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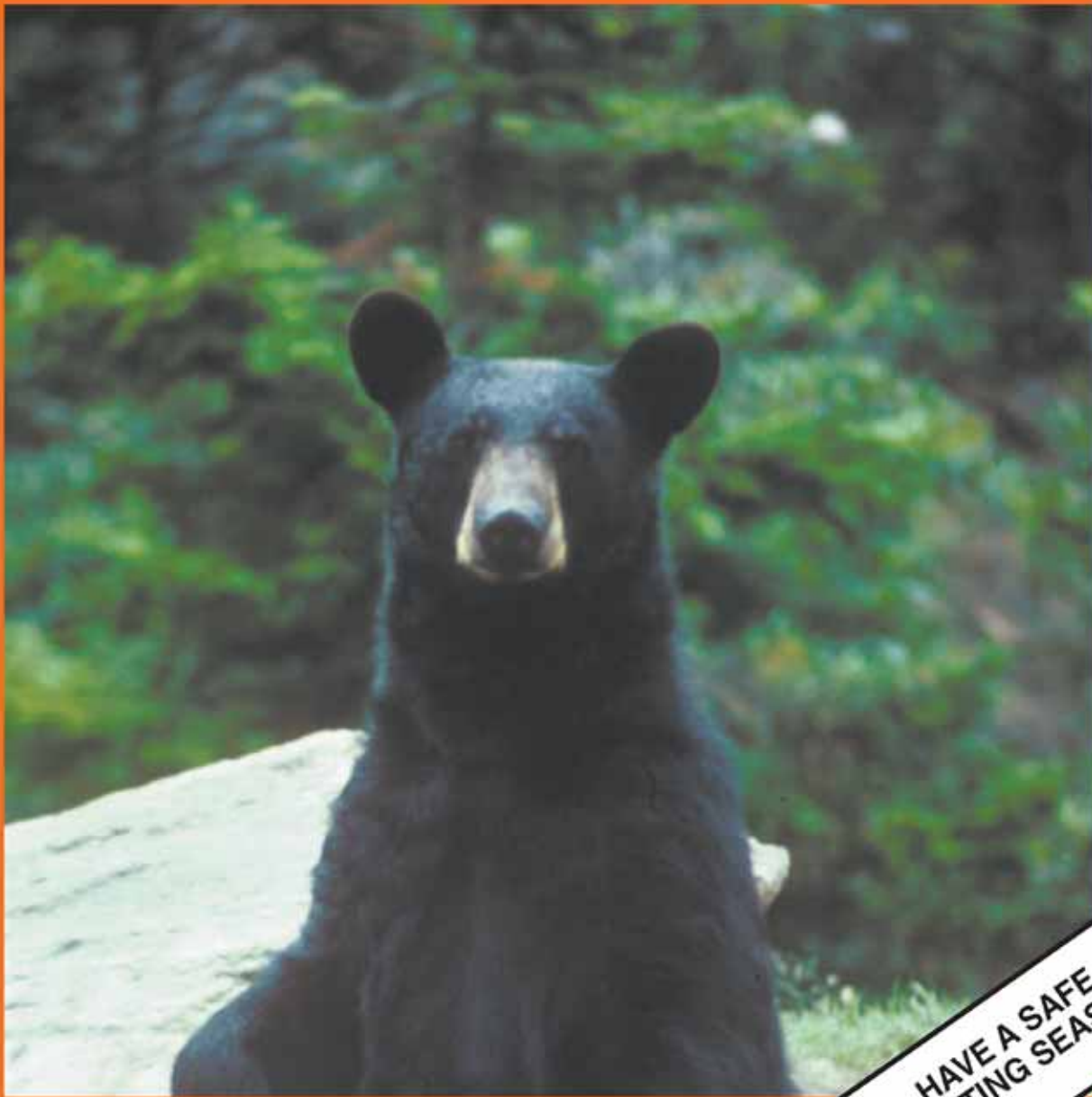
**VOLUME 12, NO. 4  
FALL 2003**

The Past and Future  
of Bear Hunting in NS

**Chronic Wasting  
Disease**

**Chain Pickerel**

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# NOVA OUTDOORS

## FALL 2003

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Photo credit: Black Bear, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Image Library.

To place your ad in the next issue (Winter, 2003) of Nova Outdoors, please call (902) 468-6112, or call Tony Rodgers of the Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters at (902) 477-8898.

# Nova Outdoors

Official Publication of the  
Nova Scotia Federation  
of Anglers and Hunters



Vol. 12, No. 4  
Fall, 2003  
**STATEMENT  
OF PURPOSE**

The Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters is interested in all aspects of the out-of-doors and is dedicated to the fostering of sound management and wise use of the renewable resources of the Province. We want to ensure that their economic, recreational and aesthetic values may continue for the benefit of this and all future generations.

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Special thanks to our many contributors who have assisted in this project - your continued support will be appreciated.

We cannot be held responsible for unsolicited articles or advertisers claims.

Published quarterly by

**NATIONWIDE**  
Promotions Limited

#### Design and production

Angela Urquhart  
David Mullins  
Maria Erman

#### Advertising

David Boutillier  
Ken Landry  
Ross McQuarrie

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may be sent to the editor c/o:

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P.O. Box 44028, 1658 Bedford Hwy.,  
Bedford, NS B4A 3X5  
Ph: (902) 468-6112  
E-mail: novaout@accesscable.net

Printed by

**Transcontinental**  
PRINTING  
WEB ATLANTIC LIMITED

Mailed under Canada Post  
Publication Agreement No. 40050030

## Letter to the Editor:

While reading the Nova Outdoors article, "Ambitious Partnership to Protect Almost 4000 acres of N.S. Wilderness," I noticed that the article stated that one of the threatened species in the area mentioned was "Nova Scotia's only native moose population."

This is incorrect and should state "South Western" Nova Scotia's native moose population.

Northern Nova Scotia still has a native population, decreasing unfortunately in some areas as Bob Bancroft will agree.

I don't want to sound meticulous on this subject, but to let you know about the error.

Your magazine is a good one, and I enjoy reading it. On a personal note, I have great respect for Bob Bancroft, not only as an outdoor writer, but as one of the most common sense, knowledgeable, biologists that our province had during his years employed with D.N.R.

Thanks for your time, and all the best.

Sincerely,  
Stan Corbett  
Forest and Wildlife Technician  
Cumberland West Parrsboro

## Natural Resources — Hunter Education Instructor Of The Year

A Yarmouth County man has been named the 2002 Hunter Education Instructor of the Year. Dave Watson of Tusket, a member of Yarmouth's Scotia Sportsmen Club, was named the title winner by the Department of Natural Resources on Feb. 7.

"This award provides an excellent opportunity to reward volunteer contributions to the overall safety of Nova Scotians during hunting season," said Natural Resources Minister Tim Olive.

Mr. Watson has more than 36 years of experience and has taught hundreds of Nova Scotians how to hunt safely.

"Instructors like Dave Watson are the foundation of hunting safety in Nova Scotia," said Gordon Wilson, the department's area supervisor for Yarmouth and Shelburne counties. "They are the people out there making an impression on new hunters about the importance of hunting safely."

More than 160 volunteer hunter education instructors work through non-profit service clubs to deliver hunter education programs across Nova Scotia throughout the year.

The efforts of instructors like Mr. Watson have helped reduce the number of hunting accidents in the province. Since 1993, there have been fewer than five accidents per year. To date, this year's hunting season is accident free.

