

4.2 Fishing and Hunting

Fishing and hunting along the Ottawa River represent a popular form of recreation for many. For others, it is a way to earn a living and a source of food. Fishing and hunting along the Ottawa River echo a long tradition by First Nations Peoples long before the arrival of European explorers. This was particularly important along the Upper Ottawa River, where the colder climate was less suitable for farming.

Champlain and other early European explorers relied on the abundance of wild fish and game along the river in the 17th and 18th centuries to fuel their journeys upriver. Early European fur traders began trapping beaver and other mammals, beginning a large-scale hunt that had such a great impact on the ecosystem and political development of the region.

Today, fishing and hunting represent significant recreational opportunities along the river. Some 34 fishing and hunting outfitters on the Upper Ottawa River underline the importance of this sector (Hydro Québec: Bassin supérieur 5-1).

4.2.1 Fishing

The Ottawa River has long had the reputation of being a great fishing spot. In his book *Spectacular Fishing: Ken Schultz's Guide to the Best Freshwater and Saltwater Sites in North America*, internationally-renowned sport fisher Ken Schultz lists the Ottawa River as one of the top fishing spots in North America (178). The Ottawa and its many lakes and tributaries offer a great diversity of fish species, surroundings, and types of fishing. Fishers are also drawn to the natural beauty of the setting.

The most popular fishing places are along the Upper Ottawa River, where there are around 50,000 fishers. Visitors prefer Lake Temiskaming because it is more accessible. Sport fishing brings in \$33 million annually to the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region (Hydro Québec: Bassin supérieur 5-1).

One of the greatest assets of the river is its natural diversity of fish species, including over 80 species. The Ottawa River is home to one of only a handful of naturally reproducing Muskellunge fisheries. In summer months, many nearby lakes provide trout fishing. Species found in the river include Northern Pike, Walleye, Whitefish, Sturgeon, Brown Trout, Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass, Muskellunge, Bullhead, Sauger, Gar, Carp, Catfish, Crappie, Eels, and panfish.

Figure 4.8 Recreational Fishing



Source : Faimont Le Château Montebello

The size of fish in the river is also impressive, and the Ottawa has consistently produced large released fish that have won world records. In particular, Large-mouth Bass and Catfish often reach large sizes (La Toile des Robinsons: "Pontiac"). These trophy-sized fish are regularly caught and released to maintain the vitality of the fishery. Some lakes and tributaries are stocked by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to ensure sufficient catches during peak fishing times, including the southern end of Renfrew County (Colonial Fireside Inn).

Sport fishing is popular and accessible on several stretches of the river. On the Lower Ottawa River, both fishing and ice fishing are popular at Pentecôte Bay, Grenville, the Grand-Calumet channel, between Montebello and Pointe-au-Chêne, and between Carillon and Crushing dams.

Petrie Island (downstream of the Chaudiere Falls) is a major recreational site and significant wetland. In the spring, people fish for Bullhead near the road and Northern Pike and panfish in the inland bays and channels. In the summer, Largemouth Bass populate the inland waters. On the north side of the island, the Ottawa River attracts Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, Muskellunge, Yellow Perch and Black Crappie. In the deeper channels near the Quebec shore, Walleye and Sauger are common. Ice fishing for Walleye, Pike and Black Crappie is popular in the bay. Although Sturgeon is not common in the area, some have been reported (Ottawa River Integrated Development Plan 42).

Figure 4.9 The Legacy of Fishing



Source: Library and Archives Canada

The McLaurin Bay-Clément Bay area has extraordinary aquatic life, with a total of 15 fish species that use McLaurin Bay to spawn, raise their young and feed. Common species include Yellow Perch, Brown Bullhead, Largemouth Bass and Northern Pike, supporting recreational fishing. There is also commercial fishing on this section of the Ottawa River, mainly for Brown Bullhead and Common Carp. In 1999, a plan to develop the area called for the conservation of wildlife habitats and the development of compatible recreational activities (Ottawa River Integrated Development Plan 42).

Fish populations in the Lièvre and Gatineau rivers, two main tributaries of the Ottawa, have been damaged by decades of log floating and possibly as a result of water flow management for hydroelectric generation. Rehabilitation measures could improve the fishing potential of these rivers.

Lake Deschênes is one of the most popular places in the Ottawa area for fishing. The best fishing spots are found in Shirley's Bay, along Pontiac Bay/Fitzroy Harbour. Walleye, Smallmouth Bass and Northern Pike are the mostly commonly fished species. Yellow Perch and Black Crappie can be found in shallow bays. Common Carp, Suckers, Long-nose Gar and Mooneye also occur in this part of the river, but are not as popular for fishing. Winter fishing is mostly done in Shirley's Bay and Constance Bay, for Walleye and Pike, with Yellow Perch as a secondary catch. The marshes of Shirley's Brook are important spawning grounds for Northern Pike, panfish and other common species.

On the Upper Ottawa River, main species caught for recreation include Walleye, Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, and Char. Ice fishing is practiced on Lake Temiskaming and surrounding bodies of water such as Lake Opasatica.

4.2.2 Hunting

Game hunting, both by rifle and bow, is popular in the Ottawa Valley. The regulated annual harvest is open for small game, Black Bear, Moose, Hare and White-tailed Deer. Other species include waterfowl, Turkey, and Ruffed Grouse. Crown land along the river is generally open to hunting.

Duck hunting is particularly popular along the Lower Ottawa River. Hunting for White-tailed Deer is common around Bryson and Carillon. Two outfitters operate along the river near Carillon.

On the river's upper stretches, Moose, White-tailed Deer and Black Bear are the main species that are hunted for sport. Every year, 26,000 hunters including both residents and visitors from outside Quebec and the region come to Abitibi-Témiscamingue, with non-resident hunters preferring large game. Hunting brings in approximately \$17,000,000 annually to this region (Hydro Québec: Bassin supérieur 5-1).

Trapping is a popular activity that also generates revenue. Trapping for muskrat is significant around Carillon and the Réserve Faunique de Plaisance, with 11,000 Muskrat trapped annually. There are over 20 fur-bearing animals that are sought for trapping in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region, of which Beaver and Mink are the most commonly trapped (Hydro Québec: Bassin inférieur 5-1).