Record Turnout at OLA's "Take A Youngster Fishing" Contest!

A nice walleye inspires a healthy grin on Jeremy Ackerman of Canastota.

The OLA salutes all these young anglers!

Under Age 6 Category

Kayleigh Ackerman  Coty Lee Gorton
Cassy Butler  Cassia Hameline
Joey Button  Corey Hanlon
Adam Copeland  Nick Jannone
Laura Chrissley  Val Kyser
David Classen  Ashley Lane
Rae Ann Clemens  Zachary Lansing
David Craig  Andy Lisak
Anthony DePaolo  Kevin Lisak
Joseph Desens  Emily McDonald
Adam Donner  Tyler McDonald
Billy Faucett  Justin Niles
Brianna Giancola  Kirsten Niles
Brittany Giancola  Edward Rogers
Mike Glahn

(Continued on Page 5)

Kyle, Bob & Erin Worden of Canastota, proudly display a chunky smallmouth bass.

Brandon and Josh Snyder of West Edmeston, show off their fine perch.
President's Report

Oneida Lake Bulletin
Summer/Fall 1996

Oneida Lake has benefited in some special ways during this spring and early summer. Your Oneida Lake Association has worked hard to introduce our next generation to fishing's great joys. The Association held a "Take A Kid Fishing" Contest on the last weekend of June and the event attracted over 200 children. I would like to thank all the sponsors for their support. Brewerton Sports and Marion Manor were especially outstanding. These two businesses hosted the contest, its related fishing seminars and its casting competition. Their owners, Steve Rogers and Jerry Randall, gave generously of their time and contributed numerous prizes. To Jerry, the event's chairman, let me express an additional, well-deserved "thank you" for an outstanding job!

Our lake's south shore users are now enjoying the newly remodeled New York State Boat Launch, east of Bridgeport. The launch's dedication occurred on June 21 and was attended by many state and local officials. Our Association extends its gratitude to all who helped make this project a reality. Access to our great natural resource improves dramatically with the opening of this fine facility.

Your Oneida Lake Association strives to continually protect and improve the lake. In doing so, we address a variety of concerns. Last spring, some east shore members and residents noted an increase in the trash that floats in after ice-out. Glass bottles, propane tanks, and miscellaneous construction debris mar our beautiful shore and create potential health problems. The Association encourages a "carry on, carry off" policy throughout the year. And, if you come upon a mess left by others, stop and remove it. Remember-Oneida Lake is our lake to protect and preserve.

I wish all of you a safe, marvelous, summer and fall.

John Guilford, Jr.
OLA President

John Guilford

From the Editors-

Welcome to the summer/fall edition of the Oneida Lake Association's Bulletin! "Fishing '96" is this issue's theme and all of our articles reflect this. Cornell biologist Tony VanDeValk's prose explores Oneida's valley's population's dynamics, Jerry Randell details in-depth fishing techniques and fishing spots on the Oneida lake while Richard Colesante's writing informs us about the Oneida Fish Cultural Station's activities, and our lead article cites the 200 plus young anglers who shared in our "Take A Youngster Fishing" Contest's joys. We applaud these children who are, in a very real sense, a big part of the future of fishing and of the Oneida Lake Association itself.

Dom Maio
Jack Henke

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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Oneida Lake Bulletin
The OLA Fishing Corner

Oneida Lake - Heads or Tails?
by Jerry Randall

There is no doubt that Oneida Lake's walleye fishing is changing. Much debate exists as to what the future holds, but the present is what matters to anglers in 1996 and some OLA members are altering old techniques in an effort to adapt to current conditions. Listen to what a few are doing.

Steve LaComb lives in Sylvan Beach and fishes the lake every chance that he gets. Steve has had a good year thus far and the keys to his success have been the changes he's made to his fishing habits over the past eighteen months. What are Steve's secrets? Number one has been "area of concentration." Steve finds most walleyes in eight to twelve feet of water, often adjacent to weed beds. Very early in the morning and very late in the evening have been the most productive hours and Steve concentrates his efforts accordingly. Dark floating jig heads tipped with worms have worked best, but Steve has found success using sonars, worked slowly along the bottom. If you fish similar areas with these techniques expect to spend a lot of time cleaning weeds off your hooks, but your reward may be a heavier stringer of walleyes.

