

OFAH ZONE "H" report for BPSA Stu Paterson - December 2019

"opinions expressed in this report are not necessarily those of BPSA, its members or directors"



1. CORMORANT HUNT A GO!!!

OFAH reps and fish stocking clubs support the provinces decision to go ahead with a legal cormorant hunt. The proposal to allow the hunt has passed first reading at Queen's Park:

"Proposed amendments to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997, received First Reading on November 6, 2019 in the Ontario Legislature. if the proposed legislative amendments are passed by the legislature, the ministry (MNR) would have to advance regulatory amendments before a double-crested cormorant hunting season could be created"

"Cormorants have been detrimental to fish populations, island forest habitats, other species and aesthetics. to respond to these concerns, the Ministry is proposing to create a hunting season for double-crested cormorants in Ontario. this new population management tool would allow persons who hold a small game license to hunt these birds "

In its lifetime one cormorant will eat what five-hundred walleye will eat. Cormorants eat their own weight in fish every day.

Our BPSA position on this hunt is that:

...."Cormorants are damaging fish populations affecting both sports and commercial fishing. They have destroyed vegetation on many Great Lakes islands, example Hay Island at the mouth of Colpoy's Bay. We continually work towards improving the survival rate of fish we stock. This hunt will reduce cormorant populations and improve stocked fish survival rates. We don't want to eliminate cormorants we want to bring their populations under control. Cormorants are one reason why sports fishing on the

Great Lakes is not nearly as good today as it was 20 years ago"....

Rob Hare the President of OFAH says about the hunt "I totally agree that some sort of management control of cormorants needs to be put in place. My question is how, is a person supposed to deal with the carcass of a cormorant once it has been dispatched."

Under the proposal hunters are required to safely dispose of dead birds. On this issue some suggest buying stick grabbers used in gardening that have claws and grab the dead birds and deposit them in garbage bags. Or designate a fishing net to net the critters and put them in garbage bags. One Georgian Bay fish charter operator suggests fishing clubs provide free lake side disposal bins for cormorant carcasses.



It has been clear for some time that not everyone agrees with this hunt. In the Peterborough examiner environmentalists DREW MONKMAN and TIM DYSON have written about the coming “slaughter of the double breasted cormorant”



Double-crested cormorants photographed in Campbellford.
Don Munro for the Peterborough Examiner.

from their article-

If passed in its present form, the legislation would designate double-crested cormorants as a game species, create a province-wide annual hunting season from March 15 until Dec. 31 and allow anyone holding a valid Ontario Outdoors Card and small game hunting license, to kill up to 50 cormorants per day (1,500 per month or more than 14,000 per season).

What we have here is clearly NOT a “hunt” of any kind. Hunting involves some level of skill on the part of the hunter and requires patience, stealth and the ability to make a clean kill. We have no issue with ethical hunting. However, what we have before us is simply a slaughter of a species that has twice before been on the Endangered Species List and yet has rebounded from extremely low numbers to now breed in abundance across much of the province.

The best way to think about this proposal is “slob hunting,” namely an activity in which people are content to kill for the sake of killing. In the case of cormorants, it will be child’s play for hunters to shoot the birds as they sit on their nests or fly in and out of the colony. Zero skill will be required to kill them from boats positioned near nesting colonies. All of this will happen without sufficient monitoring by the resource-strapped MNRF.

It is clear the outdoors community backs this cormorant hunt. But we should be aware opponents are standing by in the wings hoping to scuttle it.

Here is part of the official announcement about the pending cormorant hunt:
<https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/013-4124>

2. Hunting with dogs:



Make sure you know where your hunting dogs are at all times. In his quarterly report at the latest meeting Zone H Chair Wayne Forgrave reported “some hunters have been charged with trespass when their dogs ventured onto private property. OFAH is seeking a clarification from MNRF on this issue.”



3. At the latest zone H meeting in Kincardine there was talk of improved brown trout catches in south west Georgian Bay.

Brady McDonald (right) with buddy Clark Green were very excited. They wowed a lot of onlookers at the 2019 Owen Sound Salmon Spectacular with this 18.74 pound brown caught off Leith with a red nosed Lyman. It was the largest brown weighed in in many years.

We are hearing more reports of browns caught in Owen Sound and Colpoy’s Bay but numbers are insignificant compared to reports of bows and salmon. This one was a natural with no fin clip.



4. Wild Boar Threat

OFAH has set up an email address to report wild pig/boar sightings. It is wildboars@ofah.org.



Federation biologist Keith Munro says it's important to track the extent of the problem. He says there has been a disconnect between the info the MNRF policy staff and district staff are giving to the public.

OFAH wants to see consistent messaging and action on the spread of wild boar. It is clear these beasts are a threat to Ontario's biodiversity. They multiply quickly, spread disease, destroy crops and can be a threat to human safety through aggressive behaviour. In our region sightings have been near Tobermory and Mount Forest.

