

OFAH ZONE “H” report for BPSA Stu Paterson – Sept/Oct 2023

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



1. HATCHERY PROGRAM RENEWED - for one year

In mid-summer the Ontario Community Hatchery Program (CHP) sent funding approval letters, to 39 community hatcheries including the four in Grey-Bruce. For this year, the CHP approved over \$173,500 in operational funding and capital improvement grants. Some CHP member groups will also receive additional money from the \$25,000 OFAH Community Hatchery Support Fund.

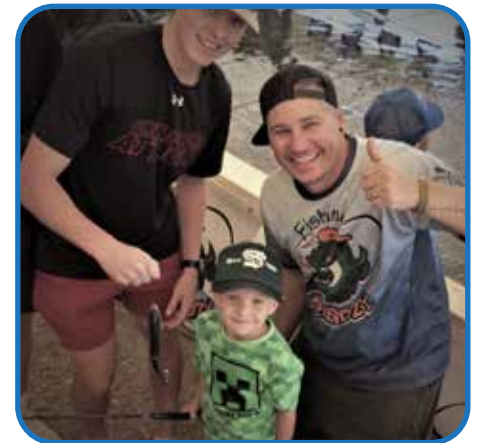
Matt Burley the CHP co-ordinator told me the provincially funded program has only been renewed for one year until March 2024. In the recent past it had been renewed every five years. Hatcheries like ours at BPSA depend on the CHP. Some years this program pays about half the costs of operating our volunteer-run Bruce Peninsula Sportsmen's Association Fish Hatchery.



CHP is funded by the province and managed by OFAH. CHP was established in 2013 “to support community stocking by providing operational and capital funding for member clubs.” In August an MNRF statement indicated “The Ministry is reviewing options with OFAH as we plan for the future of this program.”

2. 2023 Salmon Spectacular – “LARGEST CONSERVATION EFFORT IN GREY-BRUCE”

This summer, nearly 60-thousand people attended events at the Salmon Spectacular tent. Profits from this fishing festival support fish stocking and other conservation efforts. It is now clear that the Spectacular is not only the largest event of the year in Grey-Bruce. It is also the largest conservation project in our region. Congrats Sydenham Sportsmen for a superb effort!



3. SALMON SPECTACULAR DETAILS:

Chris Geberdt, co-chair of the 35th Salmon Spectacular Festival and Derby updated delegates to the Zone H summer meeting on “the largest event of the year in Grey-Bruce.” The meeting was hosted by the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association attracting delegates from as far away as Alliston, Kincardine, and Orillia.

Geberdt, a member of the OFAH Fisheries Advisory Committee, reported:

- The derby expanded this year to north of Lions head
- To encourage exposure to sponsors messaging, there remained only one weigh station
- The KIDS FISHING POND expanded to a three-day run



- This 10-day derby awards over \$175,000 in prizes and attracts over 4,000 anglers. This year 4,600 took part.
- 3,200 fish were weighed in last year, 2766 this year.
- 250 sponsors and 400 volunteers support the derby
- the derby team attends 34 trade shows promoting the derby selling draw and derby tickets. 58-thousand attended events at the derby tent.



The top salmon was a 20.73 pounder caught by Ian Morrison of Embro seen here with his son and the much prized Yamaha fishing boat.



Rob Harnack of Chatsworth had the largest fish of all, a 22.40 pound laker. Top rainbow was caught by Mike Higginson, an 11.39 pounder. Scott Graham had the largest brown at 9.01. Several BPSA members volunteered in various capacities again this year.

In pelting rain, the BPSA team helped raise the derby tent in a record three-and-a half hours saving the Sydenham Sportsmen an estimated \$10,000. That's what it would have cost that club if it had to pay for the erection and teardown, which went well on September 4th taking only two hours.



3. CHINOOK POPULATIONS HEALTHY:

Scott Thede won the 2023 Chantry with a 21.50 pound chook.

This is the second largest fishing derby in Grey Bruce. It ran 16-days, produced 1530 fish including 1103 chinook salmon, 244, lake trout and 120 rainbow trout.

