

# STEELHEAD NEWS

A Publication of the Lake Superior Steelhead Association

[www.steelheaders.org](http://www.steelheaders.org)

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Tom Cawcutt with a bright brown.

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### Lake Superior Steelhead Association

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#### LSSA's Mission:

For these reasons and more, the Lake Superior Steelhead Association exists: to protect our rivers and fish; to help preserve Lake Superior and its bounty; to learn more about the resources we enjoy and foster discussion, research and sound fisheries management practices; to educate anglers and the public about all these things. The LSSA has taken all these tasks upon its shoulders. These issues are too important to leave to chance or the vagaries of bureaucracies and politics. Our mission is to protect and improve the cold water fishery of the Lake Superior region and to bring various groups of anglers together in an atmosphere of friendship, so they can work for their and the resources common good.

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#### Michigan Grayling Initiative (MI DNR)

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources, in partnership with the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians (LRBOI), announced a new initiative aimed at bringing back a long-gone historical species to the Great Lakes state - Arctic Grayling.

Michigan's Arctic Grayling Initiative - so dubbed following the addition of more than 30 organizations to the DNR's and LRBOI's foundational partnership - is committed to re-introducing this culturally-significant species. "Our formal mission as an initiative is to restore self-sustaining populations of Arctic Grayling within its historic range in Michigan," said DNR Fisheries Division Assistant Chief Todd Grischke.

Michigan's history with the Arctic Grayling is long and storied. A striking fish with a sail-like dorsal fin and a slate blue color on its body, it was virtually the only native stream salmonid in the Lower Peninsula until the resident population died off nearly a century ago.

"The fact we have a town named after this fish indicates to me just how iconic it was and still is to many in this state," Grischke said. "When you add in other factors - such as the fact they're only native to Michigan and Montana out of all the lower 48 states - it just adds to their legendary status."

In the 19th century, northern Michigan streams were filled with Arctic Grayling offering anglers plenty of opportunity to catch these unique fish. But a variety of factors slowly erased their presence, including the cutting of Michigan's vast virgin forest in the 1800s.

The last Arctic Grayling on record in Michigan were taken in 1936 but since that time natural resource managers have repeatedly looked for options to

reintroduce it.

"In the late 1800s and early 1900s they tried stocking millions of Arctic Grayling fry into Michigan streams, but that didn't work," said Grischke. "And then in the 1980s we, the DNR, stocked hatchery-reared yearlings into lakes and streams, but again to no avail."

In each of these previous re-introduction efforts something critical was missing that prevented these populations from flourishing, but Michigan's Arctic Grayling Initiative hopes to rectify that.

"We have learned from the mistakes experienced during these previous re-introduction events and plan to capitalize on new approaches, dedicated partnerships, and advanced technology," Grischke explained.

The group is gleaning as much information as possible from the state of Montana and their successful effort at re-establishing stable Arctic Grayling populations.

The four focus areas on the Action Plan include research, management, fish production and outreach and education. The research focus area will work on a variety of items; including understanding relationships between resident trout and grayling, prioritizing streams for grayling introduction, and evaluating in-stream Remote Site Incubators (RSIs). RSIs allow fish to be reared and released directly in the streams to better allow them to imprint to the waters they will hopefully reproduce in later on.

Better imprinting means the initiative will be one-step closer to establishing a self-sustaining population of Arctic Grayling, which is really the ultimate outcome of this effort.

Goals for the management focus area will include evaluating key habitat

criteria, establishing population goals, and working on regulations related to fishing for grayling.

The fish production focus area's work will center on experimenting with Remote Site Incubator designs, ensuring fish health standards are upheld, and maintaining a genetically diverse broodstock which will be housed at a hatchery facility.

Lastly, goals for the outreach and education focus area will be concentrated on informing the public on this initiative's efforts, identifying future partners, and creating a stewardship plan.

If you'd like to learn more about Michigan's Arctic Grayling Initiative, visit [migrayling.org](http://migrayling.org)

### Ontario Steelhead

Jon George, formerly of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources continues with his Co-op Angler steelhead studies on several north shore rivers, in partnership with the OMNRF Upper Great Lakes Management Unit and the North Shore Steelhead Association. He recently released data from the 2017 spring steelhead run on the Cypress and Jackpine rivers.

Cypress River:

- The adult steelhead population was estimated to be between 1500 and 2000 adults.
- Four year classes ages 2013, 2012, 2011 and 2010 (ages four to seven years) represented 15 % or more of the 2017 spawning population.
- 70% of the adult population (females 77%, males 62%) were repeat ...the majority of the repeat spawners were on second to fourth spawn.
- Maturity occurred mainly at age three and four years for most males, age four or older for females.
- 47% of the adults had spent one and

49% two years in the stream while 3% spent three years in the Cypress River prior to migrating (smolting) to Lake Superior.

