LIGHT LINES

FALL 2000 Volume 11, Number 2

Fly Fishing the Upper Credit

By Mike Brady

When most people hear of the Credit River, the thing that most likely springs to mind is the fabulous migratory species fishery that exists between Norval and Lake Ontario. However, if you continue to head north up the Credit River you eventually come to a part of the upper river, which harbors a fabulous stream trout fishery.

The stream trout fishery extends from north of the town of Inglewood all the way up the west branch of the Credit past Erin, and up the East (Main) branch to Orangeville and Island Lake. In this portion of the river can be found brook, brown, and rainbow trout. There are all types of water to fish, from the cascading whitewater of the cataract to the slow meandering meadow pools in Forks of the Credit Provincial park and the boggy swamp water north of Caledon. The fish in this river are some of the best fighting and most beautiful stream trout to be found in Ontario. There is no – and has not been – any stocking of browns and rainbows for decades, so the fish are "wild" in the best sense of the word. As for crowds, they are non-existent, and I can count on one hand the number of other people I saw fishing while I was fishing all of last summer. I have seen more guys on the Grand, in a single pool, than I saw in Forks of the Credit Park, from May to September last year.

There is suitable water for all techniques on the upper Credit, and I had great days last year fishing nymphs, fishing dries, and even fishing BIG streamers. What method works best really depends on the water conditions, but more importantly what the fish want, and what you feel comfortable fishing with. The only method that I found to be more of a nuisance than an asset was nymph fishing with an indicator, which I will explain later.

In the early part of the season, from opening day until the water warms up sufficiently for any surface activity, the method that I found to be most effective was short-line nymphing. I found this to be much more effective than fishing with a strike indicator due to the generally shallow depth of the runs that you are fishing, as well as the variability of the pools and runs that are present. You may be fishing a fast/deep chute one minute, only to wade up river and find a slow, wide flat, and I found that

with an indicator there was way too much time lost changing split shot, the depth of the lead, and even the indicator itself in some instances. Also, by short-line nymphing you are in constant contact with your split-shot, which should be on bottom, and therefore you will instantly feel the take of a fish, rather than having to wait to see your

Credit River Anglers Association

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Fly Fishing the Upper Credit *continued*

indicator move. Once the water warms up sufficiently, the fish begin to key in on the numerous insect hatches that can occur throughout most of the day. This fishing is extremely exciting both mentally and visually, as you see the presentation of your fly, and hopefully the take of a fish. I took many large fish, 15–20 inches, last summer on dry flies and there is nothing much more exciting than seeing one of these large fish suck in your tiny dry fly! Another option, which I have found to work best during high water periods, is to fish with large streamer flies. The fish become extremely aggressive when the water is high and/or off-colored and when fishing this way, hold on tight to your rod as these fish absolutely hammer streamers. I have had a few fish eat these flies as soon as they have touched the water, without me even starting my retrieve!

The flies that I recommend can be placed into three basic groups: nymphs, dries, and streamers. For nymphs, Credit fish really love bead heads, and I have had the best success with them in the12-16 size range in dark brown and olive. As for specific patterns, dark green caddis larvae, and dark brown hare's ears have proven to be hard to beat. With dry flies, it is really dependent on what is hatching, and even more so, which bugs the fish are eating that are hatching. There are sometimes multiple species of insects hatching, and the fish may only be feeding on one kind. Small, size 12-18 mayfly patterns in browns and olives as well as olive caddis imitations will all take fish, but I have found the best way to imitate what the fish want is to find a couple of naturals streamside, and then go and tie or buy some flies to represent them. For streamers, any bait fish-or leech-imitating streamers will work, but I have yet to go wrong with the standard black wooly bugger, either with or without a gold bead head.

If you are looking for somewhere that has beautiful scenery, no crowds, and lots of good looking, hard-fighting fish, than why not give the "other" Credit River a try?

Book Review

By Mike Brady

Fly Fishing for Great Lakes Steelhead

By Rick Kustich and Jerry Kustich
ISBN 0-9633109-1-7

If you are at all like me or many of my steelheading friends, then you eventually reach a point in your steelheading life when you realize that there are many other ways to catch this magnificent fish than just float fishing. I'll be the first to admit that the most versatile, most productive, and still my favorite, method to catch steelhead is float fishing, however, sometimes it is not always about how MANY you catch, but HOW you catch the fish. One of these alternates to float fishing that I have become extremely interested in is fly fishing for these silver bullets.

