



THE CONNECTICUT RIVER SALMON ASSOCIATION N·E·W·S·L·E·T·T·E·R

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WINTER 2008 – 2009

CRSA Education, Service Awards to be Presented at 2009 Dinner

By Jim Carroll, CRSA Secretary

DEP's Gephard to Receive Education Award

Stephen R. Gephard, of the Inland Fisheries Division of the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), was selected in December for the inaugural CRSA Educational Award for his active support of and partnership in the association's Salmon-in-Schools Program. Awards Committee chairman Richard Heffernon said, "Steve has been extraordinary in his contribution and has both respect and recognition in over 100 schools in Connecticut where he has had direct educational involvement over the past thirteen years. His role has been a key to the program's success."

At the time that the award was voted unanimously by the board, Education Chairman Dick Bell said, "After all, Steve got us started in the school business 13 years ago. He has been indispensable to our training of new teachers and the successful running of our program."

(See Awards/Gephard, page 2)

Tripps' Tributary Mill Conservancy Gets Service Award

The first CRSA Service Award has been given to the Tripp family and their Old Lyme conservation foundation, the Tributary Mill Conservancy. The award was announced by CRSA Award Committee chairman Richard Heffernon on December 16. Heffernon said, "Their contribution to the salmon restoration effort has been extraordinary and the award is richly deserved. The story about their effort is like a chapter in the saga of American environmental efforts. The award names the Tributary Mill Conservancy but the thanks are to all the Tripps who participated: James Tripp, Sandra Millan-Tripp, their two children (Morey and Grey Tripp), and Scot, Fran and Sharon Tripp."

The saga began in 2004 when the DEP/Inland Fisheries Division's Diadromous Fisheries Project approached Jim and Sandra Tripp with a proposal to incubate Atlantic salmon eggs at their Old Lyme home. It was hoped that fry production at Tripps' would help offset the loss of production at the MDC Hogsback Dam, which ended when the Whittemore Salmon

(See Awards/Tripps, page 2)

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Richard Shackleton, Guest Speaker

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Richard Shackleton, pictured above with an Icelandic salmon, will speak on salmon fishing in Iceland and Russia at the 2009 CRSA Dinner. See page 6 to learn more. (Photo: R. Shackleton)

Awards/Gephard (from page 1)

Steve is Supervising Fisheries Biologist responsible for the Diadromous Fishery Program in Connecticut, which is for fish that migrate between fresh and salt water. This includes, in part, river herring, shad and Atlantic salmon. Steve captured the first Atlantic salmon to return to the Farmington River. He has worked on all aspects of salmon restoration, including habitat inventory, the development of the fry stocking program, spawning operations, adult salmon capture and fish passage.

THE CONNECTICUT RIVER SALMON ASSOCIATION

The Connecticut River Salmon Association (CRSA) is a nonstock, nonprofit Connecticut corporation. Our mission is to support the effort to restore Atlantic salmon in the Connecticut River basin, a joint undertaking by the states of Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut, together with the US Fish and Wildlife Service of the National Marine Fisheries Service, pursuant to an act of Congress in 1983.

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Steve Gephard (left) explains fry stocking. (Photo: J. Carroll)

He presently serves on the Technical Committee of the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission (CRASC), which was established by Congress in 1993. Steve also presently chairs the CRASC Genetic and Smolt Advisory subcommittee. He has been a member of the US Atlantic Salmon Assessment Committee since its inception. He was appointed in 2002 by then-president George W. Bush to be one of three US commissioners to the international North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization. He has also been inducted into the Atlantic Salmon Federation Roll of Honor.

Awards/Trips (from page 1)

Station was closed in 2003. Their home, a converted streamside mill, offered a unique opportunity to incubate salmon eggs using surface water from the nearby Mill Brook.

