

The Thames River Angler

Newsletter of the Thames River Anglers Association

Spring 1999

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President's Message – Randy Bailey

Anyone familiar with the TRAA over the past decade or so knows that we have committed many hours to the protection and enhancement of Komoka Creek. This stream is now recognized as possibly the best example of a Class 1 cold water stream in South-western Ontario. Short sighted land use practises have turned most of our other cold water tributaries into nothing more than drainage ditches. Komoka Creek is once again threatened with the same fate as her sister streams. Massive, urban-style residential development is soon going to increase the population of the tiny hamlet of Komoka by approximately 250 percent! A large portion of what was an extremely permeable landscape will be transformed into rooftops, manicured lawns, paved streets and parking lots. How will the storm water from all of these impermeable surfaces be managed? I challenge the developers, the consultants recommending the best management solution, area residents and elected officials to have the guts and the foresight to maintain the current integrity of Komoka Creek.

It's a quality of life issue for all the inhabitants of the Komoka area.

Editor's Note – Paul Noble

For the first time in years, the majority of this newsletter represents the authorship of many. I believe that the texture and diversity of this issue illustrates the positive impact of contributions from various TRAA members. Some of the submissions were nothing more than random thoughts put to paper and others were manifestos! Thanks go to all those who offered your humble editor the fodder to produce this issue of the Thames River Angler!

The format and content may change as this publication evolves. I'd like to have more opinion pieces, letters to the editor, classified ads and so on. You may actually see photographs, drawings, colour and other graphic imagery. All of this, of course, will be dependent upon budgetary constraints.

So keep those cards and letters coming. We welcome all comments, suggestions, cheers and jeers.

"Anything else you're interested in is not going to happen if you can't breathe the air and drink the water. Don't sit this one out. Do something. You are, by accident of fate, alive at an absolutely critical moment in the history of our planet."

Carl Sagan, Astronomer & Writer

Trout Committee – Ralph Lass

The brown trout fry continue to grow in the circular holding tank at the TRAA trout hatchery and will continue to do so until June. This additional growth period should increase their size to a point that will allow us to fin clip them. The purpose of the fin clipping is to aid in monitoring them after their release into Hall's Creek near Ingersoll, Ontario. The rainbow trout are at the "swim up" stage and have been removed from the trays to swim freely in the trough. Because these fry no longer have an egg sac to sustain them, the commercial belt-style feeder has been brought out of mothballs to feed them. This is because we still require the more dependable TRAA-built feeder for the brown trout. Stony Creek near Fanshawe Park Road and Highbury Avenue in London is the tentative release sight for this batch of rainbow trout. If you haven't seen the trout hatchery in action, contact us by e-mail, telephone or approach us at the May 12th general meeting and we'll set you up with one of the "trout sitters" for an informal tour. There have been a number of successful tours of the trout hatchery by some very diverse groups. We had 7 members of the Komoka/Kilworth Resident's Association checking out the trout hatchery and some of the TRAA's rehabilitation work. There were also 2 separate groups of children out for a tour and you can touch on those experiences by reading my article Opening Minds further on in this newsletter.

Warm Water Committee – Lawson Jones

The walleye hatchery is now up and running due to the efforts of Michael Mathews, Lawson Jones and Fred Smithers. They cleaned the bell jars and tanks, fit the pipes back together, installed a new filter, turned on the water and added formaldehyde to sanitize the system. A separate holding tank has been set up with pond water and plankton to attempt growing the walleye fry prior to release. Lawson Jones and Archie Graham obtained approximately 200,000 eggs from two female walleye on April 7th from the Dunnville Anglers Club. On May 1st a dozen TRAA members were treated to a tour of the working walleye hatchery. It was interesting to see how only a couple of degrees in water temperature affected the hatch rate of the walleye. The eggs in the cooler water of the bell jars were still waiting to hatch. A separate aquarium was set up with water only a few degrees warmer and the tiny fry were already clearly visible swimming about and munching on plankton. This was also the case with the holding tank outside the hatchery. The fry were already hatched and foraging for food because the tank water had been slightly heated from the sunlight. The experimentation will continue as we attempt to find the best solutions for raising walleye fry. After the tour of the walleye hatchery, TRAA members executed an extensive cleanup of litter on both shores of the river below Fanshawe dam. With this done, we rewarded ourselves with a couple hours of angling.

