



LIGHT LINES

SUMMER, 1997

Volume 8, Number 3

DROP BACK STEELHEADING - INCREDIBLE

By Aaron Bodiam

This past spring was the best post-spawn steelhead fishing I have ever seen in the Credit River. It all began on opening day and finally came to an end with the hot weather the first week of June.

On the first Saturday it started slow, fishing below the Streetsville Dam with close to one hundred other nuts. The water was gin clear and the fish were none-existent. A few of us hooked some nice fresh steelies in the fast water but the crowded pools just wouldn't produce. So my friends and I headed for another spot. We drove for a short while and tried about halfway between Streetsville and Norval. There was not another angler in sight. The water was clear and our spirits were low. I threw a cast into the deep bend pool we discovered and to my shock the float dropped. I pulled back expecting a big chromer, and to my pleasant surprise it was a big 8 inch **wild** chrome steelhead smolt on his way back to the lake. The next drift the float dropped again. I gently set the hook into the fish, expecting another smolt. As the twelve pound chromer tail walked down the pool and kissed me good-bye I cursed my pathetic hookset.

My buddy was laughing at me when his float tore across the pool and ended up in a tree thanks to another big steelie. After hitting about fifteen chrome drop-backs and a dozen wild smolts we headed for the lower Credit, near Erindale. There were a couple of people fishing and a few fish around. After ten minutes in the falling rock pool we couldn't believe nobody was there. Six drifts

for me and six drop backs. My buddy did the same.

Over the month of May I had many opportunities to fish the Credit from Dundas to Norval. Every spot I visited had fish. It seemed every pool I fished had at least a few drop backs in it and nobody was there to catch them but me. I had the same experience on Bronte Creek and on Oshawa Creek in May.

It seems the cold, late spring kept the steelhead in the river longer, even though they were done spawning. This made for an incredible spring that I will always remember, especially all those days on the Credit with a chrome steelhead tail walking down the pool and nobody there to witness it.

CRAA is doing a mark recapture count on all steelhead caught above the Streetsville Dam this year. We need to know how many fish each angler caught between the Streetsville Dam and the Norval Dam, and how many were tagged with blue tags. I landed 37 steelhead, four with blue tags. My buddy landed 28 steelhead in the study section, 2 with blue tags. Another guy landed 44 steelhead, seven with blue tags.

If you caught any fish in this section of river this year, tagged or not, please let us know over the hotline.

(905) 608-0169

UPCOMING EVENT

JUNE

28 STEELHEAD STOCKING

Meet at 9:00 am at Terra Cotta Conservation Area.

We will be stocking over 150 000 steelhead fry from the CRAA up-welling box. The steelhead fry will be released into Silver and Black Creek as specified by the MNR. This is some of the best water in the Credit River below the escarpment so the steelhead should be very successful.

The steelhead will be released a few at a time over a wide area to maximize distribution and survival. Volunteers will walk along the edge of the river and release a dozen fry each step. This spreads the fry over the entire river to minimize competition and maximize survival. Bring waders or rubber boots. This will also be lots of fun for the kids.

Bass fishing will be very good at Terra Cotta as well.

JULY

6 URBAN FISHING FESTIVAL

Meet at the Lake Aquitaine dock at 8:45 am, Meadowvale.

CRAA will again provide bait and tackle for the three hundred young anglers that attend on a yearly basis. This is great fun and gives anglers the opportunity to give back to the sport we all love. Bring your kids!

12 STEWARTOWN DAM TREE PLANTING

Meet at Stewartown Public School (Trafalgar Road and 15th sideroad, 7 minutes north of the 401).

The property owner has agreed to allow CRAA to re-forest this 750 m stretch of Black Creek immediately above the Stewartown Dam. This section of river has

JULY CONTINUED

STEWARTOWN DAM TREE PLANTING CONTINUED

some speckled trout and is at the bottom end of CRAA's Atlantic salmon stocking site. This short section of river without trees warms Black Creek by 4 degrees Celsius. This tree planting will ensure that lower reaches of Black Creek are colder in the future.

There is some good speckled trout fishing nearby.

19-27 STREETSVILLE FISH LADDER CONSTRUCTION

Daily work at the ladder will be done with machinery. Start at 9 am.

The fish ladder channel will be re-directed and the back of the plunge pool will be re-created. One of our new members will be assisting us with the use of his large back-hoe. Finally we have machinery to do the heavy work.

26 STREETSVILLE FISH LADDER VOLUNTEER DAY

8:30 am start, come any time, rain or shine, call if you need directions.

