“Au temps et dans les quantités qui lui plaisent”: Poachers, Outlaws, and Rural Banditry in Quebec

DARCY INGRAM*

Tensions emerged over wildlife conservation in Quebec during the latter half of the nineteenth century. These are exemplified by the case of Henri Ladouceur, a poacher in the Beauce region of Quebec’s Eastern Townships, who enjoyed province-wide notoriety during a two-year manhunt leading to his imprisonment in December 1897. This study uses state documents, associational records, newspaper reports, and comparisons with the Eastern Townships’ “Megantic Outlaw” of the 1880s to view poaching as an expression of social and environmental banditry and to examine divergent claims regarding men’s entitlement to hunt based on class, ethnicity, gender, and territory. In addition to its implications for wildlife conservation, resource regulation, and social order, the Ladouceur case became part of a broader narrative regarding rural resistance to the law, the state, and private forms of power.

La question de la conservation de la faune dans le Québec de la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle a provoqué des confrontations. L'exemplifie le cas d’Henri Ladouceur, un braconnier de la région de la Beauce des Cantons de l’Est, au Québec, qui devint un personnage notoire sur la scène provinciale durant une chasse à l’homme de deux ans qui déboucha sur son emprisonnement en décembre 1897. L’étude utilise des documents officiels, des dossiers d’associations, des reportages de journaux et des comparaisons avec le « hors-la-loi du Mégantic » des années 1880 pour dépeindre le braconnage comme une expression du banditisme social et environnemental et pour examiner diverses allégations voulant que l’homme jouisse du droit fondé sur la classe, l’appartenance ethnique, le genre et le territoire de chasser. Outre ses implications pour la conservation de la faune, la réglementation des ressources et l’ordre social, le cas Ladouceur a laissé son empreinte dans le récit plus vaste de la résistance rurale à la loi, à l’État et aux formes privées du pouvoir.

* Darcy Ingram is an FQRSC postdoctoral fellow at the Centre interuniversitaire d’études québécoises at Université Laval (CIEQ-Laval). The author would like to thank the editors and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions. SSHRC doctoral and FQRSC postdoctoral grants helped make this research possible.
“ONE OF THE WORST poachers in the Province of Quebec,” reported the Montreal Daily Star. “He had been carrying on his depredations for four or five years,” the Montreal Gazette elaborated. Such was the tone of headlines throughout Quebec during the fall of 1897 as the press followed the exploits of the increasingly infamous “Beauce outlaw” Henri Ladouceur.¹ Henri Ladouceur was an inhabitant of the remote Beauce County in Quebec’s Eastern Townships, not far from the village of Lake Megantic near the province’s border with the state of Maine, and was well known by locals as a habitual poacher and supplier of game. When tensions over fish and game resources in the region escalated midway through the 1890s, Ladouceur found himself at the centre of one of Quebec’s most sensational stories of rural banditry. Starting in the fall of 1895, he became the subject of a series of manhunts aimed at bringing him and other local poachers to justice. Two years later, the still uncaptured Ladouceur gained province-wide notoriety as state and private authorities, sporting enthusiasts, and wildlife conservation advocates scrambled to bring what was by now an embarrassing case to a close. But things would get worse before they got better. Despite the best efforts of authorities, Ladouceur remained at large throughout the fall and winter of 1897. Newspapers in the province were quick to exploit the public’s fascination with outlaws, and it was not long before Ladouceur was linked to the region’s better-known “Megantic Outlaw” Donald Morrison, who, with the help of locals, evaded authorities on a charge of murder for ten months before being captured in the spring of 1889. By the time of Ladouceur’s capture in late December 1897, stories of outlawry, incompetent authorities, and a sympathetic rural populace were once again front and centre in the region and throughout the province. The Ladouceur case became part of a broader narrative regarding rural resistance to the law, the state, and private forms of power.

The story of the “Beauce Outlaw” was symptomatic of the tensions unfolding in Quebec and elsewhere in North America over the regulation of fish and game resources. As noted above, the press was quick to take up the Ladouceur case, but poachers like Ladouceur also make fascinating subjects of historical inquiry. Both in Britain and North America, historians have found poaching to rest upon the surface of deep-rooted tensions over property and resource rights. This is immediately apparent in the history of the conservation movement in the United States and Canada during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In recent years, historians including Tina Loo and Bill Parenteau in Canada and Karl Jacoby, Richard Judd, John Reiger, and Louis S. Warren in the United States have

pushed the study of conservation beyond former state-centred frameworks to reveal a movement rich in implications, from the heavily contested history of resource regulation to perspectives on masculinity and related issues of gender, class, and ethnic identity. As many of these authors point out, poaching was central to this process. To use Jacoby’s words, poachers were part of the “hidden history” of a conservation movement that criminalized rural socio-economic strategies, including commercial and subsistence use of wildlife resources.²

North American poachers were distinct in many ways from those in Britain, where regulations related to fish and game resources were of long standing and were attached closely to landownership and aristocratic privilege. Still, the British historiography on poaching sheds considerable light on the North American context. Admittedly, Ladouceur was not among the class of men E. P. Thompson describes in his classic study of poaching and law in eighteenth-century England, *Whigs and Hunters.*³ Unlike Thompson’s poachers, Ladouceur was not part of a long-settled lower gentry that was being displaced by new money. Nor could he draw on centuries of custom to claim territorial rights to local wildlife resources. In fact, there was for Ladouceur little “custom” on which to draw, given that


Euro-North American settlement in his part of the Eastern Townships had only recently begun. Finally, poachers in Quebec were in no way subject to regulations akin to the Black Acts, those extreme legislative measures described by Thompson that transformed poaching and a number of related practices into capital crimes. Nevertheless, Thompson’s poachers, like Ladouceur and his counterparts, were bitterly opposed to a regulatory climate that barred locals from access to fish and game resources. As in the case of the men known after the above Acts as the “Blacks,” for whom poaching was a response to reassertion of a forest authority that had been relaxed for some time, poaching was for Ladouceur an assertion of rights to local resources that had been previously subject to minimal state regulation. Likewise, comparison with Douglas Hay’s work on poaching in rural England shows that the rural poor on both sides of the Atlantic took advantage of the difficulty of game law enforcement: in communities where poaching opportunities were abundant, resistance ran deep, regardless of the severity of the law. Thus, while important differences remain, Britain and North America supported similar territorial and class-based divisions over wildlife resources.

No less important an identity common among poachers was their status as outlaws. The Blacks, clearly, are a good example, but British historiography is full of them, from the mythic Robin Hood to characters such as the infamous highwayman Dick Turpin. So common are they that Eric Hobsbawm has identified a pattern of “social banditry” persistent in societies undergoing socio-economic and cultural transformations similar to those underway in Quebec’s Eastern Townships, where frontier and rural life was giving way to urban and industrial society. A glance at Ladouceur’s corner of the world reveals the presence of many men who challenged extra-local powers and maintained the support of the communities in which they lived. As Hobsbawm argues, the activities of such outlaws contain an ethical dimension that makes it difficult to understand them simply as criminals. Often it makes legends of them. Edward D. Ives points to such a situation on the American side of the border in his work on George Magoon, and J. I. Little has studied in detail the links between Hobsbawm’s bandit thesis and the Megantic Outlaw. Indeed, this pattern of opposition in regard to wilderness resource regulation is so persistent within the North American conservation movement that one historian has suggested describing it as a form of “environmental banditry.”

