

The Oneida Lake Bulletin

Spring 2015

www.oneidalakeassociation.org

Algae and Oneida Lake - What You Need to Know

By: Scott Kishbaugh, NYSDEC Division of Water

Oneida Lake means many things to many people. The word “big” is often used—big boats, big fish, big sky, big waves, big fun. For others, it has the feel of a “small” community, with friendly neighbors and a sense of family at the many restaurants, marinas, beaches, and lakefront businesses. Those lucky enough to spend a day or lifetime on the lake will no doubt have their own favorite description of the lake. The Oneida referred to the lake as Tsioqui, or “white water”. But the French referred to it as “le lac vert,” or “the green lake.” Who habbed it right?

HAB?

The term “HAB” is short for “harmful algal bloom,” a term that describes a condition in lakes and rivers that may have been around for many years but is increasingly the focus of scientists, government officials, and lake residents throughout the world. Each phrase in the term is important—“harmful” refers to the production of algal toxins and other substances that can cause a range of symptoms, including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, skin or throat irritation, allergic reactions or breathing difficulties. Blue-green algae can also produce toxins that affect the liver and nervous systems when water is consumed in sufficient quantities. The term “algal” is a misnomer, since freshwater harmful algal blooms are made of cyanobacteria—photosynthesizing blue green bacteria—rather than algae, but the term has been used for so long that it has stuck. “Bloom” refers to large quantities of algae, usually seen in surface scums or rafts, or heavily discolored water. Small amounts of cyanobacteria are naturally present in nearly all lakes and



Oneida Lake Shackelton Point Harbor – Summer 2013 (Photo by Amy Lee Hetherington)

streams. It is when these three terms and certain environmental conditions collide large concentrations of cyanobacteria that can produce toxins—that lake users need to be concerned.

Although the term “harmful algal bloom” is relatively new, cyanobacteria are among the oldest organisms on earth, dating back at least 3.5 billion years. Harmful algal blooms have been reported throughout the world. Cyanobacteria toxins have been implicated in the death of countless wildlife, many pets in the US and around the world. Blooms shut down the drinking water supply for millions and cost more than \$150 million in Lake Tiahu, the third largest freshwater lake in China. In Brazil, nearly 75 dialysis patients died from cyanobacteria toxins at a clinic that was drawing water from a lake with an intense algal bloom in 1996. However, illness associated with blue green algae exposure is probably

highly underreported, because similar symptoms are often experienced by picnickers who ate food left out too long in the heat, weekend athletes over-exerting in the hot sun, or even someone suffering from the common cold. Only a handful of New Yorkers have reported symptoms associated with exposure to blue green algae blooms (tracked by the state Health Department) in the last few years, although several dogs within the state have died suddenly over the same period after exposure to blooms. Blue green algae toxins may accumulate in some fish, although there have been no reports of anyone getting sick from eating fish caught from blooms. To be safe, anglers should heed the advice in the New York Freshwater Fishing Guide from NYSDOH that recommends avoiding eating fish caught from areas that have thick paint-like or pea soup-like coloration characteristic

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President's Message

OLA Celebrates 70!

Wow! As I write this message, 70 degrees is but a dream. But what a winter! And what a reason to celebrate — your Oneida Lake Association has a big birthday this year.

As we gear up for the April 29 Annual Meeting, the Association is 70 years old. Congratulations! In the last 70 years, only a few years have seen ice durations and thicknesses like the 2014-5 winter. I hope that the April 25, 1891 ice-out record is not broken!

The record I do hope to break is that of our recent membership – with your help, let's break through the 3,000 ceiling that we have been chasing for the last decade. With that membership, let's get the lake community more involved. Take a kid fishing. Bring the children to our meetings. Advance school and town programs to put youth in and on the water. Volunteer, lead by example, and generally help the next generation of leaders learn to observe the little, daily changes that have long term consequences to our ecology, economic environment, and government. Think what influence your Board could have in speaking to Albany and Washington on behalf of 5,000 members! Can that be our target for 2020?

