

The THOMPSON LAKE

OBSERVER

Fall 2011

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*Co-Presidents Kathy Cain and Sue Ellis open TLEA Annual Meeting.
(Photo Bob Tracy)*

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi all, its fall. What a summer we had. Wonderful weather until hurricane Irene arrived with her wind gusts and tree damage. While I was kayaking around, I noticed one float with a phone number on it. This was a great idea should the float get loose.

Our annual meeting was well attended with lots of new faces and interesting speakers. If you have any suggestions for future speakers, please let us know.

The sale of our Thompson Lake throws has been brisk. Don't forget the holidays are just around the corner, and throws make great gifts. We can ship them to you. Contact Kathy Cain at kcain56@hughes.net for ordering information.

Lake biologist Scott Williams has confirmed that those little green floating dots are algae, but don't get too upset before you read his article in this Observer.

Due to the budget crunch, we are changing the printing of the Observer this year from 4 issues to 3. There will be no winter issue. Some of the directors want to go paperless and only put it on the web site. I am personally a "paper trail" person. If you have an opinion, we would love to have you let us know on the web site. We do respond to questions. Also, we need photos for the web site! If you have any you would like displayed, send them to Kathy Cain at the email above.

I am hoping for a cold and snowy winter so we can all go play on the frozen lake.

Stay healthy and happy! See you in the spring.

Sue Ellis,
Co-president



IRENE BRINGS A MESS

For those living on or near Thompson Lake, Hurricane Irene was a short and messy storm. But some areas felt its impact much more than others. The west shore of the lake in Otisfield, as spotted from Cobb Hill and Scribner Hill Roads, suffered little damage other than branches down and power off for several days. We had reports that Canada Hill Shores Road, also in Otisfield, was awash with water, and waves were attacking rip-rap embankments. In Oxford Village, Marcia Pottle watched half of a big locust tree come crashing down but, fortunately, missing her house. Black Island Cove in Oxford took a pounding with numerous uprooted trees with root balls the height of a single story structure. Damage was spotted to a total of 9 hardwood trees, 21 large evergreen trees, and 20 smaller trees. One summer camp was spared extensive damage despite having one downed tree ending up on its rooftop. Several trees on Megquier Island snapped and soon draped themselves across power lines on Black Island Road. But all in all, the Thompson Lake area got off pretty easy.



*Black Island Cove took a beating from Hurricane Irene.
(Photo, Kathy Cain)*

ABOUT THOSE FUZZY WHITISH-GREEN DOTS IN THE LAKE

Scott Williams, Aquatic Biologist

A few weeks ago a concerned Thompson Lake resident wrote to me about the relatively sudden appearance of small fuzzy dots floating in the water – lots of them! I hadn't been on the lake for several weeks, but based on the time of year, and observations of nearly three decades, I suspected the landowner was seeing a blue-green alga known as *Gloeotrichia echinulata*. *Gloeotrichia* (pronounced: glee-oh-trick-ee-ah), or “Gleo”, to keep things short, is not a newcomer to Thompson Lake, or to a number of lakes throughout Maine.

Gleo exists in an unknown number of lakes in central Maine. Although Gleo is a blue-green alga (also known as cyanobacteria), historically it hasn't been a problem because it typically shows up in late summer (August-September) in relatively low density. However, during the past several years, concerns about the concentration and duration of Gleo “blooms” in Maine lakes have increased. And so it proved in Thompson Lake: When I measured the density of Gleo colonies in September, the number was nearly double what we have seen during the past decade.

Although little is known about the implications of this increase of *Gloeotrichia* in Maine lakes, research is underway to better understand this unique organism. Scientists at Bates and Dartmouth Colleges, in collaboration with the Maine Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program, have undertaken one such study. Gleo often occurs in lakes that are known to be clear and clean, like Thompson, and which otherwise support relatively little planktonic algae growth. But Gleo spends part of its annual growth cycle on the lake bottom, where there is plenty of available phosphorus (the nutrient that most directly controls algae growth in lakes). In late summer, the well-fed colonies float to the surface of the lake and multiply. These colonies float close to the surface and look more abundant than they actually are. Wind and lake currents often concentrate the colonies in downwind coves and shoreline areas, giving the impression that the Gleo “bloom” is much more dense throughout the entire lake. Such was the case when I recently visited Thompson. Even so, the overall density of Gleo was greater than we have observed historically.

