

FISH TALES

BLUEWATER ANGLERS NEWSLETTER

www.bluewateranglers.com

FALL 2009

CLUB ACTIVITY CALENDAR September - December 2009

September 2	Board of Directors Meeting
September 8	General Membership Meeting
September 19	Fall Big Fish Derby
October 7	Board of Directors Meeting
November 4	Board of Directors Meeting
November 29	2009 In-House Big Fish Contest ends
December 2	Board of Directors Meeting

Check the Bluewater Anglers website for the most current information on upcoming club events at www.bluewateranglers.com/events.html.

SEPTEMBER GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, September 8, 2009

Point Edward Arena & Community Centre
210 Monk Street
Doors open at 7:00 PM
Meeting starts at 7:30 PM

AGENDA

Hatchery Update
Salmon Derby Update
Coming club events
Fishing Report
Swap Table

Guest Speaker/Topic

Pete Bothwell
Underwater Divers: How to Use
Dipsy Divers, Jet Divers and Fish Seekers

We hope to see you at the last General Membership meeting of the year.
Bring a friend.



FAMILY FUN FISHING DAY

Saturday, July 11, 2009

SPONSORED BY SARNIA RV CENTRE

Well, our second annual family goby derby was a huge success. Forty kids plus their parents (... total of 79 people) participated representing 24 families. Although the day started off sketchy with rain and thunder at 9AM, it cleared and a good time was had by the youngsters (and their parents/grandparents). Every kid took home a prize. The overall winner was the Blondin family who brought in 100 gobies. The big fish winner of the day was Hailey French with a 19 inch Carp. She is taking after her dad who has won numerous events with the anglers.

Special thanks to Bucks Bait and Skunked/Erie Pro Tackle for supplying worms for the day, and Tom at Sarnia RV for supplying prizes for all the kids. Also, thank you to the BWA volunteers who gave up their morning from before 8AM until after 1PM when the clean up was done. If it weren't for the dedication of these committed (or at least some of them should be committed) people, these events would not happen.

It sure is fun to see the kids' faces when they get a fish on the line, even if it is only a 4 inch goby. It is very rewarding for all those involved.

Thank you everyone for making this event a success.

HATCHERY REPORT

Another Year of Hatchery Operation is About to Start

We have had a relatively successful year of fish production. The Salmon numbers weren't as high as would have been liked but the fish were in great shape when released in April. The Ganaraskas Rainbows and the Brown Trout released were excellent size and good numbers. The plants from a couple of years past are starting to show up so hopefully we can continue building some strength in our local fishery.

Summer has been busy around the Hatchery with normal daily work, some extra maintenance and our first experience with fin clipping. There is never a dull moment. Visitors to the fish feeding station and tours of the Hatchery have been steady all summer. It is great to see all the interest in what the Club is doing.

Help Wanted - Salmon Egg Collection

We need your help as we prepare to get another fish production year underway. We will be making several trips to the Owen Sound area in early October to collect Salmon eggs. Some people have already expressed interest in making the trip but we can always use more help. This is usually a weekday trip as the MNR prefers us not to be at the fish ladder on the weekends when there are many visitors. We usually leave around 6AM and return about 6PM. We also need help when we return to the hatchery to get the eggs fertilized, disinfected and put in the incubators. This is a long day with lots of work but the results are rewarding when the fish are released next spring.

Help Wanted – Hatchery Operators

We are also in need of additional Hatchery operators. No special qualifications are required just a desire to put something back into your sport. There is a 3 - 4 person crew for each day of the week. The crews usually work about 1 - 2 hours a day once a week. If you would like to see what is involved, drop by the Hatchery any morning around 9:00AM – 9:30AM.

If you are interested in helping with either salmon egg collection or hatchery operations give me a call at 869-2371. I will be making an appeal at the general meeting in September.

Jake



VILLAGE OF POINT EDWARD AND THE BLUEWATER ANGLERS WALLEYE DERBY

August 7-8, 2009

Local anglers chased the elusive walleye during Friday evening (and night), August 7th and Saturday morning, August 8th. The weather was threatening but the rain did not arrive until after the Walleye Derby weigh-in. Derby participation was good (76 tickets sold) and the walleye were quite cooperative with 36 fish weighed in (... limit of 1 fish entry per person).

The 10 lucky (... and talented) big fish winners were

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. Cynthia King | 2.82kg (\$500) |
| 2. Kevin Somes | 1.77kg (\$250) |
| 3. Chris Garwood | 1.61kg (\$200) |
| 4. Lloyd Blondin | 1.50kg (\$150) |
| 5. Mike Hachey | 1.41kg (\$100) |
| 6. Kim Lgong | 1.27kg (\$50) |
| 7. Rick Allen | 1.21kg (\$50) |
| 8. Tim Holt | 1.16kg (\$50) |
| 9. Brian Somes | 1.11kg (\$50) |
| 10. Tricia Geerts | 1.10kg (\$50) |

Kevin Somes was the Bluewater Angler member with the biggest fish. He won an additional \$100.