An upstream dam diverts brook water to a location below their house, where the former mill's water wheel used to be seated. The Tripps installed a piping system

that collected the water and made it available to pass through egg incubators. Two "heath tray" type incubators on loan from the DEP were installed with the capacity to incubate approximately 70,000 "eyed" salmon eggs. After some initial technical help from

the DEP, Jim and Sandra took over operation of the incubators, picking eggs and tracking development. They quickly improved on the initial design, enhancing both the plumbing and filtration systems.

Eyed salmon eggs are obtained from the Kensington State Salmon Hatchery in Berlin, CT, in late December and loaded in the trays. The Kensington hatchery does not have space to incubate all of the eggs that eye-up and these eggs would have had to be sent to an out-of-state federal hatchery. The ability to keep them in Connecticut is a major advantage for the program.

(See Tripps, page 7)



Back row (left to right): James Tripp, Sandra Millan-Tripp, Fran Tripp, Scot Tripp and front row, Grey and Morey Tripp, in front of the Heath Tray Incubators in the basement of their Old Lyme house. (Photo: CT DEP)

Atlantic Salmon Federation Report: A Note of Optimism in the Air

By Robert Wolter, President, Western New England Council and Director, CRSA

The November 2008 ASF meetings were well attended and there was some note of optimism in the air, mainly because of the unexpectedly increased runs of returning Atlantic salmon to Canada and the Penobscot, but also because the ASF financial portfolio is in satisfactory condition due to prudent fiscal management.

Penobscot River

The ASF is fully committed to the continued support of the removal of the dams on the Penobscot River and the opening of additional spawning habitat. The ASF was very instrumental in raising the \$10 million of non Government financing for phase #1 (buying the dams) and is committed to help raise \$5 million for phase #2 (taking the dams down).

Endangered Species Proposal

Regarding the Endangered Species Proposal for the Penobscot, Androscoggin and the Kennebec, ASF is supporting a Threatened status rather than an Endangered status.

Canadian Endowment Fund Grants

Distributions of Canadian Endowment Fund Grants totaling \$275,000 (all Canadian funds) were made as follows: \$50,000 to each of the five provinces involved, and \$25,000 to ASF for smolt tracking research. Concerns were raised by the various regional council presidents, including why Prince Edward Island received the same allocation as Quebec; the amount to be distributed next year (hopefully the same as 2008); the current value of the fund (estimated to be about \$3 million less than the original amount); and whether the fund management is monitoring expenses, and using fiscal responsibility in investment of the fund.

Tracking Research

Dr. Fred Whoriskey gave an interesting presentation about smolt tracking for 2008. Fred reported that the results from smolt tracking on the five rivers in 2008 were very similar to those of 2007. Even though the smolts left the various rivers at different times and had different distances to travel, they all arrived at the Strait of Belle Isle at almost the same time. It would appear that the early arrivals waited for the others to arrive. Fred also had a kelt tracking operation going on simultaneously, using kelts from the Miramachi in conjunction with the Miramachi Salmon Association. Even though the kelts left at about the same time as the smolts, and the kelts are larger and faster than the smolts, lo and behold, they arrived at about the same time as the smolts, and the smolts followed the kelts through the Straits of Belle Isle. Fred feels very strongly that the kelts are the leaders and the ones that show the smolts the way to the Greenland feeding grounds—without the kelts to show the way, the smolts would not get to Greenland. Fred will be doing more research on the combination of smolt and kelt tracking in 2009.

Suspending the Ocean Fishery in Greenland

We are in the seventh year of a continuing agreement with the Greenland fishermen's group. ASF spends about \$250,000 per year for this purpose, in accordance with the terms of the agreement. Since the agreement was reached there have been better returns of 2SW fish in Canadian rivers. Under the agreement there is no allocation for commercial fishing. One of the problems has been a 20 metric ton per year allowance for a subsistence fishery. Some of these fish have been turning up in Greenland markets. There are negotiations being conducted to correct this. Also, there is a minor dispute between parties regarding taking of whole fish for research sampling. The problem is that the fisherman, by law, can only bring gutted and cleaned fish back to Greenland, and the scientists need whole fish for research. It is felt that this could open up a "can of worms" in controlling the fishery. All parties are working to find a practical solution.

