



# ANNUAL REPORT

The Voice of Anglers and Hunters



2015

# PROTECTING RIGHTS AND TRADITIONS

**WHAT WE DO:** The OFAH provides a unified voice for anglers, hunters and trappers on a variety of natural resource issues. The future of fishing, hunting and trapping depends on a broader social understanding and acceptance of these activities. The majority of Ontarians do not fish, hunt or trap, so they do not fully understand the significant ecological, economic, cultural and social benefits these activities offer to society as whole.

**HOW WE DO IT:** The OFAH works hard to reach these people and gain more social acceptance through positive representation of our heritage activities and defending against anti-propaganda and misrepresentation. On behalf of anglers, hunters and trappers, the OFAH stays on top of important issues and provides a strong voice in the protection of our fishing, hunting and trapping future.

## TELLING OUR STORY



It is the role of the OFAH to promote the value of fishing and hunting to our economy, to showcase the important social aspects of these activities among friends and family, and to recognize the deeply-rooted cultural aspects of fishing and hunting in the history of Canada. The OFAH promotes a positive image of hunting and fishing while ensuring conservation of the resource is paramount. September 2015 marked the first National Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Day that recognized the cultural, social and economic importance of these activities in Canada.

The OFAH pushed for the official recognition of this day and was proud to highlight it by encouraging folks to wear camouflage and share their events and social media messages about what heritage activities mean to them. Over 38,000 people were engaged in sharing their stories via Facebook and Twitter.

## CREATING A POSITIVE IMAGE

The OFAH leads by example by being an ambassador for the fishing and hunting community. We promote a positive image for the activities that we are so passionate about, whether it is on television, on the radio, in the news or online.

We promote a positive image by donating deer hides, keeping public fishing areas clean and mentoring the next generation of anglers and hunters, among other things.

The better the image we portray on the ground, the more credibility we build with the non-angling and non-hunting public and government decision-makers. In 2015, the OFAH supported increased fines for trespassing and worked hard to educate the fishing and hunting community on the importance of positive imaging.



# DEFENDING AGAINST MISCONCEPTIONS

**Do fish feel pain?**

Fish are not humans or mammals. They live in a separate physical and mental world where they behave differently. Yet there are still groups claiming that fish feel pain and experience fear when caught by hook and line. A literature search on the subject by OFAH staff found a recent scientific review which exposes the deficiencies and misinterpretations of the claims at "fish pain".

The review found studies claiming to have found that "fish feel pain" have failed to do so, often because they were unable to distinguish between unconscious detection of noxious stimuli (technically known as "nociception") and conscious pain. Understanding the terminology and difference between the two, is the first critical step in answering this question:

**Nociception:** the unconscious sensory detection of injurious stimuli

**Pain:** (according to the International Association for the Study of Pain): an unpleasant sensory/emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage; pain is always subjective; pain can be reported in the absence of tissue damage and the definition of pain should avoid tying pain to an external detecting stimulus.

*Fish provide us with food and recreation.*

*Any official guidelines for treating them should be based on sound science, neurological realities, and objective indicators of well-being, NOT feelings.*

Pain is a result of specific patterns of activity in certain well-studied regions of the brain (the cerebral cortex). Pain is not felt at the level of sensory receptors, peripheral nerves, or pathways within the spinal cord or brain. The fish brain does not contain a true cerebral cortex which is essential for the experience of conscious pain, which is a psychological state.

[ofah.org/fisheries/resources](http://ofah.org/fisheries/resources)

Groups opposed to fishing, hunting and trapping are often well funded, and continuously try to influence public opinion. Unfortunately, many of their tactics involve fear-mongering, propaganda and misrepresentation of fish and wildlife issues.

The OFAH defends science-based fish and wildlife management and counteracts any misinformation that is out there. In 2015, the OFAH stood behind anglers that were harassed for fishing in urban parks, and we also spoke out on the differences between poaching and regulated hunting while Cecil the lion made headlines worldwide.

Our work in dispelling the myths around fishing, hunting and trapping will be relentless. The OFAH will continue to provide a loud voice on behalf of our membership, and provide statistics and science to back up our positions.

While the OFAH provides a collective voice for Ontario anglers and hunters, we also play a role in empowering our membership to speak out individually on issues that impact fishing and hunting.

In 2015, the OFAH rallied support to encourage people to comment on moose management proposals and decisions. We also gained support from many Ontario municipalities that want to see the spring bear hunt returned to Ontario.

At the same time, the government was seeking comments on bear baiting and, through various media sources, the OFAH reached out to hunters and guided them through the public consultation process.

The OFAH also continued to ask for municipal support for better cormorant control in Ontario.

Also at the municipal level, the OFAH worked on many bylaw-related issues, including a new discharge of firearms bylaw in Port Hope. That issue brought out hundreds of members and non-members who supported our opposition of the proposal.

## RALLYING SUPPORT

### Moose Project Phase 2

*Thank you to every individual who took the time to comment on the Moose Project phase 1 and 2. Our members and supporters, the OFAH also comments on factors that affect moose populations with our recommendations.*

**Drastic Tag Cuts!**

**WILL YOU SPEAK OUT?**