I recently received, as a Christmas gift, a book entitled Fly-Fishing for Great Lakes Steelhead, which is written by a well-acknowledge professional in the field of Great Lakes steelheading, Rick Kustich. This book is an extremely helpful guide to anyone wishing to become a successful Great Lakes steelhead fly fisher. It has a breakdown of a number of rivers in the Great Lakes Basin and each page or so, provides access locations, seasonal movements of fish, numbers of fish (where counting is feasible), as well as the techniques that prove most successful on those particular rivers. The book also examines, in general, the various techniques that one can employ in the pursuit of steelhead. It runs the whole gamut from the very popular nymph fishing to two of my personal interests, spey & wet flies and dry fly fishing for steelhead. Probably the highlight of the book for me was the beautiful, full-colour plates showing some of the more popular and sometimes innovative flies that are used to catch steelhead. Mr. Kustich is a great proponent of the technique of spey fishing for steelhead, and there are a few pages devoted almost entirely to spey flies, which are some of the most beautiful flies to be seen, and they even catch fish!

The book also has some interesting insight into the history of the steelhead in the Great Lakes region, as well as the importance of having wild, self-sustaining steelhead running the tributaries of the Great Lakes. The only topic missing from this wonderful book is the Credit River. Somehow, our great fishery was overlooked, other than a brief mention as "a river to the West of the Ganaraska." Several other Ontario streams such as the Nottawasaga, Saugeen and Maitland did make the cut.

Hatchery Report: Spring 2000

By Mike Tost

Fantastic! That's all I can say!

John, Aaron and I made changes to the water source to increase flow and improve oxygen levels. MNR biologist Ken Cornelisse measured our oxygen level and found it was far too low (something we had suspected), so he loaned us his O2 meter to make the changes. After the alteration the oxygen content increased from 1.75 ppm to 6.6 ppm. The change in oxygen, increased flow and the use of anti-fungus treatment meant CRAA's hatchery had a 93% hatch rate to swim up fry stage, our best ever!

We collected 249,500 eggs from the Streetsville fishway, which left us with an estimated 225,000 fry at stocking time. Due to the cold, wet weather stocking was easy and we expect excellent survival of the stocked fry.

The Fisheries Management Plan now says steelhead will be passed over Norval, but only once a barrier is built at Inglewood. The MNR has been slow to have the barrier built; in fact, they are just now removing the remains of the old barrier. The delays in allowing steelhead over the Norval Dam make CRAA's fish hatchery operation more important than ever. Future steelhead runs will rely heavily upon our hatchery until steelhead are allowed past the Norval Dam by the MNR. If we were not raising the steelhead for stocking the steelhead run in the Credit River would be dismal, perhaps 2,000 fish! Instead, we had about 6,000 return last year and expect more in the future.

In-Stream Boulder Placement to Enhance Fish Habitat

By John Kendell

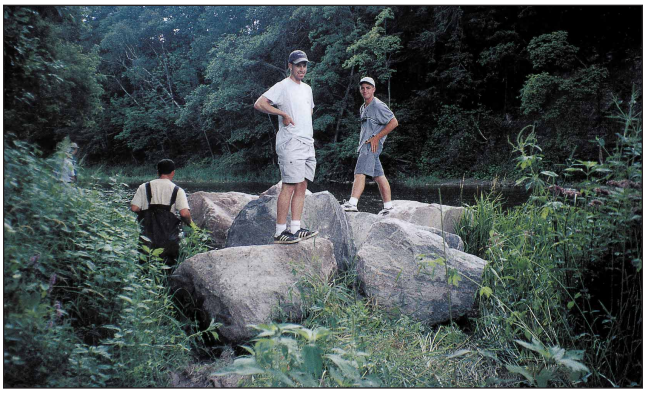
We've been planning to place boulders in Erindale for three years, arranging money, permits and equipment. Finally, on August 12, 2000 it all came together! It took 9 months to get the permits (on the second request) but it only took a week to arrange for the delivery of 82 large boulders, weighing between 4,000 lbs and 12,000 lbs!

6000 lb. boulder below the Atlantic pool.

