

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

From the President's Corner By Jack Parker

Preparation is over and the game has begun. Through the snow and ice storm of February 6, biologist Dave Bean appeared at our hatchery with 102 insulated thermos jugs secured in the back of his pickup, each containing some 5,000 salmon eggs packed in ice. Two Fridays later, he repeated the scene with 32 more jugs. This being our eighth annual egg reception, our experienced hatchery crew quickly processed them. To prevent bringing contaminants into the hatchery we disinfected the containers outside the door. Once inside we opened each one and immersed the eggs in a diluted argent solution. Ten minutes later, we rinsed them and gently poured them into the incubator trays, one container per tray. By afternoon, 715,000 black-eyed babies were ensconced in their new quarters and another hatchery season was underway.

Each year some eggs arrive DOA and must be picked before they decompose. Left too long, they attract fungi that will infect others, so our first task is to pick these out. This is when our need for volunteer pickers is most acute. If mortality is low and volunteers are enough, the task is accomplished quickly. On a good year like this the task is done in a day or two. From now until early May, the eggs and fry need to be regularly attended. Volunteers are needed on a regular and come-when-you-can basis. The more help, the easier the job and the healthier our fry will be. Please consider helping us by calling Bob Monroe at 499-2668, email me at jparker@zwi.net, or call the hatchery number, 282-6985 and leave a message.

About 5,000 smolts will be stocked in the river next month. Several of our members helped mark these by fin-clipping them yesterday (2/26) at a nearby hatchery. Two years from now, we will be looking for these marks on returning survivors. This is a small but significant new step in our restoration program. There will be more information on this program in the next issue of the Salmon Run.

Please note the inserted pages regarding dues and the upcoming annual banquet. Dues and hatchery contributions by our generous membership make up the financial core of our operations, without which restoration would not continue. We keep dues low just to cover membership costs, but your generous contributions keep the water flowing and the fry swimming.

With the sale of Art and Angela Leblanc's fabled Seasaples restaurant at Cape Porpoise, our banquet committee worked hard to find another venue. On April 30, Dunstan Schoolhouse Restaurant will teach us how to enjoy a good time and good food in their banquet hall on Route 1 in Scarborough. Our committee made the prices even more affordable this year for

an inclusive buffet menu to satisfy all tastes and appetites. Please make your reservations soon and invite your friends. Our annual fundraising auction follows the dinner. We would gratefully welcome any of your saleable items. May the upcoming open water season tighten all your lines.

Cal Robinson Gets Us Dreaming With A Terrific Show By RJ Mere

After the best meal Lynne Jackson has prepared for us to date, Cal gave us a whirlwind tour of out doors fun on the east coast of Maine and Canada. At the previous meeting, I told Dan Bonville that I would take a picture of the meal presented by Lynne, to get members to realize what they are missing. Unfortunately, I forgot the camera at our last meeting, but it would have done you or me no good. Just as Lynne was about to place platters of scrumptious food on the counter, Dan and I took a quick trip to the hatchery for some last minute items that we thought we would need. By the time we returned to the meeting, there was a long waiting line and 90 percent of a Belize-style chicken dish had been scooped up! No chance for pictures there! Seriously, Lynne is doing a very fine job of presenting good down home cooking. You have one more meeting coming up in March to sample some of her cuisine.

Shortly after everyone finished their second and third trip to the food counter, Cal Robinson fired up his slide projector and talked about a wide range of outdoor topics. Starting with Atlantic salmon fishing on the Matapedia, we quickly were turkey hunting in Southern Maine – which Cal highlighted with tips on calls and decoys to use. Springtime trout fishing can be enhanced with a search in the woods for deer antlers, called sheds.

A little later in the spring, the fiddleheads are popping up all over. Cal suggest placing the picked ones in a wire basket and letting a good river current do the job of washing away the bitter brown encasements for an easier way to remove them.

Late spring brings in the stripers. Cal likes to fish below the dam at head of tide on the Saco River. Last year he chartered 78 trips. Most of the trips were for stripers and 25 of those were for tuna. The blue fish follow in June. While Cal is on the water, he likes to drop a few lobster pots over and try his luck on those tasty critters. Late summer brings on the blueberry picking. Fall time is for cranberry picking in Nova Scotia and hunting pheasants, partridge, and woodcock over his Brittney and setters. Look for Cal at King and Bartlett camps where he works as a hunting guide for grouse. If you are interested in fishing or hunting, give him a call at 207-283-0712.

Barry Hadlock is Guest Speaker for March Meeting *By RJ Mere*

March 16 will be the next SRSC meeting. We will have a great meal, masterfully cooked by Lynne Jackson. This is the meeting where the Board of Directors is voted upon by the membership. The officers of the club, Jack Parker (president) and Dan Bonville (vice-president) have agreed to serve their terms for another year. Barry and Rose Hadlock will then speak of their unusual trip to Kurdistan. This is bound to be a fascinating evening as Barry weaves a tale of adventure as only he can. Please get there early! We sit down to eat at 6:00PM and the speakers will begin at 7PM.

