

The THOMPSON LAKE

OBSERVER

Summer 2006

Issue No. 144



*Three Lake Day Students use the piggy-back method of note taking.
(See Lake Day story page 4)*

**ANNUAL MEETING
CAMP FERNWOOD
AUGUST 5th
(See page 3)**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This has been a busy but hectic year for TLEA, and once again our committees have all done yeoman's duty. Summer, of course, is the busiest time of all. It's not only social season, but it's also TLEA's project time. Here's what's going on:

The **Environmental Committee** has tackled the plant nuisance problem by direct action and by an educational initiative. Led by Scott Bernardy, volunteers recently placed large special tarps, called benthic barriers, over variable milfoil patches in Otisfield Cove, Edwards Cove, and other problem areas of the lake. (See p.8). They also organized an Invasive Plant Workshop. In August this will pay off when the newly-trained Weed Watchers inspect the lake.

The Youth Conservation Corps and Milfoil Inspectors are in full swing around the lake. The towns of Casco, Otisfield, and Oxford all voted funds to support the YCC; Poland did not. Should you run into any of the inspectors at the boat landings, please cooperate. And if you have an erosion problem the YCC can help with, please call the TLEA Office at 539-4535.

The **Education Committee** awarded scholarships to several deserving high school and college students interested in environmental studies. They also organized **Lake Day**, again a huge success, with over 130 sixth grade students from local schools participating.

The **Events Committee** has several things going: The **Annual Meeting** on August 5 at Camp Fernwood, with a geologist from Poland Springs Bottling to talk about the local area; the **I-Did-a-Paddle** on August 12, and a **Cookout** on August 26 at Agassiz Village. Come one, come all!

The **Publications Committee** again has done a great job in getting these *Observers* to you.

Finally: **THE MOVE** on June 30. At best, the hours TLEA directors spent at meetings with the Town of Oxford to determine the status of the our old office at the Stanton School were frustrating. In the long run, it seems, they were determined to sell the building to get it on the tax roll. Then came many hours spent searching for a new home, packing up, and moving everything accumulated over 12 years. After all this, we are now located in temporary quarters in the Robinson Mill Building and are happy to be there while we continue to evaluate other options.

– Tom Ray

ANNUAL MEETING SLATED FOR CAMP FERNWOOD ON AUGUST 5

TLEA's annual meeting will be held at Camp Fernwood on Saturday, August 5. Come for coffee at 8:30. As in other years, the first order of business will be to elect new directors and officers for the year. Other agenda items will include a report on TLEA's new home at the Robinson Mill, a briefing from Environmental Chair Scott Bernardy on TLEA's War on Milfoil and the recent Invasive Plant Workshop, Jane Fahey's report on Lake Day at Agassiz Village, and an advance briefing on the I-Did-a-Paddle scheduled for August 12.

Keynote speaker will be **Tom Brennan**, Head Geologist of the Poland Spring Bottling Company, who will inform us about **Lake Aquifers**.

As always, members and guests will have a chance to invest in some great TLEA sale items: hats, T-shirts, mugs, and a good supply of our newest item, hand-carved loon ornaments for only \$13.

Come meet your fellow members, renew acquaintances, find out what's going on, get involved!

COME, SWIM, AND FEAST AT TLEA'S BARBECUE

Agassiz Village isn't just for kids, at least not this year. On **Saturday, August 26**, from 1 to 3 p.m., join us by boat or car at this scenic Poland camp, for swimming, visiting, and, best of all, a genuine Thompson Lake barbecue. All members and guests are welcome. The event is a fundraiser for TLEA, and the charge will be \$15 per person. Children under 12 eat free!

The food, to be prepared by Jeff Cain of Oxford, will include barbecued pork, chicken, baked beans and potato salad, desserts and beverages.

Agassiz Village is located off the Johnson Hill Road in West Poland. Directions: At the Rustic Pizza store in West Poland, turn left or right onto Johnson Hill Road and follow for approximately two miles. The camp entrance will be on your right. Turn right and reach the lodge in about 1/4 mile.

Register for the barbecue at the Annual Meeting; or at the I-Did-a-Paddle Regatta; or by calling the TLEA Office at 539-4535. For more information, call Tony Caggiano at 539-4864 or Sharon Rice at 998-2088.



Buffer planters at work, Lake Day, Agassiz Village.

LAKE DAY 2006 SURVIVES RAIN THREAT

This year's scheduled Lake Day, May 31, arrived with overcast skies and an ominous threat of rain. Sandy Roderick, the sixth-grade teacher who coordinates the annual event, looked out the window and remembered what happened on a similar day last year when the event had to be postponed. This time she declared, "You know what? I'm gonna go with it!"