"When Nova Scotia has accident free seasons, it helps promote the sport to others," Mr. Wilson said. "It reflects well on the province of Nova Scotia to visitors who will come here to hunt."

The Department of Natural Resources has presented the Instructor of the Year award since 1994 to recognize volunteer instructors who have made an outstanding effort to promote hunter education in Nova Scotia.

Submitted by Susan Mader Zinck,  
Communications Officer, Department  
of Natural Resources.

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### Correction Notice

In our last (summer) issue, on the bottom of page eighteen, the ad should have read best wishes to the Halifax Wildlife Association on your 150th Anniversary.

Our sincere apology for any inconvenience this may have caused.

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# Executive Director's Voice



By Tony Rodgers

Well guess who's back looking to consult with firearm owners? Why it's the masters of deception, the Federal Department of Justice, AKA the Canadian Firearms Center.

Over the summer the department, primarily through their web site, <[www.cfc.ccaf.gc.ca/en/consultation/default](http://www.cfc.ccaf.gc.ca/en/consultation/default)>, has been seeking "consultation" with gun owners on changes they put before parliament in February. But before you get all excited, the changes are only to help them accomplish their work and very little benefit for the average firearm owner.

It's interesting that they may actually be trying a genuine consultation this time but, as we all know, the Department of Justice has soured that process so many times in the past that no one believes them anymore. These consultations are looked upon now as just additional window dressing the feds need to roll out at future legislative committee hearings so they can say they consulted with firearm owners.

My first experience with this type of "non-consultation consultation" was during our very first meeting held in Halifax with the infamous father of Canadian gun control, through bad legislation, Allan Rock.

He had asked our Federation to arrange a meeting with principal wildlife groups in the province so that he may consult on his new gun control legislation. We did that, we had some of the most knowledgeable people on wildlife conservation, firearms and firearm use in that meeting room. To the person they told him that his idea was expensive and given that Bill C17 (the present gun law at the time) was only a little over a year old, it was an unnecessary trip down a similar bad road. We pointed out to him at the table, that it would be fraught with problems and was unworkable.

So much for consultation. We got his full bill anyway, lock, stock and barrel, Bill C-68. The irony was that during the meeting his assistant at the time Susan Thenholm collected the names of the attendees, for the record. However, we soon saw those names on "consultation document" that Rock produced saying he continued his support for the bill after consultation with user groups and it contained a list of our names.

You can't, however, turn your back on their overtures to consult because it will be used against you with statements of, we asked them to help us, but they turned their backs, so they get what they deserve.

Can a leopard change his spots? Not likely, however, the head lion, Jean Chretien has changed the leopards. Attorney General, Wayne Easter, from PEI is in charge of the Canadian Firearms file now and he has a newer Commissioner of Firearms, William V. Baker. I don't think it will make any difference who is sticking us with the bad news, this whole law needs to be scraped and rewritten by

the people who know firearms and firearm safety.

The biggest mistake that these two gents have made since getting stuck with the boondoggle was to get rid of the original Minister; Users Group on Firearms chaired by Steve Torino of Montreal.

I'm sure, that this move came at the suggestion of inside bureaucrats, who have had to deal with the questions and the common sense suggestions and ideas brought forward by this group. In the original scheme of things Rock brought together this group of men and women, knowledgeable in the workings of the firearm community. At the beginning of their tenure they were looked down on by many individuals and groups in the firearms community as traitors to the cause. It has only been recently through the freedom of information requested made by Saskatchewan Alliance members of parliament Garry Breitreuz, that the users group had been shown to be an effective group making recommendations to government to help get changes.

Nova Scotia's representative on that group was a well know gun dealer, safety instructor and target shooter, Mr. Jim Adam of Dartmouth, who along with Mr. Torino and others, worked hard to bring forward concrete change to an already destructive piece of law. I for one was glad they were in house with the bureaucrats, heaven knows how much worst it might be without their persistence for change.

The information that came to light from the Freedom of Information documents was that the users group's wisdom and years of collective firearm knowledge

*Continued on page 11.*



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# Venison Vs. Beef

Author Unknown

Controversy has long raged about the relative quality of venison and beef as gourmet foods. Some people say that venison is tough, with a strong "wild" taste. Others insist that venison is tender and that the flavor is delicate. To try and resolve this issue once and for all, a blind taste test was conducted by a certified research group to determine the truth of these conflicting assertions.

First, a high-choice Holstein steer was selected and led into a swamp approximately a mile and a half from the nearest road.

It was then shot several times in various locations throughout the carcass.

After most of the entrails were removed, the carcass was dragged over rocks and logs, through mud and dust, thrown into the back of a pick-up truck bed and transported through rain and snow approximately 100 miles before being hung in a tree for several days.

During the aging period the temperature was maintained at between 25 - 60 degrees (F). Next the steer was dragged into the garage and skinned out on the floor.

*Please Note:* Strict sanitary precautions were observed throughout the processing within the limitations of the butchering environment. For instance, dogs were allowed to sniff at the steer carcass, but were chased out of the garage if they attempted to lick the carcass or bite hunks out of it. Cats were allowed in the garage, but were always immediately removed from the cutting table.

Next half a dozen inexperienced but enthusiastic individuals worked on the steer with meat saws, cleavers and dull knives.



photos courtesy of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources.

The result was 200 pounds of scrap, 375 pounds of soup bones, four bushels of meat scraps for stew and hamburger, two roasts and a half a dozen steaks that were an inch and a half thick on one end and an eighth of an inch on the other.

The steaks were then fried in a skillet with one pound of butter and three pounds of onions. After two hours of frying, the contents of the skillet were served to three blindfolded taste panel volunteers who were

asked if they were eating venison or beef.

Every one of the panel members was sure they were eating venison.

One of the volunteers even said it tasted exactly like the venison he had been eating at the hunting camp for the last 27 years.

The results of this trial showed conclusively that there is no difference between the taste of beef and venison. 🐾

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# The Past And Future Of Bear Hunting In Nova Scotia

Submitted by  
Anthony (Tony) L. Nette

The history of how bears have been 'used' in Nova Scotia is interesting and an excellent example of how social values and public attitude toward bears has evolved.

Early settlers learned from the Mi'kmaq the many values of bear. They were used for food and for the value of the pelt, claws and teeth by hunters/trappers. As agricultural pursuits grew however, conflict with the animal increased to the point where it became acceptable to simply shoot a bear on sight, anytime.

The assault on bears became more formal in the early 1900s with the introduction of a bounty, offered at times by both provincial and municipal governments. Bear bounties were discontinued in 1966. However, until 1988, landowners, hunters and trappers holding a big game licence could take an unlimited number of bear throughout the fall deer hunt.

Black bears were finally recognized as a valued big game animal in 1988. New regulations were introduced that have remained in place through 2002. They include:

- 1) A separate licence to hunt bears (@ \$20 + tax);
- 2) A separate licence to trap bears (by foot snare only; @ \$20 + tax; available to licensed FurHarvesters only);
- 3) Licences issued only at local DNR offices;
- 4) Hunting over bait only;
- 5) A requirement to register all bait sites with DNR (together with #4, to counter deer poaching);
- 6) Written landowner permission to establish a bear bait site on privately owned land;
- 7) Separation of bear and deer hunting seasons (primarily to counter deer poaching);
- 8) Compulsory submission of hunter and trapper report cards and,
- 9) A bag limit of one bear by hunting and one by snaring.

