

# GRAND TIMES



Newsletter Vol. 12, No. 1

Winter 2008

## From the President's Desk:

It seems that as I get older, the days speed by at a faster rate. It feels like last week when I was freezing sensitive parts looking for spring steelhead in New York state; the five-month trout season seemed to last for about three weeks, and my kids seem to be a foot taller than they were at Christmas last year.

Oh well, let's make the best of it. We've made good progress in the last year, and we see more to come. Of course, there's not much happening in January, but we're making plans.

One January thing that came to pass was the introduction of new fishing regulations across Ontario. Get a copy of the summary from your favourite local tackle shop. And our American friends may want to check out the Ministry of Natural Resources web site ([www.mnr.gov.on.ca](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca)).

For readers of the fine print, there's a significant error affecting the five special regulations sections of the Grand in the Fergus-Elora area. It's this: the regulations require use of "only artificial lures," with one barbless hook. But read the definition of "artificial lure" on page 7. It says, "An artificial lure...is not an artificial fly."

Local MNR staff assure us this is an error. It sounds like only spoons, plastic worms and crankbaits are allowed, but that was not the intent.

If you fish some of the year-round open-season Lake Huron-Georgian Bay tributaries, the printed summary does not specify reaches that are open, often to the first highway crossing, such as Hwy 21. What has changed is the definition of the lake's actual boundary. It's no longer from point-to-point at the mouth of the river, but it goes up-river to that first crossing. So regulations affecting the lake apply up to that first bridge.

But don't just take my word for it. Talk to MNR! Or check out their FAQs arising from the latest regs on the web site. I can't stress that strongly enough.

The lengthy review of our fishing regs was an exercise to reduce the complexity (sigh!). The new book is as big as the last, but now we have fight through errors and confusion (be positive, Larry). We'll still be fishing. And that's the good news.

All best to you and your families. Sorry to bring this up now, but it's time for paying dues again — there's a form on the back page. See you at the AGM — Sunday, April 20, 2 p.m., Belwood Lake Conservation Area office.

Tight Lines and Best Wishes,

*Larry R. McGratton*

**President**

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## Dates to remember:

### Annual General Meeting

Sunday, April 20, 2 p.m.

Belwood Lake Con. Area

Cty Rd 18, 5 km E of Fergus

### Tree Planting

Saturday, May 3, 9 a.m.

Location: TBA

### Grand Opportunities

Saturday, June 7, 9 a.m.

Belwood Lake Con. Area

Cty Rd 18, 5 km E of Fergus

## Grand Times

Vol. 12:1

*Grand Times* is a publication of the Friends of the Grand River, an incorporated organization dedicated to environmental efforts in the Grand River watershed.

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the organization's policies.

As a new initiative, this newsletter will be on our web site as an Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) file.

Your editorial team:

- Larry McGratton
- John Dadds
- Ian Martin

# Where has all the loose-strife gone?

By Donna MacKenzie  
Ontario Beetles

Have you noticed that the purple hue near waterways and wetlands in the Grand River watershed is now gone?

Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is a non-native plant that was introduced to North America in the 1800s. It became widespread throughout Canada and the U.S. because it had no natural predators. Purple loosestrife became so common that it affected natural communities and biodiversity — you may remember a flurry of news stories about it in the 1990s.

*Grand Actions* did a series of stories about it in 1996 and 1997 because it was such a threat. The first had the headline, “Beetles fight the purple plague.” The loosestrife plants are dense, wisely-distributed and tenacious.

o herbicides were approved to treat purple loosestrife in Canada and mechanical control methods, such as digging it out, didn’t work.

In the late 1980s, experts began to focus on two types of leaf-eating beetles that are natural predators — *Galerucella californiensis* and *Galerucella pusilla*. Both evolved in the native range with loosestrife and are restricted to it as a host.

Testing over many years found that introducing these beetles wouldn’t threaten other North American plants. The beetles were first released in Ontario in 1992 by the University of Guelph after they had been approved in Canada and the U.S. Today there are over 400 beetle release sites across the province.

Many of the first release sites were in the Grand River watershed, where the beetles spread naturally along the waterways. The Grand River Watershed Management Plan for Purple

Loosestrife was conceived in 1996 and

1997. Forty new beetle release sites were set up to control this invasive plant across the watershed by the University of Guelph, working with the Grand River Conservation Foundation, Environment Canada, the GRCA, volunteers and others.

A 2004 follow-up study funded by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources found that beetles had spread throughout the watershed. The study also found that as a result of this, purple loosestrife was controlled along the water’s edge virtually everywhere in the region. The beetles also controlled loosestrife that was further away from the shorelines.

