

## GTAA STREAM RESTORATION PROGRAMS

The club has been **active in stream restoration** for many years. We concentrate our efforts on two coldwater streams namely, the **Pretty River** and **Silver Creek**. Over the last fifteen years we have undertaken many significant programs that have been very helpful in maintaining these two streams as superb steelhead and trout spawning grounds.

Silver Creek has been the site of **two** major efforts. The first was the excavation of the river's estuary. The money to fund this program was raised by **club volunteers** and government **CFIP** grants.

When the water in Georgian Bay began to drop, it became clear that the **steelhead** and **browns** that spawn in the creek could not easily access the main river course due to a limestone shelf that became exposed. The GTAA applied for and was granted permission to excavate a channel. We brought in a backhoe and dredged out a path through the limestone and rock obstructions. **This work was very successful** and fish are now able to come from the bay and access the river and upper spawning beds with little trouble.

The second program involves **removing logjams and beaver dams** that stop the flow of water and make it very difficult for spawning fish to enter and exit the creek during the spring migration.

The club purchased chain saws, pick axes, crowbars and waders to assist volunteers with this work. This is a yearly program that requires many volunteers. We are lucky as a club to have an active membership to call on when work needs to be done. The GTAA also partners with the staff and students at John Vanier High School. **Without the help of the Vanier team, we would not be able to keep ahead of this work.**

**It is amazing to watch 40 high school girls and boys attack a beaver dam!** The dam disappears in an hour amid great cheers and laughter as at least one student steps in a deep hole and goes for a cold swim.

The **Pretty River** is the other stream system that we maintain. Several years ago we applied for and received a **\$75,000** grant from the **Trillium Foundation**. From 2002 to 2006 we organized, funded and completed **10 major bank stabilization projects** on the lower Pretty.

This work entailed using a high hoe to grade banks that were undercut and causing silting. We brought in **tons of rock** to protect the banks and prevent future erosion. Many volunteer hours were spent **talking to landowners** for permission to work on their properties. Also, many volunteers **planted willow shoots, conifers and hardwood seedlings** to provide a secure root system along the banks and to provide shade to help lower water temperature.

The **Vanier High School fishing club** helped us plant literally **thousands** of trees along the banks of the stream.

Another partner we work with is the **Collingwood Senior League**. Each year, the Senior League **donates funds to the GTAA** to help us purchase trees to be planted on the banks of the Pretty River.

The Pretty River, like Silver Creek, **requires yearly work** to keep the stream free of obstructions. Over the last decade volunteers have spent many hours up to their waists in water **clearing garbage, old tires, log jams and beaver dams** from the stream bed.

**Keeping the water flowing is necessary** to assist the adult fish getting to and from the cold gravel beds at the headwaters on the escarpment. It is also necessary to allow the fingerlings **easy access** back to Georgian Bay. By removing debris and dams from the riverbed we ensure silt buildup does not occur. **When silt builds up behind a dam it acts as a solar panel, heating up the cold water.** Removing log and beaver jams really helps maintain these two watercourses as coldwater streams.

### **Water Temperature Study Program.**

For many years, GTAA members have done **water temperature studies** on Silver Creek and the Pretty River. We want to make sure that we monitor the water temperatures from the headwater tributaries to the estuaries.

So far it is clear that even in the hottest days of the summer, when the temperature studies are done, the headwater temperatures average around **18 to 21 degrees Celsius**. Trout fingerlings survive in such cool water.

**What is of concern** is the fact that during a dry summer, the amount of water in both streams is low and the temperatures in the lower courses of the river are above 25 degrees Celsius.

Since **trout cannot survive in such warm temperatures** it is clear that our club must continue our efforts to maintain the upper headwater gravel beds that provide good spawning habitat.

**We are always looking for new members to join our club.** Volunteers spend hundreds of hours each year in the out of doors doing work in the streambed and along the banks of the Silver and Pretty. If you are interested in having fun helping out, contact the club and a member will get in touch with you.