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A BRIGHT FUTURE

Atlantic Salmon

JOURNAL

RIVER LIFE

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WITH PADDLE AND ROD

THE SCIENCE BEHIND
LIVE RELEASE

WINTER 2017

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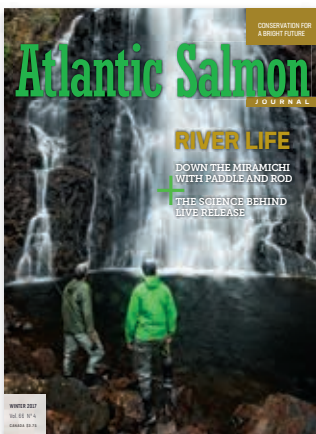


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**OUR COVER:**

Falls Brook Falls, on Falls Brook, a tributary of the Main Southwest Miramichi. Photography by Nick Hawkins.

The *Atlantic Salmon Journal* welcomes manuscripts, letters and news about Atlantic salmon conservation and angling. We also welcome submissions from artists and photographers. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you wish your material to be returned. We accept no responsibility for loss or damage of unsolicited material. The contents of the *Journal* may not be reproduced without permission. Mention of a product or a service in an article does not constitute an endorsement. The opinions expressed in these articles are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect Atlantic Salmon Federation policy.

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PURCHASING POWER

On August 19, one of Cooke Aquaculture's net-pen sites failed off the coast of Washington State, resulting in a massive escape of 165,000 farmed Atlantic salmon. "These fish are headed to every river in Puget Sound," Brian Cladoosby, Chairman of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, told the *Seattle Times*. "We've been saying all along it was not a question of if, but when, this would happen."

Washington's Governor, Jay Inslee, condemned the incident in the press and suspended the issuance of any new licenses for open net-pens. The Wild Fish Conservancy called the escape "an environmental disaster" and announced its intent to sue the company. Another Salish indigenous group, The Lummi First Nation, turned down the company's attempts to buy their silence, calling it an "insult." Incidents like this are exactly why the states of Alaska, Oregon and California have banned open net-pen salmon farms.

Yet, where is the public outcry on this side of the continent? As serious as escapes of farmed Atlantic salmon are on the west coast, they're an even bigger threat to wild salmon on the east coast. Here escapes happen regularly and pose the same disease and sea lice threats to wild salmon, but with the added risk of genetic introgression. A recent Fisheries and Oceans Canada study found farmed salmon genes present in 17 of 18 rivers investigated in southern Newfoundland, resulting in steep declines in the local wild salmon runs.

ASF and its legal team are preparing to go back before the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador to defend our victory that forced an environmental assessment of the largest open net-pen salmon farming proposal in Canadian history. The province and Norwegian giant Greig Aquaculture couldn't accept the Judge's ruling. Obviously, they felt their proposal wouldn't stand the test of scientific scrutiny.

The short-term solution is an immediate introduction of a more robust regulatory regime across Atlantic Canada and Maine. It should hold salmon aquaculture operations to consistent best practices, prevent escapes, address pollution and water quality issues, effectively manage fish health and avoid outbreaks and spread of disease and parasites to wild salmon. Ultimately, industry and government must commit to a transition to closed containment, aided by investments and incentives similar to those which helped launch and grow salmon farming in the first place.

In the meantime, you can help by staying informed and demanding sustainably raised or wild-caught fish. By refusing to purchase Atlantic salmon raised in open net-pens, we can send a potent message. As consumers, the power to effect positive change is in our hands, or more accurately, our pocketbooks.




TOM MONTGOMERY

POUVOIR D'ACHAT

Le 19 août, une des installations aquacoles à filets ouverts de Cooke Aquaculture, dont le siège social se trouve au Nouveau-Brunswick, a connu une défaillance au large des côtes de l'État de Washington entraînant l'évasion massive de 165 000 saumons atlantiques d'élevage. « Ces saumons se dirigent vers chaque rivière du détroit de Puget, a affirmé Brian Cladoosby, président de la Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, au *Seattle Times*. Nous l'avons toujours dit. La question n'était pas de savoir si cela se produirait, mais quand. »

Jay Inslee, gouverneur de l'État de Washington, a dénoncé l'incident dans les médias et suspendu la délivrance de nouveaux permis pour les fermes d'élevage à filets ouverts. Le groupe Wild Fish Conservancy a qualifié l'incident de « désastre écologique » et a annoncé son intention d'intenter des poursuites contre la compagnie.

Alors où sont les protestations du public de ce côté du continent? Ici, les évasions sont fréquentes et posent le même risque de maladie et de pou de mer aux saumons indigènes en plus d'un risque d'hybridation génétique. Selon une étude récente de Pêches et Océans Canada, des gènes de saumons d'élevage avaient été trouvés dans 17 des 18 rivières échantillonnées dans le sud de Terre-Neuve, entraînant des déclins importants des montaisons locales de saumons sauvages.

La FSA et son équipe juridique se préparent à se présenter de nouveau devant la Cour suprême de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador pour défendre la victoire remportée plus tôt cette année ordonnant à la compagnie Grieg de soumettre le projet d'aquaculture à filets ouverts le plus vaste dans l'histoire du Canada à une étude d'impact environnemental. La province et ce géant de l'aquaculture norvégien ne pouvaient accepter la décision du juge. Ils craignent sans doute que leur proposition ne résiste pas à un examen scientifique rigoureux.

À court terme, la solution qui s'impose est la mise en œuvre immédiate d'un cadre de réglementation plus robuste dans l'ensemble du Canada atlantique et le Maine. Il devrait obliger l'industrie aquacole à adopter des pratiques exemplaires cohérentes, à prévenir les évasions, à s'attaquer aux problèmes de la pollution et de la qualité de l'eau, à gérer adéquatement la santé des poissons ainsi qu'à éviter les éclosions et la transmission de maladies et de parasites aux populations sauvages. Au bout du compte, l'industrie et le gouvernement doivent s'engager à passer à un système d'élevage en circuit fermé sur terre grâce à une combinaison d'investissements et de mesures incitatives semblables à ceux qui ont rendu possible l'implantation initiale de l'industrie.