Finally, there are the ethnic and gendered dimensions of poaching. Recent studies, including those of Gail Bederman and John M. MacKenzie, suggest that some significant changes were underway during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in regard to male as well as female identities. While not enough to be labelled a crisis, Bederman argues, challenges to white middle-class male power in the United States during this period nevertheless undermined Victorian models of masculinity based on “gentility, respectability, self-mastery and restraint.” Bederman’s analysis of the rise of “primitive masculinity” and its emphasis on the male body, on athleticism, and on a rougher, less refined concept of middle-class male power fits remarkably well with MacKenzie’s work on masculinity in the context of British and imperial sport hunting. Like Bederman, MacKenzie notes how men, and in particular boys, were subject during this period to a celebration of primitive male identity, by which “images of frontier manliness were fed back into the metropolis and became an established feature of a variety of popular cultural forms.” The interest among middle-class men in hunting and fishing and the evolution of a sportsman’s code of conduct valuing fair play and reserving fish and game for sport were part and parcel of these changes. Middle-class men in Quebec and in cities throughout Eastern North America turned to that province’s wilderness regions as a means of escaping urban and industrial woes and reconnecting with an idealized vision of primitive male identity and the frontier environment. It is probably too much to say that this idealized “primitive” male identity had overtaken Victorian ideals of manliness by the 1890s. Though in many ways contradictory, the two nevertheless existed together, as is clear from the varied homosocial and heterosocial contexts of sport hunting and fishing as well as the ways in which sport served as a vehicle for both frontier adventure and family vacation. Contradictions aside, it remains clear that these middle-class visions of masculinity were incompatible with that of Ladouceur. In vigorously asserting his “right” to hunt where and when he pleased, Ladouceur not only challenged the

---


8 Ibid., pp. 10–20.


10 On the sportsman’s code of conduct, see MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature*, see also Reiger, *American Sportsmen*. 
power of middle-class men. He also asserted a rugged and independent frontier identity — the same model of masculinity against which middle-class Victorian manliness had defined itself and one to which a new generation of middle-class men was slowly laying claim. Thus the tensions over Ladouceur formed part of a pattern: as urban middle-class men sought to reinvigorate their masculine identity through sport hunting and fishing, they came up against a form of rural or frontier masculinity that challenged their power and authority. At first glance it seems that some form of mutual self-respect might make sense. However, as Tina Loo argues in her work on hunting and masculinity, even links between white, middle-class hunters and their more skilful white, Aboriginal, or Métis guides were at best superficial and remained subject to vigorously delineated lines of class, ethnicity, and gender. This was even more the case with poachers, who challenged the efforts of middle-class men to make the use of fish and game conform to their expectations.11

The Ladouceur case thus presents an opportunity to examine the links between poaching and some of these broader transformations as they took shape in Quebec. During the late 1890s, a combination of facts, myths, half-truths, and outright fabrications unfolded around Ladouceur, elevating him to the status of a local and eventually a provincial celebrity. Yet the stories also reflected a pattern being repeated in less sensational terms across the province and continent during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Upper- and middle-class men based in the growing and increasingly industry-oriented society of the cities sought to integrate fish and game resources into a sport-based tertiary economy that offered spin-offs for some local residents in the form of wage labour and a market for goods and services. The state also benefited financially through an array of leases, licences, permits, and other fees. This vision was not popular with everyone. Many rural inhabitants saw their economic livelihoods threatened both by the loss of wilderness resources and by increasing dependence on external market forces. Not surprisingly, they remained deeply resentful of extra-local efforts to exert control over the region. Proponents of this approach to fish and game resources thus found themselves pitted against men who continued to believe in their right to hunt and fish for subsistence and small-scale commercial use. Ladouceur, after all, was not alone in the Quebec woods. Products of opportunity, of marginalization, and of the belief in local rights, poachers were busy throughout the province. Like their counterparts elsewhere, they often worked in relative freedom, given the difficulties of surveillance and enforcement. Not until someone like Ladouceur exposed the limits of state and civic regulation or offended the loosely defined ethical codes related to sport or to the treatment of animals did authorities

11 Loo, “Of Moose and Men.”
take to the woods with such determination to reaffirm social order and the rule of law.

The Beauce Region
Henri Ladouceur lived and hunted in a remote and mountainous region straddling the Eastern Townships’ southern Beauce and northern Compton Counties.\(^{12}\) Characterized by its considerable forested areas and its relatively poor agricultural potential, it was the last part of the Townships to be populated by Euro-North Americans.\(^{13}\) Settlement took place here during the nineteenth century mostly as a result of a number of colonization schemes. The first of these saw a trickle of Scots emigrants settle on lands held by the British American Land Company between the upper St. Francis River and Lake Megantic. They were soon joined by a growing number of French Canadians, following the establishment of roads into the region and a concerted nationalist effort on the part of religious, state, and civic institutions to stem the flow of rural migrants into the province’s cities and to the northeastern United States. Upon arriving, rural migrants found their efforts to settle confounded by poor farming conditions and by the considerable degree of external control over local land and forest resources. Added to these challenges were ethnic differences separating French Canadian settlers from the previous wave of British immigrants, many of whom would eventually relocate in Western Canada. Mainly francophone and Catholic by the turn of the century, the region’s rural populace combined agricultural production aimed largely at self-sufficiency with a variety of forest-based economic strategies: maple sugar production, wood-cutting and employment in the timber industry, and commercial and subsistence hunting and fishing. Not surprisingly, this combination of factors generated a range of class, ethnic, and demographic tensions.\(^{14}\)

---


13 Little, for example, notes that the region’s “average snowfall is double that of Sherbrooke, and the growing season is regularly a month shorter than in the Montreal area” (*Ethno-Cultural Transition and Regional Identity*, p. 17).

The Megantic Outlaw affair of 1888–1889 encapsulated many of these tensions. It centred on Donald Morrison, a Canadian-born Scot living in a Highlands Scots community in the Townships’ Upper St. Francis District. As a young man, Morrison left his Eastern Townships community to work in the west as a cowboy. He sent much of his earnings home to invest in the family farm. While Morrison was away, his father contracted a considerable debt regarding the property. Upon his return the young Morrison became immersed in a further series of transactions related to the farm, and the likelihood of his ever laying claim to it became increasingly remote. Eventually, the farm was transferred to Malcolm McAulay, the local mayor of the town of Lake Megantic, who held the mortgage on the property. Once in possession of the farm, McAuley had the family evicted. He then sold it in 1887 to a French-Canadian farmer, Auguste Duquette. In the spring of 1888 Morrison began what Little describes as a “campaign of intimidation” against the Duquettes, during which he allegedly set fire to the barn and fired shots into the house. In themselves, these actions were enough to turn authorities on the disgruntled man. What really propelled Morrison to the status of outlaw, though, was a deadly incident that took place on the streets of Megantic the following summer. In June 1888 Lucius “Jack” Warren, an American who had been living in the region for a number of years, was deputized and set off with a warrant to arrest Morrison. Armed with a revolver, Warren confronted the similarly armed Morrison on the main street of the village. Following an exchange between the two, Morrison shot and killed the deputy. Marked now for murder in addition to allegations regarding the Duquettes, Morrison went into hiding. With the help of the local Scots community, he evaded authorities for the next ten months without ever leaving the Upper St. Francis District. The affair came to an end in April 1889, when Morrison was shot and captured. At his trial that October, he was found guilty of manslaughter and was sentenced to 18 years’ hard labour in the St. Vincent de Paul Penitentiary. He died of pulmonary consumption in June 1894 following repeated refusals to eat.15

Historians of the Megantic Outlaw affair have reached a number of conclusions. For Ronald Rudin, the Morrison case offers a good illustration of the deep-rooted tensions that separated the province’s anglophone and francophone populations. Rudin sets Morrison in the context of a series of contemporary issues, notably the 1885 execution of Louis Riel and

---

the subsequent election of Honoré Mercier’s Parti Nationale; the Jesuit Estates Act, which provided compensation in regard to former Jesuit lands held by the provincial government; and a series of education-related bills and campaigns. From here he argues that the Megantic Outlaw affair became fodder for tensions between the Quebec’s English Protestant and French Catholic populations. Relying in large part on the French and English presses, Rudin shows how the response of the former — for which Morrison’s actions reflected the hostility of the Townships’ Scots community to the growing number of francophones in the region — contrasted sharply with that of the latter, which responded in sympathy to Morrison and the plight of his community. In contrast to Rudin’s study, J. I. Little argues that the Megantic Outlaw affair needs to be interpreted in light of tensions within the local Scots community that supported him. Describing the affair as “the result of a community crisis, a crisis of survival in the face of fundamental economic, social, and cultural change,” Little demonstrates that the impetus to protect Morrison reflected a deep-rooted anxiety within the local Scots population over their community’s demise.  