We thank **The Village of Point Edward** for donating the \$500 prize for the largest walleye entered.



BLUEWATER ANGLERS FALL BIG FISH DERBY

Saturday, September 19, 2009

This is the last club outing of the year! Any person is eligible to enter provided they have a valid fishing license and an entry ticket. This is a BOAT and SHORE event. If fishing from a boat all people aboard must have an entry ticket.

Entry tickets are \$10.00 per person. Entry forms and derby information will be available at Bucks Bait, The Outdoorsman, and the September 8th General Meeting. All entries must be in by **4:30PM Friday Sept 18, 2009**.

The Salmon Derby boundaries apply (... in the St. Clair River south to the south end of Fawn Island, east to the harbour at Grand Bend and north to the trailer park north of Lexington, Michigan).

This is a single fish derby. Derby contestants are allowed to enter only their SINGLE heaviest fish. Participants must bring their catch to the weigh-in station, located at the FISH HATCHERY, between 2:00PM and 3:00PM on September 19, 2009. You MUST be in line by 3:00PM for your entries to be eligible!

Cash prizes will be awarded for the top 5 heaviest fish. Only Salmon, Rainbow Trout and Brown Trout are eligible. Prizes will be awarded immediately following the weigh-in. The following is the breakdown of cash prizes based on the total entry ticket sales.

1 st Place	35%	2 nd Place	20%
3 rd Place	15%	4 th Place	10%
5 th Place	5%		

15% for the Bluewater Anglers hatchery operation



2009 IN-HOUSE BIG FISH CONTEST

Do not forget to enter your fall trophy into the year-long club Big Fish Contest. This is a friendly competition for Bluewater Angler members only. The In-House Big Fish Contest started on Wednesday, March 11, 2009 and **ends on Sunday, November 29, 2009**. The Bluewater Anglers Salmon Derby boundaries apply. Fish can be weighed in at Bucks Baits on Napier St. during regular store hours.

Prizes will be awarded for the 3 largest fish entered in each of the following categories ... SALMON (Coho, Chinook, Atlantic or Pink salmon), WALLEYE, RAINBOW TROUT, BROWN TROUT, LAKE TROUT, and BASS (Small or Largemouth bass)

A person can only win one award per category. In case of a tie in weight, the FIRST fish registered is declared the winner. The awards will be handed out during our January General Membership meeting.

The Big Fish Contest is only available to paid up Bluewater Angler members. Your membership card must be dated at least one day prior to fish being entered. The committee will validate entries through our master membership list.

2010 SALMON DERBY

Mark your calendar! The dates for the 2010 Salmon Derby are **Friday, April 30th through Sunday, May 9th**.

The first meeting of the 2010 Salmon Derby Committee will be held on **Tuesday, September 29th at 7:00PM at the Hatchery**. The committee is always looking for new members to provide some new blood and new ideas. If you are interested, please attend the September 29th meeting or contact Colin Brown (519-869-4099).

If you know a company or person who might be interested in donating a derby prize and/or putting an ad in the 2010 Salmon Derby Brochure, please send the contact person's name, address and phone number to the club's email box (bluewateranglers@hotmail.com) or contact Colin Brown. We will use the information to contact the potential sponsor or advertiser and provide them with a 2010 Salmon Derby information package.

SPECIAL REPORT - LAKE HURON

The Great Lakes Sport Fishing Council (GLSFC) recently published the **GREAT LAKES BASIN REPORT Special Report - Lakes Huron & Superior** (June 2009; Vol. 20, No. 9). This special report is an extensive summary of the Lakes Huron & Superior annual Lake Committee meetings of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission of March 2009.

The following sections related to the current health of prey fish and Chinook salmon in Lake Huron have been copied from the report. The full report is available on the Bluewater Anglers website at www.bluewateranglers.com.

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Recreational Harvest Summary, Lake Huron, 1987–2008

We monitored trends in the offshore, traditionally trout/salmon ports by focusing on 10 “Index” ports – the 10 ports on the Main Basin of Lake Huron that receive the most consistent sampling from year to year. Trends in Main Basin harvest and catch rate are based on these 10 ports. Total catch and harvest composition in 2008 are based upon all ports sampled in 2008. We also used two ports on Manitoulin Island for trend monitoring because these ports offered the best time series available for Ontario waters.

The collapse of alewives in 2004 precipitated pronounced change in harvest trends and fishing behavior for the Lake Huron recreational fishery. Since 2003, walleyes have replaced salmonids as the leading species harvested in Michigan waters, even at Main Basin ports, which had traditionally been the focus of the salmonid fishery (Fig 1).

