

Summary of Incidents to Wildlife at Grenadier Pond Related to Fishing: Conclusions and Recommendations

Table of Contents:

- 1) Summary of Incidents to Wildlife at Grenadier Pond Related to Fishing
- 2) List of Recommendations
- 3) Problems with Promoting Urban Fishing, Grenadier Pond Including
- 4) Map of Incidents to Wildlife at Grenadier Pond
- 5) Appendix: TWC Support Letter

Summary of Incidents to Wildlife at Grenadier Pond Related to Fishing

The incidents, occurring as a consequence of fishing activities, are happening all over Grenadier Pond's shoreline available for fishing, nevertheless their frequency and severity corresponds closely to the numbers of people fishing at specific location as well as wildlife presence.

There is no doubt that the areas of the highest occurrence of the incidents to the wildlife due to impacts of fishing have been the same as the areas visited by the biggest number of fishers throughout the fishing season. According to the records and observation carried out by the volunteers as well as agencies such as TWC or Toronto Animal Services there is a consistent pattern showing that the locations along the shoreline with the most intense fishing are also the areas with the highest numbers of reported wildlife incidents.

Wildlife is being injured and killed as a consequence of too many people fishing at Grenadier Pond which situation is only made worse by a massive evidence of reckless and irresponsible behavior, lacking adequate fishing skills, while illegal activities seem to be a part of this highly unsettling picture as well.

Most fishers, about 90%, are crowding the shoreline beginning approximately towards the end of the naturalized area and ending at the south-east corner of the pond, while the biggest density is regularly seen in between utility building and left of the pier, where the grass is cut short and concrete is lining the shore.

Coincidentally, during the peak months of summer, along the same area, many waterfowl choose to rest or forage, since it offers open space, food, shade and breeze during the hot days (see bright blue-green lines on attached map). The birds, gathering here on shore are mainly Canada Geese and mallards, while wood ducks and diving ducks can be seen swimming just along this shoreline, including families with newly born ducklings.

As the birds are competing for the same area with people fishing, this part of shoreline becomes for them a kind of "mine field", since the amount of fishing lines with hooks, etc., scattered all around in the grass is so huge that practically every square foot carries a "hidden mine"(see area marked with blue and red line on attached map).

Apparently, also the turtles are lured to this area to forage along with fish. Fishing can have serious impacts for the turtles living in the pond, especially for the snapping turtles, as they are often attracted to the organic or live bait on fishhooks, or the fish themselves. It is not uncommon to see fishers using shrimps or ham in addition to worm and small fish to attract their catch.

Wildlife swallow hooks utilized by those fishing and intended to lure and attract the sought-after fish. The birds become entangled in carelessly discarded fishing line either in the pond water or on the shore, consequently, they are trapped, maimed or die. Occasionally they are found hanging in trees 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.

Last summer, the overwhelming number of recorded incidents, about 90%, occurred along the described (see red line on attached map), fishers heavily used shoreline. These included both the birds and turtles.

As of now, only about 10% of fishers choose to fish within so called "naturalized area", the shoreline beginning at the north end of the pond and ending just ahead of utility house (see green line on attached map). This shoreline is less accessible because of a robust presence of water vegetation, overhanging tree branches and fallen trees all of which make fishing much more risky. At the same time, these particular features work as a natural deterrent especially to less skilful and novice fishers as well as to the groups.

Conclusions

Under the present circumstances, there are no safe areas for fishing at Grenadier Pond. There are only the areas of higher or lesser occurrence of the incidents depending on intensity of fishing activities and presence of the wildlife which situation prompted us to seek a provisional ban on fishing at first place.

Unless there are significant changes in place, governing the fishing activities at the pond, this situation will not change for better.

Moreover, just restricting of fishing from the shoreline available for this activity today to smaller areas south of the naturalized shoreline, prior to implementing of these significant, regulatory, changes, could actually even increase the number of incidents to wildlife by adding even more pressure on areas, that are already highly stressed by too intense fishing.

The absence of enforcement and adequate monitoring to help control this rapidly developing situation greatly accelerates this gloomy scenario, which is poised to go on and even worsen as the population influx into Toronto core continues.

In a longer perspective, at present existing uncontrolled and unrestrained urban fishing and the heavy toll, that it has it been inflicting in terms of harm to the wildlife and natural environment, over fishing and adverse public reaction, at many places, including Grenadier Pond, is not sustainable.