On this day we will build the rip-rap walls of the fish ladder channel to prevent erosion and siltation of the new channel. Most of the heavy work will be done with the back-hoe, but we will have to put the fencing along the banks of the channel and wire it together so it can hold the rock that will be placed against it. Bring your bathing suit and shoes/boots you don't mind getting wet. This is a very important part of the work at the ladder, **we need lots of help**. Bring your friends too. Even if you can only spare a few hours please join us.

Continued on page 4.

1997 - 1998 MAJOR PROJECTS

By John Kendell

CRAA has reached the next step in our work to improve the Credit River fishery. We are at the stage of undertaking our biggest projects to date, with corporate and government sponsors. The results of these endeavors will take the Credit River from being a good steelhead river to becoming the premier steelhead river in Ontario.

As many of you know, the Credit River's steelhead population is a fraction of it's potential due to the combination of ineffective fish ladders, dams, and the MNR management plan. Our major projects we have planned will change the limiting factors of the steelhead population, giving them access to much of the river that currently flows void of salmonids.

STREETSVILLE FISH LADDER

The Streetsville Fish Ladder has seen a number of changes in the past two years at the hands of the MNR. The MNR spent approximately \$75 000.00 at the ladder to fill in the plunge pool, thus forcing the fish to hold below the fish ladder entrance.

Unfortunately, as we told the MNR who were involved, you cannot fight the river, or mother nature. Each spring during the break up of ice, the river has tremendous power, and as a result can dig out holes and move boulders without any effort. This is especially true below a dam where the plunge pool should be.

Last fall the plunge pool was filled in and worked fine when the fall run fish were at the dam, but after the spring flood this year the plunge pool was 6 to 8 feet deep. In addition to that, a gravel bar consisting of an estimated 100 cubic yards of gravel was deposited at the fish ladder entrance. The result; steelhead passed the fish ladder entrance and held below the dam. After wasting their energy jumping at the dam the fish dropped back to spawn in water that will not allow their offspring to hatch

due to lethal summer water temperatures.

CRAA'S PLAN.

We plan to re-direct the fish ladder into the plunge pool that naturally forms below the dam. This is where the fish ladder should have always entered, but for whatever reason, it did not. Figure 1 shows the original ladder overview, and figure 2 shows the changes we are planning to do.

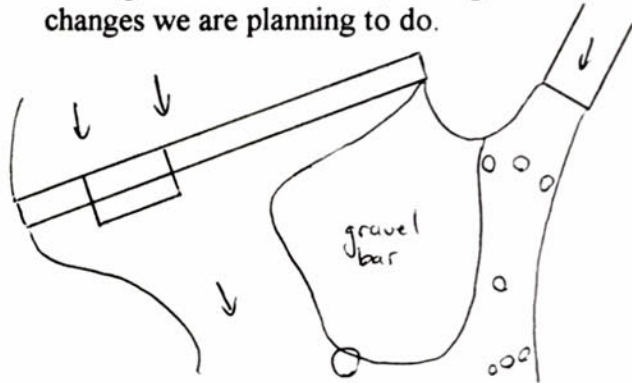


Figure 1.

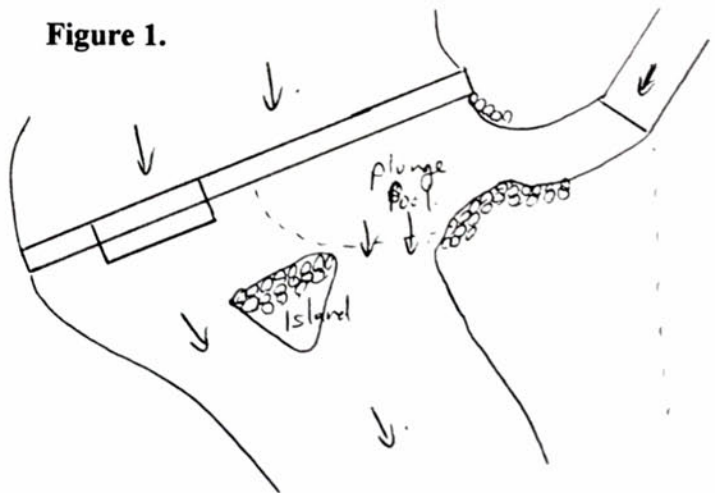


Figure 2.

