

The THOMPSON LAKE

OBSERVER

Summer 2005

Issue No. 140



Spring Salmon Fishing on Thompson Was Fine! Dana Hagerty of Bath shows off his two trophies, caught on April 25, weighing 4.2 and 3.7 pounds. Jim Bullen's 4.10 pounder took first prize in the Thompson Lake Marina's Contest. Jim Morrill won second and third prizes with catches weighing 4.8 and 4.3 pounds.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hope you all enjoyed winter wherever you are. Recently I concluded, at the end of a long winter and dreary spring, that one of the advantages of the lake is that it lends itself to pondering. Here are a few of those “things to ponder” while you dwell at Thompson Lake.

LOVE YOUR DUFF - (and that doesn't mean your backside or your husband or wife 😊) – it means the leaves and pine needles covering the forest floor. Duff acts like a sponge and a deterrent to runoff and phosphorous pouring into the lake. So don't rake it. Love it and leave it.

SEE BUT HIDE – So many Lake Dwellers have done a wonderful job of hiding their homes in the trees while keeping a space to view the lake. Congratulations! It still looks natural. And I'm so glad to see how many of us have put in buffer plants along the waterfront to slow down the runoff of water, sand, and earth. I've seen only a few lawns running directly down to the water, and only a few wide-open sandy beaches. Thanks to all of you for protecting our water.

EMBRACE THE DARK – It saddens me to see security, yard, or pole lights left on all night. I wish we could all consider the value of preserving the dark, peacefulness of the lake and woods, the moonlight and stars. It is delightful to see only natural reflections in the water.

I'm looking forward to summer and seeing you all back enjoying the open water. If you have suggestions for articles you'd like, or activities for TLEA to sponsor, please let us know.

Needless to say, the words on this page are the opinion only of this co-president and might not reflect opinions of the directors or Lake Dwellers. Just food for thought as we start the summer!

Sue Ellis, Co-President

TLEA'S MILFOIL INSPECTION TEAM FOR 2005

This year's milfoil inspection team consists of two veterans, Becky Slattery and Chris McVety, and one newcomer, Callia Talmor. Despite the name by which this group of young people is usually known, the team actually checks boats entering and exiting Thompson not just for milfoil but for any kind of invasive plant. On duty mostly on weekends when boat traffic is heaviest, they will be stationed primarily at Thompson Lake marina in Casco, at the Landing in Oxford near the Otisfield town line, and at Pismo Beach in Oxford.



ANNUAL MEETING
THOMPSON LAKE ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSOCIATION

Saturday, August 6
9-11:30 a.m.
Agassiz Village, Poland

Election of officers and directors

Speaker:
John Robinson of
Robinson Manufacturing Co.
will speak on the history,
management, and
future prospects
of the Company

ALL WELCOME!
COME AND BE A PART OF TLEA!

TLEA REWARDS ENVIRONMENTAL STUDENTS

For several years TLEA has furthered its educational mission by awarding environmentally-oriented scholarships to young people living in the four towns that border Thompson Lake. Usually we award two \$500 textbook grants each year to graduating high school seniors going on to attend a college with majors related to environmental studies. This year we voted to make three such awards. We also support a grant of about \$350 to a fifth or sixth grader to help them attend the Maine Conservation School summer camp at Bryant Pond. In addition, this year the directors voted to use part of its educational budget to sponsor a “Hey You” cruise on the Songo Queen. (See related story elsewhere in this issue.)

This year our textbook grants go to:

- **Hannah Grenier**, an Otisfield resident and graduate of Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School. She will attend Colby College in the fall with an Environmental Science major.
- **Erica Huber**, a Poland resident and graduate of Poland Regional High School, who will attend Unity College in the fall, majoring in Wildlife Care and Education.
- **Alaina Clark**, a resident of Casco and graduate of Lakes Region High School, who will enter her second year at Colby College, majoring in Environmental Studies. We also supported Alaina last year.

We do not yet have the name of the elementary school student we will help send this summer to the Bryant Pond conservation camp.

