

Anglers and Hunters Federation tackles invading species

Strong action to stem the tide of invading species into Ontario has been announced by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH).

Three new programs were announced at a news conference attended by Ontario Natural Resources Minister Howard Hampton and OFAH Executive Vice President, Rick Morgan. The OFAH programs are titled "Project Purple", "Zebra Busters" and "The Invading Species Hotline". They have the assistance of the Ontario Ministry of Natural

Resources and the Environmental Youth Corps.

Project Purple is an extension of a very successful 1992 OFAH program. It employs teams of students who control and research Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), a foreign plant that devours hundreds of thousands of wetland acres every year, leaving fish and wildlife homeless. Purple loosestrife first came to North America more than a century ago, but only in the last decade has it started to devastate wetlands. The teams, based in Peterborough and North Bay,

travel to inform the public and conduct public information sessions and perform control measure tests at several wetland sites. They arm communities with the knowledge to control the plant in their own wetlands.

The OFAH Zebra Busters are students who travel to high boat traffic locations with a special boat wash system. Their goal is to attack zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*), the insidious mollusks that have infested Great Lakes waters since arriving in a European vessel's ballast water in the mid-

1980's. The mussels have since moved through some southern inland waters and could pose a threat to the natural environment and tourism. Boats are the primary vector for the mussels. The Zebra Busters activate and educate thousands of people and show them how to control the spread of zebra mussels and other aquatic invaders.

The Invading Species Hotline is a new OFAH service that informs people about invading species, their impact and what to do about them. In addition, the all-

Ontario, toll-free Hotline takes reports and sightings of invading species and passes them along to government sources for research and action purposes. Because of recent provincial expenditure reductions, the ministry is unable to continue monitoring for zebra mussels. Therefore, the OFAH Hotline is vital; it allows scientists to monitor the spread of exotic species. Information is available on several other species, including the ruffe (*Gymnocephalus cernuus*), spiny water flea (*Bythotrephes cederstroemi*)

and purple loosestrife. The Hotline, 1-800-563-7711, operates Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Morgan pointed to several options to help slow the spread of these species. First, people should be careful about transporting their boats from one body of water to another without properly cleaning or drying them. Second, people should purchase purple loosestrife hybrids, commonly available at many nurseries. And third, people should actively educate others about the threat to our environment.



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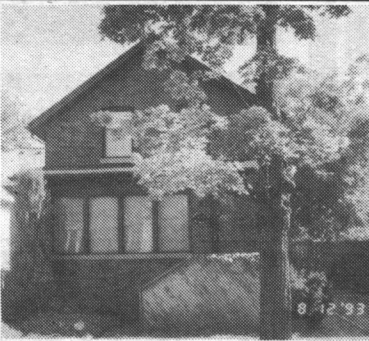
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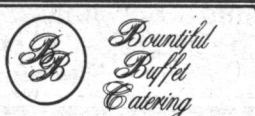
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