

The THOMPSON LAKE

OBSERVER

Summer 2011

Issue No. 164



*TLEA's Youth Conservation Corps Begins its 10th Season.
Left to right are Tucker Johnson, Justin St.John, Megan McKnelley,
and Coordinator/Crew Chief Drew McLaren (Photo Jean Hankins)*

August 6 9-11
ANNUAL TLEA MEETING

August 21 12:30-2:30
Barbeque at Agassiz Village

see page 7 for more!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

“Lordy, lordy, look who’s forty!” Yes, it’s true! TLEA will be celebrating our 40th anniversary this year. Our association began in 1971 with a small group of dedicated people concerned about the water quality of our beloved lake. This group organized the initial water quality testing of the lake and began to use this information and other means to protect this valuable resource.

Since 1971, our organization has grown and evolved into one of the most effective lake environmental associations in the state. We have met the environmental challenges of shoreland development and its resulting nonpoint source pollution. More recently, we have responded to the threat of invasive plant species, especially variable leaf milfoil, with an aggressive eradication program. Over the years we have developed Lake Day, an environmental program to prepare the next generation to be lake stewards. And for ten years we’ve sponsored a Youth Conservation Corps in which high school and college kids solve erosion control problems throughout the watershed, thus easing the threat of phosphorus and sediment deposits. In addition, TLEA has funded a series of watershed surveys to locate and identify these erosion problems.

TLEA’s many projects have greatly benefitted the water quality of Thompson Lake, but they do come with a price tag. Town funding is down. Grants are getting harder to obtain. As a result, we may have to cut back on some of our most beneficial programs in the future. We don’t want to do that. Your membership dues of \$50 a year (14 cents a day) is a small price to pay to insure that TLEA can continue its quality programs.

As you settle into your summer activities, enjoying the comforting sights and sounds on Thompson, and lakeside barbecues with family and friends, paddling a kayak on a quiet morning, relaxing on a summer cruise and listening to the “cries of the loon,” we hope you’ll think of TLEA’s efforts that make all this possible. Please join us in celebrating the big “40” by becoming a member if you aren’t one, or making a birthday donation. An association is only as strong as its membership. We can be even stronger with your membership support. Help TLEA so TLEA can help the lake!

And don’t forget to buy the new woven throw blanket! All proceeds benefit TLEA programs. Have fun in the sun!

Kathy Cain
Co-President

MILFOIL FIGHTERS BEGIN SUMMER ATTACK

TLEA's mighty milfoil fighters have already launched their summer assault on Thompson Lake's remaining variable leaf milfoil. Drivers crossing the Greeley Brook causeway on Route 121 in Oxford may already have noticed the *Hippobottomus* at its lakeside dock. According to crew chief Rob McVety, the *Hippo* was launched on June 17 and, because of McVety's time constraints, will work a condensed season this summer, ending the first of August. To get in the necessary work called for in his contract, McVety's team will work long hours and perhaps weekend days as well.

After cruising the lake, Rob reports that though the Pine Point area continues to be a challenge, other areas are looking better after three years' hard efforts. Otisfield Cove, he thinks, will need less than 2 days' work to clean up. The area near Hancock Beach still has some milfoil, but "it looks pretty good" now. A little work is still needed in Serenity Cove, and Edwards Cove continues to show less milfoil.

This summer the emphasis will shift to putting down benthic barriers. The crew hopes to add 20 new tarps this year to their present supply of 90. Each tarp costs \$85 for materials and labor. The diver-assisted harvesting operation (DASH) will be used much less this summer than in years past. The *Hippo* remains invaluable as a means of transport and also as a good platform for tarp placement.