We accomplished a lot together last year. Our members influenced sustained cormorant control measures, helped control the extent of water chestnut in the lake, facilitated timely removal of navigation hazards, supported the Fish Culture Station programs, and a dozen other 'pluses' that we will mention at the Annual Meeting. If you are local, come join us April 29 in Cicero. Bring a neighbor. Bring the kids! Learn 'the state of the lake' from experts, and take home a door prize.

Our real prize is this lake. What a jewel, its value changing, but nevertheless something that like a precious stone in a ring—Oneida Lake makes all that surrounds it complete. For many of you, the completion of the ice fishing season opens the consumptive opportunity for walleye, then bass, and finally duck seasons. For others, putting away the snow machine means the speedboat, personal watercraft, and cuddly cabins can come out of storage, or perhaps the kayaks, sailboats, canoes—maybe even the standup paddleboards. Please avail yourself of the opportunity to enjoy friends and family time on the lake, be conscious of your impact and influence. Have fun, respect others' "space," and be safe.

Scott Shupe
President, Oneida Lake Association
president@oneidalakeassociation.org
info@oneidalakeassociation.org

The Oneida Lake Association, Inc.

Founded in 1945

The Bulletin is published by the Oneida Lake Association, Inc., so that its members may be informed regarding the activities of the association. The Oneida Lake Association, Inc., was organized in 1945 to restore and preserve the natural resources of Oneida Lake and its environs.

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Annual Meeting

Wednesday April 29

6 pm

Cicero-North Syracuse
High School

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Algae

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of blue-green algae blooms. All of this indicates that blue green algae bloom illness may be uncommon but serious.

What about Oneida Lake?

The writings from Samuel Champlain, about 400 years ago, described the lake with words consistent with blooms and the observation of “lake blossoms” on the lake by James Fenimore Cooper about 200 years ago suggest that the French had it right. Or did they? There is no standard definition of what is a bloom, and scientists don’t yet know how much green is too much, at least as it relates to blue green algae and toxins. Many Oneida Lake residents and visitors have commented that green is normal for Oneida Lake and therefore it doesn’t represent a problem, although samples from similar conditions in other recently studied lakes have shown elevated blue green algae levels and, at times, high toxin levels.

Fortunately, Oneida Lake has been closely studied for many years. Dr. Greg Boyer from SUNY ESF and Dr. Ed Mills have investigated the algae communities in Oneida Lake since the 1970s and more intensively in the last decade, especially for algal toxins. They have reported their findings about lake conditions to the Oneida Lake Association for many years. Their work shows that the most intense blooms do not occur every year—in fact, they often seem to be greenest along the shoreline every other year or in unpredictable intervals. The algae levels away from the shoreline may at times create unsafe conditions for those that drink the water directly from the lake, but to some extent, this is similar to many other lakes. Drinking untreated water may be unsafe even from crystal clear lakes that rarely, if ever, suffer algae blooms.

In Oneida Lake, high algae levels are often reported along the shoreline, frequently reported to look like green flecks or grass clippings in the water, but will take on a pea soup appearance when concentrated by the wind. The algae

community in the lake is dominated by a mostly non-toxic cyanobacteria species called *Aphanizomenon*, more commonly referred to as “Fannie.” However, both toxic and non-toxic strains of a different cyanobacteria called *Microcystis*, or “Mike,” can create a higher risk for swimmers. These can result in conditions ranging from a slight green tint to heavy concentrations along the shoreline, particularly in mid to late summer, occasionally closing Verona and Sylvan beaches and creating unsightly and smelly conditions. Unfortunately, without examining each bloom with a microscope, and an analysis of toxin levels, it is impossible to know whether Fannie or Mike are present, or even if green water creates a risk for swimmers. Due to this uncertainty both the Department of Environmental Conservation and Department of Health strongly advise avoiding contact with all surface scums or heavily discolored water. This is particularly important in a lake like Oneida, which can experience both short-term and long-lasting widespread blooms that can be difficult to characterize.

Scientists are still trying to understand why blooms happen in some lakes but not others. Phosphorus and nitrogen clearly play a role; lakes with high nutrient levels are much more likely to have regular and intense blooms. So keeping nutrients out of the water, by properly maintaining septic systems, planting shoreline buffers to intercept stormwater, and reducing land fertilization, can help to reduce the likelihood of summer blooms. But other factors, from zebra mussels and food web disruptions to wind concentration of small blooms, as well as many poorly understood factors, can lead to a lot of green water.

