

# *The Thames River Angler*

*Newsletter of the Thames River Anglers Association*

**Fall 1999**

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### *Editor's Note – Paul Noble*

Welcome to the fall edition of your newsletter. Many people proclaim autumn to be their favourite season and I confess to sharing their affection for this time of the year. On a clear day the eccentric mix of vibrant, flaming foliage contrasted by an almost painfully crystalline blue sky can take your breath away. When your breath returns, it is to the sweet, crispness of a cool, dry breeze. But the autumn days I like best are the dull ones. The swollen, leaden clouds stumble ponderously across the sky, carved by an ebony matrix of leafless branches. Beneath this moody canopy, the landscape takes on earthy, muted shades of rust, old gold, burnt umber and crimson. Dull days are also favoured for pursuing the last of the year's fishing opportunities. In the lower light, fish feel safer and compromise their allowances of encroachment. The water has little or no glare, affording the possibility of "sight fishing". The rivers are less congested by others and this can improve our odds of success. Yes, I'm there with a rod and reel, but the aesthetics of the day often divert my attention from the fish. The pungent odour of earth-musk, the sombre colours of a forest put to bed for winter, the dark slow-motion deepness of a river made viscous by the cold; these are the drugs that push me into trances of reflection. Some people meditate...I go fishing.

### *President's Message – Randy Bailey*

Statistics state that only 10% of the members in a volunteer organisation actually become active beyond submitting their annual dues. The attendance at November's TRAA general meeting definitely supports these data. Although we fit this statistical pigeonhole, it is a fairly recent trend for the TRAA. Up until two years ago, we were easily running at a 20% participation rate in the general meetings. And, we were getting 10% or more out to the work parties! Social events such as fishing derbies used to be enormously popular but for our latest two derbies 3 and 4 people, respectively, showed up. There are key positions within the TRAA that have been abandoned or were never filled. The TRAA has not evolved to reflect the dwindling support of its own members and the strain is beginning to take its toll on those who have remained active. I think the time has arrived for the Thames River Anglers Association to evaluate its future role in the community and re-structure accordingly. What types of changes are coming? Well, let's just say that a few fundamental philosophies within the TRAA will be altered. All recommendations from TRAA members as well as interested partners and stakeholders will be seriously considered at an executive level. Those recommendations accepted by the executive will then be presented at a TRAA general meeting to be approved by those in attendance for passage into our by-laws. Please understand that we do not underestimate the value of our inactive members. When it comes to presenting our concerns regarding issues within our community, a large membership commands respect. We just need to adjust the TRAA's focus and operations to reflect the recent levels of involvement.

## *Trout Committee – Randy Bailey*

We received permission from the Ministry of Natural Resources to obtain 30,000 brown trout eggs in the green stage from MNR's Normandale Hatchery. Rick Ornato picked up the eggs on Friday November 5, 1999. After being transferred to the TRAA trout hatchery, they were placed in three of the four trays for incubation. Historically, the tray nearest the water inlet has had the highest mortality rate and so we left it vacant. We determined that there were three reasons for the rate of failure in the first tray: it seemed to have the largest amount of air built up under it; the water flow was too heavy when the other trays were receiving appropriate circulation; there appeared to be more silt accumulation than in the other trays. So far the adjustments appear to be having a positive effect on egg survival. The date and the site for the release of this batch have yet to be determined. Suggestions are welcome from any of our members, partners or other stakeholders.

This is the current rotation for tending the trout hatchery:

Monday: George Hoy, Ross Strickland; Tuesday: John Jackson; Wednesday: Dave Jeffries; Thursday: Ken & Jeff Van Steensel; Friday: Lloyd Graham, Rick Ornato; Saturday: Fred Smithers, Randy Bailey; Sunday: Archie Graham & Paul Noble.

If you'd like to be the back up on either Tuesdays or Wednesdays, please call Randy Bailey. No experience is necessary!

