

The Oneida Lake Bulletin

Summer 2013

www.oneidalakeassociation.org

OLA Publishes Oneida Lake Boating Safety Map

The Oneida Lake Association Board of Directors proudly announces the publication of an Oneida Lake Boating Safety Map. The Board used the NOAA Oneida Lake navigation map as a basis for the publication and thanks that agency for graciously granting permission.

The Board published this map to increase boating safety and save lives. Boating on Oneida Lake can be challenging and the Board hopes that the map's information will facilitate and encourage safe navigation.

Our map is free; it is not for sale. In addition to this *Bulletin's* centerfold, maps can be obtained at marinas surrounding the lake. Be aware that marinas have limited quantities. Copies of the map can also be downloaded from the OLA's website - www.oneidalakeassociation.org. The map will be distributed to public libraries, schools, and village/town offices in communities bordering the lake. In these places, copies will be available for in-house use only.

The OLA Board hopes that everyone who uses the lake can access this map. We believe that applying the map's information can greatly increase boating safety and reduce the number of accidents on the lake to *zero*.

While the map is printed on heavy, high quality paper, it is not waterproof. Keeping an untreated map in your boat may cause it to wear. Staples stores offer laminating services (\$3-4) that waterproof the map. That company's stores are located on Chevy Drive, East Syracuse and Route 31, Clay; in Northern Lights Plaza, North Syracuse, and in Consumer Square, New Hartford; and on Erie Boulevard, Rome.

Oneida Lake Association Boating Safety Map
Download this map at www.oneidalakeassociation.org
This map is not for sale.

Some Navigational Hazards Along the Shore
Some of these are marked by can or pin buoys; others are not. Always drive slowly when voyaging along Oneida Lake's shoreline.

Along the Oswego County Shore - Traveling West to East

- Shoals south of Shaw and Weidewerth Points.
- Two grass shoals in Johnson Bay.
- Shoals south of Phillips Point.
- Shoals south of eastern end of Three Mile Bay.
- Willard Island shoal south of Bernhard's Bay.
- Dickinson Isle, east of Bernhard's Bay.
- Ruins of Barge Canal breakwaters, Cleveland Harbor.

Along the Madison County Shore - Traveling West to East

- Shoals north of Oneida Shores County Park.
- Shoals north of Long Point.
- Shoals east of Short Point.
- Shoals south of Frenchman's Island and east of Long Point.
- Shoals west of Norcross Point.
- Shoals west of Chittenango Creek's mouth - Stay between the green and red guide buoys until safe water is reached.
- Eel Island shoals, north of Hitchcock Point - This is a large shoal area. Stay outside of pin buoys.

Boaters - Please Read!
Specific shoreline hazards on this map are circled in red and numbered. Their numbers correspond to the numbered hazards in the lists for each county that border Oneida Lake. While we have tried to be all-inclusive, additional hazards may exist. Buoys in the channel are labeled "B" and circled. If the buoy is placed on a concrete piling, it is labeled B-C and circled. Channel dangers are marked D and circled.

New York State marks many hazards with "can" and "pin" buoys. Occasionally, marina owners use other buoys to identify hazards near their facilities or entrances to channels leading to their property. Be cautious near any buoy in Oneida Lake.

Navigation Tips for Oneida Lake

- Never consume alcoholic beverages or use drugs.
- Obey U.S. Coast Guard navigation rules.
- Always carry your cell phone.
- Make sure that your boat and motor are in tip-top condition.
- Know all dangers in the area of the lake where you're navigating.
- Check the weather forecast for storm warnings and advisories.
- Pay close attention to wind speed and direction. Large, wind-driven waves create dangerous conditions.
- Thunderstorms are extremely dangerous. Lightning, powerful winds, and big waves often accompany these storms.
- Stay off the water if you have any doubts about your boat or the lake's conditions.
- Always wear a PFD (life jacket). New York laws state that children under twelve must always wear one when in any boat under sixty-five feet in length, unless they are within a fully enclosed cabin. All passengers must wear PFDs from November 1 until May 1.
- Be aware of Oneida Lake's annual draw-down top to three feet, which occurs around November 1 and continues through winter. After draw-down, consult a reliable depth map to determine which areas are too shallow for boating.
- Slow down when you navigate near launch areas and near the shoreline.
- Thick weed beds can congest buoys in summer. Be careful.

