

The Salmon Run



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A Publication of the Saco River Salmon Club, P.O. Box 115, Saco, Maine 04072, 207.282.6985

The President's Corner **By Dan Bonville**

I became aware, at our last director's meeting, that many members of our Saco River Salmon Club and Hatchery have either little or no knowledge of our history; our beginnings, our river work, our reasons for being, our wanderings, and our learning and discoveries.

Several of our present working directors were in the club when it was formed twenty five years ago with John Blunt as the first president. Among them were Lionel Bouthot, Nick Sibilgia, and Ray Dussault. John Cadwallader was president when I joined in 1985 after reading about the club in the *Maine Sportsman*. I arrived on the scene with my twin nephews, Mike and Tom Elliott, who were around eleven years old at the time, and attended monthly meetings at the Rotary Park building in Biddeford. We had a brief meeting each month with news on the past season's Atlantic salmon fishing on the Saco River as well as clean up efforts and stockings of smolt and sometimes parr & whatever was available from the feds. Donut holes, coffee, and soda were served and we fishermen went home pretty happy with our efforts.

All of the members joined because we were fishermen. Only later did some people join to help restock our watershed with fry from our own hatchery. Our dedicated goals to enhance, clean up, and restock Atlantic salmon to the Saco River watershed really took off after Dr. Dave Bernstein designed our first hatchery in Bar Mills, right along the river far upstream from our present and second hatchery on the lower river in Biddeford. John Blunt headed up the construction, Dave designed our in-hatchery loop water systems, and many of our members built the building and the whole water and filter systems doing everything from well drilling to piping, electrical, heating and cooling, filtering, and of course once the eggs were in, picking, cleaning, feeding the fry, and then more picking.

Finally we stocked fry all the way from the New Hampshire border to the Atlantic Ocean in the towns of Saco and Biddeford.

It has not all been work however! We've had club meetings with speakers ranging from biologists to a course in wilderness survival, from artists and taxidermists to rod makers and guides, from captains to hunting with falcons, from shows on Alaska wildlife to shows on fly tying. From our first weekend trips to John Blunt's camp and John Cadwallader's trips to the West Branch of the Penobscot, members have gone on club trips to the Restigouche and the Matepédia Rivers in Quebec for Atlantic salmon, to Alaska for trout and salmon, to the Beaverkill in N.Y. for brown trout, to the Farmington River in Connecticut, to the Rupert River in Quebec for pike, trout, lake trout, and walleyes. We've also been to Lac Leonce, also in Quebec, for brookies, to New York coastal waters for false Albacore and stripers, to New York's Salmon River for king salmon and steel head, to Florida for permit, tarpon, false Albacore, sharks, dolphin, red fish, sea-trout, black fin tuna, snook, and bonefish. That's not counting our trips within Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. I have personally fished with at least thirty members in Yellowstone National Park and the Teton Mountains and on numerous other waters in Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Washington, North Dakota, and South Carolina. We've had fly casting clinics and rod making and fly tying classes. What I'm getting at is that all of these things that have taken place, that has transpired, have been as a result of the work and play and the friendships of many wonderful Saco River Salmon Club members and their friends and their families.

I have benefited immensely from my membership, as I hope you all have. Here's to the Saco River Salmon Club and Hatchery. Cheers!

October Meeting By Dan Bonville

Although the crowd was quite small, fifteen of our members had a wonderful meeting at the Trinity Episcopal Church in Saco. A great BBQ meal of pork and chicken along with coleslaw, baked beans and cornbread was donated by **The Pit Boss BBQ of Biddeford**. We all give them an appreciative big thank you! Nick Sibilica, Larry Orme, and Dan Bonville set up tables with photographs of trips to Wyoming, Yellowstone NP, and Alaska. Nick had a power-point show of club trips taken in Maine with great shots of salmon and trout taken up at Steve Berry's camp on the Moose River and Chris Bond's place on the Carrabassett River on our annual trips. With talks among the tables of this past summer of fishing and plans for the future plus lots and lots of BBQ, we had a very pleasant evening indeed. It was wonderful to have Jack Parker back with us that evening. It was also great to see everybody again. Happy Holidays to one and all.

