



# Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council

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## Media Update – 2011-06

### 2011 Synoptic Trap Net Survey – Magnetawan River (Britt & Byng Inlet)



Andrew Austin with walleye captured during the Magnetawan River Synoptic Trap Net Survey

The fish community in the Magnetawan River of Eastern Georgian Bay (Britt / Byng Inlet Area) looks fabulous for muskellunge and good for smallmouth bass, but not so hot for northern pike and walleye. Those were the findings of a synoptic trap net survey conducted this spring by the Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources, Magnetawan First Nation, Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve and the Britt / Byng Inlet Anglers Association.

The survey was prompted by concerns raised by the Magnetawan First Nation that the walleye population in the Magnetawan River area of Georgian Bay has been low and dwindling for many years. Results from the survey substantiate those concerns. Only

18 walleye were captured during the survey; amongst the lowest catch rate for similar surveys conducted elsewhere on Georgian Bay. Walleye captured were clearly segregated into two size groups: large, mature fish greater than 60 cm (24") in total length; and small, juvenile walleye less than 36 cm (14"). Although several year classes in the mid-size range appear to be missing, there remains a small but viable spawning population that is showing signs of reproductive success.

The survey consisted of 24 net-nights of fishing effort at 18 different locations in the Magnetawan River. Live-capture trap nets were used for the survey conducted from May 28 to June 3.

Fifteen different species comprising 513 fish and weighing 794 kg (1750 lbs) were captured. The over-all catch rate of 21 fish per net set was well below the average observed in other similar surveys that have been conducted by the Ministry of Natural Resources throughout Georgian Bay.

Relative to these other surveys, the abundance of red-horse sucker, channel catfish and muskellunge were high in the Magnetawan River. The abundance of smallmouth bass and gar was average; and that for northern pike and walleye was low. Abundance indices for largemouth bass, carp, bowfin, pumpkinseed and yellow perch were exceptionally low.

A remarkable 16 muskie were captured; of which five were trophy size – in excess of a metre in length and weighing over 12 kg (approx 26 lbs). Due to the exceptionally large size of these fish and fear of injury, they were released without sampling procedures that could be very stressful to fish of this size.

Smallmouth bass were the most abundant game fish with 136 captured during the survey. All size classes were well represented in the catch suggesting the population is stable, reproducing well and with sustainable levels of harvest.

Over-all, fish community composition was typical of other areas of Georgian Bay. Two-thirds of the fish biomass caught was comprised of non-game fish – predominantly red-horse sucker (49%); and one-third game fish – predominantly muskellunge (14%) and smallmouth bass (12%).

Eric McIntyre, coordinator for the Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council noted: "This was a collaborative effort that relied heavily on partners to provide the necessary manpower to conduct such a survey. We are highly appreciative of significant contributions from the MNR, Magnetawan First Nation, the GBBR and the Britt – Byng Inlet Anglers Association."

The complete survey report is available on the website of the Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council at: [www.helpourfisheries.com](http://www.helpourfisheries.com). (Look under the "Reports and Documents" tab on the Home Page.)