

POINTE AU BARIL ISLANDERS' ASSOCIATION FISHING REPORT - 2011

SUMMER 2010 RECAP

One doesn't need to have success (i.e. catch a whopper) to enjoy fishing. Without promoting the "zen" of fishing, it is a great activity for relaxing, getting caught up with family and friends and just observing and enjoying nature. Whether you are out for an early morning or late afternoon fishing expedition, there are few distractions (unless you manage to hit a shoal). This provides a great opportunity for conversation with your fishing partners after a busy week or the chance to reconnect with old friends. It is also a perfect occasion for observing local wildlife in its natural habitat, such as snakes and snapping turtles swimming, mink, beaver and otter running around or swimming, bald eagles perched or soaring and black bears swimming or ambling by. It also affords shutterbugs the chance to photograph scenic rocks and bays that one normally doesn't travel through. Fishing allows you to explore bays and inlets where you might otherwise not travel.

2010 was another banner year for fishing in the Pointe au Baril area. We caught several bass in many sizes and in many different bays. A few, very large bass (in the 4lb+, range) were caught and released. Although it is tempting to keep and eat these large fish, good conservation practices dictate returning them to the lake. In addition to large females being good producers and large males nesting earlier, being better nest guards and their young having a better survival rate over the first winter, larger fish don't taste as good and carry more toxins accumulated over time. If you can snap a picture quickly without keeping big fish out of the water too long, do so but please return these large bass to the lake to provide good fishing opportunities in the years to come! We were lucky enough to rediscover a fishing hole from years gone by that yielded walleye, bass, perch and pike. Most of the walleye caught were under the restricted slot size but we did not keep these as they were rather small. Those caught in the restricted slot size (16.1 – 22 inches) were released though they were of very tempting size to keep! Walleye are usually easier to catch in early July and late August when the water temperatures are cooler. They head into deeper water in the heat of summer as they don't like bright sunlight.

Round goby continue to plague our waters. They appear in minnow traps, occasionally on fishing lines and in the stomachs of fish caught and cleaned. We do not know how this invasive species will affect our waters over the years. If you catch any round goby, please destroy them and do not return them to the lake! Gobies are believed to be vectors of the neurotoxin produced from naturally occurring type E botulism in the lakes. Essentially, zebra and quagga mussels pick up the toxin from the lake bottom and are in turn eaten by gobies. The neurotoxin affects the gobies, causing them to swim erratically and become easy targets for fish eating birds. The toxin moves up the food chain and kills these birds by causing paralysis and drowning. This scenario is suspected as the cause of a mortality event in Wasaga Beach Provincial Park in the fall of 2010. In October, loons, gulls, cormorants and lake sturgeon were found dead. Warm water, low lake levels, low oxygen levels and a rich nutrient source help the botulism bacteria to thrive and begin producing the toxin. Sturgeon, being bottom feeders, may have eaten the mussels directly.

INVASIVE SPECIES – ASIAN CARP

I cross my fingers every summer that good fishing will continue to prevail in our rapidly changing Georgian Bay. As a result of the 185+ invasive species now in the Great Lakes, changes to the lake ecosystem are taking place, though perhaps not fast enough to be visible to cottagers. Yes, we catch round goby now and we cut our toes on zebra and quagga mussels. But there are other inevitable changes taking place that will affect the ecological stability of the lake. We cannot see them and we don't know how rapidly they will occur. Invasive species threaten the diversity and population of the native sport fish we enjoy catching. They do this by impacting food webs, reproduction, nutrient dynamics and sustainability. While these changes aren't visible yet, they **are** happening and we do not know at what speed or with what results.

