

OFAH ZONE "H" report for BPSA Stu Paterson – March 2025

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



1. HATCHERY FISH THREATENED

Big snows meant roof collapses at Zone H volunteer run fish hatcheries. At the oldest of the three Sydenham Sportsmen's hatchery buildings, SSA member Steacy Lynn Urbshott reported it was: *"bad news for the fish...Sydenham Sportsmen's Association volunteers successfully transferred 60,000 rainbow trout to awaiting tanks after the roof collapsed on the tanks."*



Says Steacy *"a big thanks to Chris Geberdt, Stacey Lynn Urbshott, Mike Prevost, John Ford, Craig Geberdt, Gary Legate, Max Urbshott, Steve Klerks, Jeff, Wyatt, Len Cox, Carl Jones and Jen Belanger for their superior shovelling skills."*

Chris Geberdt of the SSA noted: *"Nobody was hurt. We saved all the fish. It could have been a lot worse...I've got to have a positive outlook on it because it could have been a lot worse....not all repairs will be covered by insurance so SSA supporters have launched a silent auction and donation event to raise money for additional repairs not covered."*



To donate check here-

https://www.gofundme.com/f/sydenham-sportsmen-fish-hatchery-3-roof-collapse-rebuild?attribution_id=sl:21ad77e4-2bd6-4fed-846f-3ce8b8adaff5&lang=en_US&utm_campaign=man_sharesheet_dash&utm_content=amp13_t1-amp14_t1&utm_medium=customer&utm_source=facebook

There were fears of a similar collapse at the Georgian Triangle Hatchery. 80-thousand fish were threatened. However, GT volunteers answered the call and cleared the roof preventing any fish losses at that location as well. The Georgian Triangle Hatchery's Stefanie Barry reported:

" The weight of the snow managed to break 5 roof trusses, but volunteers were able to fix the damage and clear the roof of snow before anything worse could happen. We would like to extend a big thank you to Jamie Morrison, Chanse Dionne, Nick Alfano, Kyle Crawford, Emerson Cooke, Jamie & Jack Barry for their hard work!"

Both hatcheries belong to the 40-member Ontario Community Hatchery Program which is funded by the province and operated by the OFAH.

No snow damage to the BPSA Hatchery.

2. PRE – CHRISTMAS PERCH SCOOP

Days before Santa arrived, legally licensed commercial fishers caught a load of perch near down-town Warton. Perch had been making a comeback in Colpoy's Bay after being mostly wiped out by overfishing. For two years anglers reported good catches of perch within 3 km of town. This perch scoop involved gill netting close to town breaking the rules governing commercial fishing here, which require the commercial folks to stay a certain distance from town.



One witness reported:

"At the town dock I observed about 5 gallons of perch in a large bin plus 4 Brown trout with one close to 10 lbs, 2 Atlantic Salmon, a few whitefish...the rest were ciscoes (1 full bin).

They had another bin that had Rock bass, suckers etc. that they did not want. That bin was a third full. They had their nets out for 2 days in 10-25 feet of water from the Caframo plant to the Warton town dock out to Grandore Street.

There were 3 fishermen in an aprox. twenty-foot open steel boat. I went to Howells fish store, and they had perch for sale \$24 a lb."

Howells is a fish store in Warton.

The law governing these commercial fishers allows gill netting certain fish for their own consumption. NOT for sale. A MNR Conservation officers told a member of the conservation group

The Bruce Peninsula Sportsmen's Association (BPSA) "we can't do anything about this."

Several BPSA members told me when advised of this scoop:

"these folks claim to be good guardians of our resources and yet they try to deplete fish that were making a comeback."



3. PERCH COMEBACK:

Why are perch making a comeback in our bay? Writing in Ontario Out of Doors OFAH fish and wildlife biologist Matthew Robbins suggests invasive round gobies may be the answer. In Owen Sound Bay MNR electro-shock studies found 237 tons of gobies. Gobies have invaded Colpoy's as well. Robbins reports "gobies are an abundant food source for sportfish....research has found goby introduction can lead to an increase in the average size of some species notably smallmouth bass and yellow perch."



Robbins also notes "these invaders can spread disease...they are linked to botulism type - E in Great Lakes fish and fish-eating birds, which have led to die-offs of both." He concludes "the long-term implications of any non-native introduction can be almost impossible to predict." Oh Yes! We are still waiting for an answer to the question "since gobies eat quagga & zebra mussels which concentrate toxins, are the fish that eat gobies that we eat any less safe"?

