

The THOMPSON LAKE

OBSERVER

Winter 2008

Issue No. 150



Arianna Ebacher, age 6, considers whether to waterski or snowboard on the slopes of Silvaqua. (Photo Ros Ebacher)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This time of year you take your excitement wherever you can find it. The other day I was having an exciting time watching the lake freeze. Today as I look out my excitement is watching some ducks sitting on a little patch of ice, trying to stay warm. Winter is certainly upon us. Before the ice came, the resident beaver came to visit me, the one who reportedly is still cutting down trees. And an otter came too. Other exciting wildlife on our beautiful shores showed up last summer when I had a visit from a mother mink and her two babies.

This coming summer TLEA will have a new kind of excitement as it ventures into somewhat uncharted waters in an aggressive effort to fight variable milfoil. Recently our directors voted to acquire a pontoon boat and equip it with the necessary mechanisms to harvest milfoil. Running this operation will be a steering committee to raise funds and direct the divers and other personnel we will need for the summer's work.

Although we've had good success using benthic barriers and divers who have handpulled the milfoil, and although we'll continue these methods in certain areas, the board felt that the magnitude of the infestation required a more aggressive approach. In addition to requesting the four lake towns to contribute at the same level they have in the past, soon we will be doing some major fundraising to cover the costs of operating the milfoil boat. This fundraising will involve both direct appeals to our members and grant proposals to charitable foundations.

We are elated to report that already several individuals have made substantial gifts earmarked for milfoil mitigation. Moose Landing of Naples has endorsed our efforts by donating a second-hand pontoon boat that perfectly fits our needs. TLEA is extremely grateful to those donors whose generosity and confidence have given us a big early boost.

The directors also believe that the Youth Conservation Corps is an important means of combatting a less visible but equally insidious form of lake pollution, nonpoint source pollution. We believe we must continue the work of our Youth Conservation Corps this summer, its seventh year, perhaps on a reduced basis. In the months ahead, please keep in mind the good erosion control work of the past along with the new milfoil eradication efforts. As always, the good will and support of its members are crucial to TLEA.

So exciting days are ahead. With summer in our thoughts, I hope you all have a healthy and happy winter. For my own part, I'm thinking thick ice and lots of snow. Winter's the second best season on the lake.

Sue Ellis, Co-President

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE AT FULL SPEED

TLEA's Environmental Committee, chaired by Scott Bernardy, has completed another productive year, both in its lakeshore monitoring and its milfoil management projects. During this winter the committee hopes to finish the planning necessary to outfit and inaugurate our milfoil harvester in the summer of 2008.

Our all-volunteer lake monitoring program has now been operating for three years. Each volunteer covers approximately one mile of shoreline, some by kayak, canoe, or boat, and some equipped only with masks and snorkels. The prime time to monitor for invasive aquatic plants is July through September. Currently we have 16 volunteers who monitor approximately two-thirds of the lake. In the past year these volunteers have spotted one new area of variable leaf milfoil on the north end of Pine Point in Oxford. We would like to thank all of these indispensable Volunteer Lake Monitors for providing an essential service that helps protect Thompson Lake now and for years to come.

Managing the lake's variable milfoil has also been an important task for the past three years. In an effort to share knowledge about methods of controlling milfoil and other invasive aquatic plants, we have been in contact with three other lake associations with management programs similar to our own. Beginning in the summer of 2008, our primary technique for milfoil control will be the use of a harvester mounted on a pontoon boat with a hired crew of three people. Presently TLEA is organizing a steering committee both to run the program and to help raise funds to support it.

Anyone interested in helping either with the Lakeshore Monitoring Program or the Milfoil Management Program should contact Scott Bernardy at 878-5380.

Words of Wisdom for Winter Months *

January: Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes. -
Henry David Thoreau

February: Who so loves believes the impossible. -
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

March: I've lived in good climate, and it bores the hell out of me.
I like weather rather than climate. -
John Steinbeck

* Thanks to Janet and George, who happen to live in a good climate.



Progress on Parkway. (Photo, Jane Fahey)

TOWN ACTS TO SOLVE ROAD WASH-OUTS

Parkway, a short thoroughfare located between Shore Road and Thompson Lake in the Silvaqua area of Otisfield, is only about a quarter mile long. Even though it may be one of Otisfield's shortest town-maintained roads, foot by foot, it must also be the most expensive. Twice in the past three years, including this year, most of Parkway has washed into Thompson. The cost to the town of Otisfield for repairs this year alone came to \$41,600, a huge unexpected expenditure that had the town scrambling to find the wherewithal.

The devastation of Parkway wrought by this year's Patriot's Day storm was a wake-up call to town officials, who moved quickly to rectify the poor original road design that everyone acknowledges was the basic cause of the erosion problem. Ross Cudlitz, an engineer from the Oxford County Soil and Water Conservation District, was in charge of designing and supervising the remedial work. The contractor was Ben Pratt of Off Road Construction. Also on hand daily to check on progress was Hal Ferguson, Otisfield selectman, who himself lives on Shore

Road. The new work, nearly all completed in the fall, consisted primarily of reconstructing riprap-lined ditches and culverts along Parkway and a section of Shore Road. In addition, the engineers designed what is called a level spreader pool, or a plunge pool, constructed in the common area owned by the Silvaqua Owners Association. This pool slows and diffuses the stormwater headed for the lake.