We invited two of last year’s recipients to help us this year with our educational program. As a result, Alaina Clark provided invaluable help at Lake Day this year and also supervised events on the Songo Queen’s “Hey You” cruise. Garrick Johnson also participated in several of the “illegal activities” along Long Lake which students on the Songo Queen were asked to identify (and vociferously object to with a shouted “Hey You!”). Involving our scholarship alumni in our own environmental activities seems to be a real winner. We hope to expand this effort in the future.

– Chris Pottle



SWQPP PROGRESS STALLED

Maybe it's the unpronounceable acronym that's holding things up. More likely it's lack of money that's stopping solutions to Route 121's problems near Thompson Lake. Members will recall that for the past two or three years TLEA has attempted to bring local highway problems to the attention of the State Department of Transportation. So far, we've had one notable success. Last year the DOT replaced guardrails and improved the shoulder of the Greeley Brook Causeway. But recently, despite increasing deterioration of the site near "the Landing" on Route 121, MDOT has made no meaningful progress in putting in place the Surface Water Quality Protection Program (SWQPP) it approved well over a year ago.

Several factors may be causing the delays. MDOT may be finding it difficult to find an economical way to deal with the erosion. The concept of widening the shoulder through placement of large fill or boulders into the lake seems to be gaining support but may be too expensive for a DOT increasingly strapped by budget constraints. The recent weather-related road damages have also burdened the DOT. Spring runoff created huge gullies along the southbound shoulder of Route 121 near Canada Hill. And repairs have been required for miles along the route. For example, in the village proper of Oxford, road barriers have been in place for two months, guarding a portion of the collapsed shoulder bordering the Little Androscoggin. One trucker recently voiced his concerns about meeting another truck in that section of road, fearing that he might be forced into the stream should the shoulder give way completely.

TLEA remains in pursuit of a solution and hopes that repairs may yet be effected this summer to cure some of these problems that seriously threaten Thompson's water and drivers' safety.





Kayla Paine (right) and Allyson Snow (left) from Madison Avenue School Plant Firebush as Part of Their Lake Day Training in Planting Buffers. (Photo: Jane Fahey)

LAKE DAY ANOTHER RESOUNDING SUCCESS

Postponed once during Maine’s May monsoon, this year’s Lake Day finally happened on May 31, a misty, cloudy day at Agassiz Village that brought out the best in 120 sixth-graders from Oxford Elementary, Madison Avenue, and Hebron Station Schools. Seven teachers were on hand, as well as at least 15 volunteers that made all the difference: from TLEA, Chris Pottle, Tom Ray, Jane Fahey, and Bob and Cathy Thorpe; from DEP, Jeremy Dubois, and Christine Smith and husband; from the Mollycokett Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Dick Walthers and George Westerberg; from Oxford Elementary School, Paula Wheeler. Three Agassiz Village counselors also pitched in, as did Alaina Clark, one of the winners of this year’s TLEA scholarship.

A new activity this year was a “Walk and Talk Tour” of Agassiz, led by teacher Sandy Roderick and volunteer Alaina Clark. Students walked around the camp searching out problem areas. When they found one, they marked it on a map, described it in writing, and worked out possible solutions which they will discuss later with Agassiz officials.

After it was all over, Oxford teacher Sandy Roderick, the Guiding Spirit (and major mover-shaker) of Lake Day, sat back and took a long view at what’s been happen

ing during the last few years, years of notable education and accomplishment. “More and more students are learning about care of watersheds by doing all of the activities that we do,” she said. A representative of the Lakes Environmental Association in Bridgton echoed Sandy’s remark by commenting on how well the sixth-graders from this area answered her questions during the “Hey You Cruise” on the Songo Queen.

But Sandy, like other members of TLEA’s Education Committee, won’t rest on her laurels, however well deserved. Planning is already underway for next year’s Lake Day. And Agassiz Village officials have enthusiastically signed on for 2006.

[Editor’s note: The following poem was inspired by a sixth-grade student’s experiences at this year’s Lake Day activities at Agassiz Village. We haven’t changed a word!]

Problems and Solutions

by Morgan Kesseli,
Madison Avenue School

Paint spills,
and clogged ditches on the hills,
Help us out some more!

Runoff by the tree roots,
Erosion on the hill,
Can’t you help us,
Because there are problems by the more!