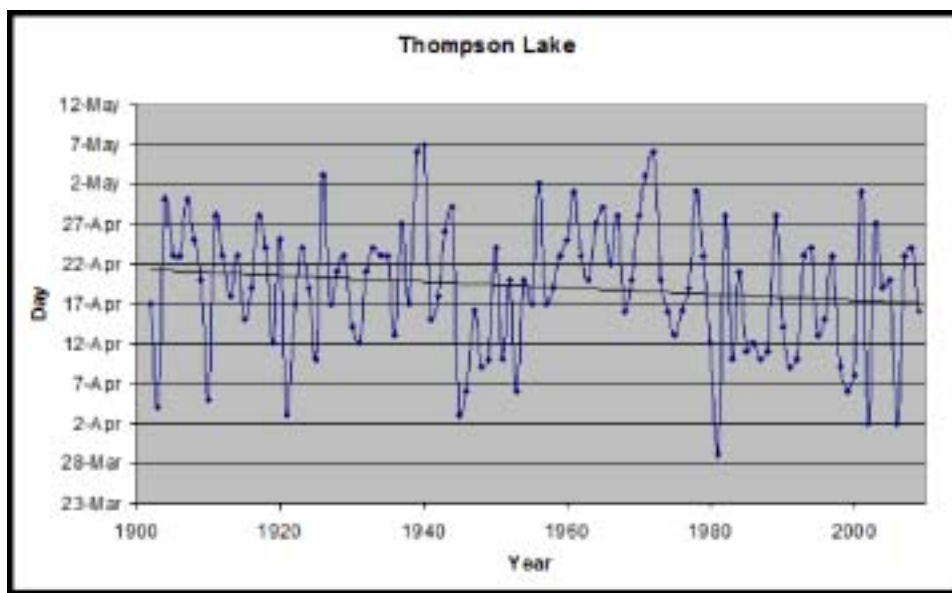


*Bob Tracy's camera caught three divers diving near Pine Point.
Hippobottomus in the background.*

ICE OUT ALMOST A MONTH LATER

This year Mother Nature showed us her fickle side when she caused Thompson Lake's ice to depart on April 20, almost a month later than last year's record-setting March 24. The weather that day was strange, too, starting off with cold and foggy conditions and then punctuated late in the morning by an uncommon spring storm with lightning, thunder, and hail. The previous day most of the lake was clear, but, as often happens, the ice was slower to go out of the southern end. TLEA's ice out judges had a tough time making a call during the morning, as conditions were too difficult to see much of anything on the lake. When the fog did lift, observers near the Heath reported that a shelf of ice still obstructed the end of the lake from one side to the other. But two or three hours later, that obstruction was gone. Ice out was officially declared about 4 p.m.

This year we had five lucky guesses. Congratulations to Ewald Bender of Loon Point Lane, Poland; David Libby of Pine Point Road, Oxford; Lizzy Price of Fishhook Road in Oxford, Gil and Diana Poliquin of Island Cove Lane, Poland, and Tom Ray of Ray's Way, Poland.



Scott Williams of Maine Volunteer & Lake Monitoring sent us this interesting graph showing historic ice out dates. It appears not to include the last few years.

YCC STARTS 10TH SEASON

Arriving at the TLEA office a few minutes before 8 a.m. on a hot June Monday morning, this reporter found coordinator/crew chief Drew McLaren well ahead of her, ready to start work, along with new crew member Megan McKnelley, a resident of Oxford. Two minutes later Justin St. John and Tucker Johnson, both veteran members of TLEA's YCC crew, arrived at the office. And in another five minutes the crew was loading up their truck and heading out to Cobb Hill Road to undertake yet another erosion control project for the Youth Conservation Corps, installing a box culvert.

Megan, a student at Oxford Hills, says she is looking forward to a physically demanding summer, perhaps developing some muscles along with learning how to construct devices like box culverts. She likes the idea of spending the summer working to preserve the environment. Asked about how he trains the new crew members, Drew McLaren's answer was short: "On the job training," he said as the crew of four started to roll.

This year's corps is already a well-educated group. Drew is now finishing up a few remaining credits for a bachelor's degree in history at the University of Maine/Farmington. In the fall Justin will start his sophomore year at University of Maine/Orono, and Tucker will be at Warren Wilson College in North Carolina, majoring in peace studies and international relations. Megan will be a senior at Oxford Hills.

According to Drew, the YCC will be especially busy this summer with work they'll be doing on some of the Residential Matching Grants. He still encourages watershed landowners with possible erosion sites to contact him at 539-4535. As in the past, the YCC helps homeowners with design, state and town permits, and construction and placement of solutions. Their labor is free; homeowners pay only for materials used.



