



GBA UPDATE

News and Information from the Georgian Bay Association

The Value of Place: Thoughts from a Summer Steward

By Lindsay Potts, Georgian Bay Land Trust



There is power in place, in intimately knowing and belonging to a geographical space. Georgian Bay is my place. I believed that I knew the Bay just about as well as I ever would. And then I became a summer steward with the Georgian Bay Land Trust.

Growing up, I lived in Toronto but my summers were spent on an island in the Wah Wah Taysee region of the Bay. As a kid from the city, the cottage was magic. Never before had I encountered such a vast spectrum of weather: fog that swallowed our island, storms that shook the foundations, dizzying sunsets that set the water and rock ablaze. The wildlife oozed, crawled, slithered, and wiggled out of every rocky crevice and mucky lake-bottom. For my siblings and cousins, the Bay became our

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PRECIOUS COASTAL WETLANDS

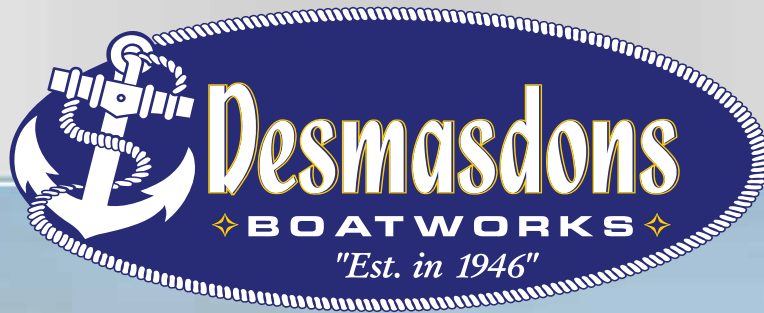


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playground and classroom. On windy days, we would sit on shoals, howling as waves crashed and cascaded over us. At night, we would drag our sleeping bags onto the rock and gaze up at the millions of stars that sparkled above us. One year, my aunt built a terrarium for three monarch caterpillars and we watched in awe as they transformed before our eyes first into chrysalises and then into butterflies.

My fascination with the wilderness was sparked from these beginnings on my pink rock and it was this wonder that inspired me to study Biology at McGill University, to pursue a career in wildlife and conservation biology. As a summer steward with the Georgian Bay Land Trust this past summer, it felt like I was coming full circle.

Each year the Land Trust hires two summer students to assist with various responsibilities, including monitoring properties for use and environmental condition, providing educational materials to visitors, developing and implementing educational programs, and participating in related community events. Which, as I discovered this summer, is really just a fancy way of saying meeting and talking with new people. As a naturally introverted person, who had strategically entered a field of study concerned

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with non-human organisms, these daily interactions with strangers always held a certain degree of thrill and trepidation for me. Conversely, my co-worker Tom shone in these situations with an effortless charisma and easy-going nature that, much to my astonishment, frequently awarded him free food from picnickers. Because of my initial reservations, I was completely caught off guard when it was precisely these connections that became the highlight of my summer.



It was through my work with the GBLT that I met Elizabeth Berry, a watercolour artist returning to the same site on American Camp that she had painted twenty years ago. It was how I almost comically kept running into the same couple, the wife always with a camera slung around her shoulder, eager to talk about the startlingly large number of blackbirds, or show me her favourite wildflower garden. I met two young siblings from Geneva, keen to explore the ponds in search of “grenouilles”. I instantly bonded with Katrina from Georgian Bay Forever, about to start her Masters in Water Levels and who was devoting her summer to phragmites removal along the shores of the Bay. I greeted a group of visitors from the Netherlands, in Canada for a wedding, who were taken aback by the impossibly beautiful and flat rock. I watched a wicked storm roll along the mainland with a family that had tubed up to the Pines, the island overlooking darkness and lightning in one direction and a hazy, late-afternoon sun in the other.

This summer, I have come to appreciate that, while there is a great beauty in intimately knowing a place, there is also power in sharing those experiences with others. I have known and loved the Bay my whole life, but my story is just one of infinite stories, past, present, and future that compose the legacy of the Bay. There is wonder, discovery, history, and magic, dating back billions of years ago, etched into a single slab of granite. From cottagers to campers, to local First Nations communities, to international visitors, to scientists, to artists, to flora and fauna, this archipelago is a rich and diverse ecosystem, a community formed solely by our shared space. Our experiences on the same rocky archipelago are what give the Bay, and its inhabitants, identity. For me, this is the real value of preserving place. ■

GBA Mission Statement:
To work with our water-based communities and other stakeholders to ensure the careful stewardship of the greater Georgian Bay environment.

The Georgian Bay Association is a volunteer umbrella group representing 20 community associations with over 3,200 dues paying property owners and over 18,000 residents.

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Fall 2014



What a difference a year makes! Last year we headed into summer worried about water levels and adjusting our docking and boat routes to accommodate very low levels. This year we saw a rebound thanks to the cold winter and wet winter, spring and summer. We even started to hear some grumbings from people who needed to relocate their docks to accommodate the higher levels. But more on water levels later.

There have been two significant changes in the way we communicate that I would like to highlight. The first is our website.

Our website has been redesigned to be more user friendly both to readers and to those who want to post information on it. A big thanks to Eric Armour for spearheading this initiative. In conjunction with this redesign we launched an email alert service so you can receive automatic emails when new items are posted to our website. We post articles, news of interest to the Georgian Bay community and other information every few days. You can sign up to this service by providing us with your email address through the link on the front page of our website, www.georgianbay.ca.

The second change is the redesign of our newsletter that you are reading right now. John Carson and his UPDATE Newsletter team have tried to streamline this publication so that there is more information on more subjects but in shorter, easier to digest articles and sidebars. We also aim to use more graphics and images.

Now back to water levels. In our various communications with the federal government about water levels and possible remedies in the St. Clair River we have always stressed that the time to make any alterations to the Great Lakes system is when water levels are high. In times of plenty, downstream stakeholders will have fewer concerns over holding back water to correct long term man-made declines in the Middle Great Lakes.

We repeated this message to Tony Clement (MP, Parry Sound – Muskoka and President of the Treasury Board) when Bob Duncanson and I met with him at his Huntsville constituency office this summer. We shared our concern that the water levels issue has receded in priority at the federal level, and reminded him that the government has yet to respond to last year's advice from the International Joint Commission to take action to address the impact of man-made alterations to the St. Clair River. Minister Clement acknowledged the lack of response, but assured us that the government will indeed respond. We also spoke about the Mowat Report on the economic impact of low water levels, and emphasized that this issue is now being championed by a broad coalition of stakeholders including the Canadian Shipowners Association and the Council of the Great Lakes Region.

