Seven New Ponds on Rum Hill

Upper Susquehanna Coalition personnel constructed 7 vernal ponds in the old fields below the original Thayer Farm (the Old Place) on Rum Hill this summer. Funding was provided through a NYSDEC grant to enhance amphibian habitat in the Susquehanna River Basin. Two established beaver ponds immediately down valley, that provided baseline data for a multi year survey of water quality associated with USACE wetland reclamation locally, will serve as primary sources of immigrating salamanders, frogs and related organisms associated with temporary ponds.

Located in Cooperstown and founded in 1968, the Biological Field Station is a unique facility serving the Upper Susquehanna Watershed, Otsego County and the immediate Cooperstown area. It is primarily a teaching and research center for undergraduate and graduate students from across New York, the United States, and Canada. Directed by Dr. Willard Harman and staffed with talented, experienced professionals, the Biological Field Station is presently the focal point for information about issues affecting Lake Otsego and the Susquehanna River.

Do we have your correct address?
Zebra Mussels Found in Otsego Lake

Zebra Mussels were found in Otsego Lake this summer in several places. Although the present population is very small, it is widespread. Within a few years we expect the negative economic and recreational effects to become apparent. However, because of Otsego’s deep cold waters and comparatively restricted shallows, we don’t feel that the ecological impacts will become too severe. At about the same time, a team from the BFS surveying freshwater clams associated with NYS Department of Transportation construction activities in the Oneonta area documented a well established population of zebra mussels between exits 14 and 15 along I-88. We have verified a colleague’s report from Binghamton that established zebra mussels are in that area also. This means the entire upper Susquehanna is colonized. Therefore, we expect to hear very soon from monitors downstream that the mussels are into Pennsylvania.

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the old trail from Snipe Hill past Broad Meadow. At that crossing a new mowed trail parallels the road east below Turtle Pond over to the south end of the Boondocks Trail. The new system now loops around the entire northwest quarter of Greenwoods. Since his retirement from the Otsego Land Trust Earle Peterson has been actively engaged in trail maintenance and development and the planting of grains for waterfowl forage on the Conservancy.

- We found a single water chestnut plant in Otsego Lake in July, the first since a few plants were removed in 1999. A full day’s search and diligence during our 35th Lake Cleanup Day failed to turn up others.

- Ryan Burns, BFS 03’, has been working as a NYSDEC technologist on Hudson River fisheries. He has spent most of his time tracking sturgeon, haul seining bass and shad, and electrofishing. He intends to pursue a career as an Environmental Conservation officer.

- Kristin France, BFS 93-96’, recently received her Ph.D. in marine science from the College of William and Mary. The college honored her with the “Thatcher Prize for Excellence” which is given annually to recognize an outstanding graduate student in their programs. Her most recent work has been as graduate research fellow with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science at Gloucester Point, VA, where she secured over $180,000 of external funding to support her research. She received her undergraduate degree at Williams College in 1999. Kristin is now back in NY and has taken a position as a Senior Conservation Scientist with the Nature Conservancy in Rochester.

- Wesley Tibbits has completed his thesis research and has taken a position with the Washington Department of Fish and Game working with Pacific salmon on the Columbia River. His work on Otsego Lake lake trout established the existence of three genetic strains of trout present in the lake, documented major lake trout spawning areas, recruitment success, and used sonic telemetry to note the changing locations of several individual fish from place to place in the lake during 2004-05.

- During the week of 9 July, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay held their Staff Retreat at the UIC. About 25 personnel from offices in Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania came together...
with the President, David Bancroft, to work with each other on comprehensive planning and other Alliance activities. They were visited by Board Chairman Brigid Kenney and Charlie Conklin, a recent past Chairman. Jim Curatolo, from the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, spoke to them on current headwater initiatives in the basin.

