

The THOMPSON LAKE

OBSERVER

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Beaver power!

Joel Dulberg took this shot this summer at the tip of Megquier Island.

Note: Town code enforcement officers warn that tree cutting of this magnitude, without permit from the town and DEP, constitutes a Shoreland Zone violation.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: MILFOIL IS SPREADING

This is a pivotal time for TLEA. The invasive species of variable leaf milfoil is spreading to new areas of Thompson Lake. As many know, this pest has been in our lake for at least 25 years. For the first few years this awful plant spread to every cove and shallow spot on the lake. Then slowly it retreated to a few spots at the northeast end of Thompson and at the Heath. Lately we have observed it spreading faster. We are now in **crisis mode**. If we don't do something quickly, the milfoil could return to its previous widespread state. Therefore, we are asking your support to mitigate this insidious weed. Beginning with this issue of the *Observer*, we will be seeking your help on several fronts: soliciting your neighbor to join us, volunteering some of your time, and helping to fund our environmental projects.

As reported on page 3 of this issue, the Environmental Committee has tried, through the use of benthic barriers, to kill areas of milfoil. While this method does eradicate the vegetation under the tarp in two months, it's a slow and labor-intensive process. We feel that this method is of limited value, especially considering the fast rate at which the milfoil is growing and spreading. This year a second method was tried, in combination with the residents of Edwards Cove, where trained, licensed divers pulled up a considerable area of infested milfoil by hand. While effective, this method yields results faster than the benthic barriers do. But professional divers are expensive.

In use at several Maine locations is a craft called a **harvester boat**. This is a converted pontoon boat with a large water pump to bring water and plants from the lake to a sluiceway (separator). Here the vegetation is removed from the water to be disposed of. This method also uses a shallow water dive system which does not require tanks or licensed divers. If someone will donate a structurally safe pontoon boat to TLEA, we can build this system for about \$11,000. This boat, with a three man crew, could clear an area of about 60,000 square feet in one summer. Though expensive to operate, it will still cost less than the professional divers and will be much faster than the benthic barriers. The estimated cost to operate the pontoon harvester is over \$14,000 per year for the crew, maintenance, gas, insurance, and miscellaneous items. At our last meeting, TLEA directors listened to the arguments for all methods of mitigation and decided to investigate further the possibilities of the harvester boat.

Removal of milfoil is not just a problem for isolated stretches of the lake shore. It is a problem for every person who uses Thompson. Milfoil mitigation is going to take an enormous commitment from TLEA. Please be extra generous in your membership donations. And ask your neighbors and friends to do the same.

Tom Ray, Co-President



*Diver Rob McVety harvesting variable leaf milfoil at Edwards Cove.
(Photo Scott Bernardy)*

AN UPDATE ON MILFOIL MANAGEMENT

The variable milfoil didn't all appear at once in Thompson Lake. And getting rid of it is going to be a long-term process, too. That's what TLEA's milfoil fighters have been acknowledging as they have been experimenting with several techniques to see what works best. In the past two years, there have been some encouraging signs of progress. In the two areas of the lake which TLEA has been concentrating on, Otisfield Cove and Edwards Cove, the eradicators have used different strategies.

Bob Tracy, one of those fighters, lives in Otisfield Cove, which has been heavily infested with milfoil for some time. Here he reports that the most effective means of killing the milfoil has been using large benthic (plastic) barriers weighted down with rebar and rock-filled plastic bags. The decaying plants release what Bob calls "an amazing amount" of methane gas, causing the tarps to float upward. When this happens slits are made in the barriers to decrease the floating tendency. In the last three years that the barriers have been used, the milfoil has vanished in over

fifty percent of the infested areas covered by the barriers. In September a total of four 30 x 60 foot tarps were put down in Otisfield Cove.

Bob also reports that in this specific location, Scott Bernardy and his associate found it necessary to hand pull individual milfoil plants which lurk around docks and other places which cannot be reached by the tarps. (Scott cautions that only those who have received special training should attempt this hand pulling procedure.)