The state of water levels was not the only subject we raised with Minister Clement. We briefed him on our ongoing campaign to encourage sustainable fresh water aquaculture in Ontario through the use of closed contained systems to enable farm waste to be captured and treated. We shared a copy of a presentation that we will be making to the Canadian Senate this fall as they review the future of aquaculture in Canada.

As always Minister Clement was generous with his time and listened to us very attentively. We will be following up with him on these issues as the year progresses.

As we turn our minds toward the fall and winter we will continue to work hard on many issues that we have identified as being critical to the sound stewardship of Georgian Bay and to the success of GBA and our member associations. And, as always, we're open to suggestions and assistance from our broad network of members. ■

Protecting Georgian Bay's Precious Coastal Wetlands

Summary of analysis by Patricia Chow-Fraser,
Professor, Department of Biology,
McMaster University prepared
for 2014 Great Lakes Wetland Day.

Summarized by John Carson,
Editor, GBA UPDATE

With thanks to Mary Muter,
Chair, Great Lakes Section of the
Sierra Club Canada Foundation

Great Lakes coastal wetlands are productive ecosystems supporting a high diversity of freshwater species. Most of these wetlands have been lost or degraded as a result of human disturbance, but Georgian Bay's coastal wetlands remain abundant and in pristine condition. The *McMaster Coastal Wetland Inventory* (MCWI) counted over 3,700 aquatic marshes in eastern and northern Georgian Bay. About 90% are less than 2 hectares in size. Despite their small size, they provide high-quality reproductive and foraging habitat for fish and wildlife, including species at risk.

The coastal wetlands of Georgian Bay are still among the least human-disturbed on the Great Lakes, but expansion of road networks, increases in cottage and residential development,

invasion by non-native species, and a sustained drop in water level of close to 1 meter over the past 14 years (as of late 2013) are threatening the integrity of these sensitive ecosystems.

The MCWI is the most comprehensive study ever of coastal wetlands in eastern Georgian Bay. McMaster's study found 4 times as many wetland complexes than previously counted – over 700, with over 3,700 aquatic marshes.

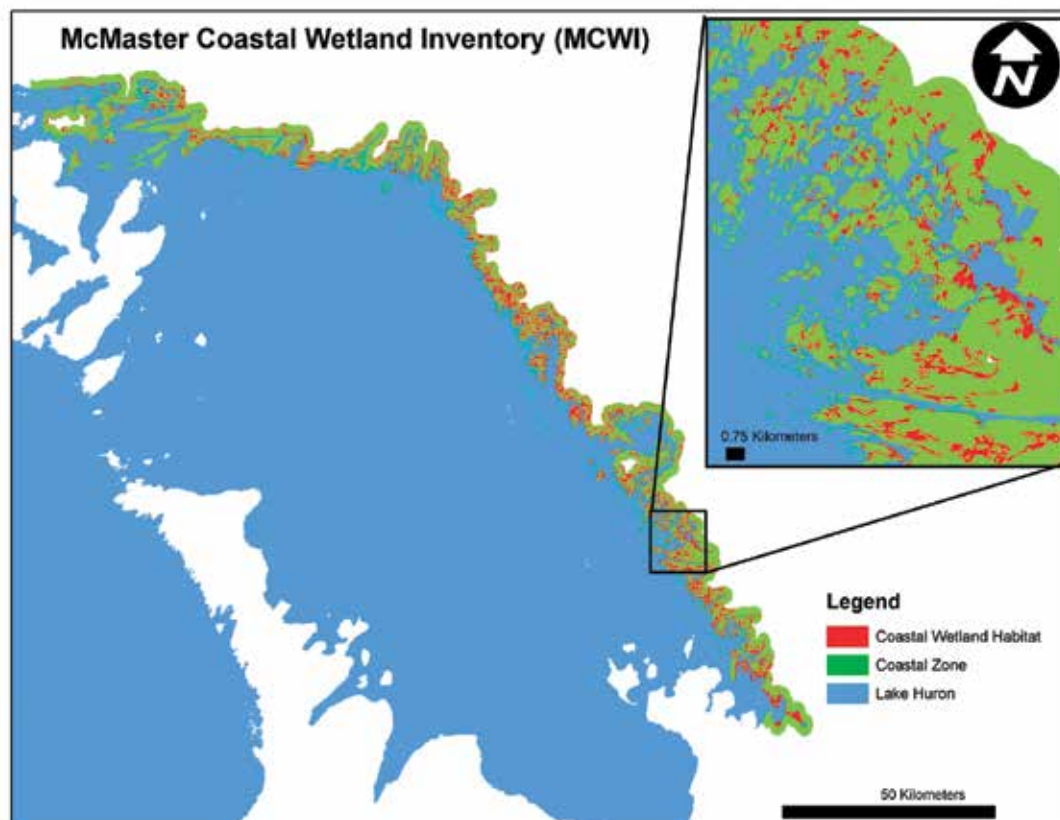
The MCWI was developed to provide a comprehensive dataset of Georgian Bay's unique collection of pristine coastal wetlands. High-resolution (1 m) IKONOS satellite images of the entire eastern coast of Georgian Bay

from 2002-2008 were used to manually delineate the wetlands. The inventory enables long-term changes in fish and plant communities to be monitored and compared. To monitor changes in fish habitat, wetlands were digitized into low-marsh (permanent fish habitat), high-marsh (seasonal meadow habitat), and upstream habitat.

Coastal Wetlands Water Quality

The health of Great Lakes coastal marshes is directly related to the extent of human activity, including urbanization and agricultural development. Statistical analyses show that wetland water quality varies widely in the Great Lakes – over 50% of marshes in Lakes Michigan, Erie, and Ontario were in degraded condition, while over 70% of marshes in Lake Superior, Lake Huron, and Georgian Bay were minimally impacted. The highest proportion of "very good" and "excellent" quality wetlands and the least number of "degraded" wetlands are found in Georgian Bay.

The water chemistry of Georgian Bay's wetlands is heavily influenced by direct connection to the Bay, which leads to large variations in water levels on a daily, seasonal and annual basis. This plays an important role in maintaining aquatic biodiversity in the wetlands by preventing monocultures of vegetation from forming, by facilitating frequent water exchange between the wetlands and lakes, and by allowing daily and seasonal migration of fish in and out of the wetlands.