Whether or not Gleo's atypical life cycle could result in more phosphorus becoming available over time to other algae in the lake, resulting in overall less clear water, is not known. But it would seem that the potential is there for this to occur. This reinforces the message that we know so well about the importance of preventing phosphorus from flowing into the lake from watershed stormwater runoff.

Little is known about the physical effects of Gloeotrichia. While not a direct health concern, there have been reports that exposure may cause a skin irritation, and that ingesting it could result in an upset stomach.



A fall photo from the air focuses on the Pottle family camp, Loseekum, in Otisfield Cove. Recently two visitors arrived at the Cape in their pontoon plane and then treated photographer Ethel Turner and Jean Hankins to an hour-long aerial inspection of the lake.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Bob Cotton Retiring as Director: At the September meeting of the Board, Sue Ellis announced that for the first time in many years the Board of Directors will be without the services of long-term director Bob Cotton, who has resigned. To find out just when Bob first joined the Board, we had to go back to the very early records of TLEA. We finally spotted his name showing up in 1974. So in addition to praising him for years of faithful attendance and his many quiet contributions to TLEA over the years, we also credit him with serving on the board longer than anyone else to date. We wish Bob many years of happy retirement!

Grants: Stan Tetenman, TLEA's chief grant writer this year, reports that TLEA applied to several foundations this year for help with YCC and water testing. We acknowledge with gratitude the generous help of the following:

Dead River Co. - \$500 for the YCC
Hancock Charitable Trust - \$1000 for the YCC
Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation: \$2500 for the YCC
Poland Spring Bottling - \$1000 for water testing

In addition, Co-President Kathy Cain was successful in obtaining a grant from the Modern Woodmen of America for \$2500.

In order to improve our grant-writing expertise, the Board of Directors recently voted to utilize the services of Anne Toepker of West Paris, an experienced and successful grant writer herself, to expand our ability and knowledge in applying for grants in 2012.

Annual Meeting Notes: We had another good crowd of members at the August 6 annual meeting, which celebrated TLEA's 40th birthday. The meeting was held at Oxford's Station House Community Center. Chief speakers were Rick Micklon, Otisfield selectman; Jim Pittman, the new owner of Robinson Marina; and Jeff Stern, TLEA's well-known erosion control consultant.

Re-elected as directors for a 2-year term were Karen Brown, Kathy Cain, Tony Caggiano, Pete Laverdiere, Sharon Rice, Tom Ray, Jean Hankins, Marcia Pottle, and Sandy Roderick. The members endorsed the formal return of Barry Jorve as director and treasurer and also elected one other new director, Dan Porter, who spends his summers in the Silvaqua area of Otisfield. We are fortunate to have the present officers continue next year: Kathy Cain and Sue Ellis as co-presidents; Bob Tracy as secretary; and Barry Jorve as treasurer.

MEET TLEA'S DIRECTORS

This issue in our Directors' series profiles Directors Marcia Pottle and Tom Ray.

Marcia Pottle lives on Pleasant Street (Route 121) in Oxford, in the house her late husband Chris inherited from his maternal grandmother, Kate Starbird. She has spent time here every summer since 1960, and she and Chris moved here permanently in 2000. She grew up in New Orleans. Before retiring in 1997, she was a chemist and a computer analyst, having completed her BA at Tulane and her MS at Johns Hopkins.



She enjoys gardening and volunteering for non-profit organizations including TLEA, of which she has been a member since 1972. She became a director in 1996 and is mainly responsible for our membership and our database. The extended Pottle family shares a camp on the lake in Otisfield Cove, where Marcia enjoys many good times and meals with the family.



Our next director this issue is **Tom Ray**. Tom and his wife, Phyllis, live in Bass Cove next to Agassiz Village and on the corner of Heath and Johnson Hill Roads, Poland. He has lived on the lake for 15 years, but his family purchased 75 acres in 1956 and started building "camp" in 1958.

Tom and his wife Phyllis both grew up in Arlington, Massachusetts. He attended college at Northeastern University for both his Bachelor's (Industrial Technology) and his MS in Business. After college, he lived in Woburn and Littleton, Massachusetts, for 39 years. He was a Plant Engineer for Honeywell and President/Owner of Ray Engineering Company, retiring in 2006.