Perhaps the most worrisome threat to the Great Lakes ecosystem is Asian carp. The bighead carp and silver carp have been making their way up the Mississippi River and its tributaries toward Lake Michigan for a number of years. The changes these fish bring to ecosystems they invade are rapid and very visible. Voracious eaters, they make up something like 95% of the fish biomass in the rivers where they have established populations. They eat huge quantities of plankton – the tiny plants and animals at the base of the aquatic food chain. Silver carp, the smaller of the two species, reach weights of 20kg+ and jump en masse out of the water when disturbed. There are many videos posted on You Tube showing these fish jumping high out of the Mississippi River when disturbed by a boat engine. They have caused many injuries to boaters including broken noses and teeth.

The only thing stopping (hopefully) the bighead and silver carp from reaching Lake Michigan and the Great Lakes are the electrical barriers in the Chicago Sanitary and Shipping Canal. While environmental DNA (eDNA) from the carp has been found beyond the barriers, there is much debate between various interest groups as to how close to Lake Michigan the carp actually are. (What is eDNA? Fish release DNA into the water through secretions such as urine, mucous and faeces. Positive testing for the presence of these secretions indicates a high probability that the fish have been nearby.) A paper released in early January by the scientists who invented eDNA testing, reported that Asian carp DNA was detected in 58 water samples taken from Chicago area rivers and canals **past the barrier** over nearly a year. While the findings suggest the presence of live bighead and silver carp, they do not know the numbers because an individual fish could be responsible for multiple positive results.

The discovery of Asian carp DNA in these areas has been at the centre of a legal dispute over whether to close shipping locks on Chicago waterways that are providing the pathway for the fish to Lake Michigan and the Great Lakes. Federal officials claim the electrical barriers in the canal are preventing the advance of the carp. The eDNA evidence says otherwise. Michigan and four other states sued in federal court to close the locks, a move fought by barge operators and businesses that rely on cargo shipping in the Chicago area. The U.S. Supreme Court denied requests to close the locks but the legal battle is ongoing. Many claim it is easier to take action now rather than try to fix damage to the environment and the economy when it is too late. The lawsuit also seeks to re-establish the natural separation between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River basin that was eliminated in the early 1900s with the construction of the Chicago canal system. (This complex system of rivers and canals was built to divert wastewater from Lake Michigan to the Illinois River and many of these tributaries provide access to Lake Michigan during flooding.)

Meanwhile, The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, through the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study, has been studying methods to stop the migration of aquatic nuisance species between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi basins. They have been accepting public input/comments during February and March through public meetings, emails and letters but the study is not scheduled for completion until 2015. While politicians and engineers talk, argue and perform studies, the Asian carp are continuing their migration toward Lake Michigan. Many have been frustrated with the slow pace of the study as reflected in comments by participants in the meetings. In early March, legislation was proposed in Congress that would give federal engineers 18 months to come up with a plan for severing ties between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River systems to prevent Asian carp and other invasive species from moving between the two basins. Another identical bill is being sponsored in the House. The bills call for speeding up the process for hydrological separation as opposed to closing Chicago navigational locks. A separate bill will be introduced to close the locks, in spite of failed legislative attempts so far. If the bills succeed to light a fire under the Army Corps of Engineers, they would have 30 days from enactment to begin studying how to achieve separation and would have to supply progress reports after periods of 6 and 12 months. The plan would have to be completed within 18 months. The Great Lakes Commission (which represents the region's eight states) and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative have started a privately financed study into separation methods. This info could help the Army Corps meet the 18 month deadline, should the bills pass. However, The federal engineers seem content with the 2015 study completion date.

By the time you receive this report in the 2011 directory, more up to date news about Asian carp will be available. What won't change is the horrible threat this species poses to the biodiversity of aquatic life in the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes contain 20 percent of the world's above-ground fresh water. The combined annual value of the commercial and recreational fisheries in the five lakes is estimated to be \$7 billion.