Providing Safe River Passage to Spawning Beds

ASF continues to push live release on the Canadian rivers, with some success. They have proven that it works and that mortality rates are less than 3% of those released. Most of the work ASF does is with outfitters and camps. The Regional Council Presidents have been active with their local provincial government in pushing for lower limits, release of larger fish, barbless hooks etc. ♦

Tripps (continued from page 2)

The eggs hatch in April or May and DEP staff, along with volunteers, immediately stock them into nearby streams.

Since 2005 the facility has produced a total of approximately 200,000 fry. Annual production has ranged from a low of 35,000 in 2006, to a high of 62,000 in 2008. All fry produced at the facility have been stocked in Connecticut in the Eightmile and Salmon River watersheds.

In 2008 the Tripps applied for a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to expand fry production. The improvements were completed in November of 2008, doubling their incubation capacity. On December 17, 2008, the incubators were loaded with 140,000 "eyed" eggs and are expected to produce 120,000 fry for the spring of 2009.

In gratitude for all their hard work, Jim and Sandra were nominated this year for a Field and Stream, Heroes of Conservation award. Out of 2000 nominees, Jim and Sandra were selected as one of the six finalists. Last November, at an awards ceremony at the American Museum of Natural History, Jim and Sandra (a.k.a. "The Fry Couple"), were awarded \$5,000 by Toyota for their hard work and dedication to conservation. ♦

The CRSA “Salmon-in-Schools” Program

12 New Schools Join CRSA Salmon-in-Schools Program in 2008

By Dick Bell, Education Chair and Vice President, CRSA

Twelve new schools joined the CRSA Salmon-in-Schools Program for the year 2008-09. They range all over the southern half of the state of Connecticut, from New Canaan in the southwest, through East Hartford in the mid-central, to Quaker Hill, way up the eastern shore. (Quaker Hill? Yes—a village within the town of Waterford). They included two magnet schools, two private schools, an agriculture school, and one where the program is operated not by the board of education but by the town’s park and recreation department!

Starting alphabetically, we welcome Laurel Ledge School in Beacon Falls. Alan Concilio is both the lead teacher and liaison for this program. Because the town’s educational budget was strapped, Al persuaded the park and rec department to be the sponsor, and added his own Trout Unlimited chapter as a supporter! As a retired teacher, Al ran a very successful program at Beecher Road Middle School in Woodbridge; he then became our liaison for that school plus Bethany Community; he now occupies his expanded role in Beacon Falls.

Julie Christianson was in the CRSA Program for many years at Carmen

Arace in Bloomfield. This year, she has moved over—and brought the program with her—to the Big Picture High School in that community. Jennifer Reed has a similar story. She was a stalwart of the program at King Philip Middle School in West Hartford, and has now moved to Two Rivers Magnet School in East Hartford, where she will revive the program after a two-year lapse.

Holly Turner at Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture School brings the state’s largest such school into our program. She joins New Haven’s Sound School, where Jack Walsh will take over the program this year, in this elite class of special institutions.

(See New Schools, page 5)



The 2008 Teacher Orientation was once again graciously hosted by Northeast Utilities. (Photo: J. Carroll)

CRSA Salmon-in-Schools Program Welcomes New Liaison, New Chiller

By Dick Bell, Education Chair and Vice President, CRSA

Iam pleased to introduce you to Derek West, who will become a new Liaison this year for a cluster of schools in the New Haven County-Eastern Fairfield County region. The specific assignments will be confirmed by the time the directory comes out, which will hopefully be around the first of the year. Derek comes from Owega, New York, a town on the Susquehanna River some 20 miles west of Binghamton. He received his undergraduate degree

at Cornell University in 2008, and he is now a doctoral candidate in Yale’s Department of Ecology and Environmental Biology. Derek attended our orientation in November.