Despite of its rare natural attributes, Grenadier Pond has been suffering the consequences of the policies lacking in focus to protect and enhance its natural environment and the wildlife.

Grenadier Pond is located within High Park, an Environmentally Sensitive Area. 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). It is used for foraging and serves as a migratory stopover for numerous other species—diving ducks, herons, kingfishers, other marsh ducks and many passerines. 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.)

Species harmed or killed include Canada Geese, Cardinals, Snapping Turtles and Wood Ducks and Mallards. 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.

List of Recommendations

As it follows from Conclusions included in our **Summary**, significant changes, governing fishing activities at Grenadier Pond, would have to be implemented in order to bring into being more balanced and environmentally conscious fundamentals for fishing activities.

These changes are needed to promote safer fishing, while preventing wildlife injuries that have been lately occurring in such a drastic rate.

These changes would have to be implemented prior or at the same time as any decision regarding restricting or changing of the current shoreline available for fishing to make such a decision really meaningful.

If the fishing is allowed to continue in the currently unrestrained and uncontrolled manner, any modification to the fishing area may not produce positive results but only shift the problems elsewhere along the pond's shoreline.

Suggested changes:

- **Regular and intense monitoring by a dedicated conservation officers and efficient enforcement are a MUST under the existing circumstances**
- **Changing a focus of promotional strategies regarding urban fishing** from existing message to build more balanced and environmentally conscious fundamentals for fishing activities, to promote safer fishing and generally focus more on appreciating wildlife and natural environment. In a longer view, with a growing population in focus, this is a prudent way to go.
- **Exclude Grenadier Pond from fishing days activities** or any similar activities promoting fishing to large groups
- **Have a seasonal recreation staff assigned to do on-site education** of the fishers where fishing is permitted
- **Both the education and enforcement staff should be prepared to deal with people who speak little English** (e.g. have materials in other languages, have staff who can speak the most common other languages, etc.)
- **Make mandatory for all fishers to wear their licenses visibly displayed** (either hanging it around their neck or pinned to the clothes), this could help to deter people currently fishing illegally and make any monitoring or enforcement easier and more efficient
- **Mandatory clean-up of all discarded equipment and items**
- **Consider naturalizing the remaining east side shoreline** that would help to reduce a usage of this very area by a number of waterfowl, including Canada Goose, presently gathering on this grassy strip lining the shore. This enhancing of the shoreline would also reduce congestion of fishers occurring lately along this grassy, obstacle free, area. **Too**

intense use of this grassy part of shoreline by fishers contributes immensely to an alarming number of incidents to wildlife due to fishing.

- **Have signs with fishing regulations and recommendations for the pond installed along all areas where fishing is permitted**
- **Customize fishing regulations to Grenadier Pond's needs** as it is done at some other parks and conservation areas by placing the emphasis on the natural environment and wildlife protection, conservation and education as oppose to current "anything goes" situation. For recreational urban fishing to continue in future and to play positive role, fishing regulations and ethics must undergo a major change to address changing urban reality.

The following are some suggestions in this respect:

- **Shorten fishing season to July and August only to** avoid peak wildlife breeding period and bass spawning season
 - **Allow barbless hooks only**
 - **No lead**
 - **No organic or live bait** (that could go a long way in protecting turtles)
 - **No night fishing**
-

Problems with Promoting Urban Fishing, Grenadier Pond Including

Written by Lenka Holubec, a member of the High Park Natural Environment Committee

When we look closely into many factors contributing to negative impacts of fishing on the wildlife at Grenadier Pond we cannot overlook **a role played by a massive promotion of urban fishing.**

The attached pdf file titled **Summary of Incidents to Wildlife at Grenadier Pond Related to Fishing: Conclusions and Recommendations** describes in detail the situation that has resulted in the most disastrous year on record in respect to the frequency of incidents and the variety of affected species. **This alarming reality has prompted us to seek a provisional ban on fishing and/or significant modifications to the conditions contributing to these adverse impacts.**

What becomes clear when paying attention to the scale, means (Internet) and targets of urban fishing promotional campaigns is that over the past couple of years this promotion, by both governments and private agencies, has become massive. It is run very effectively and mainly targeting urban youth as well as ethnic communities.

Fishing, as much as hunting, has been not just a human passion but for a long period of human history also means of our survival. Sport fishing remains a recreational outlet for these ancient human instincts and a popular outdoor activity. For that reason it is a very easy "sell" to the youth, who are always looking for excitement and to the communities where it has been a long standing tradition and used to be a way of supplementing their diet.