While walleye harvest increased, harvest of trout and salmon species declined (Fig 2, Table 1). The decline in Chinook salmon was dramatic and led to a sharp reduction in angler hours at Michigan’s 10 index ports of Lake Huron (Fig 3), where trout and salmon had been the mainstay of the fishery. Alewives had been suppressing walleye reproduction, and following the alewife collapse walleyes produced the largest year classes on record in Saginaw Bay. By 2006 walleyes of the massive 2003 year class reached harvestable size, which precipitated a switch in targeting for both the Charter and Recreational fisheries. Walleye harvest in Saginaw Bay is now nearly a quarter million fish annually.

While fishing pressure has been in steady decline at Main Basin ports, fishing effort has declined comparatively slightly on Saginaw Bay, probably because of the attraction of its recovering walleye population. Yellow perch are at all-time low levels in the recreational harvest, even in Saginaw Bay where they had once dominated the harvest (Fig 5). The decline in yellow perch, combined with rising fuel prices, probably explain the slight decline in fishing pressure in Saginaw Bay. Yellow perch have recovered in the Les Cheneaux Islands, due principally to the control of the archipelago’s cormorant population.

Chinook declined sharply after the 2004 alewife collapse, which in turn caused a loss of over 1,000,000 hours of fishing at these deepwater ports, with significant impacts to local economies.

Chinook harvest reached a record low in 2008 (Fig 3, Table 1). Chinooks were rare in the harvest at ports south of Alpena on the Michigan side of Lake Huron. Even at Oscoda, which is the second largest stocking site on Lake Huron, the harvest estimate was only 126 Chinooks. The decline in 2004 was more dramatic in Michigan waters (Fig 3) than in Ontario (Table 1). But in 2008 there was a pronounced decline in harvest at the Ontario index ports, perhaps caused by a combination of low numbers of Chinook and declining effort. Even as Chinook harvest has declined, the proportion of hatchery origin has remained small. Wild fish composed an average of 81% of Chinooks examined at Michigan and Ontario ports from the 2000–2004 year classes and made up 89% of the weaker 2006 and 2007 year classes.

Brown trout harvest also reached a record low in 2008 and Michigan has consequently chosen to end its program of stocking approximately 300,000 spring yearlings per year in favor of an experimental stocking of 90,000 larger fall yearlings at three sites.

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Trends in the Chinook Salmon Fishery of Lake Huron, 2000–2008

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MI DNR) has monitored trends in the Chinook fishery by estimating harvest and catch rates at 10 “Index Ports” on the west shore of Lake Huron. Chinook salmon abundance in Lake Huron, as indicated by catch statistics from these index ports, declined sharply after the alewife collapse of 2004 (Fig 1). The decline in Chinook abundance was especially pronounced in the central and south portions of Michigan’s Main Basin, as indicated by catch rate trends (Fig 2).

The alewife collapse led to declines in nutritional status and recruitment in Chinook salmon. Weight and condition of Chinook returning to the Swan Weir in north-west Lake Huron declined sharply after 2003 and reached record-low levels in 2007. In 2007 eggs collected from Swan Weir were of such poor quality they were not used for fish culture that year. Condition of the spawners and egg quality recovered somewhat in 2008. Recruitment also declined sharply after 2003, as indicated by declining harvest and catch rates (Figs 1 and 2) and by low fall return fisheries at Michigan stocking sites (Table 1).

Although Chinook salmon declined in both number and physical condition, natural reproduction continued to account for most of the salmon observed in the fishery. All stocked fish were marked in 2000–2003 and 2006–2008. Michigan's fish were marked with oxytetracycline and Ontario's with fin clips. Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and MI DNR collected vertebrae from each of these cohorts by sampling fishing tournaments. The 2000–2003 year classes, produced prior to the alewife collapse, were comprised of 81% wild fish (lakewide average). The incidence of wild fish of the 2006–2008 cohorts, produced after the alewife collapse, averaged 89%. Mean 2005–2007 stocking rates at each port (Table 1) accounted for little of the variation in harvest between ports. Only one stocking site, Swan Bay (near Swan Weir), produces a significant fall return fishery.

In summary, Lake Huron's Chinook salmon appear to have reached a tenuous equilibrium in response to the alewife collapse. The species has declined to a fraction of its previous abundance in the central and southern waters of the Main Basin, but continues to produce attractive sport fisheries in northern waters of the Main Basin and in Georgian Bay. Body condition and size at age remain very low. Upwards of 80% of Chinooks harvested are of wild origin and stocking contributes little to the fishery.