Mike Hahn of the Lake Huron Fishing Club (LHFC) told the Owen Sound Sun Times: “the fish were smaller, but have appeared very healthy the past couple of years... because rainbow and brown trout and coho and Atlantic salmon are adapting to consuming the invasive round goby, it has left more emerald shiner and rainbow smelt for the chinook to prey on.....this spring on both sides of the Peninsula – on the Lake Huron main basin and in Georgian Bay – everybody was catching salmon.....there seems to be a bit of an uptick in the chinook population.”

Along with the more than 1,103 chinook salmon weighed in, there were 53 coho salmon, eight Atlantic salmon, 244 lake trout, only 120 rainbow trout and two brown trout.

The largest rainbow trout was landed by Jesse Van Vlymen with a 15.6 pounder. A total of 10,944.5 pounds of fish were entered. Prizes valued at \$65,000 were handed out with the money raised supporting the Lake Huron club's hatcheries.



4. MP TALKS FIREARMS:



Delegates to the summer Zone H OFAH meeting at the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association clubhouse, heard from the Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MP on the firearms controversy. Conservative Alex Ruff referred to a bill that had passed by the government, Bill C-21: An Act to amend certain Acts.

“This bill, originally put forward as a handgun freeze, later expanded into a ban affecting a large number of hunting rifles. Since then, the bill morphed to one primarily impacting the specifications for new firearms.”

Ruff told the meeting “we forced the Liberal Government to withdraw amendments to Bill C-21 which would have banned hundreds of hunting rifles.”

Ruff continues to be a strong advocate for hunters, sports shooters and firearms collectors.

5. BPSA REPS AT ZONE H:

Three reps from BPSA addressed the summer zone ZONE H meeting.

- Former BPSA President Jim Martell revealed that the Bruce Trail Organization has copied the BPSA Boot Scrubber design and will install scrubbers (exact copies of our BPSA units) from Tobermory to Niagara-On-The-Lake. The Bruce Trail Conservancy says “we will partner with the Baffin Boot Company which calls the project “The Trail Conservancy Project. To prevent the spread of harmful, invasive species along Canada’s oldest and longest marked footpath – Baffin will build 100 co-branded boot brush stations by 2025. This adds to the existing 35 stations currently located throughout the 900 km of main trail.”



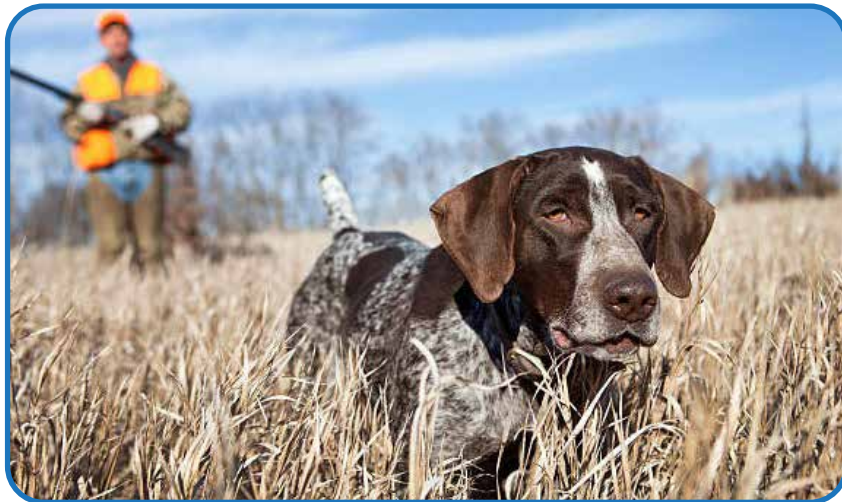
- Ray Marklevitz proudly talked about the largest fish ever stocked by BPSA during the summer stocking of rainbow trout that averaged 98 grams or 3 1/2 ounces.

BPSA Hatchery Manager Al Sutter led the stocking team at Colpoys Creek)

- Yours truly discussed the possibility of Zone H campaign to install used fishing line containers at launch ramps and fishing piers across the zone from Tobermory to Kincardine east to Orillia. I had a mock up model created by Al Sutter of BPSA featuring drain holes and space for a lot of used line. The issue remains under discussion.



