

The THOMPSON LAKE

OBSERVER

Winter 2007

Issue No. 146



*Eternal Vigilance - At least until Thompson freezes over.
Holly Troy caught this eagle near Jillson's Beach, Otisfield Cove,
in early December.*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Near the end of November I was getting in one last kayak trip on the lake when I came across a beaver lodge. Its exact location will remain a secret until summer when the beavers can be dis-lodged. I was informed that two summers ago someone trapped and moved the beavers, but the trees in the photos I took look as though they're freshly cut. Last summer I did encounter the beavers while kayaking up to what I thought was a log. Mr. Beaver came over and slapped the water with his trail, then came up closer to the kayak and slapped again, perhaps a warning to get out of his territory.

Now I'm wondering if those trappers caught mom and dad and the kids are still out there working. Or maybe they got the kids and it's the parents that are working away. I find it hard to believe that the lodge I saw is two years old, because I kayak along that shore often. Someone told me that beavers should not be relocated much after the summer, because they need time to rebuild a home and get ready for producing little ones in the spring. Anyhow, if you're out on the lake this winter and see fresh cut stumps along the shore, you may be seeing beaver activity.

So, my president's message this time is ... Does everyone know the rules about cutting trees along the shoreland? And the other message is that, like you, those beavers had good taste to choose Thompson Lake for their home. Have a good winter.

Sue Ellis, Co-President



Beaver home, fall 2006 (Photo, Sue Ellis)

PRELIMINARY WATER QUALITY REPORT

Scott Williams, Aquatic Biologist

We won't soon forget the summer of 2006! For most of Maine it was one of the wettest on record, with the rainy summer following an unusual winter with very little snow. This meant we had virtually no spring runoff.

The weather plays a big role in influencing the indicators used to assess lake water quality. But individual lakes often respond quite differently to the effects of weather. Lake biologists often say that each lake has its own unique personality. That is largely because there is such a wide range of variation in the natural factors shaping and influencing that personality. Those factors include the shape, depth, and orientation of the lake basin (the "bowl" that holds the water), the size of the watershed, the topography and geochemistry of the soils, the distribution of vegetation, the location of wetlands, and the hydrology of tributaries that carry water from the watershed to the lake. And there is much more.

Then there is the human factor, which can have a bearing on nearly all the natural factors listed above. The extent to which the watershed is developed, or altered from its natural state by people, the location of developed areas, the ways in which roads change the natural flow of water, and the overall amount of the watershed that is developed can have a strong influence on the quality of a lake.

Of course, there is also the question of global climate change, and the potential for that phenomenon to influence all of the above! All this variability helps explain the sometimes dramatic differences between lakes located near each other, and it helps us understand why the indicators used to assess lake quality may vary from season to season and year to year.

The indicators used to measure Thompson's health include a measurement of water clarity, the concentration of the nutrient phosphorus in the water, the level of algae growing in the lake, and the concentration of dissolved oxygen in the deepest area of the lake during the summer months.

With all the rain that fell during the summer of 2006, it was certainly possible that Thompson's water quality could have been notably better or worse than during previous years. Interestingly, however, **it appears to have been just about average**. When compared to the summary of water quality indicators for the lake, the 2006 numbers were quite close, or slightly improved. Overall, the

concentration of algae in Thompson was somewhat lower (better) than the long-term average.

Every few years the area of the lake known as “the Heath” is also assessed. Even though this shallow area is connected to Thompson, the conditions are distinctly different from those in the open lake. In 2006 the concentration of algae and of the nutrient phosphorus in the Heath were approximately twice as high as in the deep area of Thompson. This was not unexpected, because the Heath’s shallow, warm water provides nearly ideal growing conditions for all forms of plants, including variable leaf milfoil, which grows through much of this part of the lake. More detailed information about the 2006 monitoring of the water quality of Thompson Lake will be available from TLEA in early 2007. By that time, information for many additional Maine lakes will be in hand, allowing us to view the big picture. By then we will also have a better sense of which Maine lakes looked better or worse than their historical averages, and which stayed about the same, as Thompson appears to have.

