

October 2007

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



From the President's Corner

By ?

John Blunt is roughing it in Rangeley with Carolyn attempting to reduce the overpopulation of partridge (Roughed Grouse for those of you who are “from away”) in that area of Maine. So far, he’s doing alright and, with the help of Maine guide Cal Robinson, he and his guests at Kennebago Camps are enjoying tempting appetizers of partridge each dinner. John reports that the woodcock have not move through their area yet but given the reduced population over the past decade or so he’s not likely to see very many when or if they migrate through the alder patches around Rangeley.

John wanted to pass on two bits of information to the membership: The first is that we are receiving 750,000 fertilized Atlantic salmon eggs for the 2008 season. That’s good news and a relief for those who were wondering what our status was with regards to the availability of eggs from Craig Brook Hatchery. Soon, Garry Kasten and others will be looking for volunteers to help prepare our hatchery for the delivery and also to establish a volunteer list for cleaning, water quality testing, and egg picking during the months of January through March. After hatch out in April and through May volunteers continue their work keeping the fry healthy and prepare for stocking in mid-May. Think about how much time you can donate to the hatchery during the rearing season so that when Garry contacts you he will have an easier time of filling the schedule out.

While on the topic of eggs, John has contacted Bill Archambault, Program Supervisor, Northeast Region Fisheries, from the Hadley, Massachusetts office and Bill has agreed to be our guest speaker for our November/December meeting held on December 12. Bill will discuss issues concerning our eggs, what the future may hold for us in regards to our program with USFWS, and why the line for Penobscot Atlantic salmon was drawn just one watershed north of the Saco River. December 12 promises to be an interesting and enlightening meeting. We hope to see you there.

(Continued on page 2)

The other bit of news John wanted to share was that on October 19 at 11:30 AM, the Turner Broadcast Network will be showing the documentary film about Kenebago Camps, in Rangeley, Maine. John's grandchildren and some L.L. Bean personnel are in the film but it is not clear whether John will be making his film debut in this one. We're all looking forward to see it.

After feasting on Lynn Jackson's (On the Corner Cafe) wonderfully prepared meal club members enjoyed Rob Cotiaux as guest speaker for our September meeting. His topic was bow hunting. Rob is a registered Maine guide and is a member of many organizations and puts on an entertaining and informative presentation whenever he speaks to our club. Thanks, Rob, and we hope that we may have you back again.

This month's membership meeting is on October 17 and our guest speakers are Dan Bonville, Mark Drummond, and RJ Mere, all Maine guides from High Adventure Outfitters and Guide Service. They will share their stories of adventure – some high, some low. Be prepared for belly laughs. We will meet at Please join us October 17 at 6:00 p.m. at the Episcopal Church, Route 1 in Saco.

Remember that we will not have a meeting in November but we will have a meeting on December 12.



Saco River Fish Passage Agreement in Action

By Mark Woodruff

Three and a half years ago FPL Energy (FPL), owner of the hydroelectric facilities on the Saco River, invited government fishery agencies and non-governmental organizations to begin a series of meetings to develop plans for fishery restoration in the watershed. Jack Parker and I represented the club in the negotiations that recently produced a consensus agreement. It is comprehensive; addressing restoration issues for Atlantic salmon, American shad, river herring, American eels, and freshwater species.

The cornerstone of the agreement is four measures that FPL must complete to satisfy the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Over the next twenty-four years, FPL will construct upstream and downstream passage for American eels. This is a significant step for FPL because eels were not considered a "target species" for restoration in an earlier agreement. At the time eels were not known to be a species just as threatened as Atlantic salmon.

Prior to this agreement, construction of upstream passage for anadromous species (salmon, shad, and river herring) hinged on FPL and the fishery agencies assessing and agreeing on the need. To avoid what would have been a lengthy and litigious process, the parties agreed to specific, but

delayed operational dates. Upstream passage will be operational at West Buxton in 2019, Bonny Eagle in 2022, and Hiram in 2025. Under the new license agreement for Bar Mills its upstream passage will be operational in 2016.

