

The THOMPSON LAKE

OBSERVER

Spring 2013

Issue No. 169



The sap flows sweetly this year at Paul and Kathy Cain's Black Island maple grove. (Photo, Kathy Cain)

ANNUAL MEETING

August 3rd (See pg. 3)

Official ICE OUT April 15th

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

To say we had a weird winter would be putting it mildly. No snow in January but plenty a month later. Our February blizzard broke records in Portland. The wildly fluctuating temperatures have folks concerned about the effects on the trees, plants, insects, and lake water. For one thing, the lake first froze late in January when the lake was set at its new winter water level. Some lake homeowners probably saw rocks they didn't know they had. We noticed very few ice fishing houses and only a few snowmobilers.

This winter beavers have again been seen busily engaging in their construction (or destruction) projects around the lake. You might want to put some chicken wire around any trees you cherish. Three years ago, the beavers gnawed down 35 of my trees. They are industrious creatures and, according to law, can only be trapped, not killed.

On another note, please check the changes in the TLEA website which Kathy Cain has been updating with her usual diligence.

Looking ahead, TLEA continues to seek to attract new members. And we also would like to recruit some younger people to serve as a directors. The board meets on the third Friday evening of each month except December and February. Although some of our directors are snow birds, email keeps them in touch.

We hope to see you at the annual meeting in early August. Should you be interested in helping out TLEA by joining the board, please let me or Kathy Cain know so that you can be nominated from the floor.

Sue Ellis, Co-President

BLAMING THE GROUNDHOG

If you have been wondering, like the rest of us, why Thompson Lake was still covered with thick ice at the end of March, you can always blame the groundhog. Though Punxsatawney Phil's accuracy record over the years is excellent, this February he jinxed the deal by refusing to return to his hole, thereby predicting an early spring for the entire United States. Last year, you recall, the ice left the lake on March 23, thereby setting a new record, and we all pulled out our shorts and lawn chairs to bask in the sun. Take solace this year in the fact that you're not responsible for this meteorological aberration usually considered spring. It's the groundhog's fault.

ANNUAL MEETING AND NOMINATIONS

TLEA's rules state that it must give its members ample notice about the annual meeting and the candidates for election at the meeting. Please mark your calendars now!

ANNUAL MEETING, TLEA
Saturday, August 3, at 9 a.m.
Oxford Recreation Building,
Corner of King Street and State Route 121

Nominees for Directors: Karen Brown, Kathy Cain, Tony Caggiano, Pete Laverdiere, Dan Porter, Barry Jorve, Tom Ray, and Jean Hankins, all of whom are currently in office and seeking re-election. New nominee for director: Joy Lowe.

Other directors continuing in office until 2014 are: Dr. Scott Bernardy, Peggy Dorf, Anita Delecto, Sue Ellis, Marcia Matuska, Stan Tetenman, Bob Tracy, Linda Gonya, and K.C. Putnam.

TWO VETERAN DIRECTORS STEPPING DOWN

Two long-term directors who have contributed greatly to TLEA in recent years will be retiring from TLEA's board of directors this summer, according to a recent announcement by Co-President Kathy Cain. Marcia Pottle, an Oxford resident, has served on the board and as Membership Chair for some 16 years, and Sandy Roderick as Education Chair for about the same length of time. During those years, Marcia computerized TLEA's membership records and has meticulously maintained the data base. In addition, she is the individual who several times each week pulls mail out of the TLEA's Oxford Post Office box and visits the bank to deposit checks. Sandy Roderick, also of Oxford, is best known for creating Lake Day and its partner, The Hey You Cruise, popular educational events which have been educating school children for many years.

TLEA has been blessed to have these two women on its Board. Fortunately, they have guaranteed to provide help with transition: Marcia has promised to help train her successor, and Sandy has promised to continue to direct Lake Day even as she retires from the board.

YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS GEARS UP FOR A BUSY SUMMER

Justin St. John, now a junior at the University of Maine at Orono, will be finishing up his papers and exams just in time to kick TLEA's Youth Conservation Corps into high gear. As this goes to press, the experienced YCC coordinator and crew chief is lining up his three-person crew and preparing the group's schedule for the summer. As most TLEA members know by now, the YCC's job is to keep Thompson Lake clean by eliminating soil erosion and other NPS (non-point source) pollution problems. Working closely with landowners and road associations, the YCC hauls rip-rap to stabilize raw banks, rebuilds paths and steps to eliminate runoff into the lake, installs box culverts and rubber razor bars to prevent rain water from washing down driveways, and creates and plants buffer strips near the edge of the lake.

Justin wishes to emphasize that the YCC was set up to handle erosion problems anywhere in the large Thompson Lake watershed, not just on properties bordering the lake.

For a good look at just what the YCC can accomplish in one summer, we urge you to go to the TLEA website at www.thompsonlake.org, and click on YCC. To contact Justin for more information or to ask how you can get on his list, email him at thompsonlakeycc@gmail.com.

He promises to put aside his books and get back to you quickly.



The 2012 YCC crew lining up for work.

DAM COMMITTEE CONTINUES WORK TO UPGRADE OXFORD DAM

According to Scott Bernardy, who heads TLEA's Environmental Committee, the advent of winter has meant a slowing down of meetings of the Dam Committee which makes recommendations for improvements to the dam in Oxford village that controls Thompson Lake's water level. While the dam itself is owned by the town of Oxford, the Committee is composed of members from towns surrounding the lake. In August, as reported earlier, the town held a public hearing concerning water level standards recommended by TLEA. Subsequently the Town of Oxford endorsed those recommendations and successfully implemented the winter water level.

The town has an ongoing list of repairs needed to get the center gate of the dam functioning. It hopes to get these repairs made sometime this year.

TLEA TO HIRE COURTESY BOAT INSPECTORS

Looking for a summer job? Each spring TLEA hires Courtesy Boat Inspectors (CBIs) to monitor boat launches at three sites on Thompson Lake. Work hours are on weekends and holidays. Boat traffic is usually highest on Saturday and Sunday, so inspectors must be able to work at least one weekend day a week.

The best way to combat invasive plants in Maine waterways is to prevent them from entering in the first place. Inspectors talk with and educate boaters to do their own inspections of their watercraft for invasive aquatic plants as they launch and remove their boats from the lake. Reliability, honesty, and strong communication skills are a must for all CBIs. Inspectors generally start at \$8 per hour.

To learn more about becoming a Courtesy Boat Inspector on Thompson Lake, watch the CBI training video by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection at <http://www.maine.gov/dep/water/invasives/inspect.html> and call TLEA Director Dan Porter at 978-380-0672 or email him at danpor226@gmail.com.

WATER QUALITY REPORT FOR 2012 SHOWS COMPLICATED PATTERNS

[Editor's note: This is a condensed version of Scott's report. Scott's full report will be included on TLEA's website.]

by Scott Williams, Aquatic Biologist

We are just beginning to understand the impact on the Maine lakes of the 2012 weather, with its record-breaking early ice out, record-breaking high air temperatures in the spring and summer, and a severe 48-hour storm in early June in which nearly 8 inches of rain fell. Last summer several Maine lakes with no previous history of water quality problems experienced severe algal blooms. One such lake was nearby Lake Auburn, which also experienced a severe lake trout kill. The early loss of winter ice, runoff in the watershed from the June storm, and record high lake water temperatures combined to create ideal conditions for algae growth in lakes.

While the effects on Thompson were less dramatic, Thompson also appears to have experienced negative effects from the 2012 weather. One of the attributes that we value most about this lake is its exceptionally clear water. The season started off on a positive note, with water clarity readings in May in the 9 to 9.5 meter range (about 20 feet). But after the early June storm, the distance we were able to see down into the lake plummeted. Certified Volunteer Lake Monitor Bob Tracy reported a reading of only 5.3 meters (about 17 feet) four days after the early June storm. In the next several weeks, Thompson gradually became clearer, with the best readings of the summer recorded on September 29 (9.6 meters).