TLEA has supported comprehensive monitoring of the water quality of Thompson Lake for nearly three decades. The information gathered through this process has been vital to our efforts to understand and protect one of Maine’s most clear and healthy lakes. Many thanks to certified volunteer lake monitor Bob Tracy, who helped gather some of the water quality data for 2006.

MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE NOW DUE

After a wet summer and an unseasonably warm fall, now in mid-December winter has finally arrived, bringing snow and chilly winds. This reminds us at TLEA that it’s time to get ready for a new year and the challenge of managing all next summer’s activities.

Please do your part by sending in your 2007 donation and by filling out the enclosed envelope. That envelope goes into the membership file and serves to confirm your mailing address and other information. Because TLEA is a 501-c-3 tax-exempt organization, your donations are tax-deductible.

Many thanks! We need each and every one of you as members.

Marcia Pottle, for the Membership Committee

TLEA SETTLES INTO ROBINSON'S SPACE

TLEA's move late last summer out of the Oxford schoolhouse that served us so well for so long into shared office space in the Robinson Manufacturing Company building worked out much like the ordinary family's move from one house to another. The actual moving process went faster than expected, although we found, of course, that we'd accumulated more stuff than possible. It took a bit longer to settle in than we'd thought it would, and, because we're now renting space at the Robinson mill, there were some unanticipated adjustments. But, six months later, TLEA's officers and directors are happy to be where we are.



TLEA's new location. (Bob Tracy, Photo)

And, according to Robinson president John Robinson, the Oxford company is happy to have us settled there. He sees TLEA as “a group that does a lot of positive, environmentally friendly things for Thompson Lake, and Robinson and Thompson Lake obviously have a close connection.” Robinson Manufacturing ended its mill operations in May 2004, but the company continues to operate the fabric store, a marina, and rental storage space. Robinson anticipates further development of the mill buildings, with condominiums and shops a future possibility.

Although TLEA's space is configured differently than it was at the Stanton School, at the Robinson complex we have the room we need, and outside parking is ample. In addition to some storage space for YCC's bulky items, Robinson has

given us the exclusive use of two good-sized office rooms. One of these we're using for storage; the other, with telephone, computers, and files, is our real office.

We share the use of one big room with Robinson. This room contains mostly our long table, used for directors meetings. With our blessing, Robinson is using this space as a place to conduct the craft classes they operate through the Oxford Mill-End Store. These craft classes, which have been developed in the last few years, consist of instruction in such areas as rugbraiding, hooking, and quilting. Some classes meet for only one session; others last for six weeks. According to Kathy Corbett, a Robinson spokesperson, the classes have become increasingly popular in the last few years and attract students from as far away as Fort Kent and Vermont. For more information on these activities, contact the Oxford Mill-End Store, 281 King St., Oxford, telephone 539-4451.

To find us, look for TLEA's loon sign located just after the Mill-End store, as shown in the photo on page 5. Turn right into the large parking lot and head for the Robinson Manufacturing Company's main office door.

TLEA OFFERS \$500 BOOK ALLOWANCE

Once again, TLEA is pleased to offer a book allowance of \$500 to two qualified high school seniors. Our goal is to help college students purchase textbooks at whatever college they choose. These book allowances will go to two students interested in environmental studies or related fields during the 2007-2008 college year.

To qualify, a student should write a letter of application reflecting 1) the student's goals in college with a focus on environmental studies; and 2) the student's goals in their future life related to protecting the environment.

The application letter should be accompanied by an application form (available from area high school guidance offices or from TLEA), and a grade transcript. This three-part application form should be postmarked by **April 30, 2007**, and mailed to:

TLEA Book Allowance Committee
P.O. Box 25
Oxford, ME 04270

For more information, contact the TLEA Office at 539-4535 or Jane Fahey at 744-0318.