Around 1972, he joined TLEA when Fred Peterson was President. He was Co-President of TLEA from 2002 to 2008, and is now chairman of the YCC. Tom and Phyllis moved to the lake in 1997, spent the summer at "camp" and moved into their new home in December of 1997, just in time for the ice storm. Tom enjoys family, golf, gardening, traveling, winters in Florida, and anything to do with Thompson Lake.

Who will be in the next issue?
Karen Brown

**SECOND SUCCESSFUL SEASON FOR
EROSION CONTROL GRANT:
100 TONS OF SOIL EROSION ELIMINATED**

Project RESTOA, also known as The Thompson Lake Watershed Improvement Project, Phase III – Otisfield, has wound up its second successful field season in 2011. At this point, a few tasks remain to be completed in the two-year grant.

In 2009, TLEA applied for, and received, a \$61,189 grant from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to control erosion from town roads and private properties in Otisfield. That town's steep terrain and extensive shoreline bordering on Thompson Lake made it a prime candidate for a focused erosion control program.

According to Project Coordinator Jeff Stern, the DEP considers soil erosion to be the primary polluting threat to Maine's lakes. Too much soil washing into a lake fertilizes algae and can unleash a disastrous chain of events that turns formerly clear blue lakes into slimy green mats.

TLEA was worked closely with the Town of Otisfield to address major erosion problems on town roads. Town taxpayers voted to contribute \$16,000 in matching funds. In 2011, work concentrated on problems on Silvaqua, Loop, Forrest Edwards, and Peaco Hill Roads.

Combined with the work done in 2010 on Cobb Hill Road, also a town road, TLEA and the Town of Otisfield reduced erosion flowing into Thompson by more than 100 tons a year. At the same time, TLEA worked with private associations and property owners to reduce erosion from private roads, driveways, camps, and eroding shorelines.

Educational activities conducted in the summer of 2011 under the auspices of the grant included a buffer boat tour in July and an August workshop that focused on Otisfield's shoreland zoning ordinance and its ramifications for property owners.

Jeff Stern adds that only a few tasks remain in the grant work plan. These are to complete the final private road erosion control project, to conduct a workshop on camp road maintenance, to convene a final meeting of the

steering committee, to add some additional buffer plantings, and to submit the final grant report.

The grant also authorizes six more “Thompson Lake Tune-Ups,” which provide the property owner with onsite consultation with an erosion control expert to deal with erosion problems on their land. These consultations are free and available on a first-come, first served basis to anyone who owns property in Otisfield that drains into Thompson Lake. Contact Jeff Stern at 207-583-2723 or sternjm@hotmail.com if interested.

TLEA plans to apply to DEP for a one-year extension in order to complete the remaining tasks. The grant, which began in January 2010, was originally scheduled to end in January 2012. However, TLEA feels it can reach more people with its erosion control message if the final workshop and remaining Thompson Lake Tune-Ups are offered in the summer of 2012, when visitation at the lake reaches its peak, if the grant is extended until January 2013.



Jeff Stern (foreground) and pilot Hal Ferguson lead a pontoon boat tour of the lake. Jeff is pointing out newly created buffer strips.

YCC FINISHES 10TH SEASON, LOOKS AHEAD TO CHANGES

TLEA's Youth Conservation, led by Coordinator Drew McLaren, wound up its tenth consecutive summer of erosion control projects in August. This was Drew's fifth and last year with the YCC, first as crew member, then as crew chief, and finally as Coordinator/Crew Chief. This semester he will finish up at the University of Maine at Farmington and then set his mind and feet to another big job, hiking the entire Appalachian Trail.

During the summer Drew and his three other crew members, Justin St. John, Tucker Johnson, and Megan McNelly, completed their most jobs since 2007. They also added some muscles, moving a total of 225 yards of material, including 151 yards of rip-rap, and placing 121 plants in buffer areas. This summer, like last, they worked closely with Jeff Stern, the coordinator of TLEA's 319 Otisfield project.

Next summer will bring some changes to the YCC program. According to Tom Ray, who chairs the YCC Steering Committee, YCC veteran Justin St. John has accepted the job as Coordinator/Crew Chief for 2011. Under Drew, he has received training this past summer on how to assume these new duties, and we know he will do a fine job.

