

# Northshore Steelhead Report

A North Shore Steelhead Association Publication  
Volume 4 - Spring 2005

## The Joy of Spring

by Gord Ellis



To most north shore steelheaders, spring is the best time of the year. The air is fresh, the rivers are flowing and silver fish are on the move. After a long winter of ice - and one too many Saturday morning fishing shows - the anticipation of running water becomes very hard to bear.

Spring fishing fever can manifest itself in many ways. For instance, a couple of years back I had a strange dream. The dream had me backing my Lund into a very large puddle of water that had accumulated on the street in front of my home. The boat went in well enough - although I forgot to put the plug in - but I remember that some people watching from the roadside thought this undertaking a bit odd.

Clearly those dream people hadn't experienced an angler with spring fever. Most of us fend off weird dreams and the like by getting our pre-spring outdoors house in order.

Regular visits to tackle stores relieve some of the pent up pressure, and allow us to whip fishing rods around, try on new waders, and generally burn time thinking only about fish. Others among us turn to our tackle boxes for solace and kill hour after hour scrubbing spoons, sharpening hooks and tying flies.

I've written before about the lead sinker pours that have long been a spring tradition in our family. Dad and I used to go through a lot of lead during the steelhead season, and a communal pour allowed us to get in the mood for the season. We'd tell the same old stories we'd been recounting since anyone could remember and enjoy them as much as ever. Alas, float fishing has pretty much ended our lead pours. Just in the nick of time, it would seem.

Another family tradition was the pre-tying of steelhead rigs. Because snags are so common when you're drift fishing for rainbows, it was a

pre-spring custom to sit down and tie up about fifty leaders with a yarn fly, swivel and some Maxima eight pound test. This simple activity saved us many precious hours of fishing on the stream each season. So strong was the urge to do this that some winters I'd tie over a hundred leaders in one sitting - way more than I could possibly use. But I couldn't stop. It just felt too good.

The funny thing about spring fishing, is that the anticipation of the event often drives us to jump the gun. I've known walleye anglers to head out a week before the open season, just to make sure they had their trailer in the best spot.

But when it comes to jumping the gun, steelhead anglers are the worst. We somehow believe that if we can just get out a bit earlier than everyone else, we'll score the jackpot of unwary steelhead. Due to this kind of thinking, I've been repeatedly talked into hiking miles through crotch deep snow, boiling alive in 5 mm neoprene waders. As often as not the end result is a secret honey hole still covered in ice, or water so low you couldn't drown an ant in it. Steelheaders never learn.

Despite all the false starts and foreplay, spring fishing always comes, and it's always good. Feeling that first sharp strike of a brook trout or the powerful surge of a steelhead heading out of a pool allows the adrenaline to flow again as a new season begins.

A shared shore lunch with old friends, the joy of watching a child reeling in that first steelhead, and the twinkle of stars under a clear night sky helps to complete the anglers seasonal circle.

Spring is a time to breathe deeply and enjoy the best of what the outdoor life has to offer. It just doesn't get better than that.



NORTH SHORE  
Steelhead  
ASSOCIATION



## Message from the President

by Tom Whalley

Start saving your loonies and toonies now. Spring will be here soon and if the high price of gasoline continues it will cost significantly more to travel out of town to fish the North Shore. Some of us may even choose to spend a few more days in town fishing on the McIntyre and, maybe spend some time on the Current River.

In regards to the Current River, electro-shocking of the upper sections of the river has revealed some good news. To our surprise, young of the year and yearlings were found. The origin of these progeny is in question. Are these the results of fish returning from Lake Superior or are they the result of an existing river based population? Could they be the result of farmed fish that have escaped from private fish ponds on the Current River? To help answer this question the NSSA has sponsored a graduate student to perform DNA analysis on scale samples collected from young-of-the-year electro-fished from the Current River. The molecular markers within these fish may help to determine if the Rainbow Trout in the

Current River are a unique strain or if they are a offspring of attempted stocking programs which introduced strains from Portage Creek and the McIntyre River. We would appreciate it if any angler that happens to catch a Current River Rainbow Trout would either keep the fish, or at least take scale samples for which we could send for analysis. Contact any member of the NSSA to arrange a pick up.

The NSSA is currently seeking partners to help fund the purchase and installation of a counter on the Current River. A fish counting device is crucial to the determining both the numbers of Rainbow Trout are ascending the ladder measurement and under what conditions do they utilize the ladder before any further work would be considered on the lower river access of the river. Also, discussions are underway to re-establish a fish first attitude for a water taking agreement on the Current River.