Downstream passage will not be overlooked. Salmon biologists raised concerns that out-migrating adults, known to swim at depth in the river, could be attracted by flows entering the turbine intakes. To address this, FPL is required to conduct a three-year study of downstream passage routes used by Atlantic salmon kelts. Similar studies will evaluate the effectiveness of downstream passage for shad and river herring.

Lastly, FPL will conduct electro-fishing studies of smallmouth and largemouth bass in two impoundments and Lake Arrowhead. This will be done in anticipation of introduction of alewife to these waters.

The agreement also includes actions aimed at supporting Saco River fisheries restoration. Although FERC does not have enforcement authority in this part of the agreement, the parties to the agreement are in the same boat to make a difference. First, FPL will be funding as much as \$100,000 over ten years toward the development of a geographic database to track annual habitat surveys, fish population studies, and fish access to habitat.

The need for multi-aged stocking of salmon is addressed with two activities involving the Saco River Salmon Club. FPL

will support the Club's annual fry rearing and stocking with a one-time \$25,000 grant. A more substantial annual grant of \$50,000 per year until 2022 will offset costs associated with smolt stocking. This was recognized as an important part of the restoration since higher adult returns occurred a few years after smolt were released in the Saco River.

Finally, to increase public awareness of the cooperative fisheries management and restoration effort, FPL will donate a total of \$25,000 for use in public education.

Not unlike the negotiations that produced the 1994 Fish Passage Agreement, the Saco River Salmon Club played a role during the three and a half years of discussions. The agreement compels FPL, government fishery agencies, the Saco River Salmon Club, and the Atlantic Salmon Federation to work cooperatively to restore and manage the Saco River's fish populations. Such an effort is needed for a river used for electrical generation, a variety of recreational activities, and increasing development.

Hatchery Lab News

By Garry Kasten

Maintenance on the hatchery building has continued through the summer and into the fall season. Our work TO DO list has been reduced from over 75 items to about 57 items. Some of the items accomplished have been the building of insect screens for the vents upstairs and downstairs, 22 coolers have been cleaned and prepared for the

next stocking season, the emergency generator is being prepared for operation, burned out bulbs have been replaced, upgrading the drain pipes from the trough room is in progress, the back yard has been cleaned up and mowed and three more PH meters have been secured and calibrated for stream surveys. Ron Lewis and I will continue to try to keep the hatchery volunteer list up to date. If there is a change in your contact information, please let me know.

I have been keeping track of the time that volunteers have spent on hatchery work so if you have not been logging in your time at the desk at the hatchery, please let me know your hours on projects so that I can log the hours in to the Time Log Summary. I have recorded 1726 volunteer hours from January to August. This is important for securing grants and funding for the club.

If you are available to help organize the hatchery and lab in October or November, please call me at 207-283-4003 or e-mail me at gkasten22@msn.com and let me know when you are available. Any help will be appreciated to make the TO DO list a little shorter.

Summer Stream Surveys Find Fry Habitat

By Mark Woodruff

Club volunteers literally took some big strides this past August in our ongoing habitat survey project. Since 2001, volun-

teers have been working closely with state salmon biologists to describe and measure types of habitat in the tributaries of the Saco River. Data from the surveys will be used to determine how many fry should be stocked in a stream and in which locations.

Although August's afternoon thunderstorms cut into the back end of the days, club members Dick Neal and Ron Lewis and biologists Paul Christman, Dan McCaw, and Jason Overlock finished Swan Pond Brook and Stackpole Creek. Six years ago Jack Parker and Bob Monroe had begun surveying Swan Pond Brook downstream from the pond at the Lyman-Dayton town line.

The survey resumed in 2005 and 2006 and reached the confluence with the Saco River in Biddeford this year. Why did it take so long you might ask? Limited time to conduct the survey each year and a meandering streambed slowed the progress, but did not prevent the teams from finishing. On the other hand, Stackpole Creek, relatively shorter than Swan Pond Brook, was completed in two days! While these streams were being completed, Cooks Brook in Hollis was started with the remainder to be done next summer.