December Meeting By Mark Woodruff

Harold Porter will be our guest speaker at the December 13 social meeting. Harold was recently featured in the Maine Sunday Telegram for his interesting collection of antique camping equipment - some of which dates back to the 19th century. The meeting will be held at the Episcopal Church on Main Street (Route 1) in Saco. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. with supper provided by "On the Corner Cafe" for a nominal donation of \$7. Harold's presentation should begin by 7:30. If you have camping or fishing treasures from years gone by, please bring them along to show to the group.

Loggers Record Big Ossipee Warmth (I ain't no biologist, but.) By Mark Woodruff

More than a decade ago Central Maine Power Company began a trap and truck program to transport returning adult salmon to the Big Ossipee River. This practice commenced after the East Channel fish elevator and the West Channel Denil fish ladder at the Cataract Hydro Project became operational. By 1999, the trap and truck facility moved upriver to Skelton Dam where a new elevator had been installed. Florida Power and Light (the new hydro owners) continues the program under the supervision of Matt Leblanc.

As an example of how trap and truck works, FPL biologists counted 25 adults ascending the East and West Channel passages of Cataract in 2005. Twelve miles upstream they trapped and then trucked 11 adults (5 females, 5 males, and 1 grilse) to the Big Ossipee River. The Big O begins at the outflow of Ossipee Lake in Effingham, New Hampshire. A dam controls the lake elevation and there are many camps along its shoreline. The river flows eastward into Maine flowing through the villages of Porter, Kezar Falls, and Cornish before reaching the main stem of the Saco River. What makes the river so appealing for the trap and truck program is the adult spawning habitat: gravel and cobble substrate, adequate water depth and velocity, and cold water refuge in the several small feeder streams. River temperature is a key factor that determines the suitability of salmon habitat. This year, the Club's directors became concerned about the impact of warm water temperature in the Big Ossipee River. In the spring, they formulated two questions to investigate. First, does the series of dams in the Maine portion of the Big Ossipee increase the river temperature? Second, were water temperatures exceeding a suitable range for adults and their offspring? To answer these questions Dan Bonville, Brian Lewis, and I placed four temperature loggers in the Big Ossipee and South River (a tributary to the Big Ossipee) in June. The loggers are digital thermometers that can be submerged to record water temperatures hourly for several months. Once removed from the river, the readings that were stored in a memory chip can be downloaded to a computer spreadsheet program. Brian easily found all the loggers at the beginning of October. Afterward, I brought them home to download the temperature data. The data revealed that the dams had no effect on river temperature. Loggers had been placed below the old wood and stone dam in Kezar Falls and below the Kezar Falls Hydro dam. Recorded temperatures were nearly identical to those collected by a logger just east of the state border in Maine. The maximum temperature was 83oF; the minimum was 55oF; the average was 66oF. Not surprisingly the South River in Parsonsfield ran cooler throughout the period.

Several factors such as head ponds or lakes acting as heat sinks; increased surface runoff entering the river without the chance to cool as groundwater; loss of vegetation that shades tributaries and surface runoff. Warmer conditions promote the growth of warm water fish species that prey on juvenile salmon or compete for territory and food. These conditions

limit the growth of juvenile salmon and in the worst situation increase their losses unless they are able to find cold water seeping out of the ground or flowing from tributaries.

Hopefully, this data can assist biologists, the Club, landowners, and hydro owners to take action that improves habitat for Atlantic salmon and other cold-water fish species.

Report from the Petit Cascapedia River By Mark Woodruff

Harvey and Victoria Patry and Skip Paolini visited Camp Bonaventure earlier this fall. The sporting camp is located on the shores of Quebec's



Gaspé Peninsula. Congratulations to Victoria for landing a 30 pound Atlantic salmon! Better luck next time Harvey.

