

FISH TALES

BLUEWATER ANGLERS NEWSLETTER

www.bluewateranglers.com

WINTER 2010

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Another year is coming to an end ... giving us an opportunity to look back on 2009 and forward to 2010.

2009 was another successful year for the Bluewater Anglers. Club membership continued to grow, several thousands of Chinook salmon, rainbow trout and brown trout were raised in our hatchery, the Salmon Derby was another popular and successful event, club members and the public participated in the club events. Our success is dependent on the many volunteers who work at the hatchery or plan our club events, and the membership who participate in the club activities. We look forward to more of the same in 2010.

Enjoy this time of the year with your family and friend.

Paul DeVlugt
President, Bluewater Anglers

CLUB ACTIVITY CALENDAR For January – March 2010

January 5	General Membership Meeting
January 6	Board of Directors Meeting
February 3	Board of Directors Meeting
February 13	Ice Fishing Derby
February 26-28	London Boat / Fishing Show
March 3	Board of Directors Meeting
March 9	General Membership Meeting
March 20 & 21	Hatchery Open House

Pick up a copy of the **Listing of Events 2010** at the January 5th General Meeting and check the Bluewater Anglers website for current information on upcoming club events at www.bluewateranglers.com/events.html.

JANUARY GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, January 5, 2010
Point Edward Arena & Community Centre
210 Monk Street
Doors open at 7:00 PM
Meeting starts at 7:30 PM

AGENDA

Election of 2010 Directors
Hatchery Update
Salmon Derby Update
Ice Fishing Derby
2009 Big Fish Contest Winners
Fishing Report
Swap Table

Guest Speakers/Topics

Mark Robbins, Ministry of Natural Resources &
Mark Dew, Sarnia Lambton Crime Stoppers

+

Bill Davies, Lake Erie Fishing

ELECTION OF 2010 DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors would like to acknowledge and thank this year's retiring directors, Brad Armstrong, Bob Daly, Dave Hicks, and Paul DeVlugt, for their service and dedication during the past 3 years.

At least five (5) Directors are needed for the 2010 – 2012 term. One third of the Bluewater Anglers Board of Directors is elected to a 3 year term at the first General Meeting of the year. This provides both continuity and new blood on your Board of Directors. New ideas and perspectives will help our club grow and prosper. Both shore and boat fishermen/fisherwomen are needed. The job is not difficult or time consuming. Board of Directors meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month and generally last about 1.5 hours.

If you are interested in becoming a Director or know a club member who is interested, please contact Paul DeVlugt (519-845-3064) or John Knight (862-3605) before the January 5th meeting. Volunteers and nominations will be accepted at the January 5th General Meeting.

KIDS, COPS & CANADIAN TIRE FISHING DAYS AMBASSADOR

Frank Turnbull (aka "Reel Doctor") has been honoured as a **KIDS, COPS & CANADIAN TIRE FISHING DAYS AMBASSADOR** for 2009. The award is in recognition of Frank's long time involvement with the annual Kids Training Day held at the Hatchery in late May. Frank has planned and coordinated this event for many years.

Frank received his award on October 20, 2009 at the annual Fishing Forever Fundraising Dinner held at the Le Dome Banquet hall in Oakville.



Congratulations Frank for a job very well done!

BLUEWATER ANGLERS ICE FISHING DERBY Saturday, February 13, 2010

The Ice Fishing Derby is open to both club members and the general public. This is a license free weekend in Ontario (... no fishing license is needed).

An entry fee of \$5.00 per person must accompany the entry form. Entry forms and derby information are available at Bucks Bait or The Outdoorsman until 4:30 PM on Friday, February 12th, the January 5th General Membership Meeting, and the Centennial Park boat ramp parking lot at Sarnia Bay on Saturday, February 13th from 6:00AM - 9:00AM. **You must buy a ticket before you start fishing.**

The derby boundaries are from the Floodway Dam (Fawn Island) up through/including Point Edward.

The Derby starts at 6:00 AM on Saturday, February 13th. Participants must bring their catch to the weigh-in station located at the Centennial Park boat ramp parking lot at Sarnia Bay. All fish must be weighed in by 11:30pm.

