

## The Otty Lake Fishery

By Wally Robins

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Otty Lake houses a variety of fish species. For resident and visiting anglers, smallmouth and largemouth bass are the main attraction. Northern pike also reside in Otty but this population is small with few fish over eight pounds. Panfish including bluegills, black crappie, rock bass, perch and sunfish, thrive in Otty.

Don't be surprised to see carp in Otty. Over the last decade, this population has exploded. Many carp have reached the 30 to 40 pound range. Carp are commonly seen in weedy back bays in relatively shallow water.

Over the past 20 years, the smallmouth bass population has been in decline, especially with regards to "adult" fish. Because of the lengthy winter period, it takes a long time to "grow" an adult bass in Eastern Ontario. An "adult" bass weighs roughly two pounds. To attain this size can take up to six years! The population decline has resulted from illegal fishing during the spawn and by legal, but irresponsible over-harvesting of adult bass during the open season. Currently, the smallmouth population is stable but requires considerable care if it is to increase or even remain at its current level.

To counteract this situation, the Otty Lake Association and the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority have combined on a smallmouth bass spawning enhancement initiative. This shared venture began in 2013. Further work will be done in following years. Detailed information about this joint venture can be seen elsewhere on this site.

"Catch and release" and "selective harvest" are two concrete things anglers can do. Catch and release is exactly that – all fish caught are immediately released. The only exception is fish that are very badly hooked with little chance of survival if released.

“Selective harvest” means releasing all adult fish (two pounds or bigger) and keeping smaller fish for the table. Not only is this an excellent conservation practice, it is a healthy choice for those who enjoy a meal of fish. According to the Ontario Government publication, Guide to Eating Ontario Sport Fish, bass over 14 inches in Otty are not recommended for consumption on a regular basis.

Panfish are easy to catch and are an ideal way to introduce kids to fishing. No special equipment is needed. A simple push button spinning reel on a light rod will do the trick. Use a small hook, a split shot sinker and a piece of worm right from your dock. As an added bonus, panfish are absolutely delicious on the table, far superior to bass or pike!

Enjoy matching wits with the fish of Otty. Please practice catch and release for bass. Fish are an important link in the ecosystem. It's up to us to respect and protect what Nature has provided.