A second likely impact of the unusual 2012 weather concerns the late summer dissolved oxygen levels in the deepest area of the lake, which appear to have been the lowest on record for Thompson. Two related reasons influenced this phenomenon: the early loss of ice in March 2012, and the extremely high spring air and water temperatures. These factors contributed to a longer than normal period of thermal stratification (water temperature layers) in the lake, during which the deep, colder water was isolated from the atmosphere. The longer the period of stratification, the more likely it is that oxygen will become depleted, as bacteria in the water decompose decaying algae and other organic matter. Coldwater fish like trout and salmon depend both on cold water temperatures in the deep area

of the lake and on abundant concentration of oxygen. Thompson Lake's coldwater fishery habitat was marginally compromised in the late summer and early fall.

Although phosphorus and algae concentrations in the lake during the 5-month monitoring period were closer to the historical average for Thompson, one particular bluegreen alga, *Gloeotrichia echinulata*, was observed in summer months at higher concentrations than have been observed in recent years. This alga is the subject of considerable interest and research in New England lakes.

Even though Thompson exhibited signs of stress in 2012, it remained one of Maine's clearest, ranking in the top 7 percent of Maine lakes monitored last summer. This is due in no small part to the longstanding efforts of TLEA to protect this valuable resource. Nevertheless, climate change poses new threats to our lakes that we are still in the early stages of recognizing and understanding. A comprehensive lake water quality monitoring plan is a fundamental component of the long-term strategy to make sure Thompson remains one of Maine's clearest and cleanest.



Paul and Kathy Cain's new sugar shack on Black Island Lane. Kathy took the photo and wrote the caption just after the recent election of Pope Francis.

**POLAND AND OXFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT
AND SHERIFF'S OFFICERS
RESCUE MAN TRAPPED ON ICE NEAR FERNWOOD**

On April 1, the Lewiston Sun Journal published a front-page story written by Douglas McIntire outlining details of the rescue of an ice fisherman from Thompson Lake the day before. The man's name was not identified in time to be included in these pages. Apparently the man was returning in the dark from his position on the ice some 1500 feet out from Camp Fernwood when he tripped on a pressure ridge in the ice. According to Poland Fire Chief Mark Bosse, the man apparently hit his head when he fell and became wedged in the water between patches of ice, unable to free himself.

Fortunately, the caretaker for Camp Fernwood heard the man shouting and alerted rescue personnel. About 25 responders were involved. Speed and ice safety were both concerns because of the danger of hypothermia. The rescue workers used rope lines and put on cold weather gear called "Gumby suits." The Maine Warden's Service called in an airboat to assist moving the fisherman to the shore. An ambulance then took him to Poland Regional High School for warming before he was airlifted by Life Flight to Central Maine Medical Center.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Raffle Winner: While we can't announce the winner of TLEA's annual ice out contest, we do have a winner of this year's membership contest, a drawing of the names of all those who sent in their membership dues by February 1. The prize, one of our great Thompson Lake throws, goes to Bonnie Eletz. Congratulations, Bonnie!

Membership in 2012 at All-Time High: Membership Chair Marcia Pottle drew a big round of applause at a recent Directors meeting when she announced that TLEA's final membership figure for 2012 was 550, an all-time high. This is 10 members more than we've ever had before. The goal remains 600.



A throng of Redpolls lining up on Sue Ellis's railing for a winter breakfast. The Common Redpoll, slightly larger than a Goldfinch, is also related to the Pine Grosbeak and other finches.

MAINE LAWMAKERS CONSIDER BANNING LEAD SINKERS

Maine's Congress of Lake Associations (COLA) has just alerted its members to current bills that should be of interest to those of us around the lake. One such piece of legislation, LD 730, would make it illegal to sell or use lead sinkers and jigs weighing one ounce or less and measuring 2 ½ inches or less in length. Maine already bans the use of smaller lead sinkers. The main reason for this bill is that lead poisoning is the leading cause of mortality in loons. According to COLA, "One quarter of all loon bodies recovered from Maine lakes over the last 25 years show that death was caused by lead poisoning."

This bill has just been reviewed by the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. COLA is urging concerned individuals to express our opinions, one way or the other, to state legislators. For legislators' contact information, check the COLA website at www.mainecola.org. To read the text of the lead sinker bill, as well as other lake-related proposals, go to <http://www.maine.gov/legis.house/jt.com/ifw/htm>.