- Four strong years plus a high repeat spawning rate indicate low fishing mortality and a healthy steelhead population.

Jackpine River:

- Age five(2012), six (2011) years represent 32 %, and 23% of the 2017 spawning population, 20% were greater than age seven years of age.
- 80% of the adults were repeat spawners, 25% had spawned five to six times.
- Maturity for males was three to five years old, females generally spawned at four or five years.
- Males usually spend one or two years in the lake prior to first spawning migration, females require at least two to three year in the lake prior to spawning.
- 45% of the adults had spent one year



in the stream, 52% two years and 3% spent 3 years in the Jackpine River before migrating (smolting) to Lake Superior.

- Three years classes > 15%, and a high rate of repeat spawners (low mortality rate) indicate a healthy wild steelhead population.

*Clarence Heikkila and brothers.  
Photo from J. Tegeuder*



*Post Card From The Past.*

## BOD Social Gathering

By Kevin Bovee

For the first time in many, many years the LSSA Board of Directors gathered for a strictly social outing. The only real rule was “No Fish Politics” allowed that night. Of course, when a group of fishermen gather, the lies flow like water. That’s allowed and expected. The entire board, along with almost all spouses/significant others, gathered at the Bovee house. It was a potluck affair with appetizers galore, pulled pork sandwiches, potato salad, beans and several desserts. Not to mention some adult beverages with some other beverages for the young folks in attendance. It was a great evening even though fish talk was not allowed; a tackle box of huge muskie/northern baits did make the scene. The event was held on the evening of Saturday, August 12 and it was a beautiful night. We ended the evening with a large fire in the fire pit and even a couple rockets were fired off in salute.



## Newsletter Editor Position

Scott Thorpe has notified the board that this will be his last year as newsletter editor. The board seeks a volunteer replacement. Also the board seeks opinions on whether members prefer receiving a hard copy newsletter as they have in the past or would rather have an electronic version emailed to them. If you have opinions on this, please forward them to the board.

## From the Editor

*2017 marks my tenth season as head guide at Talaheim Lodge in Alaska. The 2016 king salmon run of 4,000 on the Talachulitna was nearly twice the five year average and so in 2017, ADF&G decided to allow catch and kill of two kings per season from the Tal, after five years of catch and release angling. However, what we guides were finding on the river showed the king run was actually in deep trouble. Suddenly, ADF&G did a complete reversal and closed the Tal to even C&R angling for kings two weeks before the normal closure. Mid July, our lodge helicopters flew the ADF&G biologist on the annual aerial count and found the king run to be under 1,000 kings, well below its target return of 2,500. It turns out tht kings are vanishing. Atlantic salmon are also declining throughout their range in the North Atlantic. Wild steelhead runs in the Pacific Northwest are also in trouble. It's really got me thinking hard.*

*I now realized that it's time to start taking some of the destination angling trips I have been postponing till "someday." Time is running out. I may have waited too long. Thus, I am making a few changes to my current lifestyle. Among other things, I am retiring from the position of Newsletter Editor, freeing up a dozen days a year for other activities. If you are interested in taking over, give me a call or send me an e-mail. If I can get a replacement on board soon enough, I can help with the transition. I've still got several more issues to go, and my successor will need material so text me at 612-669-9601 or e-mail me with articles and photos at [scott@scottthorpeflyfishing.com](mailto:scott@scottthorpeflyfishing.com).*

On a beautiful Saturday morning at 11:00 am, fifty people gathered at McNeil's on the banks of the Brule River for the LSSA's Third Annual Brule Spey Day. Fly fishing legend Bob Nasby led off with an introduction to spey casting. Dave Gellatly, the regional Redington/Rio/Sage sales representative followed with a demonstration of rods and spey casts focusing in on choosing the right tools for the water you're fishing.

At noon, the LSSA sponsored a wonderful lunch of brats, baked beans and accompaniments.

After lunch the crowd grew to well over sixty, watching casting whiz Andy Selvig give a presentation on casting and troubleshooting casting problems. Paul Sandstrom followed with demonstrations of casting Skagit/Scandi lines and pointers on sink tip use. The presentations ended with LSSA President Mike Pitan giving an outstanding demonstration on skating flies.