En refusant d'acheter le saumon élevé dans des cages à filets ouverts, nous pouvons transmettre un message. Le pouvoir de changer les choses est entre nos mains, ou plus précisément, dans notre portefeuille.

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TAPESTRY OF WONDER



NICK HAWKINS

Tom Cheney at Falls Brook Falls, the highest waterfall in NB. The brook empties into the Main Southwest Miramichi.

In a canoe, on a river, with a friend (or friends), deep in the wilderness. Could this not be a definition of happiness? It's certainly the Canadian version, and two young men offer it up in "Sons of the River" (page 16). Tom Cheney and Nick Hawkins' description of a canoe trip down the Miramichi struck a chord with me the instant I read it and saw the wonderful photo of Falls Brook Falls, which graces our cover. As a teenager on the Upper Capitachouane River, I paddled and portaged with seven friends until we came to an idyllic spot, complete with its own waterfall and a log cabin. For days, we fished and swam and laughed until it was time to go, and like Cheney and Hawkins, we did so very reluctantly.

The many joys of river life help explain why so many of us travel so far to fish for Atlantic salmon. The characters who call these places home, like those I met in Gaspé this summer ("La Vita Locale," page 30), are part of the charm. These locals understand that without the influx of visiting anglers, rivers like the York, Dartmouth and St-Jean, and others, would lose much of their value, and thus the care and protection that goes into keeping them wild and free. That could explain why they are so darn friendly and helpful.

The presence of anglers also supports the tenacious, tireless work of volunteers like Bob Baker, who recently stepped down as head of the Nepisiguit Salmon Association (Baker's Run, page 36). It also helps keep longstanding traditions alive, like that of the Wilson family's camp (page 40).

Yes, anglers do help by being on the river. They can also be an important part of the lifecycle of Atlantic salmon when they practice live release. If anyone had any doubts about the efficacy of this conservation technique, they will be dispelled by Robert Lennox's summary of findings from his PhD thesis and work at Carleton University's Fish Ecology and Physiology laboratory ("The Science Behind Live Release," page 25).

"At times on our journey, I thought of how magnificent it would be if the river would simply keep flowing forever, an eternal tapestry of wonder and experience," Cheney writes in his final paragraph. The conservation work you read about in these pages, and the amazing efforts of ASF, which publishes this magazine, is dedicated to keeping that very thought alive.

Martin Silverstone

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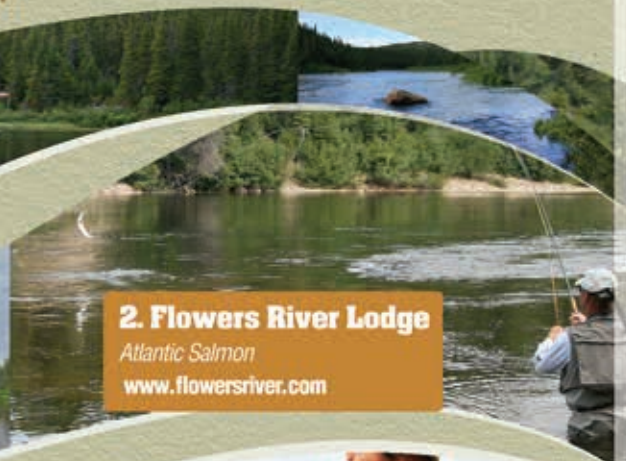
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STOCKING

The NSA has been stocking fish in the Nepisiguit River in excess of 40 years under the direction of our previous President, Robert Baker, with measurable success. There is a difference, however, the NSA does not stock fish from a hatchery; we take broodstock in the fall and overwinter the fertilized eggs in a hatchery. The eggs are taken to a location adjacent to the Nepisiguit River in the spring and are placed into streamside incubation boxes fed by river water, until they become swim up fry. There is mortality of less than 2% and the operation is not expensive. The fry are then dispersed throughout the river system ready to feed on their natural diet.

The NSA is one of only a few organizations who follow this simple model to assist the enhancement of our salmon population. I submit that we can modify and improve habitat for a long time, but when will the fish return? I would like to find out from the author of "Kicking the Habit" (ASJ, Autumn 2017) if he is critical of our model, as our swim up fry never see the confines of a hatchery holding tank.

—Wayne Clowater
PRESIDENT, NSA



KYLE YOUNG RESPONDS:

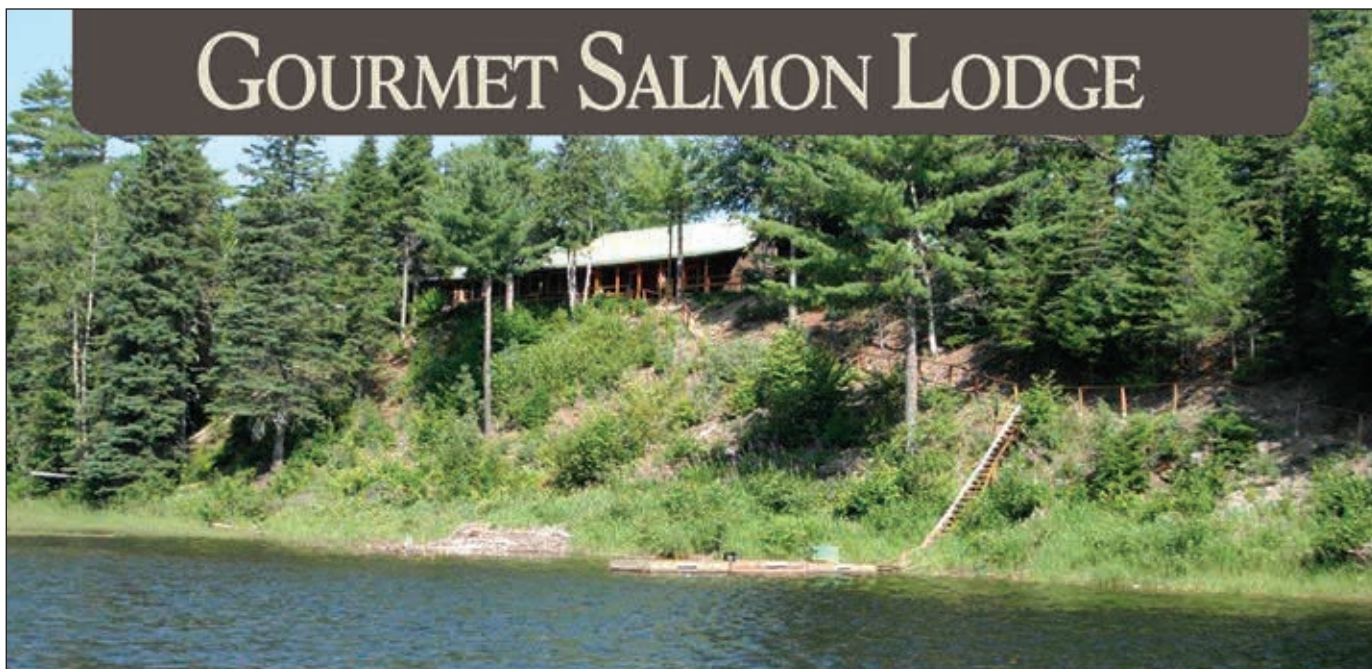
This letter raises an important issue not addressed in my article. Evidence suggests the degree to which hatchery fish are maladapted to the wild increases not only with the number of generations exposed to artificial selection, but also with the duration of that exposure within each generation. Streamside incubators are popular on both sides of the Atlantic as a way to reduce within generation exposure to artificial selection.

Of course, swim-up fry from incubators are still hatchery fish. In the wild, the number and quality of swim-up fry produced by a female and her mates is determined by natural selection. She must complete her migration in good health, find and secure quality spawning habitat, dig a good redd at the right time, and attract and breed with males that must fight and sneak for access to her eggs. Their eggs and alevins must cope with sediment-mediated variation in water temperature and chemistry, resist infection, avoid predation, and struggle through gravel to emerge as wild swim-up fry. Choosing and breeding adults, then rearing their offspring in streamside incubators replaces these and other episodes of natural selection with artificial selection.

It is likely that swim-up fry from incubators are less maladapted than fish reared to the fry, parr or smolt stage in hatchery ponds. Regardless of the relative damage inflicted upon wild population productivity, such systems contravene the clear evidence-based scientific consensus: stocking should only be considered for wild populations facing an immediate risk of extirpation.

Salmon management is not, however, simply a matter of applying the best available science. Stocking engages and inspires those who care passionately about rivers and salmon. Our shared challenge is to find a rational balance between scientific evidence and the desire to help wild salmon by artificially increasing survival rates. For example, instead of stocking hatchery-bred swim-up fry from incubators, we might capture and transfer wild swim-up fry from areas of high to low spawner density. Doing so should increase fry recruitment by relaxing early density-dependent mortality, expose fish to mere hours of artificial selection, and satisfy our desire to help wild salmon populations through stocking. I would welcome the opportunity to work with any group striving to help wild salmon.

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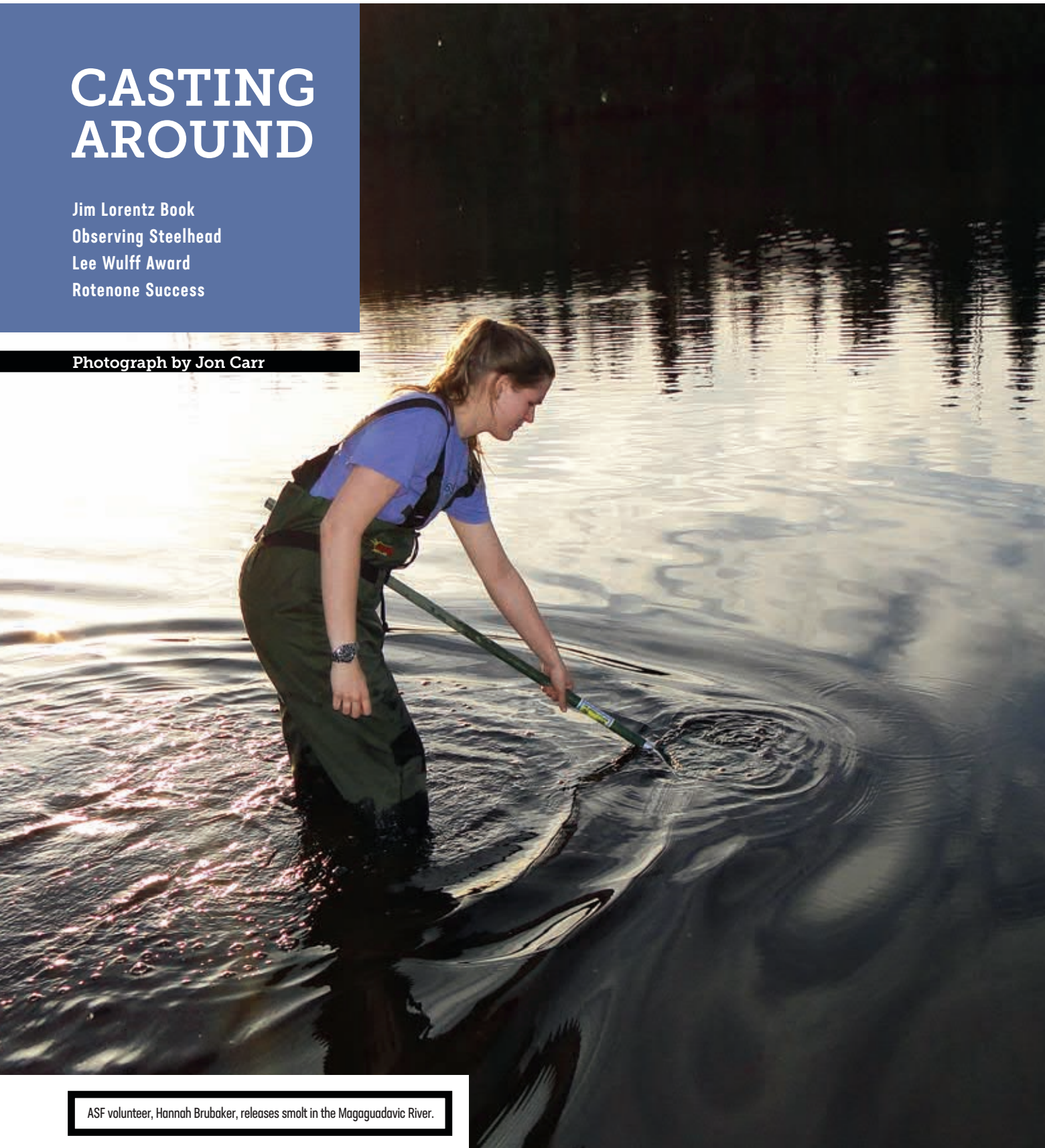
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CASTING AROUND

