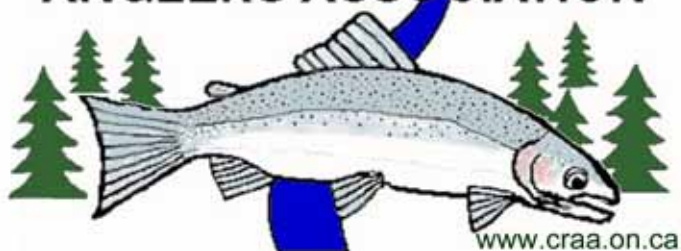


CREDIT RIVER ANGLERS ASSOCIATION



Issue: Spring 2010

Light Lines

Journal of the Credit River Anglers Association

For more information, please visit our website at www.craa.on.ca

Spring 2010 New Look News:

Spring Fishway Operations:

Spring fishway is completed check page four for the summary. Final data will be released in the Light Lines Summer 2010 issue.

Credit River Rainbow Trout Barrier:

Public Meeting to be held in the next few months (date TBA) on issues related to the proposed rainbow trout barrier. CRAA needs support, check the homepage or message board for detailed date, time and location information.

Norval Dam Fishway in its final stages:

The ground breaking day for the project to build a dual Denil fishway at the Norval dam is closing in. Final permitting authorizations are being completed as this issue of Light Lines is going to print.

Inside this Issue

- Fall Fishway Ops
- Fishing Barbless
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Fall Fishway and Transfer Operations

CRAA, MNR and OFAH transfer Atlantics, Steelhead, Browns and More.

John Kendall

Five years ago CRAA began lifting and transporting wild steelhead past the Norval dam in a controlled release to a major coldwater tributary under direction from the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). In 2008 we began moving numbers of fall steelhead in addition to spring runs, to ensure more fall run steelhead had a fair chance and ensure a proper distribution of genetics. Our aim was to ensure we didn't benefit one portion of the run (spring) only. Many fall run steelhead spawn in late February to late March and were simply missed in the spring fish lifts. These early

run fish often spawned below Streetsville Dam and had no success reproducing. Hopefully we will see this work paying dividends in the near future.

The fall of 2009 saw CRAA working with MNR and Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) at Streetsville to lift, collect and move steelhead. Huge thanks go out to OFAH for their Atlantic salmon crew who moved many of the fall steelhead along with browns, cohos for the hatchery and those treasured Atlantics. CRAA volunteers and the OFAH crew operated the ladder 3-4 days per week during the warmer periods and once November rolled around they

were into steelhead lifts daily. A steady stream of steelhead produced many 10-20 fish days over the course of the fall.

CRAA volunteers working to collect Atlantic salmon were also instructed by the MNR to collect and hold all steelhead, brown and coho salmon caught fishing the Credit River. Again, once November arrived steelhead numbers jumped and we managed to move several hundred fall run fish, many bearing the tags from the fall of 2008.

Fishing Barbless Prevents Juvenile Mortality

John Kendall

This fall I fished barbless all the time while drifting roe or flies. While I normally fly fish barbless (habit from the regs), it is less common under a float. Yet common sense and science tell us a barbless hook does less damage to a fish we plan to release. So doesn't it just make sense to pinch your barb? Absolutely. What about lost fish? Hogwash.

I can fairly say I only lost 1 fish this entire fall (out of 500 or so) that I can blame on the barbless hook and only because I let the line go slack as the fish

ran to my feet. No harm to my ego, or to the fish. The benefit of barbless hooks on juvenile salmonids such as smolts is even more valuable. We have all had a little smolt suck back a bag or fly and have jaw damage despite our most careful removal. But with a pinched barb the hook simply slips out and the little fellow is off to feed again soon. The vast majority of us release the majority of our steelhead and other species too. It simply makes sense that we do everything in our power to ensure that fish we release are unharmed. For anyone who has stuck a finger with a hook (Dave

Leschied can attest) will admit if barbless it just slides out, but if barbed your driving to the emergency (right Dave!).

I have fished barbless while rigging in Lake Ontario for 15 years and never had an issue. And again, when releasing fish like bows they just slip off at the boat's side and rarely need to be netted. Again giving them the upper hand at coming back again.

So I encourage everyone to always pinch their barbs! Always! Tightlines will ensure a fish stays on and the fish will thank you!