## Three Additional Changes To The Regulations Followed:

10) A limited pre-hunt baiting period introduced in 1994;

11) Compulsory submission of skull for tooth extraction introduced in 1995;

12) In 1996, a requirement for DNR to seal bear gall bladders before sale or export, and

13) In 2003, the bear hunting season is being extended through to the end of the general deer hunt as discussed below.

Serious bear hunters welcomed the bear hunting regulations introduced in 1988. Hunting over a bait greatly increases success, and registration of bait sites effectively gives hunters exclusive privileges in their chosen hunting area. Conversely, they have been complicated and administratively cumbersome, making us the only Canadian jurisdiction not allowing a mixed bag, big game hunt (i.e. the opportunity to hunt deer and bear at the same time).

Conflict with bears occurs yearly. In years of abundant natural bear foods the number of problem situations is relatively low compared to years when foods are scarce. Years of plenty also result in a high

rate of cub survival. If the following year offers little natural food, the high number of hungry dispersing juveniles places a high demand on staff to deal with hundreds of nuisance bear complaints.

Nuisance/problem bear reports have increased considerably in recent years. The Department addressed 578 nuisance/problem bear situations in 2002 and recorded 44 vehicle/bear incidents. These are the highest numbers of bear related incidents/year on record, and the year 2003 is shaping up the same way.

There are a number of reasons for the increased number of nuisance/problem bear situations in recent years: cool late springs resulting in slow development of natural foods; more housing developments and sprawl of acreage dwellings into bear habitat, and the high level of protection in recent years (since 1988) allowing an overall population increase.

There have been 'stories' in recent years, of hunters becoming frustrated/annoyed with the restrictive nature of Nova Scotia's bear hunting regulations and simply taking a bear without a licence. No doubt there has been an element of poaching but there has been little evidence to substantiate the stories. There have however, been many hunters clearly expressing their disappointment in not being able



photo courtesy of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources.

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to hunt bears during the fall deer hunt and in 2002 the Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers & Hunters (NSFAH) requested this change by resolution.

Continued on page 9.

# Random Casts

## Joe Aucoin And The Brown Bomber

By Don MacLean

In 1935 Joseph Louis Barrow, better known to boxing fans as Joe Louis was making a name for himself in the ranks of heavyweight contenders. It was during this time that he was given the nickname "The Brown Bomber" for his exploits in the ring. His drive to the top would culminate in his defeat of Max Schmelling in 1938 to become the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world. While his abilities as a prize fighter earned him praise all around the world he would receive special recognition from an unlikely corner. In New Waterford, Cape Breton a local fly tyer, Joe Aucoin would craft a salmon fly, the Brown Bomber, in his honour.

Joe Aucoin worked as a miner during the 1930s until an accident ended his days in the pit. With a small miner's pension he opened a fishing shop in New Waterford and began tying flies commercially. Like other early fly tyers from Atlantic Canada he was a pioneer in the development of hair wing Atlantic salmon

flies. Aucoin's flies are distinguished by their very long wings as well as the long jungle cock eyes. Aucoin felt that the long wing gave his flies a breathing action in the water. The reason for the long eyes was more practical. Aucoin used all the regular jungle cock on the flies that he was trying to sell, leaving only small or very large eyes for his own flies. When he found how effective the large eyes were he started offering them on the flies he sold.

Joe Aucoin's flies first appeared in Edson Leonard's 1950 book, *Flies*, and in the book Leonard published a letter from Aucoin in which he gave the story of his flies and said that "they had saved the day and the fishing trip for him many times." Aucoin's flies were also featured in A.J. McClane's Standard Fishing Encyclopedia; Joe Bates Atlantic Salmon Flies and Fishing, Dr. Grey's Handbook for the Margaree and more recently in Stewart and Allen's Flies for Atlantic Salmon. The famous 1948 Fortune magazine article on Atlantic salmon featured Aucoin's bomber series as well as the Ross Special, a famous Margaree fly which, although he may not have developed, he certainly helped popularize.

Joe Aucoin passes away in the 60s

and unfortunately many of the patterns he developed have fallen out of use. As one long time Cape Breton salmon angler told me, "Joe's flies are gone off the river". I still keep a few of Joe Aucoin's flies in my fly box though and give them a swim every season, partly because they played such an important role in the development of our sport, and besides you never know, as Joe stated "They may save the day and the fishing trip". 🪰

The Brown Bomber  
Tail: Golden pheasant crest  
Tag: Silver  
Tip: Yellow Floss

Butt: Black Chenille  
Rib: Oval silver  
Body: Brown floss  
Hackle: Brown  
Topping: Golden pheasant crest  
Wing: Red squirrel tail  
Cheeks: Jungle Cock  
Tight Lines

© 2003 Don MacLean  
Donald A. MacLean is the Assistant  
Director Inland Fisheries Division for  
Nova Scotia Department of  
Agriculture and Fisheries, Pictou, NS.

## Lightwave™ Introduces The First Modern Flashlight

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# Guns Taken Away In Australia

## Some Interesting Facts

By Ed Chenel, a police officer in Australia

Hi Yanks, I thought you all would like to see the real figures from Down Under.

It has now been 12 months since gun owners in Australia were forced by a new law to surrender 640,381 personal firearms to be destroyed by our own government, a program costing Australia taxpayers more than \$500 million dollars.

The first year results are now in: Australia-wide, homicides are up 3.2 percent,

Australia-wide, assaults are up 8.6 percent; Australia-wide, armed robberies are up 44 percent (yes, 44 percent)! In the state of Victoria alone, homicides with firearms are now up 300 percent. (Note that while the law-abiding citizens turned them in, the criminals did not and criminals still possess their guns!)

While figures over the previous 25 years showed a steady decrease in armed robbery with firearms, this has changed drastically upward in the past 12 months, since the criminals now are guaranteed that their prey is unarmed.

There has also been a dramatic increase in break-ins and assaults of the elderly.

Australian politicians are at a loss to explain how public safety has decreased, after such monumental effort and expense was expended in "successfully ridding Australian society of guns."

You won't see this data on the American evening news or hear your governor or members of the state Assembly disseminating this information.

The Australian experience proves it. Guns in the hands of honest citizens save lives and property and, yes, gun-control laws affect only the law-abiding citizens.

Take note Americans, before it's too late!

## Past and Future...

Continued from page 7

The request by hunters and the escalating number of nuisance bear situations, has resulted in the following regulation change for fall 2003:

- Bear hunting season will be extended through to the end of the General Open Season for Hunting Deer, and
- During the general deer hunt (October 31 - December 6, 2003) there will be no requirement to hunt bear at a registered bait site.
- All regulations for the early bear hunting season (September 8 - October 30, 2003) remain unchanged from previous years. (i.e. hunt only at registered bait sites)
- Though legal to set out bait for bears until the end of the season, written permission of the landholder if bait for

bear is placed on privately owned land, will remain in effect.

## Another New Regulation Introduced This Year At The Request Of The NSFAH Is:

- No person who holds a Bear Hunting License shall take, hunt or kill or attempt to take hunt or kill a female bear which is accompanied by one or more cubs.

Many hunters have seen bears when deer hunting, but it was not legal to take the bear. In the past, if a person took a deer early in the hunt, they were then only able to hunt small game and coyotes. Now they will have the option of hunting bear as well.

