



Newsletter: 2019/2000

Editorial: P.J.Wall

I grew up beside the Little Salmonier river on Newfoundland and Labrador's Avalon Peninsula where I was introduced to salmon fishing at a young age. It wasn't considered a "sport" in my family at that time, but a means to an end—food for the table. Those were hard times. "Sports," as we called them back then, were people with money, at least more than we had, but when one or more of those strangers came calling at our doorstep on summer evenings looking for a guide, my mother was quick to send me on my way with them. They paid me, not much, but everything helped and was another means to an end. Occasionally I got a little tip that was never mentioned when I got home. Frequently, the strangers were United States naval personnel from the nearby Argentia naval base. Most times "my" sports, yes, there was competition from my school chums, were successful but if they weren't the topic of conversation on our way home would usually involve remarks about all the nets in the estuary—the bay we called it. I fiercely defended those nets because, back then, they too were a means to an end. What I didn't tell them was, that when catches were high, quite often the smaller salmon, now called

grilse, were considered a nuisance by the net owners, and went as fertilizer on gardens. Another means to an end. One that I, even at that young age, didn't think was right but I shut up because I, too, had to eat

In my early school years, yes, I did go for a while, there was never a whisper about salmon conservation. Cod was king then, yet the word conservation was seldom, if ever, pronounced in a sentence where either of those critical resources were mentioned. That, despite widespread remarks by inshore fishers that both were scarce, yet politicians of the day were paying lip service to their complaints and allowing wholesale depletion of stocks on the high seas. My experiences were on the Rock, but these scenarios played out everywhere in the Atlantic provinces and the Eastern United States. Shame, on our education system, our regulatory system and, yes, our greed. We have paid a high price for those means to ends.

Now, we can only reminisce, at least I do, about what once was and attempt to improve on a cosmos where change is the only consistent and lasting phenomenon. Our attempts, and those of our

compatriots, to improve conditions and, hence, the numbers of Atlantic salmon in our rivers, are commendable. Yet, daily, we are reminded of its continued decline due to the practices of our past and the new predatory, regulatory and climate challenges of today.

Several years ago we were informed in a Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) document titled: "Atlantic Salmon" Eastern Cape Breton, that our salmon population was endangered, that we could make a difference; our comments and suggestions were welcomed. WSU responded to that document and, subsequently, made attempts to cooperate with the DFO in their supposed recovery plan which, to today, is not well defined anywhere. Just like the plan announced by politicians, some years ago, to bring the numbers of Atlantic Salmon back to 1975 levels.

Bringing Atlantic salmon back is a monumental endeavour but, unless we have a plan and direction by those whose

responsibility it is to seriously follow through, we are going in the direction of the Great Auk. Numerous salmon organizations are to be commended highly for continuing to bust their butts to help bring *Salmo salar* back, they are the ones with the plans, however, unless we can get buy in from the public-at-large to help convince governments to make strategic changes, their efforts, including those of WSU, will be akin to riding a bicycle up hill on icy pavement.

Apart from this rant, the pages that follow contain articles by Chuck Thompson and Don MacLean as well as letters from organizations grateful for donations made to them by WSU in the past year.



Waiting for that tug.

Some 2019 AGM News:

At our annual meeting in 2019, If everyone can remember that far back, you'll recall our guest Speaker, Allan Ledgerwood, outlined for us what we all already know about dwindling Atlantic salmon stocks. What he did tell us that we didn't know was there's a movement afoot to start a new salmon organization. One he felt could be more effective in lobbying government and other NGOs to make changes to how the

resource can be managed and then utilized. The plan was to have a meeting in Prince Edward Island, where Mr. Ledgerwood lives, to bring together those interested organizations including WSU. Unfortunately, Covid-19 got in the way and the meeting had to be abandoned. In the last e-mail communication with Mr. Ledgerwood, he suggested a Zoom meeting which, to now has not taken place due to circumstances beyond his control. We'll keep you up to date as to future happenings on that front.

Port Morien Wildlife Assoc:

The Port Morien Wildlife Association (PWWA) was the recipient of a generous donation of \$2500 from WSU in the past year. The group utilized the donation to purchase new equipment for their Fish Friends program. Jeff McNeil, president of PWWA, was very grateful for the donation and said it will enable them to continue their program of helping educate children.