Fishing Artificial for Steelhead

Brian Morrison and Jim Butler

Many anglers are strong proponents of catch and release angling for steelhead as well as being concerned about the health of our wild steelhead populations and ecosystems, we as anglers can look at ways that will minimize our impact on steelhead and their ecosystems. One way besides releasing wild steelhead, is to use artificial baits that will reduce catch and release mortality as well as the number of times a fish is caught within a season, again reducing the chance of post release mortality. By reducing the amount of roe an anglers uses, it will also result in less anglers targeting wild female salmon and trout for eggs to use as bait. Using barbless hooks will further minimize any impact on wild steelhead. Additional benefits from fishing with artificial baits and barbless hooks will increase the protection for resident trout, rearing parr, migrating smolts, and resident fish of other species that are integral parts of steelhead/coldwater ecosystems.

Recent research from Oregon State University and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife conducted a study evaluating the impact of cured roe on juvenile salmon and steelhead. The research discovered that within a 23 day span, 30% of the juvenile salmonids were killed. They found that eggs cured with sodium sulfite were lethal to juvenile fish. Anglers that fish with eggs cured in sodium sulfite are fishing with poisoned bait.

Further impetus to become proficient with artificial baits is based on recent concerns of Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) outbreaks or future aquatic invasive disease introductions, and the use and transfer of roe across watersheds and political boundaries. By not transferring live bait that may act as a vector for spreading aquatic diseases into new watersheds, it will help protect our aquatic resources.

This past year, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources has limited the use and transfer of roe within Lake Erie tributaries because of this threat.

Jigs

It's hard to pinpoint just when steelhead jigs found their way under the floats of Great Lakes steelheaders, however, one thing has become inherently clear and that is their growth in popularity in recent years. So the question begs why then have steelhead jigs become so popular amongst the Great Lakes float fishing fraternity?

For starters, materials such as marabou feathers and rabbit fur used to produce jigs both 'pulsate' and 'breathe' once in the water. This pulsating action creates the impression of realism within the jig and often times triggers a reflex strike from opportunistically feeding or aggressive fish. Jigs then are merely suggestive or impressionistic versions of baitfish or invertebrates found within the aquatic community. Perhaps one aspect more important than the action of a jig is its color. Both marabou and bunny jigs come in an array of colors and color combos all of which have a time and a place on the water. Popular jig colors are black, pink and white. While popular colors do produce results, do not expect them to produce for long in heavily pressured water. Let's face it, every single pool, run and pocket is generally fished with popular colors by mid-morning no matter what the conditions are on a daily basis. This is when the lesser used colors such as olive, peach, purple, brown, blue, etc. can put stale or pressured fish back on the bite. One of my favorite alternative jig color patterns for pressured fish in clear water is a brown/orange jig combo. This jig combo often turns the heads of even the most pressured fish.

Although there is a great deal more that could be discussed about jig fishing, I will try and dispel some myths

about jig fishing that I have heard over the seasons.

The foremost misconception of jig fishing is that jigs are only productive during the colder water periods. This has not been my experience. Truth be-told, I use jigs from September through till the following June. In other words, whenever steelhead are present. Jigs seem to particularly effective during periods when fish have seen too many egg presentations. Another misconception is that jigs must be tipped with some sort of live bait such as a maggot. Again, this just hasn't been my experience. Having experimented with jigs for well over a decade now and having banked more than my share of steelhead, I can honestly attest that none of these fish were caught using the addition of bait on my jig.

In a nutshell then, the natural pulsating action and proper color selection of a jig is in itself enough to solicit a Feeding, Aggressive, Curious, Opportunistic or Reflex style of strike from our Great Lakes Steelhead.

Plastic Worms

Like jigs, plastic worms are another presentation that offers us additional opportunities to connect with fish within a given piece of holding water.

If you haven't heard already, the most popular worm color amongst steelheaders is pink however my favorite color is whichever one is working at the present time.

Given peak periods of heavy angling pressure, try opting out of the traditional pink worm presentation as fish become stale. Purple, white, and light pink are just a few alternative colors which in most cases will put

“A jig is itself able to solicit a feeding, aggressive, curious, opportunistic or reflex style strike”

you back into additional fish. You can also adjust the size of your worm from 1.5 inches up to 6 inches, or how you rig the worm. Like jigs, plastic worms do not need be scented in order to produce fish. The mere action, texture and color of the worm is all that is needed to produce results.

