

TRIBAL MEMBER NEWS

Back From The Brink

by Claire B. Dunn (first printed in the fall/winter 2005-2006 issue of *Inside ESF*, the magazine of the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry; reprinted with permission)

Thriving populations of large, healthy brown trout and walleye – and one 4-foot-long sturgeon – have been found in Onondaga Lake by ESF researchers.

The presence of the highly prized sport fish, discovered in nets this past summer, could mean that the lake – once considered to be among the nation's most polluted – is rebounding.

"It could reflect the improvement of Onondaga Lake," said Dr. Neil H. Ringler, an ESF fisheries expert who is serving as the college's interim dean of research programs. "I've been working on this lake since 1986 and I did not realize that there is a sizable population of large, cold-water fish there."

The discovery of fish that require water that is cool or cold and highly oxygenated could be signs that the lake is recovering from decades of industrial and sewage pollution.

"It may be that the quality of the lake has improved over time and is permitting the fish to survive," Ringler said. "The trout and the walleye are especially of interest because of the cool water. It's clear that there's a fishery there we didn't know about, for the larger fish."

"This finding suggests that the lake may have far more potential for a cold-water fishery than we anticipated."

The discovery prompted the Onondaga Lake Management Conference, headed by Dr. Edward Michalenko, to extend a grant to study the movements of fish in and out of the lake. Ringler said that numeric tags and radio transmitters will be used to track the fish.

He is also seeking support from New York Sea Grant, a network of research, education, and extension services that promote protection of marine resources.

The fish populations were found by Tony Siniscal, a master's student studying the movement and habitat of fish in Onondaga Lake. He is completing an internship with the state Department of Environmental Conservation and supported by the Edna Bailey Sussman Foundation.

Siniscal's work involved setting gill nets in an area that has not recently attracted a lot of research interest. He set the nets between 20 and 30 feet below the surface, where experts had believed low levels of dissolved oxygen would hamper aquatic life during summer months.

He was working in sight of the waste beds on the lake's west shore, near a permanent habitat module established in the lake by the Onondaga Lake Management Conference. The module, which resembles a jetty, provides environment for aquatic plants and spawning habitat for fish.

One day in early June 2005, when he checked the nets, Siniscal found a brown trout that weighed 10 pounds. In the following days, he routinely found trout of that size and walleye that were more than 24 inches long. About a week after that first discovery, a thunderstorm kept him from returning to the nets until the next morning. On that visit, Siniscal pulled in some 40 large walleye and four brown trout.



Tony Siniscal

"I've fished the area a lot," said Siniscal, who grew up in nearby Liverpool. "I haven't found anybody catching fish of this magnitude. I've checked the records and I've never heard of anybody catching fish like this in Onondaga Lake."

Ringler and Siniscal believe the fish were migrating through the lake, feasting on the smaller alewives that live there. They suspect the fish came from Nine Mile Creek, Onondaga Creek, or the Seneca River. Other research projects involve checking several types of nets in the lake but the scientists have not seen any juvenile brown trout or walleye, which indicates the fish are not spawning there.

Siniscal said the trout apparently left the lake later in the summer, perhaps in search of cooler water in Nine Mile Creek or the Seneca River. The walleye, however, were still in the lake at the start of autumn.

Siniscal was also netting quillback,

a type of sucker that has never been seen in the lake, at the beginning of autumn. Quillback are usually found in larger bodies of water and their tributaries, such as Lake Ontario and the Black River.

And he had netted one sturgeon, which he estimated to be around 15 years old. He believes the sturgeon, classified as a threatened species in New York, probably moved into the lake from Oneida Lake.

"They've been seen in Onondaga Lake before but it doesn't happen very often," Siniscal said.

Scientists describe Onondaga Lake as hypereutrophic. Abundant nutrients, specifically phosphorus and nitrogen, result in significant algae growth, which in turn supply food for bacteria, which consume much of the oxygen deep in the lake.

Essentially, the lake water becomes two layers: Approximately 20 feet on the top that is warmer and oxygenated, and deeper water that is cooler and can be virtually devoid of oxygen. In fall, when temperatures drop, the lake "turns over" and the two levels blend.