It is not surprising that contemporaries were quick to link Ladouceur to Morrison, for the two outlaws shared much in common. Likewise, the Ladouceur case fits well with the themes outlined by Rudin and particularly by Little in regard to the Megantic Outlaw affair. However, the centrality of poaching in the Ladouceur case, as opposed to murder, makes for some significant differences. While the Megantic Outlaw affair offered a quick and ready framework in which to place the poacher, Ladouceur’s brand of banditry was much more widely acceptable than Morrison’s actions. Few, after all, could condone Morrison’s shooting of Warren, even if they sympathized with his plight. As Little points out, even support from Morrison’s embattled Scots community was at times reluctant. By contrast, a good number of the region’s rural populace made a habit of killing deer and other fish and game, both in season and out, and in numbers that exceeded state limits. As a result, rural inhabitants identified much more directly with Ladouceur. What is more, Ladouceur did not slip easily into tensions that divided French and English in Quebec. I do not mean to suggest that ethnicity was not a factor: urban upper- and middle-class anglophone Protestant men were the driving force behind Quebec’s fish and game protection movement, and the province’s English press gave the Ladouceur case extensive coverage. There remains little difference along linguistic lines, however, in regard to the tone of contemporary media reportage, and much to

16 Rudin, “The Megantic Outlaw and his Times.”
18 Ibid., pp. 110–113.
suggest commonalities between English- and French-speakers who shared identities of class and rural or urban location. Indeed, while both presses condemned poaching, they also shared a similar fascination with Ladouceur and to some degree revelled in his transgressions — not the least because, as the Montreal Daily Star had learned a decade earlier during its extended coverage of Morrison, tales of rural outlaws sold well to urban audiences. As a result, Ladouceur proved to be a tenacious figure. Rural inhabitants, after all, had reason to be embittered towards authorities who threatened to rob them of the products of forest and stream. Elites and industrial interests already held considerable control over local resources, and they, along with the state and clergy, had been responsible for misleading settlers as to the area’s agricultural potential. As a challenge to these forms of authority, Ladouceur thus commanded considerable sympathy and support.

Regulating Fish and Game

In Quebec, colonial, provincial, and local levels of government as well as private clubs became increasingly devoted to wildlife conservation in the 1850s. During this decade, the colonial government consolidated its game legislation for Lower Canada in the Lower Canada Game Act of 1858 and organized a system of protection for the Gulf of St. Lawrence through a series of Fishery Acts. Together, these Acts established a system of surveillance comprising state and private overseers as well as a patrol ship on the Gulf of St. Lawrence under the command of Pierre-Étienne Fortin. Legislators also established on the lower St. Lawrence and the Gulf a series of commercial salmon fishery licences, which were in turn supported by a series of river-based angling leases on the salmon rivers of the North Shore and Gaspé peninsula aimed at protecting the

---

salmon’s spawning grounds.20 Civic associations also became involved. Before the decade was out, advocates of fish and game protection had formed clubs in Montreal and Quebec City.21 Regulation of fish and game resources developed slowly from this point until the 1880s, when a long-awaited ruling from the Supreme Court of Canada in April 1882 recognized provincial jurisdiction over Crown Lands, including the right of fishing on inland waters.22 As this included control of the system of angling leases established during the late 1850s, it presented the Quebec government with considerable opportunities as well as challenges over the regulation of fish, game, and other wilderness resources. Within a few years the Quebec government turned the existing combination of legislation, leases, and club culture into the foundation for its approach to fish and game protection. Overall, the system reflected the sport-based models of fish and game conservation that were developing throughout North America, with an important difference. The Quebec government relied to a degree unmatched by most other provinces and states on private regulation of provincial lands and wildlife resources. Legislation passed in 1883 expanded the decades-old system of angling leases on the salmon rivers of the lower St. Lawrence to encompass all of the inland rivers and lakes under Crown control. This was followed in 1885 by legislation encouraging the formation of fish and game protection clubs. A system of hunting leases established in 1895 further expanded this regulatory structure, so that by the turn of the century much of the province’s accessible wilderness territory was under lease. In addition to drawing large numbers of Canadian as well as American sportsmen and fish and game clubs, the system brought an array of federal, provincial,
and private authorities to bear on communities accustomed to hunt and fish on their own terms.  

These developments had implications for the Eastern Townships. By the end of the century there were protection clubs in Sherbrooke and in Compton County, and fish and game clubs held leases throughout the region. One of the largest of these clubs was the Boston–based Megantic Fish and Game Corporation (see Figure 1). Established in 1886 by Boston doctor Heber Bishop and incorporated the following year in both Maine and Quebec, it was the fifth such organization to take advantage of Quebec’s system of angling leases. As the club’s name indicates, it set its sights directly on the region surrounding Lake Megantic. Aiming “to establish and perpetuate a preserve that will be unequalled anywhere upon the eastern section of the continent,” it consolidated exclusive hunting and angling rights through Quebec’s lease system and in Maine through leases with private landowners. The club’s 1887 prospectus outlined its holdings:

The Crown Lands Department of the Province of Quebec have leased to the Club the exclusive fishing rights of all the inland waters in the township of Louise (20,571 acres), which include the Spider River, and also, in the unsubdivided portion of the township of Woburn, 10,811 acres, which include the headwaters of the Arnold River and Arnold Bog. Leases made with private landholders in the Province include over two thousand acres fronting upon Spider Lake (the whole southern shore), Lower Spider River, Rush Lake, and the head of Lake Megantic. In Maine the leases are made with the owners of townships. The whole territory covered by the Club’s leases will include over seventy-five thousand acres, or one hundred and twenty square miles.

Club directors busily set out to improve the territory. To raise the capital needed to fund the project, they offered for sale 500 membership shares at $50 each, for a total of $25,000. Within a year the club counted more than 300 members.


160 members, almost all of whom were residents of Massachusetts or New York State. For these men, one of the Megantic Club’s key attractions was the growing railway network that allowed them to travel within 24 hours between the major cities of the Northeastern United States and the Club’s territories (see Figure 2). Like many other fish and game clubs that leased territory in the province, the Megantic Club constructed buildings and transportation routes to facilitate members’ visits and attempted to reshape the local habitat and species composition to improve sporting conditions. When the province began leasing hunting


**Figure 1:** Map of Lake Megantic and region, showing the Quebec portion of lands held under lease by the Megantic Fish and Game Corporation, 1887. Source: Megantic Fish and Game Corporation, Guide Book To the Megantic, Spider, and Upper Dead River Regions of the Province of Quebec and State of Maine (Boston: Heber Bishop, Hoffman House, 1887), np.
Figure 2: Map of Routes to the Megantic Fish and Game Club Territory, 1887. By the 1880s many formerly remote regions such as Lake Megantic were within a day’s travel of the major cities of the Northeastern United States. As in the case of the Megantic Club, these circumstances brought growing numbers of American sportsmen to the province, a good number of whom formed clubs and took out hunting and fishing leases of their own. Source: Megantic Fish and Game Corporation, Guide Book to the Megantic, Spider, and Upper Dead River Regions of the Province of Quebec and State of Maine (Boston: Heber Bishop, Hoffman House, 1887), p. 100.

territory in 1895, the club quickly added to its holdings another 70 square miles in Ditchfield, Louise, and surrounding townships.²⁷ By this time the club had more than 300 members and boasted a preserve of 250 square

²⁷ Quebec, Sessional Papers, “Report of the Commissioner of Lands, Forests and Fisheries of the Province of Quebec For the Twelve Months Ending the 30th June 1898,” Appendix no. 21, p. 53.
miles straddling the Quebec-Maine border. Its improvements included a four-floor, 24-bedroom clubhouse on Spider Lake at the southern end of Lake Megantic, remote camps scattered throughout the territory, and small-scale pisciculture operations to stock club waters. From these sites, members took advantage of the relative abundance of wildlife that the region offered, from large game species of moose, caribou, deer, and bear to small game, partridge, and waterfowl as well as trout, bass, and the land-locked salmon introduced by the club.

The most important means of improving fish and game resources on club territory, though, was the regulation of hunting and fishing. Like some of the other large fish and game clubs in the province, the Megantic Club set catch and bag limits on club territory that were stricter than provincial regulations. It also employed wardens on both sides of the border to enforce fish and game legislation. These men were assisted by caretakers, who maintained club buildings and territory, and also by guides, who upheld the fish and game laws while under the employment of club members. Because guides played an important role in monitoring activities on the grounds, club directors watched them closely. Members were not permitted to hire guides at random, but were required to take them from a list of men “sanctioned or recommended by the Board of Directors” who had agreed “to enforce the fish and game laws and the Club rules.”

Hunting and fishing by outsiders was an even bigger problem. In part, this reflected the nature of Quebec’s leasehold system. Leases on Crown lands gave the Megantic and other clubs rights to fish and game, but they did not prevent outsiders from entering club territory. Attempts on the part of lessees to prevent “trespassing” on club grounds were commonplace, but proved difficult given the extent of territory under lease and the determination of locals. To cultivate good relations with locals and to curtail unwanted hunting and fishing, some lessees tried less direct methods. One strategy employed by the Megantic Club was to establish a system by which “bona fide settlers” living on or near its leaseholdings could obtain free permits allowing them to hunt and fish on club territory, provided that such permit-holders did not abuse these privileges. Not surprisingly, “abuse” entailed activities that fell outside contemporary views of sport hunting and angling, namely any action by which a given settler “wastes or destroys fish, takes more fish or game than he is allowed by the Provincial laws, in any one season, or hunts or fishes for the market.”