A raffle was held with donations from St. Croix, Sage, OPST, and Bob Nasby. The grand prize was an 11'-0" seven weight St. Croix switch rod outfitted with a Scientific Anglers System II reel and a matching 350 grain OPST Commando Head. Special thanks to all who donated prizes. The LSSA would also like to thank all the folks that attended the affair and those people that helped pull off another great event.

The perfect day ended with a casting clinic and a chance for spectators to dial in on the right line for their rod. 





*Above, Dave Gellatly demonstrating single handed spey casting on the bank of the Brule. Below left, lunch provided by the LSSA. Below right, door prizes announced. Photos by Kevin J. Bovee.*

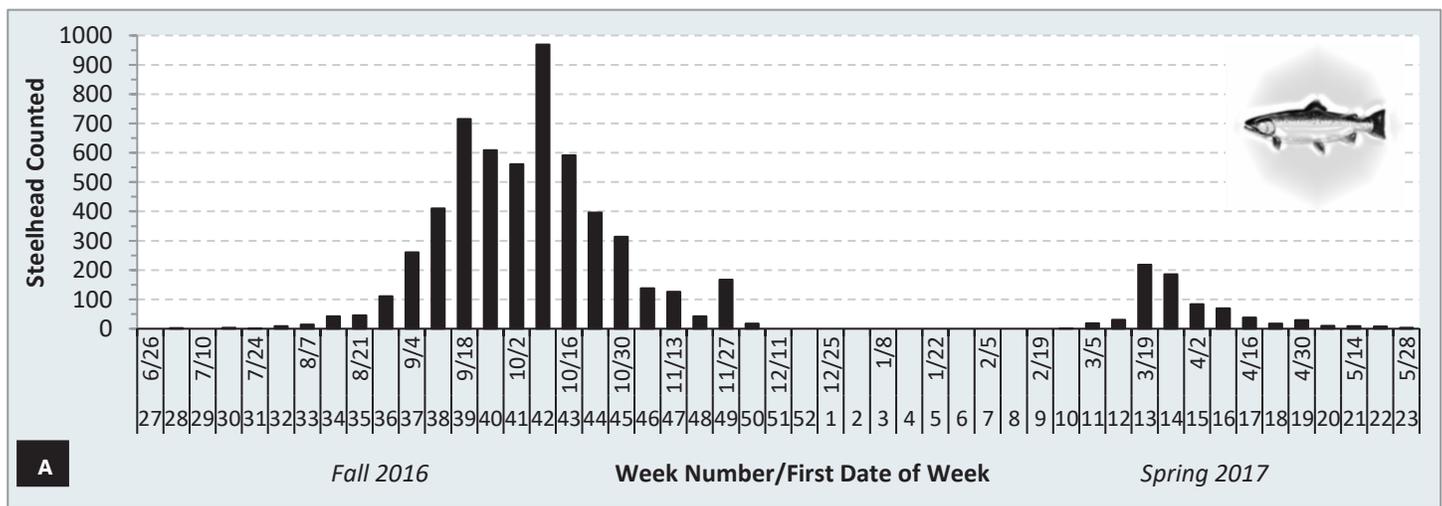


# 2016 – 2017 BOIS BRULE RIVER STEELHEAD RUN

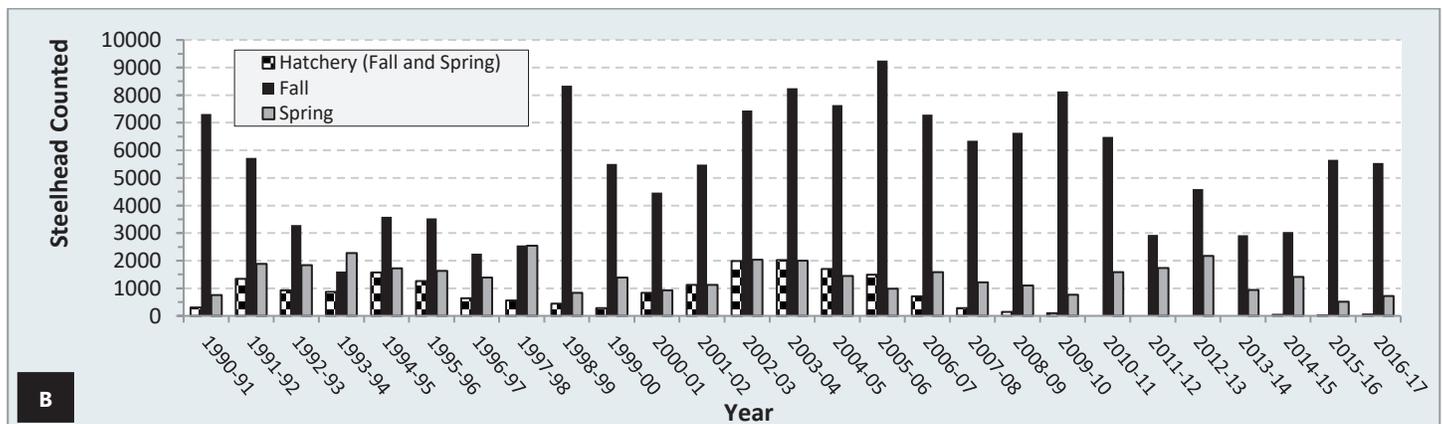
| Fall 2016 Count | Spring 2017 Count* | Total Wild Steelhead Run Count |
|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| 5,544           | 724                | 6,268                          |