Keeping track of blooms

DEC has several statewide monitoring programs that look at and for harmful algae blooms, but Oneida Lake does not have a group actively involved in these programs. However, beach managers at Verona and Sylvan beaches regularly look

for any conditions, including blue green algae, that might compromise the safety of swimmers. The long-term monitoring program at the Cornell Biological Field Station at Shackleton Point continues to track a variety of water quality indicators, including algae. But even this intensive monitoring cannot keep track of all blooms in all locations in the lake. DEC has developed an on-line HAB reporting form at www.dec.ny.gov/docs/water_pdf/algaereportform.pdf to collect information and pictures from anyone observing what may be bloom conditions outside a dock, in areas where people boat or fish, or anywhere on the lake. This information, is reviewed by DEC and DOH and if it is determined to be a bloom, the lake information is reported on the DEC website at www.dec.gov/chemical/83310.html. This website is updated every week with reports of blooms from throughout the state and is intended to provide information to lake residents, visitors and their families to help make informed recreational decisions.

Can we expect the problem to go away?

The problem with blue green algae blooms is likely to get worse. The ice-on period for lakes in the northern US is shorter now than 50-100 years ago, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency. The longer ice-free season means a longer growing season, allowing blooms to start earlier in the spring and last longer into the fall. Many climatologists believe that global climate change will result in warmer air and water temperatures, a greater frequency of drought periods, and more extreme storm events. This change in the climate will create the right conditions for blooms to develop, and bring more nutrients to feed these blooms. Warmer water may mean more algae; research shows that blue green algae are more likely than other algae species to thrive in warmer conditions. The eutrophication or natural aging of lakes is sped up by human activities, and

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Algae

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the nutrient enrichment that comes from eroding materials, stormwater, fertilizer, and wastewater contributes to a number of lake problems, including algal blooms. As eutrophication accelerates due to the slow but relentless pressure that comes from loving lakes too much, the frequency of algae blooms is expected to increase. Green water may be here to stay.

What should we do to help prevent the problem?

DEC and DOH have limited authority to reduce the steady drip of nutrients entering lakes and individuals cannot do much on their own to stop landscape level nutrient inputs to lakes. The problem requires all affected parties to work together. For individuals, the seemingly slight and subtle decisions made by lake residents every day—whether to fertilize a lawn or allow it to grow to the lake edge, how often to pump a septic tank or upgrade it when they build that extra bedroom, which materials they use to pave their driveway, or even whether to feed the ducks—all can have profound effects on the nutrient loading to lakes.

Until the actions by individuals and government programs to reduce nutrient levels in the lake result in a significant drop in algae levels, lake users need to be mindful of the potential risks of recreating in or drinking “HABby” water. Much of Oneida Lake may fully support swimming and other recreational uses during most of the summer, and managers at public beaches continue to carefully monitor for blue green algae and other hazards for swimmers, closing beaches when needed. For those recreating outside of beaches, the advice on the DEC web page—“if you see it, avoid it”—is the best way to protect yourself. Even with blue green algae blooms cropping up in some locations during part of the summer, Oneida Lake is still big summer fun as long as visitors and lake users look out for the lake.

Cornell Scientists Tracking Oneida Lake Blue-Green Algae

Cyanobacteria, also known as blue-green algae, are microscopic organisms which have been on Earth for at least 3.5 billion years and are found naturally in many lakes, including Oneida Lake. Some species form colonies that are clearly visible as strands or clumps in the water. Although small in size, cyanobacteria can have large impacts on ecosystems due to their abundance. In addition, some of the Oneida Lake species are toxic, and if ingested, can be harmful to humans and animals. In the summer and early fall, cyanobacteria can rapidly multiply in surface waters causing visible, blue-green colored blooms which decrease water quality affecting human and animal health, drinking water, and recreation. Factors that affect cyanobacteria bloom formation and persistence include light intensity, water temperature, nutrient availability, pH, and water column stability. Due to the complex interrelationship of these factors, there are seasonal and year-to-year fluctuations in Oneida Lake cyanobacteria abundance and species composition. Additionally, climate change is impacting the northeastern United States with increasing air temperatures and precipitation, and changes in the timing and intensity of precipitation. Oneida Lake surface water temperatures have been shown to increase by approximately 1°F/decade from 1985-2009 and nutrient concentrations will likely increase due to increases in precipitation and changes in the intensity of precipitation potentially leading to increases in cyanobacteria. Although knowledge of cyanobacteria is continually increasing, additional research is required to fully understand the magnitude of blooms and their seasonality, as well as, the realized ecological impacts of toxic cyanobacteria blooms to food web structure and function.