His letter follows:

To the Executive and members of WSU

Please accept this letter on behalf of the executive and members of Port Morien Wildlife Association who wish to thank you for supplying us with a new refrigeration chiller unit and aquarium, necessary accessories needed to continue with our Fish Friends program. Your support is greatly appreciated by our organization and the many youth that will learn from this valuable resource. Your generosity will enable us to reach another school with this life-learning program that we take great pleasure in delivering. The feedback we receive from the children and schools is very gratifying. Many children who take part in these programs eventually make their way to our Fishing Derbies and, eventually, on to a life-long enjoyment of Sport Fishing.

Jeff Mc Neil

President Port Morien Wildlife Association



Tank accessories



Tank on location



Jeff McNeil assembling tank.

From the Margaree Salmon Museum by: Dr. Delphin Muise, Chairman of the Board:

The **Margaree Salmon Museum** faces the Covid-19 pandemic determined to use the opportunity to improve its offerings to the public. Our 2020 season might be truncated to a shorter season for parts of August and September. Keep tuned to our Facebook page at **Margaree Salmon Museum** for updates.

With financial support from **Wild Salmon Unlimited**, we are undertaking very necessary changes to the displays. The rod room will be the focal point of the first effort, with replacement of the very popular fish tank which, with assistance from the Margaree Fish Hatchery, we hope to have stocked for the 2021 season. We are also planning a new audio-visual presentation on new screens in the area.

These developments would be impossible without the help of the \$8000 donation from WSU. We will be able to deliver more programming for the Margaree community, especially school aged audiences. Once the essential improvements are in place, we hope to be using the area for other public purposes as well.

WSU funds will also support the beginning of an oral-history project designed to capture the voices and experiences of longer-term members of the Margaree River salmon-fishing community. New protocols will allow for recording the interviews remotely. We hope to use them in some of our programming on Facebook

and in the museum itself, as well as creating an archive of the memories of the fishery.

So, thank you very much for all your help to equip us for a new future as we move toward modernizing this museum of treasures.



Curators Bernardine & Sean



President Muise & Secretary E. Coady



WSU check presentation to MSM

to this writing, there is nothing new to report.

More news from the Board:

Several attempts have been made by Board members to have some work done on, Beaver Brook, a tributary of the Middle River. Frist Nations have been contacted but to date things are still evolving.

The International Year of the Salmon event at the hatchery was a success despite inclement weather. WSU was represented and provided hard-copy material for distribution.

It was reported by Jim Morrow, at our January 2020 meeting, that Big Spruce had donated some 5 thousand dollars to UINR for use in work to be done on the Middle River.

Darryl Murrant, from NS. Fisheries and Aquaculture, attended our March 2020 Board meeting to present two items: the first was a request to WSU to fund some restoration work on a river in Colchester County and the other was to fund a Fish Friends initiative with the Port Morien Wildlife Association (PMWA). Both were approved. Darrell will keep WSU informed of the Colchester initiative. The PMWA initiative was completed shortly after its approval and a thank you letter from its president, Jeff McNeil, was included earlier in this newsletter.

Later in the Spring, Darryl informed us that the Colchester initiative was on-going with The North Colchester River Restoration Association (NCRRA). Bob Shortt had also contacted people at that organization, and,



Planning for WSU



WSU is born



At Down East Salmon Federation



A visit with the ISAA



Behind the camp

Dancing together:

By

Chuck Thompson

The concept of volunteer groups and government working together is not new, but it still struggles for acceptance on both sides. In my 32 years with DFO, I have seen organizations come and go; some having achieved success and some, maybe most, not. Part of the problem can be found in the expectations of the NGOs after they join the mainstream. Government asks that interested parties form organizations to provide a collective voice. I can tell you from personal experience, individual letters die on the table—almost without fail. What gets lost is they (we) are asked for input in developing policy. Asked is the key word here, it does not imply acceptance. Fisheries management is the sole purvey of the federal government under the terms of confederation and will not be delegated. Even sport fishing licenses are issued by various provinces at the invitation of the federal department.

The federal government is guilty of creating situations that cannot succeed. I think of earlier days when sport and commercial salmon fishermen, and sometimes First Nations, all sitting around the same table each arguing for their share of the pie. The same scenario played out with the commercial fishing interest; everyone trying to get as much as they could; they were elected by their members and had no mandate to step back. I cannot count the number of heated meetings that I attended. Most were knockdown, drag out affairs. How could they be otherwise, especially if there were cuts in the air?

