



# Light Lines

JOURNAL OF THE CREDIT RIVER ANGLERS ASSOCIATION  
LATE FALL, 2002

VOLUME 13, NUMBER 3

## Float Fishing Fall Steelhead

By John Kendell

Float fishing for steelhead is beyond a doubt the most effective technique for river fishing these chrome warriors. The technique was developed in the 1980's in southern Ontario by anglers who were pursuing steelhead on a regular basis. Prior to using the float and a long noodle rod, most steelhead fishing was limited to bottom bouncing with a short rod, shore fishing or trolling in spring.

Float fishing gives you the ability to present a perfect, drag free drift to the fish while avoiding snags along the river bottom. The float also allows you to extend that drag free drift over a long distance to cover more water much faster and more effectively. The popularity of using a float to chase steelhead is continually increasing with more people taking up the sport and the technique.

The float revolution really took off around 1990 to 1991 when many regular steelheaders gave up their spinning reels and converted to the centre pin float reel. During the mid 80's more anglers were using floats and noodle rods, but the float reel was still not that common. By 1992 most anglers chasing steelies had the whole set up, and today, with the variety of reels and rods it seems everyone has float equipment, even if they do not know how use it. Therefore, techniques and tips will be the direction I will take for

this article.

Choosing a rod and reel can be the most difficult choice for anglers buying their first combination. Float reels range in value from \$150 to \$800 and rods about the same. My advice is buy near the top, but decide what you want for performance first. I strongly suggest a rod between 12' and 13.5', made from high



The author with a 37" steelie from the Credit River in Feb. 2001.

quality graphite with a good warranty. The rod should be 2 or 3 piece, tied with high frame guides, a cork handle and if you like, a wood reel seat. The Loomis series in my opinion continues to perform best, with power, quality and durability, but the price is a little higher for GL3 or GLX rods. For those who will fish a lot, you will learn to appreciate the subtle differences a GLX will offer over other rods. As for float reels, a Stanton is still my favorite, due to quality and light weight. However, there are several models that are a little heavier that perform well, albeit a little more expensive. The cost range is between \$350 to \$450 and these reels do not offer you a drag system. You can step up the Angling Specialties reel or a Clough, both beautiful reels with quality drag systems, but prices go to \$800 and up. And to me, a float reel does not require a drag system, your hand should do the work.

can cost you a lot of hook ups if you fail to pay attention to conditions. I suggest trying different rigs in various conditions to see what method is best in what situations. The float you choose is also very important, as I commonly see anglers use a huge float in a tiny stream with clear water scaring the fish as they go. You must always size your float to the river and conditions. An average float for the Credit River might be too big for the Wilmot, just right on the Nottawasaga or too small for the Saugeen and never be seen in the Niagara. Therefore, choose the size float depending on the size of the river and the water levels and clarity. When the water is off colour and high a larger float makes sense, but if the water is low and clear you should consider switching from balsa to clear plastic. Virtually every time I fish clear water I have seen more fish scared away from floats than caught, except for those who changed their float or technique. The next big mistake that many new float fishers make is their leader configuration. These anglers set their float a couple feet from the bait when they arrive at the river and never adjust the level of the float all day. They start fishing a shallow run and snag on bottom and then move to a deep pool and only fish the top 2 feet of the water because they never changed their lead length and they miss out on a lot of fish. My advice is adjust your lead multiple times in every pool and every time you arrive at a new spot. You should run a long enough lead to catch bottom occasionally, otherwise your presentation is too high in the pool. Remember, most steelhead are laying near bottom facing into the current and are not prepared to leave their hold so you must bring the food to them.