Nevertheless, fishing is a resource-based activity, conducted within natural environment and habitat for many wildlife species and for that reason requiring a very comprehensive and prudent management. Especially today, amidst the rapidly growing metropolis as Toronto, urban fishing ought to be managed extremely carefully and with a long view in mind in order to avoid becoming a high impact "out of control passion and pastime" detrimental to nature and wildlife.

Unlike in many other countries where to obtain fishing license a person must pass a comprehensive exam, it is very easy to fish legally in Ontario. Most Canadian residents need an Ontario-issued Outdoors Card and fishing license tag to fish in Ontario if they are at least 18 years old but have not reached their 65th birthday. At a cost of roughly two movie tickets, the residents of Ontario can buy a One-year Sport Fishing License Tag plus Outdoors Card online.

At this point, there are too many people fishing legally or illegally in Toronto inner city water venues already, while monitoring and enforcement are absent or a very low profile which situation is made worse by fishing regulations inadequate for high density, ethnically diverse environment.

Significant changes are required to halt the mounting evidence of harm inflicted through fishing activities especially to waterfowl, turtles and other species surviving at Grenadier Pond but also other urban ponds, rivers and the lakefront.

We need urgently monitoring, education, enforcement and a change of regulations governing urban fishing and obtaining of a fishing license to modify the current abysmal situation.

We need to put resources into building fundamentals of prudent management of urban fishing activities before engaging into any further promotion. Good management must come first, not the other way around.

To illustrate this situation, the following is a reflection on the subject of a recent promotional event at Grenadier Pond that took place on Oct. 24, 2012.

There are many concerning aspects of this event, as described above, in regards to promotion of urban fishing in general.

Additionally, the electrofishing method used that day at Grenadier Pond to attract fish for the sake of students is also highly questionable under the circumstances.

Since "it is well known that electro fishing techniques are selective to larger fish..." (see the article below), we should be asking if the use of this method has been really warranted for a fairly small body of water such as Grenadier Pond, and under all applying conditions? Or was it just used by promoters of urban fishing to "impress" students gathered at the pond on Oct 24?

"The students were amazingly attentive, cheerfully high-fiving whenever the word of the day, "PASSION" was used by any of us!"(see the article from NationalProStaff.com website Oct 25,2012 below)

Is not PASSION getting here in a way of a more balanced and responsible view of outdoor activities, especially that of urban fishing in a long run?

Links:

Item #1 article on effects of electro fishing: THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF ELECTROFISHING

Item #2 article by urban fishing promoter, Pro Angler David Chong, Oct 24 Outdoor Classroom Part Two, Content from NationalProStaff.com website Oct 25,2012

<http://www.tws-west.org/transactions/Emery.pdf>

THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF ELECTROFISHING

Electrofishing is a valuable tool frequently used to assess and manage fish populations. Techniques and equipment for electrofishing have been perfected over the years, **but there are drawbacks that some users fail to recognize. One of these drawbacks, physiological stress, can damage or kill a fish weeks after initial contact with the electrical current.**

Electrofishing is a technique whereby electrical energy is put into the water and fish, intercepting this energy, are drawn toward the probes and incapacitated in such a way that they can be captured with nets. The movement of fish toward the source of electricity is called galvanotaxis

and is believed to be a result of direct stimulation of the central and autonomic nervous systems which control the fish's voluntary and involuntary reactions. The involuntary contraction of the fish's muscles causes a forced swimming toward the probe.

It is well known that electrofishing techniques are selective to larger fish. A bigger fish has more total surface area than a smaller fish, thus receives or is exposed to more current or total energy, and is, therefore, easier to collect. Larger fish usually receive a greater shock because total body voltage increases with length.

Delayed Effects of Electrofishing

As stated earlier, the strength of the field, and duration or exposure time that a fish remains in an electrical field, determines whether the fish will live or die. Death can occur immediately after shocking, and in these instances is usually caused by respiratory failure, hemorrhaging, or fractured vertebrae. Death can also occur days or weeks later, and in these instances, is most likely the result of the combined effects of stress, exhaustion, or physical damage. In one early report, delayed mortality was called "lingering death".