In Edwards Cove, the local property owners raised most of \$8,000 needed to hire two professional divers. TLEA obtained the necessary permits required by the DEP for work in an area heavily infested with milfoil. This summer the two divers removed several truckloads of milfoil from the Cove, significantly reducing the total amount of milfoil present. However, this is not a one-shot procedure. To get the area totally under control requires having the divers remove the surviving milfoil year after year. In Cushman Pond in western Maine where hand pulling has been used as the sole method of milfoil management, it has taken seven years to completely eradicate the milfoil.

As Tom Ray's President's Message states, TLEA's directors have been taking the milfoil management problem most seriously. Please read Tom's message on page 2.

LOONS REMAIN ELUSIVE

When loon hunters began their search very early on the morning of July 21, they had almost perfect conditions for spotting birds, with clear skies and plenty of sun. But, as Loon Coordinator Peggy Dorf reports, the spotters found only four loons. Tom Ray found two down by the Heath, and Chris and Marcia Pottle reported two in Otisfield Cove. So the official count for all of Thompson Lake, as Peggy reported to the Audubon Society, was **four**. Last year it was 14. What's going on?

Peggy has suggested that Thompson Lake's loons may be late risers, because other folks on the lake saw plenty of loons at various other times. The best news is that there seem to be a number of little loons on the lake. Craig-who-delivers-mail-in-Poland spotted two chicks. Someone else saw two babies behind the island owned by Doris Ham in the Edwards Cove area. Then on August 15 Holly Troy reported two more chicks, these in Otisfield Cove. These reports of six members of a new loon generation encourage us to hope that the loons are making a comeback, and that next year's count will rise.

OF PADDLES AND PIGS

The much-anticipated **I-Did-a-Paddle** took place only a week late, postponed from August 21 to 28 because of strong winds on the original day. August 28 dawned hot and sunny, auspicious conditions for canoers and kayakers assembled at Thompson Lake Marina for the long paddle to Pismo Beach. The postponement obviously kept the participant number down. Still, seven intrepid souls spent the morning testing their muscles as they conquered the lake. Four support boats with equally intrepid directors aboard provided the safety net which, this year, no one needed. At Pismo Beach the Caggiano family once again cooked up a delicious lunch.

Next year, according to Sharon Rice, TLEA's Principal Organizer, the regatta will get turned completely around. On July 19, 2008, she says, paddlers will depart from Pismo and end up at the Marina in Casco. The idea is not just to test the opposing winds and provide some variety, but also to shift the lunch preparations over to the marina. Rain date will be a week later, with more information forthcoming in the spring *Observer*.

The second annual **Pig Roast** was held on a blustery, cold day when everyone was happy for an excuse to move away from the lake and inside the welcoming walls of **Agassiz Village**, which Camp Director Allan Gillis once again made available for this fund-raising event. Harvest Hills Farm Market in West Poland and Eggcetera Restaurant, also in Poland, provided great food for the 120 diners. Plans are to repeat this event next summer, with a possible wine tasting treat to accompany the barbecued pork.



*Scott Bernardy nears the finish of July's I-Did-A-Paddle event.
(Photo Kathy Cain)*



Some of the many guests at Agassiz Villiage enjoy this summer's TLEA pig roast. (Photo, Bob Tracy)

SHORELAND BUILDERS BEWARE

“Otisfield Heats Up Shoreland Warnings,” reads the headline to Mark Chag’s September 20 article on page 3C of the *Advertiser Democrat*. For those who live near Thompson Lake, those warnings deserve wide publicity. What it comes down to is that ignorance of shoreland zoning laws is no excuse, and those who ignore them are engaging in financially risky behavior.

After a long period of fact finding by the town’s Planning Board, the selectmen in Otisfield recently fined two separate landowners \$2,500 and \$5,000, respectively, for making building changes within the 250-foot shoreland zone without first obtaining permits. These permits, as Mark Chag’s article notes, are required by both the town and the state. Richard St. John, who is Otisfield’s code enforcement officer, says it pays to consult him before doing anything. “They should contact me first for anything within 250 feet of the shore, and especially within 100 feet of the shore.” Enforcement is likely to be equally strict in the towns of Poland, Oxford, and Casco. So be sure to ask first.

