

The THOMPSON LAKE

OBSERVER

Fall 2006

Issue No. 145



*Before the Tempest: I-Did-A-Paddler tackles Thompson.
(Photo, Kathy Cain)*

(VICE) PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Labor Day and the start of school typically signify the end of a Maine summer. For TLEA this past one has been busy with meetings, fundraising, and projects. Our most recent event, in case you missed it, was a fundraiser titled “the Piggy Roast,” held at Agassiz Village on August 26. Over 100 people attended this afternoon event, with proceeds going to benefit the YCC program. Joel Cain of Oxford did a superb job catering. We hope to repeat it next summer.

The I-Did-a-Paddle on August 12 had another good turnout despite the wrath of Mother Nature. As the story in this issue explains, the experience has taught us some lessons. At the 2007 I-Did-a-Paddle there will be some new protocols regarding weather, registration, emergency calls, and so on. Despite all the wet and cold paddlers, we enjoyed the cookout at Pismo Beach following the regatta. Chef Tony Caggiano and crew did their usual superb job.

TLEA's Annual Meeting was held on August 5 at Fernwood. (See story following). It was well attended and featured an informative talk by Tom Brennan, head geologist at Poland Spring.

TLEA gives special thanks Fritz Seving, director of Camp Fernwood, for the new TLEA memberships given to the graduating campers. This is a new tradition he hopes to continue in the future. Fritz hopes the memberships will continue as the campers move on with their lives and remember their good times at Thompson Lake.

In closing, please get involved with TLEA, either by volunteering or by contributing financially. If not already a member, please join! I was surprised to find that only one third of property owners on the lake are members. Everyone on the lake and in the watershed benefits from TLEA's efforts to protect the lake's water and surroundings. We must protect and preserve this jewel of a lake so that we can safely hand it down to future generations in the same condition that it was handed down to us, much like protecting a family heirloom. Get involved, be informed, and educate those around you so that we all can continue to enjoy the clear waters of Thompson!

And have a wonderful foliage season.

Kathy Cain, Vice President

ANNUAL MEETING DRAWS MEMBERS

This year's annual meeting drew approximately 65 members to Camp Fernwood on August 5. As usual, the most important piece of business was to elect and re-elect officers and directors for the following year. Once again Tom Ray and Sue Ellis have agreed to serve as co-presidents, with Kathy Cain as new vice president, Jane Fahey as secretary, and Chris Pottle as treasurer. With most of the incumbent directors staying in office for the next two years, Kansas Wight will be the only new face on the board.

Fritz Seving, Director of Fernwood, announced that 20 TLEA memberships were purchased in the names of the camp's senior girls this year. Committee reports included Environmental Chair Scott Bernardy's DVD presentation, put together with the help of videographer Joel Dulberg, showing the painstaking work he and several others performed this spring in placing benthic barriers to combat variable leaf milfoil in Otisfield Cove and Edwards Cove. Getting those plastic tarps to stay in place under water looked like a real challenge!

Tom Brennan, geologist for Poland Spring Bottling Company, followed with a power point presentation titled "Management of Lake Aquifers," in which he concentrated on the geological aspects of the Company's water harvesting operation. He also discussed the extensive mapping the company has made of renewable freshwater springs in our area.

Three fine photographs by Kathy Cain were auctioned off at the event, to the benefit of TLEA's coffers.

A SPECIAL WELCOME

TO TLEA'S TWENTY NEW MEMBERS –

THE SENIOR CAMPERS FROM FERNWOOD!

We're delighted to have you join us and hope your association with Thompson Lake and TLEA will continue for many, many years to come!

(Thanks also to Fritz Seving and the Fernwood Staff
for some good thinking!)