<http://www.nationalprostaff.com/report/4078/High+School+Kids+Converge+on+Grenadier+Pond+in+High+Park>
<http://torontourbanfishing.com/?p=124>

Oct 24 Outdoor Classroom Part Two

Content from NationalProStaff.com website Oct 25,2012

Pro Angler David Chong wrote the following article:

Hopefully this will be the first of many future events designed to introduce inner city high school students to our beloved sport of fishing! After how this year started with my unfortunate run-in with the Metro Toronto Marine unit, who would have thought that we'd be able to have something like this happen in Toronto? Today (Wed. Oct. 24, 2012) 90 high school students from 3 different schools (Western Tech, Dante, and Bishop Marroco) converged onto Grenadier Pond in High Park! **This was made possible through the efforts of Allan Crawford from the City of Toronto, P.C. Candy Graham, the Credit Valley Conservation Authority, the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, the MNR and a slew of volunteers!**

National Pro Staff was also front & centre along with David Clark (executive of TUFA) and the Toronto Urban Fishing Ambassadors. We had several stations set-up and the theme of the day was "The Science, Skill and Stuff of Fishing!" Our friends from the CVCA & TRCA were there to handle the "Science" portion of the day. **They brought their electro-shocking boat and shocked up numerous fish species so that the students could see exactly which ones were found in Grenadier Pond.** (Read on negative effects of electro fishing in article above) They covered fish species identification, the handling of fish and the catch & release aspect of fishing! They did a great job and brought in a diverse selection of fish species for the students to observe. There were Northern Pike, Largemouth Bass, Common Carp, Black Crappie, Yellow Perch, Bluegills, White Suckers and Brown Bullheads in the holding tubs for all the kids to check out!

Myself along with David Clark and a bunch of the Toronto Urban Fishing Ambassadors took care of the "Skills" portion of the day. I spoke about fishing in general, touching on competitive fishing a bit and the TUFA had 15 rod & reel combos rigged up for the kids to try some actual hands on fishing. The students ended up a couple of nice 2 1/2 lbs. Largemouths! **The students were amazingly attentive, cheerfully high-fiving whenever the word of the day, "PASSION" was used by any of us!**

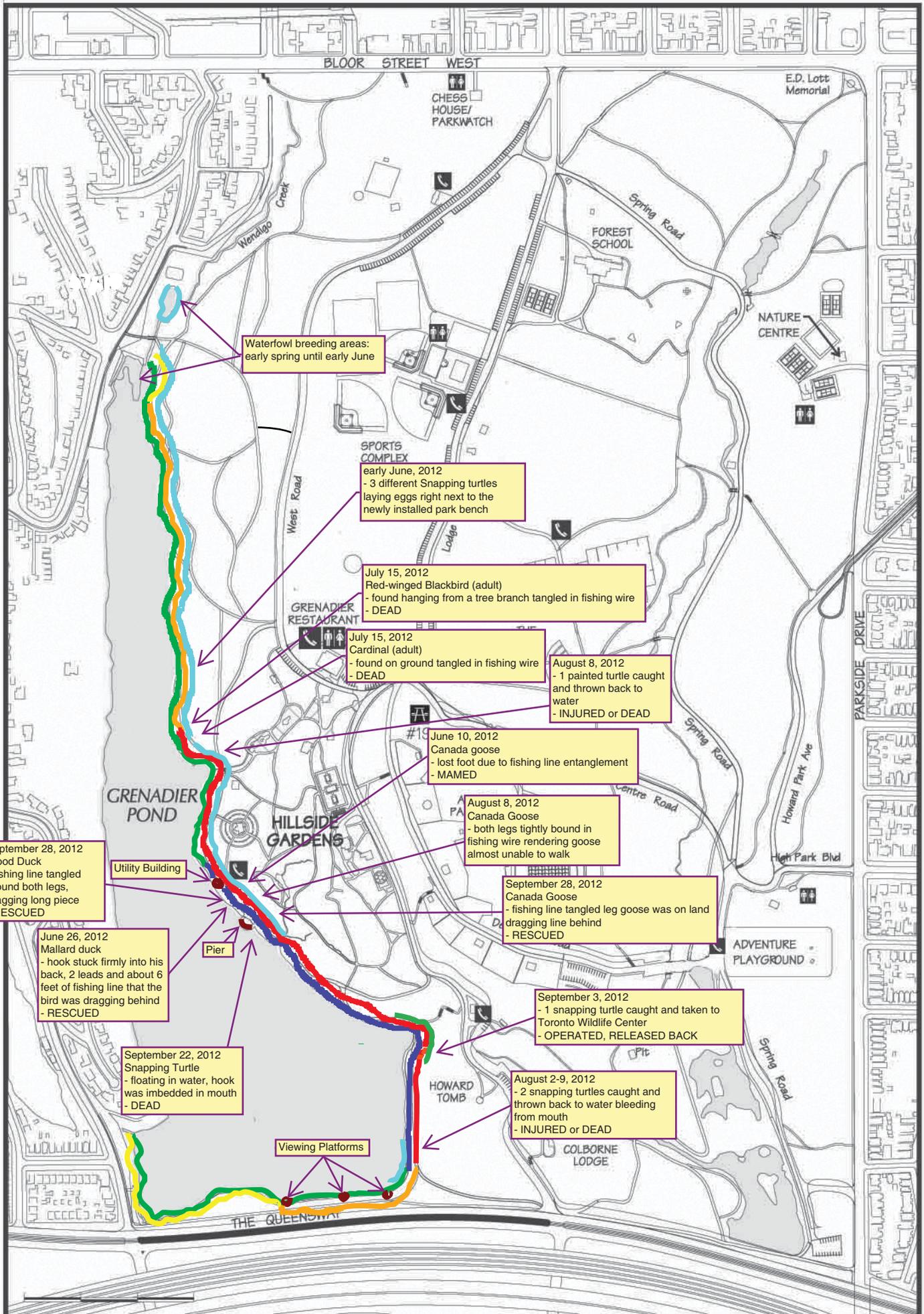
Chef Benny, **Dan Miguel of NPS** (nationalprostaff.com) the MNR & the Metro Police handled the "STUFF" section of the day. The incomparable Chef Benny skillfully demonstrated how to filet and deliciously cook up your catch when you get off the water. We had several members of the Metro Toronto Police force and a CO from the MNR on hand to expand how to legally and responsibly fish in Toronto & Ontario. **Dan, of course did his usual stellar job of selling and expanding to everyone what this great site is all about! Many of the students and teachers signed up right on site!**

