

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR LARGEMOUTH AND SMALLMOUTH BASS CONSERVATION

Written by Frank Sammut, Lake Steward, Rainbow and Little Silver lakes

Protecting Nesting Bass

Currently, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) has established a “Closed Season” for Bass in the spring of each year until the 3rd Saturday in June in our area (Zone 18). This closed season is designed to prevent the disturbance and/or removal of male bass while guarding their offspring. Unfortunately, angling for Perch, Crappie, Walleye and Pike ARE allowed during this “Closed Bass Season”. Male Bass, sitting on their nests, are easily pulled off them by Anglers as a result of accidental hooking or illegally fishing for them. These fish will attack any lure that swims near their nest in an effort to defend it. Even ‘catch and release’ exposes the young fry to predation by sunfish, perch and crappie. Studies prove that if a male Bass is removed from its nest, even only once, and then quickly released to go back to defend it, that a significant amount of the young fry will be eaten by the voracious pan fish during that brief time. If the male Bass is angled and released again, then the male often stops his parental care, and the nest is lost! There are several other long-term negative ramifications of fishing for Bass while they are on the nest. Please take the time to read the very interesting attached documents for more details.

I have been in communication with Dr. David Philipp (Fisheries Conservation Foundation) and Dr. Steve Cooke (Carleton University), both of whom have been studying spawning Bass behaviour for many years. In 2024, they started a study assessing “Experimental Bass Sanctuaries” in two Eastern Ontario lakes, Charleston Lake and Lake Opinicon. We are very fortunate that Little Silver Lake is being considered as a possible lake for an expansion of this study. IF approved by the OMNR, we would be part of a consortium of participating lakes in Eastern Ontario.

In a nutshell, we will provide 3 to 5 volunteers to help out with the scientists. We will choose suitable shorelines to include in the sanctuary areas. These will occupy only 10 to 20% of the lake’s total shoreline. The sanctuary areas will have signage “No Fishing April 15 – July 7th”. Just to be clear, fishing will still be allowed under the usual OMNR seasons and guidelines in the other 80 to 90% of the lake. Also, after July 7th, all fishing, including Bass fishing, will be allowed in the sanctuary areas.

As well, the scientific team will be snorkelling the lakeshore spring and summer to collect baseline data on the existing bass population, number of nests, juvenile numbers, size/age of bass, aggression levels of guarding males, etc. If all goes well, this data collection would commence this coming spring and summer as a baseline. The sanctuary area, if approved by OMNR, would not come into effect until the following spring of 2026.

This bulletin is just a heads up to give everybody some information. I would appreciate any and all questions and feedback. Drs. Philipp and Cooke are also willing to set up a Zoom meeting with interested people to answer questions. I am currently recruiting 3 to 5 volunteers to help out. Please contact me if you are interested. Finally, please take the time to read the [attached material and slide show](#). I think it explains the issue much better than I can. My goal and wish from all of this is to have a healthy Bass fishery that we all can enjoy for many years to come.

Frank Sammut.

Lake Steward