

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

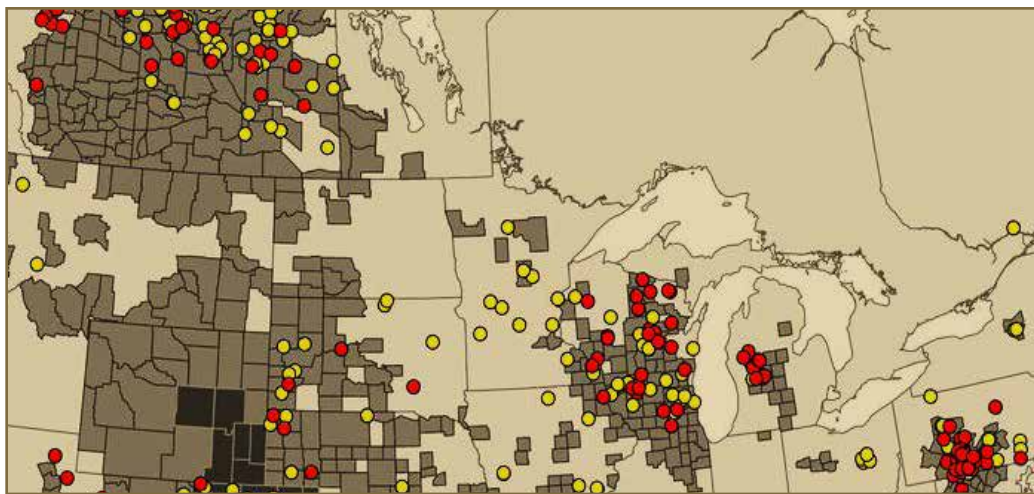
"opinions expressed in this report are not necessarily those of BPSA, its members or directors"



1. ONTARIO REMAINS FREE OF CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE.

The results are in: Chronic wasting disease (CWD) was not detected in Ontario in 2023! That's the conclusion of the latest MNRF research.

The OFAH and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry thanks all hunters, taxidermists and other partners who provided samples to the CWD monitoring program. As our federation has said repeatedly "If CWD enters Ontario, it would harm wildlife and the economy."



Ontario is surrounded by states and provinces with CWD cases. The disease has been found in over 34 US states and five provinces. Surveillance is critical to early detection of CWD and enables a rapid, effective response to a positive detection. The OFAH considered the CWD threat such a major issue that it hosted a large conference on the subject.

The 2019 OFAH meeting raised awareness and built a strong multi-sector collaborative to convince governments to take the necessary steps to protect Ontario from CWD. Visit ontario.ca/CWD to find your test results and for more information about what you can do to keep CWD out of Ontario.

#ScienceON #Deer #CWD

2. FORMER OFAH PRES. HONOURED:

A former Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) President, has been honoured for years of volunteerism and conservation work. The announcement came at the 27th annual Owen Sound OFAH Conservation Dinner. The event was hosted by the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association (SSA).



John Ford was the recipient. Ford is a Co-Chair of the Owen Salmon Spectacular Fishing Derby and for years served on the executive of the Sydenham club. Ford, a retired teacher, served as President of the OFAH from 2004-2006. He headed The Canadian Wildlife Federation from 2017-2019.

OFAH Director Chris Geberdt presented John Ford with the Fred Geberdt Volunteer Award Carving. Fred Geberdt was a co-founder of the giant Owen Sound Salmon Spectacular. Ford, a derby co-chair, worked with Fred for many years on the annual fishing festival. Ford said he was “humbled and surprised by the award.” Geberdt noted that Ford was the best friend of his late father and added “you both worked so hard on our club’s projects...my dad would have approved of this.”

The wood carving by Clayton Urbshott features beautifully sculpted fisheries scenes. This new award will be given each year to a Sydenham Club member who excels at volunteerism.

The annual Conservation Dinner and Auction raised an estimated 45-thousand dollars to “support fish and wildlife conservation projects.”

It attracted 300 supporters who took part in a number of raffles and silent and live auctions for hundreds of prizes, including fishing trips, trolling motors and a wide variety of fishing and hunting equipment.



OFAH began as a small group of concerned anglers in the 1920's. The federation has grown into the largest fishing, hunting and conservation-based organization in the province. A highly motivated team of fish and wildlife biologists and other professionals deliver conservation programming, government advocacy, and education and outreach on behalf of more than 100,000 OFAH members, subscribers and supporters, and 725 member clubs. The OFAH is proud to continue its legacy as the VOICE of anglers and hunters.

3. OFAH at the Sportsmen's Show on WILD PIGS:

At the 2024 Toronto Sportsmen's Show our federation had an excellent display with experts on hand to answer questions on the wild pig threat.



Two federation biologists completed wild pig lectures at the OFAH seminar stage. Fish and Wildlife Biologist Matt Robbins and Invading Species Awareness Assistant Co-ordinator Brook Schryer were well received.