During the summer, BFS personnel began to evaluate the plant community in a sedge tussock wetland near Highland, Sullivan County NY that will be impacted next year by the installation of a large gas pipeline across it. BFS students and staff, working with the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, are characterizing the present flora, will be involved with removing tussocks to nearby refuge areas during construction of the pipeline, and returning them afterward. Several years monitoring will determine the success of the reclamation process.

Willow Eyres continues her graduate work on water chestnut control near Oneonta. For the second year the BFS has had 2, 4D applied followed by hand picking in an attempt to get the situation under control. For the second year Millennium Pipeline, Inc., has provided major support for the project.

Holly Meehan, BFS, 02-03-05*, is working part time with us helping with a series of projects. She recently received her Masters of Environmental Science and Management from the University of Rhode Island.

Renovation has started on the Hop House on the Thayer Farm. The contractors should be done before winter with the basement and new siding, windows and doors. At that point Dale Webster will begin the inside work. Willie’s apartment next to the boathouse, known by some old timers as “Canasta Hall”, has been renovated for short-term use by visiting researchers. Although there is electricity and heat from a wood stove, there is no water. Bathrooms and cooking facilities are available in the boathouse.

BFS personnel spent the 14th of July manning a booth at the Otsego Lake Festival and providing “Scientific Boat Rides” on the lake at that venue. Aquaria holding living fish, aquatic invertebrates and our 6 year old snapping turtle “Frankette” appeared to be a hit with the younger generation. Adults exhibited considerable interest in observing the host of aggressive exotic introductions now occurring regionally.
Seven undergraduate interns have been sponsored at the BFS this summer. Charlie Bueche from SUNY Geneseo was awarded a Rufus J. Thayer Otsego Lake Research Assistantship. He monitored water quality throughout the Otsego lake watershed and fecal coliform bacteria concentrations within the lake. Lori Crane, SUNY Oneonta, received a Biological Field Station Internship. She worked with Tom Horvath on zebra mussel mortality related to turbulence in streams. Dan Stich and Joe Lydon, both from SUNY Cobleskill, filled Robert C. MacWatters Internships in the Fisheries Sciences. They conducted research on predation by Otsego’s warm water fish on recently stocked walleye pond-fingerlings and monitored walleye movements and behavior by tracking acoustically-tagged fish, respectively. Karan Mummigatti, a SUNY Oneonta student, was awarded a Madison County Lake Moraine Assistantship. He also investigated water quality in stream reaches whose banks were dominated by the exotic plant Japanese knotweed. Caitlin Snyder, Cazenovia College, received a Biological Field Station Internship. She worked with Tom Horvath on zebra mussel mortality related to turbulence in streams.

Emily Underwood, Paul Smith’s College, held a Greenwoods Conservancy Internship. She continued the long-term monitoring of water quality and biotic indicators at Moe Pond following the establishment of largemouth bass.

There were 19 applicants this year for the two F. H. V. Mecklenburg high school internships. The most distant application was tendered from the Cambridge International School, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. This summer the internships were awarded to Sophia Ottley from Old Bridge High School in Old Bridge, New Jersey, and Owen Coyle from Alendale Columbia School in Rochester. Sophia monitored chlorophyll concentrations in Otsego Lake. Owen monitored water quality throughout the upper reaches of the Susquehanna River.

The BFS has recently received a grant of $104,390 from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for hydro-acoustic equipment to be used to further monitor the results of our work with Cornell and SUNY Cobleskill on walleye/alewife management in Otsego Lake. Additional funds are available for remote water quality monitoring equipment. Since 2005 we have received over $350,000 from the NSF for research support and renovations at the Thayer Farm. Many thanks are due our Grants Development folks, especially Kathy Meeker.

This last year a new trail complex has been added to Greenwoods Conservancy. A new trail from Seldom Seen running west to the Cranberry Bog Road northwest of High Fields was cleared and blazed by a BFS crew. This will join a flagged trail looping down along Butternut Creek east back to cross.

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