



# Light Lines

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## Exceptional Change

What a difference a few concerned anglers can make

John Kendell

I still remember studying the Credit watershed back in the early 90's while attending university like it was yesterday. My keen interest in fish and creating more cold water (historical and natural) habitat was a basis of much research and my thesis of the day. It also laid groundwork for CRAA's work over the past 15 years. I was reminded of the incredible change recently when my daughter's class stocked their classroom hatchery Atlantic salmon in Cedarvale Park on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Back in 1995 Cedarvale was a typical city park, with manicured grass cut to the edge of Silver Creek and roughly a kilometre of wide open, exposed stream. No vegetation along the creek and only a half dozen mature trees set apart from the water's edge, leaving the stream to bake in the sun. The stream was wide, shallow and had little habitat variation from shallow rapids. The only work done prior to '95 was a few bank stabilizers built in one small section of the creek. During this time CRAA volunteers, new to the rehabilitation scene added some boulders, built some new stabilizers and planted about 100 willows and shrubs. Between 1997 and 1999 CRAA began hiring a small summer rehab crew, led by Aaron Bodiam and later Vince D'Elia. They built several more wing deflectors, log stabilizers and planted several thousand trees at this site. Still we were not per-

The changes are becoming clear, and not just in the landscape!



CRAA Huttonville 1994



CRAA Huttonville 2006

Here are just a few "before and after" images CRAA is developing to show off our awesome work.

mitted to plant the upper 200m near the parking lot, but the remaining 800m was planted. With continued follow up on our part and progressive thinking from town parks staff the go ahead was attained to plant the final open areas in 2003 and 2007.

My recent visit to stock fish in this once wide open section of stream was a reminder of the many amazing accomplishments CRAA has made on the Credit watershed. In the grand scale this site is quite small, but in detail the site thunders of the success a bunch of anglers and conservationists can achieve. Most of the formally open stream is wrapped with a forest buffer, trees reaching up to 70 feet tall, and shrubs growing so thick some sections of stream are completely obscured from sight. Where once you could see from top to bottom in the park, now a heard of deer could hide from detection.

What was truly the icing on the cake was in the water. CRAA volunteers have been transporting adult steelhead to the

tributary for five years now and the success is swimming between the boulders and wing deflectors. Tremendous numbers of small steelhead fry were crowded into every eddy, only hours or days from swimming out of the gravel. Truly wild steelhead in every sense. Amongst them some larger fry, likely Atlantic salmon or brown and brook trout and in the deeper pools that have formed from our work – parr, smolts and even some larger juveniles. Add in tons of dace, darter, chub, sucker and many other minnow species and we have a smorgasbord of fish in a stream that 15 years ago was all but vacant.

What is profound is this expression of new and diverse life is not limited to this small reach of stream, but rather is duplicated at hundreds of sites across the watershed. From Erindale, Streetsville, Meadowvale, Churchville, Huttonville, Inglewood, Terra Cotta, Glen Williams, and Caledon the watershed is changing. There are more fish, more and colder water, more insect life and more diverse fish and wildlife populations. Living proof that if you build it...they will come!



CRAA 1999



CRAA 2009



## Credit River Anglers Association

### Light Lines

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Contributions are welcome from all members and non-members alike.

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## CRAA Volunteers in Action!

**Executive meetings** – 20 CRAA members serve on the CRAA executive and our ranks continue to grow. Meetings are held every two months and members are welcome to get more involved – many hands make light work.

**Spring Fishing Show** – CRAA operated a booth and brought in a strong number of new members. We also had seven private land owners come forward at the show and enquire about having CRAA work on their property. Most of the properties were suitable and they were planted by CRAA in April and May this year!

**Sportsmen Show** – CRAA volunteers operated a booth again this year in March and again had an excellent membership drive. This show is a wonderful opportunity to meet new people and get more people involved in protecting the river.

**Spring fish lift** – CRAA volunteers worked daily from the middle of March until early May to operate the Streetsville fishway in partnership with the MNR. In total over 1650 steelhead were lifted, setting a new spring lift record.

**Steelhead transfer** – CRAA set a new record transporting 1030 wild, unclipped steelhead to a major nursery tributary they cannot access due to a dam in Norval. This project is very time consuming and costly, but the benefits are absolutely worth the effort. Without the transfer wild steelhead would be rare in the watershed. All fish were tagged with a flow tag and had biological data collected including length, sex, lamprey lesions, etc.

