

Valley Angler  
50 Rivers 50 States in 50 Days  
by Bill Thompson

Last winter I received an interesting phone call from a gentleman by the name of Jeff Turner, from Virginia. Jeff was inquiring about the possibility of a drift boat trip on the Androscoggin River for sometime in July. A call from someone asking about a drift trip is not that unusual, however when Jeff explained what he and his son Taylor were planning on doing it was most unusual. The Turner's were planning the ultimate fishing adventure. The plan was to fish fifty different rivers in all fifty states in fifty days. Jeff described it as the ultimate father and son bonding trip.

As we talked more Jeff explained in detail his plans on how they would accomplish what some would say was a mission impossible. He directed me to his web site ([www.fish5050.com](http://www.fish5050.com)) where a map of the United States was displayed. The map was covered with an intricate web of red lines which connected the dots of the rivers where the Turner's planned to fish in all fifty states. And for the record Hawaii and Alaska are included in the package. The whole idea caught my imagination and it wasn't long before I had booked Jeff and Taylor a trip with our close friend and drift boat guide Rick Gerber.

Last Monday Rick Gerber and I met the Turner's at Molidgewock Camp Ground, on the Androscoggin at eight A.M. It was the 38<sup>th</sup> day of their adventure and their 41<sup>st</sup> state. They had fished the day before in Vermont and the next day they would be fishing in Maine; this day it would be New Hampshire.

As Rick was making the final preparation with the boat I took a few minutes to talk to the father and son team. They were driving a well equipped RV with a license plate that read 50FSH50. Jeff said that they were averaging around 400 miles per day; however some of the legs between destinations were 1200 miles or better. That afternoon, after their drift, they were headed to Bangor, Maine, to fish the Penobscot River. After Maine they were headed for Massachusetts and the Deerfield River, two long trips that would surely up their average.

The evening before they had spent the night at the Bethel Inn. The owners of the inn had heard of their trip and had offered them a night at no cost. They said it was the first night that they had spent in a hotel since they had left Virginia. They have certainly logged in a lot of hours in their camper.

For the most part every river they have fished has treated them well. To date they had caught 521 fish. As you might expect they have caught quite a wide variety of different species of fish. On the day they fished the Androscoggin they added another 21 fish to their combined total. The Androscoggin was indeed most kind to them as they managed an "Androscoggin Grand Slam", a salmon, brown trout, brook trout, rainbow trout, bass and an Androscoggin tarpon better known as a chub. Jeff leads in most fish caught, but Taylor is not far behind and his father thinks that he will soon take over the lead. All of the fish caught have been released.

It is well worth the time to check out their web site. The journal page is fascinating. There is a short narrative of each river they have fished to date complete with a short video and pictures. Each one is great, but they did an especially great job with the New Hampshire entry. Of course I may be a bit predigest. I am quite sure that they left New Hampshire with a very favorable impression.

Personally I can't think of a better way to spend a summer. I must admit that the schedule may be a

bit demanding. I guess I would prefer to sample more than one body of water that a state may have to offer or to linger a little longer on a special one. However, it is doubtful that any of us will ever have that luxury. The Turner's may have actually set precedence, they are no doubt the first to have attempted such a feat, perhaps their trip will inspire other fathers and sons to follow in their footsteps. Not all fathers and sons will have the desire or the means to spend fifty days fishing together, but perhaps the Turner's experience will inspire other sons and fathers to spend a little more time together.

See you on the river.