

The Salmon Run



Visit our website at www.sacosalmon.org

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

Note: This summer we are printing only two issues of the Salmon Run. This issue will be the June-July issue and the next newsletter will be the August-September issue, which you should receive in the beginning of August. The editors need more time to go fishing!

RJ Mere

From the President's Corner By Jack Parker

Another hatchery season is ending with more than a half million fry attesting to its success by settling in their new quarters in Saco River tributaries. Two hatchery troughs will still contain fish through early June for inspection by student tours from area schools participating in the Atlantic Salmon Federation's "Fish Friends" program, expertly administered by our last year's conservation award winner, Lionel (Toots) Bouthot.

By mid-June, biologists Dave Bean and Paul Christman will have conducted a post-stocking meeting to critique and summarize this year's stocking activities. Before month's end director Dave Fenderson will bring a very welcome, high-tech solution to the onerous task of cleaning our 320 incubator trays and 30 feeding troughs with a high-temp, pressure cleaner used in his business for heavy duty industrial cleaning. We'll simultaneously be soliciting members to clean up and secure the building and outside grounds for the season. Please watch your e-mail for the dates and help us demonstrate the justifiable pride in which we hold our unique facility.

Thanks to so many hatchery volunteers for the successful past year. This summer our attention will shift to habitat and fry survival studies through fieldwork by volunteer teams. Our social meetings will resume in September after many members have enjoyed the great trip schedule put together by Dan Bonville. If April's Restigouche trip was any indication, 2002 should be a banner year for our outdoor excursions.

Welcome New Members By John Cadwallader

Please offer a hearty handshake to the following:

Richard Frantz & Family, Newtonville, Ma
Gregory Regan, Biddeford, Me
Bill & Yvette Busch, Biddeford, Me
John Lescure, Kennebunk, Me

Our paid membership for the year now stands at 175, compared to an even 200 for the same time last year. Considering that we have 18 new members for the year, there are over 40 of you out there that haven't renewed yet. Check your all important mailing label code: P2, P3 or PL means you're paid for 2002, 2003 (we have a few) or Life. Anything else means the fishing gods will give you nothing but wind knots and missed strikes for the rest of the season. If you want to salvage the remainder of the season, fill out the renewal form elsewhere in this newsletter. Thanks to those of you who have renewed. Your continued support is what keeps us going in more ways than you might imagine.

Club Hats By John Cadwallader

New member John Lescure, above, scoffed up the absolute last club hat from our stockroom. We expect to order more, but, for the time being, please hold off on trying to order hats. We'll let you know when they're available again. (You could try eBay. I've heard they're going for \$100's.)

Stocking Fun By John Cadwallader

Mike Arsenault and I had the pleasure of stocking the lower stretch of the Big Ossipee River in the company of Salmon Commission biologists Paul Christman and Kevin (sorry Kevin, I forget your last name). We launched two canoes from the bridge behind Cornish and released about 45,000 fry between there and the confluence with the main stem of the Saco. It's a short trip, maybe a mile as the crow flies, but it's got to be



one of the prettiest stretches of river anywhere in the state, with plenty of riffles and rapids (read prime salmon habitat). What sticks in my mind are a couple of statements made by one or the other of the biologists. One was that you'd have to cover far more miles on a typical "Downeast" river (I think the comparison was to the Machias or Narraguagus) to see the same amount of habitat. The other was that if the Ossipee flowed directly into the ocean (bypassing the 6 downstream dams on the Saco) it would be one of the best salmon rivers in the state.

The returning salmon are getting a free truck ride upstream, bypassing 3 or 4 of those dams, and we know they're spawning successfully. We can only hope the outgoing smolt are able to get past those same dams without too high a mortality.

Fundraising Auction & Raffles

By John Cadwallader

Thanks to the generous donations of Maine artists, sportsmen, and businesses the auction held at the annual banquet raised \$2,215. the general raffle netted \$350, and the Grant's Camp raffle raised \$1535. We would like to extend our gratitude to the following individuals and businesses.

Kittery Trading Post

L.L. Bean

Saco Frame Center & Gallery

Grant's Camps - John & Carolyn Blunt

Dan and Sandy Bonville

Don Sicard

Habitat Survey Teams Begin to Organize

By Mark Woodruff

Have you been wondering what our fry need to survive in the wild? Or perhaps you volunteered to stock fry and asked, "Why am I releasing the fry here?"