It remains to be seen how many more bear hunting stamps will be issued this year. It is expected to be considerably higher than the  $\pm$  500 issued in recent years. However, an increase in sales would be unmanageable at DNR offices, the only place they were sold in the past. In anticipation of this problem, bear hunting stamps will now be available at a select number of license vendors who sell all other hunting stamps.

Similar to the Small Game Report

Card, the Bear Hunter Report Card is now a postcard type form in the Hunting & Furharvesting License & Summary of Regulations booklet which is part of the base license for any hunting in Nova Scotia. The report form may be sent in by mail (if no bear was taken) or for successful hunters, submitted at a local DNR office together with the skull of the bear for extraction of a small pre-molar tooth to determine the age of the animal.

*Hunters Must Remember: Submission Of The Bear Hunter Report Card And Submission Of The Bear's Skull At A DNR Office, Within 15 Days After The End Of The Season (By December 22, 2003) Is Required By Law.*

Assuring wildlife populations are harvested at a sustainable level requires the involvement and assistance of all hunters. Though an individual's contribution may seem insignificant, it becomes very valuable when combined with that of others. The alternatives (research, studies and surveys) are prohibitively expensive and near impossible to maintain.

It is easy to forget to submit a hunter report card or to avoid the inconvenience of taking the skull to a DNR office. However, if we are unable to demonstrate that bear hunting is sustainable, those opposed to hunting could very well force a closure.

The future of hunting depends on the collective participation of hunters in management programs.

*Anthony (Tony) L. Nette, Manager, Wildlife Resources, Wildlife Division, Kentville, Nova Scotia  
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# Lyme Disease - Should Hunters Be Concerned?

By Anthony (Tony) Nette

Lyme disease is an illness caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*. The bacteria is most often transmitted to humans by the deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*), a small tick that is relatively uncommon in Nova Scotia.

The first case of Lyme disease contracted in Nova Scotia, was reported in 2002. Apparently the person acquired the infection after being bitten by a tick (or ticks) in a grassy-wooded area of her backyard. To date there have been only two confirmed human cases of Lyme disease contracted in Nova Scotia and both were from the South Shore area. Both persons have been treated and have fully recovered with no long term ill effects.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) continues to assist the Department of Health in trying to determine where in the province there is a risk of contracting the disease. Ticks are being accepted from the public, and tested to determine if they are carriers of the disease. You can assist by submitting any ticks you may find on yourself, family members or pets, at your local DNR office.

As deer hunting season approaches, hunters may be concerned about the possibility of acquiring Lyme disease when field dressing a deer or eating the meat. Hunters will be pleased to know there is virtually no possibility of getting Lyme disease directly from a deer.

Deer are important in the life cycle

of adult ticks because male and female ticks usually "find each other" and mate after female ticks have begun to feed on the host, and deer also provide the blood that female ticks require in order to produce offspring (eggs). Although deer may be exposed to the Lyme disease bacteria when adult ticks feed upon them, the injected bacteria is quickly removed from the blood stream of infested animals. Because deer do not play a role in the transmission of *Borrelia burgdorferi* to ticks they are considered dead-end hosts for the bacterium. As a result, deer cannot infect other animals directly with the Lyme disease bacteria and there is no record of a hunter acquiring the disease from dressing out a deer. Further, there is no evidence that a person can become infected by eating the meat of an infected deer. The Lyme bacterium is killed when the meat is cooked.

If a hunter killed a deer infested with ticks, it is unlikely the ticks will transfer from the carcass to the hunter. Female ticks which have begun feeding will either remain attached to the deer or drop off, and these partially fed females will not likely attempt to feed again. However, female ticks that are not yet feeding and male ticks (which feed and attach for only a short period of time) can move from a freshly killed animal to persons handling or carrying the carcass. Tick transfer is most likely during prolonged contact with the carcass (such as carrying it on your shoulders). There is a very low chance of ticks transferring from the carcass to a

hunter during routine field dressing and skinning of the deer. If hunters check themselves after hunting or handling a deer, any ticks that may have transferred can be detected and removed.

There is a higher possibility of hunters picking up ticks as they walk through the woods, shrubs and tall grass. However, hunters usually wear heavy clothing which make it difficult for the tick to find and attach to bare skin. Use of an insecticide containing DEET will also discourage ticks. Other factors which further reduces the risk of becoming infected with the disease are: a relatively low percentage of ticks are carriers of the Lyme bacteria; and an infected tick must have been attached (actually taking a blood meal) to a person for at least 24 hours before the Lyme bacteria is transferred to the person.

Enjoy your hunt this fall. Hunters are at no more risk of contracting Lyme disease than anyone else who goes for a walk in the woods.

Brochures on Lyme disease and how to reduce the risk of acquiring the disease are available through your family physician, veterinarians, at your local public health office and Department of Natural Resources office. As well, more information on Lyme disease can be found at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/health/opmob/lyme.htm>

Tony Nette, Manager of Wildlife Resources, Wildlife Division, Kentville, NS.


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# Production And Value Of Wildlife Pelts

## 2000 (Revised) And 2001 (Preliminary)

The value of wildlife pelts for Canada increased 14.1% in 2001 to \$23.5 million, compared with \$20.6 million in 2000. During that same period, Ontario, at \$4.7 million, showed no change, but Quebec enjoyed an increase of 29.9% while Manitoba de-

creased 11.9%. Together, these three provinces account for about 60% of the total value.

The publication *Fur statistics*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (23-013-XIE, free) is now available on Statistics Canada's website ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)). From the *Our products and services* page, under *Browse our internet publications*, choose *Free*, then *Agriculture*.

*For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, call 1-800-216-2299, or contact Bernadette Alain (902-893-7251; [bernadette.alain@statcan.ca](mailto:bernadette.alain@statcan.ca)), Agriculture Division.*

### Executive Directors Voice...

*Continued from page 5.*

was not listened to by those in power to make change. Not listening to experience is why the government is in the mess it is in today. I predict there will be a fire-arms backlash against Paul Martin, when he becomes the new king of Canada.

The original users group has been replaced by what appears to be a non-fire-arm educated collection of government hangers on and political appointees. Although three members of the old users group have been asked to stay on with the new bunch, including Mr. Torino. I don't think they will be an effective force for positive gun owner changes. My reason for writing this is because the Coalition of Gun Control's, president Wendy Chukier has also been appointed to the new panel. Now there is a fox in the chicken coop. History will eventually show how this woman owes the Canadian public one heck of a huge apology and over a Billion dollars for championing this miss adventure in legislation and wasting taxpayer dollars.

Like Rock's attempts at a consultation process in the past this group will be nothing more than names on a document of approval for future blunders of the CFC.

Math has never been one of my strong suites and I have plenty of math teachers to attest to that, but you don't have to a mathematician to figure out that the numbers don't add up for an easy election term for Premier John Hamm.

During this summer's provincial

election neither the premier or the opposition leaders came up with enough seats to get the majority authority and the premier and his new cabinet are in for a difficult challenge to satisfy both their needs and the needs of the opposition.

Minority governments don't have a great history in Canada with the average government only lasting 18 months. That is just enough time to get the tires spinning but no time to go anywhere.

A minority government also presents challenges and opportunities to groups that try to influence government policy and decisions. Unions, who deal with government, in particular try to use this time of confusion to their advantage.