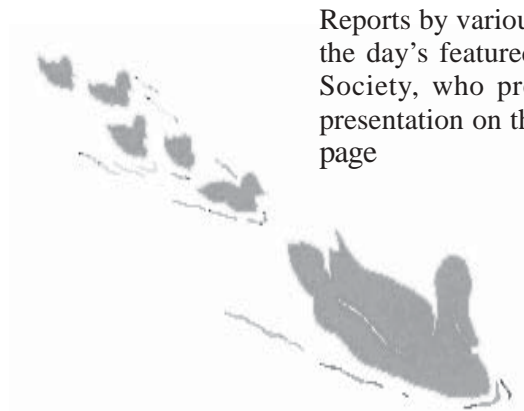
ANNUAL MEETING ELECTS OFFICERS, LEARNS ABOUT LOONS

Those who missed TLEA's annual meeting, held at Kamp Kohut on August 4, will be glad to learn that Thompson Lake Environmental Association is alive and well. Some sixty members attended. Ten directors were re-elected to the board, and one new face was added, that of Sandy Roderick, the Oxford teacher who, as organizer of Lake Day, is no stranger. Stepping down as directors this year were Joe Wax and Jerry Wax. Joe Wax served as secretary to the board for several years. Jerry has been chair of the YCC steering committee and also a hardworking member of the Events Committee. Although no longer directors, Joe and Jerry have promised to pitch in and help out when needed. We're grateful for their past and future good works.

Just to bring you up to date, TLEA directors serving until 2009 are: Art Bellwood, Kathy Cain, Jean Hankins, Chris Pottle, Tom Ray, Sandy Roderick, Tony Caggiano, Jane Fahey, Joe Kiley, Marcia Pottle, and Sharon Rice. Directors whose term ends in 2008 are: Scott Bernardy, Jim Bishop, Bob Cotton, Peggy Dorf, Ed Leonard, Bob Tracy, Kansas Wight, Stan Tetenman, and Sue Ellis. Tom Ray and Sue Ellis are continuing as co-presidents; Kathy Cain as vice-president, Chris Pottle as treasurer, and Jane Fahey as secretary.

Tom Ray and Sue Ellis delivered the Presidents' Message, remarking that 2007 will be remembered as the Year of the Patriot's Day Storm. "For those of you who do not reside on the lake year round, they wrote, "consider yourselves lucky to have not been here. The six inches of rain that fell overnight caused washouts. From this destruction, it all ran down hill. Tons of gravel, sand and dirt washed into Thompson Lake." The result was a marked decrease in water clarity this summer, one that everyone hopes will be only temporary.

Reports by various committee chairs were followed by the day's featured speaker, Joy Felio of the Audubon Society, who presented an interesting power point presentation on the life and habits of loons. See photo page





At TLEA's Annual Meeting, Joy Felio of Maine Audubon gives details about loons. (Photo, Bob Tracy)

BOAT INSPECTORS REPORT ON SUMMER'S WORK

This spring and summer TLEA's boat inspectors, on duty over weekends and holidays, checked approximately 864 boats, looking for any hitchhiking aquatic plants and reminding boat operators about the dangers of invasive species like variable milfoil. According to Jim Bishop, who coordinates the program for TLEA, this summer's boating level was about the same as last year. Only seven plant fragments were discovered. As usual, most of these were turned over to Scott Williams' team at Volunteer Lake Monitoring in Auburn for expert identification. Jim's statistics go to Peter Lowell, of Lakes Environmental Association in Bridgton, who serves as the Boat Inspection Program coordinator for the southern part of the state.

The inspectors were busiest at the Thompson Lake Marina in Casco, where they counted 446 boats. At "the Landing" on Route 121 in Oxford, they counted 307, and at Pismo Beach, 111. This was the fifth or sixth year TLEA has undertaken this work, which is now funded through the State of Maine's sticker program.

Asked to comment on the effectiveness of the program, Jim replied that most of the boat operators entering and leaving Thompson are well informed about the problem of invasive plants, and most are courteous to the inspectors. Jim believes that the emphasis should now shift to making sure the boaters do more self-inspection. In future years he also hopes the boaters will help TLEA out by recording and reporting back all the sites where they find infestations of milfoil and other invasive species.

