

Fall ~ 2000

Memberships
\$15.00

The Thames River Angler

"Newsletter of the Thames River Anglers Association"

Inside this Issue

Busted!

by Ian Colin James

The TRAA

Gear Pig

The
TRAAtoon

Randy Bailey's
Trout Tricks

CONTACT US

Messages

645-2845

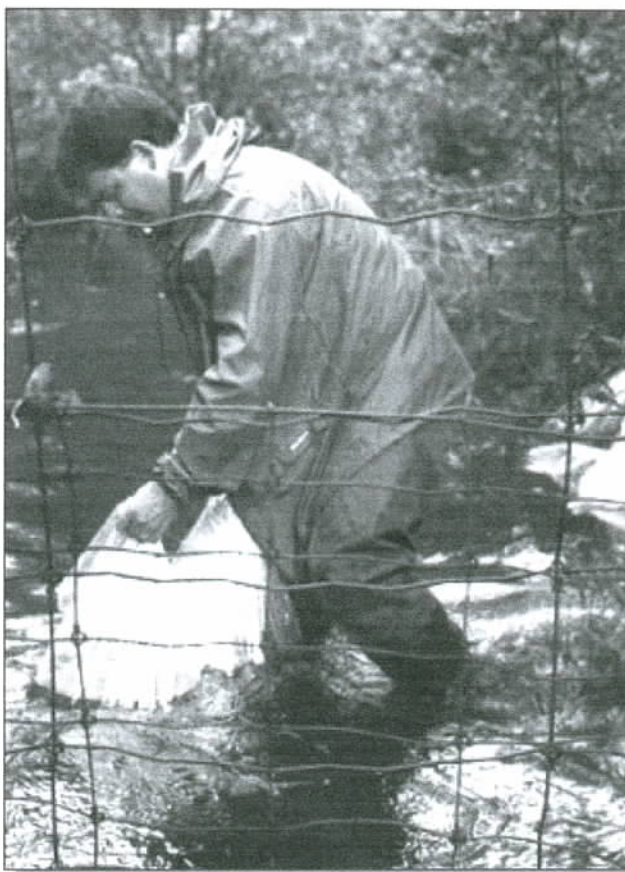
E-mail

traa@anglers.org

Web Site

www.anglers.org

Is This Man Poaching?



No!! TRAA member Paul Noble is releasing rainbow trout fry into Komoka Creek. The TRAA has been raising both brown and rainbow trout in their own hatchery and letting them go in area streams since 1988. Although we no longer believe in stocking as a long term solution for a healthy population of fish, the trout hatchery has been maintained for educational purposes. Students, resident's associations, kids and youth organisations and other special interest groups have all toured the hatchery facility. This allows them to see stages of the trout life cycle that normally take place on the stream bed. Contact us if you and your group are interested in a tour!

Editor's Note

Paul Noble



Many folks claim the fall as their favourite season but everyone tends to have a different set of reasons for doing so. For some it's the blazing colours of foliage, for others it's the respite from the summer's heat and still others have had enough of the lawn and garden thing. For my friends and I, fall signals new and uncrowded fishing opportunities.. The big chinook salmon make their way into our feeder streams with the steelhead right on their heels. The gizzard shad invade the Thames River by the thousands. At a time when most people have packed up for warmer climes, we're virtually alone with the river and the annual migration of the fishy "snowbirds". We've had some great submissions for this issue. I hope you enjoy it. Keep 'em coming!

Busted!

Another "Les Howey Adventure"

Ian Colin James

Place: A secret location on the Thames River, near a white bean field.

Mission: To catch big, pigging-out-before-their-keesters-freeze-up smallmouth.

Result: A trip to the hospital (So you know that Les Howey was involved!)

Jig Boy, with his new jig-o-matic bag of tube jigs, and I set out down the happy trail for a spot of fall bass fishing. Everyone knows that at this time of the year the bass pig out, porking up before the winter freeze-up. You can catch obscene numbers of the little critters if you can find a deep, slow pool with lots of structure. We found that pool, 3 km from the car at the base of an embankment which would scare the daylights out of your average mountain goat and make even the most sure-footed of them say, "Uh-oh!".

On his first three casts, Les landed two smallies, both around the 10-inch mark. "Not bad," I said to myself. "Looks like it's going to be a wonderful day in the neighbourhood." We fished a great looking plunge-pool and caught naff all. In case you didn't know, a plunge-pool is where anglers fall in. Then we fished the edge of some shallow riffles (where the plunge pool lads get out) - still naff all. Perfect water but no fish. Next we crossed over the river and started fishing a great looking pool. Les was casting upstream and doing the "high-sticking" thing. I was in the middle casting a black woolly bugger across and down. "Lets move up river," shouts Jig Boy, "there are some great big logs out there." Had I been looking to build a cabin . . .