We will also dig out the plunge pool in front of the fish ladder (Figure 2) so fish can hold below the ladder entrance. This work should result in upwards of 95% of the fish at the dam finding the fish ladder to pass the dam.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST

15-31 ELECTRO-FISHING DATA COLLECTION

We will be electro-fishing on various days over the period. If you can help out please call the hotline. Volunteers will assist in netting, information collecting and habitat mapping. We will be working on the main Credit River and Silver and Black Creek.

23 GLEN WILLIAMS TREE PLANTING AND CATTLE FENCING

9:00 am start, meet at Terra Cotta Inn parking lot (King Rd, 2 km west of Mississauga Road)

This project will be done on a section of the main Credit River where there is a serious problem with cattle and bank erosion. The cattle trample all the vegetation and leave the bank exposed to erosion. This is a very high priority rehabilitation site. The work here will serve as a demonstration project to other property owners in the area where CRAA plans future work. Many of these properties have no trees lining the river banks leaving the river to boil in the sun's hot rays. We will be planting willow, poplar, white pine and cedar. Bring shovels, gloves and work boots.

CRAA supplies materials, tools, and gloves for all projects. CRAA also offers beverages and a BBQ free to all volunteers at the work site. **Bring your friends! Hotline # (905) 608-0169.**

1997 - 1998 MAJOR PROJECTS CON'T

NORVAL DAM FISH LADDER

As many of you know from past newsletters, the Norval Dam has a fish ladder that does not work, and never will. Therefore, we are planning to build a new ladder at the dam in the next year or two. This ladder will be set up to allow Atlantic salmon past the Norval dam during the fall, and steelhead in both spring and fall when steelhead are allowed past the dam by the MNR.

The completion of a fish ladder at the Norval Dam will result in a major increase in the number of steelhead in the Credit River. It will also mean that the entire river below the electro-barrier will be utilized for trout reproduction, rather than wasting the best forty miles of river for no trout at all.

In addition to the construction work we will be going through the entire process of changing the management plan for the Credit River with the MNR. In the article 'Save Our Steelhead' I hope I made it clear that we must have the members involvement in the meetings that will be coming up over the next year.

The MNR must follow what the anglers want, as long as it is scientifically sound. Therefore, the more of you that make your voice heard at the public meetings, the more the MNR has to listen.

In the mean time the CRAA executive will be initiating the changes through a small public/MNR advisory committee that is currently being set up. This will allow the major stakeholders, CRAA, TU, IWFFC, the CVC and MNR to plan a joint effort that we can present to the public for approval. To this point we are in agreement with IWFFC and about half of the CVC, TU and MNR. We are working to bring the other people to our side to help in the struggle to save the Credit river fishery. **Here's to our success!**

THE COMMON DENOMINATOR

By: Victor Beacham

When I am asked what my favourite specie is to fish for, it seems that I am stuck between a rock and a hard place. Two species have a special place in my heart.

From the end of May until Thanksgiving, I fish for Muskie. From mid October until the end of May, I fish for steelhead.

The fishing techniques are as different as night and day: A short stiff rod for Muskie, a long noodle rod for steelhead. Heavy 27 lb. Dacron for Muskie, light 2 lb. mono for Trout. Finesse for Steelhead, almost anything goes for Muskie. Three large trebles hanging off 10 inch bodybaits for Muskie, a number 14 wide gap hook buried in a dime sized roe bags for Trout. Jerkbait for Muskie, floats for Trout. Wading streams for steelhead, covering lake structure for Muskie.

The fish themselves hold a world of difference. A silver bullet vs a striped green monster. Angelic

grace vs ferocious intimidation. A fish sought for by royalty vs a fish hunted for by madmen. Aerobatic vs brute strength.

How did I ever find myself in a dilemma like this? Thankfully, I search them out at opposing times of the year. How can one ever compare the two? Why must one lose sleep at night, trying to decide? The heart stopping thrashing as a green monster inhales a jerkbait. The rush as the pencil float dips downward and the 10 foot rod sweeps upward driving the hook home. Nightmares of sun flashes off the silver sides of leaping *Oncorhynchus mykiss* and the evil glare of that quarter sized eye of *Esox masquinongy* - waking in a cold sweat.

At last a decision is reached: one is just as sporting as the other. Both deserve RESPECT. Both deserve another chance. Both are released to fight another day. The thrill of seeing both swim away following a gallant fight brings equal satisfaction. Both teach an important lesson: Catch and Release. The common denominator. What it is all about.

S.O.S.

By John Kendell

SAVE OUR STEELHEAD!

That's right. Save our steelhead. The time has finally come when we have the chance to save our steelhead. CRAA has worked hard enough and done so much to prove that steelhead must have a place in the Credit River that the future of steelhead in the Credit River is in our hands!

