

# Northshore Steelhead Report



North Shore Steelhead Assoc.

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## Shall We Gather at The River

by Gord Ellis



Gord Ellis photo

Gord Ellis Sr. battles a trout on a North Shore River.

Spring means different things to people. Some folks welcome the longer days by cleaning out their basements, or trying in vain to organize their garage. Green thumb types think about planting flowers and watch expectantly for their tulips to peek through the dirt.

For me, spring really means one thing – Steelhead fishing. Actually, not so much the fishing, but the anticipation of it. The bug bites during the first warm spell in March. Instead of driving straight down Balmoral, I'll take a detour on to Central Avenue and take a quick look at the McIntyre River. It's generally ice covered, but there's usually enough open water to get me thinking.

By the end of March, the steelhead grapevine is buzzing with a report or two of a rainbow being caught. Another warm spell comes through and a few more reports trickle out. It's at about this time that I dig out my tackle.

Steelhead anglers have a lot of stuff. Waders. Vests. Sinkers. Flies. Because of the specialized nature of steelheading, much of the gear doesn't see action except for a very few weeks each spring. And it's amazing how many things can go wrong in the span of 11 months. Waders are the worst offenders. Although they're always stored with no leaks, neoprene waders invariably have some new seepage when they're brought back into service. Usually the hole is located near a body part that doesn't appreciate being bathed in ice water. I can assure you that cold, Lake Superior water gushing into your nether regions will clear even the most blood shot eyes.

Nothing identifies a dedicated steelheader quite like a rancid, ripped vest. Vests absorb everything from fish slime to cigar smoke and have the lingering smells to prove it. Usually, the back pouch of my vest will cough up treasures like uneaten lunches, empty pop cans

and last years roe bags. Vest pockets will have discarded bits of line, stray hooks, split shot, cedar twigs and that shriveled up worm picked off the trail. Vests are never washed, just reorganized.

In an earlier life, I had more time to pre tie yarn flies and other rigs. At least a hundred colourful little flies would be pre-snelled hooks and then carefully wrapped around small pieces of cardboard. These cardboard hook holders would be stowed away in the vest for quick stream side use. Now a days, with kids and bills and responsibility, I'm lucky to get a dozen tied. But they get done.

The culmination of all the build up is the chance to actually fish. When the day comes, the morning ritual is carried out like it has been for 20 odd years. Check for both rods. Waders, boots and vest go in the hockey bag. I throw a camera in my back pack, with a thermos of coffee and two roast beef sandwiches. An extra sweater is stuffed in the pack just in case. I'll end up wearing it all day.

On the bank of the river, the sharp cold of the morning will keep me moving. I'll put my rod together and feel around in my vest pocket for sinkers. The sound of the water running around boulders will bring me back to other days, and other times, like an old, sweet song.

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## Message from the President

by Frank Edgson



Steelheading is what you make it. Relax. Sit on a riverbank and fish a single pool waiting for the testing tug of a trout on your line. Or, battle tag alders, ice, snow, and mud in order to reach a honey hole that only the most avid of us would attempt to reach, all with the hopes that this physical exercise will be rewarded with a silver trophy. In either case, the pleasure that is felt is the same.

There are approximately 115 streams flowing into Lake Superior between Sault St. Marie and the Minnesota border that support runs of Steelhead trout, encompassing about 700 miles of fishable water. These waters vary from the small wadeable urban stream like the McVicar's Creek to large navigable rivers such

as the Nipigon. One could be old and gray before truly knowing all of them and the ways of the trout that ply their waters.

It is this diversity which offers opportunity to all age groups to develop their skills and become competent fishermen. It is this same diversity which helps protect Superior's Steelhead. Many of the area's rivers are safe for the moment, due to the lack of access to many sections of the rivers. While this is mostly true for remote streams, they too, will in time, be affected by the increasing numbers of fisherman and their quest for quality fishing opportunities.

Our hope is that through education and example, the younger anglers can be persuaded to practice catch and release at an earlier stage of their fishing lives. The normal maturation of a fisherman includes two stages. The initial learning stage, where the biggest fish are kept and bragging rights are earned, and the mature stage, which includes the realization that the

resource is limited, and, that in order for their children to enjoy the same opportunities they have to restrict their catch. It is a process that has been in place for ages, and one that did not require governmental regulations, but a process that worked best when the numbers of fishermen was not excessive.

The next time you go fishing, consider bringing a camera and using the garbage bag in your vest to clean up the area.

I wish you all the very best of luck this spring, with all of you catching trophy trout in the 10-16 pound class. Practice catch and release and it maybe it will happen.

If you encounter a 1993 green GMC with a silver topper stuck in the mud, please lend a hand.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Edgson', with a long, sweeping underline.