As part of the weekly sampling by the Cornell University Biological Field Station at Shackelton Point, we are investigating some of these questions, including increased attention to the timing of cyanobacteria blooms and species identification as related to water temperature, water column stability, and nutrient loading from streams. Dr. Greg Boyer, Professor at SUNY-ESF, is also investigating the toxicity of Oneida Lake cyanobacteria. All of this information is necessary to provide recommendations to water resource managers to protect and preserve Oneida Lake.

Amy Lee Hetherington
Graduate Student Cornell University
Department of Natural Resources
111A Fernow Hall
Ithaca, New York 14853
Email: alh11@cornell.edu

Lars Rudstam
Director and Professor
Cornell Biological Field Station
900 Shackelton Point Road
Bridgeport, NY 13030
Email: lgr1@cornell.edu

Notice of Board of Directors' Elections

The annual election for members of the OLA Board of Directors will take place at the Annual Membership Meeting on April 29. Members in good standing who attend the meeting will have the opportunity to vote on the following slate of OLA director candidates, OLA members who have been selected by the Board of Directors Nominating Committee to stand for election to three-year terms on the Board: Anthony Buffa, Richard Colesante, Robert Cote, Robert Gang III, Bill Girvan, Jim Novak, Gina Duggleby, Ryan Asmus and Michael Barretta



OLA member Hunter Wojslaw showcases a Big Bay pike he caught on a recent ice outing.

A Big Birthday Bash for OLA! Wednesday April 29 • Cicero-North Syracuse High School

All Oneida Lake Association members are invited to a party for a big occasion – the 70th anniversary of the Association! Mark your calendars for Wednesday, April 29 at 6 p.m. for OLA's 70th Annual Membership Meeting!

The meeting will be at Cicero-North Syracuse High School, 6002 Route 31, Cicero, NY 13039. Doors open at 6 p.m. so members and visitors can renew memberships, sign up for raffles, and view exhibits and demonstrations provided by friends of Oneida Lake.

As usual, OLA directors and volunteers will be on hand from 6-7 p.m. in the school lobby to assist with membership renewals and answer any questions. Memberships are just \$5 per new member or renewal and include two editions of the OLA Bulletin, access to the annual meeting, and other benefits. It's also an opportunity to bring new members and guests into the OLA fold to meet members of the Board of Directors, view interactive exhibits about the lake, and network with Oneida Lake people from all walks of life.

At 7 p.m. the annual business meeting will begin, with brief informational presentations on OLA's financial status and membership rolls. As a registered non-profit, OLA uses this opportunity to provide detailed information to members regarding our finances and membership activities, and for members to elect volunteer directors from their ranks.

President Scott Shupe will give a report to members on OLA's 2014 achievements and plans for 2015. Then, the meeting will feature presentations of interest to members. These include an update from the Oneida Lake Fish Cultural Station, a fisheries report from Cornell University, DEC comments regarding cormorant hazing success in 2014, an update on Atlantic Salmon in Oneida Lake, a new New York State Canals project to monitor water levels, and a drawing for a kids-and-parents fishing charter courtesy of OLA Director and leading local guide Capt. Tony Buffa. Anglers aged 16 and younger and their family members can sign up for the kid+2 trip, ensuring the future for "kids+fishing=fun and conservation" on Oneida Lake.

The meeting will conclude with the Conservationist of the Year Award and drawings for door prizes. Plan to attend our 70th annual meeting to mark OLA's milestone anniversary, and mark your calendar for Wednesday, April 29 at C-NS. Your Board of Directors looks forward to seeing you there!