Sustained low water levels have degraded this precious resource. Until the past year, water levels in Lake Huron have been declining for over a decade, which has significantly impacted wetland vegetation in Georgian Bay's coastal wetlands that provide critical fish and wildlife habitat. Persistently low water levels have resulted in many of the coastal wetlands being disconnected from Georgian Bay, according to an analysis of IKONOS satellite images.

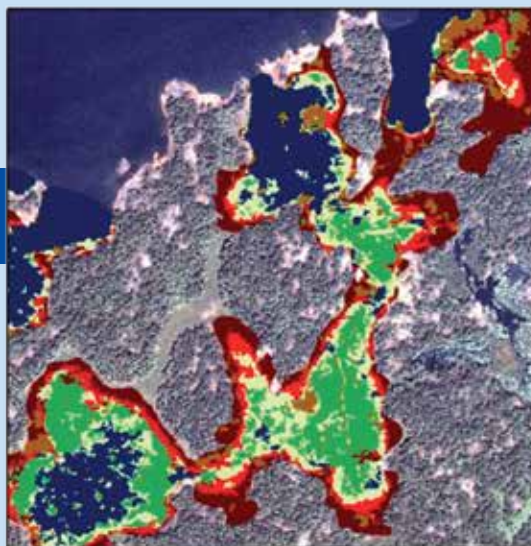
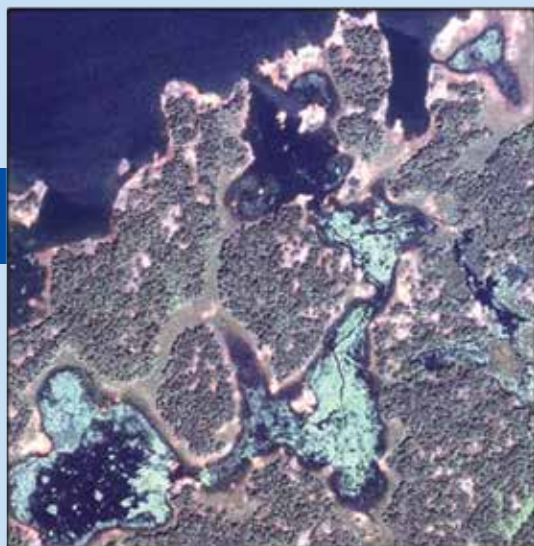
To study the impact on the water chemistry of coastal marshes, McMaster sampled 34 coastal marshes in pristine watersheds, 17 of them impacted by beaver dams. They compared water chemistry in beaver-impounded wetlands both above and below the dams to determine the effects on water chemistry in coastal marshes.

According to McMaster's survey of 7 wetlands, an average loss of 24% of coastal wetlands' surface area occurred between 2010 (176.11 m) and the historic water level high (177.5 m) in 1986. The record low water level of 175.7 m set in January 2013 caused additional losses of wetlands from the 2010 levels.

Beaver dams also prevented wetlands from mixing with the open water of Georgian Bay, producing water chemistry above dams that was nutrient rich and ion-poor, while water below dams was nutrient poor and ion-rich. (Fish need mineral ions.)

Vegetation in Black Rock Bay in Tadenac Bay area

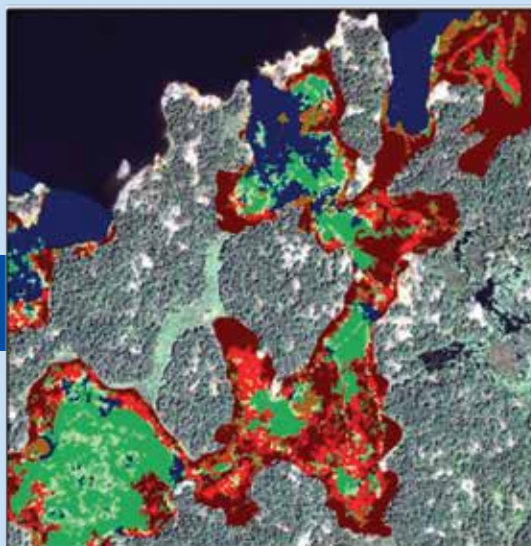
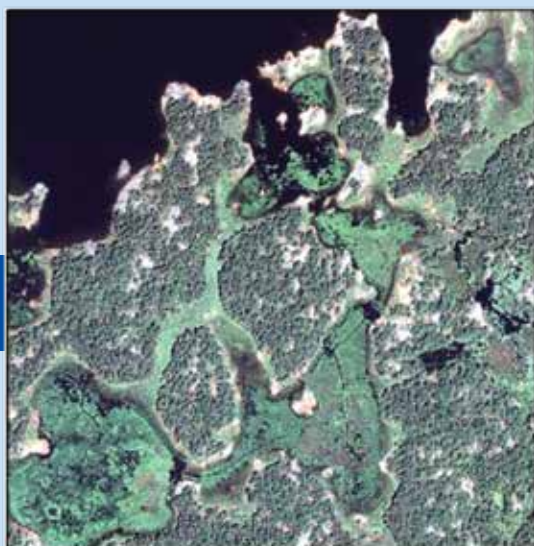
Comparison of two original IKONOS images (left panels) with images that have been classified (right panels).



July 2002

Legend

- Red = emergent vegetation
- Dark green = HD floating vegetation
- Light green = LD floating vegetation
- Maroon = meadow vegetation
- Blue = water
- Brown = rock



July 2008

IKONOS imagery provided by Georgian Bay Forever under license. RADARSAT-2 Data and Products © MacDONALD, DETTWILER AND ASSOCIATES LTD. 2008 - All Rights Reserved. RADARSAT is an official mark of the Canadian Space Agency.

0 100 200 400 600 Meters

Source: Sierra Club of Canada Foundation, 2014 Report by Patricia Chow-Fraser, McMaster University Dept. of Biology.