Scott Bernardy explains milfoil control to audience at Annual Meeting at Camp Fernwood. (Photo Kathy Cain)

TACKLING MILFOIL, CHECKING BOATS, FIXING PROBLEMS

Summer is not just the time when everyone has fun on the lake. It's also the time that TLEA volunteers – and its paid workers – are busiest trying to solve potential and present problems. Following is an update on three ongoing efforts to keep the lake clean and healthy:

Milfoil eradication: As reported in the last *Observer*, TLEA's Environmental Chairman Scott Bernardy and his several volunteers put down large tarps, called benthic barriers, in two locations in an effort to eradicate at least some of the lake's flourishing patches of variable milfoil. The two locations targeted were Otisfield Cove and Edwards Cove, both in Otisfield. The plan is to move these tarps in the middle of September to adjacent spots and then leave them in place over the winter. In May, Scott's crew will again move the tarps to adjacent areas.

Preliminary results look very good. "I sneaked a peak last week," Scott says, and it looks as though the tarps have been effective in killing the milfoil. The challenge will be to kill *all* the milfoil in one area so that the native plants can reestablish themselves.

Scott says he's hopeful that more volunteers will appear next spring so that his crew can place barriers in Greeley Brook and Parsons Point.

Boat inspections: Jim Bishop is coordinator of TLEA's boat inspectors. The program is financed through state funds derived from the boat sticker program and also contributions in cash and volunteer time from TLEA itself. This summer five young people were stationed at Pismo Beach, the Oxford launch area on Route 121, and at the marina in Casco. Their job was to check boats both entering and leaving the lake for any plant life. The inspectors also hand out educational material and compile statistics. During their 570 hours this summer, the five inspectors, named Risa Card, Skye Landry, Sarah Field, Gary Garcelon, and Chris McVety, inspected 893 boats. (Last year four TLEA inspectors checked 603.) They spotted five weed fragments, of which two turned out to be variable milfoil and three were non-invasive plants.

The Youth Conservation Corps: The YCC is TLEA's major erosion control initiative, and this was its 5th summer in operation. Joe Kiley is the coordinator. The corps this summer consisted of crew chief Mindy Gilman, Josh Grenier, Tyler Wax, and Chris Wight. During their summer, the crew completed 25 projects on private property in the towns of Casco, Poland, Otisfield, and Oxford. They also donated two days' labor to Agassiz Village in return for the camp's letting TLEA use its facilities for the August pig roast. The YCC's erosion control projects included installing razor bars, box culverts, and buffer plantings and laying many yards of rip-rap to stabilize shoreline. Their biggest project, located at two adjoining residences on Pine Point Road in Oxford, involved placing rip-rap on more than 200 feet of shoreline. This job took almost six days. TLEA is especially grateful to Phoebe Hardesty, former director of the Androscoggin Soil and Water Conservation District, for volunteering her expertise at Agassiz.



YCC crew spreading loam at Agassiz Village.

McVETY AWARDED SCHOLARSHIP

TLEA's book award scholarship, awarded each year to a student pursuing environmental education, goes this year to Chris McVety of Otisfield. Chris is well known to the lake community because he has served both on the Youth Conservation Corps and as a Boat Inspector. He is beginning his first year at Susquehanna University in Pennsylvania. TLEA wishes Chris a successful scholastic career.

STRONG WINDS MAR I-DID-A-PADDLE III

Well, boaters found this year's I-Did-a-Paddle not quite as trouble-free as the boatless regatta was for the first two years. The morning of August 12 found conditions at Thompson Lake Marina sunny and cool, and the water rather quiet, with a mild 8 mph headwind from the northwest. The two chairmen for the event, Sharon Rice and Jane Fahey, gave the go-ahead for some 14 kayaks and canoes and 4 support boats to embark. Within a short time, with the wind picking up, paddlers encountered three-foot waves. Gordon Chamberlain, a veteran kayaker from Otisfield, reported waves as large as he'd ever seen them on Thompson.

