

The 2012 Algonquin Park Trout Fishing Survey

Welcome

We thank you and all of the participants who have given their time and effort to make this Ontario's most successful volunteer trout fishing survey. Since 2005, the Algonquin Fisheries Assessment Unit (AFAU), consisting of three full-time staff based out of the East Gate, has conducted this project. We recognize and appreciate the efforts of Ontario Parks staff at Lake Opeongo (Tania, Ian and Jason in particular), and personnel from the Harkness Lab.

A Special Place, Very Special Fisheries

Algonquin Provincial Park contains a high percentage of the native (non-stocked) brook trout lakes that remain in Ontario. Where else outside of the Park would you commit 4 to 6 days fishing for natural brook trout, except on an extremely expensive fly-in trip? The uniqueness and value of wild trout fisheries becomes more apparent with each passing year, and it is vital to monitor their status.

It's easy to become complacent and to take these wonderful fisheries for granted, but they are under constant threat, and we at the AFAU and Ontario Parks are very concerned about detrimental changes. As recently as 2009 we received reports of smelt in Tim Lake. Already this unwelcome invader has moved into Rosebary Lake, and its spread will not be good news for brook trout throughout the Tim River watershed. Rock bass have infiltrated many trout lakes in Algonquin Park as well, so you're heading into some of central Ontario's last remaining unspoiled trout lakes.

Recent results show that most interior lakes of Algonquin Park still provide very good trout fishing, even when compared to angling surveys dating back to the 1930s. Your reports help us to identify any potential problem areas. Outside of the Park, it is not unusual to spend 8 to 10 hours fishing time for each trout caught.

We Can't Do This Without You

It may seem unfair to ask you to work for us while you are on holidays, but it is both prohibitively expensive and logistically impossible for us to gather sport fishing information in any other way. Our efforts have been recognized by MNR management as being valuable and cost-effective. We sincerely appreciate your help, and once again the AFAU is offering an incentive that should make it worth your while. As usual, springtime results will be posted in June, and final season numbers posted on The Friends of Algonquin Park website http://www.algonquinpark.on.ca/visit/recreational_activites/fishing-in-algonquin-park.php

It Takes Just a Couple of Minutes Each Day (from the example on your recording form):

On May 10, Doug and Bob fished in Lake Lavielle for 4 hours, while the other members of their party, Jim and Rick, fished for a total of 6 hours. At day's end, you would enter '4' for the number of people fishing and '5' for the average hours fished. The following day, two people fished on Dickson for 3 hours and two fished on Lavielle for 4.5 hours. Be sure to record **all of the time fished on all waters every day**.

For a 'party' of one person, enter the estimated number of hours fished, not an average.

Please keep an accurate count of numbers of all trout that you catch and keep daily.

What if I Catch a Tagged Trout?

Tagged fish are fundamental to our understanding of the brook trout dynamics in Dickson Lake, as we can estimate population, growth and survival rates. Should you catch a tagged fish and release it, we would appreciate your recording the tag number, but please **do not remove the tag**. If you kill any tagged fish, please record the tag number(s) on the survey form.

Thank you for being part of this year's survey. Every piece of information that you provide is helpful and important in managing our irreplaceable natural trout populations.

Keep these sheets as a reference and feel free to contact us anytime:

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
Algonquin Fisheries Assessment Unit
P.O. Box 219 Whitney, Ont. K0J 2M0

Phone: 613 637-2780
Ext. 270 or 271

e-mail: greg.betteridge@ontario.ca

An Annual Spectacle

From early October to late November, brook trout congregate to spawn in lakes throughout Algonquin Park. An amazing gathering occurs in Dickson Lake, where 150 or more trout at a time crowd into an area measuring about 100 square metres. Elaborate mating behaviours keep fish on the site for many weeks; a spectacle that occurs in very few places worldwide. The Algonquin FAU takes advantage of this by using a seine net to harmlessly (zero mortalities) capture, tag and release brook trout every year.