Trout Beads

Egg imitations are also important as artificial bait for steelhead. A newcomer to Great Lakes, but has been used in Alaska for a long time are trout beads. Trout beads are plastic beads that come in a variety of colours and sizes (6mm, 8mm, 10mm, 12mm). One of the great things about trout beads is that they are fixed to your leader at whatever distance you want from the hook. By doing this, you reduce the chance of hooking an adult fish deeply as well as make it a lot

harder to hook and harm parr, smolts, and non-target species like resident trout or minnows. This is especially true once the water warms up in the spring. A lot of us have experienced having to tie extra roe bags just to deal with all the juvenile salmonids and minnow species. With trout beads, you can avoid this. You usually attach the bead about an inch and half to two inches away from the hook by either using a knot similar to a clinch knot, or you can use a toothpick. I prefer using the knot shown on the trout bead website (http://www.troutbeads.com/How_To.html). I have found trout beads can fish as well as roe. After fishing one day with a friend this past fall, I hooked twice as many steelhead on trout beads as he did using roe.

How to tie on a trout bead. Source: http://www.troutbeads.com/How_To.html

Whichever presentation you chose to present under your steelhead float, keep in mind that there really is no one bait or artificial that will do it all. Each presentation has a time and a place and that can change from pool to pool. The real key to being a successful steelheader is to be as versatile in your presentation as steelhead are in their feeding behaviors.

A wild Lake Ontario north shore steelhead that took a bunny jig. J. Butler photo



Catch – Release – Catch Again!

John Kendell

The other day I was looking over the fall tagged fish reports that come through via e-mail. One in particular caught my eye, this fish had two CRAA tags and had been caught in Erindale in November, 2009 and released.



Well, with the report I dug into the file to look at this fish's history with CRAA. I always try to give a little history to those that catch and report a tagged fish. Sure enough, CRAA volunteers lifted this hen in late March, 2008 at 56 cm in length. Then in 2009 I caught her in March in Erindale and released her. We lifted her in the fishway at Streetsville on March 29, 2009 at 62 cm. A second tag was added and she was loaded into the truck for her second spawning run. Now she has been caught again this fall and released. And sure enough, a week later is picked up in the Streetsville fishway and tagged for number three at 67 cm in length.

Over the years we have seen many tagged fish caught in the lake and dozens and dozens from the river return to the fishway. Amazing given these floy tags only last 6-18 months. But from time to time we see fish with three and even four tags at the fishway. Now that's amazing to know a fish has spawned 4 years in a row with certainty. These fish have undergone the lift, measurement, transport in the CRAA truck, spawning, dropping past two dams and surviving the lake to come home again and again.

Credit River Anglers Association
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CRAA would like to thank the following individuals for their contribution to this newsletter: Brian Morrison, Jim Butler, Ken Patterson and John Kendell

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 John Kendell

Black Wing Streamer
 Ken Patterson reveals a secret fly recipe for steelhead success

Ken Patterson

Recipe

Hook: Mustad salmon fly hook #8

Thread: 8/0 black tying thread

Tip: Flat silver tinsel and light green floss

Tail: Golden pheasant crest

Butt: Red wool or micro chenille

Body: Black embroidery thread

Rib: Thin flat tinsel

Throat: Red hackle clump

Wing: Black marabou feathers

Hackle: Yellow 4 to 6 turns

Shoulder: Jungle cock (optional)

Tying Instructions

1. Lay down a base wrap of black tying thread and stop at the hook bend.
2. Tie in some flat silver tinsel and

wrap it part way down the bend and back up to form the tip but don't trim, then over-wrap the top section of it with some light green floss.

3. Tie in a small section of Golden pheasant crest for the tail.

4. Tie in some red wool or micro chenille and wrap several turns to form the butt.

5. Tie in some black embroidery thread and wrap it up the hook to form the body. Take the remaining flat tinsel and wrap it forward to form the rib over the fly body and tie off and trim.

6. Tie in a clump of red hackle behind the hook eye to form the throat below the fly body.

7. Tie in a clump of black marabou feathers behind the hook eye to form a wing above the fly body.



8. Tie in jungle cock barbs for shoulders.

9. Tie in yellow hackle and wrap around 4 to 6 times and tie off behind the hook eye.

10. Wrap the tying thread around to form a head and whip finish. Apply some head cement to complete the fly.

This is one of my favourite steelhead flies for fall or spring runs and is a great summer fly for bass.



Volunteering with CRAA

Volunteer opportunities abound this spring! Check the CRAA website or visit the CRAA message board:
 www.craa.on.ca

Fish Ladder and Transfer Update

March 31 - April 23
 Spring Steelhead Lift
 Total Fish Lifted: 2000+
 Total Wild Fish Transferred: 1402
 Check out the long term trend! ----->

