

Medway River Blues

As winter turns to spring fishers thoughts turn from hunting to fishing. The sun warms up the days, the ice recedes from the Medway and tributaries, and wetting a line will overtake toast and coffee around the pot bellied stove.

Tying the odd fly, pinching the barbs from older salmon flies, and readying the gear for another season. Checking the log book as to the best hole for early season trout, most successful fly and hook size. Was it really that cold on April 1st or just an April Fools joke!

Questions that arise in the members minds go from a Kelt Fishery Experiment in 2009? an angling season for the Medway this year? Will the sea run trout placed in the river in 2007 return in great numbers? Will DFO policy on stocking reverse itself? Will liming projects for the Medway commence or be formulated in 2009?

Many of these questions remain un-answered and are important to the membership and the Environment Committee. Sweet water is of the utmost importance as we must improve pH levels to ensure maximum egg survival. Liming initiatives are in the proposal and/or planning stages. Support for a Medway revival is growing and 2009 may be the year we see a breakthrough.

What a great day it will be when the Medway teams with salmon, acidic water is a thing from the past and fishers from all over return to angle this great

Membership Meeting
Wednesday, March 18, 2009
7:00-PM
Charleston Fire Hall
Charleston, N.S.

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Presidents Message

Another year and new challenges face the Atlantic Salmon community. Fisheries & Ocean's Canada are removing themselves from stocking initiatives, save for, gene-bank rearing. This amounts to a maximum of a couple of rivers per annum, that will have juvenile populations removed and reared to adults at Federal Biodiversity Facilities, and returned to the river of origin. The Medway River (2003-2008) completed the five year cycle last October. DfO may also re-populate vacant waters, however, will not enhance existing populations.

On the positive side a recent seminar was held at St FX University (Feb. 6-8/09), the theme being, "Atlantic Salmon Stocking as a Tool in the Restoration Toolbox". Attended by federal and provincial fisheries biologists, scientists, river groups among others, it was an opportunity to discuss the pros & cons of stocking, genetic diversity and methodology. Stocking case studies were presented by Leonard Forsyth, Margaree River, Walter Regan, Sackville Rivers and Robert Baker, Nepisiguit River, N.B. Panel Discussions were also held on Socio-Economic Issues and Biological Issues.

Our attendance at the seminar enables our Association to acknowledge the pit falls that lie ahead and plan for the challenges. Not all will be easy, however, determination can overcome great obstacles, be they political or not, and find solutions. We owe it to the Medway River and ourselves that we succeed.

This years experiment with 20,000 trout eggs being reared in an incubation box in the water-way of the Old Charleston Fish hatchery may hold some hope for salmon rearing opportunities. The Nepisiguit Salmon Association in New Brunswick has been rearing salmon eggs in incubation boxes, up to 350,000 per annum, for several years with great success. For us, the question is a supply of salmon eggs keeping in mind the genetic effects.

Improved water quality, salmon eggs, incubation boxes and voila a great future for the Medway River.

Yours in Conservation;

Darrell Tingley



A fishy experiment

420 whitefish tossed into Anderson Lake with hopes of saving species

By DAVENE JEFFREY Staff Reporter

It looks like just a small lake surrounded by woods, but beneath the surface of Anderson Lake in Dartmouth an **experiment** is going on that could help save a local fish species from extinction.

Early Tuesday afternoon a group of biologists slipped 420 rare Atlantic whitefish into the lake just outside Burnside Industrial Park.

"We're trying to see whether . . . populations can be established using stocking," said Rob Bradford, a biologist with Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

The Atlantic whitefish was first identified in 1929 and was found in the Tusket and Petite Riviere rivers, along the South Shore. It is one of four species of fish that exist only in Canada.

"It's probably been around for about one million years," Mr. Bradford said.

But scientists believe the whitefish may not be around much longer.

The Tusket River population is gone, although the Petite Riviere group is still around, probably because they live in lakes within the Bridgewater watershed that are more pristine than most, he said.

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In hopes of saving the species, researchers have been growing the fish in captivity at the DFO's Mersey biodiversity facility for about eight years.

Whitefish live in both fresh and salt water, spawning in rivers and spending part of their lives in the sea, Mr. Bradford said.

But the Petite Riviere fish haven't been to sea for many years, at least not since the time of the Loyalists, who began damming rivers, he said. That fish population is now completely landlocked, in an area of about 16 square kilometres.

But biologists are trying to determine whether the fish can still tolerate the changes in temperature, salinity and acidity level that they would experience travelling between fresh and salt water. One Dalhousie University doctoral student about to wrap up his work has found that the fish should still be able to go to sea.

