



**Oneida Lake Association**  
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## **ONE OF OUR LOCAL CONSERVATION OFFICERS WINS AWARD**

### **Officer of the Year - Onondaga County**

On Sept. 13, ECO Thomas received the 2022 Officer of the Year Award from the Northeast Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs Association (NECLECA). The awards committee selected Officer Thomas for his continued work in protecting the environment and holding polluters accountable in Onondaga County. Colleagues say ECO Thomas has served in DEC's Division of Law Enforcement with grace and professionalism. DEC congratulates Officer Thomas on receiving this award.

**The OLA thanks all of our ECOs for the great work that they do!**

*From left to right below: Captain Stevens, ECO Thomas (Award Recipient), and Lieutenant Colesante*



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## News from Shackleton Point

### Increasing Understanding of Oneida Lake's Gentle Giants: Age-Length Keys for Lake Sturgeon

*by Krystal Lynn Dixon*

Lake sturgeon are a threatened species of fish occupying various systems within the Great Lakes region, [including Oneida Lake](#). They are a long-lived and late-to-mature fish, typically reproducing between nine to twenty-five years old. By the late 1800s, lake sturgeon were killed as a nuisance fish and harvested at unsustainable rates for their caviar. In combination with their life-history strategies, these actions quickly decimated lake sturgeon populations. Today, efforts by multiple agencies in New York State are helping to restore lake sturgeon populations, but additional research and public outreach are essential for their recovery. During my internship with NY Sea Grant and Cornell Cooperative Extension, I spent my summer at the Cornell Biological Field Station working on lake sturgeon research and extension.

Although researchers have studied this threatened species, a lack of knowledge remains on population abundance and age structure for many populations. Differences in growth and survival between lake sturgeon populations has also not been well studied in general. To address these research gaps, I spent the summer creating an age-length key for sturgeon in Oneida Lake. An age-length key is used in fisheries to reduce the time spent aging individual fish. It is created from a documented relationship between the age and length of a sample of fish. This relationship can then be applied to estimate the ages of other fish with known lengths but without known ages. Age-length keys can also be used to compare growth rates between populations.

Lake sturgeon were intermittently stocked in Oneida Lake 1995-2004, and have been stocked annually since 2014. Researchers at the Cornell Biological Field Station conduct an annual survey of the sturgeon population in May and June. Sturgeon caught in the annual lake sturgeon survey are measured, weighed, and tagged. Sturgeon age is determined through their tag, if they have one, and through interpreting the annual rings on a pectoral fin ray. From the annual survey data, I created two separate age-length keys from the two different aging methods. I found that the age-length key created from the tagged sturgeon data was able to accurately predict the age of a sturgeon more often than the fin ray aged age-length key, which we expected because of the certainty in ages that tags provide.

I am continuing this project as my honors thesis by creating and comparing age-length keys for lake sturgeon in other water bodies across the state. The resulting age-length keys would be useful in understanding where sturgeon are growing the fastest, monitoring the restored populations, and may have implications for choosing the best locations to stock these fish.



## **Town of Constantia**

**Wilderness Search:** On Oct. 3 at 10:52 a.m., Forest Ranger Erin Petit overheard radio traffic from a New York State Police (NYSP) Trooper requesting search and rescue assistance for an elderly subject suffering from dementia. The subject's caretaker called for help when the 90-year-old walked into the woods. At 11:19 a.m., Ranger Petit located the subject, helped them out of the woods, and delivered them to a Brewerton Ambulance. Resources were clear at 12:20 p.m.

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## **Oneida Lake Watershed Plan**

The Central New York Regional Planning & Development Board (CNY RPDB) recently launched an updated website for the Oneida Lake Watershed 9E Plan, currently under development.

This plan will build on past watershed planning efforts, including the 2004 Management Strategy for Oneida Lake and its Watershed and the 2003 State of the Lake and Water-shed Report. Both resources are available on the updated website.

A 9E Plan is a plan that describes a community's water quality concerns and provides a strategy to address those concerns. The Nine Element (9E) plan will be developed in partnership with the people who live, work, visit, and enjoy Oneida Lake and the creeks and streams around it, with guidance from state and local agencies. Funding for this initiative is being provided by the NYS Department of State, under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund, through a grant to Madison County and the CNY RPDB.

Visit <https://cnypdb.org/oneida9e/>

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## **In memoriam**

The OLA offers condolences to the friends and family of Edward Pierce who recently passed away at the age of 57. Our organization received a very generous outpouring of donations in his memory.

Ed was a life-long member of the fishing community on Oneida Lake. His mother tells me that as early as elementary school he would get off the bus and head directly to his favorite spots on Big Bay, often fishing until sunset.

Ed enjoyed fishing year-round, venturing onto the frozen bay for the ice-fishing season. He was a true sportsman who loved both hunting and fishing.

We thank his parents, Ed and Jeanne, for encouraging donations to the



**The Mission of the Oneida Lake Association is to protect the fisheries, wildlife, and natural resources of Oneida Lake by promoting science-based conservation and management through education and outreach, in partnership with our members and local communities.**

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**Pay your dues, and HELP PROTECT ONEIDA LAKE!!!!**

**\$8 annually**

**Recruit your neighbors and friends TO JOIN US!**

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[Memorials and contributions to our](#)



program are most welcome.

OLA is a 501(c)4 organization serving and protecting the Oneida Lake environment.



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

OLA is a 501(c)(4) not-for-profit organization.

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/>.

Please remember to obey all laws, rules, regulations, and codes of ethics as they pertain to boating, fishing, hunting, and the management of Oneida Lake and its tributaries.

[Report environmental violations.](#)

[1-844-DEC-ECOS \(1-844-332-3267\)](tel:1-844-DEC-ECOS)

*Edited by John Harmon*

*Send us your notes and articles for use in future ENews!*

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