Plant a buffer,
Get the algae out,
And you will surely make us shout!

Yay we say,
Then we can play,
No more pollution,
Because of the solution!

The wind will blow,
And the kids can play,
No more pollution,
Because of you today!



*Madison Avenue Student
Tyler Hart Learns the Skills
of Fly Fishing from Trout
Unlimited's Lake Day
Volunteer, Dick Walthers.
(Photo: Jane Fahey)*

GOT A FEW SPARE HOURS TO DONATE?

As many of you probably know, Margaret and Ted Slattery, who have been such an important part of TLEA for so many years, have moved from Portland to Massachusetts. This means Margaret will no longer be coming to Oxford to monitor TLEA's office every Saturday morning all summer. We will miss Margaret's expertise, devotion, and cheerful face!

Can you help TLEA fill in the vacuum she leaves? We've got Mondays covered, but we need help for Saturday mornings (9-12) and Wednesday afternoons (1-4) this summer. No experience is necessary! If you can help by volunteering even one day, please leave a message on the TLEA telephone at 539-4535.

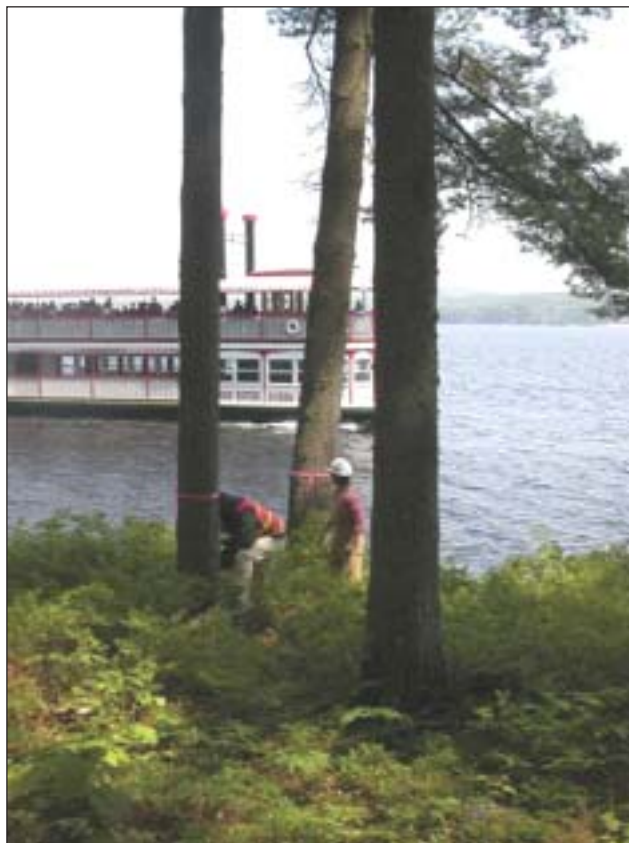
Summer Office Hours – 345 King Street, Oxford

Monday and Wednesdays,	1 - 4 p.m.
Saturday	9 a.m. to noon

SONGO QUEEN TEACHES ENVIRONMENTAL LESSONS

A number of sixth graders from Otisfield, Oxford, Madison Avenue, and Hebron Station Schools also learned a great deal about protecting the environment when they participated in a recent “Hey You” cruise aboard the “Songo Queen II” on Long Lake. The trip was sponsored by TLEA. Students were exposed to various water testing stations on board the boat. They were also challenged to spot a number of environmental violators along the shore who were flouting Shoreland Zoning Laws. (The violators were actually volunteer adults only pretending to be doing damage.) Whenever they spotted a violator, the students were instructed to shout “Hey, you!” The deck of the boat became a noisy place indeed.

Shown in the photo are volunteer violators Nancy Hohmann and Katey Branch as they pretend to cut down trees. The Songo Queen and its students are shown floating by in the background.



I-DID-A-PADDLE HAPPENS ON AUGUST 6

TLEA's second end-to-end of the lake adventure will take place on August 6, starting at 9 a.m. at the Thompson Lake Marina, at the south end of the lake. The format will be much like last year's. Let's hope we get the same gentle breeze from the south, mild temperature, and sunny sky.

