

The THOMPSON LAKE

OBSERVER

Summer 2013

Issue No. 170



Mother Goose shows off Babies at Casco Marina. (Photo, Jenni Null)

ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, August 3

9 A. M.

Oxford Recreation Center

(See pg. 3)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In preparing to write this message, I realized that I have become complacent. I used to thrill every time I drove down the driveway and spotted the sparkling Thompson Lake water. I waited for sunset and stood on the porch observing the colors and their reflection in the water. Now, after learning more, I still love our beautiful lake, but I am resolving to be more observant; to see, smell, hear and savor all that Thompson Lake has to offer because things can change and they can change quickly.

At a recent director's meeting, Scott Williams explained the circumstances surrounding the fish kill that occurred in Lake Auburn last summer. His talk was both fascinating and horrifying, especially because Lake Auburn is so much like Thompson. Both lakes have similar depths and exceptional water clarity. The 2012 warm winter and the massive June rainfall may have precipitated the sequence of events that resulted in algae blooms and large numbers of trout suffocating at the bottom of the lake. The sudden change in water quality in such a clean lake surprised everyone. When asked what we could do to prevent a similar occurrence here, Scott replied, "Keep doing what you are doing." That is: protecting the lake and its watershed.

TLEA works hard to protect our beautiful lake, and I resolve to take the time to observe and savor it. I hope to see all of you on your porches and decks watching the sunset too!

Marcia Matuska, Co-President

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Editor's Note: Sue Ellis, who has served TLEA as Co-President for many years, stepped down from that position at the May meeting of the Board of Directors. Fortunately, she has agreed stay on the board. The Directors, acting in accordance with Association by-laws, immediately elected Marcia Matuska to replace her. The Association is grateful to have the continued commitment of both Marcia and Sue.

ANNUAL MEETING SLATED FOR AUGUST 3

TLEA's annual meeting will take place at 9 a.m. on Saturday, August 3, at the Oxford Recreation Center. This is the green building located at the corner of King Street and State Route 121 in Oxford.

The main official business of the annual meeting, as always, is to elect and re-elect directors and officers. This year the nominating committee will present two new candidates for director, Joy Lowe and Jade Doyle.

The meeting will feature two main speakers. Heather True, Project Manager at the Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District, will discuss the goals and objectives of the new Thompson Lake Watershed Protection Plan, which updates a similar plan written in 2000. The updated document presents five-year strategies for solving polluted runoff problems in the lake's watershed. Heather is currently working with TLEA on a grant proposal to Maine Department of Environmental Protection to fund some of the proposed solutions.

The other principal speaker will be Francis Brautigam, a regional fishery biologist with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Brautigam, who has a 28-year career in natural resource management, supervises freshwater fisheries management programs in the Sebago Lakes region.

Members will have a chance to purchase some of TLEA's popular lake-related items, including tee shirts, tote bags, and hats. There will be a few nifty new items for sale: small wood cutting boards with a loon logo, jigsaw puzzles featuring a Thompson Lake scene, and an illuminated glass craft block. The last item cannot be easily described.

TLEA is pleased and honored to announce the special sale at the annual meeting of Joel Dulberg's video, made for TLEA, and titled "Reflections of Maine." At the last meeting of the directors, Joel treated us to a preview of this work, which features haunting images of the seasons and waters of Maine. This was a special experience for all of us and a stirring reminder of how fortunate we are to be in Maine.

Then we'll also have a raffle, which Kathy Cain promises will include one of her framed photographs and probably one of the new cutting boards. Don't miss your chance!

YCC STARTS OFF BUSY SEASON

The Youth Conservation Corps is up and running again. Justin St. John is once more heading up the group in his position as Coordinator/Crew Chief. This season his crew includes veterans Drew McLaren and Moriah Lee along with first-year crew member Aaron Tremblay.

The YCC is looking for additional erosion control projects to complete within the watershed this summer. Justin wishes to remind all residents in the area that the YCC services are not limited to those who live directly on the lake but are open to all those living in the large Thompson Lake watershed. If you're not sure if you qualify, a fast phone call to Justin at the TLEA office, 539-4535, will answer that question.

The crew's skills reach far beyond the shoreline. They can work on everything from drip-line trenches to filtration steps. If you're not sure if you need one of these things, or possibly a razor bar to divert water from your driveway or a buffer strip for the front of your lot, give Justin a call. His advice is free. He can also be reached at thompsonlakeycc@gmail.com.