Kathy Cain made this handsome sign to advertise the YCC's work.

KIDS LEARN AND LAUGH AT LAKE DAY AND HEY YOU CRUISE

The 100 students from Oxford Elementary and Hebron Station Schools attending TLEA's annual Lake Day on June 1 were probably too busy to worry about the weather. Not so Coordinator Sandy Roderick, who had to cope not only with wet morning conditions but also a tornado warning during the afternoon. As usual, Sandy was unflappable, and the day proceeded as smoothly as always.

One strong tradition of Lake Day is the number of outstanding volunteers that come forward to ensure its success, as well as organizations like the Departments of Environmental Protection, and Inland Fish and Wildlife, Oxford County Soil and Water, and Trout Unlimited. Five TLEA directors helped out in various ways, including running learning stations. Several public school teachers conducted teaching stations and supervised kids. Sandy singles out Denise Donnellan, an ed tech who took a personal day in order to work at Lake Day in the first aid building. Denise also took over the chore of cleaning several inside rooms so that students could move inside during the rain.



*Agassiz Village Lake Day students assembling in their hand dyed t-shirts.
(Photo, Bob Tracy)*

Sunny skies were the order of the day for the Hey You Cruise held a week later. As usual, actors on shore performed environmentally harmful practices as the Songo River Queen chugged by. According to Sandy, the Oxford-Hebron kids knew all the right answers to questions posed by the Lakes Environmental Association team that runs the cruise. The kids also won praises for being the best behaved of any group that LEA has taken down the waterway – even counting previous years!

All in all, an ambitious program sure to be long remembered by students and volunteers alike. Sandy concludes her summary with this: “We can’t thank TLEA enough for their help and support with educating our students to be better stewards of the earth and most of all to show that learning can happen outside the classroom and that it can be fun!”

FIRST LOON SPOTTED ON APRIL 18

Ethel Turner of the Cape, in Otisfield, telephoned on the morning of April 18 to report she’d heard a loon for the first time this season. Does anyone keep track of these things? Should we?

TLEA PLANS SUMMER FULL OF EVENTS

July 23, Saturday, 9-11 a.m. Pontoon Boat Tour of Thompson Lake. Leaves from Robinson Marina. Tour will look at and discuss valuable role vegetated buffers serve in protecting water quality. Otisfield’s 319 Project Director Jeff Stern will be tour guide. Rain date July 30. Boat holds only 10, so call Jeff in advance to reserve a spot: 583-2723 or email at sternjm@hotmail.com.

August 6, Saturday, 9 to 11 a.m. Annual TLEA Meeting, Oxford Rec Hall. Speakers: Jim Pitman, new owner of Robinson Marina and summer resident of Beechwoods Road; and Rick Micklon, Otisfield selectman and TLEA member. Election of officers. Thompson Lake throws available for purchase.

August 20, Saturday, 10-12. Public Conversation on Shoreland Zoning with Otisfield CEO Richard St. John. To be held at residence of Jane Fahey, 73 Loop Rd., Otisfield. Questions and answer session. Call Jeff (above) for more information.

August 21. Sunday, 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Barbeque at Agassiz Village. Catered by Lake Region Caterers, Naples. Music by Don Campbell Trio we enjoyed last year.



*Fox kits snacking on Bob Tracy's garden flowers, Otisfield Cove
(Bob Tracy Photo)*

COURTESY BOAT INSPECTORS ALSO HARD AT WORK

Much of the work of TLEA's Courtesy Boat Inspectors involves sitting and waiting - for boats going in, boats going out of the lake. It's often boring, usually hot, sometimes freezing, and rather lonely work. Their purpose, most of us know, is to prevent invasive plant fragments from entering or leaving the lake. Although Thompson and some 20 other Maine lakes and ponds already have variable leaf milfoil, none of them so far have the Eurasian milfoil or hydrilla that can be far worse.

