



# Light Lines

JOURNAL OF THE CREDIT RIVER ANGLERS ASSOCIATION  
SPRING 2007 VOLUME 18, NUMBER 1

## CRAA's Recent highlights By John Kendall

Our newsletter production has been a bit soft for the past nine months. I'm hoping a member will step up to the plate to take over the newsletter layout and printing, as Louis and I are so busy along with other regular volunteers managing projects.

For some of you who do not frequent the CRAA webpage and chat boards, Louis has been VP of CRAA since fall 2005 and has taken a very active role alongside myself in managing projects. With two highly dedicated guys running the team we are busier than ever.

Here are a few brief highlights of recent works. More details to come and can also be found on the clubs website and chat board:

**Fish ladder and adult transfers:** CRAA transferred a record 500 adult steelhead past Norval Dam in 2006 and collected our 50,000 egg allotment for the hatchery. Members Dave Leschied, Rick Symanski and Justin Elia have led the project.

**Hatchery work** continued with raising our steelhead fry and parr and Atlantic salmon in partnership with MNR and OFAH. Thanks to Christine, Leslie and Ryan who are non anglers living nearby

that just care about the river and feed our fish every day for us. Mike Tost has stepped down after 10 years of service to whom we all owe a debt and Joe Ward has stepped up to the plate.

**Political advocacy**—Louis has done a stellar job in lobby work and he and I have had many, many productive meetings at Queens Park and with MP's, MPP's, ministers, John Tory (PC leader-Ontario) and senior MNR staff.

**Lake Ontario Steelhead Meeting**—hosted by CRAA at CVC offices in July 2006. We hosted a meeting with senior MNR, NY DEC and NOAA representatives to discuss the state of steelhead, presentations and limits. A truly progressive event!

**Tree planting**—CRAA planted roughly 6,000 trees in 2006 at various sites including Erindale Park, the upper watershed and Bronte Creek watershed.

**Bronte Creek Leadership**—Members Tony Bolger and Aaron Shirley have led the work on our more western tributaries through land owner contacts and tree planting.

**Membership growth**—CRAA now directly represents over 1,500 members and over 4,000 steelheaders through partnerships developed in 2006.

**CRAA represents all Lake Ontario Tributaries**—Through our Bronte/16 mile team and partnership with FF.net conservation group CRAA now represents rivers from Hamilton to Bellville

and we have made it clear we will fight for migratory fish and work with MNR and other agencies and NGO's to better protect fishing and rivers on the whole north shore.

**Mississauga Kid's Fishing Event**—CRAA hosted the Mississauga Kid's Fishing Day at Lake Aquataine in late August. The fishing was a bit slow, but we had over 250 local children out to fish and learn the joys of fishing. Walter Oster from the Toronto Sportsmen's Show donated 250 rod and reel combo kits that we gave out to children free of charge. What a rewarding event for all.

**CRAA director in Afghanistan**—Mike Brady, long time member and director of CRAA recently returned from a 6 month tour of duty with the Canadian Military in Afghanistan. I know Mike is glad to be back in the land of steelhead.

**Norval Fishway Plans**—CRAA has worked closely with local Norval land owners, the Reid family and have set in place an agreement to build and maintain a fishway at the Norval Dam. This will be part of the Fisheries Management Plan and be perhaps the most vital component of a wild steelhead fishery next to the barrier project itself.

**Migratory Fish Barrier Environmental Assessment**—Louis and I have spent hundreds of hours on this most important project. Louis, Mark Heaton (MNR) and I wrote the EA study report in summer 2006 and thanks to our constant push and Mark's steadfast work at MNR we have completed the first public comment period in March 2007.

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Credit River Anglers Association  
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Contributions are welcome from all members and non-members alike.

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- Fish Rearing : **Joe Ward**
- River Watch : Dave Leschied
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- Moderator : Dave Leschied
- Moderator : Rick Symanski

**Bronte/16 Mile Team Leaders**

- Aaron Shirley
- Tony Bolger
- Brian Morrison

**Editor**  
**Vacant**

# News and Announcements



## Highlights within CRAA!

### CRAA Membership Corner:

CRAA has added a new component to our membership. Due to overwhelming support CRAA has added two types of membership within CRAA. The first is our traditional membership, with paid members. Paid membership will be classified as voting members, entitled to membership cards, embroidered crests, discounts, special prizes and mailings from CRAA. The second membership is free and can be signed up on line as a non-voting member. Non voting members will be e-mailed CRAA news and events in pdf and have access to postings on the website.