**Mississauga Earth Day Plant** – April 21<sup>st</sup> - CRAA volunteers joined CVC, city of Mississauga and other groups to plant roughly 500 potted trees and shrubs north of Britannia Road along the Credit River. Over 60 volunteers joined the event making for a quick planting and enjoyable event for all.

**16 Mile Creek planting** – CRAA volunteers planted in Milton along the banks of 16 Mile Creek to expand on the fall 2008 planting projects, completed in Oakville. Roughly 500 potted trees were planted. CRAA is looking to put in a big push on 16 Mile Creek in the near future and is always looking for more local support in this area.

**Microsoft Tree Plant** – The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual planting with Microsoft grew and we planted 250 potted trees along the Credit River upstream from Creditview Road. The employees were able to see the success of the 2008 planting and all thoroughly enjoyed a morning in the field. CRAA president John Kendell spoke to the volunteers about the importance of planting, why the Credit River is special and how they can help. The CRAA crew assisted with delivery of materials and gave a demonstration of proper planting methods.

**CRAA hatchery** – The hatchery team has grown to 10 members led by Joe Ward. The team works daily to feed fish, clean tanks and check on the whole operation. With more volunteers gaining experience we are having our best success ever. The volunteers stocked our 2008 steelhead yearlings in April, maintained our fall 2008 brown trout parr and worked daily to monitor 2009 steelhead eggs from Streetsville. Volunteers also added a new tank and made ongoing repairs.

**Atlantic salmon monitoring** – CRAA is again assisting MNR and OFAH as a watershed partner monitoring and collecting adult Atlantic salmon in 2009. We are hopeful the 2009 year will build upon the successes of 2008.

**Behind the scenes** – Many CRAA volunteers do a great deal of work behind the scenes. Most projects take a great deal of time to plan, finance and bring to fruition. This includes accounting by the treasurer, the hundreds of phone calls and countless meetings attended by Louis, John and other executive, website updates, newsletter article writing and editing, tournament sponsorship acquisition, and event planning. Just to name a few.

**Rehabilitation Planning** – CRAA is always eager to get in contact with new property owners to expand our work and educate owners to improve water quality and fish habitat. John Kendell has been doing this since the mid 90's and as our work grows more members are assisting and taking leadership roles. Derek Koneiczny has organized many Halton area projects in the past four years and more recently Peter Swift lined up about 15 smaller sites near his home in Glen Williams. More volunteers are needed, especially members in the Erin, Caledon and Orangeville areas.





## Crew Leader's Report

Summer work crew is planting up a storm

Robert Nonomura

CRAA Rehab Crew Leader

Over the past few months, the CRAA tree-planting crew has been hard at work on many projects along the Credit River and its tributaries. So far, thousands of trees have already been planted in our ongoing stream rehabilitation efforts. In addition to our work maintaining and augmenting past tree-planting projects in Brampton, Caledon, Glen Williams, Halton, Mississauga, Milton and Norval, we have also gained access to new sites including: The North Halton Golf and Country Club, Upper Canada College, and a new site in Inglewood. At each location, we have planted various mixtures of indigenous tree species, including: poplar, maple, fir, pine, dogwood, and cedar, planting in this manner helps maintain diversity and maximizes the probability of plant survival.

The purpose of these efforts is to improve the overall ecological well-being of the watershed. The reintroduction of trees to the banks of the river will not only help to prevent soil erosion by stabilizing those banks but it will also provide shade for fish and habitat for other wildlife. Moreover, it offers the cover needed by deer and other large animals to migrate between otherwise segregated wooded areas.

The crew has also been working at the CRAA tree nursery to expand our tree growing ability. Over 1,500 new potted trees have been added to the stock this spring and another 1,000 in planting beds to grow them to larger sizes. Ongoing weeding, fertilizing and watering are completed by the crew to maximize success at the nursery. Potted trees are used by our crew and volunteers to plant more difficult reaches and extend our planting timeline. It also allows us to grow much larger trees for very low cost.

It is heartening to see the success that this program has already had in communities along the Credit. Working at sites planted by the CRAA crew 10 years ago is rewarding when we see huge trees, reduced erosion and even fawns hiding in the new habitat CRAA created. Our tree-planting crew intends to continue this tradition so that these local ecosystems may thrive for years to come.

John Kendall

Many anglers wonder what makes a tree important for wild



Large potted trees ready to be put next to a stream

## The Tree's Role

So why do we even bother with planting trees?

trout and salmon versus stocking. Stocking is a suitable method to develop a fishery where habitat does not exist or to introduce a specie of fish not previously found in that body of water. But without the habitat needed for reproduction, there will be no sustainable fishery and without exceptional habitat there will be no wild fish.