Although town officials are disappointed that FEMA did not fund this project, they are cautiously optimistic that their Parkway problem is now a thing of the past. So are Silvaqua residents. According to Jane Fahey, president of the homeowners' association, "this work should prevent further erosion into the lake. It effectively has solved one of the biggest trouble spots that has impacted the lake's western shore."

OTISFIELD STARTS LAKE ASSOCIATION

Otisfield's lakes are important to the town. That was the prevailing theme on November 29, when twenty individuals met at the Otisfield Town Office to discuss their concerns about the future of Otisfield's two watersheds, those representing Thompson Lake and Pleasant Pond.

Pixie Williams, a retired biologist who has spent years studying the plant-life on Saturday and Pleasant Ponds, convened and chaired the meeting. Two Otisfield selectmen and Richard St. John, the town's CEO, were present, as well as Beth Damon and several other members of the new Otisfield Conservation Committee. Rick Micklon, chair of the Otisfield Planning Board, also attended. Four TLEA directors were on hand. Joel Bloom and Lew Wetzel led the representation from the Parker Pond-Pleasant Lake Association (PPLA). Scott Vlaun was present as an advocate for Otisfield's Moose Pond, and Carl Anderson was present for Saturday Pond.

The main topic for the evening was how lake associations can co-operate for their mutual benefit. One suggestion that gained favor among participants was the revision and re-publication of a booklet TLEA produced in 1999, titled "A Handy Guide for Homeowners in the Thompson Lake Watershed." Discussion centered on how to fund and oversee the project and how to distribute the final product. The Otisfield Conservation Commission accepted responsibility for directing the project, assisted by members of the various lakes and ponds. It was generally agreed that the various lake organizations would help fund the project, as would the town of Otisfield, tapping money recently acquired from fines assessed for lakeshore code violations.

The group also discussed the growing threat posed by variable leaf milfoil, now present in both Thompson and Pleasant Ponds. Jim Bishop of TLEA announced



*Pixie Williams chairs first meeting of Otisfield Lakes Association
(Photo Bob Tracy)*

that TLEA has decided to invest in a milfoil-harvesting pontoon boat in order to deal with the extensive areas of milfoil in Thompson. Joel Bloom and Lew Wetzel of PPLA described in detail the success they have had with benthic barriers, which also have been used in Thompson.

Before the meeting ended, the majority of those present voted to convene another information-sharing session in the spring.

SEND IN YOUR 2008 MEMBERSHIP ENVELOPE TODAY!

TLEA membership dues for 2008 are now due. Please notice that we've enclosed our new membership envelope, slightly changed to better reflect TLEA's priorities for 2008. Notice especially that we've included three new categories for special giving – Education, the Youth Conservation Corps, and Milfoil Mitigation. We are also now asking for your email address so that we can send special notices. Please fill out the envelope, enclose your generous check, and put it in the mail. TLEA needs your support more than ever!

OXFORD OKAYS ROBINSON DEVELOPMENT

In early December, Oxford voters gave their approval to the Robinson Manufacturing Company's plans for developing its land around the former woolen mill in Oxford village. Their approval of a tax increment financing district (TIF) altered the formula on which the state's aid to education is based. Essentially, the TIF is an economic development tool that prevents any increase in the town's basic valuation from decreasing the amount the state gives for local schools.

At a fall meeting of the TLEA directors, John Robinson outlined his plans and showed detailed architect's plans for the development. The proposed project will include 10 to 12 townhouse units on the lot across from the existing Oxford Post Office, as well as about 50 residential units in the mill. Robinson also hopes to develop retail stores and restaurants, a textile museum, and a marina. As part of the full project, Robinson also plans to reopen for public use the short piece of road which formerly connected Pleasant Street and King Street.

Robinson Manufacturing has been an important part of Oxford and Thompson Lake ever since 1850 when Joseph Robinson moved to Oxford from England and started a cloth mill located at the outlet of Thompson Lake. Although mills had been operating at that spot since 1820, the Robinson mill was the first fully successful such operation. Robinson's main woolen product was a "fadeless Oxford blue" used for uniforms for the Union army in the Civil War. At one time the Robinson Company was ranked as one of the largest woolen manufacturers in North America.



*Cindy Clausen catches a breeze blowing from Otisfield Cove.
(Photo, Bob Tracy)*

VOLUNTEER SURVEYORS NEEDED FOR SPRING

TLEA's directors recently approved a new survey of part of Thompson's western watershed, similar to those conducted in 1994 and 1999. The purpose of all such surveys is to identify possible nonpoint source pollution or erosion sites. The State Department of Environmental Protection considers these surveys a first step in applying for federal watershed management grants, such as the ones TLEA has had in the past and which were responsible for getting our Youth Conservation Corps up and running.