Left to right: Justin St. John, Aaron Tremblay, Moriah Lee, and Drew McLaren. (Photo Jean Hankins)

MILFOIL CREW SHIFTS SUMMER'S FOCUS

This is TLEA's fifth year of active battle against the insidious milfoil on Thompson Lake. Once again Rob McVety serves as Captain of the USS Hippobottomus, with Matt McVety as Executive Officer. Over the past four seasons, they've learned and accomplished a great deal, but much remains to be done, especially in the Pine Point area. This year the focus has shifted. According to Scott Bernardy, who supervises the milfoil program, this summer's main strategy will be placed on mopping up colonies of plants at Edwards, Otisfield, and Hancock Coves. This summer, while TLEA and Maine's Department of Environmental Protection study other possibilities for controlling the milfoil in the heavily-infested Pine Point area, that section will be absorb less of the crew's time. Meanwhile, the DEP will map the milfoil in Pine Point with the help of GPS devices.

One reason for the shift is increased equipment expenses. TLEA's pontoon boat, The Hippobottomus, is still quite lake-worthy but showing some signs of age. This summer its captain's chair will be replaced, and the dredge pump will be overhauled.

There are other changes in focus this time around. First, the crew intends to survey more of the shoreline this summer. Also, the Pismo Beach area will receive some attention. The Hippo crew will place tarps there and also do some hand pulling.

Although it may seem that we'll be fighting milfoil forever, Scott Bernardy gives us at least one thing to cheer about: "Serenity Cove has been milfoil free for two years in a row." Good news indeed!

NOTES ON MAINE'S TICKS

Maine is famous for its largest animal, the moose, but those of us who enjoy the outdoors seem to encounter more frequently one of its smallest – the deer tick. While we may know by now that the deer tick can carry Lyme disease, did you know Maine has 14 species of ticks? And you probably didn't know that the Maine Medical Center in Portland has been studying ticks for 25 years in its Vector-borne Disease Laboratory. According to Tom Ferent's Maine Lakes News Digest, the lab recently sponsored an unusual tick-hunting expedition. The lab sent two hikers off clothed in shin-high boots, long socks, and "blanket-sized capes made out of broomsticks and corduroy fabric." The pair carried tweezers and rubbing alcohol as well. Results from this ongoing research could lead to recommendations for ways to control ticks and improve public health.



Jennifer Null, Sam Donatelli

As the photos on this page show, the Courtesy Boat Inspectors are already a familiar sight at boat launch sites at Pismo Beach and the Landing in Oxford and the Marina in Casco. Weather permitting, on weekends and holidays from Memorial Day through Labor Day, these four individuals may be seen checking boats entering and leaving Thompson. They also hand out informational flyers and stickers that can be attached to boat trailers as a visual reminder to boaters to check their equipment. The inspectors' job, as most TLEA members now know, is to make sure no invasive plants are attached to watercraft or trailers entering or leaving the lake.



Dave McVety, Jacob Leeman

Jennifer Null and Dave McVety are both old hands at this job. Jenni, who is also good with a camera, took the Mother Goose photo on the cover. This summer TLEA has two new CBIers: Sam Donatelli is a junior at Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School, while Jacob Leeman has just graduated and will soon be a student at the University of Maine at Machias. The CBI program is funded through a combination of TLEA contributions and Maine Milfoil Sticker sales. TLEA director Dan Porter is supervisor.

THE CHALLENGE OF DETERMINING ICE OUT

At a recent TLEA directors meeting, someone proposed we start keeping track not just of ice out, but also ice in. Although most of those present agreed it was a good idea, Co-President Kathy Cain responded with what sounded like a most uncharacteristic groan. “Figuring out when ice was out was bad enough,” she said.

Remember what a strange cold spring it was, a far cry from the record setting warm trend of 2012? As the middle of April approached and the lake was becoming a little less solid, Kathy enlisted the help of director Pete Laverdiere and a number of other spotters, including Anne Miller at the Heath and Joannie Jordan on Megquier Island. As folks driving around the lake were reporting only open water, these other observers confronted plenty of solid ice. On the morning of April 14, for instance, Anne Miller said the Heath was ice free. But Kathy looked out from Black Island and saw “a ton of ice in front of my house” and, even though she could see small open areas, there was still not enough clear water for watercraft to pass through.