One last point on invasive species: the Mississippi River system is not the only means by which these unwanted creatures cross borders. Most, such as zebra mussels and round goby, have arrived in the ballast water of foreign ships. Others have been introduced as live transfers and released. Legislation is in place in Ontario to prevent Asian carp from infiltrating its lakes. Since 2005, it has been illegal to possess live bighead, grass, black and silver carp in Ontario. There is a culturally based market for these fish in the Toronto area and they are in high demand. Dead Asian carp can be legally imported but some supermarkets in the GTA have been found selling live fish. A local fish importer was caught with a truck full (4,000 pounds) of live bighead and grass carp just outside the Windsor border crossing in November 2010 and was fined \$50,000 in early March of this year. Investigators have stopped two truckloads of live Asian carp en route to the GTA during the first two months of 2011. The \$50,000 fine was the largest handed out for possession of live Asian carp in Ontario and it is hoped it will act as a deterrent, especially considering the low wholesale value of the shipment at about \$6,000. Checking fish cargo at the border is part of a new enforcement strategy. Prior to the fall of 2010, enforcement officers focused mainly on monitoring grocery stores and wholesalers in the GTA.

EASTERN GEORGIAN BAY STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL NEWS

The Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council (EGBSC), part of MNR's Ontario Stewardship Network, has completed its fifth year of operation. While the council's recent activities do not directly affect us in Pointe au Baril, the enhancement of fish habitat in other communities along the eastern shoreline of Georgian Bay is good news for the lakes' larger ecosystem. Every June or July, the council hosts its annual lake stewardship workshop. In 2010 the theme of the workshop was "Climate Change and What it Means to Your Environment". The workshop explored the affects of climate change on local flora and fauna, water levels and wetlands and on invasive species. For 2011, the theme for the annual workshop will be "The State of Fishing in the Bay" which will be included in the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve report card initiative. Please read the summaries provided from all the annual workshops (since 2008) at the council's website at www.helpourfisheries.com. Other projects undertaken or continued by the council in 2010 included the Go Home Bay Walleye Rehabilitation Stocking Project, Moon River Walleye Egg Collection and Rehabilitative Plantings, and Crown Land Custodial Management.

The Stewardship Council has no plans for projects in the Pointe au Baril area for 2011. This is actually good news as their rehabilitation, spawning enhancement and restocking programs are geared toward areas with the greatest need. Our walleye fishery is considered in good shape based on recent netting surveys by MNR. We have good natural recruitment and many strong year classes. They will focus some attention this summer on the Magnetawan River to decide if enhancement work should be done there. Many problems exist with the walleye fishery there including spawning beds located east of Hwy 69 that are no longer accessible to spawning fish due to low water levels.

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The Pointe au Baril area will also not be included on any Ministry of Natural Resources projects this summer. They conducted two studies in the spring of 2009: a muskellunge population assessment and an end of spring trap netting survey. Both were reported on in last year's directory. Our area's well established musky population has played a role in restocking efforts in two other watersheds. During the survey conducted in 2009, gametes were collected and successfully produced four families of muskies. They were reared at Fleming College, a natural resource technical college in Lindsey, Ontario which runs an aquaculture program for restoration purposes. A portion of the reared families (20%) was stocked in Lake Simcoe while the other 80% were exported to the State of Wisconsin. The latter fish were put into

two brood stock lakes (small lakes set aside for rearing to adult stage) in Wisconsin. When they reach maturity (by 2013 to 2015) they will be used as a population source in the Green Bay area.

2011 REGULATIONS

The new 2011 Fishing Ontario Recreational Fishing Regulations publication can be viewed at www.ontario.ca/fishing. Pointe au Baril is situated in Fisheries Management Zone 14 and our regulations are outlined below. Please take time to examine the regulations for your favourite sport fish and pay special attention to open seasons, catch and possession limits, and size limits for the 2 types of licences (Sport or conservation).