There are people out there, some in the government and some in other powerful positions that do not like steelhead and do not want them in the Credit River. You must understand that not everyone likes steelhead. I don't know why? They are a

beautiful fish, powerful, self sustaining (if given half a chance) and available to anglers from September to June in the river.

If you as an angler want the steelhead in the Credit River to have a fair chance at reproducing than you better get involved. CRAA has pushed and shoved and the MNR management plan is finally coming up for a review. The management plan is the only thing between 5,000 steelhead and 35,000 steelhead in the Credit River. If you want more steelhead than make your voice heard. Starting this winter we hope to initiate public meetings to change the management plan. Your attendance is imperative! Watch for further updates in Light Lines!

SUCCESS

Baby Steelhead in the Up-welling Box

By Mike Tost and John Kendell

The up-welling box was a lot of work this spring, but it was worth it. Mike Tost adopted the box as his baby this March since he lived so close. Now his wife says he spends more time with the fish than her! Mike has spent one to three hours every evening at the up welling box since March 12, 1997. By next week that will be over 100 consecutive days keeping an eye on our baby steelhead.

PART 1 - EASY SET UP?

Back in March when the MNR gave CRAA permission to raise 250 000 steelhead we expected to put the egg incubator back in the box and put the steelhead eggs in. **Life is never that easy!**

It was a bit of a struggle with the MNR to have permission to raise the steelhead, but the Lake Ontario manager (Phil Smith) and Salmonid Biologist for the Lake Ontario Management Unit (Jim Bowlby) were instrumental in helping CRAA. Aurora MNR finally agreed and biologist Paul Savioe helped with some of the paper work.

Now picture this, Mike T, John K, Aaron B and Mike W walk through a foot of snow in March and set up another holding tank for the 20 000 Atlantic salmon we were raising. That went smoothly, except for getting sprayed with freezing water out of the water pipe from the spring creek. Once we transferred the Atlantics into their tank we emptied the up welling box to determine what needed to be repaired.

We knew the box had some leaks in it, but this was ridiculous. The box had so many leaks that a 4" pipe full of water could not fill it up. So John and his crazy ideas said he would take the marine plywood home and rebuild the box. The next day

we were pulling the old box apart and carting the plywood to John's basement. The box had broken all its seals because the framing had rotted. Two of the original support beams were rotted away underneath the box.

That night I called Grant D who had the up welling box incubator at his house for the last year. I knew it needed to be repaired, but Grant had thrown it out without telling anyone. So we had to re-build a new incubator for the box from scratch.

After 48 hours of fans, portable heaters, blow-dryers and the central heating systems the plywood was dry and ready for use. Over that same 48 hours numerous people were over to my house to help me build the new frame. Shaker delivered materials, Aaron and Mike W helped me putting the parts together in the basement and Mike T prepared the site for the new box.

Finally on the Thursday night Mike W and I put the entire box together in my garage. We went through 300 deck screws and eight tubes of silicone calking. Now we had a new up-welling box that was built from pressure treated wood, now it just needed paint. Fortunately I found the last can of non-toxic marine paint (it is not made any more) that we needed to seal the new box and egg incubator. During the next 24 hours everything got two coats of paint and was ready for delivery on Saturday. We had fourteen volunteers out to help on Saturday, as well as three pick-up trucks. With all the help it was easy to move the box into place and set it up with the egg incubator. Now we had to re-build the dam on the spring creek for our water supply and set up the silt box.

We filled over 100 sand bags and piled them into a two foot high dam on our creek. Finally, the box

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SUCCESS CONTINUED

was rebuilt and the system was working perfectly. **Now we just needed 250 000 steelhead eggs!**

PART 2 - RAISING EGGS

On March 29th we collected our very first eggs for the up welling box from the Streetsville Fish Ladder, about 15 000. We had devised a tray system to hold the eggs in the incubator rather than gravel we originally used. That first evening we put the eggs in was our first taste of satisfaction. 99.6% of the eggs fertilized and were looking great!

Now we had to count a small area of the eggs to ensure our numbers were accurate. It seemed our math skills went out the window for a while, but we finally believed it. One tray could easily hold over 12 000 eggs, but it took an hour of counting the length and width to prove it to me. Most people who saw the trays guessed the quantity of eggs to be 300 to 1000, until they too counted how many eggs made up the length and width.

