

The Salmon Run

September 2011

A publication of the Saco River Salmon Club



Saco River Salmon Club, P.O. Box 115, Saco, Maine 04072
Visit our website: www.sacosalmon.com

From the President's Corner

By RJ Mere

We're ramping up for another season of rearing Atlantic salmon fry and parr and we are kicking off the season with Lynn Jackson's (On the Corner Café) great cooking and one of our most asked for return speakers, Dan Bonville. Dan will provide a PowerPoint show on Alaska 2010.

This is a banner year for returning Atlantic salmon on the Saco River. As of September 5, 94 adult salmon have been handled by NextEra personnel at Cataract Dam. All were released above the dam and 35 of the adults have made it to the top of the fishway at Skelton Dam, in Dayton. Returns are counted typically to the beginning of November so we may see additions to the already impressive number. Downeast rivers are also marking record or near record returns. Unfortunately, no one knows why the number of returns is up this year or down in previous years. There still remains a lot of research as to what is happening to Atlantic salmon during their lifecycle in the ocean. I recently attended a lecture at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute given by guest speaker Dr. Fred Whoriskey of Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Dr. Whoriskey is the Executive Director of Ocean Tracking Network (OTN) program which tracks all kinds of species including mammals, sea turtles, squid, sharks, sturgeon, eels, cod, tuna, and Atlantic salmon. The acoustic tags relay information to strategically placed receivers strung across various 'choke points' where species must travel. Grey seals feed on salmon and OTN not only attaches acoustic telemetry equipment called a Vemco Mobile Transceiver (VMT) on the seals but also a GPS device which lets researchers know precisely where the seals are and presumably where the Atlantic salmon are. The VMT can pick up signals from the salmon acoustic tags and other seals fitted with VMT. So far, \$82 million is invested by numerous international partners including a \$35 million grant from The Canada Foundation. What does the OTN know about what is happening to Atlantic salmon? One of the interesting numbers for smolts is that they travel about 13 kilometers per day and even though the adults can swim faster, they don't. Another interesting observation is that it appears that the negative impact on salmon populations during their

migration to and from their feeding grounds is not in the first 1,000 kilometers. More receivers must be put in place to get the total picture of the migration and feeding patterns of the Atlantic salmon. We anxiously wait for more details to come from OTN.

Closer to home, the club has one more trip schedule for this year. Please take a look at Club Trips by Dan Bonville later in this issue.

Also in this issue, is our own Ed Fortier with another fly fishing gem; this month it's about small trout brooks. Enjoy!

Come Join Us at our September 21 Club Meeting

By Curt Mildner

The dinner speaker for our first meeting of the fall season is Dan Bonville. Dan's talk and slide show will be on Alaska 2010.

Please join us on Wednesday, September 21, at the Trinity Episcopal Church in Saco. We will begin serving the meal at 6:00 pm and Dan will start his slide show at 7:00. Please RSVP by email to info@sacosalmon.com right now, while you are thinking about it, if you plan to attend so we can order the correct amount of food. We will take meal reservations up to noon on Tuesday.

Editor Note: Directors are encouraged to bring a dessert to each of the club meetings.

Membership update 9/8/11

by Garry Kasten

As of September 8, 2011, we have 178 current club members. Membership numbers are very important for the club when we write grant proposals because it shows support for the club and its objectives. If you have any questions about the status of your membership, please e-mail me at info@sacosalmon.com.

Volunteer update

by Garry Kasten

The Saco River Salmon Club is an all volunteer non-profit organization. As of September 8, 2011, we have 114 volunteers who continue to contribute to the club by volunteering their valuable spare time. Our volunteer time log as of 9/8/11 indicates that volunteers have contributed 1604 hours since the first of the year. Thank you to all our volunteers that have helped keep our club in operation this year.

Saco River Salmon Club Hats for Sale

By Garry Kasten

We have a limited number of quality embroidered hats available for sale to club members and associates. Please also consider purchasing these hats as presents for friends and relatives. In stock are 32 long bill caps (especially good for dealing with the setting

sun) and 55 standard bill caps.

These hats are available on a first come, first serve basis. We will sincerely appreciate a \$23 donation per hat, which includes shipping, payable to the Saco River Salmon Club, PO Box 115, Saco, ME 04072. Or make a donation of \$23 per hat at PayPal on our website www.sacosalmon.com and I will ship your hat to you, or to a person of your choice, by first class mail as soon as I receive your payment. Please specify if you wish a long bill or short bill hat. I will look forward to receiving your orders soon and I will mail them out as soon as possible.

The Little Gems

By Ed Fortier

My skinny, eight year old legs were beginning to tire as dad and I struggled up the steep incline of the gravel pit and it seemed like for every two or three steps we would slide back two, as the loose gravel gave way under our feet. Sweat was pouring off us and the early morning August sun blaring down on us didn't help. Cresting the top we immediately felt the cool breeze flowing up from the dense growth of hemlocks that covered the slopping hillside that lay ahead of us. The coolness and the strong odors of evergreens rejuvenated us as we slowly hiked down the hillside. Reaching the bottom, dad stopped and said, "Let's rig up here." Jointing up my three piece rod, my eyes kept searching for the brook we were supposed to be fishing, but couldn't see any water.

"Where's the brook?" I asked.

"See those rows of tall ferns about forty

feet in front of us? It flows through the middle of them," he responded.