<000><

### IN THIS NEWSLETTER

- Float fishing Fall steelies
- Bronte-Petro Canada Work Done
- Sponsor Thanks
- Hatchery Update
- Flyfish Canada from Coast to Coast
- Wild Fish Signs in Halton Hills
- Changing the Regs

Rigging mistakes are very common and



**CREDIT RIVER  
ANGLERS ASSOCIATION**

Credit River Anglers Association  
Light Lines

Contributions are welcome from all members and non-members alike. Send your articles of interest, messages or suggestions to:

Light Lines editor  
Credit River Anglers Association  
128 Queen Street South  
PO Box 42093  
Mississauga, ON L5M 1K8

E-mail—[info@craa.on.ca](mailto:info@craa.on.ca)  
Website : [www.craa.on.ca](http://www.craa.on.ca)

Contributors to this newsletter:

John Kendell, Mike Tost, Matt Taggart,  
Brian Morrison and Chris Atkinson.

**CRAA Executive**

President : John Kendell  
Vice President : Mike Tost  
Treasurer : Jim Kendell  
Secretary : Matt Taggart  
Membership : Jurgen Richter  
Fish Rearing : Mike Tost  
Webmaster : Jerry Tusa

**10% discount:**

for CRAA members at these fine retailers!

**ANGLING  
SPECIALTIES**

A DIVISION OF FIVE OAKS ENTERPRISES CORP.  
325 Central Parkway West, Unit 42  
(Corner of Confederation Parkway)  
Mississauga, Ont. L5B 3X9  
Tel. 905-275-4972

**HOOK, LINE & SINKER**  
Fishing Tackle  
"...A Fisherman's Paradise..."  
Ray Collesso  
(519) 766-HOOK  
(4665)  
email: [hls@on.aibn.com](mailto:hls@on.aibn.com)  
380 Erasmus Road  
Guelph, Ontario  
N1E 6R2

**WILSON'S**

"Toronto's Fly Fishing Centre"

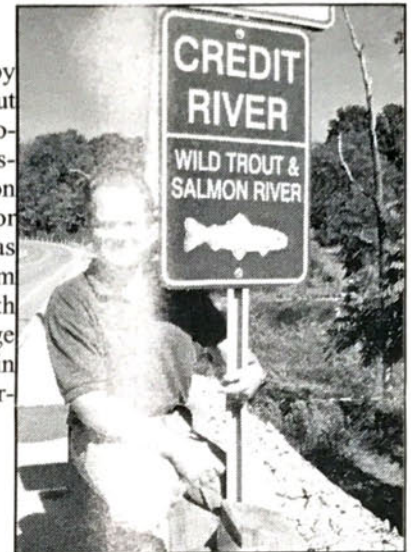
61 Front Street East  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5E 1B3

(416) 869-3474  
[wilsons@ca.inter.net](mailto:wilsons@ca.inter.net)  
[www.wilsonorvis.com](http://www.wilsonorvis.com)

# News and Announcements

## Wild Fish Signs for Halton Hills

18 months after the initial meeting, followed by planning and funding allocation the "wild trout and salmon signs" are up in Halton Hills. I proposed the idea to Halton Hills Mayor Kathy Gastle and staff with a very positive response. Halton Hills had the signs printed and installed at major road crossing for the Credit River, as well as Black and Silver Creeks. These signs come from BC where many small streams are marked with similar signs to educate the public and encourage stewardship. Halton Hills staff did a great job in finding a fish design that looks great and the overall layout is fantastic.



## Hatchery Update

Hydro has been brought down to the property and the aerator has been successfully connected to the ponds and hatchery! Oxygen levels have risen to 85% from 40%! All fish have been stocked and we now await the brown trout eggs again. Mike Tost has put in a great deal of work as always with some help from Bill Large and others.

## Sponsor Thanks

The year is coming to an end and CRAA has completed another exciting year of conservation work. Many past projects are coming to fruition with trees hitting 15 to 20 feet in height and more people getting involved than ever before. As more members volunteer to manage and coordinate projects the more we can accomplish. If you have some free time and want to help manage a project, let us know by phone or e-mail. It is a great opportunity to gain experience for a professional job as well!