Trees provide direct shade to the river and this keeps the water colder by reducing solar heating. Equally important is trees insulate the river keeping a cold microclimate around the river and preventing hotter air over meadows and fields to warm the water through thermal transfer. I first realized just how air temperature played a role when I found the river would warm up dramatically even on a cloudy day in summer. Research proves even 100 m of open river can impair a cold water trout stream so one can only imagine the damage of kilometers of open stream bank.

Trees also reduce soil erosion by stabilizing banks, which in itself has multiple positive impacts. Firstly, the stream becomes narrower and deeper, thus further reducing the exposure to heat and sun. It keeps the gravel cleaner, improving the opportunity for fish eggs to survive and hatch free of smothering silt. Trees also create scour points, creating more pools and more diverse habitat so not only biomass increases, but diversity of fish species increase. This is why in healthy, forested cold water sections we often see Brook, Brown, Rainbow, Chinook, Coho and Atlantic fry and parr co-existing.

Trees become a key source of fish habitat when they fall into the river, creating cover in log jams and sweepers. When the leaves drop from the trees they provide a wealth of food for the river feeding millions of small insects that live in the river which in turn act as the primary food for baby trout and salmon.

If that is not enough evidence, simply look at some of your favorite trout streams. Are they well forested? Then take a look at some streams without forest cover, such as streams in wide open pasture and farmland. These streams often lack any deep pools, fish or even life. Plant trees and come back in ten years – you will see the difference.



Healthy young evergreens at the CRAA Nursery



## Summer Overview

### Highlights within CRAA!

## CRAA Crew Wrap-up

### CRAA looks back at another successful work crew season

CRAA had a stream planting and rehab crew again in 2009 thanks to funding from Canada Summer Jobs and CRAA fund raising. Four students started work in late April and continued to work throughout the summer. From April to early June the crew focused on tree planting. This year the crew, with volunteer help, planted another 10,000 trees in the Credit watershed. By the middle of June their focus changed to maintaining past planting sites, updating tree guards, stream rehabilitation and maintaining the tree nursery.

The crew added several new planting sites this year including two large properties in the Forks of the Credit below the Grange Side Road. Other sites included Glen Williams, Upper Canada College in Georgetown, the Club at North Halton Golf Course, Huttonville Creek, and various sites on Black and Silver Creeks. Continuing planting and maintenance occurred throughout all past planting sites from Orangeville, Caledon, Hillsberg, Brampton and Mississauga as well.

The crew has also tackled an expansion of the CRAA nursery. This includes adding: new planting beds, potted small stock and larger potted stock. These planting beds will allow us to grow trees for 1-4 additional years and replant them as bare root trees increasing survival and growth rates. Potted stock expands our planting abilities throughout the summer and fall and has grown to become a very important part of the project. Starting in 2008 CRAA added larger pots and began growing potted trees for those 'hard to plant sites where larger trees are the only thing that survives. These large pots will provide 3m to 6m trees in the next few years adding to our successful riverside planting work.

To understand why planting is so vital to our watershed, please read John Kendell's article entitled *The Tree's Role*.



## New Membership and Member 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 3.

**Membership Fees:**      1 year \$10.00      3 years \$30.00    (Please enclose cheque payable to CRAA)

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

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

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

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## CRAA on YouTube

### Watch videos of the Credit River fishery

The Credit River Anglers Association has taken some considerable time lately to put together some short video clips to help people learn more about what our organization does. You can find a number of these videos on our Credit River Angler's Channel on YouTube.

Check out videos on:

- ◆ The Spring Steelhead Lift
- ◆ Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon
- ◆ Credit River Coaster Brook Trout
- ◆ Steelhead Spawning
- ◆ And More...

Visit: <http://www.youtube.com/user/CreditRiverAnglers>

**Report all tagged fish to CRAA!**  
[www.craa.on.ca](http://www.craa.on.ca) OR [info@craa.on.ca](mailto:info@craa.on.ca)





## Spring Tournament Recap

### Winners, Winners, and More Winners

#### Annual CRAA Spring Steelhead Tournament

By Justin Elia

The Credit River Spring Steelhead Tournament was held on May 9<sup>th</sup> of 2009 at Erindale Park. It seems like every year Mother Nature doesn't want to co-operate with us as yet again the rain played havoc on our original date of May 2<sup>nd</sup> which made us push up our date to May 9<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately many participants who were ok for the original date couldn't accommodate the change in schedule, reducing our turnout by 30%. Luckily for CRAA, the anglers who couldn't participate donated their money to the club, for which we are all thankful. For this year's event, my goal was to raise \$2,000 for the club and put on a fun filled day for everyone. I'm happy to say that we raised over \$2,000 and from the compliments given to me, I assume everyone had a great time.