In regard to the fish counting device on the McIntyre River, this year marks the seventh season since the counter was installed, and data collected this spring may prove to be very significant. Last year (2004) the count after adjustments revealed that the total estimated Rainbow Trout was a very encouraging 952 fish. When compared with the four previous year's

results which averaged about 420 Rainbow Trout, things are looking up. This year, we are optimistic that the number of fish detected continues to increase, reinforcing our belief that the implementation of recent regulations changes has had a positive effect on total population.

From a communications perspective, the NSSA has also made progress. The official logo of our club has been redesigned by NSSA Director Jeff Korkola. The new logo reflects our sentiment towards a healthy, self-sustaining rainbow trout population and reflects our commitment to conservation and preservation efforts. As well, in an effort to communicate more efficiently, the NSSA has posted a site on the World Wide Web. The site features club activities, upcoming events, as well as future plans. Visit [www.northshoresteelhead.com](http://www.northshoresteelhead.com). Currently the NSSA in cooperation with EcoSuperior, is in the final stage of developing an educational program for our community which will be implemented this year.

These endeavors will raise the community's awareness of the NSSA, our concerns for the fishery, and our commitment to our goals. Have a great spring and remember to limit your catch, not catch your limit.

Tom Whalley, President, NSSA

## NSSA Celebrating 30 Years of Conservation & Preservation

by Mike Friday



The following are but a few of the accomplishments of the NSSA.

- The initiation, engineering study and partial construction funding of the McIntyre River Fishway/Spillway in cooperation with the Lakehead Conservation Authority, the City of Thunder Bay, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Lakehead University.
- McVicar Creek cleanup and construction of "fish steps" over the Court Street falls, providing migratory fish access to upstream spawning areas.
- Regulation changes. Successful in achieving a change in fishing regulations for Rainbow Trout on Lake Superior and its tributaries. The daily and possession limit was changed from (5) to (1) with a size restriction on the Neebing and McIntyre River systems of over 69cm.
- Construction and operation of upwelling box fish incubators. During 1983-1995 close to 140,000 steelhead fry were released into the McVicar Creek and Current River headwaters.
- Through a co-operative effort with the MNR, LRCA, MNMD, and the Lake Superior RAP program the NSSA was successful in constructing the Current River Fish ladder.
- Design and installation of new signs clearly stating the size and possession rules for the McIntyre and Neebing rivers as well as separate signs for the rivers and creeks in the Thunder Bay area.
- Continued sponsorship of the ongoing Portage Cree study (1991) designed to gather quantitative information on the population dynamics and life history strategies of steelhead in a closed (no angling) stream. This information will serve as a reference on which to model the sustainability and health of other populations of steelhead.
- Participation and partial funding of the Cooperative Angler Program in cooperation with the MNR, which saw members of the NSSA collecting scales
- specimens from Rainbow Trout, which were then used to determine the age and life history information of the Rainbow Trout population in their respective streams.
- Sponsorship of a graduate student from Trent University in a study to determine the genetic makeup of the Rainbow Trout existing in the rivers in the Thunder Bay District.
- Funding of the Watercourse Stewardship Project being organized by EcoSuperior with the purpose of initiating a community based stream monitoring program, and the distribution of information packages promoting the need to protect and respect the rivers and streams in our neighborhood.
- Participation in the formulation of the Coaster Brook Trout Management Plan along with representatives from the MNR, DFO, LRCA and other sporting organizations.
- The NSSA endeavors to provide educational material to individuals and groups in an effort to encourage a strong ethic of conservation, and to foster respect for our resources and users alike.



## Camp Quality Taking Kids Fishing

by Robert Pye

Kids love fishing, and catching a fish is enough to put a smile on any child's face, especially those dealing with serious illnesses like cancer. That's why the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and the North Shore Steelhead Association are working together to take kids with cancer fishing.

In 2003, the O.F.A.H. Tackle Share program was pleased to provide 25 rods and reels with fully equipped tackle containers to Camp Quality, a summer treatment program for kids and their families that struggle with cancer. O.F.A.H. members of the North Shore Steelhead Association assisted in the tackle donation and pledged to provide fishing instruction at the camp.

Camp Quality is located on East Loon Lake, near Thunder Bay. The program is open to Northwestern Ontario children, ages 3 to 18, who are undergoing cancer treatment. Clara Butikofer, director of Camp Quality, said, "our program aims to get children as far away as possible from the stress of cancer and its treatment, and to alleviate some of their family's burden."

## Cooperative Angler Program

In the early 1990's, anglers on Lake Superior's North Shore began to voice concerns about what was perceived to be a declining fishery. This concern led to calls from NSSA for the collection of information on the status of the Steelhead populations in North Shore tributaries. With instruction from biologists with Lake Superior Management Unit and MNR science and Information, clinics were held to instruct anglers on taking length measurements from rainbow trout, and carefully removing scale samples from angler caught fish. This data can be used to accurately age fish, and to learn the life history and spawning characteristics of the population.