On Tuesday June 18 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., Paul Christman of the Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission will answer these questions in a habitat survey workshop at Swan Pond Brook near the Dayton-Lyman town line. We'll meet in the parking lot beside the Baptist Church in Goodwins Mills. This is the church beside the old dam house on Route 35. (See DeLorme maps 2 & 3.) Bring boots, something to drink, bug-dope, and your energy to learn how to conduct a basic stream survey. Paul will be showing all interested folks how to identify, describe, measure, and locate various kinds of stream conditions that effect the survival of fry in the wild. Feel free to call Mark Woodruff at (207) 929-5300 for further details. This will be an excellent way for us to energize and plan the summer's habitat surveys.

After last year's habitat survey class, two teams were able to survey Back Brook and a portion of Swan Pond Brook in just three days!

This year our challenge is to organize three teams and survey Pugsley Brook, Red Brook, Breakneck Brook, and the remainder of Swan Pond Brook. To accomplish this, we will need teams of two to four people. Each team will need to set-up agreeable dates to walk its stream during the drier times of July or August. The data the teams record will then be used by the Maine Atlantic

Salmon Commission to plan future stocking densities for those streams. (Last year's survey of Back Brook will become part of a state wide study of salmon fry stocking.)

If you are interested in seeing the type of habitat our salmon and other cold water species prefer, this is an outdoor opportunity in which you will want to participate. See you there!

Bar Mills Dam up for Re-licensing

By Mark Woodruff

The Bar Mills Dam located on the Saco River between Buxton and Hollis received its first license to operate in 1956. Back then, Central Maine Power Company (CMP) owned the hydroelectric project having purchased it from Cumberland County Power and Light 14 years earlier. CMP had just rebuilt the dam, and I'm not sure I want to know what the cost of a monthly electric bill was! Fast-forward to today. FPL Energy owns the project and must apply for a new license to the Federal Energy Regulatory Committee by June 30, 2003. The old license expires June 30, 2005.

As part of the re-licensing procedure, FPL Energy has submitted an Initial Stage Consultation Document (ISCD) to the affected municipalities, natural resource agencies and other interested parties. This document contains information about the operation, stream flow, and environmental resources influenced by the tailrace, bypass, and head pond. It presents scientific studies of the fish species, aquatic bugs, birds, mammals, vegetation, and recreational uses of the entire project area. The re-licensing process is also a time when natural resource agencies and the public have an opportunity to weigh-in on the conditions of the new license. Therefore, the Saco River Salmon Club Directors formed a committee comprised of Jack Parker, RJ Mere, and Mark Woodruff to review the ISCD and submit written comments to FPL Energy. This is a daunting task for everyone involved. If you are interested in knowing more about the ISCD or want to express your opinions, please contact one of the committee members.

The Biologist's Notebook

By Ed Baum

Atlantic Salmon Rivers of New England

We residents of the Great State of Maine often get so wrapped up in our statewide Atlantic salmon restoration program that it's easy to forget that similar programs exist in all 6 New England states. There are dozens of dedicated State and Federal fishery biologists and program managers from Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire who are working just as diligently as "our" Atlantic Salmon Commission, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and National Marine Fisheries Service folks here in Maine. In fact, did you know that Atlantic salmon restoration and management programs occur in 22 rivers throughout the New England region of the US?

In southern New England waters (south of Cape Cod, Massachusetts) salmon restoration and management programs are being undertaken in the Connecticut River Drainage, which drains portions of the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire, and the Pawcatuck River, which

is located within the state of Rhode Island. In northern New England (north of Cape Cod) salmon restoration and management programs are underway in three rivers in New Hampshire: the Merrimack and two small coastal rivers near the Maine border (the Lamprey and the Cocheco). The remaining 17 Atlantic salmon rivers are located in Maine, and, as you well know, the Penobscot River represents the largest Atlantic salmon restoration program in the state. Fourteen of the 22 US Atlantic salmon rivers currently contain facilities for counting adult salmon returns.