Moose River Fishing Lessons Learned By Mark Woodruff

I arrived the last Thursday of September at Steve Berry's camp on the Moose River after a leisurely drive from Buxton. Steve, Nick Sibilis, and Tom McNeil were talking on the porch that overlooked the river toward a hillside of maples and birches nearing the peak of their autumnal yellows, greens, gold, and reds. This was my first visit to Steve's camp to fish during the final week of the landlocked salmon season on the Moose River and I was glad to be there. If I wasn't already excited enough, Nick enlightened me on how great the fishing would be. He said, "Just remember you're going to be fishing in two of the best pools for landlocked salmon so that makes it the best river in Maine to fish for

landlocked salmon. And if it's the best river in the state to fish for land locks, it must be the best river in the U.S. So, if it's the best river in the country, it must be the best river in the world to fish for landlocked salmon!"

The pressure was on. After bringing in my bags, I quickly put my rod together as we made plans to fish that evening. Nick offered to take me out to fish Gilberts Pool. We motored across and slightly up river from the camp. Anchoring just inside an eddy I reached for my rod, but Nick quickly offered guidance. He said, "Let me show you how to fish here." Like a dutiful student following his noble master, I listened as Nick demonstrated with his first cast saying, "You have to cast upstream at an angle to the current and then let the fly drift without any drag." I watched carefully. The master spoke, "As soon as it shows the least amount of drag in the water." (There was a rise; the line went tight.) "Hey, I got one!"

With no time to waste, I was standing up in the boat casting for what I hoped would be a nice sized salmon. My technique was at best mediocre, but fortunately Nick's shouts to mend the line made my fly drift more and drag less. That evening wasn't meant to be, but Friday brought renewed effort. Steve introduced me to Scotts Pool that begins at a narrowing of the river upstream from his camp. A noticeable seam formed on either side of the river where the fast current collided with the water stacked in the eddies. Steve really had a knack for fishing this pool; catching and releasing several fish in the 14 to 18 inch range. We would fish one stretch, drop down 10 yards, and cast to a new area. With each new section of water, our catches were usually made on the first cast. Saturday morning was my last chance to fish that weekend. I hiked to Scotts Pool early to beat the crowd. Wading out on the gravel bar I was an easy cast away from what I hoped would be a salmon to take home. Early yet, there was no action at first. After some time I waded downstream a few yards to make another important first cast. I thought to myself, "Make it a good one and don't let it drag." Sure enough a salmon took my fly! It leaped out of the water a few times before spitting it out. A short time later another salmon easily 18 or 19 inches long took my fly. It jumped clear of the water once, twice, three times and snap went my leader. Although I continued to fish that morning and didn't get that "big one," the time spent at Steve Berry's camp was terrific. Hats off to Steve for inviting members to his camp! It's a great place to fish and get away from it all. I know Mike Arsenault, Dave Baker, Steve Berry, Dan Bonville,

Lionel Bouthot, Tom McNeil, Fred Pierce, Nick Sibia, Mike Tracey, and I had a great time. And, special thanks to Nick: master of the floating smelt and yellow perch.



Steve Berry with a very nice land locked salmon caught on the Moose River this fall.

Saco River Salmon Club
Membership Form

Name:

Address:

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Phone: ()

E-mail address

Dues are annual - January through December

Single \$20 Family \$30 Student \$10 Senior \$10 Life \$300

Donation to hatchery \$

I would like to volunteer in the following areas:

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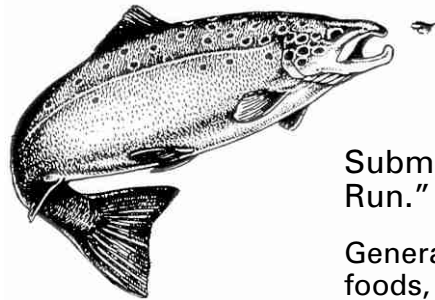
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Submit your short article for "The Salmon Run."

General interest stories, recipes for fly tying or foods, comments and suggestions are welcomed. The editors reserve the right to edit all materials. Send to RJ Mere, 9 York St., Kennebunk, ME, 04043 or email to rjmere@gwi.net

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