For those of you with short memories, here's the scoop. For a \$10 registration fee paid either in advance or on the day of the event, you get the privilege of paddling, sailing, or rowing your boat, canoe, kayak, or bathtub the whole length of the lake, from the Heath to Pismo Beach, along with a lot of other sporting people. The only motor boats allowed to accompany the regatta will be along for safety reasons only. If you manage to proceed at a reasonable speed, you'll find a cook-out lunch awaiting you at the Oxford end of things—or at least from 11:30 to 12:30.

Be sure to bring drinking water and to wear a personal flotation device.

Sharon Rice (998-2088) and Jane Fahey (627-4936) are organizing things. If you need more information, give one of them a call.

T-shirts must be ordered by August 8!

To assist in the planning for this event, please pre-register:

Name _____		
Address _____		Tel. _____
Boat type and color _____		
T-Shirts: ____ (quantity) x \$15 each		____ (Specify Sm, Med., Lg., XL, XXL)
Registration fees		x \$10 each _____
Total (make checks out to TLEA)		_____
I understand that TLEA is not responsible for my safety during the I-Did-a-Paddle.		
_____ (signature)		
Mail to: TLEA, PO Box 25, Oxford, ME 04270.		



Intrepid Kayaker Braving Thompson's waves during last summer's I-Did-A-Paddle.

YCC CREW LEARNS AND TEACHES

Before this year's YCC crew begins its summer's work of helping watershed residents solve their erosion problems, they spend important days getting some training themselves. According to Joe Kiley, this year's YCC Coordinator, the five-member crew will first undergo CPR training in first aid, survey Thompson's streams and surface, and participate in water quality monitoring with biologist Scott Williams. Their first erosion control project is to rejuvenate the gardens at the TLEA Headquarters at 345 King Street.

This year's crew has only one veteran from last year, Kelsey Libby of Otisfield, a student at Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School. The new crew chief this year is Emily Bastian, a sophomore at the University of New Hampshire whose family home is in Gray. Rounding out the crew are Tyler Wax and Josh Grenier, both from Otisfield, and both students at OHCHS, Cory Parent, a student at Poland Regional High School, and Chris Wight, a summer lake resident from Concord, Mass. The crew works for four days each week for a total of eight weeks before returning to school with suntans, hardened biceps, and a good deal of practical know-how.

Joe Kiley stresses that the YCC is still looking for projects the group can under

take within the Thompson Lake watershed. While the crew does not use power tools, it can accomplish wonders with manual labor. Typical projects include installing razor bars and box culverts to divert water runoff, and planting buffer strips to stop sediment from reaching the lake. The YCC also provides technical advice and helps the property owner obtain all the permits necessary. If you suspect you have a problem, give Joe a call for a free evaluation. He can be reached at the TLEA Office (539-4535) or at home (743-0014).

And remember – the property owner pays only for materials and plants. The YCC’s labor is free. It’s a good deal.



Environmental Engineers at Work at the Cape in Otisfield: The Results of the Beavers’ Hard Work Are Displayed Near the Cape’s “Honeymoon Cottage.” (Photo: Ethel Bean Turner)

KAYAKING AND MILFOILING AT THE HEATH

On June 3, TLEA director Jane Fahey took four Harrison Elementary School students on a kayaking tour of the Heath, hunting for milfoil. Pictured above are the fifth-graders named Mac, Abby, John, and Kelly. The outing began as the product of a spring project to study the ecosystems of ponds. The students became especially interested in milfoil's effect on a body of water. Fahey agreed to accompany them on a kayaking tour of the Heath, the southernmost part of Thompson, where variable milfoil has been around for decades.

All four of the fifth-graders had had prior experience paddling kayaks. The students learned about how milfoil spreads and were really impressed with how thick it is, even this time of year. They hope to return to the Heath in late July or August to see how it may have spread during the summer. Their final project will be to produce a movie that may be available for showing at TLEA's annual meeting on August 6. Whatever they discover between then and now, one thing's already certain: as a result of their curiosity, classroom learning, and outdoor experience, in years to come these students are sure to be great stewards of Maine's lakes and ponds!