\* Excludes 54 fin-clipped rainbow trout, likely from Minnesota DNR north shore streams stocking program

The Steelhead run was monitored with digital video equipment during fall 2016 and spring 2017. **Chart A** shows the run timing or “periodicity,” with most Steelhead arriving during the fall. The fall peak occurred during the second week of October (week 42), whereas the spring peak was mid to late-March (week 13). Ice-out (i.e., ice cover no longer present) at Highway 13 occurred on February 20, which was the second earliest date on record and influenced by warm air temperatures at that time. In general, Brule area weather is more consistent in fall than in spring, and fall migration timing responds with more year-to-year consistency. In contrast, the spring migration timing is more variable relative to spring weather patterns, particularly as they influence water temperature and the timing of ice-out.



This year’s 6,268 Steelhead are included in **Chart B**, along with the annual total Steelhead counts since video monitoring began in 1990. The 25-year average (1990-2015) is 6,136. Nearly half of all Steelhead in the 2016-2017 run ranged from 20 to 25-inches long, weighed from three to five pounds, and were four to five years old. The early-maturing (three-year-old) Steelhead or “jacks” comprised 20% of the run, ranged in length from 12 to 17 inches, and weighed from one to two pounds. Twenty-three percent of the run equaled or exceeded the minimum legal length limit of 26 inches, with weights from six to nine pounds. The Steelhead population is sustained through natural reproduction, and is therefore variable, yet vibrant. Runs typically fluctuate between 3,500 and 8,500 fish and are expected to continue as the population responds to short and long-term variations in river and lake conditions.



## “Steelie 99” Custom Rod

By Scott Thorpe

At the LSSA banquet last spring, member Vic Stark was the successful winner of a steelhead rod, custom made and donated by DAM Goods and Gear.

DAM Goods and Gear is a custom shop that manufactures specialized fishing rods, canoe paddles, snowshoes and other outdoor accessories in Duluth MN. Shortly after winning the rod, Vic graciously loaned it to me for a trip up the North Shore. The rod, designated “Steelie 99” is uniquely designed for our North Shore style of drift fishing with monofilament so I paired it with a Lamson Guru reel loaded with ten lb Maxima Chameleon. The rod is entirely customized, built around a 9’-0” nine weight TFO Lefty Kreh blank with custom wraps and components. The first feature is the use of spinning rod titanium framed guides with SiC rings. Besides minimizing friction, this design holds the monofilament clear of the blank, especially helpful in reducing the “stickiness” I often struggle with when mono clings to a wet rod with conventional snake guides. The rod is built with an 11” switch rod cork handle, which allows the angler to shift their grip for better leverage and control. The reel seat is a skeleton frame TFO in copper finish, with some special artistic touches. The rod wraps are metallic copper and olive, which are very classy on the dark olive-green rod blank. I found the location of a hook keeper about midway between the cork grip and the first stripper guide troublesome. Mono got trapped in it constantly. If I ordered this rod, I would have DAM Goods skip this keeper.

How did it perform while fishing? In short, excellent. I used it on a larger river, requiring longer casts. It took me a short while to get used to monofilament again as I have been using running line with a slinky for thirty years. My eyesight isn’t the best these days and I just can’t see the line anymore. The day I brought it out was overcast and raining. My spouse Maria and I stumbled into a river full of steelhead and we had the whole place to ourselves. I could cast the long distances with pin-point accuracy and guide my yarn fly right thru the deeper troughs. I was rewarded with many steelhead to the net. It was an excellent day and made better with this wonderful rod. Thanks to Vic for trusting me with it and thanks DAM Goods and Gear for your donation.



