

Valley Angler
Not Every Day Is A Good Day to Go Fishing
by Bill Thompson

It started with a rumor that someone got from a friend, which had heard it from another friend. The word had been passed from one angler to another, in hushed tones, that one of the “Valley’s” trout ponds was fishing well. Eventually the word came to the shop, as these things often do, and the decision was made that it might be worth the effort to give the pond a try.

I use the word effort because it does involve some work to get into this place. It isn’t because the walk in is all that far, although the trail is just about always muddy and littered with slippery rocks. The real problem is that the only really good way to fish this pond is from some kind of boat. Although there is a good hiking trail all the way around the pond the banks are so grown up with trees and brush that it is almost impossible to cast from the shore. A guy armed with a spinning rod has a small advantage over a fly rodder, but even he would have a tough time of it. This is perhaps one reason that this pond has such a good reputation, not many are willing to lug a canoe into this place.

The answer is, of course, to use a float tube of some kind. When you look at one of these things you have the impression that, “Hey that thing can’t be that hard to carry” and of course if you are buying one the sales person will no doubt go along with you and perpetuate the myth. Truth be known they are rather awkward to lug especially over a mountain hiking trail. Now, I know that they do make various kinds of straps, sold as an add on, that are designed to make the process easier. What they fail to tell you is that in addition to the float tube you also need to carry various other essentials. First and foremost are the flippers need to propel the thing and add to that your waders and boots plus all of the normal stuff like your rod, reel and a minimum of two thousand flies.

There are several different kinds of tubes. The round doughnut shaped ones are the most well known and perhaps the lightest and easiest to carry. The U Boat style is easier to get into and is somewhat easier to flipper through the water. There are also some boats that rest on two inflated pontoons. As you might expect they have all the advantages of the “U” style and offer more comfort as the angler is able to sit higher. The larger pontoon style are, however the most difficult to carry due to their bulk.

I own both the old fashioned round tube and one of the pontoon type boats. The pontoon boat is a joy to fish from. In fact it is so comfortable it is a lot like fishing from your easy chair. The down side is when it comes to transporting it through the woods. It is a lot like trying to carry your easy chair.

Because both Janet and I were to make the trip both boats would be required. Janet would take the pontoon boat and I would stuff myself into the tube. Neither of the boats have shoulder straps so one must sling them over the shoulder in order to carry them. With our flippers tied to the boats and encumbered with a ton of other gear we looked a lot like a couple of loaded gypsy wagons as we headed into the woods.

Bear in mind that once you are loaded up like this it is impossible to swat mosquitoes. As a word of caution be sure to apply a liberal amount of your favorite bug dope before setting forth.

It really isn't that far of a walk to get into this pond, but the added load and trail condition can make seem like it is a lot farther than it really is. Walking through the woods with a float tube over your shoulder is akin to dressing up in one of those inflatable sumo wrestling suits. You kinda bounce off of various things, like trees and rocks, as you trudge along.

Once we had arrived at the launching spot we quickly geared up. With rods rigged and flippers securely attached to our boots we cast off. As mentioned it is easier to get into the pontoon style boats, as a result Janet was half way across the pond before I was able to get into the tube.

Getting into a round float tube with a pair of flippers on is pretty funny thing to everyone except the guy trying get in. The old silent film era comics would have had a ball with this had float tubes been available in their day. I made a few graceful passes before I finally got in. Somehow in the act of trying to get in I forgot to secure the strap that attaches the seat to the tube. Failing to do this is a little bit like forgetting to secure the seatbelt on a carnival ride that takes you upside down. I had to flipper back and buckle up before continuing.

The night never really got better as it went along. As soon as we had arrived in the parking lot it started to drizzle. The pond itself was covered in fog; at one point we couldn't even see each other. When the shore line disappeared it started to get a little disconcerting. Janet said she took a bearing with her compass; a bearing to where I am not sure.

The fog did lift some, but the drizzle never stopped and the fish had apparently taken the evening off. I did see one fish rise and managed to get a cast or two to him. He struck when I was trying to get an errant loop of fly line clear of my stripping guide. It didn't take us to long before we decided to call in a night.

We found the launching spot, despite the fog, and de-geared. Back at the truck we stripped off our waders and boots. After managing to slip a little water while in the tube and perspiring like a steel worker tending the blast furnace, it may have been simpler to have fished necked. Had it not have been for the great number of leaches that inhabit this pond I might have. Once the rods were stowed and tubes lashed back down in the back of the truck we were off.

Not every fishing trip is a joy. The cliché is, "Even a bad day fishing beats a good day at work", and most of time that's true, but there are days when it might have been better to have gone golfing. OK, just kidding. To prove my point the same day we had our adventure, a guy came in the shop with his favorite Winston rod. He had just broken it while getting it out of his truck. Janet took pity on him and offered to send it back to the company for him and gave him a loaner to finish out the day. Winston owners stick together. Still dressed in his waders he got back in his truck to return to the river. The truck refused to start. The one thing you don't want is to break down in North Conway on a Sunday afternoon. After an hour or so of calling every garage in town he gave up and went back to fishing. I am not sure how it all worked out, but the loaner rod was at the shop when we came in Monday morning. Maybe a little of his karma rubbed off on us or it just might have been one of those days when the fishing gods were out of sort.

See you on the river.