The map contains the following information:

- A list of navigation tips for Oneida Lake.
- A legend that explains symbols used on the map.
- A labeling with "B" or "B-C" (on concrete piling), numbering, and circling in red, of New York's navigational buoys that mark Oneida Lake's channel.
- A labeling with "D" (circled in red) of danger areas near the channel, and a listing of each area.
- A labeling, with numbers (circled in red) of danger areas near the shore of each of the four counties that border the lake and a listing of each danger area, with corresponding numbers.

Please note that every effort has been made to publish the most current, accurate, and complete information possible

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- Shoals north of Deacon Point.
- Shoals north of Dutchman's Island shoals - Do not go between the island and shore.
- Chapman Point pier.
- Shoals north of French's Marina.
- Shoals north of the mouth of Cassatego Creek.
- Goose Island shoal, slightly east of Hamilton's Marina - Lighthouse.
- Levis Point shoals.
- Oneida Lake Canal (under guard wall, north of Oneida Lake Marina. Do not go between buoy and shore).
- Oneida Creek sand bars.

Along the Oswego County Shore - Traveling West to East

- Shoals north of Oneida Shores County Park.
- Shoals north of Long Point.
- Shoals east of Short Point.
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on this boating safety map. Notwithstanding these efforts, the OLA neither makes any representation or warranty of any kind whatsoever, either express or implied, nor assumes any legal liability or responsibility, concerning the accuracy, completeness, or quality of the data or information contained on the map.

The OLA Board wishes everyone a safe boating season.

Oneida Lake Bulletin – Your Environmental Voice for Over Sixty Years

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President's Message

To the OLA Membership:

In response to serious accidents on Oneida Lake in the recent past, the OLA established a boating safety committee to find ways to alert boaters to the lake's dangers. The Board of Directors instructed the committee to design a "boating safety map" specifically for Oneida Lake and readily accessible to the public. The result of the Board's effort is evident in this *Bulletin's* centerfold. Anyone can download the map from our website - www.oneidalakeassociation.org. Maps are also posted in public areas near the lake and are available at marinas.

All Oneida Lake navigators should read and use this map. It can save lives. Special thanks go to everyone who contributed to its production.

Summer is a weedy time in Oneida Lake's shallows and the pesky, invasive water chestnut continues to plague us, particularly in the Big Bay area and other west end bays. Hand pulling water chestnuts and properly removing them from Oneida Lake is a proven, effective means to control their spread. If you enjoy recreation in the lake's shallows, or own shoreline property, *let's pull together* to reduce these plants' numbers to zero!

OLA Director Scott Shupe has written an informative article in this *Bulletin* entitled "Let's Pull Together" - to eradicate problem weeds. Scott discusses how all of us can make a difference with this issue. I have asked Scott to coordinate the OLA's "Let's Pull Together" initiative. Be on the lookout for communications from him via email and the OLA's website regarding details of a late July or early August water chestnut pull.

Let's pull together is a powerful message that goes far beyond water chestnuts. Oneida Lake matters mightily to every OLA member; the lake creates jobs, recreation, fishing, tourism, fun, family bonding, revenue, culture, tradition, and beauty, among other attributes. Our government's leaders, on all levels, must join with non-government groups, law enforcement, scientists, and every friend of Oneida Lake to *pull together* to accomplish what is right for this invaluable body of water. Together, we can make a huge difference and can achieve the OLA's mission of protecting, restoring, and enhancing Oneida Lake and its environments now, and for future generations.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation will once again be working with the Oneida Lake Association to recruit volunteers for cormorant hazing this fall. The goal is to cut the number of cormorants using the lake to 100, down from peak populations in the thousands during the fall migration. Volunteers work alongside DEC staff to harass cormorants with boat chases, pyrotechnics, and noisemakers on the lake's points and islands.

Hazing efforts will kick off with a training session on August 6, at 6:30 p.m., at the Cornell Field Station, Shackelton Point. This is mandatory for anyone who hasn't participated in the past. Then, from late August through October, trained OLA members will haze cormorants with our own boats and pyrotechnic equipment supplied by the OLA and DEC. If you'd like to participate or receive more information, please send an e-mail to info@oneidalakeassociation.org with your name, contact information, where you keep a boat on the lake (if applicable) and whether you have participated in the past.