But the Anderson Lake fish won't be going anywhere for a while.

Just before biologists began easing the fish into the lake, a net was stretched across the lake's only outlet. On the other side of the lake a few orange buoys could be seen, marking another net, which scientists are using to check on the fish.

This is the third time that the researchers have put whitefish in the lake. Checks of the net have shown that at least some of the last two groups are still alive.

The group that was put into the water Tuesday are all about 30 centimetres long, and at two to three years old they're mature enough to spawn.

The researchers hope they will begin finding young fish showing up in their net, showing the whitefish are reproducing.

Anderson Lake is mostly surrounded by Department of National Defence property.

Signs posted around the property alert anglers to the population-introduction project and ask fisherman to throw whitefish back into the lake and report any sighting of the fish.

Incubation Box Rearing

Last fall and throughout the early winter months discussions between Inland Fisheries and Mike McNeil, Manager, McGowan Lake Fish Hatchery and the Medway River Salmon Association took place regarding rearing trout eggs in a stream side/in stream incubation box.

The site chosen for the experiment was the man-made waterway in the Old Charleston Fish Hatchery. Approval was sought and received from Nova Scotia Environment to construct a dam across the waterway and place the incubation box stream side/in stream. In mid-February the dam was completed, the incubation box placed in stream below the dam and 20,000 trout eggs placed in the box.

The hatch will take place when water temperatures rise and the young will leave the incubation box when the egg sac is used up and reside in the waterway. Eventually, the juveniles will depart the waterway, and make their way to the Medway River. If all goes to plan trout populations will improve and angling opportunities enhanced.





THE MEDWAY RIVER GLITTERS

BY MARTY LAYCOCK & KELLY O' BRIEN



This July, The Nature Trust was thrilled to celebrate a very generous donation from the Ponthook Fish and Game Club. Seventy acres of land, including 3 kilometers of vitally important shoreline, along the Medway River in southwestern Nova Scotia was donated. Because the area is home to rare and endangered plant species, this donation is of special significance. The Nature Trust hopes that this donation will encourage the protection of other sites supporting the diverse and fragile ecosystem in the Medway River area.

The Medway River area has ecological significance on a national level. It is home to several types of wetlands, as well as floodplains and lush, upland forests. It is home to Atlantic coastal plain flora – one of the most threatened plant groups in Canada. In particular, the land donated by the Ponthook Fish and Game Club hosts three separate colonies of the Long's Bulrush, a rare but hardy sedge plant that is found only in North America. In Canada, it is found only in Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, this rare plant is at risk of global extinction and is listed nationally as a species of Special Concern by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC).

Left undisturbed, the Long's Bulrush can reach a height of one meter and the ripe old age of 400 years. It plays a vital role in the surrounding ecology by providing feeding platforms for muskrats in the winter and nests for mice in the summer. The survival of this fascinating species is, however, threatened by human activities



LONG'S BULRUSH

that endanger the plant's wetland and lakeshore habitat. These threats include the construction of hydroelectric dams, private development, all-terrain vehicles, improper logging practices, and fires.

The Ponthook Fish and Game Club has held the land along the Medway River for two generations and, during that time, traveled there frequently and considered it to be a sacred natural retreat. It was the



MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY CELEBRATE THE MEDWAY SUCCESS AND LEARN ABOUT LONG'S BULRUSH

intention of the Club that the land be protected for future generations. With that in mind, the club approached the Nature Trust. Brad Stephens, Secretary for the Club said, "The members of the Ponthook Club are grateful that the Nature Trust has agreed to take ownership of this land. We have spent countless hours fishing along the banks of this beautiful River and are thrilled that it will be protected in its wild state forever."

This article was re-printed from the Fall 2008 Nova Scotia Nature Trust Natural Landscapes publication.

Scientists track invasive bass

■ Authorities seek culprit who introduced smallmouth bass into sensitive trout, salmon waters

BY JAMES FOSTER
TIMES & TRANSCRIPT STAFF

MIRAMICHI — The Miramichi Watershed Management Committee and the provincial and federal governments continue to battle the presence of smallmouth bass, an invasive species with damaging consequences for native fish, in the Miramichi watershed.

The smallmouth bass is a predator of the young salmonids like trout and salmon. In August, an angler fishing Miramichi Lake caught a bass. Miramichi Lake connects to the Main Southwest Miramichi River by a five-kilometre-long outlet called Lake Brook, which represents a possible passage for the invaders into the main river.