Mistakes by government can lead to an early election if the opposition wants to push an issue. Although both Liberal leader Danny Graham and Opposition Leader Darrell Dexter have both said they want to work with government for the betterment of the people of Nova Scotia, we'll see. After all, as I have mentioned a number of times in this column politics in Nova Scotia is a blood sport, and the hunt is back on.

The three branches of provincial government that the Federation has most contact with are the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Department of Environment and Labour and the Department of Natural Resources.

All three Departments have rookie ministers, who I'm sure are up for the challenge but are more than likely to receive a baptism under fire from the op-

position. The Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries is the Honourable Chris d'Entremont from Yarmouth, the Minister of Environment and Labour is the Honourable Kerry Morash of Liverpool and the Minister of Natural Resources is The Honourable Richard Hurlburt who also comes from Yarmouth.

The opposition parties have appointed the "shadow cabinet" members to watch these three gentlemen and to hold their political feet to the fire. For the opposition, the New Democratic Party have Mr. Charlie Parker, Pictou for Fisheries, Ms. Joan Massey, Dartmouth in Environment and Mr. John MacDonell, Hants East covering Natural Resources and Agriculture.

The Liberals have asked Mr. Stephen McNeil, Annapolis to watch Agriculture and Mr. Harold Theriault Jr. of Digby to handle Fisheries. Mr. Keith Coldwell from Preston will follow Environment and Wayne Gaudet of Clare to cover Natural Resources. It's interesting to note that both opposition parties split the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries between two MLAs, treating them like separate portfolios.

All e-mail addresses and snail mail addresses for these ministers and the shadow cabinet are available on the Nova Scotia Government Web Site <[www.gov.ns.ca/search/query.asp](http://www.gov.ns.ca/search/query.asp)>.

Have a safe fall hunting season and take a young person hunting, it'll do you both good.

*Tony Rodgers  
[tony.rodgers@3web.net](mailto:tony.rodgers@3web.net)*

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# GPS And Map And GPS Games

For hundreds of years man has used maps to navigate his way throughout the world. Maps of course have become much



more detailed and a great deal more accurate. We have now available the latest aerial survey maps that have very minute detail on them and are fantastically accurate. By using various methods of "fixing" one's position, such as triangulation, "dead reckoning" or by just visual recognition of one's surroundings, it is possible to discover very reasonably your whereabouts in relation to the map. The problem with all of these methods is that they are not always obtainable. In the dark, in a fog, in the middle of a large swamp where everything looks alike, or on a large body of water, none of these methods could help you find your position on the map. Yes you could use the stars for celestial navigation (I don't know any sportsmen who use this method), you might hear a foghorn that will help you with direction, maybe lights on shore, but the normal methods are of little or no assistance in these unfavourable conditions.

Now we have the GPS, which has no problem working in the dark, in a fog or in heavy precipitation. It actually works better on a large body of water because it can "see" more satellites, and as a result could well give a more accurate "fix". It now becomes a matter of transferring the GPS "fix" data to the map. With a little instruction and some practice this undertaking is very easily accomplished. The ability to make the map and GPS work as a team becomes a huge benefit to those that travel in the outdoors. No longer is man a captive of the elements when trying to find his exact location. By using a GPS your position on an accurate map can be pinpointed within meters.

Maps, maps, maps, we have all kinds of maps. Some are more useful than others, and their usefulness is in direct relation to their accuracy. Topographical maps are the ones mainly used by fishermen and hunters. These types of maps are considered fairly accurate and have printed on them all the data that is required to take and plot accurate positions.

Of course any map can be used with a GPS, it only needs to be calibrated. Calibration is accomplished by scanning it in to a computer that has GPS software and then by using several precise locations (as determined by a GPS) it is then made accurate. A good example of this is the "lake" maps usually put out by Natural Resources. These maps will show the name, location, water depth, shoals, boat landings etc for different lakes. These are not very precise, but after calibration can be a much better navigation tool. Any kind of map can be used, even road maps, but they are usually of such large scale that they would not be very useful for local use.



Maps with UTM (Universal Transverse Mercator) grid lines are the easiest to deal with when it comes to transferring position fixes to and from the map. Most maps will also have Longitude and Latitude grid lines on them. They too can be used to transfer fixes, but are not nearly as easy to use. For those that want to use Lat/Long for their fixes they can use a tool called a Lat and Long Ruler. A much easier tool called a "roamer" is used with the UTM system. A roamer is a small plastic tool that is laid on the map and is used to read the UTM grid lines. Depending on the scale of the map, position fixes can be within 10-15 meters. Any good map reading book, one on GPS or someone with these skills can teach this method in a matter of minutes. Once learned, this method is then used to transfer GPS position fixes to the map. Most roamer tools are universal, in that they include several different map scales and require that you use the correct one for whichever map is being used at the time. When buying a roamer make sure that you buy one that has the same scale(s) as the maps you plan to use.

As a coincidence of learning to plot fixes on a map, GPS users can also take

accurate positions from a map and transfer them to a GPS. Using the same roamer, fixes can be calculated and then be used to make a Waypoint in the GPS. If there is a certain shoal in a lake that you wish to fish, make it a Waypoint in the GPS and then when ready, use the GOTO command to take you there. The ability to use map and GPS together as a navigational team means that outdoors enthusiasts have much more control of their whereabouts, how to get there and how to return. As in many skills, practice makes perfect, and in this case perfection allows one to move about in the outdoors with much more confidence, even under adverse conditions.

For those with a computer and the proper GPS cables along with some GPS software, the transfer of data between map and GPS can be done in the comfort of the home. The previous article on *GPS and Computer* examines the many tasks that can be accomplished when a GPS and computer are used jointly. Map and GPS make a fine pair; a map, GPS and computer make an outstanding team.

Man has always taken new inventions and used them for pleasure. No matter what their original intention was, someone will invent a game or pastime using the capabilities of the latest. The GPS was no exception and in May 2002 when the US government removed Selective Availability (SA was a man-made form of GPS error that was intentionally introduced by the military and was intended to deny military adversaries the level of GPS accuracy available to U.S. and allied forces.) there was instantly obtainable a much greater level of accuracy to the general public. Now civilian users could obtain accuracy to within 10 meters, and usually better. This new ability to move with exactness anywhere in the world spawned some new leisure pastimes. One of the first new activities was "geocaching". "Geocaching is an entertaining adventure game for GPS users. Participating in a cache hunt is a good way to take advantage of the wonderful features and capabilities of a GPS unit." Basically the idea is to hide a cache at a known Latitude\Longitude location and then by using the Internet, tell people where it is. The fun is not only in finding the cache using your GPS, but to participate by taking and leaving some small

*Continued on next page.*



# Chain Pickerel – Some Anglers Think They're Great

A couple of my angling friends tell me they look forward every year to pickerel fishing in Digby County lakes. "They



Ed Coleman

fight like crazy and are some fun to catch," one said. "They aren't that bad eating when you skin 'em and fry them."

I've had similar reports from other angling acquaintances, that chain pickerel fishing is great sport. Basically, I'm told, it's because the fish are ferocious and pound for pound have few peers in the piscatorial world when it comes to peeling line off a reel. One angler described them as a "combination trout and shark."

As most anglers know, chain pickerel have been illegally introduced into a number of lakes, and have literally taken over these waters. At the last unofficial count, lakes now holding pickerel numbered 90.

Since pickerel generally decimate other fish life when introduced, anglers and conservationists are alarmed. Biologists say that trout and other game fish populations usually disappear once pickerel become established.