Frank Edgson, President, NSSA

## Kaministiquia River Lake Sturgeon Rehabilitation

by Mike Friday



Kam River Sturgeon fitted with radio transmitter.

Lake sturgeon, (*Acipenser fulvescens*) were once so prevalent throughout the great lakes basin that in the days of the wood burning steamboats, they were piled on docks, taken aboard the boats and burned under the boilers. Over the past 120 years, however, lake sturgeon populations have drastically declined as a result of over-harvest, physical impacts on spawning and nursery habitat and barriers to migration.

Resource agencies in Canada the United States have therefore, developed a Lake

Sturgeon Rehabilitation Plan for Lake Superior. The goal of the plan is to maintain, enhance and rehabilitate self-sustaining populations where the species historically occurred basin wide.

One of the strategies to achieve this goal is to protect and rehabilitate habitats for all lake sturgeon life stages. To do this, a radio telemetry study of adult and juvenile lake sturgeon in the Kaministiquia River (Thunder Bay) has been initiated.

### Sturgeon Telemetry Tracking

In September of 2000, radio transmitters were surgically implanted into the body cavity of twenty lake sturgeon ranging in weight from 1.7 kg (3.7 lbs) to 24.7 kg (54.5 lbs).

In June of 2001, six additional juvenile sturgeon were radio tagged ranging in weight from 1.25 kg (2.7 lbs) to 2.75 kg (6 lbs).

Tracking commenced soon after the radio tags were implanted and will continue for the duration of the tag life (3 years for the adult tags and 1 year for the juvenile tags). So far we have gained insight into the timing and duration of the spawning run, the area of the river utilized for spawning and seasonal habitats. We have also found that the adults seem to be river residents as none have been located in Lake Superior. One juvenile was recovered in Lake Superior near Hovland Minnesota.

Habitat characteristic of highly utilized areas will be evaluated to determine the importance of these areas to sturgeon. This information will then be used to protect and possibly enhance these areas in an effort to rehabilitate this population to self-sustaining levels.

This project is being carried out through partnerships established with Environment Canada, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and the North Shore Working Group.

For more information contact:

Mike Friday - OMNR  
Lake Superior Management Unit  
(807) 475-1231

# Cattaraugus Creek

## New York State

by Alex Bartholemew



### Location

The "Cat" flows into Lake Erie about 50 km. South - West of Buffalo, N.Y. at a community called Silver Creek. You can get there by traveling west on Hwy. 90 and turning south at the Silver Creek turnoff.

### Access & License Requirements

The creek may be thought of as consisting of two sections. The first is a 20 mile stretch from the Lake Erie to Gowanda. Most of this section flows gently in a northwest direction through an Indian Reservation. To fish anywhere on the reservation you will need a reservation license which can be purchased at the Reservation Administration Centre in Iroquois on Hwy 438, or at the gas bar in Silver Creek. To fish anywhere else on the river you will need a New York State license.

The second, a higher gradient section, flows southwest between Springville and Gowanda. Between these towns there are many access points but there is also much private property. Your best bet is to inquire in Gowanda or Springfield about public access.

### Prospects

Fishing the Cattaraugus is completely a matter of timing. If you time it right you can't fail; if you time it wrong you can't win. The issue is water level. This stream rises and falls in response to rain and drought like no other river you have ever fished. For many days after a big



rain it will be completely unfishable. But when the water finally comes down, look out. There will be silver fish everywhere and they will be big.

Between Gowanda and the Lake most of the river flows in a huge floodplain. When it is fishable, the high water banks are often over 100 feet from the centre of the river - in some places they are over 300 feet away. There is a web site at [water.usgs.gov/ny/nwis/uv?site\\_no=04213500](http://water.usgs.gov/ny/nwis/uv?site_no=04213500) which gives the daily water levels in the creek.

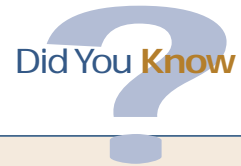
In my opinion, the river is fishable when the flow is between 200 and 500 cubic feet per second. But, flows of 100 and 2,000 cfs are not uncommon. Spring fishing is pretty much out of the question because of high and muddy water. But, from September through December, if the water levels are OK, the fishing is nothing short of spectacular. Fifteen to twenty fish days are possible, ten fish days are common, with fish often running between six and twelve pounds and some as big as fifteen pounds.

### Equipment and Techniques

When water levels are below 300 cfs the creek is ideal for fly fishing. In fact, under those conditions most of the anglers on the river are fly fishermen from all over the U.S. The fly fishermen we observed were fishing sink tips and under low water conditions were often outfishing the float fishermen. When the water gets a little higher, float fishing is clearly superior. Drift fishing is a reasonable alternative in the higher gradient water above Gowanda but in the slower water below Gowanda fly fishing and float fishing are the way to go. Many of the float fishermen from Southern Ontario use egg sacs exclusively, but our observation was, that in all but the slowest stretches of river, we were often out-fishing them with yarn flies.