About 813,000 units (one unit = 100 m²) of Atlantic salmon spawning and nursery habitat have been quantified in US rivers to date. Of the total salmon habitat inventoried, 30% is located in the Connecticut River Drainage, <1% is located in the Pawcatuck River Drainage, 9% is located in the Merrimack River and two small coastal NH river drainages, and 60% is located Maine's salmon rivers. Interestingly, Maine's mighty Penobscot River contains about 15% of the salmon habitat in New England, while the 8 Maine rivers and streams listed as Endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act contain just 3% of the known Atlantic salmon habitat in the United States of America!

To have your questions answered or to contact Ed, write to: **Ed Baum, Fisheries Consultant, Atlantic Salmon Unlimited, PO Box 6185, Hermon, ME USA 04402-6185 or E-mail address: ASUnlimitd@aol.com or visit his website at: maineatlanticsalmon.com**

Spring fishing Atlantic salmon is a bone chilling experience *By RJ Mere*

Mark Drummond, SRSC member from Kittery, pulled up to my place shortly after 5 AM. We spent the next 9 hours driving northward and into Canada, for some early spring Atlantic salmon fishing. The further north we drove the more it looked like those cold raw days when winter refuses to relinquish its rights to spring.

As we drove along the Restigouche River on the New Brunswick side, the river which we would fish the next day, we spotted large chunks of ice and trees, ripped from their banks, floating downstream. I was beginning to feel grateful for stuffing a good book into the luggage, just in case the fishing was canceled.

We checked into the Hotel Restigouche on the Quebec side of the river and bought our fishing licenses for Saturday and Sunday.

The Matapedia River enters the Restigouche just above where the hotel is located. We needed a separate license to fish the Matapedia. The licenses are cheap, \$15 for the Restigouche and \$20 for the Matapedia.

We met our guide, Peter Firth, at breakfast on the next morning.

Mark had toast and coffee but I opted for the cardiac special - bacon, sausage, ham, eggs and a slab of pork pate for the toast.

Mark warned me that the trick to catching fish is to eat light. I scoffed at the superstition as I slathered more pate on the crunchy toast and stabbed the last of the country fried potatoes.

Peter told us that the water looked good but I had my doubts when I saw the cold steel-gray waters boiling like a witch's cauldron. There were hunks of ice floating down from upstream.

We stepped into the 26 foot long canoe and Peter stood at the stern and headed up the Matapedia. The air temperature was so cold that the spray froze instantly on his out layer of clothing. The wind persistently bit at our exposed fingers and faces. The guides on our rods froze solid with ice and we had to stop fishing from time to time and chip the ice free of them.

Fifteen minutes after we anchored at the head of a deep pool, Mark had a fish his line. The salmon was landed and released, as all the salmon were that weekend, and soon after that Mark's rod was bouncing to announce that another fish was on. Maybe there was something to Mark's toast in the morning. I started to regret not ordering the plain toast instead of indulging in the Lumberjack Special.

We returned to the lodge and a noontime meal but before we quit the water, I had a hit. I could feel the salmon shaking its head just before the hook popped out. It wasn't until later that afternoon, on the Restigouche River, that I finally landed some salmon. Mark, true to form, landed three fish to my one. One



was a corker, too. It was close to 40 inches and very healthy looking.

The next morning was chillier than the first and the relentless wind did what it could do to sap our body heat. It was going to be a very cold and dark day on the water. Though I wanted to cave in to the superstition of toast, I instead went the way of the Lumberjack Special again. This time, I ordered more toast.

Peter landed us far up on the Matapedia. It wasn't long before Mark's rod tip was dancing again. The sun sent a sliver of rays through the dark clouds and soon it had pried a wide hole in them. By late morning, the sunshine not only chased off most of the clouds but it gave us a welcomed warmth as well. The sun must have warmed the Atlantic salmon, too. The hits and landings started about 15 minutes later and became quite regular. Mark landed several fish, including Arctic char, another fish looking very similar to the sea-run brook trout.

The photo here is of Mark (on the left) with Canadian guide Peter Firth holding a beautiful female Atlantic salmon. Mark is a freshwater and saltwater guide and holds a US Coast Guard captain's license as well. In all, Mark landed 9 salmon and I landed 4.

