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THE STATUS OF SMALL FISH COMMUNITIES IN THE ANNAPOLIS RIVER: THE SEARCH FOR STRIPED BASS (*MORONE SAXATILIS*) EGGS, LARVAE, AND JUVENILES

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Striped Bass (*Morone saxatilis*) is a native anadromous fish of the eastern seaboard of North America. The most recent Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (2004) assessment lists Striped Bass as a threatened species. Historically, recruitment of Striped Bass native to the Bay of Fundy (BoF) came from the Saint John, the Annapolis and the Shubenacadie Rivers.

Currently the Saint John and Annapolis River populations are considered to be extirpated, leaving the Shubenacadie as the only remaining BoF river that contributes to recruitment.

Remnant, mature Striped Bass of the Annapolis River population still may be alive and they may still return to spawn. The main objective of this study was to determine if any Striped Bass still return to the Annapolis River to spawn as determined through egg, larvae and juvenile surveys.

Egg surveys were performed by plankton net-sampling. Tows were performed in previously documented spawning areas, but only American Shad eggs were found. Beach seine surveys were performed at 12 sites along the Annapolis River to search for juveniles. The twelve sites spanned from Bridgetown to the Annapolis Basin (entire tidal range). Many other species of small fish were caught during beach seining, but no Striped Bass. The status of the small fish assemblages in the river was documented to determine spatial and temporal trends. White Perch (*Morone americana*; same genus as Striped Bass) were found at most sites. It appears that no Striped Bass returned to the Annapolis River this past year to spawn and future monitoring for Striped Bass recruitment is recommended on a 5-10 year period.



Tom Labenski graduated from Oakville Trafalgar High School in Oakville, Ontario in 2007. Tom is currently completing his Honours thesis in his fourth year at Acadia. Aside from completing his Honours, Tom has played on the Acadia Axemen Varsity football team for four years. He is currently one of the captains on the team and has received two Defensive MVP awards along with being named to the All-conference Team. Not only has Tom been successful on the field, but he has also excelled in the classroom and has been named an Academic All-Canadian for the past three years. Tom has also been involved in the Sensory Motor Instructional Leadership Experience (S.M.I.L.E.) program at Acadia for the past three years as an instructor.