Prizes are based on 90% of ticket sales and 10% will go to the Blue Water Anglers Hatchery. Cash prizes will be awarded based on size / weight in each fish category; Panfish (including perch, crappie, sunfish, rock bass), Pike, and Trout (rainbow and brown trout). You are allowed to enter only one fish per category. If No Fish are entered in a category, that fish category is deferred to the Panfish category. Prizes will be awarded immediately after the weigh-in closes at 11:30AM

A minimum of 5 draw prizes will be made from entrants that are present at the close of weigh in. If you have any questions, contact Stefan Jackson (519-542-5557) or Frank Turnbull (519-344-8562).

In case of inclement weather or unsafe ice conditions, the Ice Fishing Derby will be cancelled. If in doubt, listen to the radio in the morning.

FALL BIG FISH DERBY

Saturday, September 19, 2009

Participation in the club's last outing of the year was good. Sixty one tickets were sold. The weather was nice but the fish were not very cooperative. Only 4 fish were entered (... 3 from shore and 1 from a boat).

The winners were ...

#1: James French (6.80kg brown trout)

#2: Kevin Hughes (2.26kg brown trout)

#3: Jake Van Rooyen (2.03kg salmon)

#4: Alphonze Debusschere (1.58kg brown trout)

James French was the member with the biggest fish.



SARNIA RV RECOGNITION

At the Bluewater Anglers Director's meeting in October, a presentation was made to Pete Koehler and Tom Boyd in appreciation for all of their support towards the Club, the Spring Salmon Derby and all of our In-house events.

Sarnia RV has supported this club since the mid 1980's and was very involved in sponsoring the Salmon Derby. During the seven years that the club held it's annual Sportsman Show at the Township arenas, they were very active in supporting these events.

When Tom Boyd opened **Southwest Outdoors**, he got involved with the Bluewater Anglers in a very big way by being the major Salmon Derby sponsor. In 2002 and 2003, Tom put up the \$5000 cash for the largest salmon in each of those derbies.

Tom moved the store to Sarnia RV in 2004 under the new name **Fishing Tackle Wholesale Outlet**. During this period, both Tom and Pete continued to support the club, by giving club members a special discount, being a major sponsor of the Salmon Derby and being a Salmon Derby ticket outlet. But, most importantly, they sponsored all of our yearly in-house club events.

On behalf of the Bluewater Anglers, we would like to thank Pete and Tom for all of your support. We look forward to working with you for many years to come.



Pete Bothwell Tom Boyd Pete Koehler Paul DeVlugt

HATCHERY REPORT - The Salmon Picture is Sad

It was with great expectations that we headed out for Thornbury on October 9th to collect Chinook Salmon eggs. The call from the Ministry of Natural Resources came at 10am on Friday morning and we scrambled to put a team together for the trip. We were loaded up and on the road by 11.30 arriving at the fish ladder at 3pm. By this time the ladder operator had 8 fish in the tank but his earlier optimism had dropped. We processed these fish and tried the lift and there were no fish moving up. The ladder operator then let the level down in the ladder and collected the few fish that were in the steps. The four of us came home and processed the eggs into the incubators. The second trip on October 13th produced the same results ... only arrived home much earlier. In total we have about 20,000 eggs in incubation (... instead of the 125,000 we are permitted to get).

The story is very similar for the Port Elgin and Owen Sound clubs. They did get more eggs but only because they are much closer to the source and spent many more days collecting eggs. The Owen Sound contact tells us that the fish were in the river but not moving up the ladder.

The MNR says that about 80 percent of the fish they are seeing are wild stock rather than hatchery fish so there is still hope for the future.

I thank all of the members who volunteered to help with the collection. With the number of fish available and the requirements of only a small crew to operate at Thornbury, we didn't use many people. Hopefully next year will be better.

We will continue with the Brown Trout and Ganaraskas Rainbow Trout programs. Brown Trout eggs (25,000) are expected in December and Rainbow Trout eggs (50,000) are expected in early March. From the reports I am getting, some of the first batch of Ganaraskas Rainbow Trout raised in the hatchery are showing up in the St. Clair River.

As always we are looking for Hatchery operators to beef up some of the crews. If you are interested drop in to the hatchery or give me a call. Most teams are at the hatchery around 9:00 in the morning. Work takes about an hour ... the fish tales take a little longer.