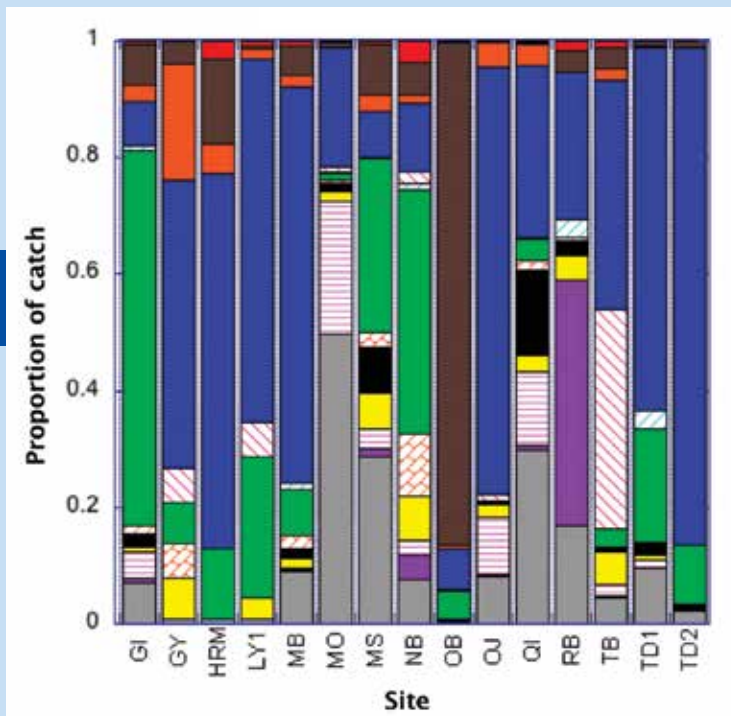
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Impact on Fish Species

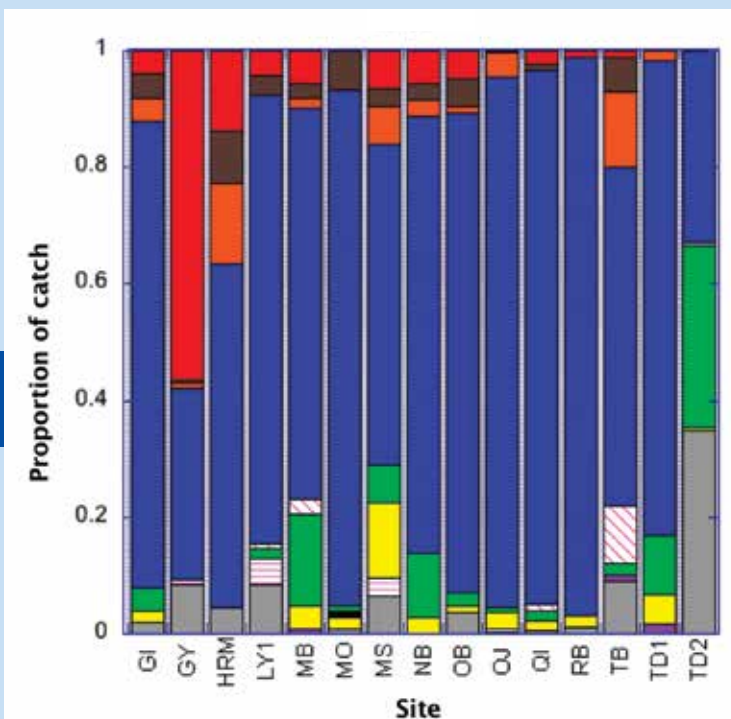
The images above illustrate how lower water levels between 2002 and 2008 led to a significant decrease in low-density floating vegetation, and to an increase in meadow and high-density floating vegetation. Aquatic habitat that is dominated by dense floating vegetation is less suitable as fish habitat because it is less structurally diverse.

These changes in fish habitat coincided with a decrease in the richness of fish species and changes in the composition of species. Pumpkinseeds and bowfin increased significantly with declining water levels, and largemouth bass, blackchin shiner and tadpole madtom decreased (see charts).

Charts below: Proportion of catch represented by each fish species in each wetland sampled in **1) 2003-2005** and **2) 2009**. Figures show a significant decrease in species richness from the first to the second sampling period.



2003 / 2004 / 2005



2009

Source: Factors Affecting Use of Wetland Habitat by Fish and Wildlife in Coastal Wetlands of Georgian Bay, Patricia Chow-Fraser, McMaster University Dept. of Biology.

Looking Ahead

Climate change is predicted to cause further declines in water levels in the Great Lakes, particularly in Lake Huron. These persistent low water levels will continue to alter vegetation structure and coverage in the coastal wetlands of Georgian Bay. The MCWI demonstrates that a comprehensive habitat-based inventory of coastal wetlands can be used to predict how wetlands respond to changes in water levels. Monitoring changes in the amount of low-marsh (aquatic) and high-marsh (emergent) wetlands enables experts to monitor changes in critical habitat for fish, marsh birds and turtles.

If water levels continue to decline in coming decades greater losses of wetland fish habitat will occur due to loss of water flow from the Bay. The results of McMaster's studies illustrate the importance of regular monitoring programs to track changes in the health of coastal wetlands, so that we can target actions to prevent further loss and degradation of vital fish and wildlife habitat in eastern Georgian Bay.

➤ View full report at: <http://bit.ly/1rwc2j> ■



The extensive wetlands in Freeman Bay and on the O'Donnell Point Provincial Nature Reserve shoreline (above, with the Reserve occupying the entire peninsula between Freeman Bay and Twelve Mile Bay on the top right) are threatened by both low water levels and phragmites.

Photo by Paul Bennett Photography, courtesy of Private Islands Inc. and Moffat Dunlap Real Estate Ltd.

COTTAGE EMERGENCY

Who should you Call?

The Canadian Coast Guard and the OPP are the main providers of emergency service on the Bay.

Coast Guard – The Canadian Coast Guard operate three seasonal on the water stations from May 24 until Labour Day. One is just north of Midland (covering the south end of the Bay up to Parry Sound and as far west as Christian Island), one at Britt (covering north of Parry Sound to the French River) and one in Little Current. The Coast Guard's main purpose is to assist with marine related mishaps but they advised GBA they will respond to emergencies on water access only properties. They can be reached at **1-800-267-7270** or **VHF Channel 16** or **Cell phone *16**.

OPP – The OPP have a few boats in the water and several that can be launched to respond to an emergency. We sense

that the Coast Guard's response time may be faster. The OPP can be reached through the **911 operator**.

If the 911 operator dispatches an ambulance it will be sent to the nearest marina. Ambulance paramedics will not go out to an island in a private boat but will wait for a patient to be brought to them (unless an OPP boat is available).

Both the Coast Guard and the OPP suggest that you provide your GPS coordinates instead of municipal address as the latter means very little to the responders. GPS coordinates can be found on Google Earth, Google Maps apps (see Google Earth settings), GPS units or nautical charts.

In summary, in an emergency we recommend you call the Coast Guard first between May 24 and Labour Day. And then call 911. Best to have two horses in the race if time is of the essence. ■

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OPP Police Services Billing Changes



The OPP currently provides policing services to 324 municipalities in Ontario including all of the municipalities in which GBA's 20 member associations reside.

The 2012 Auditor General's Report directed the OPP to simplify its cost recovery process for municipal police services and make it more transparent. The OPP were also requested to address the issue of municipalities paying different rates for OPP policing services.