Salmon Data Reinforces Multi-aged Stocking *By Mark Woodruff*

The Skelton Fishway, located about eleven miles from the head-of-tide in Biddeford-Saco, has operated successfully since 2002. The fishway provides upstream passage for river herring, American shad, and Atlantic salmon and other non-migratory fish species. FPL Energy's (FPLE) recent draft operations report includes data supportive of the added smolt stocking that the Saco River Salmon Club will begin this year. In early June of 2003, the first Atlantic salmon was captured at Skelton and trucked to the Big Ossipee River. By the end of September 7 males, 15 females, and 2 grilse ascended the fishway. These fish ranged in length from 23 to 32 inches.

Of particular interest to our restoration effort are the results of scale samples taken from these fish. The Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission determined that 10 salmon were of fry or wild origin while 14 salmon were stocked as adults. The mix of origins reinforces the Club's goal to hold up to 40,000 our fry and release them as smolts during the next year. Not to be overlooked are the returns of two other important anadromous fish species: river herring and American shad. Early in May 2003, the first of 26,762 river herring began passing through the Cataract fishway at head-of-tide. From mid May to mid June, a little over 50 percent of the herring were raised by the elevator at Skelton to continue their migration into the head pond. The balance of the herring most likely spawned below Skelton. American Shad encountered more difficulty reaching and passing Skelton. In 2003, as in past years, the migrating shad were very skittish about entering the lock system at the smaller Springs and Bradbury Dams. The pair of dams is just up river from the Cataract Project between Biddeford and Saco. FPLE ultimately trucked 1,080 around the dams so that they could continue their migration. However, once they reached Skelton, passage was prevented because water temperatures were too warm to handle the Atlantic salmon that were also in the mix. Hopefully, shad spawning took place below Skelton.

Improving Downstream Passage at Bar Mills *By Mark Woodruff*

Effective downstream passage at a hydroelectric dam is a critical technology for anadromous fish restoration. From an Atlantic salmon's perspective, it is the safest route as it migrates

to the ocean and adulthood. Recently, FPL Energy (FPLE), the owners of the Bar Mills dam, conducted a study to improve the downstream passage of out-migrating smolts. According to their draft report, passage effectiveness was increased when they used an 8-foot deep, weighted screen in the canal leading to the turbine intakes. The screen functioned to direct smolts toward the sluice and a drop to the downstream side of the dam. By tracking three separate releases of smolts when the screen was in place, 62 percent to 79 percent utilized the sluice and avoided the turbines. In contrast, 21 percent to 38 percent of the smolts passed through the turbines. Based on these results and a 2001 study of turbine survival at Bar Mills, FPLE estimates that 95 percent of the smolts passing through the sluice or turbines will survive. Keep in mind that these predictions represent only the smolts passing through the sluice or the turbines. April through early May is the period of spill (high water) conditions, so it is believed that most smolts will migrate through open flashboards and spill gates. Personally, I was pleased that FPLE wishes to install the 8-foot screen in the canal during the migration period. My only concern with the results is the cumulative effect of mortality in the turbines of not one, but as many as six dams. Granted there may be similar mortality in more natural conditions, but given the ongoing restoration the smolt population needs the best opportunity to return to the Saco River as adults.

Notes from the Hatchery *By Bob Monroe*

In the last issue of the Salmon Run, our illustrious President, Jack Parker, said that the eggs were coming. Well, they are here – all 715,000 of them. We received 517,000 on February 6 and 198,000 on February 20 totaling 715,000 eye-up eggs. After the first picking, we found 11,500 unhealthy eggs. The first picking usually gives us a high number of bad eggs when we first receive them from the federal hatchery. As I write this on February 23, some of the eggs are starting to hatch out. The eyes are protruding and the tails are extending beyond the shell. As we start a new season, we work hard to keep the mortality low. I want to thank all of the members who have been involved at the hatchery. It takes people like you to make this program work successfully. Thanks!

SRSC Has Display at Maine Premiere Home Show *By Harvey Patry and Nick Sibia*

We were fortunate to obtain a free booth space at the Maine Premiere Home show held at the Howard Sports Complex in Saco. We raised \$529.00 in raffle ticket sales. More importantly, 90 percent of the by people at this show were from the local area of our hatchery so we had a great opportunity to explain our mission to restore the Atlantic salmon to the Saco River. Most people had no idea that the Saco Salmon Club was more than a fishing club!

Ice-Fishing Record Upheld *By Dan Bonville*

Friday, February 20, saw the arrival of Brian and Simon Lewis,

Mark Fohlin, Jerry Jordan, and Dan Bonville at Bob and Laura Richters' Belgrade Four Season Camps, for the SRSC annual ice-fishing trip. Just the day before our arrival, a fellow next door in cabin 3, caught a Northern Pike while fishing right in front of Bob's warming shack, put out on the ice over the top of a nice weed bed. The lucky angler was on his first ever ice-fishing trip, visiting his brother just for the day, when he landed what will probably be the biggest fish of his lifetime. The pike weighed 24 pounds and measured in at 53 inches! As usual, club members ate like kings and had a wonderful time talking hunting and fishing, planning upcoming open water trips, going through the new fishing catalogs, trying flies and in general getting excited that winter is finally moving on, leaving us with thought of the warmer weather to come.