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on the CRAA website for viewing.

**CRAA Members** receive a 10% discount at the retailers listed below on selected items!

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## President's Update

John Kendall



Well the years just keep on passing by. Hard to believe just how much we have accomplished over the past 17 plus years. It is a pleasure to reflect on what we have done and plan our direction into the future with a great bunch of volunteers.

Rehabilitation work will continue to be a major component of what we do, but more political work is in our future with Louis' work, more partnerships such as 'Curb your Gutters', Atlantic salmon, the barrier project, stocking and more.

Anglers and people who just love the outdoors giving back to nature is the key to a healthier river and better fishing. If your reading this and are not a member or volunteer please take a moment to consider how much the river needs you and make the time to give something back. The rewards are truly priceless.

**Advertise your business here!**

## Advanced Steelheading By Aaron Shirley



The opening of trout season in the tributaries of the Great Lakes is something that I look forward to every spring. I still get as excited as a kid at Christmas to fish steelhead during opening week for drop back steelhead, and have annually since I started this yearly ritual over 25-years ago. There is nothing like hooking into a bright chrome drop back steelhead leaping several feet out of the water on a small creek. The heart-pounding action and sheer power of these chrome rockets is what draws a multitude of anglers to the Great Lakes tributaries every spring. The popularity of steelheading in Great Lakes tributaries has become quite pervasive over the past decade, and all five lakes have great steelhead opportunities in their tributaries.

To start, I will run through some specific structural elements that I look for where drop back steelhead like to rest during their migration down river to the lake. When steelhead spawn, they move into shallow areas with a gravelly type substrate and the females will occupy a redd (steelhead nest). Males will then move in to fertilize the female's eggs when she drops them on the redd. After this spawning process is over, the fish will vacate the redds and move out of the shallow gravelly areas and into deeper pools of water. It is in these specific areas that they are most vulnerable to angling methods. Undercut banks from eroding soil with deeper water can be dynamite for drop back steelhead. River bends with deeper pools are also key locations, especially if fallen trees or boulders offer further cover.



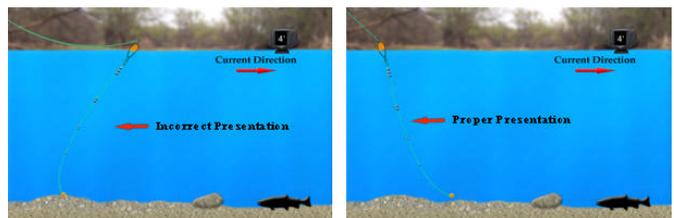
Most veteran steelheaders know just how important timing is for a successful day on their favourite stream or river. Timing the right day on the water is the most important factor for having one of those unforgettable days of fishing where you can say "you should have been here yesterday". Getting good at this will require learning the intricacies of the rivers you fish and knowing how the water fluctuations affect fish movement. When a stream at a normal water level receives a large amount of precipitation, the water will rise and become muddy. This will trigger fish to move downriver and head back out to the lake. It is imperative that you hit the river on the first available day that the water is clear enough to fish. If you hit the river on this clearing trend, you will be able to intercept the migration of fish that haven't made it back to the lake yet. If you hit the river a day too late, you may miss out on your opportunity to have a smokin' day full of chromers.

There are aids available to anglers to help with learning when the water on some rivers will be that perfect clarity and volume. Many government websites offer data that gives you

current flow information on specific streams and rivers. This is gold for steelheaders, as they can log onto a website and see up-to-date current flow rates to help determine if the drive to a destination is worth it or not on any given day. Veterans will remember the old days when driving 2-hours to a river only to find it 'blown', or too muddy to fish happened occasionally. Knowing the river you fish, the normal current flow rates and how fast or slow the river takes to clear are essential to predicting what the river conditions will be like on any particular day. When you get good at determining when you should hit your favourite river, this is when you will know when to beg and plead your boss for a day off work!

Over the past two decades, float fishing has become the mainstay for steelheading in Ontario, and has slowly been catching on south of the border in the US States. It is easy to see why it has become so popular, as it is an easy method and the float is a great visual to detect a strike. A longer rod is necessary for float fishing with my preference in the 13-foot range. Although a spinning reel can easily be used for this technique, the preferred reel is a centerpin. The centerpin reel is a smooth circular reel that spins freely on a quality bearing. Most centerpins do not have a drag system, and the angler's fingers are used to apply pressure on the spool to fight the fish similar to a mooching reel.