---

The urban-based vision of sport, wildlife, and wilderness that informed the Megantic Club was not lost on the residents of Lake Megantic. Unlike many of their rural neighbours, local townspeople identified increasingly with urban culture and with their community’s growing economic dependence on external forces. Established in the late 1870s as a stopping point on the line of the International Railway Company, the town of Lake Megantic was incorporated in 1885 with a population of about 500. During the next decade, the town grew threefold and by the turn of the century approached 2,000 residents. Like many other towns in Quebec during this period, Megantic grappled with issues of economic prosperity, respectability, and social order. Alcohol consumption was an early subject of municipal by-laws, and a host of other issues followed. In 1897 local politicians passed by-laws addressing public drunkenness, nudity, gambling, prostitution, and dangerous or reckless driving of horses, carts, and bicycles. Also constrained by new municipal regulations were vagrants as well as “nomads, bohemians, saltimbanques, gypsies ou autres.” The following year the town formed its own police force of two constables, whose work consisted mainly of dealing with public drunkenness. These by-laws, it is clear, were part of the groundwork for respectable society and were complemented by the growth of religious institutions, tourism infrastructure, and an associational culture comprised of national, professional, and agricultural organizations, as well as sports clubs for baseball, hockey, shooting, and cycling. For many residents, the Megantic Club was a prominent example of those social and economic forces that were helping to put the town of Lake Megantic on the map. Local papers routinely reported in their society notes on the comings and goings of club members and gave due attention to the opinions of protection advocates and the sporting community. For the town’s petite bourgeoisie in particular, things were looking good. In the midst of the manhunt for Ladouceur, the Sherbrooke-based newspaper Le Pionnier wrote of “le florissant village de Mégantic, qui promet de devenir, en peu de temps, un centre d’activité considérable et un marché avantageux pour les produits du sol.”

This vision of development and resource regulation had its share of discontents, however. Writing in regard to the formation of the United States’ Adirondack, Yellowstone, and Grand Canyon parks, Karl Jacoby describes the American conservation movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as a process involving the criminalization of previously

34 Ibid., p. 141.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., pp. 102–105.
37 “Au Lac Mégantic,” Le Pionnier, November 12, 1897, p. 2.
acceptable rural practices: “hunting or fishing redefined as poaching, foraging as trespassing, the setting of fires as arson, and the cutting of trees as timber theft.”38 Attempts in Canada to regulate timber, water, and wildlife resources also met with stubborn opposition from local Aboriginals and Euro-North Americans, many of whom depended on these resources. In his work on the Atlantic salmon fishery in Canada, for example, Bill Parenteau concludes that, while “the ideology of modern wildlife resource management quickly achieved a powerful and lasting hegemony in the corridors of power” during the period between Confederation and World War I, “it had limited success in penetrating the countryside,” where rural resistance remained strong.39

In Quebec, opposition to private and state control of fish and game resources is easily traced to the establishment at mid-century of the province’s fish and game laws. By the early 1860s, the Montreal Fish and Game Protection Club was already fielding complaints regarding fish and game law infractions in the Eastern Townships. In 1864 it reported that Lake Memphremagog “was given over in toto to the torch and spear last fall,” and members lamented the undercurrent of violence inherent in the work of poachers. “Many of the respectable, among the inhabitants on its shores, deeply regret this,” the club observed, “and would do all in their power to prevent it, short of running the risk of having their houses and barns burned by the vagabonds who follow this nefarious trade, and who do not hesitate to threaten this as the result of taking any steps against them.”40 Complaints regarding the Township’s Lake St. Francis to the northeast during the same year led the protection club to send its warden to investigate similar infractions. As federal, provincial, and private authorities stepped up their efforts to contain poaching during the 1870s and 1880s, conflicts occurred with growing frequency. Beginning in the mid-1880s, encroachment into the province’s rural and wilderness regions by fish and game clubs marginalized rural inhabitants further still. By the late 1890s, the province’s urban-based protection advocates, the sporting community, and the rural populace all understood the stakes involved in the work of what newspapers were referring to as the “Beauce poachers.”41

Ladouceur’s outlawry thus offers a good indication of the tensions that surrounded the regulation of wilderness resources in Quebec. Opinion over the rights to wildlife, it is clear, was not split simply between locals and outsiders. Conflicts over fish and game also pointed to the growing

separation of urban from rural society. Residents of centres as small as Lake Megantic were drawn increasingly into the growing web of social, economic, and political networks and recognized both the dependence of their community on external forces and the opportunities that these forces presented. With this came growing pressure and desire to conform to patterns of respectability that had taken shape during the previous decades in the province and the nation’s larger urban centres and to recognize, if at times grudgingly, the authority of Ottawa, Montreal, and Quebec City. Thus, when in 1896 more than 40 “residents and property owners in the vicinity of Lake Megantic,” including the mayor of the nearby village of Agnès, sent to Ottawa a petition requesting that the federal government appoint a warden to the region to combat overfishing on the lake and adjoining rivers, it is not difficult to understand that they were seeking as much to maintain this vision of society as to address the abuse of a local resource.42

By contrast, many of the poorer inhabitants in the surrounding countryside continued to rely directly on fish and game resources and were not willing to submit to forces that threatened to take them away. If urbanites saw opportunities in the form of a tertiary economy based on sport, the rural populace recognized in the transformation of rights to fish and game the loss of yet another valuable resource to extra-local control. In such a context, poaching became for rural inhabitants both a means of meeting their material needs and of asserting their rights to local fish and game. In this way, the Ladouceur case was markedly different from that of the “Megantic Outlaw.” While support for Donald Morrison rested mainly within his local Scots community and may have exacerbated tensions between French and English Quebeckers, support for Ladouceur was embedded in a much broader socio-cultural base. This, in sum, was the context in which Ladouceur would transcend his local reputation as a poacher and supplier of game to emerge dramatically as the “Beauce Outlaw.” In doing so, he highlighted for both urban and rural Quebeckers the ongoing transformation of wildlife and other wilderness resource rights.

Tracking the “Beauce Outlaw”
Ladouceur first came to the attention of authorities during the fall of 1895, when complaints from sportsmen and local residents reached the provincial government and the Montreal Fish and Game Protection Club. The following January, T. A. Poston, Provincial Game Inspector and Revenue Inspector, set out for Lake Megantic, where, with the help of Sherbrooke High Constable Hiram Moe, he began what came to be

42 Library and Archives Canada, RG 23, Department of Marine and Fisheries, Vol. 304, File 2416, Part 1, Petition, February 27, 1896.
known as the “manhunt” for Ladouceur. It did not last long. After successive days’ exposure to the winter snow and sun left him snowblind, Poston was forced to abandon the search. Poston and Moe thus became the first in a line of men to be outmanoeuvred and embarrassed by the poacher. Though they did not know it at the time, their failure to capture Ladouceur was only the beginning of a series of setbacks that would plague authorities for the next two years. In this time, many observers would come to the same conclusion: Poston’s brand of urban-based authorities were out of their league when it came to dealing with the trepidations of Quebec’s rural populace.43

Following Poston’s and Moe’s unsuccessful campaign, Ladouceur faded into the general picture of butchery, violence, and lawlessness that characterized descriptions of commercial poaching. In the fall of 1897, he re-emerged, gaining province-wide notoriety when Quebec’s newly appointed Minister of Lands, Forests, and Fisheries Simon-Napoléon Parent pushed his case into the spotlight. Parent, who would become the Quebec premier in 1900, was determined to take a stand on the fish and game laws. He quickly focused his attention on Ladouceur, whose growing reputation had become an embarrassment to the state and to Parent’s department in particular. In October, Parent wrote to the secretary of the Montreal Fish and Game Club requesting that it send the club’s warden after Ladouceur.44