Initially, several days of electrofishing was carried out by DNR, DFO and volunteers from non-government organizations belonging to the MWMC to determine the numbers and age distribution present in the lake and also to determine if they moved into the Southwest Miramichi River. DNR also used a net in the lake for a few days.

“No bass was found in the Miramichi River,” says Dave Moore, DFO anadromous fish biologist.

“A few adults have been found in the lake, plus a few young of the year. Since September, five young of the year smallmouth bass were found and removed from the first 300 metres of the outlet adjacent to the lake. We will continue the electrofishing of the outlet until freeze-up, and remove the bass if we find some.”

To avoid escape from the lake during the winter, a fence has been built to block the outlet of Miramichi Lake. The fence was donated by J.D. Irving and, with the help of members of the Miramichi Headwaters Salmon Federation, the fence was moved to the lake.

Installation of the fence, led by the Miramichi Salmon Association, was completed last week.

The fence is normally used to temporarily trap fish for counting purposes. This fence is lined with a fine mesh net that will prevent young fish from escaping. The fence will be left in place for the winter. Checking of the structure will be done regularly by volunteers.

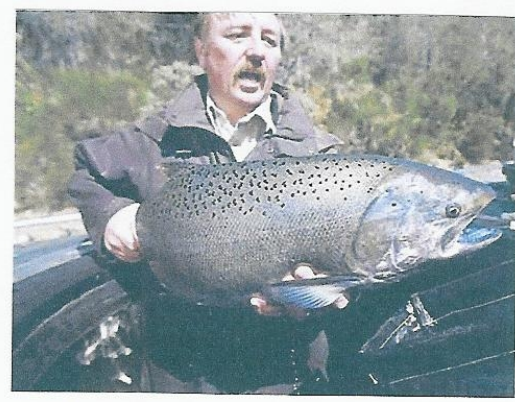
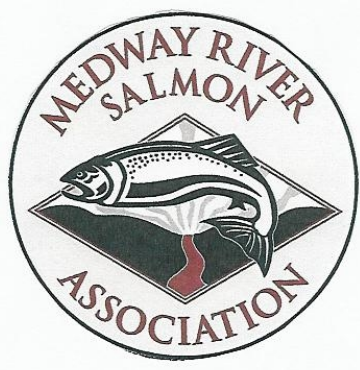
This work will allow the stakeholders and the government to do a risk assessment and prepare an action plan to solve the potential problem of smallmouth bass invading the Miramichi River system.

The presence of smallmouth bass in Miramichi Lake is believed to originate from an illegal introduction. Fines for such an infraction can mount up to \$100,000. Enforcement divisions of DNR and DFO are working on the case.



GREG AGNEW/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

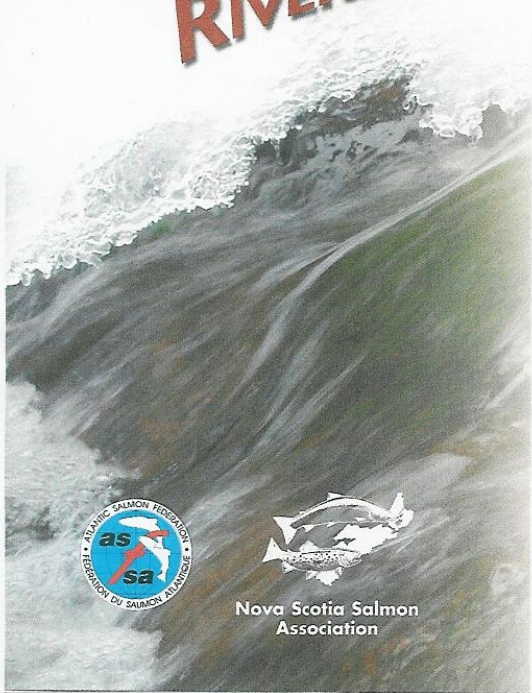
A fence is installed to prevent smallmouth bass from getting into Miramichi Lake.



John Rueth, assistant manager at the Livingston Stone National Fish Hatchery, puts a Chinook salmon in a bag where it will be transferred to a tank for propagation March 18, 2009 in Shasta Lake, California. Getty Images

ACID RAIN

KILLS NOVA SCOTIA RIVERS



If you would like to become a member of the Medway River Salmon Association or if you wish to renew your membership in our Organization or if you would like more Information about our goals and objectives please send your name and complete mailing address to:

Medway River Salmon Association
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Membership Fee is \$10.00

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