Many boaters wisely turned back towards the Heath. Two of the support boats themselves ran into problems and had to retreat. The other two support boats plucked some eight kayakers from the water. The 25 foot war canoe *Ohuivo*, filled with eight intrepid paddlers, ran into trouble on the west shore shortly after passing the beach at Silvaqua. Taking on water, it capsized two hundred feet from shore. The lifejacketed crew guided the canoe into shore where residents Jack Friberg and Bob Anderson directed rescue operations.

Some ten boats eventually made their way into Pismo Beach after a long, cold workout, and were greeted by Tony Caggiano and his cook-out crew.

It was a good learning experience for TLEA's directors who have already formulated some new rules for next year's events. One important change will be to move the event from early August to the third Saturday in July when, all hope, the weather and wind will be friendlier.



Launching Ohiivo: Chris Pottle, Paul Cain, David Gastil and Joe Zilinsky maneuver War Canoe at start of I-Did-A-Paddle. (Photo, Kathy Cain)

2006 IS BAD YEAR FOR LOONS

On July 16, a number of “citizen scientists” from Thompson Lake participated in the Maine Audubon Society’s annual loon count. The event is coordinated by TLEA’s Peggy Dorf. This year the count was a disappointing 12 loons, one down from last year’s number. Even more discouraging, the counters reported no chicks at all. And Peggy says that since then, no one has reported seeing any chicks on Thompson.

A little brighter picture was provided by Holly Troy, Otisfield Cove’s dedicated loon watcher, who reported seeing 14 loons together in the Cove back in May. But this summer Holly hasn’t spotted any chicks either.

According to Susan Gallo, wildlife biologist at Maine Audubon, “It’s been a tough year for loons.” The spring’s high water on many lakes and ponds made nesting difficult because traditional lakeside nest sites were flooded out. And storms washed away many existing nests and eggs. Although Maine’s loon population of 4300 adults is the largest in New England, Maine’s loons suffer from extremely low productivity compared to neighboring states. Some of the reasons are shoreline development, high levels of mercury and other toxins, lead sinkers, and boats. Gallo has noted that although Maine’s loon chicks have declined for two years in a row, it is traditional for loon chick numbers to rebound after two or three years of decline. Let’s hope this happens in Thompson!



Mike Dorf slices pork at TLEA's successful pig roast, Agassiz Villiage, August 26 (Photo, Bob Tracy)

SECCHI DISK READINGS MEASURE WATER CLARITY

Lake water clarity, measured with a device called a Secchi disk, is a simple, reliable indicator of overall water quality. The records for Thompson go back to 1977, making it one of the most analyzed lakes in Maine. Since 1977, Thompson's water clarity has *averaged* 9 meters, making the lake clearer than at least 90 percent of Maine's lakes. The average for 2005 was 9.5 meters, and in 2003 Thompson was the clearest ever, with an average of 10.7 meters (35 feet)!

The Secchi disk reading is taken at the lake's deepest spot, off Hayes Point. Director Bob Tracy has volunteered to help with this important task for the last several years. He cautions that many factors may affect the Secchi disk readings – time of day, amount of sunlight, wind velocity, and wind direction. He also explains that water clarity generally indicates the amount of algae present in the water. Growth of algae can be influenced by such factors as water temperature and the concentration of phosphorus in the water. Untreated

stormwater runoff from developed areas in lake watersheds often contains moderately high concentrations of phosphorus and is the primary threat to the quality of Maine lakes and ponds.

Secchi disk readings vary throughout the summer, and from year to year, as a result of the influences mentioned above. Because of this, multiple readings are required over a period of many years to determine actual trends in water quality.

With all those caveats, here are Bob’s readings for the past two summers. Note especially the reading for July 1, 2006, when clarity rose to an extraordinary 11 meters – quite impressive, considering all the rain we had this summer and also the fact that volunteers in other Maine lakes have reported record low water clarity readings this year. A more detailed analysis of all water tests will be forthcoming in a report from Lake Biologist Scott Williams, who monitors additional indicators of water quality in Thompson throughout the summer. Summary data for Thompson and many other Maine lakes appear also in a report published by the Maine Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program. It may be viewed on the VLMP website: www.mainevolunteerlakemonitors.org.