From this point on, the members and employees of the Montreal Fish and Game Protection Club led the search for Ladouceur. In answer to Parent’s request, the club quickly contacted its warden, Richard J. Greetham. Greetham was no stranger to the Eastern Townships. He had secured convictions in similar cases there in the past as well as in other parts of the province and was responsible for a number of the club’s 24 successful prosecutions during the first ten months of 1897. Members thus had good reason to believe that Ladouceur would soon make a prize trophy.45 Greetham returned to Montreal after concluding an investigation in Buckingham to the west of the city and set out for Lake Megantic in late October.46 Within days he reported success. Raiding Ladouceur’s home in Spaulding Township on October 27, 1897,

45 “Our Fish and Game,” Montreal Gazette, January 25, 1898, p. 2.
46 McCord Museum, P559, Fish and Game Protection Club of the Province of Quebec, Minutes, November 8, 1897.
Greetham arrested the poacher and seized as evidence a number of skins, weapons, and munitions.\textsuperscript{47} Newspapers throughout the province responded quickly in celebration of the club's successful work.\textsuperscript{48} Chief among them was the \textit{Montreal Daily Star}, the same paper that led the province's media coverage of the Megantic Outlaw affair during the late 1880s. In the words of the \textit{Star}, Ladouceur exemplified a type of “wanton destruction” characteristic of the “heartless game butchers” who were active throughout the eastern portion of the Townships.\textsuperscript{49} Going to great lengths to rouse public opinion against poaching and in favour of the fish and game laws, the \textit{Star} and other papers drew on a range of upper- and middle-class urban expectations regarding sport and fair play as well as animal welfare, waste, cruelty, and gender.

Among the most compelling pieces to emerge was a series of illustrations printed in the \textit{Montreal Daily Star} soon after Ladouceur's capture. The most sensational of these was the image entitled “Wanton Slaughter – Killed Beside the Dead Body of its Mother” (see Figure 3). Depicting a fawn being clubbed to death by a poacher, the man's arm raised and his gun resting on top of the young animal's dead mother, the illustration pointed in no uncertain terms to the poacher as a cruel killer. Ladouceur's activities, the paper made clear, cut across every notion of civilized or respectable behaviour being codified by sportsmen and protection advocates during the late nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{50} More subtle was the image entitled “Wanton Slaughter – A Cruel Day's Work in the Beauce Woods” (see Figure 4). Here three poachers relax against a background of dead game. In front of them rests a pile of dead deer; a dog stands in the foreground to the left. Contemporary readers familiar

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{47} Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec–Québec [hereafter BANQ-Q], TP9 S12 SS29 SSS1, 3D 034 02–06–003B–01, 1960–01-358/6, No. 27, \textit{Richard J. Greetham Plaignant vs. Henri Ladouceur Dénfendeur}, December 30, 1897; “Enforcement of the Game Laws,” \textit{Quebec Morning Chronicle}, October 29, 1897, p. 4.
  \item \textsuperscript{48} For reports during the days immediately following Ladouceur’s capture, see “Enforcement of the Game Laws,” \textit{Quebec Morning Chronicle}, October 29, 1897, p. 4; “Poacher Found by the Warden of the Fish and Game Club,” \textit{Montreal Daily Star}, October 30, 1897, p. 11; “Alleged Poacher Arrested,” \textit{Montreal Gazette}, November 1, 1897, p. 3; “Poaching in Beauce,” \textit{Quebec Morning Chronicle}, November 1, 1897, p. 4; “A Wanton Slaughter,” \textit{Montreal Daily Star}, November 1, 1897, p. 10.
  \item \textsuperscript{49} “A Wanton Slaughter,” \textit{Montreal Daily Star}, November 1, 1897, p. 10. For an example of \textit{Star} coverage published elsewhere, see “Poaching in Beauce,” \textit{Quebec Morning Chronicle}, November 1, 1897, p. 4.
\end{itemize}
Figure 3: “Wanton Slaughter – Killed Beside the Dead Body of its Mother,” 1897. Images such as this, printed during the campaign to capture Henri Ladouceur in Beauce County, Quebec, depicted poachers as cruel and wasteful killers. Source: “A Wanton Slaughter,” *Montreal Daily Star*, November 1, 1897, p. 10.

with sport and with Quebec’s game laws would have made a number of observations. First among them would have been the many deer identifiable by their spots as fawns, the killing of which was a contravention of game laws prohibiting the hunting of females and young. They would also have noted the dog, as hunting deer with dogs was a practice denigrated by fair-minded sportsmen that had been prohibited in the province since 1887. Finally, they would have picked up on the ways in which evolving codes of sporting conduct were intertwined with contemporary class- and gender-based identities. On the surface, these and other accounts associated poachers with cruelty, criminality, and wastefulness, but also with a form of masculine brutality that stood in contrast to Victorian middle-class notions of manliness regarding women, family, and social responsibility and that challenged even the more comparable “primitive” masculinity taking shape at this time.51

For sport and protection advocates, Ladouceur’s capture was a great opportunity to contrast the cruelty, wastefulness, and uncivilized nature of commercial poaching with the goals and successes of the protection movement in Quebec. Reportage focused closely on Greetham’s evidence. According to the Montreal Daily Star and other papers, Ladouceur was in possession of no fewer than 136 skins of fawns (court documents later showed there to be closer to two dozen). These, reported the Star, were “killed with clubs either beside their murdered dams’ carcases, or while vainly trying to escape from their ruthless slayers.”52 A similar tone of condemnation emerged from the Quebec Morning Chronicle, which described the seized skins to be “scarcely large enough to cover a good sized kitten.”53 For further confirmation of the cruelty inflicted by Ladouceur and his kind, one had only to pass by the window of the Star’s downtown Montreal office, where it displayed a dozen of the confiscated skins, “all of fawns, some of which can only have been a few days old, while some were so small and undeveloped as to prove that [Ladouceur] had not scrupled to make a practice of killing does in young.”54

As in the past, these kinds of attacks proved an effective if crude means of arousing public opinion in support of fish and game protection. This was true not only in the province’s larger urban centres, but also in the town of Lake Megantic, where respectable villagers and sportsmen held comparable views. It was also true of the Megantic Club’s members, who were just as likely to use sport hunting and fishing as a pretext for family

51 “Act to amend ‘The Quebec Game Law’,” Statutes of Quebec, 1887, 50 Vict., c. 16, s. 1.3.
53 Quebec Morning Chronicle, November 8, 1897, p. 4.
vacations as for an expression of primitive masculinity and male solidarity.\textsuperscript{55} In the days that followed, state representatives and civic associations lined up to congratulate the protection club on its success in capturing Ladouceur. Among them was Quebec Fish and Game Superintendent Louis-Zéphirin Joncas, who maintained a close relationship with the club. Also supportive was the Montreal-based Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), which was in the midst of efforts to establish its own authority in the region through branch institutions in the communities of Sherbrooke and Stanstead and which shared a number of interests as well as members in common with the Montreal Fish and Game Protection Club.\textsuperscript{56}

The celebration did not last long. Leaving Ladouceur in the hands of authorities in St. Joseph de Beauce to await trial, Greetham continued on to Magog, where he secured the conviction of Telesphore and Georges Boutin for poaching hare.\textsuperscript{57} In the meantime, though, he lost Ladouceur on what was probably a technicality related to the warden’s warrant. Greetham duly raced back to Lake Megantic, hoping to recapture Ladouceur, who newspapers reported was headed for the Maine border. He succeeded again in seizing some skins as evidence, but this time missed Ladouceur. Foiled, Greetham returned to St. Joseph de Beauce on November 9 to state his case before the presiding magistrate Panet Angers, who quickly issued a province-wide warrant for the poacher. Soon he would be reading headlines throughout the province highlighting Ladouceur’s “escape” from authorities.\textsuperscript{58}

At this point it becomes difficult to separate facts from the opinions, half-truths, and mythic character of the story that unfolded. Recalling its dominant role in the reportage of events surrounding Donald Morrison during his ten-month evasion of authorities, the \textit{Montreal Daily Star} once again sent a reporter to the region to follow the case. Others followed suit, and together they had considerable influence on the ensuing tale of banditry. Between Ladouceur’s brush with authorities in late October and his capture and trial at the end of December, there emerged a narrative of rural transgression in which the now infamous outlaw played the

\textsuperscript{55} Descriptions of the varied uses of club grounds by members can be found throughout the \textit{Guide Book} and \textit{Annual Report} cited above.