However, not everyone feels that introducing pickerel is wrong. I've had anglers tell me that while they don't condone it, some of the lakes where pickerel were dumped literally were dead as far as sport fishing goes. Today, thanks to the pickerel, these lakes now offer good recreational angling.

While I don't condone pickerel dumping either, people who claim it has rejuvenated some lakes have a point. Take the smallmouth, for example. Many of the lakes that today are classic bass waters had smallmouths introduced illegally. Smallmouth angling arguably is the second most popular fresh water angling sport in the province today, thanks in part to illegal introductions. Many lakes that are now prime smallmouth waters were once nearly devoid of trout.

"The chain pickerel is somewhat of a controversial fish, with some anglers defending it for its sporting qualities, others condemning it as a pest," Frederick H. Wooding writes in the Book of Canadian Fishes. Wooding says that the fish has established a "fair reputation for itself" in Quebec. McClane's Fishing Encyclopaedia says that the chain pickerel is a popular game fish in the eastern and southern portions of the U.S. and offers a year around fishery. Both Wood-

ing and McClane observe that trout fishing tactics, spin and fly, will produce pickerel.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries website notes that while the pickerel is "not a sought after sportfish in Canada," it is second in popularity only to largemouth bass in the eastern seaboard states of the U.S. As for its flesh, the Department describes it as tasty, white and flaky.

I found nearly 900 websites devoted to chain pickerel on the Internet; the few sites I surveyed condemned the introduction of pickerel for its negative impact on trout, but praised the sporting qualities of the fish.

Obviously chain pickerel are not welcome in lakes that hold brook trout, rainbow trout and smallmouth bass; or perhaps in any lake for that matter. However, should we considering introducing pickerel into ponds that have no recreational fishing? Would they provide good winter angling in ponds?

Perhaps our fisheries biologists could address these questions. Maybe, just maybe, there's a place for chain pickerel in some of our backwaters and watery byways. ♣

*Ed Coleman is a well known outdoors writer who lives in Annapolis Valley.*

## GPS and Map...

*Continued from previous page.*

item from the cache and then logging your visit. The quote is from [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) where there is listed geocaches now in 157 countries. This site, among others, will explain the whole process and give the locations (in Lat\Long or UTM) of all the current caches. Right now there is about 2300 caches in Canada, with nearly 100 in Nova Scotia. Canada's first geocache is located near Hubbards and was placed in June of 2000. Many places throughout the world are now holding Event Caches where GPS enthusiasts gather to have a kind of GPS field day with mini-cache events, and many localities now have GPS clubs that have regular meetings.

Another offshoot of the GPS's accuracy capability is the "degree confluence project". "The goal of the project is to visit each of the latitude and longitude

integer degree intersections in the world, and to take pictures at each location. The pictures and stories will then be posted at [www.confluence.org](http://www.confluence.org)." An example of this is 46(N 64(W that is very near Tidnish, NS. There are 13 major intersections in or near Nova Scotia, and at the time of writing only 9 have been visited. There are many amusing stories (and great pictures) at this website of what people have found at these major intersections.

Although the handheld GPS units used by hunters and fishermen are quite accurate, they are not accurate enough for surveying. But that does not mean that it cannot be done. It is as simple as walking your property and taking fixes at all the corners. These positions can be fed in to GPS software on your PC that will then give you an outline of your

property with Lat and Long (or UTM). If it is then projected onto a calibrated map of your area a good printed copy can be output. The printout is not super accurate, but if you have several acres then what is 5 – 10 meters here or there? GPSs can also be used to find old survey markers. By taking enough time when doing fixes so that the GPS has time to "average" the position you should be able to come within 5 meters or less. Uses for the GPS are still being invented quite regularly, and the trend will likely continue for some time. Get out there and use your GPS. The more familiar you are, the more you can use it comfortably if a situation arises where it can get you out of trouble. ♣

*KJ Kane is a 12 year Hunter Education Instructor who lives near Hubbards. [kjkane@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:kjkane@ns.sympatico.ca)*

# Nova Scotia Sport Fish Registry

By Jason LeBlanc

## "I Heard A Zzzzzzzzzzzzz"

*One day I was fishing off my dock for little yellow perch. I had my drag set low so they would actually put up a fight. Since the fishing wasn't that great I had kind of dozed off. All of a sudden I heard a zzzzzzzzzzzzz. I thought, "What the heck is that?" Then I remembered I was fishing and I had my drag set low and that was my line going out. So I looked up and saw my line by the neighbor's dock. I tightened my drag and started reeling in. When I got it in I found out it was the biggest bass I had ever caught off my dock. That was when I was pretty young and since then I have caught some trophy bass....Ben Anderson - Age 9*

Everyone enjoys a great fishing story, and this one is one of my favorites. Some of us spend an entire lifetime in pursuit of a fish that we consider to be a trophy. Anglers have been known to pine for entire winters for opening day and one more crack at "the one that got away". For some, catching the largest specimen of a particular species marks a milestone in an angling career. Others hope to gain some measure of fame, notoriety or at least bragging rights at the summer camp.



Many angling jurisdictions maintain provincial or state fish records for large fish and a National Fish Registry is hosted by Canadian Sportfishing at [www.canadian-sportfishing.com](http://www.canadian-sportfishing.com). Nova Scotia boasts two entries in this registry; a 54.06 lbs striped bass caught in the Mira River, Cape Breton County in 1994 and a new Canadian record for chain pickerel from Pothiers's Mill Pond, Yarmouth County that weighed 5.7 lbs breaking the former record of 5.38 lbs caught in Doctors Lake, Yarmouth County. Up until now, Inland Fisheries has only kept unofficial records of large fish caught in the province, many of which have been reported on in prior issues. Although Ontario produces the majority of record fish in Canada; 50 percent and 52 percent of all entries for Catch and Keep and Live Release categories respectively, Nova Scotia has the only entries east of Quebec except for a record shortnose sturgeon which was caught in New Brunswick.

Regardless of species sought, nearly all anglers want to catch big fish. Factors influencing a waterbody's capability of producing a record fish include its size (large area), unique fish genetics and an abundance of preferred forage fish. Growth rates can influence how many large fish a lake can produce. Besides girth, length is the most important factor determining weight, and length comes with age.

## Unofficial Records For Large Fish Caught In Nova Scotia

Species	Weight	Year
Speckled Trout	7.5 lbs	1871
Brown Trout	7.5 lbs	1979
Striped Bass <sup>1</sup>	57.5 lbs	1979
Striped Bass <sup>3</sup>	54.06 lbs	1994
Smallmouth Bass <sup>2</sup>	5.25 lbs	1997
Atlantic Salmon <sup>1</sup>	52.5 lbs	1927
Landlocked Salmon	4.26 lbs	1988
White Perch	1.5 lbs	1978
Shad	4.1 lbs	1979
Chain Pickerel <sup>3</sup>	5.7 lbs	2002

<sup>1</sup> Fish would have broken Canadian record if it had been registered

<sup>2</sup> Live Release

<sup>3</sup> Official Canadian Record



Lakes with the greatest trophy potential have fast growth rates and low mortality rates (this is where catch and release or size and slot limits play a role). Even in these lakes, smaller fish will usually outnumber trophy-sized fish. Fisheries managers continually discuss the use of special regulations to create trophy fisheries. Under this type of management a high slot limit may be used to protect truly large fish. For example, 30 - 40 cm (12 - 14 in) smallmouth bass may be protected, thus, anglers could keep small fish (and reduce competition) as well as an occasional trophy. Another approach may be to have a minimum length limit of 35 cm (14 in) for speckled trout in combination with a reduced bag limit and gear restriction to shift the size structure of a population to more, larger individuals.