Jake

The following is the response to several questions that were posed to the MNR earlier this fall.

1. *Where have all the Chinook gone?*

As I am sure you are aware, the Lake Huron ecosystem has changed dramatically since 2003. In the late 1990s and early 2000 period (prior to 2003) the alewife population in Lake Huron consisted almost entirely of the 1998 year class; it was essentially the only year class that fed Chinook salmon between 1998 and 2003. Both the 1998 year class and any other alewife present in the lake experienced almost 100% mortality in 2003 and 2004. This situation has obviously had serious consequences for the lake's Chinook population.

Alewives were always the primary prey item for Chinooks in Lake Huron and without them it is evident that the Chinook population has now been limited to areas of the lake where alternative prey items occur. It appears that portions of the main basin on the Ontario side support a seasonal Chinook angling fishery such as the area north of Sarnia, the Goderich area and Douglas Point/Southampton. Areas such as the south shore of Manitoulin Island and southwestern Georgian Bay continue to support year round Chinook angling fisheries (although these fisheries are not as large as they once were). To provide some context, there is currently almost no Chinook fishery south of Alpena on the Michigan side of the lake and only a limited fishery exists north of Alpena. Again, this is reflective of the absence of Chinook prey items in the lake south of Alpena. However, the tradeoff has been that more than twice as many walleye, by number, are caught in the Michigan recreational fishery than Chinooks were at their peak.

To answer your question, the lake's Chinook population is smaller, it is concentrated in areas where prey items still exist and it is reflective of the state of the preyfish community. We expect this situation to continue since our assessment of natural reproduction of Chinook salmon indicates that over 75% of the lake wide population is wild. The abundance of Chinook salmon in the lake is now driven by the balance of wild recruitment and the ability of these fish to survive which is determined by current ecosystem conditions (i.e. how much food they have to eat, habitat quality, harvest etc) rather than the past when the salmon population abundance was driven by stocking rates. Unlike the past we cannot 'turn the tap on or off' so to speak.

2. *Is the Salmon fishery over in Lake Huron?*

It doesn't appear that the salmon fishery is 'over' however it is smaller, more seasonal in some cases and concentrated in fewer areas of the lake. It seems unlikely that Chinook salmon will be extirpated from Lake Huron given that the population is supported by natural reproduction but it may be unrealistic to expect that the fishery will ever be as large as in the past. This appears to be an artifact of the current composition of the prey community; without alewives it seems that Chinooks cannot attain the sizes or abundance they once did in Lake Huron no matter how many are stocked.

In terms of managing systems as large as a Great Lake we need to remind ourselves that they do not necessarily change in a manner we might expect and that the timeframes over which they change are as yet poorly understood. When you couple this with the fact that the continued addition of non-native species affects the system in ways that we do not understand, it becomes impossible to answer your questions with any degree of certainty. In the history of Lake Huron, for instance, the burgeoning salmon fishery only existed for a period as long as the blink of an eye. This fishery was driven by a set of circumstances that may not ever occur again. Over the period of record for Lake Huron, the abundance of even native species fluctuates in ways we barely understand. In fact, we are still trying to quantify the amplitude and frequency of such oscillations and determine the effects of natural mortality.

3. *What is the MNR doing about the decline in Lake Huron as a game fish Lake?*

The changes in the prey community, which have affected Chinook salmon most dramatically, are reflective of important underlying shifts in the ecosystem as a whole. If you read the background material I have attached you will see that the ecosystem changes are dramatic and wide ranging. Current thinking is that alewife declines were influenced by heavy predation from high numbers of wild Chinook salmon and a lack of food due to quagga and zebra mussels utilizing much of the lake's productivity. This has caused declines in phyto and zooplankton, staples in the diet of alewife and other young fish. In addition, we need to remember that alewife are an exotic species and not highly adapted to the Lake Huron environment. They are at the upper limit of their northern range in this lake and severe winters will result in high overwinter mortality. It is believed that the combination of all these

factors contributed to the declines we have seen. The open water prey fish community is much less productive than it once was and the plankton community is now more similar to that of Lake Superior.

