

A FISHING BAN ON GRENADIER POND

The activity or sport of fishing should be banned commencing spring of 2013 pending a study to determine whether, and in what particular circumstances, fishing can be considered an appropriate activity in High Park; specifically, Grenadier Pond.

Wildlife is being injured and killed by abandoned fishing gear on Grenadier Pond, as follows:

- wildlife swallow hooks utilized by those fishing and intended to lure and attract the sought-after fish;
- wildlife become entangled in carelessly discarded fishing line – either in the pond water or on the shore; and
- birds are trapped, maimed and die from hanging as a result of flying into tangled fishing line which has been caught in branches and leaves (when casting a line overhead) and left there.

The Toronto Wildlife Centre is, thankfully, able to rescue and save some of the injured fauna (after removing the injured animal from Grenadier Pond and providing medical treatment on their hospital premises), only to have no option but to return the now-healthy bird or turtle to face, and cope with, the same hazards on a daily basis.

Species harmed or killed include Canada Geese, mallards, wood ducks, mute swans, cardinals, red-winged blackbirds and snapping turtles. It should be noted that the snapping turtle is a species of special concern under Ontario's Endangered Species Act and a designated species of special concern federally. The snapping turtles are not only harmed and killed by abandoned line; in fact, they are attracted to the same baited hooks as fish are.

Grenadier Pond is not the only venue affected in such a negative way as described above. However, it has to be stated that it is one of the more upsetting venues for these incidents to occur in since many, many people visit Grenadier Pond to enjoy nature and instead witness the extreme distress caused to wildlife.

According to Section 608-38 B of the *Toronto Municipal Code Parks*:

“no person shall store or leave any lures, bait, hooks, lines, poles or other equipment in the park in a location or manner that may injure other persons or wildlife.”

In June of 2012, the City of Toronto erected signs intended to warn fishers of the severe dangers of abandoned gear and the injury caused to wildlife. Since the signs went up, High Park observers have reported not a cessation, not a decrease, but an **increase** in this abandoned litter. This has been the most disastrous year ever, in spite of the concerted efforts of staff, concerned citizens and volunteers to collect and remove fishing litter on a daily basis. The litter is found along the entire eastern shore.

Grenadier Pond

Grenadier Pond is located within High Park, an Environmentally Sensitive Area, and is itself designated as an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest. In addition to fish species and the Snapping Turtle, Grenadier Pond is home to Canada Geese and two species of marsh ducks (Mallards and Wood Ducks). Grenadier Pond is used for foraging and serves as a migratory stopover route for numerous other waterfowl species including diving ducks, herons of various kinds, kingfishers, other marsh ducks and many song birds. A recent study (*Migratory Birds in the City of Toronto*, City of Toronto, 2010) found High Park to be the third most utilized location in Toronto for migratory birds. (Grenadier Pond-specific data is not kept.)

A project to restore Grenadier Pond's ecological integrity was begun in 1994. The project included shoreline naturalization and the addition of snags, cribs and weeds to the bottom to provide habitat for 'top-of-the-food' chain predator fish, namely northern pike and largemouth bass. The project, thus far, appears to have been very successful. The Toronto Region Conservation Authority ("TRCA") surveys the fish of Grenadier Pond. According to the data available to High Park's Natural Environment Committee, the fish population has increased from a small base in 1995 to twenty times the size in 2008.

Overfishing

There is evidence the fishing activity on Grenadier Pond is excessive. From the TRCA data, the number of large predators (those of breeding size) peaked in 2005 and the number of sunfish (the type that the pike and bass were intended to control) then increased dramatically. This pattern is consistent with high adult mortality of a predator population and is often associated with human overharvesting. Anecdotal evidence from Grenadier Pond visitors supports a finding of overharvesting in that only very small fish are now caught.

It should be noted that the man-made outlet draining Grenadier Pond into the Humber River prevents fish moving to and from Lake Ontario. The fish population is isolated; therefore; a natural increase is the pond's only natural replenishment. Grenadier Pond is a small body of water which, due to its location, is subject to very great fishing pressure. There are methods to curtail overfishing in small areas, but they can be complicated to administer.