## Loosestrife now under control

The beetles are now along the Grand River’s length, from Luther Marsh to Lake Erie, as well as along 30 kilometres of the Speed River from Guelph Lake to Cambridge where it joins the Grand River. Effective beetle populations control all of the formerly infested tributaries so that purple loosestrife is now under control in the Grand River watershed.

However, this doesn’t mean that all healthy stands of the plant are gone. Throughout the watershed, and indeed throughout Ontario, the greatest beetle impact can be seen along the water’s edge.

Today, groups and governments across Ontario continue to release beetles into watersheds and wetlands across the province in the few remaining areas where loosestrife hasn’t yet been controlled.

For more information on purple loosestrife biocontrol in the Grand River watershed and in Ontario, or to obtain beetles, contact Donna MacKenzie at Ontario Beetles 519-732-7993 or [ontariobeetles@sympatico.ca](mailto:ontariobeetles@sympatico.ca). MacKenzie was the University of Guelph contact at the Biological Control Laboratory ten years ago and now provides the beetles as a part-time business.

For information about invasive species, visit [www.invadingspecies.com](http://www.invadingspecies.com) or call the invading species hotline at 800-563-7711. •

## Environmental assessment of Elora’s Drimmie Dam

Staff will negotiate an agreement with Sanchez Engineering Inc. to make safety related recommendations for the Drimmie Dam in Elora. The dam is close to the Elora Mill Inn and it is deteriorating. The engineering firm will recommend interim measures that the GRCA can take to make sure the structure is safe.

In August a lawyer representing a land owner, LFL Properties Ltd., asked the GRCA to proceed with the class environmental assessment. The land owner wants to develop a small hydro electric generating system as part of the redevelopment on the south side of the dam. •

*(This is an excerpt from the minutes of the November 2007 GRCA board meeting. Reprinted with permission. FOGR will keep a watch for developments in the Class EA.)*

## Sage Rod Draw

We are going ahead with the Sage rod draw again this year. It will be for a Sage ZXL, 9’, 4-wt., 4-piece rod, complete with an appropriate Sage reel and line. The ZXL is Sage’s very newest offering at the top of their range.

Tickets will be \$10 each.

If you renew your membership at the same time as you buy your rod-draw tickets, we will reduce your membership fee by \$5. Therefore, a regular (family) membership, usually \$35, will only cost you \$30 if you buy one ticket. Second or other tickets still cost \$10.

Anyone under 18 years cannot buy a ticket on the Sage rod due to provincial lottery regulations. This draw is licensed under Ontario lottery laws. •

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# Large cover now a reality

## *Adding rocks, runs and riffles to the river*

By John Dadds and Stephen May

Our large-cover project has been on the books for several years, but late in the 2007 trout season, it reached fruition, or at least a serious pilot project stage.

The lower section of the Grand's coldwater reach tends to be flat and meandering. There is a gravel-based floodplain for much of the distance between the Elora Gorge Conservation Area and West Montrose.

Because the Shand Dam does not let raging torrents flow through this area to move rocks around, the river bottom has become progressively flatter.

What it needs is some help to offer cover and some engineering to increase pool depth and make riffles shallower. The presence of larger rocks and better-defined riffles adds oxygen and improves the natural scouring action of the water to maintain deeper pools and better quality riffles.

The large-cover project has been one of the best bets in the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan since its inception a decade ago.

The project went through a long and tortuous environmental assessment process before it could go ahead. And on top of that, approvals had to be obtained from various levels of government including the Coast Guard (it's a navigable waterway) and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO).

Even as construction day approached, MNR biologist Art Timmerman and a group of volunteers was still having to scabble a foot deep in the river bottom to find

if there were any signs of a wavy-ray lampmussel. This ate up close to half of the total budget spent on the project. This protected species is found in the Grand and you're not allowed to hurt it or its habitat. DFO wanted assurances that the project wouldn't interfere with mussel life. So be careful where you walk.

Friends of the Grand River was one of the partners in this project. Thanks go to Derek Wright for the heavy lifting done by Concrete Worx Ltd. and their High Hoe and skid-steer. The Murray Group trucked in large quantities of rock, some of which came from fence rows. James Thoume Construction

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***“The large-cover project has been one of the best bets in the Grand River Fisheries Management Plan since its inception a decade ago.”***

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supplied 120 tonnes of rock fill.

In-stream work is allowed to take place in a limited time window designed to ensure spawning is not interfered with and fish are not stressed unduly in high summer heat.

It's a complicated business. Heavy machines had to be scrupulously cleaned — seven hours with a pressure washer — before they could go in the river.

Two hundred tons of material was required for the whole job, including seven tri-axle loads needed at the last minute. Long-time FOGR

supporter Richard Seibel at Murray Group responded to a panic call when earlier estimates came up short.