As a result, reduced oxygen levels in the fall might force fish such as walleye and brown trout to leave the lake. Warm water fish, such as bass and sunfish, can survive all year.

Dunn is assistant director in the Office of News and Publications, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Syracuse, New York

SVS Students of the Month

Siletz Valley School announced the students of the month for May its last assembly for this year on June 5. Students in grades 1-8 are recognized for citizenship and academic achievements based on performance.

As a reward, we raffle various items that our local vendors give us for the students. Please thank Noel's Market, Little Chief Restaurant, and Siletz Gas & Mini-Market for their donations.

Teachers nominated the following students:

K, Ms. Irwin: Charlie Helms, Healyah Hunt

K, Ms. Miller: Alexandria Kaiser

1st grade, Ms. Butler: Kaytee Clayton, Shaundé Goodell, Taylor Sinsel

2nd grade, Ms. Hawk: Joshua Leckie, Frankie Rilatos

3rd grade, Ms. Bowen: Sierra Gerttula, Analisa Walton

4th grade, Ms. Perkins: Chrissy Joe Perkins, C.J. Perkins

5th grade, Ms. Rogers: Seth Benedict, Jesse Jordan

6th grade, Mr. Scott: Kim Anderson, Cassandra Rilatos

7th grade, Ms. Rajput: Ronni Gerttula, Nick Wallace

8th grade, Ms. McGraw: Alec Hawk, Tristan Metcalf

PE Awards, Mr. Bures and Mr. LaRoche

3rd grade: Austin Doty, Misti Warren

4th grade: James Helms, Savannah Worman

5th grade: Jasmine Elmore, Ryan Williams

6th grade: Crystal Hawk, Zachary Leckie

7th grade: Casee Case, Nichole Oliphant

8th grade: Loy Marthaller, Joe Wilson

Special Award

At the end of each school year, we recognized those students with no absences and no tardies. As a reward, Mr. Peters gave them \$10 per student that he donated himself. They are as follows:

Jostan Brown, 1st grade

Anthony Butler, 1st grade

Savanna Rilatos, 2nd grade

Tacoma Brown, 3rd grade

Amity Elliott, 6th grade

Angelia Priest-Lamadrid, 6th grade

For those students with three or fewer absences and three tardies or less, Mr. Peters gave them \$5 per student that he donated himself. They are as follows:

Julia Trchsel, kindergarden

Dylan Bisson, 2nd grade

Daniel Lindstrom, 2nd grade

Sierra Gerttula, 3rd grade

Cheyenne Maldonado, 3rd grade

Jennelle Potter, 3rd grade

Christine Perkins, 4th grade

Sophia Hendrix, 6th grade

Christopher Garza, 7th grade

Nicole Oliphant, 7th grade

Kayla Stokes, 7th grade

Thanks to Our Volunteers

We are very fortunate to have all the help that we receive from our community. In May, we had 58 volunteers who worked 172.35 hours. **Thank you** to all of you who continue to give your time and love to our school and students.

We want you to know that we will miss you all! We hope that you have a wonderful summer and are ready to start a new year in September. As you know, we will have an exciting new year as we are starting the high school.

Logan Family, Friends Reunion

The Logan family and friends reunion will begin July 22, 2006, at 10 a.m. with introductions and sharing family history. A potluck will begin at 1 p.m., followed by baseball (bring your ball equipment), bingo (please bring a small inexpensive item for a prize), and other activities.

A family tree is being developed and if you have information you would like to share, contact Jim McCormick at 503-838-3783.

Please mail in family history if you are unable to attend and other history that you would like to share.

Others who can be contacted are Elaine Thomas at 503-623-6253 (in the evening); Claudia Leno at 971-241-2031; Donna Holmes at 541-444-2578; or Lillie Butler at 541-444-2448, e-mail lebutler2@hotmail.com or send a letter to Lillie at P.O. Box 26, Siletz, OR 97380.

Please leave a message with your phone number on the answering machines. **Please call or write if you plan to attend the reunion.**