Still deliberating, on the morning and early afternoon of April 15, three of the observers drove down to Lunt Point and found a still-solid black ice sheet – but it was thinner. It seemed to be the last ice obstacle in the entire lake. At 7:30 p.m. the three judges took another trip to the same vantage point and this time – hallelujah! – the ice was gone. And so we had ice out.

As luck would have it, April 15 has established itself as the all time favorite guess for the ice out date. According to director Marcia Pottle, who keeps track of such things, there were 6 guesses this year for April 15, out of 98 total. The winners who divided the pot were Paul and Kathy Cain, Daniel Cunningham, Philip Dausiewicz, Richard Hawes, Pete and Bev Laverdiere, and Gil Poliquin. Congratulations to all!



A solitary lady slipper graces the lake near Black Island. (Photo Kathy Cain)

COLA MEETING REPORT

[Pixie Williams, who is a local botanist and former chair of the Otisfield Conservation Committee, contributed this report of the June COLA meeting.]

The 2013 COLA Conference was outstanding! We were introduced to the new President, Steve Kahl, and learned that COLA had rescued the “Lake Smart Program,” which outgoing president Maggie Shannon will manage. The organization, once Coalition of Lakes Associations, has been renamed Maine Lakes Society, and the collection of lake association members will be called the Council of Lake Associations (COLA). Individuals will be encouraged to join as Friends, and the two groups will comprise the Maine Lakes Society.

Both Dan Buckley and Ray Bouchard spoke of the impact climate change will have on lakes. Warmer temperatures will bring warmer water, longer ice-free summer periods, more algae, less dissolved oxygen, and a shift toward warm water species, particularly such fish as perch and bass. Greater atmospheric warmth will produce more severe storms and possible scouring of the lake bottoms and shorelines, thus producing more phosphorus, more algae, and more plant growth. The importance of recording “ice in” data was stressed. This is defined as the period when ice extends from shore to shore with no open ribbon along the shoreline.

During the lunch hour, two individuals, including TLEA’s Barry Jorve, discussed ways to improve lake association membership.

The afternoon session featured several workshops. The talk by Dr. Jim Haney from UNH was startling. According to his research, warmer water temperatures produce an increase in cyanobacteria, which emit neurotoxins. A link has been discovered between neuro-disease (such as ALS and Parkinson’s) and these neurotoxins. His final suggestion was to avoid drinking lake water. He noted that boiling and heat actually increase the intensity of the toxin.



Nesting Woodcock. (Photo Sue Ellis)

WEEKLY WALKS GET ORGANIZED

Tired of walking on the same piece of tar? Sick of talking only to yourself, your dog, and your spouse? Looking for a bit of unplanned adventure? Then maybe you should consider joining a newly formed group, the Weekly Walkers, at one of their Friday morning hour-long walks. No registration, no fee, no signed permission slips needed. Just show up at the Otisfield Community Hall at 292 State Route 121, at 8:30 a.m. on Friday mornings to carpool to the starting point.

According to Jean Hankins, this group is one of the spinoffs of the Otisfield Community Outreach initiative started a year or two ago. The walks, each of which should take about an hour, are all easy to moderate, with no mountains involved, and will be mostly off-pavement. Some will cross private property (with permission). Most will be in Otisfield. Walkers should bring water, insect repellent, sunscreen, and raincoats when called for. For more information, email Jean at jeanhankins@myfairpoint.net. All are welcome.

Kathy Cain's Oatmeal Pancakes (makes 10-12 small ones)

2 cups old fashioned, oatmeal, uncooked
2 Tbsp. brown sugar
1 ½ tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp. salt
1 cup low fat yogurt
1 cup apple juice or apple cider
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
½ tsp. vanilla

Mix oats, sugar, powder, soda, and salt in food processor or hand grinder until mixture is finely ground. Transfer to large bowl. Stir in yogurt, juice, eggs, vanilla until well blended. Let stand 5 minutes before cooking on skillet. Tip: These pancakes freeze very well!

MAINE TROUT PROJECT SEEKS VOLUNTEER ANGLERS

For the past three years, a collaborative effort by Trout Unlimited, the Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and Maine Audubon Society has been gathering data concerning trout populations in ponds in remote parts of Maine. Their goal is to identify previously undocumented wild brook trout populations. So far, volunteers have discovered such populations in 35 of the 161 ponds surveyed. More help is needed to continue the search: still 239 ponds left to go! To volunteer, or for more information, contact one of the organizations listed above.