The wild boar living in our midst are escapees from the 1980s, when they were imported from Europe to be farmed for exotic meat.

"They do very well in the wild," Munro told Ontario Farmer magazine. "They are incredible animals for their ability to survive and thrive." But, he said "They're ecological bulldozers, and do a lot of damage, both to land and watercourses, as well as carrying disease."

Ontario's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act actually prohibits the release of wild boar, and requires reporting of any escapes.

"OFAH had has a policy against boar going back to the 1990's, due to the risk to the environment," Munro said.

Munro said he took his report of more than twenty sightings to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) *"and argued that we need to do a better job of tracking these"*.

The ministry now has a lead person, in the form of Erin Koen, appointed to its wild boar file.

"The MNRF is working to increase the province's collective knowledge of wild boar occurrences and locations," said the ministry in an email.

"This work has included the creation of content on our website (www.ontario.ca/page/reporting-wild-boar-ontario) and an iNaturalist page at www.inaturalist.org/projects/ontario-wild-pig-reporting to educate, promote awareness, and collect sightings.

"The invasive potential and risks to the environment that wild boar pose is taken seriously by the ministry."

In 2018 MNRF denied that hunters were involved in stocking wild boar to improve hunting opportunities near Parry Sound. The allegation was made by a taxidermist who was asked to process wild boar meat from that region.

A spokesperson advised to call the MNRF Tips Line at 1-877-847-7667 if you see one. She suggested avoiding contact with the beasts as they can be dangerous.

If you see a wild boar please email your pictures to BPSA and OFAH at wildboars@ofah.org. ... and contact MNRF.



5. In a year end commentary the OFAH President reminded us that the governing Liberals in Ottawa have clearly stated their intent to push a gun control agenda and support firearms bans. Our federation he said *“is not giving up.”* Rob Hare added *“our teams are hard at work to push our priorities on Parliament Hill. Under the coalition called the National Fishing and Hunting Collaborative we are united from coast to coast bringing together fishing and hunting groups to help us show unity. In his words “what we face ahead, we can’t afford.... Division. Unity will be more important than ever.”* It remains unclear he said *“how much the new minority government will be able to accomplish and whether firearms will be prioritized enough to see new legislation.”*



6. In wake of voting at the zone H annual meeting our 2020 OFAH Zone H executive is as follows:

Chair - Wayne Forgrave - Midhurst - on OFAH board
1st Vice Chair - Mike Evers - Innisfil - on OFAH board
1st alternate-2nd Vice Chair - Wally Motz - Port Elgin
2nd alternate Director - John Ford - Owen Sound
Secretary Treasurer - Dennis Wiseman - Owen Sound

7. OFAH Zone H has just over 12-thousand members. That’s up 2 per cent over last year. Our zone has 11,555 members who have been with the federation for over 25 years. The overall OFAH membership is 78,070. The more members we have the stronger we are in terms of getting out the message of hunters, sport shooters, anglers and trappers.



8. OFAH INSURANCE: We are reminded of new OFAH exclusive enhancements to our member insurance program which is automatically included with your yearly membership.

These include LYME Disease. All OFAH memberships now include Lyme Disease medical coverage. Each time we go out, there is a risk of crossing paths with ticks.



Other enhancements include Medical and Travel Expenses coverage, and USA coverage. Contact Brian McCrae at head office if you have questions on this.

9. At year end we wish Ontario Out of Doors editor/publisher Lezlie Goodwin a happy and healthy retirement. She led this successful OFAH publication for seven years. Lezlie has guided our magazine as it effectively helped celebrate the values and traditions of hunting and fishing. Managing editor Ray Blades takes over as editor/associate publisher.



10. The next OFAH Zone H meeting is at 10am on January 12, 2020 hosted by the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association at the group's clubhouse in Georgian Bluffs. This is nearby and a good opportunity for BPSA members to take part and express our views on the issues confronting our fishing, hunting and conservation world. I estimate the 2020 cost of BPSA being represented at all five OFAH meetings I attend at 13-hundred dollars.

On to a stupendous New Year 2020 and year filled with positive conservation projects, lots of laughs, good food and most important GOOD HEALTH !!! In 2020 BPSA celebrates 58 years of conservation. We have a lot to celebrate. May you and yours enjoy the best of everything in 2020!!!!



Stu Paterson reporting on OFAH for BPSA

photos - Paterson Media, OFAH, Peterborough Examiner, Oregon Dept. Fish &Wildlife, MNRF



.....The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) was established in 1928. OFAH is Canada's leading conservation organization, as well as a non-profit registered charity. The Federation lobbies for the protection of wildlife and Canadian outdoor traditions. OFAH is considered one of the top lobby groups in Canada.....