Public Relations Committee – Randy Bailey

Paul Noble and I attended a meeting of the Komoka/Kilworth Residents Association on March 15th to inform them of the TRAA's activities on Komoka Creek. We learned that both groups had the same goals with respect to concerns of the environmental impact of impending residential development in Komoka. We supplied them with as much information as we possibly could and offered them a tour of the hatchery and a stream walk. They took advantage of our offer on April 10th (see the Trout Committee report).

At least 8 TRAA members attended an open house at the Komoka Community Centre on March 22nd that was sponsored by Middlesex Centre planners for stakeholders in the Komoka area. They displayed maps of the three major residential developments slated for Komoka and asked attendees to fill out a rather arbitrary questionnaire regarding Komoka Creek's health and flooding tendencies. Fortunately, the meeting ended with a lively question period that illustrated everyone's concern with the future of Komoka Creek. Both the planners and the consultants, Aquafor-Beech and Beak International, had to admit that they were still far from a satisfactory storm water management solution for the coming urbanization of Komoka. Preliminary best management practices for controlling the negative impacts of storm water from these developments will be presented at a meeting tentatively scheduled for 7:00 PM on May 20th at the Komoka Community Centre. We will be there.

The TRAA achieved national exposure during a short piece on the Thames River on CBC national radio. Paul Noble talked briefly about the health of the Thames River and Ian James talked about some of the angling opportunities. As usual, some of the best stuff ended up on the editor's floor!

The TRAA was also part of a feature article in the Komoka Banner. This article referred to the work we've done rehabilitating Komoka Creek and the environmental significance of the Komoka Creek watershed area. The article also covered our obvious concern over how the impending development in Komoka will affect this uniquely significant trout stream.

Social Committee – Dave Jeffries

Almost two dozen members attended the TRAA Walleye Derby. Although a few walleye were caught this year, the real reason everyone showed up was apparent when the breakfast horn was blown. Hungry anglers consumed piles of eggs, mounds of bacon, mountains of hash browns and stacks of toast beside a crackling fire. Bob James, sporting a metallic apron that he claimed would withstand the heat of a solar flare, served up more bacon and hash browns than we could handle. Archie Graham was preparing the eggs any way you liked as long as it was over easy. In addition to the 6 walleye there were a number of other species caught. One, a 10 pound channel catfish dubiously hooked by Paul Noble, kept the "peanut gallery" busy with comments, conjecture and catcalls during

the 10-minute fight. Les Howey proved to be the overall winner with both the longest and the most walleye. Be sure to get out to the May 12th general meeting to find out more about the next event: the TRAA Rainbow Derby. Be at the June 9th general meeting for information on the opening day TRAA Bass Transfer. This event features members only angling for bass to be transferred to a pre-approved location for release. Let us know if you have any other suggestions for TRAA social activities!

Rehabilitation Committee – Rick Ornato

George Hoy, Randy Bailey and I recently did a stream walk of Komoka Creek to evaluate the condition and effectiveness of past rehab' work as well as identifying sites for this coming season's projects. It was inspiring to see the how successful previous TRAA ventures were as effective, natural, habitat improvements. George Hoy and all those who helped him on these undertakings should be congratulated. There is, however, still more work to be done and I will need the support of all TRAA members. Initially, there will be work parties for general de-brushing and debris removal. We will then probably move on to the more interesting job of structural improvements to the stream. Stream rehabilitation is what makes the real difference in an aquatic ecosystem, so if you want to make a significant contribution to the health of a local watershed, make yourself available for these fun outings. Work parties will be announced in advance and supported by the Telephone Committee.

~The Quotable Angler~

"Perhaps fishing is, for me, only an excuse to be near rivers.
If so, I'm glad I thought of it."

Roderick L. Haig-Brown
From his book *A River Never Sleeps* (1949).

Opening Minds

by Ralph Lass

It's long been known that education is the key to community-based environmental awareness. Because of this, the TRAA has changed the role of its hatchery facilities from a fish stocking capacity to that of an educational tool. Over the past couple of months we have conducted a number of tours of our trout and walleye hatcheries. Of these tours, I was involved with two separate groups of kids that visited the trout hatchery. One was from a public school class and the other was Girl Guides.