It was an awesome day, both the students and the volunteers all had fantastic time! Kudos and congrats to all who volunteered and worked tirelessly to make an event like this happen, especially PC Graham, Allan Crawford, David Clark and all the teachers! **I've also posted a video about the day, please take time to check it out!**

<http://youtu.be/D47lq-0J5V8>

High Park - Grenadier Pond Fishing Event - October 24, 2012

- naturalized area
- non-naturalized area with concrete shore liner
- highest fishing activity area, most incidents occurring
- lower fishing activity area, fewer incidents occurring
- low fishing activity area, few incidents occurring
- waterfowl breeding, resting, foraging areas



Waterfowl breeding areas:
early spring until early June

early June, 2012
- 3 different Snapping turtles
laying eggs right next to the
newly installed park bench

July 15, 2012
Red-winged Blackbird (adult)
- found hanging from a tree branch tangled in fishing wire
- DEAD

July 15, 2012
Cardinal (adult)
- found on ground tangled in fishing wire
- DEAD

August 8, 2012
- 1 painted turtle caught
and thrown back to
water
- INJURED or DEAD

June 10, 2012
Canada goose
- lost foot due to fishing line entanglement
- MAMED

August 8, 2012
Canada Goose
- both legs tightly bound in
fishing wire rendering goose
almost unable to walk

September 28, 2012
Wood Duck
- fishing line tangled
around both legs,
dragging long piece
- RESCUED

Utility Building

June 26, 2012
Mallard duck
- hook stuck firmly into his
back, 2 leads and about 6
feet of fishing line that
the bird was dragging behind
- RESCUED

Pier

September 22, 2012
Snapping Turtle
- floating in water, hook
was imbedded in mouth
- DEAD

September 28, 2012
Canada Goose
- fishing line tangled leg
goose was on land
dragging line behind
- RESCUED

September 3, 2012
- 1 snapping turtle caught
and taken to
Toronto Wildlife Center
- OPERATED, RELEASED BACK

Viewing Platforms

August 2-9, 2012
- 2 snapping turtles caught
and thrown back to water
bleeding from mouth
- INJURED or DEAD



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,

Nathalie Karvonen
Executive Director (416) 631-0662 x 3201
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Toronto Wildlife Centre:
Building a healthy community
for people and wildlife