For the YCC's potential clients, 2012 will also bring a change in how TLEA finances the crew. In past years YCC has relied on contributions from the four lake towns. However, recently Poland and Oxford have reduced their support significantly. Oxford is concentrating its time and Thompson Lake funds on upgrading the Robinson Mill dam. We will be appealing to Poland this fall to restore the funding they gave us in the past. But, based on the present level of town contributions, the YCC will no longer provide free labor to those using its services. In addition to billing clients for materials used, the YCC will begin charging \$30 an hour for its labor. The Board of Directors has made this change reluctantly, after considering other alternatives. "We all want to keep the YCC going," said Tom Ray, "but this is the only realistic way to do so. At \$30 an hour, the YCC is still the best deal around."





Pete Laverdiere hawking the TLEA throw at the annual meeting.

DO YOUR HOUSE NUMBERS SHOW?

Back in the days before rural Maine towns adopted a house numbering system, emergency vehicles sometimes had to resort to unusual measures in order to locate the person seeking help. In some cases, callers were told to put a white pillowcase over their mailbox. This would show up even at night.

But now rural towns all have a uniform house numbering system, and that kind of solution should be gone forever. Unfortunately, such is not the case. Frequently, fire departments and ambulances still cannot locate the place of the emergency, simply because they can't find or see the number that identifies the building. When TLEA recently conducted erosion control surveys of properties in the watershed, we found all too often that even though we were usually on foot, we couldn't find either a house number or resident's name posted anywhere. The fact that many summer cottages lack mail boxes makes the problem worse. Also compounding the problem, of course, is the random nature of many camp roads on the lake, which branch off into driveways with little rhyme, reason, or directional signs.

The Otisfield Fire Department recently mounted a campaign to get everyone to comply with the numbering ordinance. They urged that house numbers be posted so that they can be easily read, day or night, when driving in either direction. The numbers should be visible from the road even if the home is not. This is just common sense. They also suggested that when giving directions to the 911 operator, if you live on a road that has a "T," be prepared to relay whether the turn is to the right or left. As Otisfield's Pat Dyer-Haggerty stated, "We cannot help you if we cannot locate you."

BOAT INSPECTORS AND MILFOIL PULLERS DO QUIET, EFFECTIVE JOBS

We're now used to seeing someone on weekend duty at Thompson's boat launch sites, sometimes seated in a folding chair, or perhaps giving a boat a thorough visual inspection as it enters or leaves the lake. The work that TLEA's boat inspectors perform summer after summer may provoke a ho-hum reaction. But let's remember that these individuals provide the last line of defense against more invasive plants entering Thompson or hitchhiking on to another Maine location.

Scott Bernardy, who oversees the Courtesy Boat Inspection program, reports that this summer the CBI inspectors looked over 612 boats, down a few from last year, perhaps due to more rainy weekends. Most of these inspections took place at the Casco marina and included some of the bass tournaments taking place at that end of the lake. The inspectors intercepted a record-setting 11 plant fragments, all at the Casco site. Ten of these were spotted on boats leaving the lake. Two of these were milfoil; the one incoming fragment turned out to be a native plant. For reasons unknown, these 11 plant fragments are up sharply from last year, when inspectors at all boat launches discovered a total of only 3.

Scott adds that, as in past years, all the boaters were polite and receptive to the CBI message. Next summer, new TLEA Director Dan Porter will be taking over the supervision of the CBI program for Scott, who has managed it for several years. Dan anticipates that there will be some turnover in CBI inspectors. To apply or to get more information, contact Dan at Danpor226@gmail.com.

Likewise, the Anti-Milfoil Battle continues, quietly and effectively. The crew removed only 13.5 tons of milfoil this year compared to about 40 last year. The main reason, Scott explains, is that last year's harvest season was over twice as long. Further, he says, "This reduced number illustrates some of the huge successes we've experienced, e.g., Serenity Cove had virtually no remaining [milfoil] plants, Edwards Cove yielded only 300 pounds, and Otisfield Cove has just a few remaining isolated plants hiding amongst the native plants."