The day started out great; everyone was on time and ready to fish! We had some last minute team changes due to no shows but it all worked out in the end. As we left the parking lot at 5:30, teams raced to their favorite fishing spots up and down the river hoping to bank some steelhead for the tournament. Once again, Mother Nature was not co-operative. The skies to the north of Mississauga were painted black by 11am, with rolling thunder and lightning. This only meant that the anglers only had a limited amount of time to fish. By 12pm, the rain from the north had dirtied the river below and the wild heavy rains started to pour. Fortunately for us we had a shelter and everyone stayed dry. All participants were back by 1pm as the river became unfishable so we had lunch, shared our stories for the day and gave out some great prizes.

This year, David Leschied and Min Chang came in first. This is David's third win in a row. Not a pretty face, but the kid can fish. Joe and Kevin came in second and Cameron and Phillip came in third. Big fish was won by Cameron Walker.

CRAA would like to thank the following sponsors for their consistent contributions to our fundraiser; we couldn't have done it without them:

- ◆ Dickies Workwear
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## Fall Preview

### Coming Soon!

#### Steelhead Reproduction Skyrockets

Stream assessment data done by MNR, CVC, CRAA and others is showing a massive increase in juvenile rainbow trout (steelhead) numbers directly related to CRAA's adult transfers every spring. As we move more adults we are seeing more small steelhead and biomass levels are increasing in all sectors. Atlantic salmon numbers are also skyrocketing due to the MNR/OFAH/partnership stocking program in the watershed. More details to come in the next newsletter! While fishing the main river you have likely noticed as rainbow smolts are common in the past year and Atlantic smolts are beginning to show in the mix.

#### Atlantic salmon return again!

As of the end of August a decent showing of grilse and a few adult Atlantic salmon have returned to the Credit River. This marks two consecutive years with a small, but growing run of Atlantic salmon. More Atlantic salmon have also begun to appear in catches in Lake Ontario, with more fish in the 7-10 pound category being caught from the first years stocking. Stocking levels are still quite low and the program is only in the early stages, but this sets a very positive precedent for the future. In a time when salmon are threatened in many maritime rivers we have a chance to re-establish an extirpated population in Lake Ontario. As stocking levels increase we all hope to see larger returns and eventually a fishery develop.



#### CRAA hatchery

With a growing team of dedicated volunteers and increased capacity CRAA's hatchery is expanding into new fish species this fall. CRAA will be adding wild strain brook trout and possibly coho salmon and lake sturgeon to our mix of species. CRAA and MNR are working together to collect pure strain brook trout from populations in the watershed that have not been mixed with massive stocking in the 1950's to early 80's. These brook trout raised will be stocked into streams where populations are very limited, but habitat is suitable in the hopes of re-building this native fishes range. CRAA has also been collecting and holding adult coho salmon in our hatchery collected from Streetsville by CRAA and MNR with help from the OFAH Atlantic salmon assessment crew. These fish need to be held for 8-10 weeks to allow them to mature for egg collection.

#### Norval Dam Fishway

The process is slower than we all would like, but the light is at the end of the tunnel. We are on the cusp of final drawings for the fishway and will have the next Class EA public notice out shortly. If all goes well we will be building the fishway over winter and be operational in 2010!

#### Record Transfers at Streetsville Ladder!!!

With the 2008 Fall transfer of 282 combined with the 2009 Spring transfer of 748 CRAA set a new record this year. These wild steelhead got a ride to Black and Silver Creek in Georgetown where they had the opportunity to spawn in far greater water than they would have without our help. With Cameron Walker and Mark Polanski teaming as the lead on this project; at least one of them made sure to arrive and organize each daily transfer to which we are all thankful. Combined with many others lending a hand we were able to make this years transfer and lift successful.

In Fall2009/Spring2010 we will see the first returns of the 500 fish transfer we completed in 2007. It should make for an exciting year as we have evidence that the transfers are working and the fish are reproducing extremely well.

The protocol for fish ladder work has changed as of recent; CRAA will be posting new details on the website next year on how you can assist them this spring at the Streetsville Dam.