### Getting and Staying There

WestJet round trip tickets to Hamilton cost as little as \$200. If you rent a car, you can be on the Cat in 2 hours. There are accommodations in Gowanda and in Angola which are just a few miles from Silver Creek. Gowanda is the more central of locations to fish both sections of the river.



- A fisherman must be of contemplative mind, for it is **often a long time between bites**.

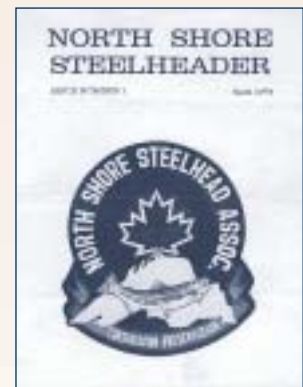
– Herbert Hoover

*This U.S. president lived from 1874 to 1964.*

- Bragging does not bring happiness, but **no man who catches a large fish** goes home through the alley.

– Anonymous

- The **first issue of an NSSA newsletter** was published in April of 1974.



The issue featured: president's message, an article relating to Ontario Hydro's plans to build a coal burning electricity generating plant, a monthly meeting column and an announcement of the winner of the NSSA 'Crest' competition - the crest, skillfully designed by long time **NSSA member Alf Barrow**, was highlighted on the cover of Issue #1.

- **It is good to have friends**, especially fishing friends.

– Carl von Essen, M.D.

- **If you are interested**, in becoming a member of the NSSA, you can contact **Frank Edgson at 475 - 7712**



# Steelheading on the web

by Alex Bartholomew

Whether you are just trying to kill some time on a cold winter night or plan a steelhead trip to new waters, there are plenty of fun sites on the Internet to help you. All you really need to do is go to your favourite search engine, type in "steelhead fishing" and follow the links. (I find "www.Google.com" to be one of best and fastest search engines).

There are countless sites covering B.C. and the west coast of the U.S. and the search engines will find all of them for you. I am confining this short article primarily to Great Lakes sites. However, I have included couple of Atlantic Salmon Federation sites because they are doing some great work that we could learn from, and they have some fascinating and alarming news about the spread of Steelhead in the Atlantic Salmon rivers of the East Coast. You will notice a conspicuous absence of Canadian Great Lakes Sites. I'm not sure if that is because I haven't found them or they don't exist.

The Salmon River on the eastern end of Lake Ontario in New York State has Steelhead runs that come close those of B.C. for both numbers and size of fish. Here are a couple of sites to get you started.

- [www.whitakers.com](http://www.whitakers.com)
- [www.salmonriversteelhead.com](http://www.salmonriversteelhead.com)
- [www.fishusa.com/fishsalmonriver/maps.asp](http://www.fishusa.com/fishsalmonriver/maps.asp)

The rivers of Lake Erie in both New York and Pennsylvania carry amazing steelhead runs, although the fish, while still big by our standards, tend to be smaller than those of the Salmon River. Try these Lake Erie sites.

- [www.noodlebagger.com](http://www.noodlebagger.com)
- [www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/fish/hotline.html](http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/fish/hotline.html)
- [www.fishusa.com/feris/erie/maps.asp](http://www.fishusa.com/feris/erie/maps.asp)



Lakes Michigan and Huron seem to be less well covered than the lower lakes but there are a couple of sites that give some information.

- [www.detroitsteelheaders.org](http://www.detroitsteelheaders.org)
- [www.mssf.com](http://www.mssf.com)  
(MI Steelhead and Salmon Fishing Association)

I guess those who fish Lake Superior don't want to tell the rest of the world about their incredible resource. I have found only a couple of sites with any real information about Lake Superior and here they are.

- [www.steelheaders.org](http://www.steelheaders.org)
- [www.BruleRiverSportsmensClub.com](http://www.BruleRiverSportsmensClub.com)
- [www.air.on.ca/~mayerrc](http://www.air.on.ca/~mayerrc)

Finally, here are the Salmon Association sites and some other general interest sites with links to other fishing resources

- [www.asf.ca/](http://www.asf.ca/) (Atlantic Salmon Federation)
- [www.saen.org](http://www.saen.org)
- [www.adventureangling.com/stepic.htm](http://www.adventureangling.com/stepic.htm)
- [www.steelheadsites.com](http://www.steelheadsites.com)
- [www.angelfire.com/wa/salmonid](http://www.angelfire.com/wa/salmonid)

If, in your Internet travels you find new and interesting steelhead sites please email the URLs to me at [abart@tbaytel.net](mailto:abart@tbaytel.net). There might be enough ammunition for another article. If you would like to receive an email with the above sites as clickable URLs, just send me an email message requesting same.

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**The NSSA welcomes your contributions, opinions and ideas.**

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