Bob Moore lives along the lake between Bridgeport and Lakeport and generally fishes close to home. Bob has had a good walleye year and, like Steve, attributes this to changing his fishing habits. Bob and his angling partner, John Bannon, have taken most of their fish in twelve to eighteen feet of water, using sand pike jigs, sometimes tipped with a worm. Nothing new here - but Bob and John now use lighter line, smaller lures, and fish earlier in the morning. In general, their approach to walleye success was to "go subtly," a nice adaptation to lake's greater water clarity.

Oneida Lake is in a state of flux and will probably continue to change. Those fishermen who are willing to adjust - to try new areas, lures, times, or presentations - will have the best chance to experience angling success.

Factors Affecting Oneida Lake Walleye Production

by Tony VanDeValk
Cornell Biological Field Station

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(Editors' note - A decline in Oneida's walleye population often provokes irrational responses.)

(Continued on page 4)
Factors Affecting Walleye Production

Fishermen accuse New York State of selling adult pike or shipping our lake's pike fry to other states. Both indictments are completely false. In the following article, Cornell Biologist Tony VanDeValk sets the record straight regarding the true causes of the walleye population fluctuations.

In the past, Oneida Lake's walleye production has been closely linked to yellow perch populations. During the 1960's and 1970's, walleyes fed mostly on perch and, sometimes, on their own young (cannibalism). When walleye numbers were high, their predation reduced the young yellow perch population by late summer. Low perch numbers intensified walleye cannibalism until early summer of the following year, when another hatch of perch eased the pressure. Cannibalism caused low walleye year-class recruitment, thus reducing the numbers of adult walleyes ("recruitment" refers to the numbers of young walleyes that survive and mature). This situation, with fewer larger fish, consequently lessened pressure on young walleyes and perch. Their populations could then increase, starting the cycle again. In summary, survival of young walleyes was determined by the interaction between adult walleyes and young perch in Oneida Lake.

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, large gizzard shad hatches wreaked havoc with the walleye-perch relationship. The presence of an alternative prey species decreased predation on young walleyes and the adult walleye population increased. When gizzard shad disappeared in the 1990's the lake was left with an artificially high walleye population. This caused intense predation on young perch and walleyes. The few young perch that survived grew quickly, making them unavailable as prey for younger walleyes. As a result, the latter fish grew slowly, which subjected them to cannibalism for longer periods of time. Consequently, lower walleye year-class recruitment occurred. Anglers harvested great walleye catches from 1992 through 1994, but the recovery of the walleye population has been slow. Other year classes simply have not provided adult fish to restore former numbers.

Two recent changes in Oneida Lake may lower future fish production. First, phosphorus (P) levels declined in the mid-1980's and have remained relatively low through 1995. Phosphorus is the nutrient that determines algae production, on which fish production ultimately depends. Total phosphorus and dissolved reactive phosphorus (what we call DRP, phosphorus immediately available for algae growth) have declined by 50% since 1985. This drop in our lake's fertility was brought about by improved water quality management in the surrounding watershed (i.e. - more sewage treatment facilities) and, possibly, by a depletion of the amount of phosphorus in the lake's sediment, accumulated during the high "loading" years of the 1960's and 1970's.

Secondly, zebra mussels, first observed in Oneida in 1991, have exploded in numbers and are extremely abundant throughout the lake. Zebras graze on (consume) algae. Coupled with the phosphorus level decrease, zebra mussel feeding will further reduce Oneida Lake's algal biomass. Zooplankton, which dine on algae, will decline in numbers. This could lead to a decrease in young fish production (they relish the zooplankton) and, therefore, a decreased adult walleye population.