Her instincts proved sound. Around 9:30 a.m. a convoy of school buses delivered some 150 sixth graders from Hebron, Oxford, and Madison Avenue Schools to Agassiz Village, Poland, on the southeast shore of the lake. The kids quickly assembled on the green and were addressed by Jane Fahey, Madison Avenue School principal and TLEA director, who handed each student a packet with the day's schedule and worksheets to be completed either on site or later back in class.

As the day went on, the weather improved and the kids stayed dry. The youngsters followed a succession of activities involving instruction and follow-through with the worksheets. While one group was learning about stormwater runoff, others were discussing climate change, invasive plants, the many sources and effects of water pollutants, rules and regulations regarding protection of our lakes and streams, and even technologies (such as hybrid cars) which can be used to mitigate or prevent degradation of our natural environment.

On hand to help kids with the fine points of fly fishing were three angling experts from Trout Unlimited. Maine DEP representatives included Tamara Whitmore and Jeremy Dubois. Phoebe Hardesty of Androscoggin County Soil and Water gave lessons on planting buffer materials. TLEA Directors Tom Ray, Chris Pottle, and

Kathy Cain also contributed valuable conservation tips. And numerous parents helped guarantee the day's success.

One of this year's most exciting events happened completely by accident and to the surprise of all the organizers. Just as Tom Ray was delivering his words of wisdom about invasive plants, a large truck from Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries arrived and proceeded to dump 750 small salmon into the lake. "Quite a sight!" said Tom.

Although Lake Day has never been covered by local television, over the years it has earned high marks as an educational success. Several hundred local students have now learned how to be good stewards of our air and water resources. The schools involved are to be commended for their extensive planning and coordination which have made Lake Day far more than a day off from school. And after it was all over, Sandy Roderick, Head Volunteer, thanked all the participants and added, "We are already talking about doing this next year – May 30. Please let the TLEA directors know how much the students benefit from all of our events. I would like to let Margaret Slattery [former TLEA president] know how instrumental she was in helping me get started, and how large this program has grown since 1997." More cheers, please!

I-DID-A-PADDLERS PLAN TAKE OFF

Saturday, August 12, has been chosen for the **Third Annual TLEA I-Did-a-Paddle Event**. As in previous years, the motorless regatta will leave the marina at the south end of Thompson Lake in Casco at 9 a.m. and will finish at Pismo Beach, Oxford, sometime around noon. A gala cookout will reward the fierce finishers. Boaters are welcome to join the regatta in progress.

Rain and wind date (if necessary) will be August 17. Cancellation notice will be given via the TLEA answering machine at 539-4535. Notices will also be posted at the launch site at Thompson Lake Marina and at Pismo Beach.

Organizers request that participants pre-register. To do so, call the TLEA Office at 539-4535 and leave your name, address, email, phone number, and number of participants. There is no registration fee. The cost of the cookout will be \$6 per person. Please also pre-register for the cookout by Friday, August 11, so that Tony Caggiano and his crew can assemble enough hotdogs and hamburgers.

Last year's regatta day turned out sunny and almost windless, much to the pleasure of the 52 men, women, and children who rowed, splashed, and paddled the nine miles up the lake. The event has proved a splendid way both to tour Thompson and to work off a few extra calories. We'll have support boats along the way, flying orange flags and supplying drinking water and cheering girls. Note: each person in the boat must wear a lifejacket. For more information, call Sharon Rice at 998-2088 or Jane Fahey at 627-4936.



Lake Day 2006: Tom Ray edifies a group of Oxford Hills Sixth Graders.

THE YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS NEEDS YOU!

The Thompson Lake Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) is gearing up for another summer of solving erosion problems in the watershed. It is now available to help solve **your** problems! Our crew leader this summer is Mindy Gilman. Crew members are Tyler Wax, Josh Grenier, and Chris Wight. Some of our more common projects are installing razor bars, box culverts, and rip-rap on the lake shore, and planting buffer strips.

We contribute solutions and design and help with the permitting process. You pay only for materials: We provide the labor. For more information, call Coordinator Joe Kiley at 539-4535 or cell phone 393-7205.