The boulders were placed throughout Erindale Park, from the barn bridge to the former Glory hole below Burnhamthorpe. Several rocks were placed under the barn bridge to improve the holding water and deepen the pool. The Atlantic pool above it had a vortex weir built at the back and two wing deflectors built along the length of the pool to deepen it. Another vortex weir was built just above and several other rocks were placed to create pocket water. Rocks were relocated at the pond pool to improve the depth and size of the pool. Two vortex weirs were built at the Clay Bank pool, one in the middle of the former pool and the other 50 m upstream to centre the flow in the future. Let's hope the weir design works to scour the pool.

Overseeing boulder placement for a vortex weir.

Rocks were placed at the tail out of the Basket pool and a vortex was built 200 m above the baskets for a small holding pocket. Seven very large rocks were placed across the tail out of the Falling Rocks pool to create a riffle crest (which helps to slow and deepen the pool) and the boulder that was in the middle of the pool was removed. Unfortunately, the machine broke down before finishing the Brown pool and Glory hole weirs. However, the City will be doing their Burnhamthorpe work in a few weeks and they will assist us with placing the remaining 18 rocks.



CRAA volunteers Aaron Bodiam and Brian Morrison inspecting the boulders at the Clay Banks.

In 1991 CRAA placed 10 boulders below the pond in Erindale Park, and in 1992 10 more rocks were placed below the ice breaker. Flooding caused by urban development has filled in many holes and the placement of boulders is aimed at creating new pools and reducing erosional pressure in the park from flooding.

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources provided $2,000 in CFWIP funding to assist paying for rocks. All other costs of this project have been funded by CRAA. The estimated cost of the

Boulder Placement *continued*

project is $8,000. However, CRAA has been given the use of a high hoe at a reduced rate and rocks have been delivered for special prices due to the environmental nature of the work.

New holding water for the basket.

The boulder placement will provide:

- holding areas for returning, migrating adult salmon and trout;
- refuge habitat for downstream migrating juvenile salmon and trout;
- resident habitat for species which stay in the area all year round;
- spawning, nursery and living habitat for all fish species including smallmouth bass which successfully reproduce in the park;
- increase the number of holding areas for migrating fish which will spread out the angling pressure on the river;
- scour out deep holding areas creating winter habitat for salmonids and improving the area for angling;
- the scouring of the river channel in areas where it has widened and shallowed which will take erosion pressures away from the banks of the river;
- add to the aesthetic benefits of the river and create more natural habitat;
- create more riffle water for canoes and kayaks;
- help to reduce the impacts of flooding on the river banks.

Lets hope this improves our fishing a little! See you on the river.

Major Rehabilitation Continues

By John Kendell

CRAA members continue to out-do themselves when it comes to improving the health of the Credit River. This year CRAA planted 67,000 trees along the river and tributaries to improve the future of the watershed. The pictures here are from Earth Day (April 22, 2000) when 35 CRAA volunteers spent 6 hours on a cold, wet Saturday to plant over 3,000 bare root trees along the river below Steeles Avenue. The Steeles Avenue site had 2.1 km of river with NO TREES, until we came along. CRAA employees and volunteers planted over 12,000 trees along the river on this property alone. We plant such huge numbers because we expect to lose many to ice, beavers, people, flooding and mice. However, with so many trees, there will be a forest where there was none in a few short years. Many of the poplars have already hit the 7 to 8 foot mark and most other trees were four feet when planted so they have a good chance of survival.

A total of 35 volunteers planted 3000 trees along the river below Steeles Ave. on Earth Day (April 22).

CRAA has also been erecting informative signs to educate the public about our rehabilitation work. By the end of this year CRAA will have placed 20 signs like the one pictured here at various sites. Full details will be in an upcoming newsletter with more photos.

We hope to see you and your family out at next year's big tree planting!

CRAA's Trees Removed

By John Kendell

The spring of 2000 was incredibly successful. CRAA planted some 60,000 trees along the river from Norval to Mississauga, creating a buffer strip of forest that will protect the river for generations into the future (assuming people don't dig up/cut down the trees in the future).

Yet the planting season had some surprises. On May 3rd, 2000 our crew of 6 planted about 1,000 trees in the field along the Credit River at the old iron bridge north of Old Derry Road, beside the Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) office. This was a continuation of our planting the whole valley in this section. On May 5th our crew witnessed CVC staff digging up our trees from the same site. Following my visit to the site that day (I had to leave work early to rectify the problem), the CVC had removed an estimated 500 white pine and poplar trees our crew had planted two days earlier. After speaking with the CVC Manager, I was informed that they owned the property and were very upset that CRAA had planted the field beside their office which has few riparian trees and large eroding banks without permission.