Anyway, just as I am starting to get out of the water my feet came out from under me. I thought I felt a shove, but it happened so fast I can't be sure. And down I went. Actually, I

came down full force on my right kneecap. Did my knee find soft, squishy mud? Nope! One boulder was sticking out on the muddy bank and my patella went straight to it. Crack! The pain was so bad that I almost passed out. I could feel the blackness creeping into the edges of my vision. It was worse than listening to a trout fisherman bragging in a tackle shop, so you know how bad it actually was. I could not wiggle my toes and my lower leg was numb. Jig Boy, who was suspiciously close by said, "Are you Okay?" As I am trying not to woof my cookies he follows with, "You sit there and have a rest. Mind if I fish through the pool?". I was waiting for, "You ain't gonna make it buddy, I'm gonna have to bash you on the head with a boulder to put you out of your misery. As it turned out the kneecap was only cracked, not broken.



Here is part of the dialogue from the hospital x-ray room:

Doc - "How did you do it?"

Ian - "I tumbled out of bed while with a blond and a redhead."

Doc - "No, seriously. How did it happen?"

Ian - "I slipped in the mud beside a river and landed on a boulder."

Doc - "No, seriously?"

Ian - "I tripped going up the stairs."

Doc - "Ha! That explains it!"

The moral: When I go steelhead fishing or night fishing I usually carry a whistle. Now I am going to carry one all of the time. Had I been alone, things might have been much worse. Had I needed to crawl through a cornfield to get back to the car, in the middle of the harvesting season amid those big red combines driven by sleepy farmers...

For the record, just before I went over, I still think I felt a push. It really was a great looking pool, wasn't it Les?!

Rehabilitation

Rick Ornato & Dave Jeffries

The mouth of Komoka Creek remains blocked with dead-falls, cornstalks and other debris because the creek has backed up to the point where access to the problem area is impossible. Members of a September 17th work party were thwarted by high water and had to abandon all thoughts of clearing the mouth until water levels recede. The area will be reconnoitered near the end of November to assess the feasibility of another attempt in early December.

It took three work parties to clear the first and most difficult of two drains on the Ready property near the headwaters of Komoka Creek. TRAA members had to contend with dense growths of bullrushes, stinging nettles, wild grape vines, wild raspberry briars, willow trees, poplar trees and silty mud up to their thighs that threatened to suck the waders off of their legs.

Blood, Sweat & Fears

September 30th was the first day and those in attendance felt overwhelmed by the conditions and the slow progress. When it came time to quit, we were amazed at just how much we had accomplished and how good it looked! Almost 200 metres of the drain had been de-brushed and as we looked back at what had been accomplished everyone felt pretty good.

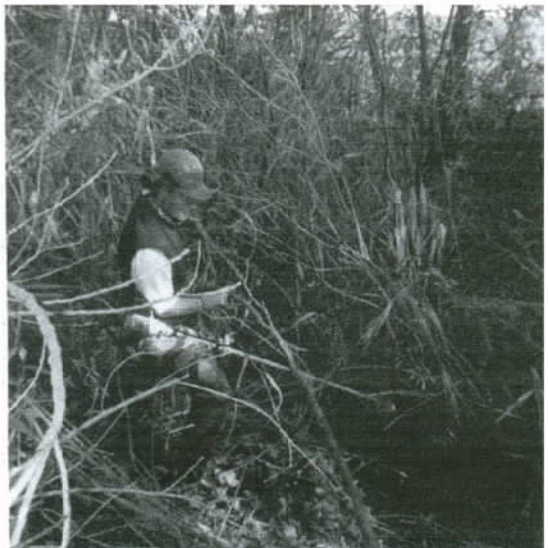
Then all eyes fell on what remained and our confidence wavered. We were suddenly aware of the sore muscles, the sweat and mud-stained clothes, the scratches from the raspberry brambles and the burning skin from the

stinging nettles.

The second work party of October 22nd managed to clear a much longer section of the same drain. We're still not sure if the conditions were better or if we were more prepared to tackle the task at hand.

October 28th was our third and last day on the first and most difficult drain. We were only about 100 metres away from completion when the chainsaw gave up. Fortunately, the Jokela family drove home to Strathroy and returned with their own chainsaw. Those that could stay finished the drain and are congratulated on doing so.

Work parties will be scheduled in November and December to complete the same job on the second drain. Members will be informed by the Telephone Committee for each date.



TRAA member Rick Ornato appears to be under attack by the dense undergrowth as he slowly works the de-brusher through the first section of the Ready drain.

