

Reel women are on the rise

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Several nights a week in the summer, Denise McClement leaves her administrative job in Kincardine exactly at 3:30, changes into shorts, picks up a pizza and joins her husband on their 25-ft. Grew boat, Piranha. On Lake Huron, McClement sets up her nine-ft. Fenwick rod (husband Ken calls it the "honey stick" and Denise says it catches the most fish) on a downrigger with a silver fox or a northern king lure.

"Fishing is a big part of my life," says McClement, 43. McClement started fishing 12 years ago with friends. She met her husband, "a lovely man who had a boat," through fishing and the McClements chaired the Chantry Chinook Classic Derby for seven years.

McClement is part of a group of women known in derby circles as "the fishing chicks." They reunite at every derby, vie for the biggest fish, visit for the weekend and then hug goodbye. "Through fishing, I've met girlfriends that I will keep in touch

with for the rest of my life."

What McClement loves about fishing is spending time with friends and her family. One of her favourite memories is a day of fishing with her son, then 11, and her daughter, then nine. Now, she says, "I like having that quality time out with my husband, away from the stress of jobs and everything else."

INCREASING NUMBERS

McClement is one of almost 700,000 women anglers in Ontario. In 1980, only 15% of adult anglers were women. Today it's 25% and growing. The 3% decline in Ontario angling licence sales between 1995 and 2000 can be traced to a loss of male anglers. In that period, the number of women anglers increased.

This trend is reflected all over North America and industry has taken notice. In the U.S. and Canada, women spend tens of millions of dollars annually on fishing gear. Women anglers no longer need to dress like small men. Hip waders, shirts, vests, jackets ... all are available in a woman's cut and size.

Like McClement, fishing women tend to fish with family

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and friends, and through fishing, make new friends. Women's fishing clubs, with names such as Reel Ladies, Ladies in Wading or Flygirls, have grown all over North America. The Juliana Anglers of New York, N.Y., took their name from Dame Juliana Berners, an English woman who wrote the first book of fishing, *A Treatise of Fishing with an Angle*, in 1496. In Ottawa, women anglers can join the Ottawa Women Fly Fishers.

Clubs have banded together into women's fishing associations. The International Women Fly Fishers has members from Canada, the U.S., Europe and Japan. For competitive anglers, the Women's Bass Fishing Association runs a seven-event women's professional bass fishing tour.

Fishing has also become a way for women to help other women.

Kathryn Maroun, 36, of Toronto is one of only three Federation of Fly Fishers-certified woman fly casting instructors in

Canada. Maroun teaches casting, sells her own line of women's fishing apparel, and was a member of the 2002 Canadian fly fishing team. She's a fill-in co-host on the television program *Fishing with Shelley and Courtney*, a show hosted by two women from B.C. that airs on 10 North American networks.

RECOVERING

Maroun is organizing the first Casting for Recovery Canada retreat this August in Cambridge, Ont. Developed in the U.S. by two women surgeons and fly fishers, Casting for Recovery is a weekend retreat for women with breast cancer. Any age, any stage, women stretch and exercise as they practise the back-and-forth motion of fly-casting and catch trout on the fly. Many hold onto their new sport and their new friends after the retreat.

"They're so excited about what they've accomplished by the end of the weekend," says Maroun. "It's very powerful."