Walleye/Pickerel

Season:	Jan. 1 to Mar. 1 and May 1 to Dec. 31
Sportfishing Licence Catch Limit:	2 per day, possession limit of 4
Conservation Licence Catch Limit:	1 per day, possession limit of 2
Size Limit (length):	zero (0) between 41 – 56 cm (16.1 – 22 in.) and only one (1) greater than 56 cm (22 in.) in possession

Northern Pike

Season:	Jan. 1 to Mar. 1 and May 1 to Dec. 31
Sportfishing Licence Catch Limit:	2 per day, possession limit of 4
Conservation Licence Catch Limit:	1 per day, possession limit of 2
Size Limit (length):	only one (1) greater than 86 cm. (34 in.) in possession

Bass (largemouth & smallmouth or any combination)

Season:	Jun. 25 (4th Sat.) to Nov. 30
Sportfishing Licence Catch Limit:	3 per day, possession limit of 3
Conservation Licence Catch Limit:	1 per day, possession limit of 1
Size Limit (length):	none

Yellow Perch

Season:	open all year
Sportfishing Licence Catch Limit:	25 per day, possession limit of 50
Conservation Licence Catch Limit:	12 per day, possession limit of 25
Size Limit (length):	none

Muskellunge

Season:	Jun. 18 (3 rd Sat.) to Dec. 15
Sportfishing Licence Catch Limit:	1 per day, possession limit of 1
Conservation Licence Catch Limit:	0 per day
Size Limit (length):	must be greater than 137 cm (54 in.)

Lake Sturgeon

Catch and Release only

WHAT IS MEANT BY CATCH AND POSSESSION LIMITS?

Catch Limit refers to the number of fish you may catch and keep in one day. If you catch 3 bass and eat them at a shore lunch, you cannot then go out and catch up to 3 more that day. Any fish eaten at a shore lunch count as your daily catch limit. (The number of bass in this example would only be permitted with a

sport fishing licence, not with a conservation licence.) **Possession Limit** refers to the number of fish you may have on hand, i.e. in the fridge or freezer. Again, if you were lucky enough to catch 3 bass in one day under your sport fishing licence and you put those fillets in the freezer, you could not go out the next day and catch and keep any bass until those fish had been consumed. Remember, these limits are there to protect our fish stocks and by abiding by them, we are supporting conservation of our natural resources as well as future fishing opportunities.

Fish Sanctuaries in the Pointe au Baril area:

Shawanaga River

(west of C.P.R. right-of-way)

No fishing from Apr. 1 to May 14
(dates inclusive)

Sucker Creek

(from Hwy 69 downstream to a point
250 m (820 ft.) west of the C.P.R.)

No fishing from Apr. 1 to May 14
(dates inclusive)

FISHING LICENCES

Residents of Ontario and Canada

***** Canadian residents only can fish licence-free from July 2 – 10, 2011. If you fish without a licence during this time period, you must abide by the limits set under a conservation licence. (See above for limits.)*****

Most people need either a Sport Fishing Licence or a Conservation Fishing Licence to fish in Ontario. The former is for those anglers who want full catch and possession limits while the conservation licence (recommended by this Association) is for those who want to live-release most of the fish they catch. Please note that you must release any musky caught, immediately, if you have a conservation licence. Ontario residents and Canadian residents (residing outside Ontario) require an Outdoors Card and a valid fishing licence tag or a Temporary Fishing Licence and an Outdoors Card Application to legally fish in the province. Resident anglers do not need a fishing licence if:

1. They are under 18 or 65 years of age or older; or
2. They are disabled.

Those described in # 1 above should have their birth certificate or other federal or provincial gov't. issued I.D. indicating their name and date of birth with them when out fishing. Those described in # 2 should have in possession either a CNIB National Identity Card or a Ministry of Transportation Accessible Parking Permit.

Please note that anyone who qualifies under the above exceptions to fish without a licence is subject to the same catch and possession limits as a Sport Fishing Licence.

Non-Residents of Canada

All non-Canadian residents must purchase a fishing licence with two exceptions:

1. Non-residents under the age of 18; (Sorry, non-resident "seniors" still need to purchase a licence.)
2. Non-resident groups of children (at least 5 children under 18 yrs.) can get a special licence for members of an organized camp.