Both groups were very excited with anticipation and after rushing in, the next reaction was silent amazement. They simply stood and gawked for a few awkward moments. Then the questions flew from their mouths, as everyone wanted to know everything at once! It was no surprise that most of the queries centered on the fish and their habits. They were fortunate because the timing was right to see both brown and rainbow trout at various stages of development.

Although the school kids and the Guides each represented different age groups, what they had in common was a keen interest in learning every aspect of what was presented to them. I believe that they probably learned more about trout habits, life cycles and habitat requirements in one hour than most people absorb over a lifetime. Watching their minds open as wide as their eyes was well worth all the hours of work that many members of the TRAA have put into this trout hatchery.

These tours should not only continue but should also increase in frequency. Whether it's the mind of a child or an adult, it is definitely a terrible thing to waste.

Do You Wash Your Car at Home?

"So what if I do?" If you do, you're probably wasting far more water than a commercial car wash. Worse than that, washing your car in the driveway can introduce soap, oil and engine grime into the environment. "How's that happen?" Well, when the job's done at home, all that crappy water flows down your driveway, into the gutters and then into your local creek or river via the storm sewer system. "What about the water treatment facilities?" Unfortunately, these treatment plants are completely bypassed by the storm water sewer system. In the city of London, everything that goes into a storm sewer ends up directly in the environment. "Does this mean conservationists have dirty cars? Conservationists know that a commercial car wash uses litres and litres less water than the do-it-yourselfer. A commercial car wash also uses a filter system that removes soap and oil from the crappy water before sending it through the sanitary sewers to a water treatment facility. "Car washes cut into my beer money! And besides, washing my car is the only exercise I get all week!" If you absolutely must wash your own car, try using very little or no soap. "What else?" Use a spray release nozzle to reduce water waste and subsequent runoff. "Is that all?" Wash it on your front lawn – your manicured monoculture acts as a sponge, sucking up the soapy water before it hits the gutter. Two bonus payoffs: you water your thirsty lawn and the soap aids in controlling those nasty grubs that are munching your grass!

Wadda-Ya-Catch in the Amazon River?

by Ross Strickland

I spent a week this past January in the Amazon region of Brazil. The group that I was with went fishing for piranha. We were supplied with 8-foot poles made from local tree branches with monofilament line, small leaders and long-shanked hooks baited with cubes of meat as the terminal tackle. After flipping in the line we slashed the water with the poles to attract the fish. This proved effective as all 14 of us caught piranha.

The guide demonstrated the pattern of piranha tooth penetration by inserting a leaf in its mouth. These fish, with their full mouth of sharp teeth, rip the flesh of animals that enter the river either on purpose or by accident. Piranha school to inflict many simultaneous bites on their hapless victims. During the high water season the piranha can no longer be caught on meat. As the Amazon River rises 25 to 30 feet to peak in June, the nuts and fruits of submerged trees become the primary food source for piranha.

The Amazon River system supplies 20% of the world's fresh water and is large enough to be fished commercially. Freshwater fish weighing 700 pounds are caught on hand lines, towed to shore and beached. The bones of these fish are large enough that a popular dish served in local restaurants is fish ribs!

After fishing for piranha, we went out again at night. This time we were after a type of alligator the Brazilians call caimans. All 14 of us, in a 20-foot, flat-bottomed canoe, went out into the darkness after these potentially 12-foot long fish eating caimans. The guides used battery-operated spotlights to easily spot the red eyes of the alligators. The guides then reached in, grabbed the small bay alligators and taped their mouths so that we could pass them around. Although the locals eat caimans, these ones were released.

The Wired Angler

Do you have an e-mail address that you would share with the TRAA to improve efficiency and reduce costs? If so, please drop us a note at traa@anglers.org and let us know the following:

Would you like your e-mail address included on the TRAA membership lists?

Would you like the Thames River Angler e-mailed to you?

Would you like the Phone Committee to contact you by e-mail rather than telephone?

Would you like a copy of each Hotline message e-mailed to you?

Do you have any other ideas?

All of these options have the potential to increase communication and efficiency while decreasing expenses for your TRAA.

Membership Notices

All TRAA members who have not paid their dues of \$15.00 by the May 12th general meeting will lose their good standing and the benefits that are a part of that good standing (this newsletter being only one – Ed.).