At most of the sport meetings, be it ZMAC, RFAC, etc., a senior bureaucrat presents an overview of what is proposed, and debate ensues among the attendees. What these meetings really are, is a presentation of what is to happen this year. They are not really consensus building—except in name only. How many things ever change following the meeting?

The harsh reality is you are damned if you do and damned if you don't. In our case, DFO holds the dance card and we must get in step. We (angling groups) can present as reasoned an argument as we can muster but they are under no obligation to follow suit. Any change must meet the litmus test of safe conservation and take in the primacy position of First Nation's interests as stated in recent court cases. These are the steps and they cannot be skipped.

But of course, you all know this by now. The question is, and shall remain, how can we get our voices heard and with influence? I have said it time and again, there is no

sense at railing at DFO or Greg Stevens. On the East coast the policies are handed down and followed by senior bureaucrats. The continual argument that the Gulf is more lenient is not accurate in my opinion. They have rivers that meet the DFO requirement for various measures that Maritimes Region rivers do not. Even so, if this is the belief of WSU, let's get together with DFO-Gulf and see what rivers they would allow enhancement using our resources.

One of the major issues is there are not many Clubs that we can sponsor. The group in Mira Road is going to work on a proposal for our consideration. That might be the kick start we are so desperately seeking.

WSU was formed as a funding organization looking to provide \$\$ to active clubs. The original hope was to stock rivers using different clubs with seed money from WSU. So far that has not happened. It is only going to happen if we beat the bushes for clubs that are still alive and well and involved in more than digger-log enhancement. Have we done this? I think not. We need to.

In summary, I have no new or great insight on how to become more relevant. We need to catalogue the clubs that are still alive, invite them to a sit down, or a Zoom meeting, and see what they are up to and how we can help. It looks like most of these organizations are tied into Adopt-a Stream and, how many digger logs are needed?

As well, we need to review the present DFO wild salmon policy and see how we might tap into this area to become involved. Despite the optics, things are changing, and we need to be aware of what DFO is

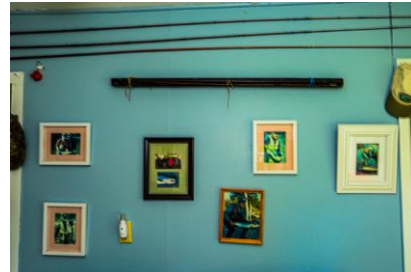
currently in agreement with. We have no other choice.



Fast friends



Backyard Retreat



Wall of honour

News from the Inverness South Angler's Association (ISAA)

The Inverness South Anglers Association (ISAA) is a non-profit organization that was established in 2004 at the behest of the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans. ISAA was created to provide environmental stewardship services for watersheds in four contiguous communities in Southern Inverness County. ISSA's efforts

are focussed on the Broad Cove River Watershed, Inverness; the Mabou Harbour Watershed, Mabou; the Captain's River Watershed, Port Hood; and the Graham's River Watershed, Judique. ISAA's work focuses on integrating stream habitat restoration, fish stock enhancement and conservation, and the promotion of sustainable recreational fisheries.

Over the past 15 years, ISAA has built approximately 400 structures among 13 different primary and tributary watercourses within Southern Inverness County. The streams are restored by installing a variation of structures such as digger logs, deflectors, rock sills, channel blockers, bank stabilization by hand rock or armour stone, and trees are sometimes planted among the



Sandy Rankin, and Michael Campbell cutting a digger log for MacLeod's Brook.

riparian zone of the rivers to stabilize banks, provide tree cover and decrease/filter sediment deposits! The restoration work builds a healthy habitat for all fish species by creating spawning grounds, holding refuge, deep pools and meandering patterns, tree cover, and migratory access. Since 2004, ISAA has successfully restored over 244 kilometres of stream habitat within an area of 501.5 square kilometres of four watersheds combined. In 2019 ISAA accomplished a great body of work that was funded by Wild Salmon Unlimited, Parks Canada, NSLC Adopt A Stream Program and the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation. With a crew size of 6, the 18-week season was started by carrying out winter damage assessments and remediation on all the

past structures built within the four main watersheds. Assessments and maintenance were performed on a total of 312 structures within 6 weeks. After completion, the focus was then moved onto a new habitat restoration project in MacLeod's Settlement which took up the last 12 weeks of the season. Starting on MacLeod's Brook, a tributary of the



A map showing the four contiguous watersheds ISAA works on!