After consultation with anglers and sport fishing organizations through the Recreational Sportfishery Advisory process, a Nova Scotia Sport Fish Registry

*Continued on next page.*



# Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

Recently there has been a substantial increase in the attention being paid to Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) by the media, state and federal natural resource agencies, and hunters and outdoor enthusiasts. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) developed this page to provide background information on CWD and explain what is being done to determine if the disease is in Florida, and if it is not, what we are doing to make sure it never gets here.

## What Is Chronic Wasting Disease?

Chronic Wasting Disease is a progressive, neurological, debilitating disease that belongs to a family of diseases known as Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs). It is believed to be caused by an abnormal protein called a prion. CWD has been diagnosed in mule deer, white-tailed deer, and Rocky Mountain elk in captive herds and in the wild. Other cervids (antlered animals) may also be susceptible.

CWD attacks the brains of infected animals, causing them to become emaciated, display abnormal behavior, and lose bodily functions. *CWD is a fatal disease.* Clinical signs include excessive salivation and grinding of teeth, increased drinking and urination, dramatic loss of weight and body condition, poor hair coat, staggering, and finally death. Behavioral

changes, including decreased interaction with other animals, listlessness, lowering of the head, blank facial expression, and repetitive walking in set patterns also may occur.

## How Is CWD Transmitted?

Transmission of CWD occurs by direct contact with body fluids (feces, urine, saliva) or by indirect contact (contaminated environment). The prion is persistent in the environment and premises may remain infective for years. Crowding, such as in deer farms or by artificial feeding, facilitates transmission. *There is no evidence that CWD can be transmitted to livestock or humans.*

## Where Is CWD Found?

CWD has been found in free-ranging cervids in Colorado, Illinois, Wyoming, Nebraska, South Dakota, Wisconsin, New Mexico, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. It has been found in captive herds in Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Kansas, Montana, Wisconsin, Minnesota and South Korea. The core endemic area is contiguous portions of Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska. The prevalence of CWD in this area is approximately <1% - 15% in mule deer and <1% in elk, although this varies greatly by location. *CWD has not been found in Florida or any other southeastern state.*

## How Is CWD Diagnosed?

Currently the only practical method for diagnosing CWD is through analysis of brain stem tissue or lymph nodes from dead animals. *There is no practical live-animal test.* A tonsillar biopsy may be done on live animals; however, this is difficult and deer have to be held until diagnosis.

## How Is CWD Controlled In A Population?

*Control is extremely difficult once CWD becomes established in a natural population.* This is because of the lack of a practical live-animal test, long incubation periods, and the persistence of the prion in the environment. Also, there is no vaccine or treatment once an animal gets the disease. If detected early in free-ranging populations, i.e. when prevalence is low, then eradication may be an achievable goal. This is not currently considered possible in the core endemic area; Wisconsin, however, has initiated an aggressive eradication program in the portion of the state where CWD has been found. 🍄

*Source: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.*


## NS Sport Fish Registry...

*Continued from previous page.*

will be established for the 2003 angling season which will serve as a database of record fish caught in the province. Anglers are encouraged to submit entries in "Live Release", "Catch and Keep" and "Youth" categories. Length and weight measurements can be taken in various ways. Generally, length is taken from the tip of the mouth to the tip of the folded tail. For released fish both length and girth (a measurement around the mid-section of the fish) measurements are required. Fish in the "Catch and Keep" category must be weighed on a registered scale and all entries must be accompanied by clear photos and witness attestations. Official rules, application forms and minimum length and weight requirements are being established. These will be posted on our website along with a list of the top ten submissions for each species and category as the program de-

velops. Anglers are also encouraged to be conservation minded. Catch and release and selective harvest can ensure trophy catches and memorable experiences in the future. For more information about the Nova Scotia Sportfish Registry, contact our office at (902) 485-5056 or visit our website [www.gov.ns.ca/nsafl/sportfishing](http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsafl/sportfishing) 🍄

*Jason LeBlanc, Fisheries Biologist  
Nova Scotia Department of  
Agriculture and Fisheries.*



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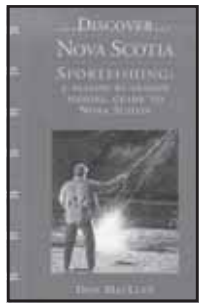
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The text contains lots of tips and a 'do-it-yourself' section on the most successful flies and knots for fly tying. It also contains tales and stories of the great fishing guides, and the legendary fly-tyers of the past. As well, there are wonderful stories of the celebrities who came to Nova Scotia for the adventure and to catch that elusive perfect fish.

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With personal knowledge of the habits and ecology of the many fish species, Don MacLean is able to introduce the new angler to many streams and habitats that will offer some success. As well, the book will help experienced anglers find new species or places to drop a line.

Don MacLean is a biologist who works on sportfish management. His weekly column: "Tight Lines" appears in several Nova Scotian newspapers, and his

articles on fishing, fly tying and traditional skills have appeared in *Eastern Woods and Waters*, *Atlantic Salmon Journal*, *Saltscapes*, *Canada's Outdoor Sportsman*, *Fly Tyer* and *Nova Outdoors*.

Published by Nimbus, ISBN: 1-55109-433-9, soft cover, black and white photos, 156 pages, \$15.95.

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Applications for both the **Canadian Firearms Safety Course** and the **Nova Scotia Hunter Education Course** can be picked up at any Department of Natural Resources office, all Nova Scotia Community Colleges or download at:

[www.gov.ns.ca/natr/hunt/hunting.htm](http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/hunt/hunting.htm)

For more information on a **Minors Firearms License**, please call the Department of Justice at: 1-800-731-4000 (Ext. 6505).

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# Illinois Euthanasia Bill Is A Disguised Attack On All Hunting, Trapping And Fishing

This *Alert* from the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance is simply another indication of how inventive the anti-hunting forces are and why we all have to watch our legislatures very closely. We have our own federal anti-cruelty legislation in the Senate right now which, although being pushed by the animal rights groups as being a benign piece of legislation, has the potential to cause serious problems for farmers, trappers, hunters and others.

## Illinois Euthanasia Bill Is A Disguised Attack On All Hunting, Trapping And Fishing

Illinois sportsmen must rally to defeat dangerous, precedent-setting legislation that was recently introduced in the Illinois Senate. Senate Bill 2431 would set standards for the euthanasia of wildlife. The American Veterinary Medical Association would set the standards. Although there is little time for the bill to pass before the end of session, there are multiple reasons why it must be defeated.

Senate Bill 2431 destroys effective

trapping of beaver, mink, muskrat, otter and raccoon by banning water sets. This accounts for the majority of trapping that takes place in Illinois.

The authors of SB 2431 are hiding the bill's impact on hunting. According to U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance lawyers, the measure applies to the dispatch of all wildlife - deer, ducks, doves, etc.

Recently, the American Veterinary Medical Association objected to a woman shooting her own dog as an act of euthanasia. Now, the same group would set the standard for hunting.