To answer your question, we are actively engaged in activities that take these changes into consideration and we are working to manage the lake in this 'new reality'. These activities include the development of a stocking plan that will consider declines in productivity when setting stocking limits for the lake and actively assessing the fish community to educate and adapt our future management decisions. The draft stocking plan for Lake Huron will be shared with the general public, including the FMZ councils, in the near future. Through this process you will have an opportunity to discuss stocking levels and targets in more detail through the FMZ 13 Council.

Given these changes, we must be cognizant of the fact that Lake Huron has changed, it is less productive and the previous recreational fishery is currently not realistic. MNR has little ability to reverse this situation or change the course of the ecosystem given the underlying impact of exotic species.

4. *What are we going to do with our Hatchery, what else can we raise?*

This question is not easily answered. From a strictly biological perspective Lake Huron is not friendly for stocked fish these days. Past research indicated that stocked salmonids performed best when we had an abundant alewife population; stocked fish were hidden in the masses of adult alewives migrating on-shore in the spring when most were stocked. These stocked fish also had abundant prey in the form of these same alewives. Without this protection provided by alewives it appears that stocked salmonids are now much more vulnerable to predation and as a result, stocking success has declined significantly in recent years.

An example of changes in stocking strategies is that Michigan DNR is now growing their brown trout to very large sizes to try and avoid these post stocking survival issues. This is a final effort on their part to improve their stocking program. If unsuccessful it will not make economic sense for them to continue to stock fish that don't survive. So, there is no good answer to your question, rearing additional fish that don't survive does not seem a logical option. We realize that this is difficult to rationalize given the perceptions in the public regarding stocking and the fishery (i.e. the

misconception that the more fish you stock the more you catch).

5. *Can we bring in more domestic Rainbow? The wild stock Ganaraskas will not arrive until late March or early April.*

It is not our preference to have you folks bring in more domestic strain rainbows. Where CFWIP stocking currently occurs on Lake Huron, we have moved to wild rainbow trout egg collections in an effort to preserve local adaptations and maximize survival given that these adaptations are beneficial. It is our expectation that stocking more domestic strain rainbow will not translate into increased catches in the fishery.

Because the FMZ Councils likely have similar questions regarding Chinook stocking on Lake Huron we will plan to share this response with them as well.

Regards,

Dave

David M. Reid
Lake Management Supervisor
Upper Great Lakes Management Unit – Lake Huron
Ministry of Natural Resources
1450 Seventh Ave. East
Owen Sound, Ontario N4K 2Z1
(519) 371-5031 / (519) 371-5844 Fax
david.m.reid@ontario.ca

**A Message from
Sarnia Lambton Crime Stoppers**

Did you know that if you have information about persons breaking the law while fishing or hunting by poaching, fishing illegally or selling angler caught fish, you can call Sarnia Lambton Crime Stoppers? We will get your information to the MNR and if your tip is successful, you could receive a cash reward. You never have to give your name or go to court. Call Crime Stoppers any time of the day or night at

1-800-222-TIPS, that's 1-800-222-8477.

“the public, the media and the police working together for safe communities”

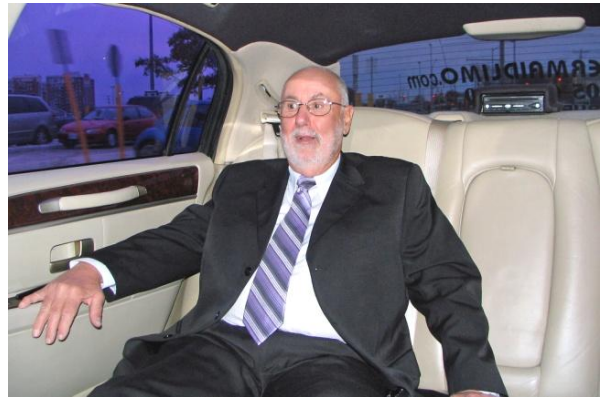
ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

The Bluewater Anglers' **FISH TALES** newsletter is now 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.

WHO IS THIS MAN?



would you believe ...
Frank Turnbull (aka "Reel Doctor")
... some people clean up real nice!

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 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 (\$32.00) Family (\$43.00) 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.