Winter Damage Assessment and Remediation on the Broad Cove River

Southwest Mabou River, 37 structures were installed consisting of digger logs, rock sills, digger logs with deflectors, brush bundles, and a deflector. On that watercourse alone, ISAA restored a length of 2,812.5 meters of stream habitat and an area of 22,500 squared meters. After that project was completed, the crew moved onto the Southwest Mabou River proper where 8 structures were installed, mostly consisting of large tree deflectors. The total length restored on the Southwest Mabou River

was 800 meters of stream habitat with an area of 12,800 square meters.

Last year Federal funding became contingent upon the establishment of long-term protocols for monitoring the effectiveness of river work projects. ISSA's annual survey and maintenance program ensures the functionality of all structures previously built and the habitat that they have restored. ISSA's Coordinator, Kailey Mortensen, has received certification to perform and supervise electrofishing operations to monitor fish stocks. As well, under the guidance of Parks Canada a regime of temperature monitoring was established.

The 2019 Learn 2 Fish Program for 5th and 6th graders and the 12th Annual John F. MacInnis Fishing Derby were a smashing success. Funding from the Royal Bank of Canada, Municipality of the County of Inverness, and the East Coast Credit Union enabled ISSA to gift each L2F participant with a spin rod, reel, and tackle set. Once again, the Fishing Derby resulted in a record-breaking number of participants and a record \$9,000 plus prize kitty provided by 76 local businesses and organizations. Wild Salmon Unlimited's contribution headed the list. ISSA's stock conservation and enhancement activities included releasing over 30,000 speckled trout and Atlantic salmon broodstock collection.

In 2020, ISAA will begin the season the same as any other year. The first 5 weeks

will consist of winter damage assessments and remediation. After that the crew members will be on year 2 of the multi-year habitat restoration plan for the Southwest Mabou River and its tributaries. ISSA will be stocking both speckled trout and Atlantic salmon and will participate in fall broodstock collection. Unfortunately, due to COVIDS-19, the Learn to Fish program and the annual fishing derby have been cancelled

To learn more, please refer to ISAA'sriversandfish.ca!



The 2019 Learn 2 Fish Program with the Grade 5&6's from Bayview!



ISAA Field Technician Kailey Mortensen and Darryl Murrant from NS Fisheries and Aquaculture holding an adult salmon.



Broodstock collection at the Mabou Mull River, 2019.

Under the Big Top

by

Don MacLean

The motto of the London Fly Fishing Club is: Piscator Non Solum Piscatar. Which translated is: "It is not all of fishing to fish." I often think of their motto when I am on the water. Spring usually marks the opening of open water sport fishing season in most of Eastern Canada. For me it is an anxiously awaited opportunity to get out on the water and try out the killer flies I tied over the winter. It also marks the time to spend time with old friends and make some new ones. While catching fish is an important part of any trip, as I grow older the number, or size, of fish I land becomes less important. Spending time with friends is a big part of my fishing experience and I have been fortunate, over the years, to have met some great people and made some good friends, through fishing and fly tying. This year, however, things are different, mainly due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Nova Scotia is also reeling from the tragic events in April and we know Canadians across the Country share our pain.

Fishing seasons have been delayed across Eastern Canada and many borders remain closed to out-of-province travelers. I recently read that Newfoundland and Labrador is presently not selling non-resident salmon fishing licenses. The first time in 125 years that the province has not welcomed out of province anglers. Being able to spend time on the water with old friends is something I cherish and, this year, I am keenly aware of how much I value the

time we spend together and how much I am missing it. Sometimes these trips are more elaborate than others. For twenty years I've been making a salmon fishing trip with three friends. These trips have ranged from Quebec and New Brunswick to Cape Breton and I have fond memories of every trip. Hopefully, we will be making another trip this season. However, I also enjoy staying closer to home and, this year, this may be the reality for many anglers across the country. One of my favourite trips is fishing the lakes and streams of the Cape Breton Highlands for brook trout. The trout aren't large, ten inches would be a big one, but they are numerous, the company is great, and we have lots of laughs. Throw in some beautiful scenery, along with the chance to see a moose, bear, or maybe a lynx, and you have the basics for a great fishing trip.

