

Valley Angler Usuula's Staying Open by Bill Thompson

At last we have had a few days of good rain. With the exception of a few scattered thunderstorms this summer we have definitely been on the dry side of things. Even with this last bit of wet weather we could still use a little more. Anyone attempting to canoe the Saco will no doubt be doing more dragging than paddling.

Oddly enough the rain seemed to put the fishing off. All last week rising trout could be found at First Bridge. Last Saturday morning two anglers had been in the shop telling me of the good fishing they had experienced earlier in the day. The following Sunday evening I could not find a single trout rising above or below the bridge. Monday evening I talked to two anglers who had fished from the bridge down to the Swallows Bank without so much as a tap. Three other fishermen were working up stream from us while we talked and from our vantage point we could only see one lone trout rising. Tuesday evening proved to be no better than the previous evening.

It is unlikely that the river could have been fished out in such a short time. However, one of the fellows I talked to Monday reported that he had run across another fisherman the day before who had made a hasty retreat when he approached. He seemed to be carrying a heavy stringer of several fish and when my friend caught up to him in the parking lot he was seated in a pickup truck with another fellow. They both waved at him and then peeled out of the parking area. It is legal to take fish from the fly fishing only section, however the limit is two fish. My friend was sure that this culprit was carrying a lot more than two fish.

Another likely scouse of the fishes disappearance may have been the large cormorant that has been seen under the bridge on several occasions. Not to mention the large number of mergansers who have showed up on the river this year.

It's a tough life for a hatchery trout and very often a short one. They do seem to acquire some of the instincts necessary for survival, if given enough time after being released. However, given their no holds barred attitude to take anything that floats by them and there lack of fear of predators it's a wonder they make it past the first twenty-four hours.

My own fishing of late has been relegated to a couple of afternoons on a couple of the smaller local streams and a day on the Androscoggin this past week. The Androscoggin trip proved to be quite fruitful. As per my usual I started the day below the Errol Dam. This proved to be a waste of time as I caught nothing and so it went all day until I stopped to fish below the Pontook Dam just after four in the afternoon. There was still a good bit of water flowing over the dam, but after wading out no more than twenty feet I caught the first good fish of the day.

In the next hour I caught four more nice rainbows all from the same spot; right in the left hand corner under the dam. A few minutes after I had arrived I was joined by two more fishermen. I

was so busy releasing my first fish that I never noticed them until one of them spoke to me as he was wading out past me. These two guys were wading wet and without the aid of felt soled boots. The water temperature was sixty-three degrees and there was a slight breeze blowing so they must have been chilly to say the least. I say they were wading, but it was more like they were swimming. They both did a lot floundering and one went under a couple of times. You have to give these guys credit though and admire their tenacity.

The best part of day was when I stopped for lunch at Ursula's Snack Stand. I had my usual bratwurst and Pepsi. I was greatly relieved to find out that the For Sale out front was not for the snack stand, but rather for a piece of property next door. Ursula tells me that she plans to around for many more years and for that I am most grateful.

See you on the river.