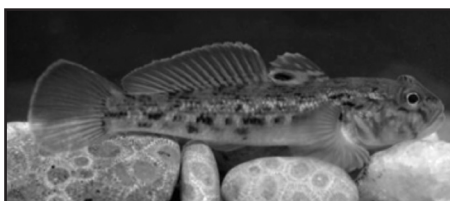
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A Tidbit of Information Regarding Non-Native or “Invasive” Species

Recently, the State passed a new regulation, New York Code of Rules and Regulations (NYCRR) Section 59.4, which requires boaters using any kind of DEC administered boat launch (ex. South Shore Boat Launch, Toad Harbor Fishing Access Site, etc..) to remove any plant or animal, or parts thereof, visible to the human eye, in, on, or attached to any part of the watercraft, including livewells, bilges, the motor, rudder, anchor or other appurtenants; any equipment or gear; or the trailer or any other device used to transport or launch a watercraft that may come into contact with the water.

Additionally, there are other NYS regulations that deal with the possession and movement of non-native species. Some examples of such are: Part 180 – which prohibits hunting and trapping of Eurasian wild boar and provides a sunset date after which possession of such animal(s) dead or alive will be illegal; Part 192 which restricts the planting of certain plants and/or cultivars, establishes white pine blister rust quarantine districts and provides prohibitions on the transportation of firewood; and Parts 10 and 35 which establish various prohibitions on the transportation and use of bait fish among NYS waters.

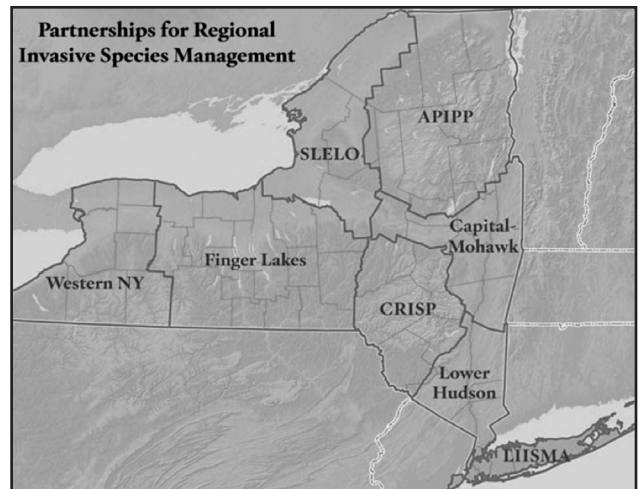
In the Summer of 2014, the Forest Health Program operated by the NYSDEC Division of Lands and Forests, dispersed roughly 30 seasonal staff throughout the state. Staff looked for target invasives; worked on specific threats like Giant Hogweed, Emerald Ash Borer, Asian Longhorn Beetle, Kudzu, and inventory forest decline symptoms in general. If you aware of the location of any these



Round Gobie

invasive species, please contact our staff members: Forest health/firewood hotline 866-640-0652, Giant hogweed hotline, 845-256-3111 or via the DEC Website, Regional Offices or on facebook (New York forest health.)

In 2008, NYS established the Invasive Species Council which, among other things, created the Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM). There are eight PRISMs across NYS- Capital-Mohawk, Finger Lakes, Lower Hudson, Western NY, Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership, Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program, Long Island Invasive Species Management Area, and St. Lawrence-Eastern Lake Ontario. Residents of the Oneida Lake area are covered by the Finger Lakes and St. Lawrence-Eastern Lake Ontario PRISMs and are encouraged to visit the PRISMs link below to learn more about PRISMs’ function and any upcoming events. This information was compiled by Diane Carlton and Michael Putnam from NYS-DEC.



Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management.



Snake head fish



Boa constrictor found by Destiny USA in June 2014.

For more information regarding laws, regulations, identification, etc..., of non-native species, please view any or all of the following websites:

NYS Forest Health Program
www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4969.html

Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM)
www.nyis.info/?action=prism_partners

NYSDEC Website for nuisance and invasive species
www.dec.ny.gov/animals/265.html

NYS Conservationist article on invasive species
www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/53542.html

Highlights From Last Year's Meeting...