With most of the coves showing such great improvement, Scott says that although this summer the McVety crew spent more than half their time handpulling and suction harvesting milfoil from the Hippobottomus, benthic barriers have become a much more important weapon. This summer, the McVety crew spent about 20 percent of their time putting down 114 tarps, most in the heavily infested Pine Point area. Put in place in the middle of September, they will remain in place until June 2012.

Another relatively new tool is the underwater sea scooter which the crew uses to survey lake shore areas with soft muddy bottoms where milfoil tends to thrive. This is the second year the scooter was used. Scott says, "The McVety crew has found numerous isolated plants in the north end of the lake from Pismo Beach north on both shores. As they find the plants, they remove them as well."

But the battle is far from won. "The challenges of Pine Point are becoming apparent and have us modifying our strategies to best contend with this enormous infestation," Scott says. "The Pine Point situation forces us to continue with a 10-week harvest season, for now at least. The other coves will now be down to simple maintenance with minimal manpower commitments."



ICE OUT CONTEST GOES ON, BUT WINTER OBSERVER GOES OUT (For now)

You may notice that this fall issue of the Observer is a bit fatter than usual. That's because the Directors decided not to print a Winter issue of the Observer this year in order to help balance the budget. In future years, when the budget starts looking blacker, we'll consider printing the winter issue again.

Those of you who faithfully cut out the Ice Out Contest Form from the back page of the winter issue may take this very hard. But don't despair: The Ice Out Contest will continue. We'll simply send you the form along with your membership renewal form in January. Watch for it! (If you get desperate, you can make your own form. Just write down your name, address, and the dates you pick, and enclose a check for \$5 for each date.)



Harriet Muir took this sunrise photo from The Cape in Otisfield.

TLEA NEEDS YOUR FEEDBACK!

In this issue's presidential message, Sue Ellis solicits your opinions and ideas about speakers or programs at TLEA's annual meeting. It will be terrifically helpful if you'll let us know what kind of format you'd like at this meeting, and if you have ideas for specific speakers who will teach us something we don't know and, even better, stimulate our aging brain cells. The easiest way to let TLEA know your opinions is via TLEA's website - accessible at thompsonlake.org. We promise to pay attention. While you're at it, it would help if you could tell us what you think of the Thompson Lake items we always have for sale at these annual meetings. What kind of items are we not offering that you'd like to see?

Sue also asks what you think about a paperless version of the Observer. As you may know, it's already possible to read current and past issues by going to "Publications" on the website, where the photos show up better in natural color. Of course, TLEA would save a bunch of postage money if we switched over to an all-electronic version. We're not likely to do so, however, unless and until you start insisting on it. Some of us—your trusty editor included—prefer to hold something in our hands while we read it. But, let us know.

LOOKING BACK 20 YEARS: HURRICANES ON THOMPSON

Hurricanes, by definition, are well defined tropical weather systems with sustained winds of 74 mph or more. Hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30, with the peak in Maine being from the last week in August to the end of September. Hurricanes aren't very common in Maine, occurring on average every 8 years.

On August 28, Hurricane Irene raced through here. Believe it or not, almost exactly 20 years ago, another hurricane, named Bob, made landfall in Maine on August 19, 1991. By the time it reached Maine, winds had died down to 61 mph, making it a tropical storm. It still caused \$26 million in damage and resulted in 3 deaths.

Perusing the old Observers, one notices that the amount of damage around the lake was much like that resulting from Hurricane Irene. Megquier Island had about 50 trees broken off or toppled, some of them 100 feet tall. For some, electricity was out for 3 or 4 days. Sound familiar?

Twenty years ago, though, unfortunately for the Thompson Lake Sailing Club, Hurricane Bob interrupted the first-ever Day Sailer Championship to be hosted on Thompson Lake. Participants came from all over, including California, Oregon, Florida, and even Brazil. Boats had been launched on Sunday only to be hauled out on Monday. Camp Fernwood had agreed to house and feed about 100 of the sailors and their families. To everyone's dismay, high winds brought down many trees and, with them, power lines. Somehow, thanks to Fernwood's staff and a generator, the competition proceeded and everyone enjoyed themselves.

There have been other hurricanes since then, such as Hurricane David in 1979 and Hurricane Gloria in 1985. These didn't even merit mention in the Observer. Hurricanes, while infrequent, are inevitable. Hopefully, we'll continue to "weather" them well.



Bob Tracy captured this hungry loon with a crawfish as an appetizer.

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