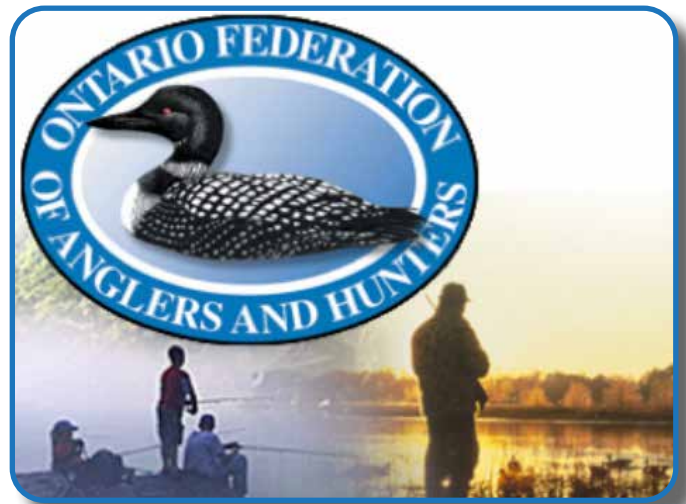


OFAH ZONE "H" report for BPSA Stu Paterson – March 2024

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



"Ribeye in the Sky" - what some hunters call sandhill cranes. **CWS Considers a Sandhill Crane Hunt for Ontario:**

The Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) wants your input on changes to the migratory bird hunting regulations for the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 seasons, to allow such a hunt. The CWS proposal is for a sandhill crane season in northern and central Ontario. This would include Manitoulin Island and areas further north such as the Hudson-James Bay Districts.



OFAH has lobbied for this hunt for 20 years. When we keep trying, the effort often pays off. Recovery of the sandhill crane population is considered by many as yet another conservation success story. One study shows sandhill populations have increased by more than 4% a year since

1979. Another by the federal government suggests "a five-fold increase in the number of nesting cranes since the early 1990's."



The hunt would be for Canadian residents only and would be staged in farm areas "with a high abundance of cranes during the fall migration."

In Ontario Out of Doors writer Steve Galea notes this hunt would offer an attractive harvesting opportunity and would ensure that the harvest does not negatively impact local breeding cranes.





In Grey-Bruce during spring and fall we often see flocks of 50-60 sandhills in regional fields. So, it would appear that a limited hunt would not hurt Sandhill populations. I talked to one farmer who reports he often sees flocks of 70-80 in his fields near Sarnia. For now, CWS is considering the establishment of a sandhill crane season only in northern and central Ontario. Voice your support for this exciting hunting opportunity. Email your comments to cites-science@ec.gc.ca or enviroinfo@ec.gc.ca

I have asked OFAH to push for expanding the sandhill crane hunt to Wildlife Management Units 83A, 84, and 82A.

These WMZ's are in our region. After talking with hunters, famers and members of the public, I have concluded that based on spring and fall sightings, there are significant sandhill populations between Grey-Bruce and Windsor/London. This seems to suggests that a controlled hunt in those regions south of us would have little negative affect on crane populations. As Environment Canada suggests "the hunt would be an added tool to help alleviate crop damage problems caused by cranes." We will see what the response is from the Canadian Wildlife folks.



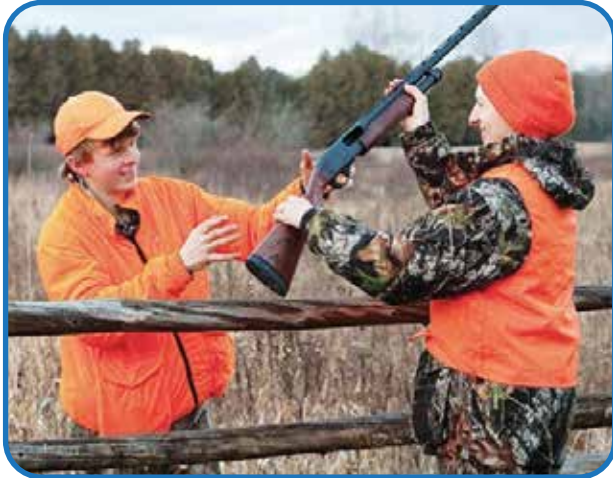
OF AH PRESIDENT ON CRANE HUNT PROPOSAL:

Federation President Rick Moore says "we want to ensure this proposal receives the support and guidance it needs to move forward." Moore urges hunters to "be sure to voice your support for a sandhill crane season by emailing your comments" to the authorities involved. It would not hurt to contact your MP and your MPP pointing out that a hunt in our part of Ontario, would be a conservation win and a win that would provide increased hunting opportunities. As Environment Canada points out "sandhill cranes can now be hunted sustainably in Ontario. "



2. FIREARMS: HAPPY 2024 FROM YOUR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT:

It was your new years present from the feds. The Liberal government's gun-control bill passed a final vote in the Senate in December, clearing the way for it to become law. Bill C-21 was introduced in May 2022, but faced legislative hurdles after a Liberal MP introduced a number of controversial amendments that gun advocacy groups such as OFAH, and opposition parties, opposed and forced the government to walk back. The legislation will cement a freeze on handgun sales, increase penalties for firearm trafficking and try to curb homemade "ghost" guns. The bill also seeks to ban assault-style firearms that fall under a new technical definition. The government had proposed a more stringent definition, but dropped a number of amendments to the bill in February of 2022 after facing backlash.



The Canadian Coalition for Firearm Rights says: "it's been the goal of this government all along to target licensed sport shooters and hunters...our goal is to have this bill repealed, and have the focus return to combating crime, violence and gun smuggling."

Bruce Grey-Owen Sound MP Alex Ruff has reminded us "we will do everything possible when we win the next election, to reverse the Trudeau 'Government's firearms legislation."



As OFAH President Rick Moore has noted: "you can be assured the OFAH's priority with firearms advocacy will continue to be built around pushing the government, both publicly and behind closed doors, to address the real issues around firearms in Canada - illegal guns, gangs, and better investments in keeping firearms out of the hands of the real criminals. Playing politics with firearms isn't achieving anything."



3. TWO LINES TROLLING

For several years anglers who fish south west Georgian Bay have been asking for a rule change to allow boat trollers to use two lines. Boat trollers are allowed to use two lines on Lake Huron but not on Georgian Bay. It appears the reluctance to equalise the rules for both waterbodies is as follows. The way it has been explained to me is that, if two lines are allowed in the eastern section of Georgian Bay, populations of pike, bass and musky could quickly be wiped out. Perhaps the MNRF should draw a line from Collingwood to Christian Island and only allow two lines for trolling on waters west of that line. Two lines are permitted on Lakes Erie and Superior with some exceptions. See the latest revisions of Ontario's Fishing Regs for 2024 at this link, including rule changes re. types of minnows you can use as well as rules governing the transport of live bait. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/fishing-notice-and-updates>



4. ROUND GOBIES OWEN SOUND BAY – MILLIONS

During daytime there are an estimated 118 million round gobies in Owen Sound Bay. At night the number is estimated at 144 million. The statistics were released during a February meeting of the Owen Sound Field Naturalists.



The presentation was by Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry management biologist Arunas Liskauskas. In a lecture entitled “the Changing Dynamics of the Fish

Community in Lake Huron” Liskauskas discussed his ministry’s research using electro fishing which temporarily shocks underwater creatures and allows scientists to count them. He said gobies like to hide under rocks during the day so “that’s why we counted more at night.” The study concluded there are 237 tons of gobies in the bay and that “a lot of fish are feeding on gobies and have been doing so for years.”



