

Fish Futures Inc.

Conservation and Enhancement
of Freshwater Fisheries



www.fishfutures.net

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Fish News

Banquet 2004

**Record Crowd Raises \$100,000+
for Conservation and Enhancement
of Manitoba's Fisheries**



Also in this Issue:

The Dangers of Lead Jigs and Sinkers

Freshwater Mussels in Manitoba

One Angler's Opinion: In Praise of the Regulators

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In This Issue

Ask the Professor..... 2

Banquet 2004..... 3

Quick Strikes..... 3

What is Fish Futures?..... 4

One Angler's Opinion..... 4

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Ask the Professor

How does lead pose a danger to fish? Will anglers be banned from using lead jigs and sinkers like hunters have been banned from using lead shot?

The use of lead as fishing weights has been banned by Parks Canada in our National Parks. It has not been banned provincially, nor is there a proposal to do so at this time.

Lead is a highly toxic heavy metal. It was banned from use for shot in waterfowl hunting more than a decade ago. There are two concerns about putting lead into our waterways. First, lead shot and fishing weights that are lost on snags may be taken in by aquatic birds as grit. The grinding action in their stomachs breaks up the pieces of lead into small fragments which can be dissolved by the stomach acids and absorbed. This leads to lead poisoning and eventual death of affected birds.

Second, lead slowly dissolves into the water from lost shot and weights, and increases the lead available for absorption by plants and animals living in or drinking the water. Once in an organism, lead is mostly retained, so that each small dose adds to the burden of lead it is carrying. It can build up to a toxic level, causing sickness or death. Also, lead and other toxins, like mercury and organic toxins concentrate as they pass up the food chain, from algae and small invertebrates, ultimately to game and commercial fish. Very low levels of lead or other heavy metals in plankton can end up at 10, 100, or 1,000 times that concentration in large predators like pike or walleye. Very low lead levels in the water can lead to dangerous levels for people if they eat enough large, predatory fish.

What can you tell me about freshwater mussels in Manitoba?

Manitoba has the second largest number of freshwater mussel species in Canada, after the Great Lakes-St Lawrence basin. There are fourteen species of pearly mussels, (Family Unionidae), and about two dozen species of small fingernail or pea clams (Family Sphareiididae). The pearly mussels are larger and are the ones usually noticed by people. The Three-Ridge clam, and some other species with large, thick shells grow slowly and can live to over a half century in our area.

Pearly mussels have a larval stage called a glochidium, which lives on the gills of fish. To help their larvae find a fish host, most species hold their larvae in their gills and expel them when a shadow caused by a fish swimming by passes over them. When the larvae are ready to transform, they drop off of the fish's gills and settle to the bottom. The Pocket Book clam holds its larvae in its mantle cavity, and the edge of its mantle protrudes from the shell when it is open. It looks like a small fish. When a fish bites at it, the clam releases the larvae into the fish's mouth, and they attach to the gills.

For more information on freshwater mussels, see Arthur H. Clarke's Freshwater Mussels of Canada, published by the National Museum of Natural Sciences in 1981.

Curious about Fish?

Send your Fish Biology / Habitat questions to: AskTheProfessor@shaw.ca

Banquet 2004

Non-Stop Action!

Fish Futures 16th Annual Banquet and Auction
May 6th, 2004 at the Royal Crown Banquet and Conference Centre

Evening Highlights:

Winnipeg's fishing community showed their enthusiastic support with a record crowd of 567 people.

Over \$100,000 was raised for fisheries conservation, enhancement, and education in Manitoba.

The Banquet Committee has already set funds aside for the Provincial Rod and Reel Program. Look for more details on other projects and initiatives in future issues of "Fish News".

John Toone received special recognition for selling the most tickets to the Banquet for each of the past 16 years. Great Work Toonie!

Special Events:

This year's Silver Six Draw was for a walleye and bass fishing trip to Crowduck Lake Camp.

There was a draw for a Winnipeg Blue Bomber VIP Package which included game tickets and dinner for six.

"Walleye on the Rocks", a limited edition framed print signed by the Complete Angler, Don Lamont, was this year's door prize.

Three lucky contestants casted to win a 2004 1650 V Rebel SS from Lund, complete with a 50HP Yamaha two-stroke motor and EZ Loader trailer.

Auction Highlights:

The silent and live auctions had great deals on fishing adventures, boats and motors, an ATV, custom rods, electronics, and unique works of outdoors art.

Special thanks to David Asper for donating a 2004 Lund 2150 Baron Magnum ITS tricked-out with a limited edition Winnipeg Blue Bomber paint job. The successful bidder will be setting the water on fire this summer!