We did make an honest mistake in the property ownership of the site. We were under the belief that the City of Mississauga owned the valley property there and that we had the City's authorization to plant. The land registry office does not show this section of the valley as being part of the CVC lands so we did not ask their permission, although the CVC biologist, forester and manager were well aware that CRAA was planting the valley since they were informed by CRAA many times.

The CVC sent a rather insulting letter to CRAA regarding the transgression, going as far to say that it was a matter of trespass and questioning the merits and professionalism of CRAA's planting and our years work. In response I sent a very harsh letter to the CVC manager expressing my overwhelming disappointment in the CVC's actions. The CVC did not even call CRAA to discuss the matter, but instead sent their staff out to dig up many of the trees we had planted. Everyone who has become aware of the issue has been shocked that the CVC, a group that prides itself on conservation, and has tried to do a lot to help the valley was actually digging up trees along the river. Vince and I took personal offence to the insults over professionalism, since we have put so much time and effort into the projects (as volunteers) to secure over $100,000 in funding, contacting dozens of land owners and buying and planting over 60,000 trees. CVC staff claimed many of the trees were not planted properly and would not survive. Yet recent checks at all our sites planted this year show a 92% to 98% survival of trees.

Although this one sad event put a damper on our spirits, the next day we were excited to have over 500 Brampton scouts, cubs and guides along with parents to plant over 3,200 trees along the river on the north side of Steeles Avenue. The event was a great success!

Wild Fish

New signs have been placed at bridge crossings to educate the public! After petitioning the City of Mississauga the "wild trout and salmon river" signs were placed at all major road crossings. The idea comes from BC where raising public awareness has helped to protect the rivers. Lets hope it helps here too!

Threatened Rivers

By John Kendell

It seems that every river humans come into contact with is threatened – no matter where on earth, no matter what the consequences. When will the human race learn that destroying natural habitats and altering rivers and their valleys will have far reaching and likely devastating effects on fish, wildlife and eventually humans. Recent fishing trips I've made to the Grande Cascapedia River in the Gaspé, Quebec and the Gold River on Vancouver Island, B.C. have provided me with a better insight of what the Credit once was, and what it should be! However, even these rivers that are so pristine are threatened by clear cutting and riparian deforestation.

The Quebec government allows logging to the edge of a salmon river and allows loggers to remove 50% of the trees from a watershed. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that is bad. On the Grande Cascapedia the Lake Branch was logged several years ago. For the next few years the river became muddy after rains, and even now becomes muddy or tea-stained and salmon stopped using the branch. Every 15 minutes a logging truck passed us while fishing, from sunrise to sunset loaded with toothpick pines from the Salmon Branch of the Cascapedia, the last stronghold of the salmon.

I fear this pristine river may face a future like that of so many rivers. The Cascapedia Atlantic salmon are among the largest in the world, with many 40 lb. plus fish taken on DRY FLIES each year. The few days I fished our group had two fish in the mid-30's (pounds) on bombers and most other fish were between 15 lbs. and 30 lbs. The fishery is worth millions to the area, yet the government allows irresponsible logging that may destroy the fishery and put dozens of people out of work and on Social Assistance (at taxpayers' expense). I'm not saying to stop logging, it is an 80 billion dollar industry in Canada, but fish are worth billions too. Selective logging and other less destructive forms of logging are a great method of harvesting timber while preserving habitat for wildlife and fish, not to mention water quality.

The Credit River

Following a constant deluge of rain this Spring one would expect most of the silt to be washed clean from the Credit River, after all, we had several heavy rains that put the river into flood stage. However, the constant assault by urban development, agriculture, deforestation, damming and water taking continues to lay waste to this once beautiful river in our back yards. The sad part is it does not have to happen!

Humans have learned a lot in the past few decades, especially about the consequences of our actions in an industrialized society. 30 years ago Silver Creek in Georgetown changed colour daily from dyes being poured directly into the stream, red one day, blue the next. Acid rain is not as bad as it once was (although it is still very bad). Many areas that were once row crops and pastureland are now young forests, slowly returning to what the land once was. The Credit River is unquestionably much healthier today than it was in 1900 or even 1960, but with massive urban sprawl the threat to absolute annihilation of the river is on the horizon.