We hope to see you on April 29, 2015!



The OLA Fishing Corner



Fishing Philosophy 101

by Cap'n Tony Buffa

If Hamlet pondered upon the shores of Oneida Lake as a modern day Shakespearean character perhaps the soliloquy would have begun with “to fish or not to fish, that is the question”. The aura surrounding a body of water evokes within us a myriad of thoughts. Is the water potable? Can I swim to the other side? How deep? What species of fish swim therein? Are they easy to catch? Are they good to eat? The questions depend on your perspective. The scientist and Huckleberry Finn will ruminate quite differently but both are awestruck in their own personal way. It is the opinion of the author, that those of us who have this compelling desire to fish would urge Hamlet not to despair but to fill his soul with the passion of angling.

As a young boy growing up in Syracuse, NY my hero was Gadabout Gaddis. Roscoe Vernon Gaddis (The Flying Fisherman) traveled across the United States with his seaplane and filmed what then were the only fishing shows on TV. I didn't miss a single one. I lived for Saturday mornings and watched with the attention of a cat in pursuit of its prey. The shows always ended too soon for me. If I could only someday do something like that, my childhood dreams would become reality. It looked so exciting; so at the age of seven the answer to the question “to fish or not to fish” would remain the same for the better part of six and a half decades. Fish on and on and on!!!

You cannot pretend passion. If you have the passion for something, no matter the obstacle you will find a way to overcome, and be successful.



Peck brothers Danny, Brian and Mike from Pennsylvania enjoyed the 2014 walleye opener on Oneida Lake while fishing with Capt. Tony Buffa aboard the MY GAL CAL II. Bass Pro Shops XPS Lazer Blades jigged up the majority of the their limit.

Fishing like most endeavors affiliated with the outdoors carries its challenges. Weather, timing, location, presentation, etc. Fishless days don't discourage the passionate angler. They help plan the next outing. Those difficult days are as important as the easy days. What did I do right? What did I do wrong? Where should I have gone? What should I have done? What should I have used? The answers are there and it takes a lifetime of dedication to learn them.

As you plan for the walleye opener on Oneida Lake, think about your successes and failures in previous openers. The wind, the water temperature, late spawn, early spawn, east end, west end, south shore, north shore; how did it all play out? Successful patterns are not a

matter of luck. They are the work of someone who took what nature offered and parlayed it into a success.

Some of us fish for contemplative reasons, others for competition, others for recreation, and a few for compensation. That's not to suggest that these are mutually exclusive. The catch is not always the measure of fun. Sometimes it's just sharing the experience with your family, friends even the anglers fishing near you. No matter what your persuasion remember the adage “the days you spend fishing are not counted against the total allotted for your life” so STAY FISHING MY FRIENDS. Have a safe and successful season.

You cannot pretend passion. If you have the passion for something, no matter the obstacle you will find a way to overcome, and be successful.

REPORT TAGGED STURGEON



Cornell Field Station
Bridgeport, NY 13030
(315) 633-9243



New York State
Department of Environmental
Conservation

Sturgeon in Oneida Lake and nearby waters may be tagged. Biologists at Cornell University and NYSDEC need your help to track these fish. Yellow tags may be attached at the base of the dorsal fin. If you catch a tagged sturgeon, please write down the number on the tag and length of fish, release the fish immediately, and call Cornell University at (315) 633-9243 or contact NYSDEC at (315) 785-2262 as soon as possible.



Volunteers Wanted!

Your Oneida Lake Association's outreach program involves staffing exhibition booths at regional sport shows. Directors' commitments occasionally conflict with scheduling, leaving difficult gaps in coverage. We invite all association members to volunteer to fill these gaps. Working these shows creates a unique opportunity to promote the OLA and share great fellowship with scores of dedicated, fascinating outdoorspersons.

Any interested members should contact the board through our website - www.oneidalakeassociation.org.

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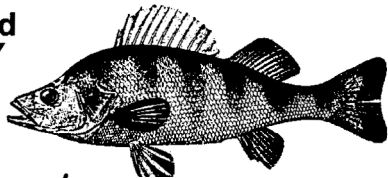
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