Over the next few weeks the next hurdle appeared in the form of a fish ladder that was so messed up by the work the MNR last year. We had a 90% decrease in the number of fish using it! We had to work extra hard just to get the eggs we needed for the box. Don't forget, about 80% of the females we lift at the ladder are still in the skein, so we need a lot of females for 250 000 eggs (an average female steelhead has between 4 000 and 6 000 eggs). By April 18th it was hopeless, we had only lifted 243 steelhead and only collected 155 000 eggs.

On short notice we planned to electro-fish below the dam and finish our egg collection. Mark Heaton (York East biologist) for the Aurora MNR took a Sunday to help us, for which we are grateful. We managed to collect 125 000 more eggs for the up welling box to put our total at 280,000 eggs (we took an extra 30 000 eggs to

cover any egg mortality from the electro-fishing).

With the box loaded with eggs we only had to pick out the dead ones every day to prevent fungus from killing them. We lost two trays of electro fishing eggs early on, losing about 20 000 eggs. Unfortunately for us there were a few thousand good eggs on each of those trays so we had to pick them off a few at a time. Mike T thought I was crazy when a showed up with a turkey baster, but they do the job extremely well.

Over the month of May Mike T spent a few hours every evening picking dead eggs and Aaron and John spent at least 8 hours every weekend with Mike picking dead eggs (It is a slow process). By late May we were getting close, the eggs began to eye up and our excitement was mounting. It wouldn't be long until the fruits of everyone's labor would be ripe.

Finally, on May 29th Mike saw the first sac fry and by June 1st there were over 150 000 sac fry wiggling around on the trays we made. In about two weeks we knew we would have an incredible number of little trout on our hands. By June 15th we had about 1 000 free swimming fry (the egg sac was fully absorbed) and they were hungry. All the eggs had finally hatched and it was now a matter of days before the big numbers appeared. On June 17th we were up to 5000 fry and on the 18th, over 30000 fry. Every day for the past few days we have had tens of thousands of fry coming off and we expect it to continue until June 26th. **So we hope to see you and your kids or friends on June 28th to help release the baby steelhead into the Credit River.** We have begun to release the fry because we don't have enough space for them, but we will have over 150 000 to release on the 28th of June!

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE

CRAA 1997 SUMMER PROJECTS

Date	Project Details
June 28	STEELHEAD STOCKING from the CRAA up-welling box. Steelhead fry will be released into the main Credit River near Georgetown and lower Silver and Black Creek as specified by the MNR. The fish are released in small groups over a wide area to maximize distribution and survival. Bring waders or rubber boots. Meet at 9:00 am at Terra Cotta Conservation Area.
July 6	URBAN FISHING FESTIVAL at Lake Aquitaine. CRAA will again provide bait and tackle for the three hundred young anglers that attend on a yearly basis. Meet at the Lake Aquitaine dock at 8:45 am, Meadowvale.
July 12	STEWARTOWN DAM TREE PLANTING on Black Creek. The property owner has agreed to allow CRAA to re-forest this 750 m stretch of Black Creek immediately above the Stewartown Dam. This section of river has some speckled trout and is at the bottom end of CRAA's Atlantic salmon stocking site. This short section of river without trees warms Black Creek by 4 degrees Celsius. This tree planting will ensure that lower reaches of Black Creek are colder in the future. 9:30 am start in Stewartown, bring your rod to fish specks later.
July 19-27	STREETSVILLE FISH LADDER CONSTRUCTION. The fish ladder channel will be re-directed and the back of the plunge pool will be re-created. One of our new members will be assisting us with the use of his large back-hoe.
July 26	STREETSVILLE FISH LADDER VOLUNTEER DAY. On this day we will build the rip-rap walls of the fish ladder channel to prevent erosion and siltation of the new channel. Bring you bathing suit and shoes/boots you don't mind getting wet. This is a very important part of the work at the ladder, we need lots of help. 8:30 am start, but come any time, rain or shine, call if you need directions.
August 15-31	ELECTRO-FISHING DATA COLLECTION on the main Credit River and Silver and Black Creek. If you would like to help out please let us know in advance. We will be shocking on selected days over the period.
August 23	GLEN WILLIAMS TREE PLANTING on the main Credit River between Terra Cotta and Georgetown. There are several properties that have no riparian vegetation, leaving the river to boil in the sun's hot rays. We will be planting willow, poplar, white pine and cedar. Bring shovels, gloves and work boots. 9:00 am start, meet at Terra Cotta Inn parking lot (King Rd, 2 km west of Mississauga Rd.)

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PLEASE POST FOR YOURSELF