The Credit River was once a great Atlantic salmon river with runs of salmon coming up from April to October (all summer) according to early settlers. That means the river had to stay below 26 C during hat summer days to allow the salmon to run and survive in the river. Once the great old growth forests were cut down for lumber, fuel and to clear the land the river was dealt a blow it will likely never recover from. Over 70 dams were built, sawdust and waste was dumped into the river and the riparian forest cover was destroyed. The once pristine river was now filled with mud, silt, sawdust and other refuse. The salmon were extinct! Flooding became much worse, erosion of stream banks became severe and summer base flows were significantly reduced (the river almost ran dry in summer). To make matters worse, many farms installed weeping tile (there is an agriculture drainage act to encourage this) which quickly drains water off fields and out of the valley directly to the river or smaller streams. This causes increased flooding, higher flood peaks and prevents the water from naturally filtering through the surface soils. Now, urban areas are even a

Threatened Rivers *continued*

greater threat. With rooftops, paved roads and storm sewers the water is rushed of the land and into the valley causing major flooding, silting, erosion and utter destruction of the watershed. During the construction phase exposed soils are easily eroded into storm sewers and the river turning the clean stream water into a mudflow as we regularly see. Further exacerbating the runoff problem is the change in infiltration and evaporation and precipitation rates when a watershed is changed from forest to urban coverage. Infiltration rates decrease (humus and topsoil is removed), and both evaporation and precipitation decreases with the loss of trees to pavement. Listed below are some of the greater threats to the Credit River and other rivers located near/in urban areas.

Urbanization

Urbanization is the greatest threat to the Credit River. It is necessary, but we have enough technology and knowledge to prevent the horrific damage to the river and in fact improve the drainage system to mimic nature. Storm water ponds are becoming more common and larger, but still enough is not done. On huge development sites topsoil is stripped off exposing clay, which drains into storm sewers and the river. Storm water ponds are not large enough to handle the massive flows, so they end up pouring the muddy water straight into the river or tributary. There are over 100 storm sewers dumping into the lower Credit River alone! The damage done is painfully obvious if you first drive over the Old Derry Road bridge and then the next bridge down on Creditview Road. Mud pouring in from Levi's Creek, and the worst one, Fletcher's Creek, turns the clean river into a mudflow, making it inhospitable to fish and unfishable for days. Every time we have a light rain (5-15 mm) the river is clear above the 401 and muddy beyond belief once Levi's and Fletcher's pour in.

I've heard many people (including biologists) say that the silt in the water is normal since the river drains a clay plain (roughly Norval to the Lakeshore) and it is not that harmful. In my opinion, this is BS. There are many rivers that drain clay areas that remain clear following rain. Having healthy forest cover and undisturbed soil is the key. Urban expansion will continue, but more careful development practices like larger storm water ponds that clean the water and allow silt to settle can add important steady base flows of cold, clean water to the river. Most areas built prior to 1990 have no storm water management, and only recently developed areas have storm ponds that help to reduce flooding, but even these ponds cannot prevent silt from entering the river. On the Gold River, BC after 3"of rain it was possible to see 15 feet into the water. After 3"of rain on the Credit River the water would be muddy for a week!

River Water Taking

Golf courses, farms and nurseries are the greatest threat to the river through water taking. The MOEE has given out permits to take water that exceeds the rivers base flow by more than 3 times! That means if everyone took water at once the river would be dry! CRAA is proposing water-taking permits restrict water taking during low flows of summer. Therefore, those who need water should develop holding ponds to hold water taking during high water events when the river has water to spare.

Groundwater Taking

All communities north of Brampton/Mississauga pump groundwater for drinking and sewage needs. These communities (like Georgetown and Caledon) use groundwater that would otherwise enter the river. Therefore, groundwater that is pumped out by wells is stealing water that would keep our base flows up, lower water temperatures and improve the habitat of the river and the valley. Many springs have diapered or been severely reduced by large wells and with urban expansion continuing even more groundwater will be taken.

The problems facing the Credit River are scary. We are on the verge of losing this unique and special river through irresponsible development and irresponsible management by agencies in charge of protecting the river. Let's hope CRAA and other groups will be successful in protecting what we hold so dear.