The OPP's new billing formula – to be effective January 1, 2015 – allocates approximately 60% of their costs (the fixed costs) across all property owners in all OPP serviced municipalities. These base level services include supervisory positions, administrative positions as well as a portion of frontline proactive policing duties such as patrol, RIDE and crime prevention. The OPP argue that all residents benefit from these base level services.

The balance (approximately 40%) of their costs will be allocated based on usage – the number and type of calls and crime in each municipality.

The assumption that all municipalities benefit equally from the OPP's base services has been challenged by some Georgian Bay municipalities. They argue that many, if not the vast majority, of their residents own water access only properties where patrolling, RIDE and crime prevention do not apply. Moreover GBA understands that the OPP's marine operations are funded by the Federal government and not through the municipalities.

The Township of the Archipelago estimates that the OPP's formula will increase policing costs considerably, likely resulting in a 10% property tax increase. Seguin and the Archipelago have reacted to the new formula by jointly examining establishing their own police service, perhaps in conjunction with neighbouring municipalities.

GBA is pursuing a meeting with the Ontario government to discuss these concerns.

For more information: <http://www.amo.on.ca/AMO-Content/Policy-Updates/2014/OPP-Billing-Model-Announcement.aspx> ■

Election Day Is October 27. Are You On The Voters' List?

Ontario municipalities are encouraging all voters to check to see if they are on the Voters List for the 2014 Municipal Elections occurring on October 27, 2014 by visiting www.voterlookup.ca



Voters can confirm, register or update their information on this site. To confirm your information is accurately recorded you need to supply your name, date of birth, location, and property address or assessment roll number.

You may also call 1-866-296-6722 to contact the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC), which is responsible for preparing the Preliminary List of Electors.

The Townships of Georgian Bay, Carling, Archipelago, Killarney and North East Manitoulin and the Islands all allow for mail-in ballots for the elections. Check your Township's website for details. ■



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It's Like Asian Carp – With Roots



Although Phragmites (or “Phrag” for short) is an “invasive species”, it’s not your run-of-the-mill invasive. From the perspective of its potential impact on you as a Georgian Bay cottager – and an Ontarian – it’s one the Top 5 worst invasives ever.

Why Should You Pay Attention to Phrag?

If Phrag gets well established near you, you will soon find you can’t use your shoreline the way you always have. Since Phrag can grow 1 meter per month and cutting the plant only stimulates growth, it is difficult to keep the shoreline clear. Phrag will then erect a “bamboo forest”, blocking access to swimming areas and docks.

Once it’s well established, Phrag is very expensive to eradicate. The Kettle Point community recently spent over \$50,000 to clear 25 acres. Their experience is not unusual. As a result, allowing Phrag to take root in your area will impact local property values.

Municipalities will soon feel the impact. Along southern Georgian Bay, Phrag is crowding out public beaches and parks. As a relative of bamboo, Phrag grows under and through roads and sidewalks. This is already happening on Highway 400, 12 Mile Bay Rd., and other shore access roads.

Phrag has invaded all of Southern Ontario from Windsor to Cornwall, including southern Lake Huron. In Georgian Bay so far most Phrag is found on the west and south shores, from Tobermory to Honey Harbour. But that is rapidly changing. Significant stands have shown up in Cognashene, Go Home Bay, Wah Wah Taysee, Sans Souci, Parry Sound, West Carling, Bay of Islands and on Manitoulin. And we simply do not know where else it may be spreading.

Highways 400 and 17 are facilitating the spread of Phrag around the Bay. Access roads allow it to spread to shorelines from highways. We’ve also found Phrag along Highway 400 close to most rivers flowing into the Bay.

If this all sounds overwhelming, the good news is that Phrag penetration is still sufficiently light that we have a good chance of defending our shorelines against this invasion – if we pay attention to its spread. But it takes concerted effort and action. So far, most communities and governments have yet to act. Working together, we must change that.

What Does Phrag Look Like and How Does It Spread?

You may have recognized the plant from the photos here. StopTheInvasion.ca provides many other images of Phrag in different habitats. Keep your eyes open and you’ll be amazed by how often you see Phrag along most traffic corridors.



This time of year, you’ll see 3-5 meter (12-15 foot) stalks forming a dense stand, with green leaves that look vaguely



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like corn, and sporting gold or purple seed tassels, which will soon be transported by wind, people or vehicles to set up new colonies.

Existing colonies send creepy tentacles out up to 30 meters in all directions, over land and water, looking to extend their range. Rootstocks reach down several meters, choking out surrounding native species, and creating vast, dense monocultures where no other plant can survive. Wildlife, such as turtles and ducks, that venture into stands can get trapped.

How can you get rid of Phrag on your own property?

The answer to the question is complex because “it depends”. The only cost-effective approach to Phrag control is a rapid response. If you catch an emerging Phrag stand while it is only about 1 square meter you can dig it out relatively easily. This is the approach we are encouraging cottage associations to adopt by asking members to identify new stands.

If the stand exceeds a couple of square meters, particularly in rocky terrain, digging it out is challenging. Any root matter you miss regenerates the plant, and Phrag thrives in disturbed earth. Eradication options then depend on whether the stand is in water or not. On land Phrag can be eradicated with or without herbicide. For now, in-water stands can only be dealt with legally without using herbicide.

Digging out Phrag can work because the plant uses much of its energy sending up its 4-meter shoots. If you cut stalks below the earth before the seeds develop (mid-September) the plant will be weakened. Repeating this over 2-4 years will often (but not always) kill the plant. Securing a tarp over the cut area to block all sunlight for several months makes success more likely. You must capture all plant cuttings in heavy paper yard waste bags, and make sure they are secure, because any cuttings (even one that blows out of your boat) can start a new colony. The StoptheInvasion.ca website has posted accounts of community-led cutting projects. Georgian Bay Forever can help set up local events in your area.

Continues on page 14



“

The only cost-effective approach to Phrag control is a rapid response.

”

Some claim that injecting Phrag roots with vinegar (or similar concoctions) will kill the plant. Although these approaches appear in Phrag literature, I have encountered as many folks who have tried them unsuccessfully, as have found them to be effective.

Herbicides can only be used by licensed eradicators, and only on land. Even then, landowners must first get a Letter of Opinion from the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). MNR will need information on the property to be treated as well as the eradicator you are using. For details, contact us at info@stoptheinvasion.ca.

