



Scott Thorpe with a Lake Superior coaster.

ing in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Alaska. It turns out he also is the man behind the Greater Lake Superior Foundation's move towards coaster work.

I used to bump into Thorpe when I was a serious steelhead bum in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but we hadn't crossed paths in years. So this spring I phoned him up for a chat and to find out how the foundation came to be.

"What happened was, about two decades ago, the Lake Superior Steelhead Association set up a fund called the "Greater Lake Superior Foundation," he said. "There were a couple of guys on that board, but they weren't really doing anything with (the fund). So they recruited me about eight years ago."

Because he was a fishing guide, Thorpe figured he had time in the winter to manage the fund, yet as anyone who knows anything about volunteering will tell you, one minute you are helping out, and the next minute you are chairman of the board. So Thorpe

is now the head of the fund. He said one of the first things he did was sort through the paperwork and secure non-profit status for the fund. He also worked through all the bylaws and got everything running smoothly. At the same time, the small amount of seed money had grown, and if you are a non-profit, you're not supposed to be building a bank account.

Coaster support

"We decided that a good use of our funds would be to support research into coaster brook trout," said Thorpe. "We picked coaster brook trout because it's a beautiful fish and it's a native fish to Lake Superior. And it's often ignored both by anglers and by fisheries managers, probably because there are not enough of them and they fall below the radar."

Thorpe notes there are plenty of groups that are promoting steelhead and salmon, and the board of the foundation thought here's a native fish, so let's become first the advocates for that fish, and get people interested and excited about them. And then see what can we best do to influence their management.

At present, the GLSF is largely about giving grants for habitat or research. Thorpe said they have focused on graduate students in colleges and universities that are somewhere near Lake

For the love of coaster brook trout

THE GREATER
LAKE SUPERIOR
FOUNDATION

There are several clubs and organizations that encourage the conservation and sustainable use of sport fish in Lake Superior. The North Shore Steelhead Association and Thunder Bay Salmon Association both come to mind, but another group is working to help conserve the native coaster brook trout. It's a fish that doesn't always get the attention it deserves, especially considering its relative rarity in our greatest of lakes.

T-shirts and car stickers

The group is called the Greater Lake Superior Foundation (GLSF) and is based in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

A quick backstory. I found out about this group when a friend sent me a link to a website that was raising funds for the group via the selling of a T-shirt and car sticker that featured a coaster brook trout. And, of all fish, brookies are my favourite. However, despite the coolness of the swag, I wanted to look into the group a bit before I dropped my hard-earned dollars.

I checked out their site and read the board of directors list. The name at the top was Scott Thorpe, who is well known in northwestern Ontario and Minnesota fly-fishing circles. He's a guide who has spent the last 10 years work-



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Sticker sales go to support research.

Superior. "We try to promote their graduate work in coaster brook trout because when they become fisheries managers, they will have an affinity to coaster brook trout, and maybe we will learn more about these fish, and we will also promote their management in the Lake Superior basin."

Thorpe said, as of this writing, grants have gone primarily to Michigan researchers. However, he says they are fully interested in coaster research all the way around the basin. "Obviously the Nipigon area (in Ontario) is the stronghold of coaster brook trout. There used to be quite strong numbers of them along the south shore and in Minnesota, too.

For some reason, the grad applications have been coming from Michigan. But, as we have more money, we will try and work around the whole lake."

Although most funding has gone to Michigan, the foundation has been quietly active in the northwest of Ontario. Two foundation board members were tagging brook trout on Portage Creek on the Sibley Peninsula this past spring, so, if someone knows of a project connected with these great fish, this is a potential source of support.

If you want to find out more and maybe order up a rad T-shirt and sticker, the website address is www.thegreaterlakesuperiorfoundation.org. They also have quite a good Facebook page, where you can see some of the projects the group has backed, as well as videos and photos of coasters.

It makes me happy to know some private money is being raised to help study the coasters of Lake Superior. These fish are jewels and extremely vulnerable to the actions of man.

I'm proud to display my coaster brook trout research fundraising sticker, even if my study is largely via rod and reel. ●

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