We have been introduced to a new chiller made by the Tradewinds Chiller Company in California. This product seems to offer certain warranty, operating, price and design advantages for us over the current

Glacier product we now recommend. We are advised that the Tradewinds Chiller has operated effectively in Trout Unlimited’s program, “Trout in the Classroom.” However, whether it will carry the extreme low temperatures required to raise salmon remains to be seen. To find out, we have purchased one, and asked Jack Walsh of the Sound School in New Haven to test it out for us this year. We will advise you of our findings. ♦

New Schools *(continued from page 4)*

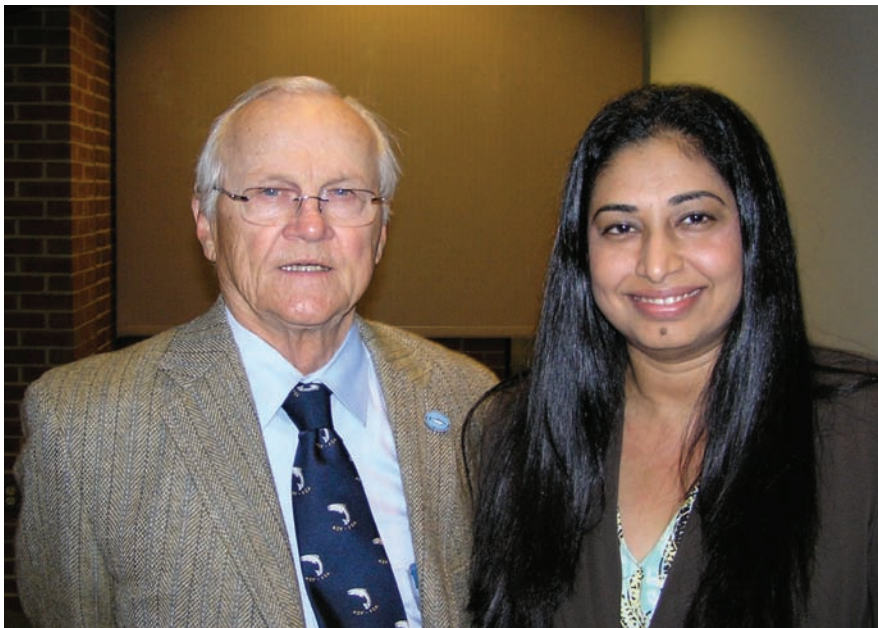
Another school returning to the fold after an absence, in this case only one year, is Cheshire's Norton Elementary School. Here, Tara Daly will preside, assisted by Carol Warner.

Elizabeth Kendell, like Alan Concilio, has served—and continues to serve—CRSA in a variety of capacities. Elizabeth was the director of the River to the Sea initiative, which brought seven schools into the CRSA fold. Subsequently, she became our liaison for those schools. Now, since she's returning to teaching, it seemed natural to her to institute the program at her new school. That is the Greater Hartford Academy of Math and Science, in Hartford, where she will be assisted by Ken O'Konis.

Michael Dietter, from the Northwest Village School, which is operated by the Wheeler Clinic in Plainville, will bring the program to the Academy of Wheeler Clinic in Middletown. Michael will be assisted by Deb Varsik and Rocky Young. The Plainville program will continue in the capable hands of Denise Congdon.

Bennet Academy in Manchester is that town's sixth grade, and will be well represented in our program. Two CRSA teachers have relocated there from other schools and both will operate tanks in their classrooms: Paul Duva and Bill McDougal.

Chantal Detlefs, lower school science teacher at the New Canaan Country School, came in just under the wire, finding funding at the last minute. She joins Pam Harmon of the Foote School in New Haven as private school entrants. Pam will be assisted by John Cunningham and Leslie Young.



Our special thanks to Northeast Utilities Environmental Property Management Director Shri Madhusudham, right, shown here with CRSA Education Committee Chair Dick Bell, for her assistance with the orientation. (Photo: J. Carroll)

The program at Quaker Hill Elementary School will be headed by Martha Shoemaker. This program is affiliated with Mike O'Conner's program at Waterford High School, which provides cooperative assistance.