Total catch on the lake? About what we have been doing: lots of wind flags and the landing of one rather large shiner. Next winter? Well, we will probably stay up at Steve Barry's to ice-fish Moosehead Lake, but we decided that we will keep coming up to the Belgrades for our annual eating, storytelling and ice-fishing practice. See you then!

Club Trips Schedule for 2004 *By Dan Bonville*

April: Fly-casting seminar at Sonny Pierce's Shy Beaver hatchery and fly-fishing club. Dates are to be determined soon.

April 23-26: Atlantic Salmon fishing on the Restigouche and Matapedia Rivers.

May 21-23: Steve Berry's camp on the Moose River. Fish the Moose River, Indian Pond, the Kennebec River, both the East and West outlets and branches. Book early on this one!

June 4-6: Fly-fishing on the North and South branches of the Dead River, the Carrabassett River, and Chain of Ponds. We will stay in Chris Bond's ski lodge. This is a fun trip for kids of all ages!

July: The Penobscot River, below Lincoln, for smallmouth bass. Dates to be determined.

August: Kayaking and canoeing for smallies on the Saco River with guides Mark Howland and Bill Diamond. Dates to be determined.

September: The West Branch of the Penobscot River. Camping, fishing, eating, and fun! Dates are tentatively set for September 22 through September 30. John Cadwallader has agreed to head this annual get together once again.

October: Fishing the East and West Outlets of the Kennebec River and hunting for Roughed Grouse from Steve Berry's camp on the Moose River in Moosehead Lake country. Dates to be determined. I am expecting a full house, so book early.

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@zwi.net

Visit our website at www.sacosalmon.org

Editors: Dan Bonville and RJ Mere

Saco River Salmon Club *2004 Dues Form*

Please send in your membership dues using this form. Dues are from January to December. Dues submitted after November will apply to membership for the following year. You can also order hats (two styles!) and donate to the hatchery for operating expenses.

Thank You!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State (Province): _____

Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

I would like to volunteer for any of the following:

Board of Directors Newsletter Stocking

Hatchery Operations Legislation Membership

Public Relations Advertising Hydropower Issues

Membership Categories:

Regular \$15

Family \$25

Student \$5

Senior \$5

Life \$300

Dues _____

Hatchery Fund _____

Hats - Regular bill \$14.00 each _____

Long bill \$16.00 each _____

Shipping for hats \$2.50 _____

Total:..... _____

Please mail to:

Saco River Salmon Club
P.O. Box 115
Saco, ME 04072

Annual SRSC Banquet

Yes, it's time to start your planning to attend one of our highlight activities of the year, the SRSC annual banquet. The venue for the dinner this year is the Dunstan School Restaurant in Scarborough on Rt. 1. SRSC will have use of the entire second floor group dining facility as well as an adjacent alcove where the auction items will be displayed. Inside the dining facility, an area of tables will be set up to display "table raffle" items

Mark the Date-----APRIL 30

Social hour will start at 5:00 p.m. with a complete buffet dinner available from about 6:00 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. Buffet entrees will include steamship round of beef, turkey, fish, pasta, shellfish, chicken, and of course, salmon. Separate serving tables will have vegetables, a salad bar, some Mexican concoctions, and a dessert area. During the social hour upstairs, appetizers will be served as well as alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Beverages will be served throughout the evening by the wait staff. The buffet is located on the first floor, but there are two sets of stairways as well as an elevator to serve the second floor dining area.

The entire fee for this repast including tax, gratuity, and non-alcoholic beverages is \$20.00 per person or \$35.00 per couple.

The directors are diligently rounding up items for the table raffle, and the auction. All members are ardently encouraged to donate items to both of these important fundraisers. There will be a separate raffle for a fishing trip for two to Grant's Kennebago Camps again this year, and tickets for that will be available soon and throughout the banquet evening up to the raffle drawing.

Following the dinner President Bush and John Kerry will engage in an unrehearsed, unmonitored debate accepting all questions from the club members present-----uh, that's not quite true. But, we will have some very interesting speakers, well-deserved award presentations, and our best auction ever.

Please don't miss this highlight event and the opportunity to join with other club members for an entertaining evening. A reservation form with return address information is printed below for your convenience. Save your spot now!

Friday, April 30 5:00 p.m. at The Dunstan School Restaurant

Banquet Reservation

Number attending:___ Singles X \$20.00/person = _____

_____ Couples X \$35.00/couple = _____

TOTAL = _____

Names of attendees_____

Mail checks with names of those attending to:

Saco River Salmon Club

P.O. Box 115

Saco, ME 04072