**CRAA would like to thank all those who have helped this year in funding our work.**

- North American Herb and Spice \$9,300.00 donation (\$6,000.00 US) for tree planting work.
- Great Ontario Salmon Derby with a \$10,000 donation to the hatchery and conservation work.
- Port Credit Launch Program, with Marina Manager Dave Broderick giving much of his time to help see the recent by-law through. CRAA made an estimated profit of \$11,000.00 this year.
- Ministry of Natural Resources, Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program (CFWIP). CFWIP donated CRAA \$12,500 this year over 8 projects.
- Town of Oakville—\$5,000 for Petro Canada Park with contractor.
- Eco Action 2000 for funding in 1999 and 2000.
- The Ontario Trillium Fund for funding in 2000.
- City of Mississauga and Town of Halton Hills for ongoing support.
- Shell, Home Depot and others for past support.



## Changing the Regs-It is not easy!

By Chris Atkinson, President of the Nottawasaga Steelheaders

I was fishing the falling rocks pool earlier this fall when I did not have a enough time to travel up to the Notty to fish. Two guys beside were discussing the need to open the section of river from Streetsville down to increase angling opportunities. "Heck they could even make it live release" one guy said, "as long as we get more room to fish". So often I've heard people talk about the need for introducing live release or restricted harvest regulations. I wondered how many people really understood how much work was involved in this process.

I started trying to introduce new regulations to reduce harvest on the middle section of the Nottawasaga in 1994. In the beginning things looked good I was a member of the Lake Huron's Rainbow Trout public advisory committee and my data was good. We went through the process and came up with the 19-25 inch slot limit where all fish that fell in that zone would be released. The data showed that this would protect almost 1/3 of all steelhead going over fishways. I was happy, I was glad we were moving forward and the fishery would be protected. On the way to the happy land a couple of things happened. First was a record year class caused by the Pinotubo volcano eruption (1992) and the second was people who were never involved in the process got to the minister and circumvented the entire process. Well that was fun. It took four years and the only thing we managed was to reduce harvest by 3% assuming no one else comes into the sport (the 2 fish limit). River anglers also lost a few tributaries to closures which hurts.

I was not done yet. I had a meeting with the minister take place late in 1998 and he agreed with me that perhaps there was a need for greater restrictive regulations on the Notty and he authorized a grant of \$7000.00 for a study and report. I then sat own with Fred Dobbs and Chris Weland. After a couple years and more re-writes then I care to think about we were ready to go. At the 2001

Spring Fishing Show we released the tabloid to the public. We had offered the public six options ranging from do nothing to shutdown the fishery entirely as well as 3 live release options. The results showed that the public agreed with us. 93% of respondents said there was a problem, 80% of people wanted the opportunities to fish left open and 73% of people said that live release options were viable. Of these, total catch and release was the most popular.

The Great Lakes Management Unit agreed and are in the process now of writing the recommendations. This is where it really starts to get strange. I decided to post the results on the float fishing board and on the Steelhead site. People suddenly come out of the woodwork to explain the decline with grossly ignorant reasons including the following: The fish are coming back into the pond and dying and that's why the run are going down. The fish are primarily fall spawning fish and since the ministry never walks the river in the fall they never see this (no but my members do and this is not happening). It's poachers—they are taking hundreds of fish out of one hole (common complaint but my own feeling now is that their is far less poaching going on then what was going on in the 70's). Ssnagging on the Credit has seen a similar declines thanks to CRAA's efforts. It's guys walking on the spawning beds (Owen Sound has a total closure on all their spawning water yet runs have collapsed as well and this is with very heavy stocking). Once people got sick of my arguments they began to attack me personally with insults, offers of thumping and even a death threat. Obviously these people have no clue who I am. There was a reason CRAA president John Kendall used to invite me to the Credit on opener and it was not so I could teach him the finer points of steelhead angling.