Over the last two years several sources have indicated “gobies are a main food source for millions of fish in Georgian Bay.” So far there are no results of MNR studies on the safety of eating fish that gorge on gobies. Concern has been expressed that since gobies consume quagga and zebra mussels which concentrate toxins, they could pass on those toxins to humans.

Gobies are one of dozens of invasive species that entered the upper Great Lakes when the Welland Canal connected the lakes to the Atlantic Ocean. Gobies were also released in ship ballast water. But the speaker noted federal laws governing ballast release have reduced that source.



The biologist also noted the success of the Great Lakes Fishery commission’s 20-million dollar a year sea lamprey program. Liskauskas said the program “has managed to keep lamprey population levels under control ...without that program, our Great Lakes fisheries would be in real trouble.”



5. INVASIVE SPECIES

Ten new restricted and prohibited species have been added to Ontario's Invasive Species Act. The move, which aims to help reduce the spread of harmful invaders, also includes four groups of similar species.

Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry Graydon Smith:

"Invasive species damage our ecosystems, impact our ability to enjoy outdoor activities and harm our economy by threatening the forestry and agriculture sectors, that's why we are taking action to restrict these invasive species to protect Ontario's economy and ecosystems."

Examples of new species that will now be prohibited include certain fish, aquatic plants, and invertebrates, while restrictions will also be placed on groups of new aquatic and terrestrial plants.

The addition is being applauded by several groups including the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH).



Executive Director Angelo Lombardo:

"The OFAH and its Invading Species Awareness Program are pleased to see the addition of 10 new prohibited and restricted species under the Invasive Species Act...with over 30 years of collaboration with the province, we will continue to support their goals of preventing the introduction and spread of invasive species in Ontario."

For prohibited species, it is illegal to import, possess, deposit, release, transport, propagate (breed/grow), buy, sell, lease or trade these invasive species. For restricted species, it is illegal to deposit or release restricted invasive species in Ontario and cannot be brought into a provincial park or conservation reserve.

Some examples of what's now prohibited:



Potential impacts: introduce parasites, virus, and disease transmission, and compete with native fishes.

Eastern and western mosquito fish.

Potential impacts: outcompete native fish species for food and habitat through aggressive feeding of zooplankton, eggs, and larvae, leading to the loss of biodiversity and possible loss of some native species.



Red shiner. Potential impacts: reduce native fish populations through predation on eggs and larvae, genetic impacts through hybridization, and introduction of parasites.

Nutria (mammal) photo Potential impacts: burrowing and foraging behaviour impacts agricultural areas and increases flooding risks, spread parasites and disease to humans, pets and livestock, and can destroy coastal wetlands.



Genus procambarus and genus pacifastacus (Crayfish)

Potential impacts: compete with native crayfish and fish species for food and shelter. Read more here <https://oodmag.com/new-invasive-species-designated/>



A new aquatic species that is prohibited in Ontario has been discovered for the first time in our province. And OFAH is investigating.

“The marbled crayfish in January 2022 it was positively identified by Dr. Premek Hamr, known by many as ‘Dr. Crayfish’” said Brook Schryer, assistant coordinator for the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters Invasive Species Awareness Program (ISAP).



Brook reports:

“Live specimens were found in the summer of 2023, and now the species is the target of an ongoing eradication program by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.”

The marbled crayfish is one of 30 regulated invasive species under the Invasive Species Act. This means it is illegal to import, possess, release, transport, breed/grow, buy or sell, marbled crayfish in Ontario. Nor are they legal to keep in an aquarium. Though they sometimes are listed for sale



as marble crayfish, self-cloning crayfish, or marmorkrebs.

The prolific species can reproduce rapidly and clone themselves. All it takes is one crayfish to start a new population as they are capable of reproducing hundreds of offspring.



If they establish, it is feared they will have a negative impact on Ontario’s native crayfish populations through competition for food and habitat. They can rapidly take over an area and replace native crayfish species which are already being impacted in parts of Ontario by the invasive rusty crayfish.