Incidentally, the Heath (which resident oldtimers still pronounce to rhyme with "lathe"), is a great place to canoe and kayak, even though you do compete with the milfoil. The area is undeveloped, and power boats are not allowed in the "pond." Birds and wildlife abound. Even better, the Heath usually remains calm even on days when the main part of the lake is choppy.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO STOP THE INVASION!

Have you ever paddled along Thompson's shoreline with the water so still and the summer air so soft, listening to a loon in the distance, and hoping that heaven could be like this? Have you ever tossed a fishing lure into the water of a shallow cove, not expecting much, only to experience the reward of a trophy-sized fish at the end of your line? Have you ever gone snorkeling and been amazed at the water clarity that permits all kinds of discoveries?

These are a few of the many rewards we receive by living near Thompson Lake. Ask your fellow lake dwellers what makes Thompson stand out and they often name its clarity, size, and diversity. In short, it's hard to think of this lake as at risk or threatened by much of anything. That's probably how residents near Pickerel Pond in Limerick, Maine, also felt at one time. But now when they paddle in the pond, many parts look more like a swamp than a lake. There are only a few fish to catch now, and not many loons to be heard. Everything has changed since the invasive plant called *hydrilla* came into their pond.

Invasive plants are probably the most threatening problem we face today in Thompson. If you enjoy living here and want to help ensure the health and quality of the lake for years to come, then *now* is the time to make a difference. If you are a swimmer with mask and snorkel, or a kayaker or canoeist, or a scuba diver, or none of the above but you still want to help protect Thompson, then TLEA can use your help.

We're now in the process of forming a volunteer group to help manage and protect our shoreline from aquatic invasive plant infestation. Some of the important tasks we'll be undertaking are: 1) mapping existing locations of variable milfoil, 2) monitoring for any infestation by new plant species, and 3) removing invasive plants by hand and/or placing plant-smothering tarps over select locations. Each aspect of plant management will require some degree of training, which TLEA will organize.

So if you do have a serious interest in protecting the lake and can give us some of your free time this summer, please contact TLEA Environmental Committee Director Scott Bernardy, at 207-878-5380 or drbinme@verizon.net. We look forward to working with you!

IN MEMORIAM: JOHN DAVID HANKINS

Dave Hankins died on March 10 in a forestry accident while snowshoeing in his woods on Scribner Hill in Otisfield. He was 69 years old and well known through his involvement in numerous community groups and efforts since his move to Maine in 1993. Long before retiring from his position at the University of Connecticut as Professor of English, though, he and his family spent summers in Otisfield. Among other activities, Dave gave considerable time as an officer of the East Otisfield Free Baptist Church, the Bell Hill Meeting House Association, and the Otisfield Historical Society. He was a Rotarian, served on the school board, sang in the Hillsmen Barbershop Chorus and its quartet, kept bees, and ran a tree farm. His collection of canoes, including two large war canoes which originally belonged to camps on Thompson, rivals any in this part of the state.

Dave and his wife Jean have been members of TLEA since 1996, following the long-term membership of his parents, who were charter members. Dave had been a member of the Board of Directors from 1997 until the time of his death. He served as TLEA President from 1999 to 2002. During his tenure as President, he helped expand TLEA's involvement in securing grants for watershed management. He also strengthened the organization's committee system and encouraged wide participation of volunteers. His efforts on the watershed management steering committees exceeded even the considerable time he put in as an activist President.

In the words of Tom Ray, "Dave preceded us as President. He certainly loved Thompson Lake and devoted so much time to preserving its beauty. He was a wealth of knowledge on any subject concerning the Lake, and I certainly will miss his smile while answering my frequent questions."

And Sue Ellis said, "What I liked about Dave was his boyish grin and his willingness to do anything asked, and if not asked, he'd volunteer. He cared deeply for the Lake and those who lived here. I'm sure that all of us who knew Dave will always carry a part of him in our hearts. Thanks for always being there."

Dave leaves his wife Jean, son John, daughters Janet and Susan, and seven grandchildren. Dave infected his children and many others with his enthusiasm for canoeing, kayaking, and skiing on and around the lake. He will be remembered for his humor, his warmth, his zest for life, and his dedication to public service.

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

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