If properly executed, herbicide programs can eradicate large Phrag stands without environmental degradation. However, not everyone will support this approach, so discussing this issue in your community is important. There is a significant risk of contamination in cottage communities from using herbicides illegally. This is already happening as desperate cottagers try to deal with Phrag that is overwhelming their property.

No herbicide is licensed in Canada for use over water. It is therefore very important to catch new in-water stands early, while they can still be removed easily. As stands grow bigger than a couple of square meters, the work required to remove them mechanically grows exponentially. At this point, containing the spread of the plant at the margins of the stand until Health Canada approves an over-water herbicide

(which MNR is working on, and which is already available in the US) may make good sense. In the meantime, cut off seed heads from the top of plants in late August or early September.

How do you protect your community from being overrun by Phrag?

You can't just worry about your own property. Assisting your community to defend itself from the Phrag Invasion is also important. If Phrag shows up near you, you're likely to be affected. You can help in four ways:

➤ **Help us "crowd-map" the spread of Phrag.** Governments won't prioritize Phrag control until faced with irrefutable evidence of the problem in their back yard. StoptheInvasion.ca is creating a map of Phrag in Ontario based on sightings by our members – not just at the cottage, but everywhere they go. To make it easy to record sightings in 20 to 30 seconds, we've built a free app called Phragspotter for download to your smartphone or iPad. Please enlist all of your cottage members to make this happen.

➤ **Rapid identification and response by the community.** We are working with the MNR, the Ontario Phragmites Working Group and others to establish a framework for landowner associations and municipalities to collaborate in managing Phrag. Encourage your cottage association to participate.

➤ **Encourage your municipality and province to be proactive.** Politicians respond to their constituents. As we map the Phrag invasion in Ontario, we need to reach out to municipal and provincial representatives to explain the threat and the impact on their constituents.

➤ **Encourage the federal government to license an over-water herbicide.** StoptheInvasion.ca is working to persuade federal MPs to ask Health Canada to fast track approval of a herbicide that would be safe to use over water.

Phrag is rapidly invading Ontario, and steadily making its way up Georgian Bay. Communities and governments are only slowly catching on to the challenges posed by this Phrag threat. If we decide we care and are prepared to make an effort, we can defend our shores against this threat. ■

GBA Advice to Members

GBA is working with the experts on future Phragmites eradication and management protocols. In the short term (ie. this Fall) we recommend that our Members look for Phragmites on their property and use the PhragSpotter app to map it. But **do not disturb the plants at this time of year** as you may unwittingly spread the seeds. Watch our web site and email blasts this fall and winter for next steps.



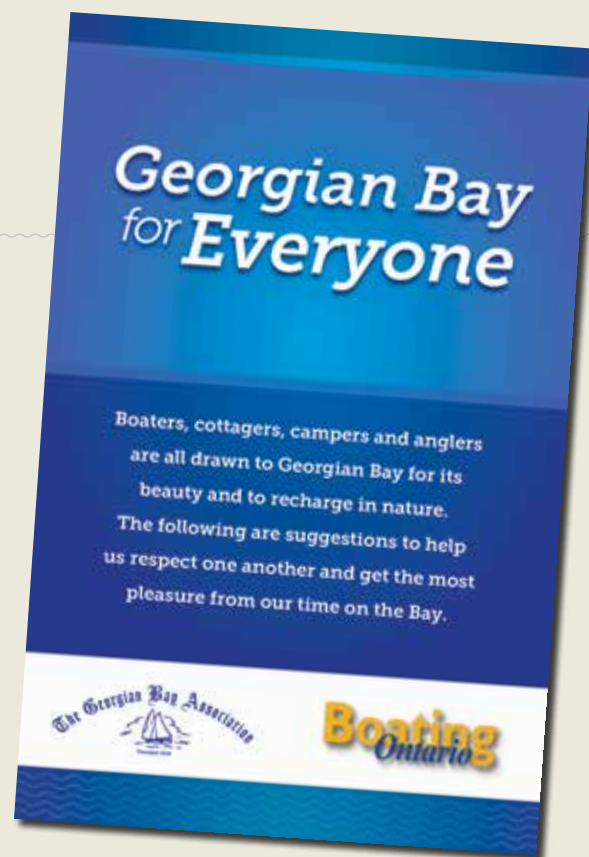
Georgian Bay For Everyone

After many requests to reprint the Georgian Bay “Boater and Cottager Code of Conduct” the GBA felt it needed a fresh approach. In December 2013, the GBA Boating and Safety Committee met in Oakville. While looking at a frozen Lake Ontario, and trying to think of the warm summer waters of Georgian Bay, the Committee reviewed the code that was developed some years ago. It was quickly agreed that a new approach was needed to bring together cottagers, boaters, campers, renters, local trades, and so on.

The Committee organized meetings of representatives of user groups on the Bay, including several representatives from the boating community and from local cottage associations. In total over 20 people were involved. Boating Ontario hosted a meeting at the Toronto Boat Show and the Barrie OPP’s Liaison Officer hosted a meeting there.

Many thorny issues were discussed, including noise, pets, wakes, speed, injuries, many boats rafting together, wake boarding and even puddle jumping on snowmobiles in the summer. Most of those issues have been concerns since the first code was developed. The need to reach people who are not familiar with how to share the Bay in a respectful manner was also discussed at length. The potential to develop a user application or an add-on to charting software was explored.

Local cottage associations and Safe and Quiet Lakes (SQL), a Muskoka-based organization, shared their experiences and the results of their surveys. Many of their concerns, such as safety, noise, large wakes, and pollution, are the same as those on Georgian Bay, especially in the southern parts of the Bay.



After many debates, drafts and revisions, the group reached consensus on an updated code. The overriding themes of Georgian Bay for Everyone remain the same: respect, good manners, and consideration for others and for nature. Respecting these principles is necessary for all of us to enjoy and maintain our beautiful Bay.

Suggestions in the document include:

- Anchor away from channels and, if possible, from cottages
- Control your speed and wake
- Respect private property
- Know the “Rules of the Road”

Since lack of boating knowledge was a common concern, waterproof decals on the “Rules of the Road” will be printed that boaters can stick on their boats.

The new code will be printed on 8 ½” x 11” glossy stock folded in half. GBA and Boating Ontario are contributing funds for artwork, printing and distribution of copies to user groups, including GBA member associations.

You can view and print Georgian Bay for Everyone at www.georgianbayassociation.com/boaters-code/ ■

Another summer has come and gone. I was fortunate to be invited to speak at many summer meetings of our member associations. I find it very interesting to hear firsthand about the issues each association is dealing with at the local level. Some are unique to a particular association, but many are shared across associations. Concern for the environment is pretty much universal, including water levels, water quality, and invasive species (both aquatic and terrestrial). Attending these meetings gives me an opportunity to explain how GBA is engaged on each of these issues, and bring some thoughts back to the GBA Board and our policy Committees for their consideration.