I cautiously approached the tall, green hedge, avoiding any harsh footsteps on the soft, moss covered ground, having learned early on that ground vibrations frighten the trout, and eventually spotted a sparkle of water amongst the thick ferns. I eased the nine foot rod over and let the worm slip gently into what I thought was the brook, but wasn't really convinced. Immediately there was some tugging and after a moment I set the hook and pulled a ten inch brookie up through the ferns. After dressing out the fish, I parted the ferns and was amazed to see a tiny brook about fifteen inches wide and as deep, with overhanging banks which obviously provided security for the trout. This was a unique experience for me because even though I had fished many other brooks during those earlier times, I had never caught a trout in such a small piece of water and unless dad had shown me, I would never have thought it contained trout. But that's why small brooks are special; their unique and they educate the angler.

There's a charm to fishing small brooks, meaning those from two or three feet wide to never much more than eight or ten feet wide and unlike the larger, more open streams, usually are engulfed in dense alders or thick woods. There are the few exceptions where they twist and flow through an open meadow or an abandoned beaver bog, but they all have one thing in common; solitude and peacefulness. It is an enclosed, quiet environment where nature is observed in more minute detail, and only the sounds of a bird, or the wind whisper-

ing through the trees and the occasional gurgle of water dropping over a deadfall, disturbs the ever present silence. And yet these small waterways can provide excellent fishing for average sized trout, with some containing lunker size fish, but the angler shouldn't assume that because the water is small and bait fishing is the only method applicable, that the fishing is easy; far from it.

It takes years to become proficient at the art of fishing small brooks, but there's no better place for the novice to learn the basics, as well as the habits of the trout, and if he applies himself, he learns early on that he has to work on improving his discipline, patience, and perseverance; three requisites which later serve him in becoming a more successful fly fisherman. As important as approach and presentation is to fly fishing, it is no less critical on the small brook, but unlike the larger river, the consequences of your mistakes can be obvious. A heavy footfall, the shaking of the brush too close to the water, or dropping the bait too harshly, and you may see the wake of the trout darting upstream, emphasizing your error, something you would rarely experience on a large river.

As that tiny brook taught me, a trout doesn't need much water to sustain itself, so the angler knowing this, fishes all the water, rather than just the good looking holds, just like he should when fly fishing the bigger waters. Anyone that practices this is in for many surprises.

The ability to change techniques and adapt to the moods of the trout is an asset for the bait fisherman as well as the fly angler. Many times dad and I would find the trout taking aggressively one day, and then the following day have to slip the worm under a deadfall or some other secure hold for a trout, and place the rod down, and wait ten to fifteen minutes before the line would twitch ever so lightly, taking forever to finally take the bait. We never tried to figure out why this was, but instead tried to find the mood of the fish early on in the day, and then adapt our technique to them.

One of the great advantages with small brooks is the ability to crawl up to the edge of a high bank and just observe the trout and see how they react to sunlight and other stimuli. Having done this many times, I can tell you it is a mesmerizing experience as well as educational, especially if you're lucky enough to come across a large trout.

Not all brooks will hold trout much over twelve inches, but those that do usually have common characteristics. They are either the headwaters of larger trout streams, or are feeders that eventually lead into a larger body of water that is inhabited by trout, and there were no obstructions blocking their path upstream. If brown trout inhabit the nearby waters, the chance for larger fish substantially increases due to their ability to survive, and their longer lifespan; allowing more time for growth. Through the years many brook trout over sixteen inches have been taken, but never near the number of browns, and in both cases, all were located in the difficult to reach parts of the brook.

Access is the determining factor in the quality of fishing a brook produces. Simply put, easy access destroys. We have all seen it more times than we care to talk about, but it is a fact; the more difficult the access, the better the fishing. I guess that's why dad never

spent too much time fishing near the roads, but rather had me hiking my little legs off until I was exhausted.

I haven't fished the small brooks much since those earlier days, but do make it a point of spending one day each season paying homage to one of these little waters. It is not a day of deciding what fly pattern to use, or trying to figure what the trout are taking, but rather a nostalgic trip back to simpler times, when as I was fishing, I would dream of fishing those far away waters I read about in Ray Bergman's "Trout" and other publications of the day. And now here on the brook again, after years of fly fishing many of those written about streams and others throughout different parts of the country, I'm back where it all began; it's a humbling experience.

Club Trips for 2011

By Dan Bonville

There's one more Club trip scheduled for this year. Please call Dan, 207-625-7693:

October 1-8, Cast and Blast for salmon and partridge: Steve Berry's camp on the Moose River.

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

Application for membership
Saco River Salmon Club
"Dedicated to fisheries restoration"

Date: _____

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Where did you hear about us? _____

Individual Family Student Senior Life Business
\$20 \$30 \$10 \$10 \$300 \$125

Dues: _____

Hatchery Fund Contribution: _____

Total Amount Enclosed: _____

I WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO HELP IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS :

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> BOARD OF DIRECTORS | <input type="checkbox"/> NEWS LETTER |
| <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 & PROGRAMS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FUNDRAISING | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER |

Please add my name to the volunteer e-mail list so that I receive information regarding volunteer opportunities at the hatchery.

Remarks: _____

Mail to: SACO RIVER SALMON CLUB, P.O. BOX 115, SACO, ME 04072

Phone: (207) 282-6985

Website: www.sacosalmon.com

Email at: info@sacosalmon.com