4. ENVIRONMENTALLY UNFRIENDLY PROJECT !!

Ontario's re-elected Doug Ford Team is FORGING AHEAD with a project that will unearth decades of old chemicals associated with explosives used in war games. If built, it could negatively affect Georgian Bay fish populations.

The Town of Meaford welcomed the Ontario government's promise to invest up to \$285 million to advance pre-development work for the proposed Ontario Pumped Storage Project, developed in partnership by TC Energy (TCE) and the Saugeen Ojibway Nation. The town says: "This major step forward highlights the project's potential to strengthen Ontario's clean energy future and create new economic opportunities for our region." The proposed Ontario Pumped Storage Project which would be the largest of its kind in Canada, would provide up to 1,000 megawatts of clean, affordable, and reliable electricity storage - enough to power one million homes for up to 11 hours.



"With electricity demand set to increase by 75 per cent by 2050, our government is advancing an all-of-the-above approach to energy affordability and energy security," said Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Electrification. "The Ontario Pumped Storage Project has the potential to store and deliver clean, affordable energy for decades, representing Canada's largest clean energy storage project. This project can only proceed following this recently announced work and the successful approval of Bruce's Power's expansion plans, as this storage is a critical part our larger energy build outlook."

The facility at the Meaford Military Tank Range - would pump water from Georgian Bay up to a reservoir during periods of low electricity demand and release the water back into Georgian Bay to generate electricity during periods of high demand. "By harnessing water and gravity, this project would act as a natural battery, storing clean electricity to ensure it's available when Ontario needs it most."

Environmental groups such as Save Georgian Bay (SGB) take issue with its possible impact on the environment, its design, the safety of the reservoir and its financial efficiency. The group questions its true carbon-offset potential as well as pointing to what SGB says are better alternatives for increasing power supply and creating energy storage capabilities in Ontario.



In the Meaford Independent Environmentalist Pay Maloney writes:

"TC Energy's proposed Pumped Storage Project threatens irreversible harm to both the Niagara Escarpment (a UN-designated World Biosphere Reserve) and the freshwater resource of Georgian Bay. TC Energy's proposed pumped storage project should not be rejected just based on environmental threats, but also on likely contamination of the site, the long-term damage to the area's tourism economies and even local farming."

5. WILD PIG UPDATE – OFAH/MNR:

Queen's Park has issued a WILD PIG UPDATE. The good news is that:

"The MNR is confident wild pigs are not established in Ontario – but that does not mean they aren't often reported"

Between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024, the Ministry of Natural Resources received wild pig reports from the public, MNR staff, other agencies, internet, and media. Overall, 109 reports of wild pig sightings were submitted during the reporting period, averaging about 9 per month. Several suspected wild pigs have been spotted in Grey Bruce over the same period. Last year, MNR staff removed 3 wild pigs (all from eastern Ontario) and helped with the recapture of 1 wild pig in southwestern Ontario. Since 2020, the MNR has removed 20 wild pigs and assisted in returning nine to captivity.



Another 187 wild pigs were removed or recaptured by residents or other partners. Most reports were of single animals.

The province's control strategy launched with a pilot project in 2020 asked the public to report wild pig sightings or trail camera images. MNR staff responded by attempting to trap reported animals.

Ontario's Official Wild Pig Strategy includes a prohibition on hunting wild boars:

"Wild pigs that are exposed to hunting pressure flee into refuge areas and learn to avoid humans. In some jurisdictions where hunting seasons were introduced as an approach to manage wild pigs, the intentional release of wild pigs into new areas to create additional recreational hunting opportunities significantly accelerated population expansion."

Our Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters says this approach has been effective at addressing the threat. "the decision to phase-out Eurasian wild boar farms and to prohibit wild pig hunting, was based on the findings of decades of work across North America."

Reports of wild pigs in Ontario continue to be submitted, indicating that wild pigs could become established if control actions are discontinued.

For more on wild pigs, click here <https://www.ontario.ca/page/invasive-wild-pigs-ontario>

6. COMMERCIAL BOAT CLEANUP COSTS:

And it appears taxpayers will pay for the cleanup after a commercial fishing boat leaked oil when it sank twice at the Stokes Bay dock. If the owner refuses to pay the 80-thousand dollar bill, taxpayers will pay under the Ship Source Oil Pollution Fund. About 5,500 litres of oily water was recovered from the boat, in addition to contaminants removed from the water using a containment boom.