MYSTERIOUS SNAIL SHOWS UP IN LAKE

As if we didn't have enough on our hands with variable leaf milfoil, now there's another invasive species turning up in Thompson – **Chinese mystery snail**. Recently Pixie Williams, an Otisfield botanist, found several of these yellowish two-inch snails in the Greeley Brook Causeway. Apparently they are also present in Saturday, Pleasant, and Parker Ponds. They may have found their way into Thompson via Sand Pond in Norway. The outlet of this pond drains into Greeley Brook, one of Thompson's main sources. Originating in Asia, the snail (*viviparus malleatus*) is uniform in color, light to dark olive green, without any color bands. According to information obtained from the Internet, it was introduced for sale in a Chinese market in San Francisco in 1892 and was in Boston by 1915. For more, check the USGS webpage at www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/fish/ais/snail.htm. (Thanks to Roberta Hill for steering us this way.)

Lake biologist Scott Williams indicates that the snails are turning up throughout Maine. Recently he found one while eating his lunch on the shore of Lake Auburn. He reports that the snails are present as far away as Pleasant Lake in Aroostook County.

So what? you may ask. The answer will have to wait for more information. Scott's guess is that "When these critters are abundant, they can become a real nuisance, accumulating and decomposing along the shoreline." We hope to have more information available for the next newsletter.



Now you see it, now you don't. Devin Savoic shows his mom Lisa the albino frog he caught this summer. (Photo, Bob Tracy)

A WAKEUP CALL FROM AUDUBON

If you think it's just the loons that are disappearing, think again. The summer issue of the Audubon Society's periodical issues a wakeup call about the decline of our common birds.

"If you live in the East," it begins, "a bird like the eastern meadowlark is synonymous with summer. But the skies are becoming a little quieter and the landscape a little drabber these days because the eastern meadowlark and many other species are slowly but surely declining."

Since 1967, the article continues, the average population of the common birds in steepest decline have fallen **seventy percent**, from 17.6 million to 5.35 million individuals. Audubon's statistics are based on their annual Christmas Bird Count and information from the Breeding Bird Survey organized by the U.S. Geological Survey. These birds include the northern bobwhite, evening grosbeak, northern pintail, greater scaup, boreal chickadee, eastern meadowlark, and common tern.

In Audubon's list of solutions are the following:

- Preserve farmlands
- Save grasslands
- Conserve wetlands
- Halt global warming
- Support sustainable forests
- Stop invasive species
- Patrol beaches
- Monitor feeders for dead or diseased birds
- Join the Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count

For more information, check the Audubon Society's watch list of all North American bird species at risk: www.audubon.org/bird/cbc

WANTED: MORE WEED WATCHERS

Thompson Lake now has about sixteen individuals serving as Weedwatchers. That's not enough, according to Scott Bernardy, TLEA's Environmental Chair. These monitors, as he prefers to call them, serve an important function in the battle against milfoil. Each person has the task of patrolling a section of the lake, usually about half a mile of shorefront located on both sides of that person's own property, looking for changes in plant life, especially invasive species. The monitors must first receive training in identifying invasive aquatic plants and, most pertinent to Thompson, variable leaf milfoil. The monitors check their sector at their own convenience, as

often as they can, usually travelling by canoe or kayak. According to Scott, two monitors actually swim their section, which, he says, is ideal because you can see ten times better in the water than above it.

Weedwatchers will resume their important work next spring, but it's not too soon to make a commitment to help out in this important job which, it is hoped, will result in an accurate map of variable leaf milfoil spots on the lake. For more information, give Scott a call at 878-5380 or email him at drbinme@banet.net.



Cindy and Colleen Clausen of New London, HH, count clams they've harvested in Otisfield Cove. (Photo Bob Tracy)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We've just learned that the Italian health ministry is urging employers to let staff go without neckties, as a way to help stop global warming. "Taking your tie off immediately lowers the body temperature by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius," the ministry said in a statement, "allowing a more sensible use of air conditioning that yields electricity savings and protects the environment."

We have two reactions to this sensational news: First, this is something we're already doing in Maine. Except for funerals and other formal occasions, when did you last see a necktie in or around Thompson Lake? Second, why stop with the necktie?

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home.gwi.net/~tlea

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