What we ended up with was a Newberry Riffle: a constructed obstruction with a steep upstream side and a long downstream slope. It is intended to provide some deeper water for overwintering and also improved oxygenation as water flows over the long (20-foot) downstream side.

Large boulders picked from fence rows were placed in the river as additional cover and six full trees thinned from a nearby plantation were strategically placed in the streambank to direct flow and provide cover for young fish.

This summer, FOGR will have a tree-planting project with a Kitchener high school to complete the project.

When you next fish Blondies, try walking across the island opposite the access stairs. The large-cover project lies the other side of the island.

Machines were still in the river finishing off the work and there were anglers trying out the newly minted stream. What's more important, the trout were trying it out as well.

FOGR has been a partner in this for a long while. It used \$2,500 to pay part of the of materials. The total project cost was around \$15,000.

There is a strong monitoring program in and around this project, and once we have some information and experience under our collective belts, you may see more large cover and man-made riffles farther down the river. •

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## McGuinty ups Non-resident Licence Fees

If you've got Canadian visitors coming from out-of-province this summer, be prepared for a surprise when you take them down to the tackle shop for their Ontario licences.

Ever since the inception of paid licences, Canadian residents all paid the same as Ontario residents for an Ontario fishing licence. But other provinces didn't extend that courtesy.

In 2003, my B.C. 8-day licence cost \$38.52, plus \$10 per day to fish their "classified waters."

Now Dalton McGuinty has upped the ante. Canadian non-residents will pay about twice what their Ontario cousins pay, plus the cost of an Outdoors Card.

So a one-year Ontario sportfishing licence and Outdoors Card for a B.C. visitor will cost \$49.52 while Ontarians will pay \$29.45, including OC. A conservation licence will set them back \$32.26, against a \$19.62 cost for you and I (both including OC). There are no 8-day options for Canadian non-residents.

Visitors from other countries face small increases in all categories, with an 8-day conservation licence starting at \$24.55.

If your visitors only fish for a day or two, one-day licences may be the ticket: \$9.82 for any Canadian resident. •

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## Brown Trout Pit Tagging Project Update – Field & Lab Results

*By Jill Hanna & Mike Wilkie, Wilfrid Laurier University*

Since the last update (*Grand Times Summer 2007*), Jill Hanna has been busy completing her field and laboratory work on the viability of implanting and detecting PIT-tagged brown trout. PIT tags are half-inch-long transponders injected into a fish's body cavity that can be detected using a handheld device.

Through September and October, assisted by Larry McGratton, Ian Martin and other members of FOGR, she tried to track and identify brown trout in an enclosure constructed in the Grand near Elora. With stream ecologist Dr. Tom Woodcock, also of Laurier, she hoped to identify microhabitat used by the trout and determine if a portable unit could be used to track the fish.

Unfortunately, she was only able to get the detector near enough to detect a few tagged fish. Most tagged trout swam away before they could be identified. The team was only able to visually identify a few trout in the enclosure, suggesting many either escaped or were eaten over the six-week experiment. Only three fish remained when Jill's team netted the enclosure following the experiment.

From her field work; it's clear that a better means of detecting the tagged fish is required if we are to learn more about the post-stocking, post-angling and reproductive behaviour of brown trout in the tailwater. The use of larger, more powerful stationary antennae arrays might achieve this goal.

Jill's lab experiments have confirmed that PIT tag implantation is not harming the fish. Wounds incurred during implantation of PIT tags have completely healed. She says the implantation process is quick and easy to learn, and it might be possible for volunteer teams to tag fish at the hatchery prior to stocking them.

Implanted tags combined with stationary detector arrays and more powerful portable detectors becoming available may still prove to be a valuable, long-term method of tracking movements and survival of brown trout in the Grand River tailwater. •

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## Annual General Meeting Sunday, April 20, 2 p.m.

Belwood Lake Conservation Area  
(Park Office)  
Cty Rd 18, 5 km east of Fergus

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## Friends of the Grand River Membership renewal form

Please make cheques out to "Friends of the Grand River" and forward to the address on the front page. 2008/2009 membership commences Apr. 1, 2008.

**PLEASE NOTE: REDUCE YOUR MEMBERSHIP COST BY \$5 IF YOU BUY ONE \$10 ROD DRAW TICKET. TICKET BUYERS MUST BE 18 OR OVER. SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT TICKETS AVAILABLE FOR \$10.**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ PROVINCE/STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ POSTAL CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBERSHIP TYPE  
(CHECK ONE):

REGULAR/FAMILY \$35 [ ] SENIOR \$25 [ ] STUDENT \$15 [ ] CORPORATE \$100 [ ]