Finally, last but by no means least, is *Connecticut Magazine's* choice for the Number One High School in the state: I mean, of course, Staples of Westport. Cecilia Duffy will head the program. Cecilia is a marine biology and horticulture teacher, as well as Assistant Girls Swimming Coach. She will be assisted in the CSRA Program by David Rollison.

Quite a group! We are pleased and proud to welcome them all. ♦

CRSA Needs YOU!

By becoming a member, you not only help support this Newsletter, our School Program, and our web site, but you will also be adding your name to the list of individuals dedicated to the health and welfare of the Connecticut River and the restoration of Atlantic salmon and other fisheries resources.

See back page for membership information.

Fishing the Salmon Rivers of Iceland and Russia

Salmon Angler Richard Shackleton to Address CRSA Dinner January 31

Dick Shackleton started fly fishing for trout in Essex County, New Jersey, in 1945 and fished for trout throughout Northern New Jersey until he started fishing the Catskill Mountains of New York in 1951. In 1960 he made his first trip for Atlantic salmon to the George River in Northern Canada.

In 1970, he made his first trip to Iceland for Atlantic salmon and has fished in Iceland every summer since. He has fished over 20 Icelandic salmon rivers, including the famous Lax-Á Assum, a small river which holds only two rods but which has traditionally given the highest per rod yield of salmon of any river in the world. Dick notes that they are small intimate rivers which are, with few exceptions, fished by wading, requiring nothing heavier than a 9 foot 7 weight rod. Some of the rivers are comfortably fished with lighter and shorter rods as light as 7 foot 4 weight rods.

Dick has fished salmon in Norway on both the Gaula and world famous Alta, and has fished for “Springers” on Scotland’s famed Dee as well as on the Tay. He has also fished on the Kola Peninsula in Russia, fishing both the Ponoj and the Kola. With all the salmon rivers that he has fished, Dick’s first love remains with the rivers of Iceland; though the fish do not compare in size to those of Norway, the loneliness and grandeur of the country and the purity of its streams continue to draw him back. ♦

*For more information or to make reservations for the dinner,
please contact Ed Ruestow (860-521-1426) or Jim Carroll (860) 236-5181.*

Vermont Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Wayne Laroche Elected Chairman of CRASC

By Jim Carroll, CRSA Secretary

Wayne Laroche, Commissioner of Vermont Fish & Wildlife, has been elected chairman of the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission, or CRASC. Laroche will chair this important group, mandated by state and federal laws to restore Atlantic salmon to the Connecticut River basin as well as to manage the preservation of other diadromous or migratory fish species such as herring and shad in the multi-state river system.

CRASC was formalized by Congress in 1983 and reauthorized in 2002. The group is composed of six senior fish and wildlife administrators—one each from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont, plus one senior official from the US Fish & Wildlife Service and one from the National Marine Fisheries Service. In addition, in each of the four states, the governor also appoints one public representative to the Commission.

These ten commissioners are advised on scientific matters by a Technical Committee, which is composed of biologists and researchers from the federal agencies and partner states who work to restore migratory fish to the river system and monitor and maintain the Connecticut River. There are five subteams that focus on genetics, American shad restoration, fish passage, salmon studies and fish culture.



Vermont Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Wayne Laroche

Commissioner Laroche of Franklin, in Franklin County, was born in Sheldon, Vermont. He is a graduate of the University of Maine (BS in Wildlife Management) and California State University at Humboldt (MS in Fish Management). He has been employed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department since February, 2003. He has worked as a research biologist and environmental consultant for universities, federal agencies, research laboratories, and private industry for over 30 years. He also has owned and operated several businesses. ♦

Atlantic Salmon Restoration in Maine

By Andrew Goode, Atlantic Salmon Federation

Over the past decade, great strides have been made to restore Maine's imperiled Atlantic salmon populations. Dams have been removed, excessive water withdrawals from Downeast salmon rivers has ended, salmon farming practices have been greatly improved and large swaths of riparian corridors have been permanently protected.