Please note there is a difference in catch and possession limits for non-residents under 18 (#1 above) compared to their Canadian counterparts: They must be accompanied by an adult who has a valid fishing licence and any fish kept are part of the catch and possession limit of the person who holds the licence.

Non-residents under 18 also have the option to purchase a licence to have their own limits.

Applications/Renewals/Fees

Residents of Canada and Ontario have various options for purchasing fishing licences:

- By mail (new application or renewal) allow 4 – 6 weeks. To have an application mailed to you, call the Outdoors Card Centre at 1-800-387-7011;
- By phone (renewal only) at 1-800-288-1155 (allow 20 days);
- Over the internet (renewal only) at www.Ontario.ca/outdoorscard (allow 20 days);
- From local licence issuers (new applications) such as Kennedy's, the Chamber of Commerce Info. Centre on the highway, the Shell station on the highway or Pleasant Cove Resort.

2011 fees* for various resident licences are as follows:

	Residents of Ontario	Residents of Canada
Outdoors Card + 3 year Sport Fishing Licence Tag	\$91.28	N/A
Outdoors Card + 3 year Conservation Licence Tag	\$56.53	N/A
Outdoors Card + 1 year Sport Fishing Licence Tag	\$36.88	\$ 60.32
Outdoors Card + 1 year Conservation Licence Tag	\$25.30	\$ 40.11
1 Day Fishing Licence	\$12.38	\$ 12.38

* All fees include 13% HST

Non-Residents have been required to hold an Outdoors Card since 2009. The Outdoors Card is required in order to purchase a fishing licence in Ontario. Its unique I.D. # will be used when the Ministry implements an automated licence system for issuers and extends services through the internet and telephone system. This automated system is now slated for late 2011 (previously 2010). For now, purchase your Outdoors Card by filling out an application at any Ontario fishing licence issuer (such as those listed above in P au B) and at ServiceOntario counters. Alternatively, you can receive your card and licence through the mail by calling the MNR at 1-800-667-1940.

2011 fees* for various non-resident licences are as follows:

Temporary Fishing Outdoors Card (not a licence)	\$ 9.68
Sport Fishing Licence Tag (1 calendar year)	\$76.49
Conservation Fishing Licence Tag (1 calendar year)	\$47.13
8-day Sport Fishing Licence (valid 8 consecutive days)	\$49.02
8-day Conservation Licence (valid 8 consecutive days)	\$28.27
1-day Sport Fishing Licence	\$20.75

* All fees include 13% HST

Canadian residents and non-residents should call the Outdoors Card Centre from anywhere in North America at 1-800-387-7011 if their Outdoors Card is **lost or stolen**.

CATCH AND RELEASE/CONSERVATION

“Large male smallmouth bass nest earlier than smaller male bass. They are also better at

guarding their nest and their offspring have better overwinter survival.” This fact has great significance for conserving future stocks of bass in our area. Survival of bass through their first winter is crucial to the future success of that year class. As there are no size limits for bass in effect in our area, it is important to throw the large ones back in order to sustain future bass stocks! In an effort to maintain and protect our local fishery, this Association promotes the "**Catch and Release Program**" - if a fish is caught that is not for eating, or is large and should be left in the wild to reproduce, please release it. A catch and release approach to fishing protects our natural fishing resource while maintaining angling opportunity! The following are a few simple but useful tips for successful release:

1. Use barb-less hooks and artificial lures to prevent deep hooking and injury;
2. Land fish as quickly as possible;
3. Keep the fish in water as long as possible to prevent suffocation and injury out of water;
4. Handle fish gently with wet hands or wet cloth gloves and don't put fingers in gills or eye sockets. Small fish without teeth can be lifted by the lower lip while larger ones can be grasped just behind the gill covers;
5. Remove hooks quickly using long-nose pliers. If the hook is in deep, cut the line and leave hook in;
6. When releasing, hold fish in the water facing into the current or if no current, gently move the fish in a forward direction so water flows through the gills.