Jim Lorentz Book
Observing Steelhead
Lee Wulff Award
Rotenone Success

Photograph by Jon Carr



ASF volunteer, Hannah Brubaker, releases smolt in the Magaguadavic River.



“REALLY, THIS RUN IS NOW EXTINCT.”

**– JONATHAN CARR,
ASF's EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF RESEARCH AND ENVIRONMENT**

SAD MILESTONE

ZERO WILD SALMON, 17 AQUACULTURE ESCAPEES
COUNTED THIS YEAR ON THE MAGAGUADAVIC RIVER.

The Magaguadavic River is ASF's longest running research project, stretching back to 1992 when Federation biologists started monitoring the fishway at St. George, New Brunswick. For the first two years the wild run outnumbered escapes, then the tables turned and it has been that way ever since.

Now, for the first time, zero wild fish have returned to the river this year. “Really, this run is now extinct,” said Jonathan Carr, ASF's executive director of research and environment.

Wild Atlantic salmon in the Bay of Fundy face threats from dams and suffer low survival rates at sea, but since the 1980s they've been exposed to the additional threat of intense, open net-pen salmon aquaculture. The first commercial harvest in Eastern Canada took place in 1978 at Deer Island, a short boat ride from the mouth of the Magaguadavic. Now the area has one of the highest concentrations of salmon farms in the world.

Over time, hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of farmed salmon have escaped from local hatcheries and sea cages. Studies by ASF and others have documented wild and farmed salmon breeding in the Magaguadavic and escapes have been found in dozens of other Bay of Fundy rivers.

“There's no question in the scientific community that hybrid offspring are not as fit for survival in the wild. They lose local adaptations that are key to each river population,” said Carr.

Any recovery effort on the Magaguadavic faces an uphill battle, but other nearby Bay of Fundy rivers, like the Hammond, Nashwaak, and Saint John have suffering, but self-sustaining wild runs that need protection from continued interbreeding with escapes.

“The fact we had 17 aquaculture escapes captured at the St. George fish ladder this year tells us the problem is ongoing, and it's probably evidence of a larger spill in the Bay,” said Carr. “Usually only a small portion of escaped fish try to enter the Magaguadavic.”

There are currently two companies operating open net-pen salmon farms in the Bay of Fundy, Cooke Aquaculture and Northern Harvest Sea Farms. Neither has discovered or reported an escape. ASF submitted genetic samples to the industry for testing to determine the source.

New Brunswick requires industry to self-report escapes of more than 100 farmed salmon, but the information is not shared publicly and no one is held responsible. Carr says the province should look to places like Maine or Norway where escapes can be traced to their site of origin and companies fined for not reporting.

“As long as there are escaped fish swimming in the Bay of Fundy, it will be hard for any of these rivers to come back,” said Carr. Inner Bay of Fundy wild salmon are an endangered species in Canada and Outer Bay of Fundy salmon are considered endangered as well.

–NEVILLE CRABBE

CASTING AROUND

Jim Lorentz

Newfoundland Court Case

HE WRITES, HE SCORES!

FORMER NHLER JIM LORENTZ'S LONG AWAITED
FIRST BOOK IS A WINNER.

Whenever the Buffalo Sabres used to visit the Montreal Canadians to play in the old Forum, Jim Lorentz would often take the time to drop by ASF's old Montreal office on St. Alexandre Street. I met him there a few times during the late 1980s, a tall lanky man, whose quiet, polite demeanour belied the fact that he had survived 10 years in the National Hockey League, eventually leaving with his head high and a Stanley Cup ring on his finger.

From reading the water, to salmon biology, to fishing in challenging conditions, Lorentz puts exactly what he gave on the hockey rink into *The Atlantic Salmon: Moody and Mysterious*. Everything.

Keep the wind on your left if you're a right-handed caster, on your right if you cast left-handed. Simple, straight forward, but effective advice like

this is found on every page. As is the author's common sense words on the effectiveness of live release. "More than seven decades ago, Lee Wulff experimented with landing, reviving, and releasing salmon in holding ponds . . . Lee reported that most lived."