SEVERAL AREA TOWNS PASS RESOLUTIONS ON TAR SANDS

Several area towns, including Waterford, Bridgton, and Harrison, have taken steps this spring to ensure that tar sands oil is not allowed to pass through pipelines in their region. In June Bridgton voters, by a 288 to 167 margin, passed a resolution opposing any future plans to transport the diluted bitumen form of crude oil through the Portland Pipeline. Harrison voters reacted even more strongly and voted for a similar resolution by a nearly three-to-one margin. In late May the Otisfield Conservation Committee sponsored a public forum on the issue, allowing each side to present information and arguments. The forum was well attended. Those opposing the pipeline initiative emphasized the critical importance of the Crooked River to the environmental and economic wellbeing of the town and area. The Portland Pipeline crosses the Crooked River and forms the boundary between Otisfield and Harrison. The tar sands question will appear as a warrant article at the annual Otisfield Town Meeting on June 29.

CHARITABLE TRUSTS REWARD TLEA WITH VALUED GRANTS

Our grantwriter-in-chief, Stan Tetenman, has been hard at work inviting a number of charitable foundations to contribute grants to help continue TLEA's important programs. Stan reports that the following grants have been received in 2013. Of the four, he points out that officials at the Ferguson Foundation, who also gave us a grant in 2012, were so impressed with Justin St. John's final YCC report that they urged us to apply again this year. A large thank you to all four contributors. TLEA greatly appreciates this vote of confidence!

Nestle's Water North America, Inc. (Poland Spring) - \$1000 for water testing

Dead River Company - \$500 for YCC

Oxford Casino - \$500 for water testing

Leonard C. and Mildred F. Ferguson Foundation - \$4000 for water testing,
YCC, and milfoil mitigation.

SCOTT WILLIAMS EXPLAINS FISH KILL AT LAKE AUBURN

At the May 17 TLEA Directors meeting, Scott Williams of Maine Volunteer Lake Monitoring gave a detailed explanation of last summer's fish kill on Lake Auburn. His hour-long summary, filled with graphs and statistics, left the assembled group shaking their heads with the realization that yes, because our climate is getting warmer, this can happen again, and yes, it can happen to Thompson.

Lake Auburn historically is one of the cleanest in Maine, according to Scott, and its watershed is one of the best protected. A number of factors contributed to what Scott called a "perfect storm" in the late summer of 2012. First, unusually warm spring temperatures caused the ice to melt very early. This in turn caused an unusual rise in the surface lake water temperature. The 2012 spring season brought sunny days, with air temperatures far above normal. This condition warmed the lake water even more. Nevertheless, until June, Lake Auburn's water measured well, even clearer than normal. Then a severe storm in early June dropped 8 inches of rain, sending a heavy load of phosphorus-laden runoff into the lake, fertilizing the lake and causing an increase in algae, especially gloeotrichia. Gloeotrichia, which was new to Lake Auburn, is a form of algae that resembles blue-green tapioca.

Trout depend on cold water, typically found in the lowest third layer of the lake. But by early September, in Lake Auburn this lowest level, called the hypolimnion, had lost much of its oxygen content. The basic cause of the oxygen depletion was the sudden increase in the oxygen-depleting algae Gloeotrichia, which, unlike other algae, sinks to the bottom of the lake where it combines with phosphorus. The result was that the trout, who couldn't survive in the warmer shallow water, also couldn't survive at cooler, deeper water levels because of low oxygen and high phosphorus levels. It was feared that the entire population of Lake Auburn's lake trout, some as much as 15 years old, perished.

Could it happen again? Scott says yes. Could it happen on Thompson? Without much doubt. But it will probably take another coincidence of early ice out, unusually warm air, and a severe erosion-producing event. Scientists like Scott Williams are continuing to study the intricate pattern of just what happened last summer on Lake Auburn. Thompson Lake differs from Auburn in at least two ways, and these may be important. First, it's twice as big. Second, because its watershed is far less developed, Thompson may be less susceptible to the sudden and dramatic increase in water temperatures that hit Auburn. Let's hope so, but let's be forewarned.

Visit our website at:
www.thompsonlake.org

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