\textsuperscript{57} “Poachers Convicted,” \textit{Montreal Daily Star}, November 6, 1897, p. 19.

lead role. Indeed, the bandit identity ascribed to Ladouceur by locals and the contemporary press fits well with the pattern described by Hobsbawm: a young, single man, sometimes with a tragic or mysterious past, who is personally affected by and reacts violently to what his local community identifies to be unethical practices on the part of external authorities, typically within the context of massive socio-economic transformation and often in regard to the encroachment of urban society on rural culture. Ladouceur’s poaching was in itself a strong component of this bandit identity, and it did not take long for his story to acquire most of the remaining markers. Though at 32 years he was by Hobsbawm’s standards a bit old for banditry, Ladouceur’s age was more than compensated for by the fact that he was reported (wrongly, it turned out) to have lost both his wife and child, leaving him free to act against authority. The Montreal Daily Star made this connection clearly, stating that “his wife and child are both dead, so that he has no family ties to restrain him in his chosen avocation.” Comparisons with Robin Hood surfaced repeatedly (based on the legendary bandit’s poaching habits, as opposed to his charitable practices), and locals widely identified Ladouceur to be “a dangerous man [who] would not hesitate to shoot any one attempting to interfere with his liberty.”

Further confirming Ladouceur’s bandit identity was one of the key themes of the 1897 manhunt, namely the weakness of urban authority in light of rural agency.

Press reports soon identified the problems authorities faced in their effort to capture Ladouceur. Not surprisingly, urban and rural differences played a major role. In general, urban opinion, including that of the town of Lake Megantic, favoured the rule of law and supported progressive sport and conservation strategies. F. J. Murray, a well-known local sportsman and the proprietor of Megantic’s Lake House hotel, captured the concerns of many during the search for Ladouceur when he observed that “the best class of sportsmen are liable to stop coming here unless a stop is put to illegal slaughter of deer.” Such concerns were not unfounded, for visiting sportsmen were indeed complaining. In the midst of the manhunt, one group of “American gentlemen” returning from Lake Megantic even took their complaints to the local press. Meeting with reporters in Sherbrooke, they publicly denounced “the indiscriminate or, as they term it, criminal slaughter of deer” they had witnessed in local lumber camps.

59 Hobsbawn, Bandits, pp. 34–45. For a detailed application of Hobsbawn’s bandit thesis to Donald Morrison, see Little, “Popular Resistance,” pp. 120–122.
60 “Ladouceur Has Escaped,” Montreal Daily Star, November 12, 1897, p. 5.
Rural opinion was considerably different. Upon discussions with locals, it became clear to reporters and authorities just how closely the region’s rural populace sided with Ladouceur. Like Morrison, the Montreal Daily Star observed in early November, Ladouceur “is an outlaw [and] is being helped and kept posted by his friends of the back country farms, whose sentiments are very much at variance with those of the people of the village of Megantic on the subject.” In fact, such comparisons with Morrison understated the situation. While many locals sympathized with Morrison, direct support for him during his months in hiding came almost exclusively from his Scots community. By contrast, support for Ladouceur was widespread and included in this mostly francophone region that of rural anglophones. Among the latter were two of Ladouceur’s accomplices, Charles Howard and James Patton. While town residents thought Ladouceur to be “a dangerous man who is bringing a stigma upon the surrounding country,” the same could not be said of the region’s “country people,” who were reported to be “in sympathy” with the outlaw.

Given the conditions of rural life in the region, this support comes as no surprise. Common experience made for common bonds among the rural populace, for whom hunting and fishing formed part of a multi-layered economic strategy and was thus widely perceived to be a legitimate part of rural culture. In this, Ladouceur was certainly not alone. “Nearly all the farmers back in the woods engage in hunting during the winter as there is little else for them to do,” the Montreal Daily Star reporter on site observed. Inasmuch as they identified poaching as a common practice among the region’s rural inhabitants, comments like these were on target. It would be a mistake, however, to attribute the actions of poachers to boredom or idleness or to assume (as many protection advocates did) that there existed an excess of leisure time in rural society that needed to be channelled towards productive, respectable ends, as in the case of urban-based social regulation. Sport was certainly a motive for rural hunters, but it existed alongside more pressing economic concerns. The vast majority of rural inhabitants in the Megantic region did not benefit from employment as state overseers or as guardians or guides for clubs, lessees, or visiting sportsmen. For them, benefits from the region’s wildlife resources came in the form of commercial and subsistence hunting and fishing, not in the much-touted tertiary economy of sport and protection.

65 “Ladouceur Has Escaped,” Montreal Daily Star, November 12, 1897, p. 5.
advocates. In this context, Ladouceur became an opportunity for rural inhabitants to voice their opposition to the fish and game laws. As the reporter for the *Montreal Daily Star* argued soon after his arrival in Lake Megantic:

There is a thorough understanding among the hunters and they are always ready to afford assistance one to another. They are by no means all poachers and defiers of the game laws, but if a man chances to kill a few extra deer in season or take a chance shot out of season their sympathies are naturally with him as against the authorities.\(^{67}\)

Authorities took such opposition seriously in part because of the undercurrent of violence associated with poachers. Like poaching itself, violence in the context of hunting and fishing was of longstanding concern. During his patrols of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Pierre-Étienne Fortin reported many instances of armed conflict, and Fortin’s robust crew of 25 also served as a mobile, sea-going police force.\(^{68}\) Fortin and his successors were exceptional, however. Of the vast number of overseers and guardians in place by the turn of the century, most worked alone, often as poorly paid, part-time officials whose employment by the state or by lessees put them in conflict with the local communities in which they worked and sometimes lived. For such men, confronting groups of armed men in remote regions was a dangerous task. The reporter for the *Montreal Daily Star* summarized the situation well during the hunt for Ladouceur: “It is a pretty risky business going into the woods looking for a man who is a dead shot, and who might be lying in ambush for the officers.”\(^{69}\)

Not surprisingly, many men employed to enforce the fish and game laws often found it easy to turn a blind eye to poachers. Given the qualifications shared by poachers and overseers, it is likely that at least some of the men hired to enforce the fish and game laws were intimately familiar with the practice. Indeed, it was not unheard of for overseers to turn their situation to advantage by engaging in poaching themselves. Compounded by the provincial government’s reluctance to invest more heavily in fish and game protection, these conditions made enforcement of the fish and game laws tenuous.

Among the authorities best able to stand up to the threat of violence were the wardens of the Montreal Fish and Game Protection Club. They enjoyed a number of advantages, when compared to their poorly paid, part-time, local counterparts. For one, they were employed by some of the fiercest protection advocates in the province. Being based in

\(^{67}\) Ibid., p. 1.

\(^{68}\) Stewart, *Life on the Line*, pp. 1, 77.

Montreal, they also did not suffer the same set of conflicting interests faced by so many other overseers. Club wardens carried considerable authority in the communities they visited, and did so without the baggage that constrained even the most dedicated of local employees. These advantages only carried them so far, though. The absence of a close connection to the communities in which they worked also meant that club wardens remained outsiders — urbanites conspicuous by their very presence and lacking an intimate knowledge of the local environment and its inhabitants. Indeed, Donald Fyson’s observations regarding the capacity of urban justices with no local ties to enforce unpopular legislation in Quebec’s rural districts during the period preceding the rebellions seems to hold true in a more general sense throughout the century. It was one thing for urban-based authorities to pass laws; another entirely to enforce them in regions with little judicial or police infrastructure.

Still, there is little question that the club’s men were better prepared than their counterparts in the region to deal with a character like Ladouceur, who locals widely believed to be “a dangerous man [who] will use his gun before he consents to give up his liberty.” As in the case of Morrison, urban-based papers were quick to focus on the potential for violence. It was not all hype. Ladouceur’s accomplice James Patton confirmed this belief, indicating soon after he informed his partner of Greetham’s arrival that “there would be bloodshed if the officers attempted to take their man into custody.” More troubling still was the armed state of the rural populace generally. As the Montreal Daily Star reporter observed upon his arrival, “nearly every man I met yesterday, while driving out through Ditchfield Township, carried a gun.” These circumstances did little to calm the situation and probably helped to ensure that Greetham’s request for assistance in the form of three armed provincial constables from Quebec City met quickly with approval.

The potential for violence does not in itself explain the failure to capture Ladouceur, however. As important were a range of immediate, practical issues. Fish and game legislation may have been brought into line during the nineteenth century with an urban, sport-oriented vision of the place of wildlife resources, but rural residents remained far more sophisticated than their urban counterparts in regard to local wilderness skills and

71 “Ladouceur Has Escaped,” Montreal Daily Star, November 12, 1897, p. 5.
72 Little, “Popular Resistance to Legal Authority,” p. 112.
74 Ibid., p. 1.
75 “Ladouceur Has Escaped,” Montreal Daily Star, November 12, 1897, p. 5.
knowledge. The Ladouceur case thus served to juxtapose the abilities of rural poachers against those of Greetham and his kind. In doing so, it highlighted repeatedly the incompetence of urban authorities when confronted with instances of rural transgression.