This summer TLEA is supervising 5 inspectors. They're stationed mostly on weekends and holidays at the Casco marina, the Route 121 boat launch in Oxford, and Pismo Beach in Oxford. The State Department of Environmental Protection funds this with an annual grant to TLEA, using proceeds from boat registrations. TLEA is proud of its five vigilantes!

MEET THE DIRECTORS

This issue in our Directors series profiles Directors Peggy Dorf and Bob Cotton.

Peggy Stein Dorf has lived on the northeastern shore of Thompson Lake near the sand bar for 14 years. She grew up in Long Island and Connecticut and attended schools in Westport, Connecticut, and Boston, Mass. She teaches Special Education at Oxford Elementary School.

Now she enjoys Thompson Lake and being a grandmother. She values the fact that you can be on the lake on the 4th of July and not see too many boats. The water is also so clear. That is one of the reasons that she has been a member of TLEA since 1996.

She went to camp on the lake in the 50's and 60's and always wanted to come back. She did so in the mid 80's when her daughter attended camp. They rented for a while and then bought in 1996. In 1997, just before the big ice storm that we all remember, they winterized the "camp" and moved in permanently.

Our next director is **Robert G. Cotton**. Bob, as he is called, lives on the east shore in Oxford. He bought his house in 1962 and has lived on the lake for 48 years. He has been a member of TLEA since shortly after it was formed.

Bob grew up in South Portland, Maine, and after finishing high school became a mechanic. He was shop chief for the National Guard. On his retirement in 1985, he started making model airplanes as a hobby.

Bob and his wife have two children, a boy in Otisfield and a girl in the State of Washington. They also have 7 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

He likes the fact that Thompson Lake is quiet and the water is so clear. This is a comment that most people that live on the lake make.

Thank you both, Peggy and Bob, for your input.
Who will be in the next issue?

Karen Brown



LAKE LEVEL BECOMES SUBJECT FOR STUDENT RESEARCH

Recently TLEA directors were treated to a brief college-level lecture, in which graduating Oxford Hills student Matt McVety of Otisfield, younger brother of Rob McVety, explained his research involving the “correlation between precipitation and the level of the lake’s water.” Matt collected statistics on the monthly precipitation of Thompson Lake between 1955 and 1985, and then compared them to the average level, month by month, of the lake. As sometimes happens when tackling such ambitious statistical feats, the resulting correlation coefficient was too low to be reliable. Undaunted, Matt came up with a list of rather complicated reasons why this might have happened. In the process, though, he compiled a good deal of significant information that may be useful to others in the future. TLEA congratulates Matt on achieving this level of mathematical sophistication. We expect to hear more great things from him in the future.



*Early morning Spring visitors at Paul & Kathy Cain's Black Island home.
(Photo Kathy Cain)*

TLEA OFFICE OPEN WEDNESDAYS AND SATURDAYS

The TLEA office at 163 Pleasant Street (State Route 121), Oxford, will be open for summer visitors on most Wednesdays and Saturdays, 10-1, except for August 6, the date of TLEA's annual meeting. Please remember that the office is not handicapped accessible.

Limited amounts of TLEA merchandise will be on hand for sale. To make sure we have what you want, better call first (539-4535).

THOMPSON LAKE TUNE-UPS STILL AVAILABLE!

According to Jeff Stern, this is the final summer Otisfield residents can take advantage of **free** technical advice about how to reduce erosion problems on their property. Let's say you have a particularly vexing erosion issue that's been dogging you for years. Sometimes all it takes is to have a fresh pair of eyes look at the situation and make recommendations. There is no cost to the property owner and you are under no obligation to implement the recommendations... though we hope you do! Simply call Jeff Stern, Project Coordinator at 207-583-2723 or email him at sternjm@hotmail.com to set up a visit at your convenience.

Thompson Lake Tune-Ups are provided free of charge as part of Project RESTOA, also known as the *Thompson Lake Watershed Improvement Project, Phase III - Otisfield*, which is funded, in part, by a grant through Section 319 of the Clean Water Act from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that is administered by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.



Friendly dragonfly resting on Sue Ellis' hand.

Visit our website at:
www.thompsonlake.org

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