Last year we caught more grilse, young males about 24 inches long. We landed 3 times more grilse than salmon. This year the number of grilse was down. Only one third of the fish landed were grilse, the rest were salmon. All fish were thin from fasting under the winter ice that capped the rivers. All were healthy and soon they will make their way down the rivers and out to the North Atlantic Ocean, where they will feed and grow stronger. Spring fishing for Atlantic salmon in Canada is not for everyone. The conditions can be raw, but fighting these powerful fish can make it all worthwhile.

SRSC Fishing Trips By RJ Mere

We have several trips scheduled between now and September. Be sure to call the organizers well in advance of the trip date so that proper arrangements can be made to accommodate everyone. Watch this section of the Salmon Run in future issues for updates and new trip listings.

June 6-9: Big Lake and Grand Lake Stream.

Bill Winward 207-773-1673

July (TBA): Penobscot River, Lincoln.

Dan Bonville 207-625-7693

September 19-25: Penobscot River, Big Eddy Campground.

John Cadwallader 207-985-6199

A Meal of Fresh Fish By Dan Bonville

When I was about 17 years old, back in the late 1950s, I met two southerners up on Big Lake in Washington County. One, the husband, was from South Carolina and he had a thick Southern accent. His wife, who also had quite an accent, told me yes, she too was from the South. Although she had lived for years on Southern military posts, she was born in South Portland! They were stationed in Brunswick, Maine, as he was in the Navy. Every Labor Day weekend and for the rest of the season, husband and wife fished on their 30 day leave to put fish in the freezer for the upcoming winter.

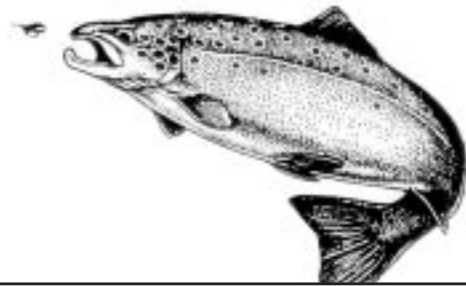
Now, Big Lake is full of smallmouth bass and has some lovely landlocked salmon but their target species were sunfish, yellow perch and pickerel. Everyday, they fished with long cane poles and bait and everyday they would fill a large galvanized tub with fresh fish. They would then fillet them, ice them down and at the end of each week, run home on a quick trip to freeze them. That was my introduction to eating small fish with its sweet tasting white flesh. They taught me how to fillet, how to prepare the fish and several ways to cook them, including over coals and on a stick.

Mainers are use to cooking small fish from smelts to white perch but I don't know too many people who eat yellow perch and redbreast sunfish. In fact, I don't know too many Mainers who target crappies, one of Maine's finest eating freshwater fish! Yet, lakes such as Sebago and Mousam have some huge crappies. Now, I'm told several southern ponds and lakes have populations of blue-gill sunfish, another wonderful tasting treat. The great thing about all of this is that because these species have so many

offspring a fisherman will not even dent their populations if he or she keeps a mess of fish for supper.

White perch, yellow perch, crappies, pickerel and sunfish and blue-gills can all be caught on light spinning gear or fly rods. I've caught all but the blue-gills, below the Limington Rapids on our own Saco River. I even have a huge black crappie mounted on a lovely slab of varnished pine on my living room wall. It's a trophy from Sebago Lake, on Sticky River, caught on its favorite streamer fly, a Gray Ghost. I landed it in May back in 1985. There's no reason not to eat a meal of any of these fish, you've just got to go out and catch them.

Through the ice or on light weight rods, our warmwater species are like jewels. Beautiful to look at, they are all great to eat and pound for pound, nothing can beat the fight of a blue-gill on a light flyrod, and they're so easy to catch during the springtime that the whole family can get in on this type of fishing. Good catching and eating to you all!



Saco River Salmon Club Membership Form

Name:

Address:

City:

State: Zip:

Phone: ()

E-mail address

Dues are annual - January through December

Single \$15 Family \$25 Student \$5 Senior \$5 Life \$300

Donation to hatchery \$

I would like to volunteer in the following areas:

Board of Directors

Newsletter

Hatchery Operations

Stocking

Hydropower Issues

Legislation

Public Relations

Membership

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

Visit our website at www.sacosalmon.org

Editors: Dan Bonville and RJ Mere