From his desk in Quebec City, Poston would surely have sympathized with his successors. Arriving on the night of November 11 in the midst of a snowstorm, the three Quebec City constables joined Greetham, and the party set out immediately on two teams of horses for Ladouceur’s cabin. There, the four men managed to seize a number of skins but not Ladouceur, who had been forewarned by Patton. For Greetham, this would be the high point of his search. Lacking snowshoeing skills, the warden’s newly arrived constables proved useless in tracking the poacher. Newspapers were quick to criticize. According to the Montreal Daily Star, the constables seemed “entirely unfit” for the job at hand. “It takes experienced men to go into the bush looking for outlaws,” the paper’s on-site reporter argued, “while the men from Quebec have been used to parading around the parliament building in uniform, looking handsome.”76

Similar criticisms were levelled at Greetham. During this second assault on Ladouceur, he seemed to display little in the way of skill or even common sense, be it in regard to his handling of the constables, or for that matter to the case in general. One of the reasons Patton was able to warn Ladouceur, for example, lay in the fact that Greetham made no effort to conceal his activities. Indeed, in a project requiring secrecy he could not have done a better job of announcing his intentions. Riding out of the village “in a mysterious manner in the dead of night after the whole community had been made aware of the intended arrival,” Greetham and his constables were under scrutiny from the start. Equally problematic was the fact that the constables were already well-known to locals: they were the same men who had been sent to Lake Megantic a decade earlier during the search for Donald Morrison.77

Having missed his man a second time, Greetham was at a loss. Rather than continue a search that was likely to prove futile, the warden let it be known that Ladouceur had crossed the border into Maine and was thus beyond his jurisdiction.

Locals were of another opinion. While Greetham stated that Ladouceur had eluded his captors by entering the United States, they rightly claimed that he had done no such thing, but remained close to home, where he continued to hunt and to make use of his familiar haunts.78 In fact,

---

76 “Search for Ladouceur: For the Present it is Abandoned,” Montreal Daily Star, November 13, 1897, p. 1.
77 Ibid.
78 “Ladouceur, the Deer Slayer,” Sherbrooke Daily Record, November 17, 1897, p. 3.
Greetham and his constables seemed to be the only ones not to know Ladouceur’s whereabouts. For their part, residents in and around Lake Megantic were well aware of the poacher’s movements and noted how he travelled freely about the region despite the ongoing search — and not just in the countryside. After his first brush with Greetham, Ladouceur went to some length to mock the warden and even called on him at his Megantic hotel a number of times to enquire why Greetham had raided his cabin and seized his skins.79 Likewise, it was not difficult in the midst of the manhunt to find people willing to confirm the poacher’s longstanding presence in the village, where he routinely sold meat and skins. “J’ai acheté de la viande de lui, en juillet dernier,” one resident told a reporter covering the story for Montreal’s La Presse newspaper. “Je ne savais pas d’où elle venait, mais elle était bonne.”80 For locals, Ladouceur’s alleged escape into Maine was nothing more than a weak excuse on the part of Greetham. What is more, it confirmed that authorities were no match for the poacher, who was quickly gaining mythic status within the region. A “dead sure shot,” whose “knowledge of the habits and instincts of the denizens of the forest is really remarkable,” Ladouceur had a solid reputation among locals for his bush skills. Among numerous attestations, one farmer claimed that, before shooting his prey, Ladouceur would “guide the animal to a point … where there would be the least trouble in removing the carcass from the bush.”81 In short, Ladouceur’s escape was not the result of a technicality, as Greetham wished to claim. As locals told the reporter for the Montreal Daily Star, Ladouceur’s “perfect knowledge” of the region would “go a long way to assist him in evading arrest.”82

In addition to his wilderness skills, Ladouceur proved a worthy adversary in the arena of public opinion and defended his activities against practically all charges. “He does not deny that he kills deer, young and old, in and out of season,” the Star reporter learned,

but considers that he is no worse than other guides in that respect. He knows that is against the law to kill deer before October 1, and that no hunter is supposed to kill more than three deer in a season, but he violates the law knowing the consequences if he be captured. He claims the right to kill a deer if he finds an animal continually destroying the root crops he grows in a little patch of ground during the summer.83

79 “Search for Ladouceur: For the Present it is Abandoned,” Montreal Daily Star, November 13, 1897, p. 1.
80 “Chasse à l’homme,” La Presse, November 12, 1897, p. 9.
82 Sherbrooke Daily Record, November 15, 1897, p. 2.
83 “Ladouceur Has Escaped,” Montreal Daily Star, November 12, 1897, p. 5.
As a defence, this certainly won sympathy with struggling local farmers. It also made sense in light of the irony that regional deer populations were as likely as not growing during this period, given that farming and similar human-caused disturbances to forests tend to increase the animals' foraging opportunities and thus to raise population levels. Protection of crops, however, was but one of many ways in which Ladouceur justified his actions. When in possession of more than the legal limit of game, he often claimed to have bought the animals “from hunters who are successful, and do not wish to keep more than one carcasse.” In similar manner, Ladouceur would identify himself as a hunting guide to explain his activities (the Megantic Club denied ever having employed him). In some cases, he redirected blame for his activities towards the same respectable class that most vigorously challenged him: in regard to hunting fawns and does, he claimed to have “orders for their skins for various purposes, even for natural history requirements.”

Ladouceur’s strongest argument, however, was to frame poaching in terms of rural rights. “[A] peculiar mixture of backwoods intelligence and denizen of the woods, who acknowledges allegiance to no authority,” summarized the Montreal Daily Star reporter, “his motto practically is ‘catch me if you can, but I will live and hunt according to my own ideas’.” The reporter for Montreal’s La Presse newspaper made similar observations: “Ses précédents ont été caractérisés par un mépris pour les restrictions qu’une loi barbare impose à la liberté d’un homme de tuer le gibier qui lui plait, au temps et dans les quantités qui lui plaisent.” These arguments played well among the region’s rural inhabitants, who believed widely that the rights of the local populace to fish and game resources transcended those of outsiders. Not surprisingly, they were more than ready to sympathize with and even support rural neighbours who ran afoul of the law. Such positive views of poaching confirmed for everyone involved the disparity that existed in the region between the fish and game laws and their application. “The whole business has been wretchedly handled on the part of the Government,” summarized the Star reporter, noting that Greetham, in particular, had become “the laughing stock of the village for many days.”

All of this was too much for authorities. Disgraced, Greetham sent the constables back to Quebec City and returned to Montreal on November 13. When the members of the Montreal Fish and Game Protection Club met three days later to discuss the case, Greetham still had not submitted a report or even contacted his employers. Looking over his

---

84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 “Chasse à l’homme,” La Presse, November 12, 1897, p. 9.
87 “Ladouceur Has Escaped,” Montreal Daily Star, November 12, 1897, p. 5.
employment record, members found further reasons to be displeased with their warden, including concerns over expenses claimed in connection with his recent investigation in Buckingham. This proved to be the start of a process that would result in the warden’s dismissal in February 1898.88

The members of the protection club may have given up on Greetham, but they had by no means given up on Ladouceur. Following the warden’s empty-handed return from Lake Megantic, members resolved to “employ the best man obtainable to capture Ladouceur.”89 To do so, club president Dr. John T. Finnie turned to Detective Joseph Gladu of Montreal’s National Detective Agency. Finnie equipped Gladu with “tents, guns and other utensils,” and together they set in place a strategy that addressed many of the issues behind Greetham’s failure. On December 15, the detective and his assistant Louis Renaud set out for Lake Megantic, disguised as sportsmen from Malone, New York, in order that “we might go right into the woods and appear as regular hunters, so that we might not create suspicion as to our mission.”90