This year, we will be attempting to maintain or increase the focus of the trout hatchery as a tool for public education. It is imperative that the trout hatchery and its facilities support activities such as tours by special interest groups. Committee members have identified several areas that need to be improved. The stairs leading down to the trout hatchery need to be rebuilt or replaced to provide easier and safer access to the facility.

## *Rehabilitation Committee – Rick Ornato*

There were two work parties this fall that concentrated on collecting and installing natural deadfalls at designated areas in Komoka Creek. The design of these deadfall structures will create both stream deflection and effective cover for young trout. Although there was a significant amount of work accomplished, much more was possible if these parties were better attended by members.

When it comes to Komoka Creek, most of the focus of the Rehab' Committee seems to be on bank stabilisation. There will be some trial plantings of willow stalks on Komoka Creek between the cornfield bend and County Road 14 this fall. There will also be ditch-grass seed mix purchased for planting in the spring.

## Warm Water Committee – Lawson Jones

It has been decided at a committee level that some major modifications to the walleye hatchery operations are needed to make this project feasible for continuation. Committee members have stated that the work involved does not justify the end result. Radically fluctuating water temperatures in the small growing tank are impossible to control. As a result, the walleye fry are released into Fanshawe Lake too soon and essentially become fish food. To continue the walleye programme, a larger holding pond is essential to allow the walleye fry to grow to a point that might ensure a better chance of survival upon release. There is plenty of open space behind the existing hatchery site for a small pond and the UTRCA has given us the permission to use it (they even offered the use of their backhoe to dig the hole). Other requirements would be a water pump, some sort of pond liner, water plants or some other type of cover to control water temperatures. As always, involvement by TRAA members is also a necessity.

The TRAA's continued involvement in Sharon Creek Conservation Area is being honoured by the Friends of Sharon Creek. A park bench dedicated to the TRAA will be erected on a new walkway being created at Sharon Creek Reservoir (this is the result of tireless work by Lawson Jones, Michael Matthews, Fred Smithers and the rest of the Warm Water Committee! - ed.).

## Update: Komoka Development *by Randy Bailey*

Aquafor Beech completed its final report and recommendations in regard to the management of storm water runoff from proposed residential developments in the Komoka area. All stakeholders have accepted the report. A copy of the report was sent to the TRAA from Kathy Saunders at the Middlesex-Centre administration office.

Upon reviewing the proposed plans, we were quite pleased to see that many of our concerns had been addressed. The plan incorporates many lot control measures, conveyance measures and end of pipe measures that will minimise the impact of storm water runoff into Komoka Creek. Many of the proposed controls will help infiltration of surface water back into the ground before it reaches Komoka Creek. They are also looking at building a dry pond for end of pipe collection and turning it into a park-like setting.

We have done a great job in supplying the necessary information about Komoka Creek. This had a direct impact on the decision making process as to the value of Komoka Creek. Our attendance at the meetings was also instrumental in educating the local interest groups, the landowners and the developers. The report is available to members for review. Inquiries can be made at any TRAA general meeting.

## **Wanted:**

### **Free lunch with no strings attached!** *by Rick Ornato*

Sunday afternoon was the second last day of our fall fishing trip on the Bayfield River. It was slightly overcast and I was working a spring wiggler in and around some boulders hoping to entice a cruising steelhead. The water was semi-clear so fish movement was visible but still required all of my attention. So there I was, in this idyllic setting, fishing and just generally getting in touch with my chi, when it happened.

I was startled out of my trance by loud splashing and what could only be described as a guttural scream. I glanced back toward our camp (about 50 metres downstream) to see Steve fighting a fish...or to be more exact, fighting over a fish. It appeared that this same salmon had also been earmarked for the menu of one of the local seagulls. The salmon, seemingly embarrassed at being involved in this freak show, executed a couple of rolls, spins and jumps. The salmon's acrobatics resulted in the hook being thrown into the seagull. The canny fish escaped and, in a manner of speaking, flipped Steve the bird. Steve did manage, however, to land the seagull and release it unharmed.