Trout

Randy Bailey & John Jackson

This fall has seen a lot of activity in and around the TRAA trout hatchery site. Movement to and from the hatchery has been vastly improved by the new stairway that was reported on in the Summer issue of this newsletter. Since then, handrails have been added to complete the project.

The first circular holding tank has been removed from the hatchery and will take on a new life as a growth tank at the TRAA walleye hatchery. The plumbing for the remaining circular tank has been re-routed to travel flush to the floor rather than at waist height. Both of these alterations will better accomodate the TRAA's educational tours and will also allow freedom of movement throughout the facility. The old sink-stand was dismantled and removed because its design was a perfect haven for mice. It was replaced by a new "open-frame" workbench that was built by Archie Graham.

The timers for the electric feeder system have been moved to the opposite wall between the workbench and the egg trays. This greatly improves access for members on the trout hatchery rotation and for those conducting educational presentations.

On November 19th there was a work party to remove the remainder of scrap building material, hay bales, plumbing rejects and other debris from the trout hatchery site. All that remains is the old stainless steel milk tank. This tank will be cut up where it sits because it is too heavy and cumbersome to drag up the hill. The pieces will be sold for their scrap value. After the junk cleanup, work party participants cleared the leaves from the

grassy area in front of and around the small house at the top of the hill.

TRAA members Dave Jeffries, Archie Graham, Tim Jokela and his father picked up over 30,000 brown trout eggs at the MNR Normandale Fish Culture Station on November 8th and transferred them to the TRAA trout hatchery. A hatchery rotation is in place but there are a few "alternate" spots open if you would like to get involved. Call Randy Bailey now if you are interested. There will be formal training for those in the rotation at every developmental stage of this batch of brown trout to hopefully avoid some of our past problems.

The South Thames River has been chosen as the release site for these brown trout because its mean temperature is cooler than that of the other branches of the Thames River.



Rainbow trout eggs in the upwelling trays at the TRAA trout hatchery. Note the white eggs are dead and still must be "picked".

Public Relations

Paul Noble, Rick Ornato & Randy Bailey

The call is out for any and all TRAA material that may be laying about members' residences and businesses. Anyone who still has files, pictures, videos, newspaper clippings, equipment or anything else belonging to the TRAA is urged to contact Paul Noble. You can drop the stuff off at my house, bring it to a meeting or work party or arrange to have it picked up. Once we've collected this material, it will be organised, inventoried and stored in the appropriate locations. This will enable us to track the whereabouts of all TRAA property so that it's accessible when needed.

One project that has been held up by the disappearance of various photographs is the restoration of the TRAA display boards. These boards are required for booths at shows, for educational presentations in schools and other venues and for possible permanent display at Grosvenor Lodge.

New TRAA pamphlets will be ready for distribution before the end of the year so please consider where they could be displayed and let us know!

Quotes from printing houses were solicited to determine whether it was feasible to have the TRAA newsletters, pamphlets, membership cards and business cards done professionally. The added cost for the additional print quality over that of photocopies did not warrant the difference in quality. The newsletters alone would have been about four times more than we currently spend per issue. Members polled at a General Meeting were unanimous in their satisfaction with the print quality of the

photocopied newsletter.

The TRAA Hotline was discontinued as of the September 13th General Meeting. If this comes as a surprise to you, it's probably because you didn't use it anyway. At this same meeting, attendees approved a new TRAA logo and it will appear on all correspondence from this point onward. Members attending the November 8th General Meeting passed a motion not to set up a TRAA display booth at the London Boat, Cottage & Fishing Show in February 2001. The "Fishing" portion of the show has been dramatically reduced and the response from last year's effort was dismal. We will centre our activities on shows that focus on fishing and the environment such as General Marine's Boathouse Sale that takes place yearly in early February.



Kids love anything to do with fish and the places fish live. TRAA presentations and tours help nurture their natural caring.

THE TRAA

GEAR PIG

Rick Ornato

O.K., so I've got a lot of fishing gear. It's not like that's a crime. My wife and I have this deal. I "ooh and ahh" whenever she buys a new pair of shoes and she tries to look impressed when I bring home a new "fly-thingy" (her terminology, not mine).

Now don't get the impression that I run out every spring and buy whatever new doodad is featured in those shiny catalogues they keep sending us. I don't impulse shop. By the time I've got my wallet out, I know more about my prospective purchase than the salesman and enough to impress the manufacturer. I'll read anywhere from 10 to 50 reviews of a product before I consider buying it. I'll talk to friends, relatives, bag ladies (a very underrated source of information), people standing at bus stops, or anyone else who is too polite to walk away. I'll know wholesale prices, retail prices, and even the "end-of-stock-we-must-be-crazy" prices. I get as much information as I can on any given product before I buy.

