



FILMING THE SALMON'S BIG COMEBACK

For the last three years, documentary filmmaker Peter Shatalow has had a water-level view of the Atlantic salmon's comeback attempt in Lake Ontario and its tributaries.

Living in Greenwood, a small hamlet in Pickering, Shatalow is just a stone's throw away from Duffins Creek, an important target tributary in the Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program. The project, which was launched in 2006, is an initiative of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH).

"When my kids were growing up we'd visit Duffins Creek and I noticed fish coming up stream," Shatalow said. "These were coho salmon, which were stocked in the 1970s."

Recently, he started to spot Atlantic salmon during his visits to the creek and filmed the restoration efforts over the course of three years. He used a quadcopter drone for aerial shots, a waterproof GoPro to capture the fish in action, and a high-definition camera. He also donned a pair of wading boots for the 16-minute video, which was partially funded by OPG.

The documentary, titled "Bring Back the Salmon", is now complete and **can be viewed online**.

"I think it's a great sign that the efforts of so many to restore the watershed are showing positive results. The watershed is now able to sustain the migration of Atlantic salmon from Duffins Creek to the lake," Shatalow said.

Atlantic salmon, which settled in Lake Ontario approximately 12,000 years ago, was declared extirpated (or locally extinct) in 1896 due to the impact of human activities. Ten years ago, OFAH and more than 40 partners launched the major initiative to restore a self-sustaining Atlantic salmon population to Lake Ontario and its streams.

As lead sponsor of the program, OPG has helped stock more than 7 million salmon in Lake Ontario and three target tributaries (Credit River, Duffins Creek and Cobourg Creek).

During one stocking session in 2011, Shatalow was invited to film 88 juvenile salmon being released into Duffins Creek by Grade 7 students from Ajax's Vimy Ridge Public School. The students had raised the Atlantic salmon eggs to the fry stage in classroom hatcheries before releasing them into the wild.

Shatalow's video is now being used by OFAH and schools across Ontario to help educate students on the history of Atlantic salmon in Ontario and the efforts to bring them back.

"It is a great way to launch discussions with students ... in terms of our interactions with the environment and water systems," said Alison Ellwood, a teacher at Vimy Ridge P.S.

Thus far, the restoration initiative has yielded positive results. A 2014 study by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry found the salmon fry exceeded expectations for growth and survival in their first year. The study also noted the presence of Atlantic salmon nests, wild juveniles and wild adults in the rivers.

