

Valley Angler Losing Time on the Androscoggin by Bill Thompson

The fishing in our own “Valley” has been pretty good the past few weeks and most anglers would be content to fish right in their own back yard. However, if Big Brother Bob Emery taught us anything the grass is always greener in the other fellow’s back yard. Disregarding Bob's sage advice I took off my dark glasses and headed north last Sunday to spend the day on the Androscoggin.

By the way if you don't have a clue as to who Bob Emery was you didn't grow up in the 50's and you probably are not from the Boston area. Bob had a kid's show on Channel 4 and his theme song was “The Grass is Always Greener”. He also used to have a segment where he toasted the president with a glass of milk while “Hail to the Chief” played in the background. Eisenhower was president back then and it was a lot simpler time. It was a time when people had more respect for the president. Given the state of affairs today it might be nice to reflect on that era, but I digress.

I am not sure what it is about the Androscoggin but it is a place that I love to fish. The Thirteen Mile Woods section, between Errol and Milan, is my favorite section. I had to make a trip to the dump in the morning so I got a latter start than usual and did not arrive in Errol until around noon. I made a quick stop at the Errol Country Store and picked up a sub. Drove up to the road a ways and parked by the river to enjoy my sandwich while I scanned the river for rising fish. There was one or two working, but not what I had hoped for. When I left North Conway it was a beautiful sunny day but by the time I arrived in Errol the sky was dark and spitting rain. It was beginning to look like I had picked the wrong place at the wrong time. I decided it was too late to head back home so I got my waders on and rigged up my fly rod.

Turns out there were fish and even though it remained dark and cloudy the rain failed to develop into anything serious. I picked up a few fish on caddis imitations and then rigged up a “hopper dropper” combination. The first drift produced a huge strike and for a moment or two I had on what appeared to be a good sized fish. This started a trend that would continue through the day.

I moved on down river and broke out the two handed rod. I have been working on improving my spey casting for some time and my first cast was by far my best and it brought another big strike. Not being used to the two handed rod I caught the back grip in my vest while trying to set the hook. Needless to say this resulted in another lost fish. I did make up for it and landed two others before moving once again down river.

The last two times that I have fished this stretch of river I have used stone fly patterns. Most anglers look at these large flies and think that they are too big for trout to take. Every angler should take some time to seine the rivers they fish. Even small streams like the East Branch or the Rocky Branch are home to some huge stone flies. It is not uncommon to find these nymphs over 40 mm or longer. On this day the two rainbows that I caught could not resist the tempting meal of my large stone fly.

I arrived at the Pontook Dam around three in the afternoon and was delighted to find that a good flow was coming over the boards. I was also absolutely amazed that there were no other fishermen in sight. For the next few hours, with the exception of a tourist who was looking for moose, I had the

place to myself. Best of all the fishing could not have been better. I caught several nice rainbows, a couple nice browns and one brook trout. For some unknown reason I never did catch a salmon, keeping me from achieving an “Androscoggin Grand Slam”.

By this time I noticed that my shoulder was beginning to feel a little sore and that I was losing what light there had been. I glanced at my watch and noted that it was only five, too early to head home, but I had had a good time and it was time to call it a day.

Back on the road I turned on the truck's radio. The clock on the radio said that it was seven. I checked my watch again and the watch insisted that it was still five. I reasoned that it had taken a few minutes of my time to derig the rod and get my waders off, but certainly not two hours. The watch, of course, had stopped working. It is amazing how fast time goes by when you're fishing and a whole lot quicker when you are catching fish.

See you on the river.