For many years, the fishing trip was a one-day affair where we would leave early in the morning, drive up to the Highlands and fish until dark. A few years ago, however, we decided to really make a trip of it and planned to camp overnight. Our destination was Cheticamp Lake. That's as far as you can drive into the area South of Cape Breton Highlands National Park. Lakes in the Cape Breton Highlands fall into two categories: natural and manmade. The natural lakes tend to be small and shallow. They support large populations of small brook trout but don't have enough forage, such as minnows, to grow larger fish. The other lakes are impoundments that were dammed for the Wreck Cove hydroelectric project back in the 1970's. These include Cheticamp, Gisborne and MacMillan flowages and Wreck Cove Lake. These impoundments are large, and caution must be used when fishing them. Water levels can fluctuate as the hydro system operates and the large amount of flooded timber can

make boating hazardous. The wind blows up there all the time and can make for dangerous conditions on open water. On our trips we fish from shore. We camp for several nights when we go and, some years, there are three tents huddled together to house seven or eight anglers. Since this area can be home to uncertain wind and weather, we take some extra precautions and pitch our tents under a second tent. Our kit has evolved over the years and the first year we made the overnight trip we took along a big tarp in case we ran into inclement weather. The tarp had been used to cover my neighbor's boat for a few winters so it was on its last legs, but we figured it would serve our purpose.

That first trip took place in early August, about 15 years ago. A time not normally considered as a good time to go trout fishing but the area of Cape Breton where we would be fishing remains cool during the summer and August is a prime time for trout fishing. The weather forecast called for high winds and rain so, as soon as we arrived, we pitched our tents and decided that, as extra insurance, we should put the tarp up, mainly as a wind break, but also to shed some of the rain. With the help of a few poles, lots of rope and some large rocks, the big blue tarp rose in the air and covered the three tents. We soon discovered why the tarp was being retired; a few holes and rips were evident, but it looked like it would last the night. Quickly christened the "Big Top" it sheltered our three tents, with some room left over for our kitchen area. Later in the night, when the wind picked up, we were glad to have it. Our shelter needs looked after, we headed to Cheticamp Lake. It was a short walk from our campsite to the shores of the Lake. Our destination was a small brook which

empties into the Lake which provides some cool water and proved to be a magnet for trout. It didn't take long for us to find out



The big top

that the fishing was as good as ever and that the fish hadn't grown any since our previous trips. A small dry fly floating on the surface was what they wanted on this trip and we soon had enough for our supper. My go to dry fly for trout is the Queen of the Waters and it didn't fail me on this trip. Once I knew we had enough for a feed I began experimenting with some other patterns. A Black Gnat, Spider and an Adams also proved effective. In August mating swarms of flying ants often appear on the highland lakes so I always carry a selection of flying ant patterns with me. I tied one on my leader and, sure enough, it tempted a few trout even though there were no natural flying ants in sight.

Most fishing trips result in some friendly competition and this one was no exception. The largest fish is usually the winner. Since the fishing regulations for this area, at that time, allowed for ten trout only, two of which could be over ten inches, we decided the winner would be the angler with the two longest trout. After much scrutiny, and verification of measurements, the winning two trout totaled twenty-one inches, so the Highland Trout Classic Trophy was awarded, with much pomp and ceremony, at our final meal. Too soon the "Big Top" came down and we packed up for the trip home, with memories of some good times with old

friends. Those memories often come back to me and, this year as I wait for another fishing season to open, those memories are especially poignant. I am anxiously awaiting the time when I can head to the highlands again to make some new ones.



Just like in NL. my own rock.....

Closing remarks:

I think Don's story is a good one to wrap up this year's newsletter. It reminds us that it is time to get out there and enjoy what nature has to offer. Especially when we are under the restrictions heaped upon us by the novel Coronavirus. Let's hope it is over with, sooner than later.

I want to thank those who have contributed to this newsletter and say a big thank you to our supporters, particularly the Bank of Nova Scotia, for their continued help. Since I will be stepping down from the board, at our 2020 AGM, I take this opportunity to thank the board of directors for their support during my tenure. The AGM is pending—Covid 19 restrictions will dictate its time and place. **It you haven't done so already, please forward your membership fee to: Joel Robinson, RD Box 5, Big Intervale, Margaree Valley NS, B0E 2C0. Please be advised the financial report will be sent as a separate document from the newsletter.**

Also, anyone wishing to volunteer to serve on the Board of Directors please contact any of our board members. We'd love to have you on board.

I leave you with this image of our friend and former secretary of the board, Peter Hill, who left us way too soon this past year. Bon Voyage Peter.



