

ENTERTAINMENT

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Return of the Atlantic Salmon

Last week, while conducting an angler survey along Lake Ontario, I encountered two Atlantic salmon in angler catches. With thousands of Pacific salmon caught in Lake Ontario and its tributary rivers each year, one may wonder why these two Atlantic salmon were significant in any way. To make a long story short, Atlantic salmon are making a return to Lake Ontario after being absent for more than a century.

Before European settlement, Atlantic salmon thrived in Lake Ontario. Unlike Pacific salmon, Atlantic salmon do not necessarily die after spawning. Tributary rivers swarmed with adult salmon during annual spawning runs. Millions of young salmon descended from the tributary rivers to mature in the lake, ensuring the survival of the species.

European settlement in the 1700's and 1800's drastically

changed the face of the landscape. Primeval forests were cleared to make way for agriculture. Dams were constructed along the rivers to provide water power for mills. These changes did not bode well for the future of the Atlantic salmon.

Forest canopies no longer shaded the rivers from the summer sun. Rivers grew too warm to support young Atlantic salmon. Dams denied adult salmon access to their traditional spawning areas. "Fishermen" clubbed, netted and speared thousands of adult salmon as they entered the rivers to spawn. By the late 1800's, the Atlantic salmon had been eradicated from the Lake Ontario watershed.

Reforestation, removal of dams and the institution of tougher pollution controls has improved the quality of several rivers in southern Ontario. In the 1980's the Ministry of Natural Resources embarked on an ambitious mission to reintroduce the Atlantic salmon to the Canadian waters of Lake Ontario.

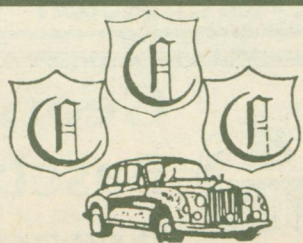
The Credit River and Wilmot Creek were picked as the release sites for young Atlantic salmon due to their excellent water quality and abundance of potential habitat. These sites offer the best opportunities to re-establish natural populations of Atlantic salmon in their native waters.

The Atlantic salmon program is still in its initial stages. In the past we were responsible for the destruction of the species in the Lake Ontario watershed. Let us hope that we can undo the damage of past generations and bring the Atlantic salmon back to Lake Ontario.

A biologist by profession, David Featherstone devotes a large portion of his spare time to volunteer groups which are working to protect and enhance the environment. David hopes to provide readers of Halton Hills This Week with a mix of interesting and informative outdoor and nature articles.

David Featherstone is a biologist who resides in Milton.

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Pizza Hut Colouring Contest WINNERS



(Left to right) Mike Stultz, General Manager, 1st place-Julie Cochrane, age 9, 2nd place-Colleen Jehu, age 10, 3rd place-Gillian Berry, age 10 and Esther Pippy, Program Co-ordinator. Missing from the picture is 4th place winner, Jennifer Smith.



Pizza Hut would like to thank everyone who took part.

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