Maybe this work is beginning to pay off, as 2008 was an excellent year for Atlantic salmon returns to Maine. Runs were the best that they have been in nearly 15 years, with at least 2,400 adults estimated to have returned to a dozen different Maine rivers. This pales in comparison to historic returns, but it does give us reason to hope that restoration is possible, particularly if ocean conditions for salmon improve as well.

Atlantic salmon populations in Maine drastically declined with the building of dams in the 1800s; there was another drop in the 1990s that brought salmon numbers in some rivers down to the single digits. By the end of that decade, things had worsened to the point where Atlantic salmon in eight small rivers located in Downeast and Midcoast Maine were listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). In 2008, the federal government proposed expanding the ESA listing to Atlantic salmon in Maine's three largest rivers, the Penobscot, Kennebec, and Androscoggin. A final decision on the expanded listing will be made sometime in the first half of 2009.

Atlantic salmon restoration has been an ongoing process since the late 1800s, when the nation's first salmon hatchery was opened at Craig Brook in East Orland, Maine. Since then, salmon restoration has largely focused on the stocking of hatchery-raised fish in order to restore salmon returns. While the hatchery program has been important in terms of preserving river-specific genetics and maintaining some level of adult salmon returns, the effort has failed at actually restoring wild, self-sustaining runs of Atlantic salmon. This is largely because hatcheries have never been

able to overcome the cumulative impacts dams wreak on adult and juvenile salmon. The Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF) is not aware of any self-sustaining run of Atlantic salmon above three dams in North America, yet all of New England's large rivers have five or more main stem dams.

Today, an increasing emphasis of groups like ASF, Maine's Atlantic Salmon Commission, and federal agencies such as NOAA Fisheries and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service is to address fish blockages on Maine's salmon rivers. These projects range from replacing poorly functioning culverts at road crossings; reconstructing altered and degraded river channels; removing obsolete dams and installing fish passage at other dams; and in the case of the Penobscot River, reconfiguring energy production so salmon and the other fisheries with which they co-evolved, such as the river herrings, can be restored to self-sustaining numbers. ASF has found that any river that has lost its river her-



The Veazie Dam would be removed as part of the Penobscot project. (Photo: Heather Perry)



On the Machias River in Downeast Maine (Photo: A. Goode)

rings in North America has also lost its salmon, so in order to restore salmon we also need to restore the other native fish in the river. The best way to do this is by fixing the habitat.

The most important project for Atlantic salmon restoration in Maine is the Penobscot River Restoration Project. ASF, the Penobscot Indian Nation, and PPL Maine, built the foundation for the project and then created a coalition of environmental, state and federal agency partners to assist in finding a balance between fisheries restoration and economic use of the river for the first time in almost 200 years. Successfully implemented, the project will remove the two lowermost dams on the Penobscot River, decommission and build a river-like fish bypass channel at a third dam and improve fish passage at several other dams in the watershed. Atlantic salmon will then have access to major spawning tributaries with just one dam passage and even more with two dam passages. Fish such as the shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon will have free swim to 100% of their historic habitat.

In June, the Penobscot Trust (the entity created to implement the project) exercised its \$25 million option to purchase the dams and has since filed all the required state and federal permits needed to take ownership of the dams and to remove them. The Trust is now working hard to secure the \$25-\$30 million needed to remove the dams. We expect these funds will once again need to come from both public and private sources. Over time, ASF is confident this project will restore self-sustaining runs of Atlantic salmon to Maine. ♦

Not a Member Yet?

If you are not a member of CRSA, then you are receiving this complimentary copy of our Newsletter in the hopes that you find it informative and that you will consider joining our organization. Publishing this Newsletter is not inexpensive and our income is limited to membership dues and receipts from our Annual Dinner. By becoming a member, you not only help support this Newsletter, our School Program, and our web site, but you will also be adding your name to the list of individuals dedicated to the health and welfare of the Connecticut River and the restoration of Atlantic salmon and other fisheries resources. We need your help. Please use the membership application below and send your check today!

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