Then I go to the local tackle shops with my wish list and say: "John can you get me this?", or "Ken will you order me that?" Why? Some may not believe this but "80% of all the gear bought in our local stores has cost me less in the long run". There, I said it.

I'd also like to say that everyone should put more emphasis on value than on price. For instance, I may be able to buy a Rapala cheaper at Wal-Mart than anywhere else (yes, I admit to using a spinning rod now and then) but I will not step into their "fishing tackle department". Again, why? If I buy it at a local tackle shop it may be 10% more in price but I'll walk away with the *right size, colour and style* of lure for my type of fishing.

Other invaluable tips such as *how* and *where* to fish my new lure are also readily imparted. I'm not sure where they get Wal-Mart staff, but you can be fairly sure that they're not as passionate about the "fishing tackle department" as the independant tackle shop owner is about our sport and his home waters. To me, that's worth at least 20% of the asking price! 'Nuff said about that.

My most recent rod purchase was a custom built 8'6", 4-weight, 4-piece travel rod. Let's begin by saying that this is not an inexpensive rod. A "factory" version could set you back about \$440.00 CDN. My custom model included several hardware upgrades that pushed the price to over \$500.00. When casting, it feels like an extension of my arm, complete with nerve-endings.

About a month after receiving this rod, I was "fishin' downtown" in the Thames River for 12 inch smallies. The retrieve of my fly through some slack water was rudely interrupted by a double-digit carp. After running downstream 150 yards and into my backing twice, the carp decided to sulk in some submerged logs. Holding the rod high, I eased him away from the logs to where I could almost reach my hand to the fly. Snap!

The rod broke just below the first section. The carp was measured against the broken section. It was the largest I'd ever landed on a fly rod. With mixed feelings I relayed the story to the custom rod builder. He made a few calls and assured me that the broken section would be replaced and rebuilt at no charge. All I had to pay was the shipping. My new favourite fly rod and I have since been re-united to fish happily ever after.

Now, that's value at any price!

Randy's Trout Techniques...

Believe It or Not!



We caught up to Randy Bailey on the river for some exclusive photos and comments. Above left, Randy ties into just some of many fish with .025 lb. test microfilament ph-adjusted line and his 13 foot graphite/titanium linear-googleplex-laminate float rod. When questioned about the size of his catch (above right) he said, "Well, I'm using a hookless #64 fly with a nano-fibre dressing that can actually tangle in the teeth of several fry, err, fish. Reeling in up to six of 'em at once is not uncommon." Yes, Randy, you could say "parr" for the course!

TRAA toon



The Quotable Angler

Paul threw in a long cast, the wind caught it and the Big Joe's Crayfish skipped several times across the surface. The wind caught it again, and on the last skip it was lofted into the lower branches, leaving it dangling a good 3 feet off the water. I stared at Paul, giving him a "Way to go there, sport" look. He tightened up his line and twitched the rod tip, trying to free the fly. There was an explosion: the smallmouth cleared the water and demolished the fly. The weight of the fish ripped the line free from the branches. In silence Paul played it out and then released the 3-pound fish back into the water. I was too stunned to say much, but finally blurted out, "Well, ain't ya gonna say something?" He looked up from resharpening his hook, saying, "I was kinda wondering how I was gonna get the fly back. It's the last one I've got."

Ian Colin James, 2000

"Opening Day", from his book:

Fumbling with a Fly Rod, Stories from the River



U P C O M I N G E V E N T S

Sunday, December 2, 2000

TRAA Work Party

Members will be meeting at the TRAA trout hatchery at 8:00 AM and then will head out to finish de-brushing the second Ready Drain. Dress appropriately: layers are recommended to adapt to temperature and your own heat generation. The area may be muddy so choose footwear accordingly.

Sunday, December 9, 2000

TRAA Work Party

Will occur only if drain is not completed December 2nd. Members will be notified.

Members will be meeting at the TRAA trout hatchery at 8:00 AM and then will head out to finish de-brushing the second Ready Drain. Dress appropriately: layers are recommended to adapt to temperature and your own heat generation. The area may be muddy so choose footwear accordingly.

Wednesday, December 13, 2000

TRAA General Meeting

New Location!!! Grosvenor Lodge, 1017 Western Road, London

The meeting begins at 8:00 PM so try to show up a bit earlier.

Coffee and soft drinks are available for modest remuneration.

M E M B E R S H I P S

You Can Join or Renew Anytime

...and it's still only \$15.00!

Yes! I want to be a member of the TRAA!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

*Tax receipts are issued for donations over \$25.00
(in addition to the \$15.00 membership fee!)

Mail To:
1017 Western Road, London, Ontario N6G 1G5
Or just bring it to the next General Meeting!