Thank you to the Gurke Family and Nueltin Lodge for generously donating a trip for ten to Kasmere Lake Lodge. The proceeds will go towards the "Get a Youth Started Fishing Program".

Cheers to the 2004 Banquet Committee! These volunteers put on a great night in support of Manitoba's fisheries. Thank-you: John Armitage, George Bones, Paul Fia, Clancy Hildebrand, Jerry Kruczek, Andre Lambert, Don Lamont (Co-Chairman), Tom MacNair, Darian Major (Chairman), Duncan Ross, Rob Sproule, Bob Williams, and Stephen Yuffe.

Quick Strikes

Manitoba Recreational Fishing League: Fish Futures and the Manitoba Wildlife Federation (Stony Mountain District Wildlife Association and Seven Oaks Game and Fish) sponsored thirty-eight young anglers from the Lake Manitoba Narrows region to compete in the 2004 season. Manitoba's Recreational Fishing League is a non-profit group who's goal is to introduce youth to fishing through an organized league. Teams are encouraged to develop skills related to angling such as fish identification, fish cleaning and preparation, care of equipment, knot tying, casting, understanding of basic regulations and water safety. Good luck to all competitors!

Correction: In the Spring 2004 issue, Ask The Professor addressed a question on fish and the floodway. It stated: "Raising the control gates makes the river impassable to fish. Operation for spring flooding apparently doesn't cause a problem for spawning fish". This apparent contradiction is one of many environmental issues that are currently being studied with respect to the potential expansion and recreational development of the "Big Ditch". Look for further updates in future issues of "Fish News".



*"Working Today
for Tomorrow's Fisheries Resource"*

What is Fish Futures Inc.?

Fish Futures Inc. is a non-profit, registered charitable organization dedicated to the conservation and enhancement of freshwater fisheries through:

- Sponsorship, development and encouragement of research projects.
- Habitat preservation, enhancement and management projects.
- Public education to increase awareness of the value of freshwater fisheries and the need for conservation and enhancement of fish stocks and habitat.

Fish Futures is managed by a volunteer Board of Directors comprised of members of the public and representatives of government, industry and the scientific community.

For more information about Fish Futures Inc. please contact us at:

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One Angler's Opinion: In Praise of the Regulators

I'm writing this piece for one reason: to say thanks to Manitoba Fisheries.

I'm not a shill: no one asked me to write this. I insisted because, when we look at the state of our recreational fisheries, I don't think we give enough credit to some deserving folks. The management framework and enlightened attitude of anglers that is helping to sustain quality recreational fisheries didn't just happen by accident.

I now share a cottage in the Whiteshell where I spent my summers growing up, developing a love for everything the outdoors had to offer. As angling skills and tactics improved through the 1970s and 80s, I saw the walleye fishery go down the tubes and stay there. The reason was plain to see at dockside: too many fish were leaving the lake in plastic bags.

About ten years ago we had a visit from a summer student doing a survey on the fishery. It was no surprise to learn that my frustration with the lack of decent walleyes was shared by many anglers. Looking back, what else could we expect with a system that favoured killing spawning-sized

fish? A year or two later, a "slot" limit was imposed, with total release of fish over fifteen inches (The upper limit wasn't an issue in our lake!). The usual grumbling followed, but the regulations stayed, and after a couple of years, fishing started to pick up. The slot limit later went up to sixteen inches, but the fishing has held.

Don't get me wrong, fishing is still a challenge. I'm happy if I catch three or four fish in an evening on the water. I now hear people grumbling about not being able to catch small fish! This year the slot went to 17" and I am worried that floodgates (walleyes flowing to freezers) may have opened too much. We'll see.

I know other factors, like strong year classes, may also be at play, but we've had too many recoveries in our road-accessible fisheries to downplay enlightened management. Manitoba Fisheries has made fundamental regulatory changes and then has labored to inform anglers of the rationale behind slot limits, barbless hooks and the like. Given the results at my fishing holes, I think the medicine is saving the patient.

I do worry about complacency, for it seems that, when fish become abundant, the collective human appetite drives them down again. Perhaps, I'm just too negative. Perhaps, we are approaching a point of collective understanding. There will always be over-fished lakes, but we are going in the right direction.

Manitoba Fisheries deserves a large measure of credit for having the foresight and the guts to help take us there.

Let's all hope that Manitoba Fisheries can continue to deliver sound fisheries management principles and practices. Any erosion in this capability will be a big loss for us all.

Tim Sopuck is an outdoors aficionado who needs all the help he can get to land a decent walleye. His volunteer activities include the Wildlife Information Network of Manitoba.