The big advantage of the centerpin reel is that you can achieve a long smooth drag-free drift throughout a pool with a proper presentation. There are two separate current flows in the water column on a river, so achieving the proper presentation while float fishing is quite important. The bottom current flow is slower than the current at the surface. Since the fish are located close to bottom, it makes sense to drift your offerings with the flow of the bottom current to acquire



a natural drift. This is done by 'palming' your reel to slow the float down just enough to create a little drag at the surface. You know you are getting the correct drift when you see your float on roughly a 45 degree angle. Some quality reels like the JW Young centerpins have an adjustable mechanism to allow an angler to obtain the perfect drift with-

Advanced steelheading continued:

out palming the reel. This adjustment is quick and easy to make, and must be done on every spot that has a different flow rate.

The set-up varies slightly with angler preference, but a standard type of float fishing rig will have a Phantom or balsa float on the main line along with some black split shot evenly spaced to a small black swivel. For a main line, I prefer the stiff tough properties of Maxima Ultragreen or Chameleon in 6- or 8-pound test on a centerpin reel; however, a limp line should be used on a spinning reel. A 4- to 6-pound fluorocarbon leader is then tied to the swivel to a small black octopus hook, with the leader length determined by the depth of water. Then some smaller black shot are added to the leader and evenly spaced to approximately 18-inches above the hook.

Fly fishing is one of my favourite ways to target steelhead. Contrary to popular belief, the fly rod can be very productive for steelhead, and sometimes even more productive than float fishing. Do you find this hard to believe? Well, believe it! I have personally had many days on the river with my fly rod in hand out-fishing the hard core centerpin float anglers, making them wish they had their fly rods. Steelhead become conditioned to the float set-ups, most especially on heavily pressured watersheds. I have seen steelhead spook away from a float set-up way too many times to ignore the stealthy approach of the fly rod. There is a time and a place for both a fly rod and a float rod.

I like to stand well down river from the fish holding in the tail section of a run and quarter my cast up river. I then make a few mends and intently watch my line. A strike indicator is helpful to determine when a fish hits, but if they are avoiding floats, they may spook from the indicator as well. I like to make long casts and several mends so that I do not have to get close to the fish. This way, the fish don't see an angler stand-

ing close to them or a float passing overhead; all that they see is your fly.

Flies I have had good success with are the San Juan Worm, Michigan Wiggler, Woolly Bugger, Egg Sucking Leech, black and golden stone fly nymph imitations, mayfly nymph imitations, caddis larva imitations, Black Gordon, Polar Shrimp, Spruce, Green Butt Skunk, Washougal Olive, small various bucktail and marabou streamers and of course the Glo Bug single egg pattern. If you would really like to have a great day on the river with your fly rod, take your waders, an aquarium net and a mason jar down to the river you plan on fishing just before the season opens to seine the bottom for aquatic insects. Walk out into the river in areas with various bottom substrates and kick up the bottom with the aquarium net just below the commotion. Gather a bunch of aquatic insects in the Mason jar and take them home. Divide the good specimens into separate smaller vials and mix formaldehyde and water into a solution to preserve them. You can then label the lid of the vials with the name of the insect and river you acquired the specimens from. You now have the exact aquatic insects that the steelhead will be feeding on to place near your fly tying vice and replicate.

For float fishing and bottom bouncing, fresh steelhead roe tied in spawn net in small bags in various colours is standard; however large bags can be quite productive at times, especially in stained water conditions. Brown and salmon roe can also work in the spring, as well as artificial eggs such as single Exude or UB Fishin' soft bait eggs. I find the egg presentation best on opening week in the morning. Usually by the time the afternoon sun is overhead, other baits work much better, like jigs worms and nymphs. I really like artificial worms like the Storm 3" and Exude 2.5" pink worms, as they can be dynamite. Other great choices include wax worms, maggots, real worms and soft plastic Exude nymphs. Micro jigs under the float also work well at times, like marabou jigs, small Mr. Twisters and little tube jigs.

## Membership and Renewal Information

Are you concerned about the future health of the beautiful Credit River and Bronte Creek watersheds including all their tributaries? Do you enjoy fishing, hiking and other activities in the valleys? Do you want a cleaner river, better fishing and a cleaner environment for the future? Then you should join CRAA NOW. CRAA's address is on page 2.

**New Member Fees:**                      **1 year \$25.00**                      **3 years \$55.00** (Please enclose cheque payable to CRAA)  
**Membership Renewal :**                **1 year \$20.00**                      **3 years \$50.00**

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Yes! I want to volunteer for: \_\_\_\_\_