Funding for this year's YCC came from the taxpayers in the three towns of Otisfield (\$5000), Oxford (\$5000), and Casco (\$2500), as well as from three private charitable foundations. We are grateful to the David and Carol Hancock Trust, which donated \$2500, the John Sage Foundation for its \$1000, and the Davis Conservation Fund, which donated \$2000. **As in past years, we also encourage individual donations from TLEA members. These may be mailed to YCC, c/o TLEA, PO Box 25, Oxford, ME 04270.**

'HEY YOU' CRUISERS SPOT SHORELAND VIOLATORS

Recently sixth graders from Otisfield, Oxford, and Hebron climaxed their study of watersheds with a TLEA-sponsored educational cruise on the *Songo Queen* on Long Lake. This trip was also made possible by the Lakes Environmental Association, which schedules an extra trip for the Oxford Hills youngsters. During their morning on the water the students learn about shoreland violations and also find out how to do water quality testing.

This marine field trip is dubbed the "Hey You" Cruise because students put into practice their new knowledge about Shoreland Zoning rules. Here's how it works: Volunteers on shore pretend to be breaking various aspects of the law. Six different skits have volunteers cutting brush, fertilizing and mowing lawns, bringing new sand onto a beach, cutting down trees along the shore, washing with soapy water in the lake, and celebrating with a raucous party in which cans and other debris are tossed into the water. As the captain of the *Songo Queen* edges the paddle-wheeler close to shore, the 150 students yell "Hey You!" until the violators cease and desist.

This year an interesting but completely unplanned episode showed some workers at a camp who were violating Shoreland Zoning by unloading sand onto a beach. The students, who naturally thought the workers were part of the skit, gave them their best sixth-grade shouts. The workers, taken by absolute surprise, stopped work, at least until the boat was out of sight.

Thanks to this partnership between the LEA and TLEA, 150 new stewards of our lakes have been trained to protect the shoreland and the watershed! As for the guilty ones bringing sand onto the beach, well, we hope the kids have taught you the error of your ways.

MOVING DAY FOR TLEA

We've moved! By the time this reaches your mailbox, TLEA's new home will be in the Robinson Mill complex at 283 King Street, Oxford, a short distance down King Street from the Stanton School which housed us so well for 12 years. The office is in the old Robinson Manufacturing Office behind the Oxford Mill End Store. TLEA's directors considered a number of options before accepting Robinson's offer to rent us what was formerly their main office, as well as another large room we can use for supplies. The move is not necessarily permanent but should suit us well for some time to come. The mailing address remains the same, and so does our telephone number, 539-4535.

Many people were involved in the relocation process. Months before the move, Jim Bishop, Kathy Cain, Marcia Pottle, Bob Cotton, Jerry Wax, and Tom Ray

visited a number of possible relocation sites. Another crew met weekly at the old office to throw out, clean up, and organize years of archives, records, books, and memorabilia. Among those who worked on this dusty job were Joe Kiley, Jean Hankins, Marcia and Chris Pottle, Doris Ham, Sharon Rice, Kathy Cain, and Bob Cotton. On **moving day**, June 30, a stalwart crew of volunteers loaded, drove, and unloaded a fleet of pick-ups and finished the job well before noon. In addition to the YCC crew, movers included Tom Ray, Jerry Wax, Joe Kiley, Sharon Rice, Bob Cotton, Kathy Cain, Bob Tracy, Chris and Marcia Pottle, Jean Hankins, Frank Papineau, and Ed Leonard.

At the end of moving day, everyone pronounced themselves tired but satisfied. That it all went so smoothly is a tribute to all the hard-working volunteers and the result of good advance planning. Thanks to everyone who pitched in!

TACKLING THOMPSON'S MILFOIL PROBLEM

This summer marks the second year TLEA has been coordinating efforts to eliminate the *variable leaf milfoil* that has been a lake resident for many years. In the process we have learned about the several native species of milfoil that are not invasive or harmful. Some of these native plants look so much like their harmful *variable leaf* relatives that correct identification is difficult. Special training and even laboratory analysis are often needed.

The *variable leaf milfoil* found in Thompson not only grows in a very dense pattern but also winters over very well and starts growing rapidly in the spring, easily edging out all native plants in its area. It spreads mostly by fragmentation when a motor boat passes over the plant and the propeller chops up the stems into little pieces. Each piece can then float to a new location, settle onto the lake bottom, and, taking root, start a new colony.

For the state of Maine, controlling the spread of variable leaf milfoil has been a relatively new endeavor. The first method, using herbicides, proved ineffective. Hand pulling has been more successful but is very labor intensive, and, if done on a commercial scale, also very costly. To date the most efficient and affordable method of removing variable leaf milfoil has been to use benthic barriers.

The benthic barriers are large, opaque tarps which are sandbagged in place on the lake's bottom. Before placing the barriers, TLEA obtained permits from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. So far the DEP has approved permits for benthic barriers and/or handpulling of plants only to such established lake associations as TLEA. They emphasize that these eradication techniques are best left to experts. Improper methods of removal can actually spread the invasive plants, and the DEP will impose a hefty fine for such illegal activity. In addition, the DEP has

been closely monitoring the locations, efforts, and progress of *variable leaf milfoil*.