Honest, helpful advice from a long-time angler and friend of salmon. Many scientific studies done since Lee's early observations, have proven that live release works. Yet, like the age-old hockey idiom, "keep your stick on the ice," and everything else in Lorentz's book, the simplest, most common sense advice seems to hit home best.

—MARTIN SILVERSTONE



Remnants of an open net-pen toss in the surf off Canada's east coast after being destroyed in a storm.

BACK TO COURT

NEWFOUNDLAND APPEALS GRIEG DECISION.

The government of Newfoundland and Labrador is appealing a ruling from the provincial Supreme Court that forces a proposed salmon aquaculture project to complete a full environmental assessment.

In July, ASF won a decision in the province's Supreme Court, compelling Norwegian giant Grieg Aquaculture to complete an environmental impact statement for its planned Placentia Bay aquaculture project. The project had been given a free pass months earlier by the Newfoundland Minister of Environment, a decision the judge found unreasonable.

Instead of beginning the court ordered assessment, which is a normal step for other major developments, the Newfoundland Liberal government has asked the province's Court of Appeal to review the case. ASF will now be forced to reargue in front of a panel of judges, attempting to uphold the original court decision. A hearing has been scheduled for December, 2017.

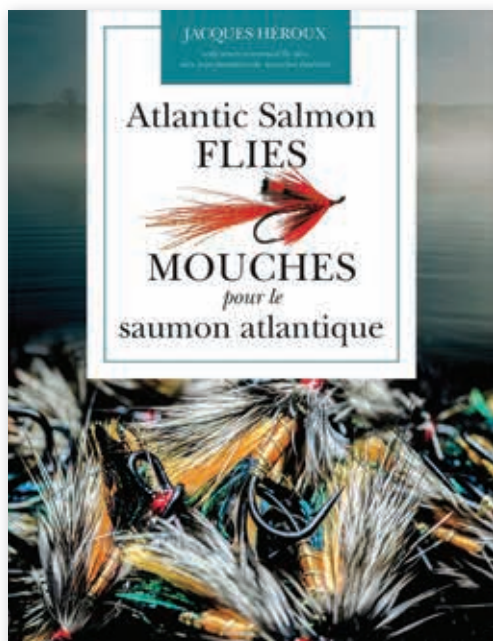
"It's unfortunate that we have to go back to court and defend the public interest against an elected government," said ASF President Bill Taylor. "We're asking for the same standards to apply to aquaculture as to any other major development in Newfoundland and Labrador."

Lawyers working for the province submitted their arguments for the appeal at the end of September. They claim the minister had the authority to release the Placentia Bay aquaculture project from a full environmental assessment because there are already rules in place for the industry, an argument the first judge didn't buy.

If ASF is successful, this will be the first modern environmental assessment of an open net-pen salmon farm in Atlantic Canada, hopefully setting a new standard for the industry.

—NEVILLE CRABBE

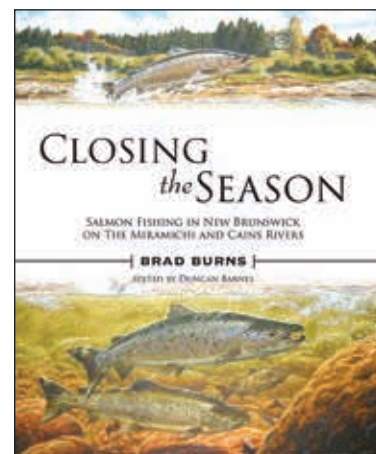
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"...on the train this morning I was reading Brad Burns's beautifully produced, photographed and written book, *Closing the Season*, ...One of the reasons I bought it was that the bulk of the book is a log that Burns wrote about the end of the 2012 salmon season fishing the Southwest Miramichi and the Cains rivers at the same time I was out there..."

- Henry Giles, British Senior Editor

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CASTING AROUND

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TOM MOFFATT

Jonathan Carr with a smallmouth bass that has eaten an Atlantic salmon smolt.

TOUGH LOVE

NORWAY HITS "RESET" TO SAVE SALMON.

It's a parasite barely visible to the human eye. Accidentally introduced to Norway in the 1970s, *Gyrodactylus salaris* spread to 41 salmon rivers by the early 2000s, leaving decimated fish populations in its wake. Studies show an infected river can lose close to 90 per cent of its salmon.

G. salaris is a leech-like organism that gives birth to full-size, live young. Females are born with an already developing offspring, a phenomenon scientists refer to as the "Russian doll" effect.

Spreading to young salmon from adults migrating upstream, it seemed an insurmountable threat to Norway's cherished wild Atlantic salmon. Then along came fisheries managers ready to employ a tried and tested tool called rotenone. This plant-based, naturally occurring chemical comes from members of the pea family. At low concentrations, it kills *G. salaris* and other gill-breathing animals, including fish.

Norway's approach was to hit the reset button on infected rivers, methodically eradicating the parasite and restoring populations with healthy, clean fish. Rotenone breaks down rapidly in sunlight, disappearing from the environment in days. While it's extremely toxic to fish, rotenone is also used as an organic crop pesticide and considered safe for humans.

Because of the *Gyrodactylus* eradication program, Norway is declaring success in restoring eight rivers in Nordland County, among them the Vefsna, once one of the country's best producers of wild Atlantic

salmon. The rivers were treated with rotenone in 2012, and monitored continuously by the Norwegian Food Safety Authority, which declared them free of the parasite in September.

"It's a happy day," said Pal Mugass of the Norwegian River Owners Association in an email to ASF. "Vefsna is a very big river in Nordland and has been restocked with salmon and sea trout the last five years. Now the river will be open for the 2018 season and we are looking forward to bringing the river back to its former glory."

A similar eradication program was successfully carried out by the province of British Columbia in the Thompson River watershed. Twelve lakes containing illegally introduced smallmouth bass and yellow perch were treated beginning in 2007. The final treatment was carried out in September 2017, completely removing predatory invasive species before they could establish in the Thompson River, protecting a valuable steelhead, coho, and sockeye salmon run.