Thompson Lake Summer's Secchi Disk Readings

2005	Water Clarity, in Meters
June 3	10.60
June 20	9.90
July 3	10.10
July 24	8.90
Aug. 6	10.80
Sept. 2	9.60
2006	
May 28	9.50
June 13	9.09
July 1	11.0
July 14	10.50
July 31	8.40
Aug. 15	8.10
Sept. 1	9.30

TLEA NEEDS YOU !

Like all such organizations, TLEA finds that a few of its 400 members do most of the volunteer work. We'd like to widen that pool! We have a wide variety of jobs taking variable amounts of time and talent. Here are some of them:

Boat inspection coordinator: Interested in coordinating the five young people TLEA hires each summer to check boats for invasive plants? Call Jim Bishop at 539-4445.

Weed watchers and barrier placers: Call Scott Bernardy at 878-5380 to learn more about these two programs. Moving those benthic barriers around takes a critical number of volunteers, but only for a short time. Kayakers are especially valuable.

Grant writers: We need individuals to help raise money from the four towns and write grants to charitable foundations to support our YCC program. If you've got this kind of experience, we can use you! Call Jim Bishop at 539-4445.

Lake Day workers: Like working with kids? The Education Committee requires a lot of folks to do a lot of different things – all culminating in their Lake Day at Agassiz Village in May. Call Sandy Roderick at 539-2697 or Jane Fahey at 627-4936.

Events Committee: If you're a people person and like to make things, sell things, or plan things, this Committee is for you. Call Sharon Rice at 998-2088 or Peggy Dorf at 539-2973.

Got more money than time? TLEA welcomes membership contributions over and above annual dues!

SCHOOL DAYS

As millions of children return to school this fall, some of them reluctantly, we came across this appropriate statement by British statesman Winston Churchill:

I am always ready to learn, although I do not always like being taught.

IN MEMORIAM, ERLAND B. STARBIRD

Erland B. Starbird, TLEA's first president, died in Oxford on August 21, 2006, at the age of 77. Born in Turner, he moved to Oxford as a young man. Before his retirement in 1989, he taught industrial arts at Oxford Hills. A master carpenter, he built many homes on the shores of Thompson Lake.

According to his published obituary, he first became concerned about the potential contamination of Thompson Lake in the 1970s. He served two terms as TLEA's first president. His wife Della, two daughters, and several grandchildren survive him.

TLEA DIRECTORS, 2006-2007

	<i>Home</i>	<i>Phone</i>
Art Bellwood	Oxford	539-2322
Scott Bernardy	Portland	878-5380
Jim Bishop	Otisfield	539-4445
Tony Caggiano	Billerica, MA	539-4864
Kathy Cain (Vice Pres.)	Auburn	783-7531
Bob Cotton	Oxford	539-2387
Peggy Dorf	Oxford	539-2973
Sue Ellis (Co-Pres.)	Poland	539-2939
Jane Fahey (Secretary)	Otisfield	627-4936
Jean Hankins	Otisfield	539-2521
Joe Kiley	Otisfield	743-0014
Ed Leonard	Casco	627-7257
Frank Papineau	Casco	
Marcia Pottle	Oxford	539-2218
Chris Pottle (Treas.)	Oxford	539-2218
Tom Ray (Co-Pres.)	Poland	998-5034
Sharon Rice	Poland	998-2088
Stan Tetenman	Poland	998-2767
Bob Tracy	Otisfield	539-4188
Jerry Wax	Oxford	539-2662
Joe Wax	Oxford	539-2662
Kansas Wight	Concord, MA	998-8277

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

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

OBSERVER

Published quarterly by the
Thompson Lake Environmental Association
(207) 539-4535
Editor: Jean Hankins

Non-Profit Organization
Thompson Lake
Environmental Association
U.S. Postage
PAID
Oxford, ME 04270
Permit # 71