

## Valley Angler Vacation Days by Bill Thompson

If you stopped by the shop last week you probably noticed that Janet and I were absent. We finally decided that it was time to take a few days off and go fishing ourselves. With the shop in the capable hands of Nate we did just that.

The first day of our mini-vacation was a day at the beach with our son who just happens to have a house in Hampton. You would think that we would take advantage of the situation and spend more time in the surf. Truth is I am not much of a beach person unless a fly rod is part of the package. However, we managed to have a great time and I actually went in the water. Anyone familiar with swimming in the ocean in New Hampshire and Maine will tell you that it can be a bone chilling experience even in August. This year was an exception to the rule and the water temperature was more like that found in Florida than in New Hampshire. Summer and our son's dog Larger had a great time chasing tennis balls in the surf.

The next day was more in keeping with our usual endeavors, we went fishing. It had been sometime between trips to the Androscoggin for both of us. Our plan was to get a later start than usual in order to have lunch at Ursula's. Over the years Ursula's has become an important part of any fishing excursion to the Androscoggin. Even though I had been told that a portion of Route 16 had been washed out we were surprised to find the road blocked in Milan. Fortunately we noticed the small sign announcing that Ursula's Snack Stand was accessible and indeed open.

It was great to see Ursula again and as always the food was delicious. We both had the bratwurst with Ursula's famous German potato salad. For desert we had strawberry/rhubarb pie. There is no finer lunch stop anywhere in the "North Country" than Ursula's. My worse fear is that she will be discovered by some traveling gourmet writer and that some time in the future you will need reservations to get a table. Don't be surprised if you drive by some day and see a sign out front announcing valet parking.

We spent some time fishing the river later in the afternoon. I fooled around a bit with a new two handed switch rod and caught a couple of nice rainbows and Janet picked up a nice brook trout. I set up the camp chairs where we could sit and watch the river go by. I got a couple of cold ones from the cooler and we just set back and enjoyed the day before heading down river.

Before heading home we fished below the Pontook Dam for an hour or so. There were fish rising, but they proved to be very selective. Although we gave it our all neither of us managed to hook up. There were three other anglers there and like us they went fish-less. All and all it was a great day despite some picky fish.

The next day Janet headed off in the darkness of the early morning to meet up with our friend Henry Barber for a morning of striper fishing at Biddeford Pool. There was some concern about Janet fishing from a canoe but she managed it none the less and caught a couple of nice fish. Henry probably has more fishing knowledge of the Maine coast than most guides. Janet said that Henry knew every inch of the bottom structure in the pool. She also said that he was a most enthusiastic guide who was more interested in seeing his protégées catch than himself. Too bad Henry is not a professional guide as I am

sure he would be in high demand.

We rounded out the week by doing a little bass fishing. Lured by an extra special bargain I recently purchased another pontoon boat. This one is different from the two that Janet and I already own. This one is an inflatable and is capable of running rivers. The real purpose of the bass trip was to have a shakedown cruise with the new boat. The boat was fine and with a few minor adjustments will be even better. The next trip will have to be a river trip.

The boat came with a trailer, which was what made the boat such a good buy. The boat launch where we took the boat for its maiden voyage was quite small and heavily rutted due to all the recent rain. It has been some time since I have tried to back up a trailer. I am glad that there was no one around to witness my less than perfect trailer skills. The good news is that boat and trailer are light enough to pick the whole rig up and get it straightened out.

We are back to work now, but we are hoping to get in some good fishing together before the season ends. With Nate returning to school this coming week it may be difficult.

See you on the river.