Oneida Lake is an irreplaceable resource. Our cormorant harassment program and the OLA's eternal vigilance helps preserve the lake's unique, invaluable productivity.

Take a few moments this summer and fall to enjoy Oneida and its traditions. Be safe and have a magnificent time on the water.



Edward L. Mills
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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A Major Facelift for Verona Beach

In June, Governor Andrew Cuomo's office announced significant upgrades for many state parks. Under this scheme, \$4.3 million will be directed for improvements at the Verona Beach facility.

Park Director Joe Morisette informed the *Bulletin* that the project entails several upgrades. The existing bathhouse, built in 1950, will be razed and replaced by a new structure on the same site. An enclosed picnic pavilion and three fresh picnic shelters will serve park patrons. The

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OLA Names Dave Lemon “Conservationist of the Year”

The OLA Board of Directors is pleased to announce the naming of DEC Region 7 Fisheries Manager Dave Lemon as the 2013 recipient of the association’s “Conservationist of the Year” award.

Dave, a graduate of SUNY Cobleskill and Virginia Tech, started his career with the USDA Forest Service as a fisheries technician in Blacksburg, Virginia, and later Juneau, Alaska. The New York DEC hired him in 1990 as a seasonal fish and wildlife technician, but a promotion shortly thereafter catapulted him into the position of aquatic biologist. Dave worked as a DEC biologist for two

decades, culminating in his elevation to Region 7’s Fisheries Manager status in 2010. Dave summarizes his current job’s purpose as doing everything to “protect and enhance the fisheries resources of Region 7 and New York State.”

A native of Philadelphia’s suburbs, Dave was “entranced” by upstate New York’s natural bounty on his initial visit to SUNY Cobleskill and deems himself “incredibly lucky” to be able to practice his profession here. He and his wife, the former Michele Barno, are proud parents

of sons Daniel and Adam; the entire Lemon family shares the bonding joys of upstate’s outdoor life as much as possible.

Dave Lemon stepped forward to organize Oneida Lake’s annual volunteer cormorant hazing program after USDA funding evaporated several years ago. The DEC program has helped lessen the birds’ impact on Oneida’s walleye and perch populations. In this role, Dave has given countless hours for our lake’s betterment; the OLA was proud to name him “conservationist of the year.”

A Major Facelift

Continued from page 2

pavilion will accommodate around 100 and contains restroom facilities. Beach access will be improved and enhanced with universal accessibility in mind. Better lifeguard and first aid stations, and a new snack bar, are planned. Also, the existing beach will be enlarged and groomed.

In a very welcome “green” change, Verona Beach’s weathered parking lot will be repaved and sited to provide filtered storm water drainage. Rain can carry unwelcome substances into Oneida Lake and the OLA applauds this move.

Project construction should begin after Labor Day this year, with a completion goal set in the summer of 2014. This project is the largest combined capital improvement in the central region in over three decades; it brings a fresh face to the environmental gem that is Verona Beach.

**OLA Members -
Report Violators -
Call 1-800-TIPP-DEC!**

Let’s Pull Together

-by Scott Shupe

Today, a suite of invasive plants disrupts New York’s aquatic ecosystems. Loosestrife and reeds clog wetlands at the expense of buttonbush and cattails. Oneida Lake nurtures invaders like European frogbit and water chestnuts, in addition to long-present Eurasian milfoil and curly pondweed. Even now, we must be alert for infestations of hydrilla, another exotic. We can, however, limit invasive plants’ impacts on our lake’s ecosystem.

Would you like to help?

When you renew your membership, please check the “volunteer” box and write your email address on the card.

Local clubs are periodically patrolling and pulling water chestnuts in our lake’s western bays. The OLA wants to complement this effort, but we need help coordinating a productive, long-term plan.

From 1999 to 2008, the OLA participated in Cornell Cooperative Extension’s “chestnut pulls” east of the Route 81 Bridge. The association also sponsored one of the first targeted herbicide test protocols to control this invasive weed.

Preventing water chestnut plants from releasing nuts (seeds) restricts their spread. These seeds remain viable for a decade and one of them can generate dozens of plants. One plant produces scores of nuts, each capable of floating away to infect another bay. Pulling the weeds in late June-early July is the best way to interrupt the cycle. Pulling works effectively for smaller numbers of chestnuts, but massive infestations require more radical treatments.