Other Issues

- **Disturbing nests of migratory birds:** People have been observed fishing in the grasses and marsh areas where migratory birds nest, thus disturbing nesting. This is contrary to federal regulations;
- **Lead:** Lead is a well-known environmental toxin causing documented harm to wildlife and is often introduced to waterways when lead sinkers and jiggers are lost. Lead should not be used in parks, particularly in such an important migratory bird stopover expanse;
- **Organic bait:** The use of organic bait amounts to feeding wildlife contrary to section 608-36 C of the *Toronto Municipal Code—Parks* (“While in a park, no person shall :C. Feed or attempt to feed or deposit food for consumption by wildlife.”). Organic bait is consumed by unintended species such as turtles;
- **Catch-and-release:** Improper technique (including the use of organic bait) and inadequate skill in catch-and-release fishing are known to stress and even kill the affected fish;
- **Topography:** Rehabilitation of Grenadier Pond resulted in snags and cribs for spawning habitat, and native vegetation including aquatic plants, shrubs and tall forbs. Together with the existing shoreline trees there are many opportunities to snag and break a line together with its associated gear;
- **Fishing education:** Pond visitors, including experienced fishers, report that increasing numbers of people demonstrate poor line casting skills resulting in broken lines in trees, bushes, and aquatic vegetation; leaving lures, hooks, leads, and pieces of fishing line on the shoreline;
- **Injured turtles:** Injured turtles are thrown back into the pond, and affected Snapping Turtles may not be reported in accordance with provincial regulations in effect from July 1, 2012;
- **Habitat protection:** Controlling activities that may harm the habitat of species at risk is consistent with the province’s new approach under the Endangered Species Act.

Enforcement

Enforcement of existing regulations is poor. The City of Toronto has chosen to retain few enforcement officers - even as the population expands and more people use parks in an active manner. Even provincial regulations, such as one line per angler, are often not followed or adhered to. The difficulty is compounded in a multi-cultural city, such as Toronto, where many people do not have English as a first language. Effective education and enforcement will require a commitment of resources adequate to the task.