Since the program's inception, thousands of samples have been collected from anglers, and have led to the management strategies

Ms. Butikofer added that fishing equipment provided by the O.F.A.H. Tackle Share program will help make wonderful memories for hundreds of Camp Quality participants. O.F.A.H. Tackle Share is the popular fishing equipment-lending program.

With over 100 Tackle Share "loaner-sites" throughout Ontario, the program makes it easy for children and families to learn about fishing. O.F.A.H. Tackle Share is made possible thanks to sport fishing manufacturers such as Shimano, Berkley and Lucky Strike.

The members of the North Shore Steelhead Association continue to support this very worthwhile endeavor through their direct cash donations. For information on the NSSA, please go to our Internet site at [www.northshoresteelhead.com](http://www.northshoresteelhead.com).

**For more information about youth fishing programs, contact the O.F.A.H. at (705) 748-6324 or visit [www.ofah.org](http://www.ofah.org)**

**For more information regarding Camp Quality please call (807) 577-0059 or visit [www.campquality.on.ca](http://www.campquality.on.ca)**

developed in the Lake Superior Management Plan for Rainbow Trout. The harvest restrictions that are now in place have led to recovering stocks and increased angler satisfaction with the number of Steelhead available for recreational anglers. The vast majority of anglers now agree that a low bag limit in western Lake Superior (1 fish, down from 5) was a small price to pay for increased recreational potential and high daily catch rates and angler satisfaction. A large population of fish always leads to high angler satisfaction.

**Today, the program continues. Anglers wishing to participate in data collection can contact any member of the NSSA or the Upper Great Lakes Management Unit at (807) 475-1231.**



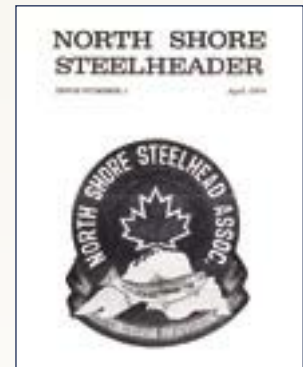
## Did You Know

- 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.
- 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**

## New Brook Trout Regs: Lake Superior, Lake Nipigon and Tributaries

The Ministry of Natural Resources has made changes to fishing regulations for brook trout that will take effect January 1, 2005. The new regulations are designed to address declining brook trout populations in Lake Superior and Lake Nipigon.

Highlights of the changes are:

Brook trout minimum size limit of 56 cm (22") and a catch and possession limit of one fish under a sport fishing licence and zero under a conservation licence will apply to:

- Lake Superior (Division 23) and portions of all tributary streams to Lake Superior in Divisions 21, 33, 19, and 18 – check fishing summary for details
- Lake Nipigon (Division 34) and all tributary streams to Lake Nipigon up to the first barrier to migration.

The open season for brook trout will be changed to the last Saturday in April to Labour Day for:

- Lake Superior (Division 23) and portions of all tributaries to Lake Superior in Divisions 33, 19, and 18 – check fishing summary for details.
- The open season for brook trout in Division 21 will not change as it is already from the last Saturday in April to Labour Day
- The open season for Division 34 will not be changed (i.e., the season will remain open from the last Saturday in April to September 15th).

These regulation changes are needed to protect over-exploited brook trout populations and to rehabilitate degraded fisheries in the short term. In the long term, the goal is

to develop a plan for conserving and rehabilitating naturally reproducing native brook trout populations in areas where they were originally found and to provide guidelines for maintaining a sustainable, quality recreational brook trout fishery.

With the implementation of these regulations the MNR's expectation is for a significant recovery of brook trout in Lake Superior and Lake Nipigon.

**For further information contact,  
Marilee Chase,  
Upper Great Lakes Management Unit  
(807) 475 -1231.**

### NSSA Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Province \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Dues are renewable each January. Dues paid by new members in November are applied to the following year's dues.

1 year - \$10       2 year - \$20       3 year - \$30

#### Make cheques payable to:

**North Shore Steelhead Association**, P.O. Box 10237, Thunder Bay, ON P7C 6T7



With a paid membership you will receive the North Shore Steelhead Report, the official publication of the North Shore Steelhead Association. Each issue informs you of club meetings and projects along with stories of fishing trips and news of legislation on the local, provincial and national level that impacts the Lake Superior region and its resources.

### NSSA 2005 Officers & Directors

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Steelhead  
Report



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

Forward to:  
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