It is fair to say OFAH was in your face in a nice way this year at this giant outdoors show.

Our federation was very active with many staff and volunteers offering generous membership incentive prizes for renewals and new signups. This portable fire-pit was one of the incentive offerings featuring the new OFAH logo.



4. ROB HARE former OFAH president: *“it has been 18 years since OFAH did a logo refresh, it was time. The old logo was difficult and expensive to reproduce, especially the red eye. The new logo colours were specifically chosen to be adaptable to other back-grounds. It works well when presented with sponsor logos. This logo still maintains the loon but also incorporates an O for Ontario. The change in direction of the loon is now forward facing, to the future.”*



Paul Prowse of OFAH Zone J: *“The call of the loon causes all to stop and listen, savouring every moment of its memorable song, after comes the quiet contemplation. Rest assured the Loon is the symbol that will be guiding us into the future as we continue to be the VOICE of Anglers and Hunters since 1928”!*

5. Within hours of the announcement of a management change at the OFAH, the next Federation Executive Director was chatting up prospective OFAH members. Matt DeMille takes over next year from Angelo Lombardo who is retiring. Matt joined the OFAH in 2010 and has been the Land Use Specialist and Fisheries Biologist, Fish & Wildlife Services Manager and Director Policy and Programs. He also serves as a political lobbyist at Queen’s Park and Parliament Hill. Matt holds B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees in biology from Queen’s University, and brings a lifelong passion for fishing and hunting to the OFAH.



6. FISH EATING ROUND GOBIES:

In March I reported that there are as many as 144-million invasive Round Gobies in Owen Sound Bay. My report was based on MNRF research headed by Ministry biologist Arunas Liskauskas. His study concluded *“there are 237-tons of Gobies in that bay”* and that *“a lot of fish are feeding on Gobies and have been doing so for years.”* So the question is *“if Gobies consume toxin concentrating mussels, and we consume fish that eat gobies, are the fish we eat less safe than they were before the Gobie invasion.”?*

We have feedback from OFAH Fisheries Biologist Adam Weir:

“The contaminants would be reflected in MECP’s Guide to Eating Ontario Fish; however, Round Gobies do consume significant numbers of dreissenid mussels which bioconcentrate toxins. At the same time, gobies have become an important prey item for a variety of predatory fish and, thus, have become a contaminant vector in fisheries where they occur. Round Goby is also a vector for botulism type E in Great Lakes fish and piscivorous birds. Botulism is caused by a toxin that can be passed from dreissenids, to goby, to birds, resulting in large outbreaks/die-offs of fish and birds.”

Bottom line ...check your GUIDE TO EATING ONTARIO FISH.



7. SANDHILL HUNT UPDATE:

I am told the earliest we can expect a sandhill crane hunt in south western Ontario could be in 2027. Here’s why. Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECC) determined that sandhill cranes could be hunted sustainably in Ontario. The proposal is for a limited hunt in northern and central Ontario. It says, “A sandhill crane hunting season would provide a new harvesting opportunity for hunters in Ontario, and an additional tool to help alleviate crop damage problems caused by cranes.” The introduction of the sandhill crane hunting season has been the subject of repeated requests from hunting and agricultural organizations, such as the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH).

The eastern sandhill crane population has been monitored by an annual fall staging survey coordinated by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The survey shows an increasing population trend of 4.4% annually since 1979. In addition, the most recent three-year average (2020-2022) of 97,385 cranes is 62% above the population target of 60,000 set by the management plan.



The number of breeding cranes estimated by the ECCC – Canadian Wildlife Service’s Eastern Waterfowl Survey in Quebec shows an average growth rate of 11% per year since 1990. The most recent three-year average is 9,920 pairs. Estimates from the Ontario portion of the survey indicate a five-fold increase in the number of nesting cranes since the early 1990s.

Matthew Robbins, an OFAH wildlife biologist, says bringing back the hunt is not just about population control. “It’s really more about the opportunity that has come from a healthy population,” he said, adding that hunters prize the crane meat as the “rib-eye of the sky.” “It’s a question of simply taking advantage of a good thing.”

Robbins says the management plan for sandhill cranes in Ontario and Quebec pegged a healthy population at between 30,000 and 60,000 birds, where it is now 97,000.



The hunt would be for Canadian residents only. The proposed hunting districts were chosen because of the high abundance of cranes in farming areas during fall migration, offering an attractive harvesting opportunity and to ensure that harvest does not negatively impact breeding cranes. This Canadian Wildlife Service proposal is for only northern and north central Ontario including Manitoulin Island. Opinions are being sought for those regions only.

If hunters and farmers present a science-based case for a hunt in Wildlife Management Units from Tobermory to Windsor, I am told it could happen. Build your case based on your observations of large flocks of the birds in Grey-Bruce and regional further south. Inform yourself. Do your research and submit your opinions.