Schryer says “If you see a marbled crayfish in the wild, contact the toll-free Invasive Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711 or report it online or with your mobile device at www.eddmaps.org.

Schryer said “This is a species of special concern in the province, given that it reproduces asexually. We at the OFAH are hoping to educate the public regarding it and to help eradicate the species.”

For more information, including what you can do to properly dispose of marbled crayfish, contact MNRF staff at invasive.species@ontario.ca.

6. CONGRATS to Kevin Harders:

Congratulations to Georgian Bluffs resident Kevin Harders for winning the Harold Cowan Legacy award. This award was created by the Lake Huron Fishing Club and is presented to “those who put their heart and soul into volunteering for the annual Chantry Chinook - Fishing Derby.”

Kevin runs the Wiarton Chantry weigh station out of his tackle store, Lures N Lines near Wiarton International Airport.



7. LICENSE FREE FISHING - Ontario

Not everyone knows about this so spread the word. The reminder is from the OFAH. Four times a year, Canadian residents can fish in Ontario for free. This means you do not need to buy a fishing license if you want to fish during:



Family Fishing Weekend (February 17–19, 2024)

Mother’s Day Weekend (May 11–12, 2024)

Father’s Day Weekend (June 15–16, 2024)

Family Fishing Week (June 29–July 7, 2024)

Free family fishing | ontario.ca

8. ATTENDANCE - 2024 Toronto International Boat Show (TIBS)

Total attendance for the 2024 TIBS Show was 60,125, over the 10-day run. This was considered to be a healthy turnout. More than 550 boat deals were approved at this the largest January event in Canada. The big show featured 3,700 exhibitors who reported brisk sales, 440 seminars, and previewed a wide variety of new boats, motors and accessories.

I thanked the TIBS folks for the free tickets they sent for BPSA members again this year. This is something show manager Linda Waddell and her team has done for 20 years.



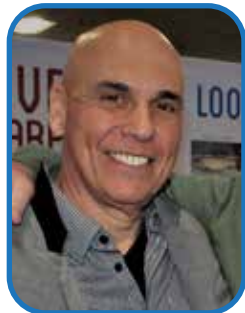


Our federation launched a new logo at this, the 76th instalment of the Toronto Sportsmen’s Show (TSS) staged at the International Centre in Mississauga. The big outdoors show saw a record-breaking 30% spike in attendance in 2023, and attracted an estimated 55-thousand this year. It featured hundreds of exhibitors with a wide variety of fishing and hunting-related products and attractions.

The OFAH had an expanded presence, where we showcased programs such as the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) through hands-on demos. Federation staff, including Ontario Out of Doors reps were also on hand to discuss fishing and hunting issues with attendees. There were contests designed to attract new OFAH members and to remind former members to renew.



OFAH Executive Director Angelo Lombardo:



“This big outdoors show provides a unique, one-of-a-kind experience, that connects us directly with those who appreciate the outdoors and are passionate about fishing and hunting...Being a part of this show puts us directly in contact with our target audience and provides an excellent opportunity to promote the OFAH and our lifestyle.”

The show included the return of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) Casting Pond, as well as demonstrations by ministry conservation officers and their canine partners.

The lineup also spotlighted the Canadian Wild Turkey Federation turkey calling championship, and the Fish TV Canadian Pro-Fishing Seminar Stage.



The next OFAH Zone H quarterly meeting will be hosted by the South Grey Hunters Association. The session starts at 10am in Durham at the Legion Hall on Sunday, April 21, 2024. The address is: Royal Canadian Legion Branch -308, 271 Bruce Street North Durham. I have room for two, so if you want to join me get in touch. Prepare for some “loud but groovy” sixties Top 40 tunes.



A big thanks to Kat McCulloch who edits these reports. This is one of six I do every year with the aim of reporting on OFAH issues of concern to anglers, hunters and conservationists.

Stu Paterson – BPSA Community Relations, Director OFAH Zone H