Stonehenge at Thompson: Katie and Gracie Tribilcock were the architects responsible for this archaeological display in Otisfield Cove, November, 2006. (Photo Bob Tracy)

‘NOT A PRETTY JOB’ – GETTING RID OF MILFOIL IN OTISFIELD COVE

Getting the Otisfield Cove benthic barriers moved a few feet wasn’t easy. “Not a pretty job,” said Scott Bernardy, who directed the operation one cold, very rainy October morning. But the job got done. Scott explained that for well over three months three large tarps, each covering 1800 square feet, had been resting on top of a large patch of *variable leaf milfoil* in Otisfield Cove, one of the worst milfoil sites on Thompson. The job of Scott and his crew was to move the barriers to an adjacent area where they’ll winter over. With divers Scott and Rob McVety in the water, Bob Tracy and Ralph Wallace in support row boats, and two more individuals in kayaks retrieving milfoil fragments from the water, the job was completed in about four hours.

This is the first year TLEA has tried using these large tarps to kill milfoil. Last year the tarps were much smaller, only 100 square feet. These large tarps are currently in place in Edwards Cove and Otisfield Cove. According to Scott, in three months time the tarps have killed 90 to 95% of the milfoil, a testament to the toughness and resilience of this plant. To reach the 100% goal will take some minor changes in how the benthic barriers are used.

In 2007 TLEA is planning to expand the use of benthic barriers to other parts of the lake, but we are still lacking volunteer divers. The volunteers working in canoes and kayaks and providing support on shore have made a difference in battling this invasive plant, and TLEA thanks all those involved. If interested in volunteering in any capacity, please contact Scott at 207-878-5380 or at drbinme@verizon.net.

THREE LATE-HATCHING LOONS APPEAR

The fall issue of the *Observer* reported that no loon chicks had been seen on Thompson this season. Right after that *Observer* appeared, we found out that, in fact, three loon babies made a belated appearance late in July. The chicks were observed by a resident of Fairturn Acres in Oxford. Only one parent was spotted. We hope that the chicks survived, and that they'll return in 2007 to help increase the lake's loon population. Thanks to Holly Troy at the Oxford Post Office for alerting us to this good news.

NEW MAINE LAWS AFFECT ROAD ASSOCIATIONS

As far as we know, no one has ever tried to list all the private road associations in Thompson's watershed. And until recently, we had no notion there was such a group as the Maine Alliance of Road Associations. Thanks to an article in the current newsletter of the Congress of Lake Associations (COLA), now we know more and are passing this information along. The Maine Alliance of Road Associations is an online community and resource center built to serve Mainers who either belong to road associations or wish to form them. Privately funded, its mission is to help Mainers who maintain private roads achieve their basic goal—providing access—while also protecting the environment and preserving community:

www.maineroads.org

The 1998 Maine legislature attempted to address the problem of how to enable road associations to collect in court for repair and maintenance costs—not just chronic erosion sites; all maintenance costs. They passed a law setting forth a brief process by which associations, if they follow it, can go to court to collect from non-payers. It's Maine statute Title 23, Chapter 305, Subchapter 2, sections 3101 to 3105. To read it, go to the site listed above, click on "Resources," and follow the link.

In 2006, the legislature amended this law. The new regulation requires that assessments for maintaining private ways and bridges be proportionate to the assessed valuation of properties owned by users of the said private way or bridge. This bill passed without dispute, and it remains to be seen if attempts to repeal or amend it will be forthcoming this session.

MAPPING THE MILFOIL ON THOMPSON

Volunteers patrolling Thompson Lake to identify the extent of *variable leaf milfoil* (*VLM*) spotted some changes this year, thanks to the dedication of 18 volunteers patrolling the lake and mapping any locations where the weed was spotted. We also had help of botanist Pixie Williams of Otisfield, who did a complete survey of the Heath, an area heavily infested with VLM.