True story - swear to god.

## **~The Quotable Angler~**

“Here is one of the world’s great truisms – the genuine fisherman never argues with his impulse; he just goes, blissfully ignoring family ties and the call of business. He goes, even if in the backwoods of his mind he knows that his fish will cost him a hundred dollars a pound. Fishing, then, is a passion, but the man who called it an incurable lunacy went too far, for the fisherman is the sanest of the sane. Of all men he is the most keenly aware that being everlastingly busy is neither a good rule of health nor a sound business policy.”

*Dr. William Sherwood Fox*

Former President, University of Western Ontario (1927-1947)

From his book *Silken Lines and Silver Hooks* (1954)

**“I’d Rather be *Spawning*”**

**A bumper sticker seen on a 1999 Pathfinder**

# A Safe Wading Primer      *by Dave Jeffries*

Wading is a dangerous way to fish if you do not know or follow some simple rules. We have all heard the stories of unwise wading fishermen. I would hazard a guess that we all have a few stories of our own to tell. I've had my share of blunders and there's two I'd like to share with you.

A few years ago I was chasing the elusive steelhead on the Rouge River behind the Toronto Zoo. I was wading alone, having already fished this stretch numerous times. Yes, my misplaced confidence replaced common sense. It had been a very wet spring and the banks of the river seemed softer than they had ever been. As I approached one of my favourite honey-holes, I failed to take stock of some obvious warning signs. The sand bar that I normally stand on wasn't as firm as usual but I decided to fire off a couple of quick casts before moving on. Three steps and I found myself crotch deep and mired. I looked around for help but was hidden by the 80-foot cliff behind me. Fortunately I was able to slowly work my way to solid enough footing to get myself unstuck. Walking away, a strange sound caused me to turn in time to witness the cliff face break off, burying my footprints on the sand bar under a tonne of sand and mud.

Then there was the trip to the Maitland River in the fall of 1997 with my buddies from the TRAA. I had separated from the main group and was standing in the river changing streamers. I put my fly box back in my vest and it promptly popped back out when I began to cast. I tried chasing it down the river but fell face-first into the cold water. Being a slow learner, I restarted the chase twice again and both times found myself wallowing in the Maitland's icy current. The box got away and my day of fishing was over. Needless to say, I was once again lucky to avoid anything more than just a frosty and bruised ego.

So here are a few safe wading tips from a reformed wading idiot:

- I. Our local freestone streams and rivers are easier to wade with felt soles or felt soles with studs.
- II. Wear polarised sunglasses to cut the glare so you can see the bottom. Remember that water will also distort your depth perception.
- III. Wear a wading belt around the outside of your waders to stop them from filling with water if you get in too deep.
- IV. A wading staff is helpful in unknown waters or if the river is unusually high and off-coloured. However, don't use it as an excuse to venture where you normally wouldn't without a staff.

*"A Safe Wading Primer" continues ...*

### *... A Safe Wading Primer*

- V. Make sure your waders and/or boots fit you properly. Boots that fit too tightly restrict blood flow and you lose the feeling in your feet. Boots that are too loose don't support your foot and you risk injury or missteps.
- VI. If you're a weak swimmer or are fishing alone, you should consider some type of flotation device. Some vests and wader suspenders come with an EFD (emergency flotation device) built into them.
- VII. If you enjoy fishing alone, consider attaching a "referee-style" whistle to your suspender and learn how to signal an SOS.
- VIII. Be sure you're dressed appropriately for the cold. The first stages of hypothermia make you stupid and uncoordinated.
- IX. Familiarise yourself with the area that you're fishing and the possible danger signs. For example, if you're fishing downstream from a dam, pay close attention to any fluctuations in the water level and position yourself for a quick exit.
- X. Fish with a partner or within sight of other anglers. If you must fish alone leave word where you are planning to fish and what time you will be returning.
- XI. Don't wade after dark. Take the high-and-dry road back to the car!