Meanwhile, smallmouth bass remain on the doorstep of the Miramichi River in New Brunswick. They were discovered in 2008, after someone intentionally carried them to Miramichi Lake. Since then, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has placed a seasonal barrier at the outlet of the lake and tried to remove as many bass as possible with nets and electrofishing, but young of the year are found every spring.

—NEVILLE CRABBE

ASF LOSES A FRIEND

ASF lost a friend and supporter this past October with the passing of Jed Wright, the project leader of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Gulf of Maine Coastal Program. For the past 18 years he brought innovation, determination, and compassion to the struggle to save Maine's wild salmon.

Back in the early 2000s, Jed worked with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to create and then help manage the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Fund. For five years this fund put millions of dollars into fish passage and land protection projects, from Downeast Maine to the Penobscot and upper Kennebec Rivers.

One of the last times I spoke with Jed, he told me how happy he was that ASF had recently negotiated a series of dam agreements in the Sheepscot River. Despite managing a weeklong national US Fish and Wildlife Conference in Bangor in early October, he had called me about our funding needs. That was Jed—never resting, always looking to help, so others, like ASF, could succeed.

—ANDREW GOODE



USFWS

Jed Wright
1962-2017

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CASTING AROUND

Book Review

Lee Wulff Award

NATURE'S STAGE

AND THIS PLAY LASTED FOURTEEN SEASONS, PERFORMING TO A SELLOUT AUDIENCE OF ONE MAN AND A DOG.

For 14 years, author Lee Spencer camped next to a pool on the North Umpqua River. From a hidden and sheltered viewing platform, he watched the returning steelhead, from May to November, as well as all other living things that visited this refuge in the woods. Be it wild animal, plant or human, Spencer recorded its behavior and the steelhead's reaction to it.

I have a weakness for environmental journalism, as it's what I've tried to make a living at for the last three decades. In many ways it is a lost art, overwhelmed by the instant gratification we get from the barrage of information that floods us from portals on the internet like Facebook and Twitter.

A *Temporary Refuge* has no lack of its own form of "breaking news." Each day of each month, much goes on at the pool. Bats appear, then the beavers. Suddenly, but always, there is life, and often just as quickly these actors disappear from the stage, leaving it for the next group of performers. Perhaps it will be the dragonflies or the Chinook salmon, or the birds and plants that enter and depart unexpectedly but always, somehow it seems, on cue.

Despite the amount of time Spencer spends observing, he too is left with lots of questions.

"This is an example of how things get more and more curious, the more Sis and I observe," Lee Spencer writes.

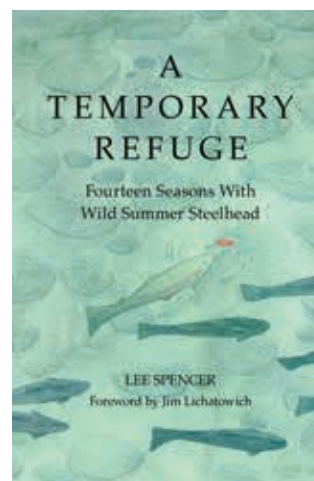
Ah yes, then there is Sis. If universities gave out honorary degrees in wildlife biology to dogs, she would be the first recipient. This stray becomes a loyal companion to the author, so much a part of his life that he uses the "we" to describe his observations. Yet despite his modesty about what he has learned about steelhead behavior, Spencer offers many of the answers to questions that have plagued me.

He and Sis found that the fish rise because they are aware. They note that the steelhead often jump to see an intruder leave, and they've seen the fish flash in response to a threat.

His book is a riveting read; it will also help Atlantic salmon anglers understand a little more about the underwater world of their prey.

Spencer gave up the rat race and headed to a salmon pool for seven months of the year. In the very least, his record of his time there with Sis will have you stopping to smell the flowers, and perhaps noticing the orchestra of life that plays all around us.

—MARTIN SILVERSTONE



A Temporary Refuge
Fourteen Seasons with
Wild Summer Steelhead
By Lee Spencer
Patagonia Works 2017
Hardcover, 319 pages, \$27.95 US



John Dillon, Chairman, ASF (U.S.), presents the Lee Wulff Conservation Award for 2017 to Paul Fitzgerald (left) during the annual general meeting in New York, last November.

AN ANGLER'S ANGLER

PAUL FITZGERALD RECEIVES LEE WULFF AWARD.

Paul Fitzgerald has been named this year's recipient of the Lee Wulff Conservation Award. Given annually by ASF (U.S.) since 1987, this award recognizes individuals who make a difference for wild Atlantic salmon at a regional or national level.

Fitzgerald has served continually as a director of the Atlantic Salmon Federation (U.S.) since 2003, and before that as a member of the ASF National Council. Since 2002, he has volunteered on ASF's New York dinner committee, helping to raise millions of dollars for wild Atlantic salmon conservation.

"Paul has shown tremendous dedication and leadership and we're grateful for his contribution. Wild salmon conservation is a big job, often against the odds. Without dedicated directors and volunteers like Paul, ASF would not be able to carry out our mission," said John Dillon, Chairman, ASF (U.S.)

AN ANGLER'S ANGLER

(continued from page 14)

Fitzgerald calls New York home, but spends time every year in Montana and rivers around the world angling for Atlantic salmon. A successful financial executive, Fitzgerald is an avid angler and outdoorsman with a heart for conservation.

"Paul would be the first person to downplay the contribution he has made to the New York dinner, but it's success today can be traced back to the hours he spent volunteering and building support for ASF in the community," said Bill Taylor, President and CEO of the Atlantic Salmon Federation.