The same applies to your OFAH membership dues of \$23.00 single and \$33.00 family. If they are not paid by the May 12th general meeting, you will not be able to renew at the reduced TRAA rate.

You can pay at the May 12th meeting or post your dues (cheque or money order) to the address below.

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

TRAA E-mail Address traa@anglers.org

TRAA Snail Mail P.O. 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. These occur on every second Wednesday of every month at 8:00 PM. The location is the Canadian Corps Association, 1051 Dundas Street, London, Ontario.

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, May 12, 1999

General Meeting for the Thames River Anglers Association

Please note that these meetings commence at 8:00 PM. Following the meeting, Hal Schraeder, Area Biologist for the Aylmer District of the Ministry of Natural Resources, will be featured as our guest speaker. Hal is a knowledgeable and engaging speaker – don't miss it!

Saturday or Sunday, May 15 OR 16, 1999

TRAA Rainbow Trout Derby

You will have to show up at the May 12th general meeting to find out if we're going on the Saturday or the Sunday! On one of those days we'll meet at the north-east corner of the Masonville parking lot at 6:00 AM. From there we'll drive to the Maitland River and commence angling for the elusive steelhead. Fishing in pairs to measure each other's fish will be the order of the day. This is because we don't want the fish abused just to prove you caught it! However, dispatching one for the table is your personal decision.

Thursday, May 20, 1999

Meeting: Storm Water Management Proposals for Komoka

Aquafor-Beech and Beak International, the consultant hired by the council of Middlesex Centre, will present their proposals for the management of storm water from the first three urban-style residential developments slated for the town of Komoka. This will have a negative impact on Komoka Creek regardless of what solution is chosen. However, it is imperative that we sustain pressure to make sure that the least invasive option is selected and maintained.

Wednesday, June 9, 1999

General Meeting for the Thames River Anglers Association

After regular business, attendees will be treated to a presentation on successful techniques for bass fishing. This is also the venue to find out about the opening day TRAA Bass Transfer (see Social Committee report).

Wednesday, July 14, 1999

General Meeting for the Thames River Anglers Association

This meeting will be one of those rare "remote location" events, so keep calling the TRAA Hotline after the June general meeting for details. These are always fun and informal meetings that invariably end up with everyone fishing.

The Entertainment Section

A Row Over Rowing

One spring-like day in March, an unnamed TRAA member (not Ralph Lass) suffering from an advanced case of cabin fever dragged his rowboat out onto his front lawn. He sat in the boat and began rowing like a madman. He thought that this "dry land" training would help get him in shape for the upcoming season.

While this "training" session was in progress, another unnamed TRAA member (not Bob James) happened by. This TRAA member berated the now sweating rower with stern words about the appearance of the activity.

"Do you think this type of craziness is going to help the reputation of the TRAA in our community?" The hapless rower could think of nothing to say and just sat in his boat in the middle of the lawn. Now shaking with rage, the other TRAA member continued. "You're lucky I can't swim or I'd come out there and kick your butt!"

Fishy Recipe - *Pasta with Smoked Salmon, Dill & Capers*

This dish can be served as an appetizer or as a light lunch when divided among six people (224 calories, 7.5 grams fat, 30.5% calories from fat). When treated as four portions (336 calories, 11.3 grams of fat, 30.5 % calories from fat), serve with grilled red pepper and asparagus for a satisfying and healthy dinner.

Ingredients

½ pound Pasta, fresh, capellini or angel
½ cup Sour cream, non fat
½ cup Yogurt, non fat
¾ cup Milk, 1%
2 tablespoons Capers, drained & chopped
Zest of one small lemon
¼ cup Parmesan cheese, grated
6 ounces Salmon, smoked
1/3 cup Dill weed, fresh, finely chopped
1/3 cup Green onions, finely chopped
Salt & Black peppercorns, cracked

Directions

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook pasta until al dente.

While pasta is cooking, combine sour cream, yogurt, milk, capers and lemon zest into a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil. Remove from heat and stir in the Parmesan cheese, smoked salmon, dill and green onions. Season with salt and cracked pepper to taste.

Toss the cooked pasta with the sauce.

Divide among four to six plates. Garnish with a lemon wedge and a sprig of dill.

Serve immediately.