As we look forward to our fall work plan we have a newly elected government in Ontario and a federal election on the horizon. On the Ontario front we have a majority Liberal government to work with. Regardless of your political leanings, the fact that the Liberals have a majority will mean that new pieces of legislation and regulations will be forthcoming at a faster pace than was the case under the previous minority government. Our challenge is to monitor new legislation that will affect the Bay so that we can contribute our knowledge and experience, and ensure GBA's voice is heard.

For instance, we expect that the government will reintroduce the Great Lakes Protection Act, which died on the vine twice

as sessions of the Legislature were prorogued or dissolved. GBA has commented on past versions of this Act. Those versions lacked the teeth and funding needed to meet the Act's objectives. We will be watching closely to see what the new government proposes for Great Lakes Protection.



We expect a federal election in 2015, probably in the fall. The election will give GBA the opportunity to engage with all parties on Georgian Bay issues. Water levels, water quality, invasive species, aquaculture and boating safety are all areas where the federal government is either directly responsible, or wields significant influence.

The longer I work in this job (coming on seven years) the more I realize the importance of networking. We have tremendous human resources on the Bay; scientists, business people, environmentalists and even current and retired politicians and civil servants. Our challenge is how to harness these resources (and their passion) in order to address the many threats to our precious Bay. Life is too short to get bogged down with inter-organizational tugs of war. Over the next year I hope to find ways to build on past collaborations with the goal of bringing together all individuals and organizations that have a love for the Bay. ■

Bayscapes Art Auction



Featuring work of our renowned community of artists whose work has been influenced by the wilderness of Georgian Bay.

Friday, November 14, 2014
St. James Cathedral Centre
65 Church St., Toronto
Cocktails, gourmet hors d'oeuvres

\$50 in advance / \$60 at the door
Tickets at www.gbtt.org

There's more than just art. You might take home a Giesler coffee table, services and equipment for your cottage, Georgian Bay fine craft and more!

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CLOSE ENCOUNTER ... With An Endangered Species For Adults Only

Write a 300 word story about a close encounter you have personally had with an endangered species of Georgian Bay. Include photos if possible.

**The GRAND PRIZE winner
will be published in the
2015 GBA Spring UPDATE.**

The GBA has the right to post any submission on our GBA website from time to time.

Submit by January 1, 2015 to gba@georgianbay.ca

**To find a complete list of ENDANGERED SPECIES
Check out GBA 2014 Spring Update on our website.**

**Lands and Forest Committee
The Georgian Bay Association
www.georgianbay.ca**

Fire On Our Island!

We all anxiously wait for spring, so we can get back to our Georgian Bay pieces of heaven to escape, relax and enjoy time with our family and friends. But when our special place is suddenly threatened, we panic. Here's our story about the fire on our island, and some tips on how to be better prepared for fire than we were.

On the last weekend in May this year, my Mother and I arrived at our island early Saturday afternoon under bright and sunny skies. We were both looking forward to a quiet relaxing weekend. We unloaded, had a bite to eat and then noticed the power was out –

not uncommon, but I called Hydro to let them know about the outage.

Shortly after I was startled by loud voices from two people in a boat right in front of our place. I went out to see what was going on – the words I heard were the words we never, ever want to hear: THE BACK OF YOUR ISLAND IS ON FIRE! Seriously... had I heard them correctly? Yes I had!

“

The back of
your island is on fire!

”

We headed to the dock and ran into a man who said he took the Hydro crew out to our island to fix the outage. When they came around the lee side of the island they saw the fire and called 911 to report it – OMG it must be serious! I wanted to get to the dock as fast as possible to go and see with my own eyes exactly what we were up against, but we had to be rational. We asked the man if he thought the front side of the island was in jeopardy – should we return to the cottage and retrieve our purses and car keys? He said no, so we made our way to the dock.

As we approached the dock our worst nightmare was clearly

Continues on page 18



visible: smoke, flames crawling up trees, the sound of pine needles singeing with the heat and the forest floor on fire, charging towards the oldest cottage on the island! We were shocked by what we saw. We were powerless and had to watch its progress with no resources or ability to stop it.

Fear immediately hit us as we watched in horror.

Miraculously, 20 minutes later, the same two people in the boat (turned out it was Bob and Caroline Duncanson!) came around the corner with two more recruits, armed with their fire pump, which they quickly got operational. One of the Hydro crew had made his way to the dock, took the lead hose and charged into the bush staying off the fire and not allowing it to get any closer. For the next two hours we were all laser focused on fighting the fire in this area. But we didn't know that the fire was also progressing in the opposite direction. Thankfully the Township of Georgian Bay volunteer fire department had arrived and quickly took action based on their training.

It took six hours, 20 people including volunteers, a Hydro crew, a volunteer fire department crew, two cottage fire pumps, and one fireboat, but finally the battle was won. The fire left three burnt acres of land but thankfully all people and buildings were unharmed. Words will never, ever express the gratitude we feel for all of these unfamiliar people who saved our island. Thanks to them, it will still be here for the generations to come!

After our near disaster I have become very passionate about fire prevention and want to share what we learned from our experience:

When you see smoke or fire:

- If you see or smell smoke, act on it – you could save a cottage, a life or both. Don't assume that someone else is on top of it! Take your fire pump and hoses with you and investigate.
- In the event of a fire do you know who to call? Does your Association have an Emergency telephone tree?
- It's urgent to act fast – fire can spread with alarming speed.
- If possible, call neighbours for help, especially with bringing fire pumps.
- Report wildfires to the Ministry of Natural Resources at 310-FIRE (3473). The toll-free number operates 24 hours per day from April 1 to October 31. Report fires even if they are extinguished so MNR can track conditions and ensure fires don't continue to burn underground.

Fire pumps:

- Do you have a fire pump? If not, do you know where the closest one is located?
- Some Townships and cottage associations provide fire pump stations. Know where to find them.
- Put operating instructions with the pump in a waterproof bag.
- Keep pump full of gas.
- Service your pump in Spring/Fall and check its operation.
- Keep a water container with the pump to prime it.
- Keep hoses dry and coiled. You should have both short and long hoses to reach both close areas and outer areas of a property.
- You will need boots to go into the woods. You will also need gloves, as the hoses are heavy and slippery.