The location of these three streams in the lower part of the Saco River watershed make them ideal for smolts: there are fewer dams to negotiate in their downstream migration. However, habitat data from these tributaries reveal limited stretches of the coarse sand, gravel, and cobble streambed in which salmon fry prefer to mature. For next stocking season, we'll know where and how many

fly to release in these three tributaries. Stay tuned as the Club continues this important work in our restoration effort.

Noted Professor's Passing Brings Many New Members

By RJ Mere

Malcolm Harrison, an avid fly fisher, died after a brief illness at Mount Desert Island Hospital. Mr. Harrison was not a member of the SRSC but he fully supported efforts to restore the Atlantic salmon to Maine waters and therefore he would have supported our efforts to do the same in the Saco River watershed.

At the suggestion from Susan Walters of Kennebunkport (a close friend of Mr. Harrison), his son, Simon, has sent in membership applications for 19 family members, friends, and students of Professor Harrison. This unprecedented act of kindness deserves a grateful thank you from our club. Thank you, Mr. Simon Harrison.

New members are:

Eve Harrison and Eric Yeomans, Islesford Maine
Harvey Bunker, Islesford, ME
Paul and Joanne Thormann, Islesford, ME
Curtis Thormann, Islesford, ME
Rebecca Thormann, Islesford, ME
James Thormann, Islesford, ME
Oliver Blank, Islesford, ME
Simon and Stephanie Harrison, Sag Harbor,

NY
Colin Phillip Charles Harrison, Sag Harbor, NY
Catherine Revland, NYC, NY
Michael Stone, Sag Harbor, NY
Darius and Rita Narizzano, North Haven, NY
Orlando Charles Narizzano, North Haven, NY
Courtney Ross, East Hampton, NY
Basil Vlack, Sag Harbor, NY

We welcome all and suggest that you visit our website www.sacosalmon.org to view some of our accomplishments and to take a virtual tour of our state-of-the-art hatchery.

The Ancient Sports of Maine

By Dan Bonville

I have an office in my basement and like most offices it has a telephone and a desk area, file cabinets, and book cases but unlike most offices mine also has storage shelves with lots and lots of outdoor gear stored in big plastic containers. There are fly reels and fly lines, fly rods and fly tying gear. Also, there are tents, sleeping bags, mattresses, stoves, lanterns, waders, and cooking gear. There are belly boats and life jackets, there's boots and hunting clothes – in other words, I have all the gear that a working Maine Guide would normally have to have to outfit his clients or as they're called here in Maine, their 'sports'.

While cleaning out this museum the other

day I came across some truly antique fishing gear and that brought a flood of memories.

Tucked away in the back of the shelf were two four-hook spreaders and three green and white cork bobbers; large ones. Upon the wall in an old rod rack was a newer version of an old 12 foot cane pole, one now made from fiberglass that telescopes from a four foot pole to a 12 foot pole with a tip-top eye on the end. These tools are the instruments of an ancient sport, probably brought to the east coast of the Americas by the early British settlers, the sport of "smeltin" or smelt fishing with a pole and line.

I grew up on the Presumpscot River in the 1940's and 1950's and "smeltin" was not only a personal pastime but quite often it brought our whole extended family as well as our neighbors together on a cool or cold fall evening usually on the weekend if the tides were right.

At low tide my grandmother, my cousin Fred Pierce, and I would be out on the mudflats digging clam worms for bait. Often our neighbors from both sides of the river would be doing the same thing and come nightfall on a rising tide a dozen or more of us would be plunking our butts on a homemade wooden bench or on large boulders or up on the ledge at the river's edge. Lifting our long cane poles with heavy string for line, outfitted with a large bobber and either a two hook or four hood spreader, tipped with pieces of clamworms we would plunk the setups out into the brackish stream's pool and wait for action.

