

Valley Angler

North Conway a “Trout Town”

By Bill Thompson

Congratulations to the town of North Conway on being named one of the best ski towns in the world. Personally, I think that North Conway is a lot more than just a ski town. North Conway really is a great “outdoor” town.

The town of Meredith, New Hampshire calls itself “The Latch Key to the White Mountains”; if this is true than North Conway, is indeed, the “Gateway to the White Mountains”. It is the “Whites” that make us one of the great “Outdoor Capitols of the World”. In addition to skiing there are lots of other winter activities; ice climbing, snow shoeing and sledding are equally important. In the summer months, when the ski slopes are a little rough to ski on, outdoor enthusiasts can hike, rock climb, bicycle, go camping, canoe or kayak and observing wildlife; or perhaps better defined as “Moose Watching”.

Oh, and least we forget, you can fish in the White Mountains. I would mention hunting, but to some that would be politically incorrect. I would like to put forth the premise that North Conway is a great “Trout Town”.

Great ski towns and great trout towns are very often one in the same. In the list of the top 25 ski towns listed by National Geographic at least seven of them are famous as “Trout Towns”. Those towns would include: Fernie British Columbia, Bozeman Montana, Whitefish Montana, Steamboat Springs Colorado, Jackson Wyoming, Ketchum Idaho and Stowe Vermont.

There are a few things that go into making a town a “Trout Town”. First there must be some great fishing near by. North Conway has the Saco River, which by some accounts, is a pretty fair trout stream. When you throw in the Swift River, the Ellis, Rocky Branch, the East Branch, the Wildcat and several other smaller streams than you have something to shout about. Secondly the town must have at least one good fly shop. In all modesty I think North Conway qualifies in that regard. Lastly one must be able to walk any where in town with waders on and not turn heads. With the exception of our shop North Conway fails when it comes to waders.

Sadly most visitors have little knowledge of the bounty that is available to them although anglers from all over the world do make North Conway a destination. Our own Chamber of Commerce, on its web site, makes no mention of fishing in its list of outdoor activities. They do mention motorcycle riding as an outdoor activity, however. Somehow I fail to see motorcycling as a real outdoor activity, to my way of thinking “outdoor

activity” requires some physical exertion and an appreciation of the outdoors. When writing this article I did a quick Internet search to see if any of the local Chamber of Commerce, of the above mentioned Ski/trout towns, left out fishing as an activity; none did.

Despite the wader thing, North Conway does indeed meet all the criteria for being a true “Trout Town”. I would concede that we may not be in the same class as say Jackson Hole or Bozeman, but we do have a lot going for us.

See you on the river.