Hunters are encouraged to comment on the proposal by emailing MbregsReports-Rapports- Omregs@ec.gc.ca
No word on when a decision will be made.

8. PHEROMONES attract males and females to each other. A pheromone is a chemical that an animal produces which changes the behavior of another animal of the same species. Pheromones are similar to hormones but work outside of the body. Now pheromones are involved in a new approach to sea lamprey control. Their use could help further reduce the impact of this invasive species.



Anne Scott, a professor at Michigan State University, is working with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and US Geological Survey. Her studies involve scent-based compounds that disrupt a lamprey's ability to smell the potent sex pheromone released by male sea lamprey. When lamprey reach streams to spawn, they are blind and scent is the only way males and females find each other. A chemical called petromyzonol tetra sulfate (3SPZS) can stop the females and males from hooking up. In the future, lamprey pheromones could be used to lure them into traps. And 3SPZS could be used to limit spawning of those that can't be trapped.

The current approach of using selective chemical lampricide can kill up to 97% of lamprey larvae. But it still leaves some lamprey for a future regeneration. This pheromone research could provide a highly effective tool to supplement control techniques already in use.



9. HUNTER REPORTING: The MNRF is reconsidering the penalties implemented on hunters who don't submit their mandatory report.

For the 2024 season, hunters who fail to submit their mandatory report will still be able to purchase licenses, and only must pay a \$25 fee. This update comes after the Ministry started a graduated penalty approach back in 2022, which saw hunters temporarily lose their ability to purchase licenses after missing two consecutive reports for a particular species.

From head office:

"While the OFAH understands the importance of hunter reports and the information they provide to ensure sustainable hunting, we also want to keep hunters hunting, which is why we will be discussing alternative approaches with the MNRF to maintain existing reporting rates. Learn more at www.ontario.ca/page/hunter-reporting



10. SUNDAY GUN HUNTING:

In early March OFAH Zone J Chair, Mark Braet attended a Minto Town Council meeting to support a citizen led campaign to allow Sunday gun hunting. Minto is 100 kilometers south of Warton. Braet, an OFAH Director, told the meeting *“Really, there’s not a large risk (permitting Sunday gun hunting) because it’s just another day...the rules are the same from Monday to Saturday and now they’ll be the same from Monday through Sunday.”* Permitting Sunday gun hunting expands hunting opportunities. The main benefactors of Sunday gun hunting include those targeting waterfowl (ducks and geese), small game and upland birds, and farmers/landowners engaged in predator control.

Minto resident Jill Machan met with Mark and told council she, along with her husband Gerald and their two sons, enjoy hunting as a family activity.

“As rural landowners we enjoy hunting on our property for sport, sustenance and our love of nature,” said Machan.

“We hunt mainly as a group of six: the four of us, our nephew and my father, who taught the rest of us to hunt.”



Machan presented a community petition bearing 140 pro-hunting signatures as well as many emails and over 25 letters. One supporter of Sunday hunting was so impressed with OFAH that she and her family are now OFAH members!

In her words: *“The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters were so supportive, I don’t know if I could have done it without them”.* After this overwhelming show of support, Minto council unanimously approved the Sunday gun hunting bylaw.

Hunting is one of the few recreational activities that requires proof of competency before engaging in the activity through both hunter safety and firearms safety courses. The OFAH has administered the Ontario Hunter Education Program on behalf of the government for 25 years. Since these mandatory training courses began, the injury rate for hunting accidents has dropped to, virtually nil.



11.

At the spring Zone H OFAH meeting in Durham, there was discussion about how federation clubs can improve their profiles in their respective communities, with the aim of increasing membership. I suggested issuing news releases on club events and involving more children and teens in club activities. They are future club members.



In the words of Mike Reader, a former Federation Executive Director, when it comes to speaking out on controversial issues:

“voice opinions whenever something or someone threatens conservation, hunting or fishing, write a letter to the editor, write a column, call a talk show, speak out now, you may regret it later.”

That is why I urge outdoors folks to be informed. Then, when an issue affecting our heritage hunting and fishing pursuits emerges, we are able to back up our arguments with well informed facts, increasing our chances of being on the winning side of the debate. You may not know this but OFAH began as a small group of concerned anglers in the 1920's. Our federation has grown into the largest fishing, hunting and conservation-based organization in the province. A highly motivated team of fish and wildlife biologists and other professionals deliver conservation programming, government advocacy, education and outreach on behalf of more than 100,000 OFAH members, subscribers and supporters, and 725 member clubs. The OFAH is proud to continue its legacy as the VOICE of anglers and hunters.



My next OFAH report should be issued in early July. Meantime, enjoy the fishing and hunting opportunities our beautiful province provides for us. Until next time.

Stu Paterson over and out