THE 2013 MILFOIL SUMMIT

Despite a somewhat ominous weather forecast, the 14th annual Milfoil Summit was convened on schedule at the Lewiston-Auburn campus of the University of Southern Maine on March 1, with Scott Bernardy, Kathy Cain, and Bob Tracy representing TLEA. The meeting was organized and chaired by Peter Lowell, Executive Director of the Lakes Environmental Association (LEA). In his brief opening remarks Peter introduced Maggie Shannon, long-time director of COLA who will retire from that position this coming June. Henceforth the organization will be known as “Congress,” not “Council”... of Maine Lake Associations, thereby retaining its acronym of COLA.

Maggie introduced keynote speaker State Senator Thomas Saviello, former Chairman of the Senate committee on Environment and Natural Resources. Saviello half-jokingly congratulated himself on having done his job well and being able to stay out of the press. He reported that his committee conducted nine days of hearings on a variety of bills, a feat unequaled since 1980. He remarked that given the present tight state resources, “there is no money” this year for new projects. Serving also as a selectman for the town of Wilton, Saviello is doubly concerned because of the consequent impact on local property taxes.

Next, John McPhedran, a biologist with Maine DEP, reported that from 2002 to 2012 the state had realized a total of \$12,199,077 from boat sticker sales. DEP received \$7,319,446 of that money while Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IF&W) received \$4,879,630. It is from its share of those funds that DEP supports the Courtesy Boat Inspectors (CBI) program, which in 2012 totaled \$240,000. McPhedran gave updates on efforts to deal with invasive plant infestations of hydrilla in Pickerel Pond and Damariscotta Lake as well as Eurasian milfoil in Salmon and Pleasant Hill Ponds. He mentioned that DEP has not yet ruled out the possible use of herbicides in the Pine Point section of Thompson Lake. State-wide, CBI inspectors worked 41,454 man-hours and determined that 93% of boaters had the required milfoil/registration stickers. Maggie stated that a CBI inspector’s work is valued at \$16+ per hour.

IF&W Game Warden Mike Pierre reported that Maine wardens checked compliance with boating rules and regulations on more than 21,000 watercraft, and issued over 400 summonses for infractions. He also suggested that although non-motorized craft such as kayaks and canoes do not require registration, they should bear some identifying information. They often slip their moorings and can be difficult to return to their owners,

The morning session was concluded by a viewing of several exhibits previously prepared by some state and non-profit agencies. Later, CBI coordinators attended mandatory training while MVLMP/IPP director Roberta Hill demonstrated to another group of volunteers how to lead a plant patrol paddle.

MILFOIL ERADICATION EFFORTS CONTINUE

Otisfield's McVety brothers have made milfoil eradication their family business ever since TLEA started its big anti-milfoil efforts back in 2008. Veteran diver Rob McVety has been running the show for all these years, but, because Rob is now in his last year of dental school, he will probably be moving on to a quite different career, and this season may be his last. Fortunately, his younger brother Matt has gained considerable experience on the Hippobottamus, and in all likelihood will succeed him next year.

Plans for the summer are to continue in the same direction established over the last two years. Last summer the Hippo crew reported good success at controlling milfoil in Otisfield, Edwards, and Serenity Coves, where this summer they expect to spend only a few days hand pulling isolated plants. At Hancock Cove, according to Scott Bernardy, they will probably need to place only half of the 25 tarps used last summer. By next year, Scott expects that Hancock will be in a "maintenance mode."

This summer the milfoil crew will divide most of its time working in the Pine Point area and also conducting underwater surveys of the shallower parts of the lake with histories of milfoil infestation. They also plan to survey as much as half of the lake shoreline, searching for any signs of new invasive aquatic plants.

The Hippo will see less activity with Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting (DASH) and more time as a platform for placing and moving tarps. At present TLEA has over one hundred 10 x 30 foot tarps in the Pine Point area and hopes to increase that number this season. It is estimated that 8 to 10 acres of the Pine Point area are infested with milfoil. Scott expects Maine's Department of Environmental Protection to visit and make recommendations in the near future to help TLEA formulate a long-term Pine Point strategy.



An old post card of Otisfield Cove recently discovered by Ethel Turner features Blake Island, Sand Island and the Cape.

Visit our website at:
www.thompsonlake.org

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