Most of Thompson Lake's variable milfoil areas are too large for the benthic barriers to cover at one time. Therefore, after the barriers have been in place for a minimum of eight weeks, TLEA volunteers will move them to adjacent areas. This process will allow native aquatic plants to return to the affected areas treated by the barriers.

The following areas of Thompson Lake have been selected for barrier placement this year:

- Edwards Cove
- Otisfield Cove
- area west of Parsons Point
- Greeley Brook

TLEA is urging boaters to stay away from the areas where the tarps have been placed. In some locations the tarps may be close to the surface where they could be easily ripped by a boat. The barrier areas will be marked with bright ribbons and signs. Also, please avoid motoring through other areas of known *milfoil* infestation. And if your lakeside property is rented during the summer, please post a notice with this important information for your renters.

Thanks to all the volunteers who have been involved so far and whose future involvement will make a real difference in the health of our lake. New volunteers are always welcome. If interested, please call Scott Bernardy, the Environmental Committee Director, at 878-5380, or email him at drbinme@verizon.net.



A benthic barrier being placed over milfoil in Otisfield Cove.

TLEA HOSTS WEEDWATCHERS WORKSHOP

On June 28 TLEA hosted a successful Basic Plant Patrol Workshop for twenty individuals at the Otisfield Community Hall. The goal of the workshop, developed by the Maine Center for Invasive Aquatic Plants (MCIAP), was to supply these individuals with enough know-how and skills so that they can join Maine's "early detection effort" to identify invasive aquatic plants, thereby qualifying for the prestigious title of **weedwatcher**. Lake biologists Scott Williams and Roberta Hill conducted the workshop. During the 5-hour session, those attending were given an overview of Maine's invasive species; learned the fundamentals of how to identify plants; had a hands-on exercise to identify all 11 known invasive aquatic plants; and learned the tools and techniques for conducting a screening survey.

One participant, Chris Pottle of Oxford, said afterwards that he was amazed at how difficult it is to identify plants like Eurasian milfoil and to distinguish it from the native, non-harmful kinds of milfoil. "In the future I'll be a lot more careful about saying I know what a plant is," he commented.

MCIAP has scheduled nine more workshops this summer. There is no charge for the workshop. The schedule may be found on their website: www.mainevolunteerlakemonitors.org.

Last year TLEA established its own Lake Monitoring Program in which 14 volunteers monitored about 70 percent of Thompson's shoreline. The monitors travel by kayak or canoe on their own schedule, looking for and charting the areas where variable leaf milfoil is present. TLEA's goal is for all their volunteer patrollers to attend the IPP workshop. As Environmental Committee chairman Scott Bernardy says, "The key to success is for early detection of invasive aquatic plants. Once they're discovered, complete removal is much more possible." To join Scott's volunteer crew, contact him at 539-8220 or email at drbinme@verizon.net.

COURTESY BOAT INSPECTORS HARD AT WORK

Once again TLEA is hosting a Courtesy Boat Inspection Program, which runs from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Inspectors are stationed weekends at the Marina in Casco, Pismo Beach in Oxford, and the Landing at Oxford. The young people working this summer include Risa Card from Casco; Sarah Field from Greenwood; Gary Garcelon and Sky Landry from Oxford; and Chris McVety from Otisfield. Jim Bishop manages the program.

**YOU'RE INVITED TO ATTEND
LAKESMART TRAINING FOR PROPERTY OWNERS**

Do your part to protect your lake by taking advantage of this free training. You will learn how to landscape and maintain your property to minimize impacts to the lake by using DEP approved best management practices. Learn how you can qualify for a **LakeSmart award**, and how your property can be used as an example by other property owners in your lake's watershed. See if the practices you are currently using on the land are good for the lake.

Session #N0623 - Otisfield - July 22, 2006 - Seeds of Peace Camp

Session #N0624 - Rangeley - August 2, 2006, Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust

All sessions will run from 9 A.M. to 2:30 P.M. Lunch will be included. Please register below.

Send this form to: J.E.T.C.C., PO Box 487, Scarborough, ME 04070-0487. (207-253-8020)

Name:

_____ **Tel.** _____

Address:

E-mail address:

The LakeSmart Training Course I would like to attend is:

Session # _____ to be held in _____ on _____, 2006.

<p>In nature, beginnings and endings, birth and death are inseparable: implicit in the flower's blossoming is its dying-off and subsequent renewal.</p>

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

Thompson Lake Environmental Association
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