The volunteers made both good and not-so-good findings. In 2006 they discovered that a small area of VLM, measuring about 100 square feet, in Otisfield Cove near Sucker Brook had completely disappeared without any human involvement. But two new areas were found. The first is at the very north end of the lake near Robinson Mill; the second is at the south end of Megquier Island. State biologists have confirmed their findings in both places.

The present areas of confirmed VLM on Thompson are: southwest side of Parsons Point by Hancock Association land; Edwards Cove; Otisfield Cove; a small cove south of Wardwell Island; Greeley Cove; Robinson Mill; south end of Megquier Island; and the Heath.

To adequately cover Thompson Lake, we need at least 24 volunteer Lake Shore Monitors. All the volunteers from 2005 returned for 2006, and we also gained an additional 3 new volunteers this year. But we're still short-handed. If interested in becoming a volunteer, **please contact Scott Bernardy at 207-878-5380** or at drbinme@verizon.net.



Hooker Farm, Oxford. (Photo Bob Tracy) Is this Oxford farm, located on State Route 121 and owned by Jim and Linda Hooker, the only working farm remaining in the Thompson Lake Watershed? If you know of any others, let us know!



*Cutting ice at Ohuivo Camp, 1944
(Photo from Lou Tucker's Album, Otisfield Historical Society)*

PASTICE OUT DATES

1902 - April 17	1929 - April 23	1955 - April 17	1981 - March 29
1903 - April 4	1930 - April 14	1956 - May 2	1982 - April 28
1904 - April 30	1931 - April 12	1957 - April 17	1983 - April 10
1905 - April 23	1932 - April 21	1958 - April 19	1984 - April 21
1906 - April 23	1933 - April 24	1959 - April 23	1985 - April 11
1907 - April 30	1934 - April 23	1960 - April 25	1986 - April 12
1908 - April 25	1935 - April 23	1961 - May 1	1987 - April 10
1909 - April 20	1936 - April 13	1962 - April 23	1988 - April 11
1910 - April 5	1937 - April 27	1963 - April 20	1989 - April 28
1911 - April 28	1938 - April 17	1964 - April 27	1990 - April 14
1912 - April 23	1939 - May 6	1965 - April 29	1991 - April 9
1913 - April 18	1940 - May 7	1966 - April 22	1992 - April 10
1914 - April 23	1941 - April 15	1967 - April 28	1993 - April 23
1915 - April 15	1942 - April 18	1968 - April 16	1994 - April 24
1916 - April 19	1943 - April 26	1969 - April 20	1995 - April 13
1917 - April 28	1944 - April 29	1970 - April 28	1996 - April 15
1918 - April 24	1945 - April 3	1971 - May 3	1997 - April 23
1919 - April 12	1946 - April 6	1972 - May 6	1998 - April 9
1920 - April 25	1947 - April 16	1973 - April 20	1999 - April 6
1921 - April 3	1948 - April 9	1974 - April 16	2000 - April 8
1922 - April 17	1949 - April 10	1975 - April 13	2001 - May 1
1923 - April 24	1950 - April 24	1976 - April 16	2002 - April 2
1924 - April 19	1951 - April 10	1977 - April 19	2003 - April 27
1925 - April 10	1952 - April 20	1978 - May 1	2004 - April 19
1926 - May 3	1953 - April 6	1979 - April 23	2005 - April 20
1927 - April 17	1954 - April 20	1980 - April 12	2006 - April 2
1928 - April 21			

ICE OUT CONTEST

50/50 PRIZE

Sponsored by
Thompson Lake Environmental Assoc.

Guess the date of "ice out" on Thompson Lake

Split the Total 50/50 with TLEA
Same dates - split the prize

Final Day for receipt of Guess - March 15, 2007
\$5.00 Each Guess

Send to:

Thompson Lake Environmental Association, P.O. Box 25,
Oxford, ME 04270

Name _____
Address _____
Telephone Number _____
Date(s) _____
_____ dates @ \$5.00ea = \$_____

Visit our website at:
home.gwi.net/~tlea

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OBSERVER

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