Recommendation

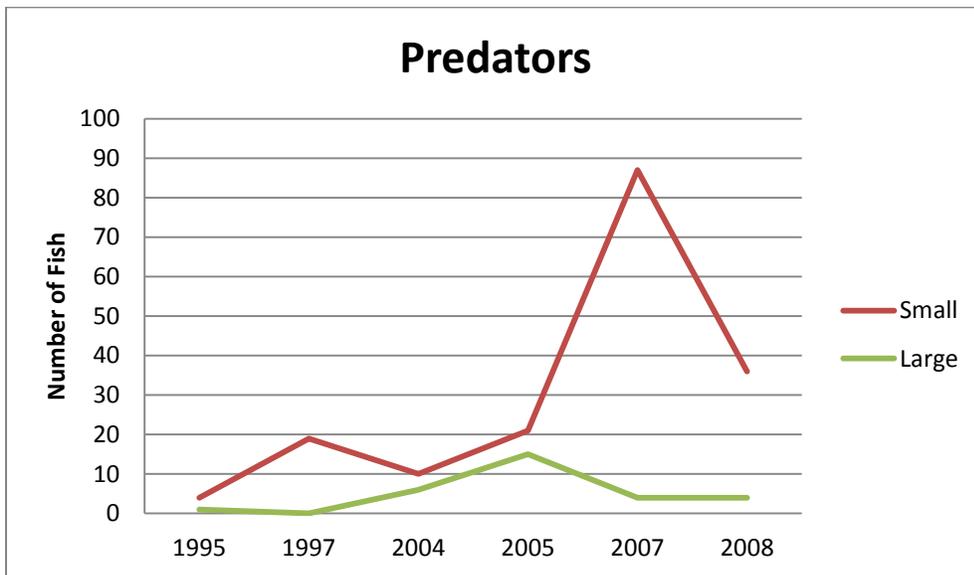
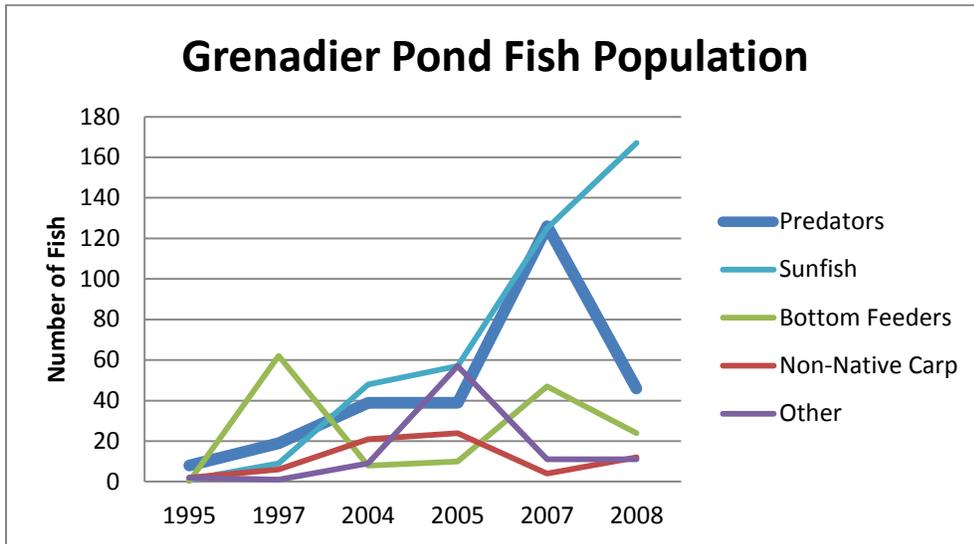
For the reasons set forth above, the Natural Environment Committee recommends a fishing ban on Grenadier Pond pending a study, or studies, to determine whether, and in what particular circumstances fishing can be considered an appropriate activity in High Park, especially Grenadier Pond.

Since High Park is designated an 'Environmentally Sensitive Area', any such study or studies should be conducted through the lens of supporting and enhancing the ecological integrity of High Park and of Grenadier Pond.

October 29, 2012

The High Park Natural Environment Committee is a volunteer group that advises the City of Toronto on the protection and restoration of the natural environment of High Park, and promotes awareness and respectful enjoyment of the park's natural heritage.

APPENDIX I



Predators are northern pike and largemouth bass of any size, and yellow perch larger than 32 grams.

Large predators are bass longer than 38 cm and pike longer than 61 cm. These numbers are the standards in Ontario guidelines for fisheries management.

Data are compiled from TRCA observations. The data have been classified for ease of presentation and no statistical analysis (other than work which may have been done by the TRCA) has been performed.

APPENDIX II

Toronto Wildlife Centre

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Oct. 10, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of a growing initiative to ban fishing at Grenadier Pond in High Park.

Toronto Wildlife Centre is the busiest wildlife centre in Canada, and a charity which runs entirely on donations. In almost 20 years of helping the community with wildlife issues, we have responded to many rescue calls and treated many injured wild animals from Grenadier Pond.

The many birds and turtles our centre sees from Grenadier Pond are typically affected by fishing line, hooks, or related fishing paraphernalia.

The pain and suffering inflicted on these animals is considerable, as a result of the unsustainable recreational fishing in High Park. There are simply too many people fishing, and those who do fish do not seem to be respectful of the wildlife or environment they are impacting when they leave their fishing trash behind.



High Park is a true gem for this city, and initiatives by all stakeholders to naturalize the park, remove invasive species, create educational signage, etc. should be commended. I also understand that Grenadier Pond has been designated as an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

It is incongruous to then allow the continuation of an activity that clearly results in suffering and death for native wildlife.

I and / or other representatives from Toronto Wildlife Centre would be happy to participate in meetings, or share information regarding our experiences with injured wildlife at Grenadier Pond, and we urge all decision makers to seriously consider banning fishing in High Park.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nathalie Karvonen".

Nathalie Karvonen