The Lee Wulff award was given at ASF's annual general meeting, November 9th in New York, the day following the 2017 gala fundraiser. This year's event raised money to support a new conservation agreement with Greenland, and a continuation of the deal in place with Faroe Island fishermen.

"WITHOUT DEDICATED DIRECTORS AND VOLUNTEERS LIKE PAUL, ASF WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO CARRY OUT ITS MISSION."

—JOHN DILLON, CHAIRMAN, ASF (U.S.)

Together, ASF and the North Atlantic Salmon Fund have maintained a conservation agreement with Faroese fishermen since 1989. The last agreement with Greenland expired in 2011 and since then that country's fishermen have escalated commercial landings. Conservation agreements pay fair market value to fishermen that elect not to net their quota of wild Atlantic salmon.

The Lee Wulff Conservation Award is named for the famous angler, artist and conservationist who is often credited with inventing live release, the practice of carefully playing a fish and returning it alive to the water. Wulff was an officer of ASF.

—NEVILLE CRABBE



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SONS OF THE





RIVER



THE MIRAMICHI ENCHANTS A NEW GENERATION OF ANGLERS.

“THE RIVER WAS CUT BY THE WORLD’S GREAT FLOOD and runs over rocks from the basement of time,” wrote Norman Maclean in *A River Runs Through It*. High in the headwaters of the Miramichi, where the water runs deep and dark, one does have the feeling of standing in that basement. Although here the river meanders and perpetually changes its course, the alder grounds seem, nevertheless, a sanctuary lost in time.

Both the origin and destination of the Atlantic salmon, the alders were the point of departure for an unforgettable adventure: a 10-day, 170-kilometre canoe trip down the Southwest Miramichi River. With me was photographer and close friend Nick Hawkins, also a son of this great river. Nick grew up fishing the lower stretches of the river, near Blackville, while I learned the small pocket pools of its remote upper reaches in Juniper.

Our journey from one of the Miramichi’s sources to its destination not only connected the river’s path, but also our own life stories. Nick and I have both always found great magic in salmon fishing, but more than adventure or fishing, our expedition was about further immersing ourselves in the water that has enchanted us since we were young.

On our first full day on the water, we passed the Forks of the Southwest, the confluence of the North and South branches. I thought of G.F. Clarke, the doyen of Miramichi salmon writers, and the camp he once had at the Forks Pool. Clarke truly loved this place. His stories tell of numbers of salmon once found here that are today unimaginable. Still, having learned to fish long after the decline of the historic salmon runs, Nick and I both continue to find great excitement in the river and its fish.

One of the main purposes of our story, I decided, would be to prove—to ourselves as much as to anyone else—that the brilliance of the Miramichi remains, even if numbers of salmon have declined. Like time itself, the river flows only in one direction; we cannot turn back the clock, yet the future can be an improvement over the present.

As we left the headwaters and put distance between civilization and ourselves, the river seemed to become wilder. Tall grass hemmed the bank tightly. Foreboding spruces, many of them dead and swathed in beards of lichen, gave the impression of otherworldliness. We were on our own in the wildness of the river.

Eventually, tall slopes began to rise from the earth in front of us. The river became faster, stippled with rocks, and more difficult to navigate. The steep pitches were covered with magnificent mature forest, including spectacular white pines. At every turn, we saw eagles perched high in the trees or soaring calmly through the valley. In due course, the slopes gently receded and the river widened and slowed. The watercourse was now flanked by a new kind of forest, with more deciduous trees.

Early on, we lashed our hammocks to stately old cedars and slept below the watchful eye of the pines. Later we camped on the floodplain, nestled in verdurous ferns. There, the canopy of silver maple swung in the light breeze and gave us a glimpse of the stars. At each site a different sound of the Miramichi filled our sleep, and we felt at home.

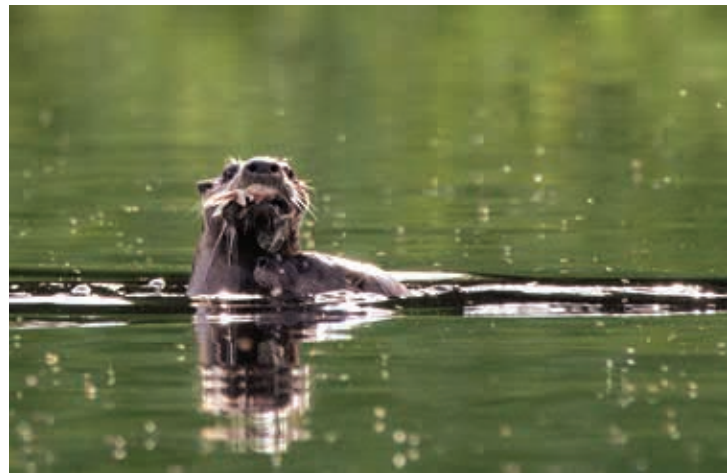
There was life everywhere. We caught a glimpse of a red fox hopping nimbly along the steep bank. We had to backpaddle furiously when the current almost put us between a cow moose and her two calves. A mother otter and her three kits swam across the river and then scampered into the woods. One morning, a doe sauntered into our campsite as we sat drinking our coffee in silence. While fishing one evening, I looked across the river to see Nick gesturing towards something behind me. I turned to see a black bear lumber into the woods, not a hundred feet from where I stood.

From my seat in the front of the canoe, I often stared into the water as we drifted downstream, almost in a trance. A few times I saw the ethereal form of a salmon slide upriver past the boat. One day we paddled until nightfall. As the light dwindled, a gentle mist appeared on the surface of the river. The night was saturated with enthusiastic birdsong and once Nick identified the call of a rare wood thrush.