However, there are a large number of "unknowns" in our lake's case. For example, zebra mussels may decrease open water alage production but increase the numbers of bottom dwelling invertebrates (shrimp and midges). Since the mussels invaded Oneida, densities of these invertebrates have increased. Yellow perch, which consume these organisms, benefit. Walleyes, of course, utilize perch and their population may be less affected by decreased algae production that was originally thought.

The Cornell Field Station's on-going Oneida Lake research focuses on a better understanding of walleye dynamics and the environmental changes that are currently occurring. We can be assured that the walleye will continue to be the lake's premier sport fish, but a return to past production levels seems unlikely.

News From Your Oneida Fish Cultural Station

by Richard Colesante and Mark Babenzien

Ice disappeared from Oneida Lake during Easter Sunday night. We consider this to be a normal ice-out date.

Fish & Wildlife Technicians, Bill Schara and Ron Tawney join Fish Culturer 1, Mike Dixon in "tending the nets"
Fish & Wildlife Technicians, Andy Damachowskie and Steve Zen Zen haul in one of the many healthy nets of walleye caught during the week.

Walleyes, however, had been in Scriba Creek for about one week, signaling that the annual spawning "run" had begun. Hatchery crews set fourteen trap nets in the lake on Monday, April 8, and four additional nets on the day after. Nets were first tended on the latter date and 1,500 walleyes were transported to our hatchery. The number of adult walleyes that were netted increased over the next eight days until a total of 31,200 fish were collected. We gathered 300 million eggs from these specimens. This year's netting, in which many large fish were caught, indicated a healthy population of Oneida Lake walleyes. Walleye eggs hatched during the week of May 6. Approximately 150 million fry were stocked in Oneida Lake. Pontoon boats transported these fish to offshore release points. Around 50 million fry were stocked in other New York State waters.

This summer, the Oneida Fish Cultural Station has fingerling walleyes and lake sturgeon in its production tanks. The hatchery's other exhibits provide further educational and environmental enrichment. Stop by for a rewarding visit.

(Continued from Cover page)

**Under Age 6**
- Megan Guilford
- Michael Hameline
- Michael Hameline
- Kirsha Higby
- Michael Jaje
- Erica Jono
- Charles LaDue
- Melissa Lane
- Jenny Lee
- Nick Maliszewski
- Erin O'Brien-Mazza
- Jack Macaulay
- Craig Mullins
- Patrick Murray
- Zachary Palmieri
- Robert Pattrige
- Jill Plontowski
- Jeffrey Pratt
- Timothy Prichard
- Coner Randall
- Ben Riordan
- Harvey Simmons IV
- Chad Smith
- Chase Stoffle

**Ages 8 & 9**
- Samantha Tacnacki
- Travis Tomaselli
- Kate Winters
- Earl Woodridge
- Kyle Worden

Katie Lansing
- Tom Larabee
- Jesse Lee
- Ross Leone
- Danny McCauley
- Melissa Miner
- Jenna Peterson
- Zachary Pienkowski
- Chris Pienkowski
- Michael Prichard
- Jodie Ray
- Brian Rolfe
- Mike Schulties
- Kevin Slomba
- Shawn Smith
- Steve Smith
- Tom Smith
- Wesley Tomaselli
- Alex VanBeveren
- Chris Vona
- Brian Winters

**Ages 12 to 16**
- Jeremy Ackerman
- Adam Isgar
- Ken Isgar
- Greg Jackson
- Tim Jarsen
- Aaron Kazan
- John Lattimer
- Tholeen Larabee
- Pat Leon III
- Shilah Mahar
- Leanna Moore
- Joe Mazza
- Kevin Mazza
- David Miller
- Troy Murphy
- Kristy Patchett
- Dan Primo
- Chuck Prichard
- Bo Randall
- Jason Randall
- Robert Reinertsen
- Kevin Rolfe
- Scott Rolfe
- Kevin Rollins
- Crystal Sands
- Andy Schermerhorn
- Edward Shoedero
- Brandi Schuetheis
- Tom Scott
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