

Valley Angler

The Hazards' of River Travel

By Bill Thompson

Considering that it is already the end of July it is amazing how well the local rivers are still fishing. In most years, by now the Saco should be a mere trickle in some places and warm as toast. Another week of rain and afternoon thunder storms may be a deterrent to some, but to the angling community it is heaven sent. Plenty of water, low temperatures and less swimmers and kayaks are the kind of conditions we pray for.

Which does bring up an interesting point; the woman who received all the press a week or so ago, the one who had the near death experience in the Saco while kayaking, from an anglers point of view makes an interesting case. In case you have forgotten she wished to have the river posted as a dangerous hazard to public safety. After thinking it over I am inclined to agree with her. I am convinced that we should do every thing in our power to discourage the use of the river by canoeists, kayakers, tubers and swimmers. Once we have we have eliminated these intruders the river will be a safe place for us fishermen once again.

Needless to say I have my tongue firmly planted in my cheek when I say this. However, in all seriousness the amount of traffic, of all kinds, increases every year on the river. Considering the inaptitude of most of these people with watercraft and with the amount of alcohol consumed it is a wonder we do not have more accidents. Each year I find more litter, most of it beer cans, despite the best efforts of organized clean ups. While most of these folks are happy campers and are just having a good time I have on occasion run into some groups, no doubt fueled by booze, that are anything less than a joy to meet while fishing or paddling.

A couple of things about the Sun's article struck me as rather ironic. Why would anyone renting a boat from a company that advertises itself as an "Extreme" sports center and not be tipped off to the fact that there might be an inherent danger the sport? The photos that accompanied the article on the front page also raises the question; what are the odds that on the very day the photographer goes down to the river, to take pictures to accompany his article, he is able to encounter, right before his lens, another near miss? If nothing else the article did indeed provide fodder for a lot of conversations for the next few days.

My own fishing the past week has been dedicated to following up more dead ends. Last week Rick Davidson and I got together for our annual fishing day. We decided to attempt to duplicate last years very successful day by fishing another pond. This time I picked a place farther north of the Valley. I had been told that you could drive into the pond, and you can, just not the way we tried to get in. It looked so simple on the map and even my GPS made it look easy. The road in proved to be gated so we decided to walk in. Our first instinct proved to be right, but is often the case we took the wrong trail. After back tracking we did manage to find the right trail.

Bogged down fishing gear and float tubes on a hot summer's day we were greatly relieved to finally come upon the pond. After four hours of futile fishing we decided to call it a day and head home. The walk out was much easier as it often is when you know where you are going.

All and all a great day just the same, it is always fun to fish with a good friend no matter what the fishing is like. We did enjoy a good burger and beer at the Red Fox, in Jackson, on the way home.

All the real fishing this week is being enjoyed by Janet. Last Friday she left for Newfoundland for seven days of salmon fishing; after this there will be keeping her home. This is payback for my trip to Labrador a few years ago. When she gets back I will let her fill you in on all the details.

See you on the river.