I guess it goes without saying that your biggest ally when wading is common sense. Use it and heed it; after all, it's just a fish!

### ***Things That Make You Go Hmmm...***

"Whoever came up with the concept of a 'put and take' fishery was probably the same person who decided we had to destroy a village to take it."

*A Korean War Veteran, who wishes to remain Anonymous*

## **Upcoming Events**

**Sunday, November 28, 1999**

### **Rehabilitation Committee**

We will be walking a stretch of the O'Neil Drain #1 to determine the amount of work would be required to de-brush and remove in-stream obstacles as an alternative to dredging. If you want to attend or want more information, please call Rick Ornato or George Hoy.

**Wednesday, December 8, 1999**

### **TRAA General Meeting**

This is the last general meeting before the second millennium and, more importantly, before the Annual General Meeting! See you there!

## **Contact Information**

Here are some sources of information for the Thames River Anglers Association:

TRAA 24-Hour Hotline      (519) 457-4122

TRAA Internet Site      [www.anglers.org](http://www.anglers.org)

TRAA E-mail Address      [traa@anglers.org](mailto:traa@anglers.org)

TRAA Snail Mail      PO Box 1415, Station A, London, Ontario N6A 5M2

TRAA Newsletter      Published Quarterly

The best way to stay informed is to attend the TRAA General Meetings. Unless otherwise informed, meetings occur on every second Wednesday of every month at 8:00 PM. The location is the Canadian Corps Association, 1051 Dundas Street, London, Ontario.

# The Entertainment Section

## Fishy Recipe - *Salmon Burger*

*Easy to make and really good for you!*

### Ingredients

16	ounces	canned salmon, flaked
4	cloves	garlic, finely chopped
2		small onions, finely chopped
2	teaspoons	dried dill
3		egg whites
4		whole wheat buns
		Dijon mustard

### Directions

Mix all ingredients except buns and mustard. Form into 4 patties. Spray a large skillet with non-stick spray and fry patties over medium-high heat until cooked through. Place on buns with mustard and eat. Experiment with other toppings such as tomatoes, cucumbers, etc. Makes 4 servings.

## *Life is a Game of Priorities!*

Two wealthy socialites were fishing where Airport Road crosses the South Thames River. One of the ladies suddenly stopped fishing, removed her hat and stood solemnly in the river as a funeral procession passed over the bridge. After she replaced her hat and resumed fishing her friend remarked, "I've never known you to be so reverential, Patricia." To which her companion replied, "So true, Rosalind. But it's the least I could do after 42 years of marriage."

## **How did *You Bust Your Rod?* *by Paul Noble***

I repair fishing rods as a hobby and as a source for “walkin’ around” money. I’ve learned to ask for the story of the rod’s demise or injury. Some readers may recognise the following anecdotes and that’s because they’re all true!

“The bonefishing was slow so I began teasing a large crab with the rod tip when...”

“I was playing a 30 lb. salmon with my 5 foot ultra-light when...”

“The 40 lb. test monofilament got wrapped around the propeller when...”

“I was in the middle of a back-cast and a truck was passing behind me when...”

“I walked into a wasps nest and was swinging my rod at them when...”

“The line was out of the trunk and the hook got caught in the revolving wheel when...”

“I was yelling at a biker for fishing right in front of me on the Credit River when...”

“The bull came right at me so I jumped from the 20 foot cliff into the stream when...”

“I was using the butt section of my rod to dry my socks over the campfire when...”

“We were trolling in canoes and missed the portage around the Class IV rapids when...”

“Graphite rods are the same colour as asphalt and so I was backing up my truck when...”

## ***There’s Something Fishy About This!***

The jealous sculpin was becoming irritated by the pretty little darter who was flirting with her ex-boyfriend. Overcome with envy she finally demanded, “I want my stickleback!”

## ***Little Known Nuggets of Useless Information***

The wind-swept country of Scotland is the birthplace of golf and fishing for Atlantic salmon. These facts may explain why it is also the birthplace of whiskey.