

Valley Angler  
The “Andro” Part Two  
by Bill Thompson

At last all that rain is paying off. Yes, there was a silver lining after all. The water levels, for the moment, in all of the local streams are just about perfect. With any luck and they should stay that way for some time. Back at the beginning of April I was beginning to think it was going to be a very dry year. Had I only known what we were in for. Unless you live in an area struck by drought, setting records for the most rainfall in a single month is not a good thing. The unusual wet weather has not been particularly good for those of us in the outdoor business. Fishing is not unlike football in that it is a game that is played in all kinds of weather. For the most part foul weather can mean good fishing. However, high water plays havoc with the fishing. The last two months have offered us far too few good days to fish. In the last few days there has been a dramatic change. The sun has been seen for several days in a row, the rivers have returned to reasonable flows and all is right with the world.

This past Friday I made a return trip up to the Androscoggin with good friend, John Buckley of Littleton. Our intention was to fish the lower section from North Road in Shelburne, where the Appalachian Trail crosses the Androscoggin River down river to where North Road crosses the river again and enters the small town of Shelburne. We had intended to start at the dam; however high water forced us to reconsider. A short ways down North Road and you come to a small brook that crosses the road. There is just enough room to get your truck off the road and by following the brook down you will gain access to the river. This section is a series of small islands or braids and for my money is one of the better sections on the river. John managed to take a couple of small ones from an eddy; however the ever increasing flow of the river forced us to retreat.

Further down North Road you will see two white gates on either side of the road with turn styles in them. I had been told that by taking the one on the left hand side of the road the trail would lead to a large tree where there was a sign or marker that told of an early settler of the region who had met his demise at the hands of unfriendly Indians. The trail follows a small stream that we naturally assumed ran into the main river. We found what we thought to be the right tree, but there was no marker. The stream took off to the right and the trail ended at a cleared area where power lines ran through. We could not find where the trail resumed on the other side of the clearing. On the way back to the truck we stopped to fish a likely looking spot on the stream, but came up empty. We decided to head north and fish the river from Errol down. In last weeks column I mentioned that my favorite lunch stop in Milan had closed. For years I had always wanted to stop at a place a few miles north of Milan called Ursula’s Snack Bar. Ursula’s is not a pretentious place, in fact it is just an old fashioned dog cart, but it is one of the best dog carts I have come across. As one might guess Ursula is of German decent and she serves one of the best bratwursts in the North Country. She also sells a real honest German wiener. John and I have both spent some time living in Germany so we know what we are talking about.

Ursula is a delightful lady and her establishment comes with my highest recommendation. She also sells old fashioned American hamburgers and hotdogs should you not be into German cooking. I have found a new favorite lunch stop.

John and I dubbed around and stopped at several spots along the river. Neither one of us seemed to driven to find big fish. The Alders were almost gone. Where only a few days before they were found in such abundance that they blocked out the sun; alright I tend to exaggerate a little sometimes. This day only a few remained.

Our last stop of the day was at the Pontook Dam. There was already a man and his wife fishing directly below the dam so we waded in near a large eddy. The man below the dam yelled down to us and held up his net in order to show us a large brown that he had just caught. John and I began casting to the edge of the eddy. Shortly there after we began to catch trout. A few small salmon to begin with and than some much larger brown trout. In the hour or two that we fished we each caught several nice browns in the fifteen to eighteen inch category. All and all a nice end to a great day.

See you on the river.