# Photo Gallery



*Above left, Andy Selvig spey casts on the Sol Duc, Olympic Peninsula. Above right, Paul Sandstrom with a bright Atlantic salmon, caught on his birthday on the Matepedia. Right, J. Tegeder with a 30" Brule steelhead. Left, Charles Haberman with north shore steel. Lower right, Seth DeGroot with his first steelhead, from the Brule.*



## Fishing Funny

By David Thorpe



*This is a time suck - there ain't no fish in this river...*



# Meeting Minutes

## LSSA BOD/Membership Meeting June 14, 2017 MINUTES

BOD Present: K. Behn, R. Fjoser, M. Pitan, C. Wistrom, G. Siverson & K. Bovee. Other-C. Wilson, P. Jordan

1. Gambling Report: All required forms were submitted for review, discussion and approval. Motion by Wistrom to accept the report as submitted. Motion seconded by Siverson and motion passed. The owner of the Breeze Inn was at our latest bingo session and was interested in learning more. Bovee to follow up with her.

2. Newsletter: The May/June issue will be out shortly. Editor will be leaving for AK soon.

3. Planking Party: The necessary permits have been submitted for the 2018 event. This must be done electronically from here on out. For the 2017 event we have no trout as of yet; Bovee's to take care of beans; Wistrom to take care of potato salad; Siverson to handle cake. Wistrom to bring small generator to keep beans hot.

3. Fish Relocate: Done for 2017. 2200 1+ steelhead were located upstream in the Knife River. The LSSA had volunteers do most of the work: fish clippers were R. Ridgewell, G. Siverson and M. Pitan. Bovee planted the fish with help from DNR Nick Peterson. The fish were planted on June 13.

4. Grant Update: The latest financial report is after Reim. Req. #13 was submitted. Reimbursement not received as of yet. Also-the sole source for the NRRI work this summer has been received. Several phone conversations are scheduled between the LSSA and DNR-OMB and LSOHC staff. The latest Status Update is due by July 30 for Phase II. The last piece of work to be performed on Reach 9 is the Valentine segment. This is about 300 feet in length with two rock structures and a segment of tow wood to be installed.

5. Old/New/Other Business: Spey Day is scheduled for September 9 down

at McNeil's on the Brule River. Bovee's to handle food and Wistrom will bring the small generator to keep things warm outside. Last year we kept blowing fuses with everything plugged in. One pan of beans this year and final count to brats to come week of event. The idea of a board gathering-no fish politics at this meeting, social only-was discussed. All thought it a good idea and a weekend in August was picked that best suited most folks' schedules. Bovee's to host the event. To be a potluck type of affair.

Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kevin J. Bovee, Secretary

## LSSA BOD/Membership Meeting July 12, 2017 MINUTES

BOD Present: M. Pitan, G. Siverson, D. Dahl, R. Fjoser, C. Wistrom, K. Behn and K. Bovee. Others present C. Wilson, B. Bergeson.

1. Gambling Report: All required monthly statements were sent out for review, discussion and approval. Motion by Dhal to accepts the report as sent. Motion seconded by Siverson and motion passed. Contact has been made with Breeze Inn and they are interested in bar bingo. Will follow up again.

2. Treasurer's Report: Treasury in good shape presently. Some payable from ANGLER advertising still out. Motion by Behn to accept the report as presented. Motion seconded by Wistrom and motion passed.

3. Grant Update: The amendment has been submitted for correcting the Project Manager and the adjustment to the personnel category. As soon

as that is approved, the first half status update will be due. We are waiting for the weather to improve so that we can get in and finish the Reach 9/12 piece. We have about 250 feet in the Valentine section to complete it: two rock structures and about 125 feet of toe wood. The entire board feels that we should try and complete the project. We have until the end of June 2019 to wrap up Phase II.

3. Summer Board Party: Date picked was August 12 out at the Bovee house. Will send out a note in regards to food.

4. Brule Spey Day: September 9 down at McNeil's. Will have new posters printed up and will send several copies down to B. Bergeson for distribution in the metro area.

5. Planking Party Update: The plankers put on a fabulous event—again. Probably had 35 +/- folks. Need a little better notification in the newsletter. Set the date for the 2018 party: June 30, 2018. Have Brighton Beach reserved. May need an alcohol permit next year even though we do not supply alcohol. Researching that subject.

6. Old/New/Other Business: Mentoring-2018. M. Pitan and K. Behn are interested in holding a fly-fishing side of the steelhead fishing along with the drift fishing side of it. Thought is to contact past kids using the contact info we have and let them know of the time and place. See what the interest will be like. Probably have it in the back room at the Reef—he thought for now. This will be a novice class but will let kids/parents know another way to chase steelhead. M. Risku brought to the LSSA's attention the idea of an incidental catch in the lake trout fishery in this end of the lake. M. Pitan to contact DNR for their input.

Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kevin J. Bovee, Secretary



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