Twice in 2024, this commercial fishing boat sank at the Stoke's Bay dock north of Warton. There's no word if the sinkings were due to sabotage or an equipment malfunction. The Warton Echo reported on the first sinking: *"The boat that sank Sept. 5 was re-floated and cleanup was completed as of Sept. 15, the Coast Guard said at the time. About 5,500 litres of oily water was recovered from the vessel, in addition to contaminants removed from within a containment boom."* The fishing boat has been towed to the mouth of the Saugeen River. At last report it was sitting on shore.

7. FIREARMS BAN:

Our OFAH was fast to react to an expanded Federal Government firearms ban.

The federation's bottom line:

"the basic premise of these bans is deeply flawed."

Before the end of 2024 the federal Liberals provided owners of some centre-fire and rim-fire semi-automatic rifles, a lump of coal, banning another 324 models of what it calls "assault-style" firearms.



The announcement prompted confusion, with the list of additional banned models released three hours after a news conference discussing firearms issues. There are no traditional hunting models in the list.

The announcement also included word of amendments to be introduced describes as "regulatory measures to ensure that all firearms in the Canadian market are accounted for." Also new regs governing high-capacity magazines are expected soon. A commitment for a buyback program was mentioned again for firearms businesses

and individuals who own the banned firearms. Word is a buyback program for businesses has started involving a few test businesses and will be open to all businesses.

The release also confirmed the Federal Government will donate some of the seized guns to support Ukraine.

And the OFAH position?

Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters Manager of Policy Mark Ryckman says *“The list of prohibited firearms might be getting longer, but the basic premise is still deeply flawed... confiscating guns from law-abiding Canadians and sending them to Ukrainian soldiers, won’t reduce gun violence or make Canadians safer. Not only does this ban not help protect Canadians, it continues to impact hunters and sport shooters alike in an unfair and unjust way.”*



8. RUFFED GROUSE NEW CHAPTER:



There’s a new chapter of the RUFFED GROUSE SOCIETY (RGS) in our part of Ontario. The news was released at the latest Zone H OFAH meeting held on Zoom.

Ruffed grouse are considered a “bell weather species” that reflects the overall health of the environment. The society’s Derek Witlib says *“We are searching for ways to assist the grouse, primarily by improving habitat. Improved habitat for*



ruffed grouse enhances food and cover for the hundreds of other game and non-game species of wildlife that share the grouse’s forest home. The chapters located across Canada are a vital link in our network and support of all concerned is needed.”

For nearly two decades, RGS has been actively establishing management projects throughout Canada. For info on how you can get involved contact Derek Witlib at dwitlib@hotmail.com

9. BIRD UPDATE OOD

The State of Canada’s Birds 2024 report, released by Environment and Climate Change Canada and Birds Canada, provided an interesting overview regarding Canada’s birds. As reported in Ontario Out of Doors, many of Canada’s bird populations are in decline. However the majority have increased or remained stable.



Waterfowl species, along with birds of prey and wetlands birds, tend to be doing well nationally, with some of the strongest recoveries.

The report says waterfowl numbers have risen by 46% since 1970, while birds of prey numbers have increased by 35% and wetland birds have increased by 21%. Each of those groups of birds have benefited substantially from conservation efforts.

However, shorebirds, aerial insectivores, and grassland birds are in crisis experiencing long-term decline.



To view the full report, visit: naturecounts.ca

10. DOG TRAIN AREAS:

Our Ministry of Natural Resources has amended the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997, (FWCA) and associated regs. to allow for the issuing of licences for new dog train-and-trial areas.

Dog trial-and-train areas are licensed, enclosed properties that are permitted to hold – depending on property size – coyote, red fox, varying hare, and cottontail for the purpose of teaching scenting dogs hunting skills and testing those skills. There are currently only 24 in Ontario. The decision, was posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario, allowed individuals to submit applications to establish new train-and- trial areas. Interested parties were asked to contact dogtraintrial@ontario.ca for more information.



Dog train-and-trial changes:

- enable the transfer of existing licences to new operators
- prescribe a one-time 90-day application period for new train-and-trial areas
- clarify record keeping requirements
- prohibit dog train and trial area licence holders from keeping cottontail and snowshoe hares that have been imported into Ontario to help prevent the introduction of rabbit hemorrhagic disease



The decision drew over 11,000 comments on the ERO. Those supporting the changes were grateful for more safe areas where their hounds could run without infringing on private property. Many said these facilities were needed to help uphold the sporting hound tradition, especially with the increasing development of available land where hounds could run.