A Once-in-a-lifetime Grand Prize

Mail your completed trout fishing survey or return it to the Opeongo access point office and you have the chance to witness this wonder of nature. We will randomly select three entries on October 9, 2012, and winners will immediately be notified by phone or email. Three people in total, one each from **three winning entries**, will accompany Algonquin FAU personnel to Dickson Lake for one day apiece in late October or early November. They will participate in operations on the primary brook trout spawning area, and they could see upwards of 100 mature trout averaging about 0.7 to 0.9 kilograms (1.5 to 2 pounds) in weight.

There will be at least five trips to the brook trout spawning site this fall. Due to the tight timelines that Mother Nature imposes, our first scheduled visit to Dickson will be during the week of October 22 and the last possible date will be November 18. We will provide complete instructions and training, use of a survival suit, and travel to and from the site. It is possible for us to arrange for accommodations and meals if necessary.

Last Year's Winners (*and some of their impressions*)



"I was impressed with your concern for the resource and your obvious passion for your job, and your professionalism made for a safe and enjoyable day afield. It was a day to remember, and a great incentive to get my surveys in for next year! Thanks and all the best, Paul"

Andrew Young had quite the reunion with a 'long lost friend' on Dickson Lake. On April 30, 2011 he had caught Brook Trout A1509 in the 'Glory Hole' on Lake Lavielle. He released it that day, only to catch it again, this time in a seine net on the Dickson spawning area on November 4 (picture top left). Andrew was thrilled to see how much the fish had grown (about 75 mm or 3 inches) in just a few months. It shows the significance of tag returns and the importance of catch and release. This male brook trout was seine netted twice more, on November 10 and on November 16, the last day of the project.

"Greg/Glenn,

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for the wonderful experience you provided me when you allowed me to take part in the tagging operations on Dickson Lake. I have been fishing for Brook Trout my entire life, and have never had a chance to observe them in their natural spawning environment. I will cherish this experience for the rest of my life! As a lifetime park visitor, I feel this has given me a renewed appreciation for the species and the park itself. I am proud that my province has a protected area containing the highest concentration of Brook Trout trout lakes in the world and feel fortunate to have access to such an amazing place. It is obvious to me that the work you are doing here is critical to the survival of this precious resource. I wish that everyone shared the same appreciation and enthusiasm for its beauty as you and your staff do.

In closing, I would urge you to consider providing this same opportunity in the future, as I feel it will generate an increased interest in the conservation efforts of fisherman visiting the park, as long as you promise to pick my survey every year :)... I am kidding of course, but serious about the suggestion to do this again in the future...

Thanks again! I look forward to visiting you in the Spring!

*Kindest regards,
Andrew Young"*

"Upon arrival I was warmly greeted by Greg, Glenn and Meagan and I was quick to ask numerous questions about the trip we would be taking as well as some details of the history of the work they did. All members were pleasant and went out of their way to ensure my safety throughout the trip. We arrived at the lake and right from the start they ensured I was able to experience to the fullest the spawning ritual of the trout detailing the process as it took place. The group was happy to answer any questions I had, and there were many, even when they were processing the trout. We were successful in netting over 120 fish that day and I learned more in that few hours than I had in a lifetime about them. The entire team was a pleasure to be with and they worked very well as a group and made me feel a part of the team. The Algonquin FAU should be proud to have such a dedicated and experienced team working for them in Algonquin Park. I have developed a deeper respect for Algonquin as well as its fisheries and most importantly the people who dedicate their life to a better understanding of the Park and it's wildlife in general. Being an avid outdoorsman, this memory will remain with me for the rest of my life.

I encourage you and your group to continue with these outings as what better venue than this to promote the Park and the people who work there. I have been going to the Algonquin Park for 30 years now and have a deep respect for it and will continue to go interior until I can no longer physically go. Being able to go into the Interior in the late Fall was special in itself, seeing the spawning ritual and being with a team dedicated to what they do made it even more special.

Congratulations to you and most importantly Greg's team for doing such a great job in providing a unique experience to those who were, and will be, able to take this spectacle in first hand!

*Sincerely,
John Feres"*