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Status and Trends of Pelagic Prey Fishes in Lake Huron, 2008

Abstract

Main Basin estimates of pelagic fish density and biomass were higher in 2008 compared to surveys in 2004–2007 because of increases in both age-0 and adult bloater. Native species now comprise the majority of the Main Basin biomass. We also observed substantial increase in the abundance of threespine and ninespine sticklebacks, although they contributed little to total community biomass increase due to small size. Rainbow smelt densities and biomass appeared similar to other

years, and both alewife and emerald shiner were scarce. Also notably absent was cisco which historically were an important pelagic prey fish in Lake Huron. Unlike previous surveys, we did not observe differences in fish density or biomass among Lake Huron's basins; during 2008 both density and biomass in the North Channel, Georgian Bay, and Main Basin were similar. This appeared to be a result of increases in the Main Basin and not declines in other areas. Main Basin prey availability for salmonids will depend largely on the extent of their predation on bloater which now comprise the majority of the prey biomass there. The Georgian Bay prey biomass had almost equal proportions of bloaters and rainbow smelt, while the North Channel pelagic biomass remained dominated by rainbow smelt. The present situation in Lake Huron where bloater is relatively abundant but alewife and other prey are scarce may result in dependence on bloater as the primary prey for salmonids.

Alewife

Alewives were an important prey species in the latter half of the 20th century, but have been scarce in recent years. Since 2004, we have captured few alewives, and of those nearly all were age-0 fish. Age-0 alewives were captured during 2008 at densities comparable to 2005 or 2006, but main basin density and biomass remained low. Age-0 alewife density was not significantly different among 2005, 2006, and 2008, but densities in those years were significantly higher than 2004 or 2007 (Fig 1), Age-0 alewife biomass was significantly higher in 2005 and 2008 compared with 2004 and 2007; however, it was chronically low between 2004 and 2008 in the sense that alewives never comprised more than 2.5 % of main basin pelagic fish biomass. Furthermore, age-0 alewives appeared to have low survival because we captured no adults between 2004 and 2008.

Rainbow Smelt

Both density and biomass of yearling and older smelt in 2008 were similar to what we observed in 2007 (Figs 2 & 3). Among all years, both density and biomass were significantly lower in 2006 than in other years (Figure 3).

Emerald shiner

Emerald shiners were collected in all years except 2004. Main Basin density and biomass were lower during 2008 compared with 2007 (Fig 6). Density and biomass varied significantly among years; density was significantly higher in 2006 compared with other years, and densities were similar in 2005 and 2007.

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ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

The Bluewater Anglers' **FISH TALES** newsletter is available by e-mail. The benefits of the electronic version of the newsletter include:

- better print quality including color pictures and links,
- quicker distribution,
- more environmentally friendly (... save paper),
- reduced club costs for printing, envelopes & postage.

If you would like to receive your **FISH TALES** newsletter by e-mail rather than regular Canada Post (... snail mail) send a request to bluewateranglers@hotmail.com. Please include your name and current e-mail address.

2010 BLUEWATER ANGLER DIRECTORS

At least 5 new Directors will be needed in January 2010. If you are interested in becoming a Director of the Bluewater Anglers, you are invited to attend one of the upcoming Directors Meetings to see first-hand what is involved. Director Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00PM at the Hatchery (see Club Activity Calendar on page 1). Send any questions to the club's email box (bluewateranglers@hotmail.com)

BLUEWATER ANGLERS AND OFAH MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

Complete the forms below to become a Bluewater Anglers or OFAH member or to renew your current membership. More information about BWA membership benefits can be found at www.bluewateranglers.com/membership.html. Contact Ralph Eves (519-383-0873 or raljo_eves@sympatico.ca) for more information on either membership.

BLUEWATER ANGLERS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

MEMBERSHIP: New Renewal Junior (\$10.00) Single (\$20.00) Family (\$30.00)

Name _____

Telephone _____

Address _____

City _____

Province/State _____ Country _____

Postal/Zip Code _____

Email Address _____

OFAH Membership # _____

Make cheque payable to **BLUEWATER ANGLERS** and send the completed form to **Bluewater Anglers**, c/o Membership Chairman, P.O. Box 174, Sarnia Ontario N7T 7H9.

Also, did you know that you can join the **Ontario Federation of Anglers & Hunters (OFAH)** at a discount rate through the Bluewater Anglers? Apply for an OFAH membership or renew your membership using the form below.

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS (OFAH) APPLICATION

OFAH MEMBERSHIP: Adult (\$31.50) Family (\$42.50) OFAH Membership # _____

(if a current member)

Name _____

Telephone _____

Address _____

City _____

Province _____ Country _____

Postal Code _____

Email Address _____

Make a separate cheque payable to **ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS AND HUNTERS** and send the completed form to **Bluewater Anglers**, c/o Membership Chairman, P.O. Box 174, Sarnia Ontario N7T 7H9.