Upon arriving, Gladu and Renaud set up camp outside Megantic and went to work. Within days the detective succeeded in employing Charles Howard, a local guide and former accomplice of Ladouceur whose relations with the poacher had recently gone sour. On the night of December 21, after a week spent gathering information on Ladouceur’s movements, a combination of patience, luck, and a chance escape by one of the party’s horses brought Gladu to the home of Joseph Boulet. Boulet, it happened, was a friend of Ladouceur with whom the poacher often stayed, and Ladouceur was in fact there that night. Maintaining his composure when Ladouceur himself opened the door to the detective’s knock, Gladu engaged the poacher in a conversation regarding the purchase of some caribou meat. After haggling over prices and listening to Ladouceur boast of his exploits, Gladu arranged to meet him the following morning. The detective returned to Boulet’s cabin with his assistant at 6:00 a.m. the next day, whereupon Ladouceur led them to the barn where he had stored the caribou. At this point, Gladu ended the charade. “I opened my coat and showed him my badge,” he explained in his report to the protection club, “told him who I was, what my mission was, grabbed him and put a handcuff on his right arm. He collapsed immediately, the most surprised man

88 McCord Museum, P559, Fish and Game Protection Club of the Province of Quebec, Minutes, November 16, 1897; December 6, 1897; January 3, 1898; February 7, 1898.
89 McCord Museum, P559, Fish and Game Protection Club of the Province of Quebec, Minutes, November 16, 1897.
imaginable and turned deathly pale and apparently stupefied...’This is a
nice trick you have played on me.’’\textsuperscript{91}

Their manhunt over, Gladu and Renaud returned with Ladouceur to the
town of Lake Megantic. On December 24, the detective delivered the
poacher to St. Joseph de Beauce, where he was placed in the hands of
the local sheriff to await his trial, set for December 30 before Panet
Angers, the magistrate before whom Greetham had failed to convict the
poacher nearly two months earlier. Ladouceur was brought up on two
charges by Gladu as well as a third by Greetham, all related to over-
hunting deer and caribou and hunting during the closed season.\textsuperscript{92} He
was sentenced to pay fines amounting to $125 plus nearly $300 in expenses
or nine months in prison.\textsuperscript{93} Unable to pay such a sum, he took the prison
sentence, but not without thumbing his nose once more at his captor. “Do
not worry yourself,” the poacher told Gladu as the trial ended. “I will not
cry for nine months. I have been in jail before for a longer period than that
and the moment that I obtain my freedom again, I will be back at my old
business as deep as ever.”\textsuperscript{94}

\textbf{Conclusion}

Ladouceur’s capture was an important victory for state and civic auth-
orities, the sporting community, and protection advocates in Quebec.
However, it remained a single battle in a war over access to fish and
game resources that would continue for years to come. During the twenti-
eth century, Quebec, like other provinces and states, worked with consider-
able success to marginalize commercial and subsistence use of fish and

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Ibid.} The most reliable version of events, this is a copy of Gladu’s report to the Montreal Fish and
Game Protection Club. Further coverage of Ladouceur’s arrest and trial, often containing errors, can
be found in the following reports: “Henri Ladouceur: Entre les mains de la police,” \textit{La Presse},
December 23, 1897, p. 12; “Ladouceur Captured: Killed 20 Deer and 7 Caribou in One Day,”
\textit{Sherbrooke Daily Record}, December 23, 1897, p. 2; “Ladouceur’s Capture: Detective Gladu Tells
How it Was Effected,” \textit{Montreal Daily Star}, December 27, 1897, p. 7; “Ladouceur’s Capture: A
Megantic Correspondent Tells How it Was Effected,” \textit{Sherbrooke Daily Record}, December 30,
1897, p. 2; “Ladouceur in Gaol,” \textit{Montreal Daily Star}, December 31, 1897, p. 1; “Le Braconnier

\textsuperscript{92} Specifically article 1398 of the \textit{Statutes of the Province of Quebec}, 59 Vict., c. 20, 1895: “No person
can, in one season’s hunting, kill or take alive more than two moose, three deer and two caribou.”

\textsuperscript{93} BANQ-Q, TP9 S12 SS29 SSS1, 3D 034 02–06-003B–01, 1960–01–358/6, No. 27, \textit{Richard
J. Greetham Plaignant vs Henri Ladouceur Défendeur}; No. 33, \textit{Joseph Gladu Plaignant vs Henry
Ladouceur Défendeur}; No. 34, \textit{Joseph Gladu vs Henry Ladouceur Défendeur}, December 30, 1897.
See also BANQ-Q, TP9 S12 SS29 SSS28, 3B 025 03–07-007A–01,1993–12–007/166, \textit{Registre des
enquêtes et convictions sommaires devant les Juges de Paix et les Magistrats, à St. Joseph de la
Beauce, 1 mai 1886 (1886–1899)}; TP9 S12 SS29 SSS7, 3B 025 03–02–004A–01, 1993–12-007/
130, \textit{Livre des Plaintes et convictions sommaires devant les Juges de Paix et le Magistrat de District
à St. Joseph, Beauce, commençant le 1 janvier 1874 (janvier 1874–août 1900)}.

\textsuperscript{94} “Mode of Capture: How Ladouceur Found Himself in the Law’s Clutches,” \textit{Montreal Gazette},
January 11, 1898, p. 6.
game in favour of a sport-based model of wildlife conservation. In the short run, though, men like Ladouceur continued to hunt and fish regardless of the fish and game laws or their growing acceptance in urban society.

During his tenure as the Beauce Outlaw, Ladouceur exemplified for many the process of marginalization that was so much a part of the conservation movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It would be a mistake to read this as yet another example of ethnic tensions in Quebec. As in the case of the Megantic Outlaw, urban-rural and class dimensions were at least as if not more important. As Little points out in regard to Morrison, local francophones may not have been harbouring the outlaw, but they also spent no time trying to bring him in. Had they done so, Little observes, he would never have escaped authorities for so long. Further, if donations to Morrison’s defence fund are any indication, it seems that local French Catholics, too, were sympathetic to the outlaw’s plight.\(^9\) In the case of Ladouceur, the tendency of the rural poor to identify with the poacher and middle-class urbanites to stand against him was even more pronounced. Embedded in this, of course, was the fact that most of Quebec’s poachers — and for that matter most of Quebec’s rural poor — were French Catholics, while the men of the province’s protection societies and the majority of fish and game club members were upper- and middle-class anglophones. Such conditions emphasized ethnic tensions in the province, but they were mediated by the fact that, for most middle-class urbanites integrated into an interdependent, ever-growing economy, the sport-based approach to wildlife conservation made sense. Poachers thus constituted a challenge on numerous fronts: legal and political, but also more broadly in regard to the privatization of common resources, the growing reach of urban culture, and the maintenance of gendered as well as class-based forms of power. As for the press that made Ladouceur available to readers throughout the province, its narrative reflected as much the facts and opinions of the case as it did a keen sense of a good story and its ability to sell papers.

In the months and years that followed, Ladouceur continued to haunt advocates of fish and game protection. Within days of his capture, the Montreal Daily Star circulated an interview with the unrepentant poacher, and copies of Gladu’s report to the Montreal Fish and Game Protection Club printed in newspapers that January ensured that he remained in the minds of readers. For the next few months things were quiet, but, as Ladouceur’s release drew near in August 1898, members of the protection club feared that the poacher might carry through on threats to kill anyone who participated in his capture. They contacted Lands, Forests, and Fisheries Commissioner Simon-Napoléon Parent, requesting that “steps be taken to have him bound over to keep the

---

\(^9\) Little, “Popular Resistance to Legal Authority,” pp. 113–118.
peace. The spring following his release, Ladouceur’s name came up in yet another campaign against poachers in the region.

As for locals, they responded to the capture of their local “nemrod acharné” and provincial celebrity with a combination of emotions. “During the time I was waiting in Lake Megantic there must have been at least four or five hundred people who called to see the prisoner and ourselves,” Gladu explained in regard to the two nights Ladouceur was held in the village before being transferred to St. Joseph de Beauce for trial, “and they one and all expressed their surprise at our having so successfully and with so little trouble secured him.” Maybe — but others saw things differently. Among the hundreds who turned out during those two days, many must have revelled in the claims Ladouceur made in his interview with the Montreal Daily Star’s reporter during the days before his trial: that he had “been about his old haunts” the entire time; that he had “never resisted arrest”; and finally that he “might easily have escaped the night previous to his arrest if he had wished.” Ladouceur’s brazen disregard for authority reflected beliefs about the encroaching powers of the state and urban culture that were far more entrenched than the relatively slim documentary record leads us to believe. On this note too, Ladouceur makes clear how, in the face of ongoing challenges, rural communities took comfort in their outlaws.

96 McCord Museum, P559, Fish and Game Protection Club of the Province of Quebec, Minutes, August 1, 1898.
98 Le Pionnier, January 7, 1898, p. 2.