6. DEMONSTRATORS AGAINST HUNTING DOG TRAINING AREAS ILL INFORMED:



Last May demonstrators protested at Owen Sound City Hall against what they called “penned dog hunting.” They were focusing on a provincial plan to license new penned dog training facilities. Ontario wants to allow licensing of new “train and trial areas” in addition to the 24 that now exist. The protesters used the term “penned dog hunting” which is misleading and should not be confused with “sporting dog training and trialing areas” (TTAs). At these facilities dogs do not actually capture any wildlife. Strict rules ensure animals used in this training have no direct encounters with dogs. OFAH wildlife biologist Kiristen Snoek emphasises “there is absolutely no

wildlife torture” going on at these locations and that “expanding access to training and trialing areas is not endorsing abuse of wildlife, but is rather a means to create responsible dogs and hunters in the pursuit of legal and ethical hunting activities and sporting competitions.

In late summer an OFAH statement on the issue said:

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) does not condone animal abuse, neglect, torture, or mistreatment of any kind, whether it be wildlife or domesticated animals and pets. It is not a part of hunting to show disrespect to game animals, nor is it an acceptable part of hunting to physically abuse or prematurely end the life of your hunting dog. These types of behaviours are exceptions to the rule, and should be blamed on the individual, not the activity. OFAH is not satisfied with the current number of on-the-ground Conservation Officers. We continue to call on the government to

invest in greater enforcement capacity to deter and punish illegal activity. Proper use of TTAs is a responsible way to train dogs to ethically pursue legal game in fair chase environments. OFAH continues to support proper management of TTAs with strict regulations in place involving hunters who hold themselves to a high standard when it comes to the treatment of dogs and wildlife, in the pursuit of ethical hunting activities and sporting competitions.

More on the story at this link in Newmarket Today:

LETTER: Expanding training areas not an endorsement of wildlife abuse - Newmarket News (newmarkettoday.ca)
OFAH member Darryl Burke commented LETTER: Well-trained hunting dogs result in better outcome for animals - Newmarket News (newmarkettoday.ca)

7. ZONE H MEMBERSHIP:

At the summer meeting we learned that zone H which stretches from Tobermory to Kincardine east to Orillia and Orangeville is the 3rd largest OFAH Zone with 11,400 members. The largest, Zone J south of us boasts nearly 21-thousand. Overall OFAH boasts over 71,000 members.

8. DECLINE - freshwater fish and mussel species:

There are species of freshwater fish and mussels disappearing from the Great Lakes. But University of Windsor researchers are working to reverse the biodiversity decline. A project called “Application and Assessment of Recovery Actions for Species at Risk Fishes and Mussels in the Lower Great Lakes” will develop a better understanding of habitat needs and threats, to restore habitat, and to breed threatened species.



Trevor Pitcher is the lead researcher:

“Freshwater biodiversity is declining quickly: this is raising alarm bells and they refer to this as ‘the invisible collapse’ because it receives much less attention than biodiversity loss in the oceans...these are at-risk freshwater fish and mussels that few people study — especially in the context of habitat loss and captive breeding — and we want to change that.”

The four-year project received \$850,000 in funding from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans’ Canada Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk and partners including McGill University and the University of Toronto. The team will identify areas within the Lower Great Lakes watershed, known to have 47 endangered or threatened fish and mussels in a variety of habitat. The big threat to many of these species is habitat degradation and loss.



One study group will focus on spotted gar. Another will study mussel species kidney-shell, northern riffle shell, and snuffbox, which are at risk in the Sydenham River watershed. One researcher says “The Sydenham is home to the largest diversity of freshwater mussels and also has a large number of them that are at risk of extinction. This work will allow us to explore the role of community science and accelerate conservation efforts on the ground based on our research findings.”

Thanks again to Kat McCulloch who edits these reports. I have two more ahead for this year. We continue to focus on items of interest to BPSA members who are anglers, hunters and conservationists in Grey-Bruce. Enjoy your fall hunting and fishing and be safe!



Stu Paterson for BPSA
photos - Stu Paterson, Kat McCulloch, Natalie Mechalko, OFAH