The legislation is precedent setting. Neither veterinarians nor any other private organization sets wildlife rules in Illinois or any state. If this bill passes, any change in the AVMA euthanasia standards will automatically become law. If anti-hunters make up the majority on the Board of Directors, they will be able to change wildlife policy without the approval of Illinois' wildlife professionals.

The impact of this bill on the public will be tremendous. It requires that any animal causing damage be turned over to a wildlife rehabilitator whenever possible. Instead of controlling wildlife, this bill

guarantees the proliferation of nuisance wildlife. The excessive beaver and raccoon population that would come as a result of this bill will cause well contamination, water damage and an increase in the spread of rabies.

Finally, the bill is an invitation to the animal rights lobby and their army of lawyers who could argue that it applies to not only trapping and hunting, but to fishing as well.

Illinois sportsmen should take action now! Senate Bill 2431 is one of the most blatantly pro-animal rights pieces of legislation ever written, and it must be defeated immediately. Illinois sportsmen can find their senator and contact him or her by calling (217) 782-8223, or by using the Legislative Action Center on the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance homepage, [www.ussportsmen.org](http://www.ussportsmen.org).

*Submitted by John B. Holdstock, BC Wildlife Federation, Kelowna, BC.*

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The heart and soul of the Eastern Shore Wildlife Rehabilitation and Rescue Center is not just about the rehabilitation of thousands of birds and mammals. Just as importantly, it gives us the wonderful opportunity to educate the children of our communities about the natural world around us. Our first annual open house accomplished this whole-heartedly. The hundreds of people including many families with children who attended exceeded all of our expectations. A fun and informative day was had by all. Several of the permanent residents became the stars. The children especially liked "Zorro" the skunk, "Gracie" the 40-year-old goose and the baby squirrels, raccoons and foxes. We are already busy planning our 2nd annual open house for September 20, 2003.

This past year was full of surprises! We have had several very unusual visitors; the strangest of all being a White Pelican. He must have gotten blown off course, or maybe he was exploring new territory! We also had a visit from a Least Bittern and a Virginia Rail this summer. We had

an unexpected baby bobcat arrive in very late summer who had been hit by a car in the Lake Echo area. The kind gentleman who stopped to rescue him thought he was scooping up a domestic kitten! It didn't take him long to realize his mistake in identifying this orphan. It was a bobcat, we named 'Alie'.

The Center has seen over 3500 song-birds, sea birds and mammals to date, with a total of 92 different species. Every day is a learning experience. Did you know that baby snapping turtles are born in late October, that crows really can talk, and that even a 'bit too friendly' river otter will eventually take his place in the wild? We have also made good progress on the

renovation of the main barn with plans for completion of the nursery in early spring. Fund raising will be focused toward a new roof and further renovations.

In our fast food, drive-through, quick paced world, we need to take the time to embrace nature as we once did. When observing children, I am always amazed at the excitement, vitality and true passion they show for the wildlife around them.

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# What's The Best Game Bird Load?

By Ed Coleman

Ask five hunters this question - what's the best load for game bird and rabbits? - and you might get five different answers.

The various replies to this question may have tyro hunters scratching their heads. It seems logical that there should be one best, all-around shotgun load for pheasants, an all-around load for ducks, and one for geese, grouse, woodcock, rab-



photo courtesy of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources.

bits, and so on.

There is, of course, and that load appears to be whatever the individual hunters thinks it is. In other words, every hunter uses the ideal game load for whatever he's hunting - the load that works best for him.

First of all, I agree with the experienced hunters who think this statement is, well, illogical. Despite personal preferences, there must be one ideal load for each game species.

However, let me give you the results of an informal survey I conducted and you'll see that this statement isn't so illogical after all. I asked hunters one question: What's your favourite pheasant load?

Let's start with hunting dog breeder and guide George Boyd, Aylesford. Boyd tells me his favourite pheasant load is a three-inch Federal shell loaded with one ounce of No. 5 steel. He hunts pheasants over pointing dogs, the German Wirehair.

Bob Williams, Chipman Corner, hunts pheasants with a flushing dog, the Labrador Retriever. Bob is an avid, all-around hunter who uses his Lab on a variety of game. His favourite pheasant shell is a high brass loaded with an ounce and a quarter of No. 6 lead.

Springer Spaniel enthusiast Steve Teal, Waterville, prefers a three-inch steel load for pheasants in shot sizes No. 4 and No. 2. Clyde Earle, Kentville, prefers a high brass two-and three quarter inch load of number 4. Occasionally - and mostly in late season - Clyde switches to a three-inch shell loaded with number 2s.

Ed Ward runs a gun and tackle shop

in Coldbrook. The majority of his pheasant hunting customers buy long range shells loaded with number 6 shot. Ed hunts pheasants with a pointing dog, using number 4 shot with a heavy powder load.

Now let's go to some of the people who manufacture shotgun shells. I went to the Remington website and asked them what they recommended as the best load for pheasants. They find that the most popular, all-around load is No. 6 (in lead) when shooting over a dog at normal ranges. In late season, when flushes are farther out, Remington recommends high brass number 4 or 5.

In my favourite book on pheasant hunting (Ringneck! by E. C. Janes) the author writes that number 6 shot is "probably the best all-around choice for pheasant hunting." Janes adds that heavier shot - 5s - are better in shooting late season, winter-feathered cocks. Other manuals on pheasant hunting recommend 5 and 6 shot.

Like Janes, I once considered a load of number 6 as ideal for pheasants. I used a low brass number 6 in my open barrel, and a high brass 6 in my tight barrel. That's past tense. Two guys I hunt with regularly in recent seasons convinced me by example that a heavy load of number 4 is more efficient than number 6 in bringing down roosters.

Concluding this discussion, please note the various opinions on what load is best for pheasants. I'm sure that if I did a survey on grouse, waterfowl, rabbits, and other game, there'd also be a variety of opinions on the best load.

Ed Coleman is a well known outdoors writer who lives in Annapolis Valley.

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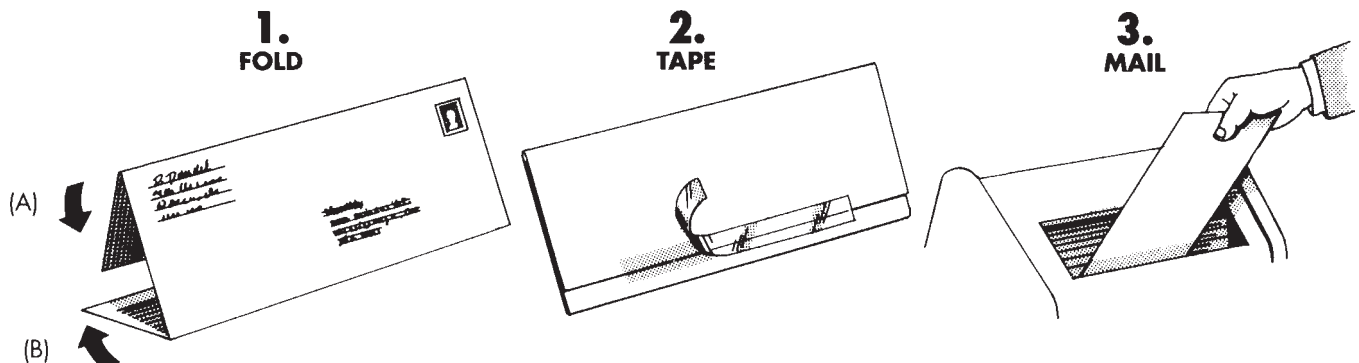


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