

Valley Angler On the Big Lake by Bill Thompson

Things are really starting to happen now. With the past few days of warm weather spring has finally happened here in the “Valley”. The trees have sprouted their new leaves, skunk cabbage has started to show up along side brooks and even a few fiddleheads have started to show. All of this adds up to some of the best fishing of the year. Now if we can have a few black flies show up we will be in clover.

The best fishing is still to the south of us, but in a very short time things will pick up in our neck of the woods. Last Sunday, good friend, Nate Hill stopped by the shop with tales of a fantastic day of fishing he had the day before. He had started his day on the Merrymeeting River with a friend from Massachusetts and then proceeded up along the shore of Winnepesaukee to fish some of the small tributaries that enter the big lake.

He told of me he had caught several large salmon in the river after which he caught several large White Perch in the bay from the docks. The next stop was at a small stream that flows into Winni on the western shore. Here he landed some nice rainbows.

That evening I begged Janet for a day so that I could follow up on Nate’s hot tip. Since she had a day off the day before, she graciously allowed me to take Monday off.

Early the next morning I loaded my gear into the truck and set off to retrace Nate’s footsteps. This will teach him to give out information so freely

The first stop was the Merrymeeting. The parking lot was empty when I arrived which is always an ominous sign. You can make bet that if a popular spot like the Merrymeeting is not being fished by others you have either arrived too early or too late. I think in this case it was too late. On the other hand it could have been my lack of fishing skills; needless to say I caught nothing. I fished about an hour or so without a hit. Two other anglers arrived and both concurred that I should have been there yesterday.

I decided to move on. The next stop was the docks in Alton. There was a pretty stiff breeze blowing into the bay and the two fellows fishing from the dock didn’t seem to be having much action, so I continued on up the west side of the lake.

Following Nate’s directions I soon found the small brook that he had spoke of. There was nobody there either, but I took this as a good sign. A couple was walking their dogs and a road crew was enjoying their lunch. I decided to explore a little before gearing up. I walked down the stream to the point where it emptied into the lake. I didn’t see much until I came to a large deep pool. After quite a while of peering into the depths of the pool I spotted what looked a couple of big salmon, although they could just as easily have been suckers. In the spring the suckers come into these small streams to spawn and the salmon and rainbow trout follow them to feast upon the eggs.

I raced back to the truck and immediately strung up my rod. With a small bag of flies and essential tools, (clippers, forceps and extra tippet material) and the rigged rod I raced back to the pool.

I tied on a number 8 Gartside Bead Head Olive Sparrow and began to cast to where I had seen the fish. The Sparrow is one of those flies that looks like a lot different things. I had been told that small green leech patterns were working well. Since I had left the only small green leech pattern I had in a tree back on the Merrymeeting I went with the Sparrow. Apparently it was close enough because after a few casts I hooded up. At first I thought it might be a sucker because of the light strike and lack of fight but as soon as I got the fish near the bank it became all to clear that this was no sucker. Suddenly there was an explosion and a very big rainbow leaped clear of the water.

The big fellow took off like a shot and I had to scramble to get the line up on the reel. The action attracted the attention of a family that was walking by and they came over to watch as I landed the trout. I guess they were not all that impressed as soon as I released him they walked away without comment. I don't know about them, but my heart was still racing.

A few minutes later I landed the twin of the first trout. This time there was no audience except for a couple of loons who were just off the beach calling to each other. After releasing the trout I took a moment to watch the loons and to enjoy the view of the lake. After a few moments of reflection I headed back to the truck. Two fish like that are more than enough to make your day; anything more would have just been pure greed.

Last Saturday's Saco Valley Angler's Auction was by all accounts a great success. We were able to raise some needed capital for our annual stocking and projects and it would seem everyone had a good time. I would like to thank a few people publicly that help make this event a success each year. Dick Stewart has always been one of the club's biggest supporters and every year gives generously from his personal collection of gear. Bill Battles and the folks at Fly Fish America have also for years been one of our chief benefactors. Special thanks to Bill Brett, Neil Boyle, Dave Baker and Janet Thompson who assisted with the auction. Our thanks also to the following individuals and local merchants: Rob Upton, Bill Franke-One-Pfoot, Rick Gerber-Androscoggin Guide Service, The Orvis Outlet, Framed Art Outlet, North Country Angler, Synergy, Dr. Slick, John Sullivan, Peter Marques-Tent smiths, Bagels Plus, Ragged Mountain, Gerry Crow-New Hampshire Rivers Guide Service, Jay Van Dyne-Fine Carpentry, Glen Builders, and Cathy Noonan-Guide Service. A special thank-you to Manny Moniz who not only gave a wonderful sailing trip for auction, but was instrumental in procuring our new club T-shirts. Again thanks to everyone who helped with this event.

Should anyone be interested in purchasing a Saco Valley Anglers T-shirt they are a limited number left for sale at the North Country Angler. The sale of just one of these great shirts will pay for one more large brown trout for the Saco River.

See you on the river.