After watching the bobbers move around a little and at the first hint of it being pulled underwater we would again lift the tip of the pole upwards and hopefully swing the hooked smelts (sometimes as many as four at a time) back to our waiting hands and we'd unhook the future suppers (the smelts ran from seven inches to around ten inches or a real big "twelve incher"). Most often we'd go home with a couple of willow creels full but on a great night with lots of men, women, and children fishing and catching we might take home a couple of bushel baskets full.

Times have changed as first the smelts died off in the Presumpscot due to pollution from the mills and later poisoned run off from the Portland City dump.

But, the river has cleaned up, especially now that the Smelt Hill Dam has been removed and once again, stripers, eels, trout, and salmon are plying the lower river. Hopefully, so are the smelts.

This type of fishing is an ancient sport but has never been completely lost in Maine. Fishermen still use their poles and rigs all up and down the coast. Usually quietly, usually at night from October until the incoming streams freeze over and once again in the spring as soon as the ice is gone.

During mid-winter, of course, everybody knows that 'smeltin' is done from ice shacks, using the same baits on the same waters, but though I like ice fishing give me my old pole, bobber, and spreader. A full moon night, a nice little bonfire or

lantern, my family and friends and for sure, all the smelts I can catch.

Summer Trips and Changing Cameras

By Mark Woodruff

As I write, the autumnal equinox has passed. Surprisingly, I already have my pictures of our family trip to Yellowstone printed. Thanks to the purchase of a digital camera, I culled the bad shots, saved the good ones to a CD, and selected the prints to put in an album. Had I relied on my old SLR there would be that last role of film left in the camera that wouldn't get developed until next year. You know what happens. Surprise: summer fishing somehow intermingles with children grimacing on the first day of school, and then modeling Halloween costumes, and then unwrapping Christmas presents! Phew.

The SLR I bought in high school traveled with me one more time to the Moose River. My father and I headed to Steve Berry's camp the



first week of June where we met-up with Nick Sabilia and his brothers and Steve's Uncle Tom. Everyone fished a lot, ate too much, and tried to outdo the other with an



ever more unbelievable story.

This was my father's first trip to the Moose River and only my second. Steve, the fishing was terrific. My father and I fished the Moose River and the East Outlet of Moosehead. It was at East Outlet that my father literally wrestled with a fantastic 18 inch landlocked salmon.

However, the fishing was even more exciting back on the Moose River where we caught several fish at Scotts Pool. This is one of my favorite places to fish because of the nice gravel bar for wading into the river. On our last morning, Tom treated us to a final fishing out of the boat. As the sun warmed the air, we witnessed one of the feeding frenzies I had heard Nick and Tom describe. This was an amazing site

when the river seemed to erupt with land-locked salmon jumping all around our boat.

Two months and a new camera later my wife Christine and I were heading to Yellowstone Park with our kids, Rosanna and Emile, to catch-up with Dan Bonville. The camera's disc was quickly filled with images of bison, elk, geysers, mountain vistas, rodeos, and cutthroat trout. We hiked to Trout Pond where Dan and Rosanna hooked into a beautiful trout.



Later in the trip, Dan and I fished the Snake River in Jackson, Wyoming. I caught a couple of cutthroats there. Not having caught one before, I was amazed at the color of the fish. The river itself was no less spectacular. With its noticeable gradient and swift current, I could hear the cobbles tumbling from the force of the water.

Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons were truly amazing landscapes that we hope to visit again. Hopefully the kids won't get trapped in the new digital camera.



The Saco River Salmon Club Membership Form

Name:

Address:

City: State: Zip:

Phone: ()

Email 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:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Board of Directors | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hatchery Operations | <input type="checkbox"/> Hydropower Issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stocking | <input type="checkbox"/> Legislation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Incubators | <input type="checkbox"/> Events and Programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising | |

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

Submit your short article for "The Salmon Run." General interest stories, recipes for fly tying or foods are welcomed. Send to RJ Mere, 9 York St., Kennebunk, ME, 04043 or email to rjmere@gwi.net