Our goal on Oneida Lake is to keep chestnut numbers low (ideally, zero). This is where you - our members - can get involved. First, learn to identify the plant. Second, pull the plant and dispose of it far ashore where it can decompose (vegetable gardens thrive on chestnut compost). Third, watch your email and the OLA’s website and volunteer when a call arrives for an OLA pulling event.

You can access excellent pictures of invasive plants, as well as other pertinent information, at these websites: <http://dec.ny.gov/animals/265.html>; www.nysis.info; www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/aquatics/main.shtml; <http://imapinvasives.org/nyimi/map/>; www.sleloinvasives.org; and www.ipcnys.org/.

Freshwater Drum - Oneida Lake's Rodney Dangerfield

-by Tony VanDeValk, Biologist - Cornell Field Station

The family of fishes commonly called “drum” consists of over thirty species in North America. Several of these, such as seatrout, sea bass, kingfish, and red drum (also called redfish) provide some of the continent’s most popular sport fisheries. For example, coastal states sponsor lucrative tournaments for sea trout and redfish similar to freshwater bass competitions. Several drum species command top market prices and highlight our country’s finest restaurants’ menus.

While the drum family contains primarily marine species, the freshwater drum (sheepshead) is the group’s only freshwater representative and inhabits lakes and large rivers from the Mississippi/Missouri basins to the St. Lawrence drainage. In New York, freshwater drum are common in Lakes Erie, Ontario, Champlain, and Oneida. These fish can weigh over twenty-five pounds, but individuals less than ten pounds are much more common. New York’s record fish weighed twenty-four pounds, eight ounces, and was caught in Lake Ontario.

Our Field Station initiated gill net surveys in Oneida Lake in 1957 and trawl surveys in 1959. Despite historical evidence suggesting freshwater drum are native to the Great Lakes’ basin, our first recording of them occurred in 1973, when we netted forty-three small fish (age-0). Eleven age-2 drum from this year class appeared in 1975’s surveys, and our trawls and gill nets have caught drum ever since.

Trawl catches of young drum vary tremendously. Strong year classes from the late 1970s through the 1990s contributed most of today’s adult population. In 2012, we aged drum using ear bones (otoliths). Only six year classes appeared in the thirty-seven drum we analyzed and most these fish (87%) were born prior to 1992. One fish hatched in 1973, demonstrating drums’ potential longevity. Indeed, a seventy-year-old sheepshead has been caught in the upper Midwest!

Drum regularly consume darters and young yellow perch, smallmouth bass, and walleyes; stomach analyses in 2012 revealed that these fish, in decreasing order of abundance,



Cornell creel technician Nikki Saavedra (l), and interns Eleanore O’Neil and Samantha Roth (r) display some of Oneida’s hefty drum.

nourish the lake’s sheepshead. Zebra and quagga mussels were found in six of the eighteen stomachs we probed. Also, past studies indicate that crayfish are important drum prey.

Although freshwater drum are excellent game fish, few Oneida Lake anglers target them. Like Rodney Dangerfield, Oneida Lake’s sheepshead earn little respect. Our Field Station has conducted over 10,000 angler interviews since 1997 and only one person expressed an interest

in catching drum. In addition to their tenacious fighting qualities, freshwater drum can provide a tasty meal. Like their redfish cousins, drum have a firm and mild-flavored flesh, and grilled filets blackened with spices are delicious.

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Volunteers Wanted!

Your Oneida Lake Association's outreach program involves staffing exhibition booths at regional sport shows. Directors' commitments occasionally conflict with scheduling, leaving difficult gaps in coverage. We invite all association members to volunteer to fill these gaps. Working these shows creates a unique opportunity to promote the OLA and share great fellowship with scores of dedicated, fascinating outdoorspersons.

Any interested members should contact the board through our website - www.oneidalakeassociation.org.



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Sturgeon in Oneida Lake and nearby waters may be tagged. Biologists at Cornell University and NYSDEC need your help to track these fish. Yellow tags may be attached at the base of the dorsal fin. If you catch a tagged sturgeon, please write down the number on the tag and length of fish, release the fish immediately, and call Cornell University at (315) 633-9243 or contact NYSDEC at (315) 785-2262 as soon as possible.



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