

Valley Angler

Exploring New/Old Trout Ponds

by Bill Thompson

In an attempt to revisit some old fishing holes that I have not fished in many years I traveled over to New Hampton on Tuesday. The targeted body of water was Sky Pond. Truth be told I am not sure that I had ever fished this beautiful little pond. I do know that many years ago I did seek it out, but I am pretty sure I never actually fished it until Tuesday.

The one thing I do remember about that first visit was that the place was not easy to find. It hasn't got any easier. I had my trusty DeLorme New Hampshire Atlas and Gazetteer with me, but the map seems to have a flaw. The map clearly shows that access to the pond may be obtained by taking first Winona Road off Route 104 and then Straits Road to Beech Hill Road. If you would like to give this pond a try don't go that way!

Should you wish to find Sky Pond do take Route 104 to Winona Road, but continue on until you come to Jackson Pond Road and then take Sky Pond Road. The state has placed some canoe launch signs at the intersections and they make it a little easier to find the place.

Sky Pond does have some special regulations that anglers should be aware of. The pond is fly fishing only and no motors of any kind are allowed. The pond also has a slot limit on trout taken; all trout between 12 to 16 inches must be immediately released. The limit on harvested trout is 2 fish daily and only one may be over 16 inches.

The launch is suitable for car top craft only which makes it perfect for the Pequod, my little Hobi Float Cat pontoon boat. I don't often see many of these boats, but oddly enough the only other fisherman on the pond Tuesday was also fishing from one. He rowed up next to at one point to exchange information and to inquire as to how I liked my boat. The answer was obvious, we both loved them. I would guess that we were both around the same age and we both agreed that we were too old to be lugging canoes around by ourselves.

Tuesday was the perfect day to be fishing. It was warm, but not too warm and the breeze was just enough to keep the black flies at bay. The pond is lovely and with only one small house on it gives the impression that you are deep in the wilderness. I spotted all kinds of wildlife; some maybe a little close for comfort. Did you ever notice that snakes have a way of appearing out of nowhere? As I was preparing the Pequod for launch a small, bright green snake crossed over and under her rear deck. Now, I am not terrified of snakes, but I am very respectful of them despite the fact that the great majority of them are quite harmless.

Besides the one snake there were quite a few salamanders and large numbers of tadpoles in the shallow water. This is a sure sign of a healthy pond. I also enjoyed watching a hawk for several minutes soar over head.

The reason, of course, for being there was the fishing and yes, I did catch a few fish. While getting the boat ready and rigging up I kept a close eye on the water looking for tell tail rises.

This is a good way to miss a guide when stringing up a rod. There didn't seem to be much surface activity, but the other guy who was fishing was hugging the far shore which led to believe that he was on to something.

I rowed to the far end of the pond, far enough away from the other fellow, but close to the same shoreline. After a few minutes of observation it was apparent that the trout were working in close. I tied on a couple of soft hackle wet flies and very shortly was into the first fish of the day.

Last winter, at the suggestion, of my neighbor Al Meyer, I had tied up a few soft hackle streamers. These flies were originally tied by Jack Gartside and are sometimes known as Gartside's streamers. This fly had been recommended to Al by noted New Hampshire guide Rick Estes. Rick had given a slide presentation last November at a meeting of Saco Valley Anglers at which time he showed a slide of this fly and spoke of its potent power over brook trout. I had made a mental note to tie up a few and when Al came to one of our Saturday morning tying sessions last winter we whipped up a few. So when it became obvious that the wet flies would work I took the opportunity to test out the new flies.

According to Al the flies that we had tied last winter were not the correct tie that Rick uses. Our flies were the right cream colored marabou, however, Rick uses a couple of strands of red crystal flash instead of pearl and weights the fly with a gold bead head, something that we left out. However, the fly turned out to be quite effective despite the lacking ingredients. The biggest fish I caught all day came to this fly. The trick was just to let the fly drift and only occasionally give it a tweak or two. The fly does have one small flaw in that I had numerous short strikes do to the short hook used to tie the fly. This fly would probably be twice as deadly if a small trailing hook was used. Something to experiment with next winter.

If you don't have the inclination to explore new trout ponds the ponds in our neck of the woods are all doing very well at the moment. We have good reports from just about everywhere these past few days. It is amazing how quickly the season came upon us and trust me it will end just as suddenly as it came. Don't procrastinate those leaves will be right on the lawn just where you left them, but all too soon the water will warm up and the fishing will slow down.

See you on the river.