11. OFAH AT SPORTSMEN'S SHOW

Our OFAH will again be front and center at the 2025 Toronto Sportsmen's show

This is the 77th annual Toronto Sportsmen's Show (TSS) and it returns to the International Centre in Mississauga from March 13 to 16. Parking is free.

The giant trade show continues to outdo itself, breaking attendance records and offering hundreds of hunting, fishing, and outdoors-related products and attractions.





OFAH will feature youth archery and give attendees lessons on how valuable our federation is as it advocates for and continues as: “the voice of anglers hunters and conservationists.”

With multiple seminars, a taxidermy display, and a kids e-bike test drive track, the Toronto Sportsmen’s Show 2025 offers something for everyone who loves the outdoors. I have distributed the complimentary SPORTSMEN’S SHOW tickets designated for BPSA members with a big thanks to the shows pr team.

12. BOAT SHOW 2025



Over 55 thousand attended the 2024 Toronto International Boat Show at the CNE grounds.

My fishing buddy Mike and I checked out the 17 and 18 footers we would buy when we win the lottery.

Mike particularly liked the idea that veterans can get a special price when investing in a new fishing boat.

One highlight was the seminars by Melodie Schaffer, 2023 Rolex Sailor of the Year. She shared her inspiring story of having a career



as a biomedical engineer to being a stay-at-home mom for 20 years; and overcoming unimaginable roadblocks to pursue her passion for offshore sailing, setting race records, and becoming the first Canadian woman to race around the world in her Class 40 boat Whiskey Jack.

I love being around boats. At this huge show I helped on the TIBS Communications/PR Team for five years and made many boating friends. Once-again I distributed free boat show tickets to BPSA members.



13. FISH THIEF – THE GREAT LAKES FISHERIES COMMISSION:

A note from the Commission:

“Thanks to everyone who came out to the Owen Sound screening of THE FISH THIEF. A Special thank you to BPSA volunteers and Stu Paterson who helped with publicity. Stay tuned to the Commission’s social media pages to learn more about screenings. In the meantime, stream the film on the Apple TV app and Amazon!!”



The documentary outlines how sea lamprey populations have been reduced by about 90% across the Great Lakes since sea lamprey control began.

In the mid-1900s—before the control program was implemented—there were approximately 2.5 million non-native sea lampreys in the Great Lakes. But with the development of integrated control methods, including lampricides, barriers, traps, pheromones, and other methods, populations have been drastically reduced.

Sea lampreys have a negative impact on the Great Lakes fishery, at one time killing up to 100 million pounds of fish each year. Thanks to sea lamprey controls, lamprey populations have been reduced by about 90%.

One way the success of the control program is assessed is through the monitoring of sea lamprey populations, which occurs by generating an adult sea lamprey abundance index for each Great Lake. The index is calculated by assessment crews who capture migrating adult sea lampreys in index streams with traps during the spring and early summer.”

If you want to learn more about the status of Great Lakes sea lampreys, check this website: <https://www.glfsc.org/status.php> and our fact sheet: https://www.glfsc.org/pubs/factsheets/FACT%205_all.pdf. And be sure to keep watching for weekly #DYK posts!

Learn more: <https://www.thefishthief.com/>

14. OFAH

The OFAH PRESIDENT Rick Moore reports that Directors of our Federation have spent 10-thousand hours (mostly on Zoom) studying and trying to perfect the Bifurcation that took place in recent months. Our federation split into two sections:

(a) The OFAH Foundation and (b) OFAH Membership.

Our Zone H operates under the membership section. The aim of the Bifurcation is to modernize, to streamline how we represent anglers and hunters, and ensure the OFAH complies with changes to laws governing non-profit organizations.

For non OFAH members: Enhance your hunting and fishing experience by joining the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. Be informed about the latest outdoors news. Enjoy member-exclusive resources, special insurance, community events, and advocacy support that make a real difference in the hunting and fishing landscape. Our Zone H boasts over 11-thousand members and stretches from Tobermory to Kincardine east to Orillia and Barrie. The next Zone H membership meeting is slated for the Sydenham Sportsmen’s Association clubhouse in Georgian Bluffs. Not date yet.

Thanks to Kat McCulloch and Al Hunter for their editing skills, and Jane Beggs at OFAH headquarters for her continuing guidance.

Photos: Sydenham Sportsmen’s Association, Stefanie Barry, Georgian Triangle Anglers, OFAH, MNR, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Paterson Media, Toronto International Boat Show

Stu Paterson - Director, Membership section OFAH
- BPSA OFAH rep since 2003