Hydro cables:

- Clear the area around the hydro cable where it enters your island. This is where our fire started and it had not been cleared. When the Hydro goes out, walk your line to ensure a fire has not started.

Emergency preparedness:

- Do you have an indoor fire extinguisher? Make sure you have one, or preferably several. Check the stale date annually.
- Keep a list of emergency contact numbers in a prominent place.
- Charge all mobile devices before coming north in the event of a power outage. Products are available in big box stores that will charge your devices when you have no power supply.

Our scary story ended well in spite of our lack of preparedness and fire damage to a significant area of our island. We were lucky. Be aware and be prepared!

A huge shout out goes to all those people we now call our heroes and friends:

Bob & Caroline Duncanson, Eleanor Proctor & Chris Littlejohn, Mike Stephens, Chris Green, Dave Wingfelder and the Hydro crew dispatched out of Georgian Bay Landing, and Township of Georgian Bay Volunteer Fire Department - Station 11. ■

Upcoming Events

We have received the following information updates from our sister Georgian Bay organizations and pass them on for your information.

Georgian Bay Land Trust

Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon Charity Challenge –
Sunday, October 19, 8:00 am

GBLT fundraising event. The race starts at the Direct Energy Centre and finishes at Nathan Phillips Square.

Bayscapes Art Auction 2014 – Friday, November 14, 6:30 pm
St. James Cathedral Centre, 65 Church St., Toronto
Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres - Tickets at www.gbtl.org

Georgian Bay Forever

GBF Vital Signs IV Speakers Series –
Saturday, April 11, 2015 9:00 am - 12:00 pm
Metro Toronto Reference Library, Bram and Bluma Appel Salon.

Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve

Films that Make You Think

All films at 7:00 pm, Museum on Tower Hill, Parry Sound

October 14 A Fierce Green Fire

November 11 The Real Dirt on Farmer John

December 9 A Burning Season

Public Forum: Walkable, Bikeable Parry Sound – October 16 and 17
International speaker, Gil Pandalosa (8-80 Cities Initiative)

Correction – Council of the Great Lakes Region

An article in the summer 2014 GBA UPDATE about the Council of the Great Lakes Region (CGLR) incorrectly described the Canada US Law Institute (CUSLI) as being located at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland and the Mowat Centre at the University of Toronto. In fact, the CUSLI is a bi-national joint venture established in 1976 by the University of Western Ontario's Faculty of Law and Case Western Reserve University School of Law in Cleveland, Ohio.

CUSLI was a partner with the Mowat Centre in establishing the CGLR. They devoted resources to the conception and launch of the Council and introduced the idea of the CGLR at their annual CUSLI Conference in the Spring of 2013.

Our sincere apologies to those whose hard work went into the founding of CGLR and were not accurately identified in our original article. ■



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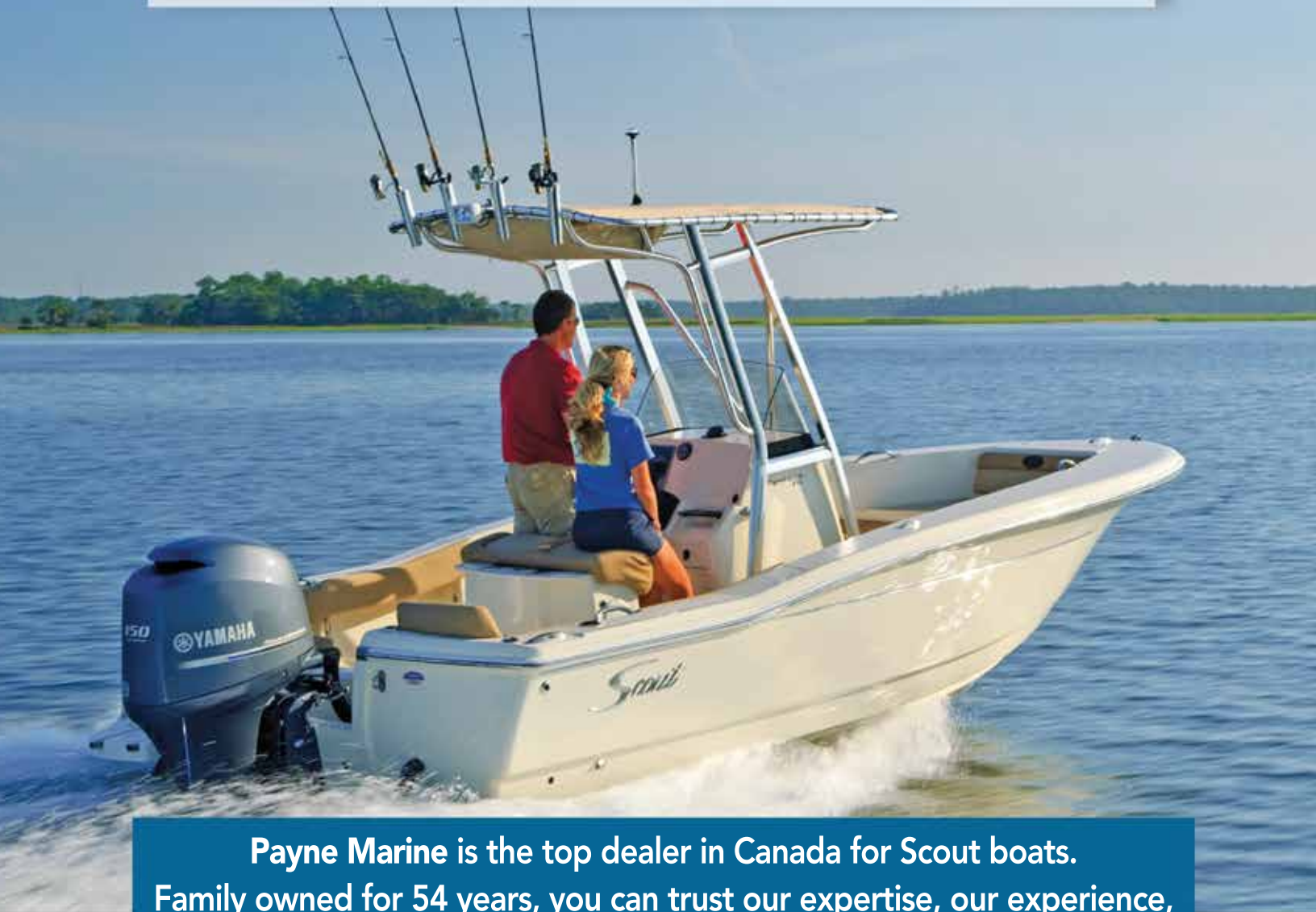
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