So, here's a chance for fifteen to twenty of you to donate two days' time, connect with your neighbors and other TLEA members, get a close-up view the watershed, and really make a difference to the future health of Thompson. Although details are not yet firm, we are hoping to convene on a Saturday morning late in April or early May, the time when spring runoff is most obvious. After an inside training session (and probably lunch), DEP instructors will lead the group outside for field work demonstrations. Later, each team of two to four individuals will complete the survey of their assigned area on their own schedule.

Experience is not necessary! Young, old, and in-between are welcome! All the equipment needed will be a pair of galoshes, a pencil, and your energy and enthusiasm. TLEA will supply other items like disposable cameras. **Please fill out the form below or contact Jim by email if you think you might be able to help. We'll get back to you as soon as we have more firm details about time and place.**

 _____  _____  _____  _____  _____

Name _____

Telephone or email _____

Mail to: Jim Bishop, PO Box 171, Oxford, ME 04270

Email: ebishop171@aol.com

BOOK ALLOWANCE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDENTS

If you or someone you know is a high school senior whose college course will include environmental or related studies, here's some good news. Once again TLEA is offering two book allowances of \$500 each. These book allowances will be awarded to two students attending college during the 2008-2009 college year.

To qualify, students should write an application letter which reflects 1) goals in college, focusing on an environmental component; and 2) the student's goals in life as related to protecting the environment. This application letter should be accompanied by an application form, which is available at local high school guidance offices or from TLEA, and a grade transcript. Please mail the three-part application form by **April 30, 2008**, to:

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

For more information on this offer, contact the TLEA office at 539-4535 or Jane Fahey at 744-0318.



Winter comes early to Thompson. (Photo, Kathy Cain)

ENTER TLEA'S ICE OUT CONTEST!

Not only is this the tenth anniversary of the infamous Ice Storm of '98, but it may also be your lucky year, your chance to win half the pot by guessing the correct date the ice leaves Thompson Lake. The rules are simple. Send in the form below to TLEA at P.O. Box 25, Oxford, Maine 04270 – or enclose it in your membership envelope – along with your check for \$5 for every date guessed. Your envelope must be postmarked on or before March 15, 2008. All those who pick the correct date will divide half of the proceeds. The other half of the pot will go towards balancing TLEA's budget.

Ice out will be declared on the first day that, in the opinion of TLEA's astute judges, a boat could successfully make its way through open water from one end of the lake to the other, even though there may still be small amounts of ice lurking around various coves. Below is a list of all the dates so far recorded, beginning in 1902. Note that in the last ten years, the ice has gone out in April nine times and only once in May. Not since 1981 has it gone out in March. Good luck!

PAST ICE OUT DATES

1902 - April 17	1929 - April 23	1956 - May 2	1983 - April 10
1903 - April 4	1930 - April 14	1957 - April 17	1984 - April 21
1904 - April 30	1931 - April 12	1958 - April 19	1985 - April 11
1905 - April 23	1932 - April 21	1959 - April 23	1986 - April 12
1906 - April 23	1933 - April 24	1960 - April 25	1987 - April 10
1907 - April 30	1934 - April 23	1961 - May 1	1988 - April 11
1908 - April 25	1935 - April 23	1962 - April 23	1989 - April 28
1909 - April 20	1936 - April 13	1963 - April 20	1990 - April 14
1910 - April 5	1937 - April 27	1964 - April 27	1991 - April 9
1911 - April 28	1938 - April 17	1965 - April 29	1992 - April 10
1912 - April 23	1939 - May 6	1966 - April 22	1993 - April 23
1913 - April 18	1940 - May 7	1967 - April 28	1994 - April 24
1914 - April 23	1941 - April 15	1968 - April 16	1995 - April 13
1915 - April 15	1942 - April 18	1969 - April 20	1996 - April 15
1916 - April 19	1943 - April 26	1970 - April 28	1997 - April 23
1917 - April 28	1944 - April 29	1971 - May 3	1998 - April 9
1918 - April 24	1945 - April 3	1972 - May 6	1999 - April 6
1919 - April 12	1946 - April 6	1973 - April 20	2000 - April 8
1920 - April 25	1947 - April 16	1974 - April 16	2001 - May 1
1921 - April 3	1948 - April 9	1975 - April 13	2002 - April 2
1922 - April 17	1949 - April 10	1976 - April 16	2003 - April 27
1923 - April 24	1950 - April 24	1977 - April 19	2004 - April 19
1924 - April 19	1951 - April 10	1978 - May 1	2005 - April 20
1925 - April 10	1952 - April 20	1979 - April 23	2006 - April 2
1926 - May 3	1953 - April 6	1980 - April 12	2007 - April 23
1927 - April 17	1954 - April 20	1981 - March 29	
1928 - April 21	1955 - April 17	1982 - April 28	

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, 2008
\$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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