So what have I learned from my experiences? Well here are some of the

basics. One, do your homework, make sure that you have as much knowledge about the situation as possible. People will throw up every reason why you should not, stick to your guns and use the knowledge you have gained to further your point. Second even when the attacks get personal smile and don't stoop to the morons level. You cannot win a battle of the minds with an unarmed opponent. Three, be patient! This is not a fast process and you need to have the patience of Job to get through this. Finally, have fun. Remember if you started this process it must mean you enjoy the fishery and you have taken the opportunity to personally protect it. Trust me, when you do, it will be worth it. <000>



Chris with a 6 lb Notty fall chromer—the fish his group is trying to protect.

## Book Review

### FLY FISHING CANADA

....From Coast to Coast to Coast

480pp. hardcover, 240 color photos, \$49.95.

Thirty-three of Canada's best-known outdoor writers and photographers, members of the Outdoor Writers of Canada, have pooled their fly fishing experiences and shared their knowledge and expertise about how, where and when to go fly fishing for over 70 species from the Arctic to the Pacific to the Atlantic. Also contains regional recipes for cooking and serving, as well as 154 color photos of flies and tying instructions.



## Bronte Creek Stream Rehabilitation

Overseen by Matt Taggart and Brian Morrison

With funding from CFWIP and the Town of Oakville through the Parks and Recreation department the Petro Canada Park project has come to fruition. It has been a great lesson in the frustrating delays that are common to such a project when done by a volunteer group and a great learning experience for Matt and Brian. As many of you know, we hoped to complete the work last summer (2001), but money, permits and materials were not available in time. Finally at the last minute it all came together in late September, 2002.

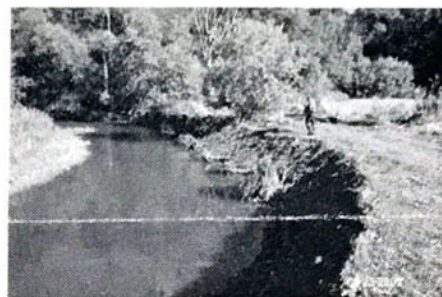
It was clear a major stabilizer was needed several years ago as the river cut deep into the open field in Petro Canada Park. The river was cutting and migrating into the field at a rapid pace of 10' to 15' a year and the resulting silt was burying the gravel and pools downstream.

CRAA adopted Bronte Creek in 2000 and completed several studies as preliminary research before starting work. This site was the highest priority on the lower river and in a highly visible location. Visibility is important to draw in new members and volunteers in addition to the value of the work.

In 2001 CRAA made a CFWIP proposal to the MNR and received \$ 2,000 in funding. The work was unable to go ahead due to contractor delays and funding shortages. In 2002 the Town of Oakville made a commitment to cover the cost of a contractor and CRAA would cover rock and tree planting materials through CFWIP and CRAA's conservation budget. Another \$2,000 was received from the MNR's CFWIP in 2002 and the funds were used to buy 80 tonnes of rock. Remaining funds will be used to purchase a mixture of large and small trees for a planting in April of next year.

The contractor cut the bank back to 45 degrees and removed about 40 yards of soil. 12 large tree stumps with 12' trunks were placed by excavating a trench into the bank for the trunk. The trenches were then re-filled with soil leaving the stump exposed facing into the current. 80 tonnes of rock was then placed over the whole bend in the river to protect the soil from erosion. The stumps will protect the rocks from erosion at the same time and create some great fish habitat! A pool should scour

around this bend and pools below should be cleaned out by the spring floods returning the section to normal.



The exposed soil after the bank was cut back to 45 degrees.



Finished! Stumps placed at the water line and the rock covered bank.

## 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**

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Address : \_\_\_\_\_

City : \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code : \_\_\_\_\_

Tel (Res) : \_\_\_\_\_ Tel (Bus) : \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address : \_\_\_\_\_

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