It wasn't all easy. On our third day on the river, I slipped and filled my waders. Then a relentless rain kept us wet for

TRAVELLING ALMOST ITS ENTIRE SPAN OFFERED US A UNIQUE VIEW OF THE MANY FACES OF THE MIRAMICHI. IN THE HEADWATERS, THE RIVER SNAKED DRAMATICALLY BACK AND FORTH, THREATENING TO CUT AN OXBOW AT ALMOST EVERY BEND.





WE WERE IN A BREATHTAKING RIVER VALLEY, SURROUNDED BY RESPLENDENT AND UNTOUCHED FOREST, MANY MILES FROM ANY OTHER HUMAN BEING. EVERY COLOUR OF THE SPECTRUM SEEMED TO FLASH FROM THE SHINY GILL PLATE OF THE SALMON.

twenty-four hours. I sat sullenly by the fire and felt that the river was putting me through a test that I would not pass. Finally, just as our remaining hope started to wane, the sun appeared from the west, bringing with it a dry and temperate breeze. As our clothes dried quickly on the rocks and we basked in the sun's warm rays, we realized that although misfortune had stranded us for two days, we found ourselves at an especially important location along our route: the famous Two and a Half Mile Rapids.

Nick's earliest impression of fly-fishing comes from a well-known painting of the pool by Eldridge Hardie that hung on the wall of his home. Nick worked hard to replicate the painting as a photograph. As the two of us re-enacted the image, we each contemplated the way that salmon fishing had been imprinted on our minds long before either of us picked up a rod. Reproducing a classic Miramichi artwork also made us feel connected to the history and traditions of the river.

A few minutes before our second dusk at the Rapids, a single angler appeared on the opposite bank and began to fish

the pool. Then, from upriver appeared a lone kayaker, followed shortly by two people paddling a canoe. In our field of view were four people. We realized that they were the first we had seen in over three days.

Rarely do we hook or land as many salmon as we expect or hope. This trip was no exception. June salmon on the Miramichi can be sparse and difficult to find, however, exceptional power and unparalleled brightness compensate for their scarcity. On one calm and warm evening, I worked a promising pool. It ended in a small pocket created by the current pushing its way between two large boulders. As my fly passed through for a third time, I hooked a vigorous fish.

The salmon went wild, seeming to lunge in every direction at once. I'd never experienced a take so aggressive. Even with heavy tippet, my modest skills were no match for the spirit inside the fish and it broke off after a few minutes. The salmon, for only a moment, electrified the tranquil evening with its outstanding life and strength. It caused me to reflect on how incommensurate is the power and fight in Atlantic salmon to the size of the water in which we seek them. This disproportion, I suppose, is a part of what makes salmon fishing so magical.

In the life of an angler there are different sorts of days: fishless ones, decent ones, even great days. Then there are pivotal days—ones that give us pause, oblige us to re-evaluate our entire relationship to the fish and how we connect with them. At dusk one evening, I found myself crouched in the water, my hand firmly around the tail of an impossibly bright 20-lb fish



LIKE TIME ITSELF, THE RIVER FLOWS ONLY IN ONE DIRECTION; WE CANNOT TURN BACK THE CLOCK, YET THE FUTURE CAN BE AN IMPROVEMENT OVER THE PRESENT.



This Eldridge Hardie painting, Two and a Half Mile Rapids, was recreated in a photograph by Nick Hawkins (top).

TWO AND A HALF MILE RAPIDS. COURTESY OF ELDRIDGE HARDIE

that Nick had hooked. Every salmon landed is an achievement, but some are simply more special than others.

We were in a breathtaking river valley, surrounded by resplendent and untouched forest, many miles from any other human being. Every colour of the spectrum seemed to flash from the shiny gill plate of the salmon. We looked into its eyes and sensed it looking back at us. We saw in the salmon's gaze something that was truly untamed. As humans, the essence of what is wild will always elude us; we define it as opposite to ourselves. In that moment, however, Nick and I felt just how real it is.

"Once there were brook trout in the streams in the mountains," wrote the novelist Cormac McCarthy in his post-apocalyptic tale, *The Road*. "On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming." In the detailed minutiae of discrete ecological facts, we can recognize the great laws of historical time. Streams that contain wild trout and salmon are, by the very fact of their existence, beautiful and meaningful—places we must cherish for their inherent value. Our time on the water is a rare opportunity to reflect on natural beauty and our place within it. It makes the river a part of us, physically as well as spiritually.

For that reason, the threatened state of many salmon rivers and the decline of the species are for anglers a personal tragedy, as well as a collective loss. The rivers themselves become lasting bonds to what has been lost. Fortunately, there are many grounds for optimism to sustain the fight. On the last night of our outing, while enjoying our supper by the fire, Nick and I heard talking from downriver. We followed the voices to meet two anglers, likely not any older than ourselves. The four of us shared the usual fishing stories and news on water conditions.





THIS RANDOM MEETING GAVE US A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE OF SALMON ANGLING AND CONSERVATION. IT FILLED US WITH A GREAT SENSE OF HOPE.

Then as darkness enveloped us, talk turned to the future of the species. Like us, our new friends embraced live release, and had concerns about the threats facing Atlantic salmon habitat. Above all, they expressed a heartfelt sense of value for their time on the water. This random meeting gave us a glimpse into the future of salmon angling and conservation. It filled us with a great sense of hope.

At times on our journey, I thought of how magnificent it would be if the river would simply keep flowing forever, an eternal tapestry of wonder and experience. But—like a human life-span—the meaning of our journey became more powerful because of its limited duration. Standing on Nash Bar, Nick's home pool and our final destination, I reflect on how we have both loved this river for as long as the two of us can remember. We had committed to travelling its length with the idea that we might know it better. In that we were successful. It is even more beautiful and full of life than we had expected. At the same time, we had to reconcile our awe with the knowledge that the deepest truths hidden beneath its waters are beyond human understanding. Still, we can clearly hear the faint, but everlasting, hum of mystery that radiates from the Miramichi's ancient rocks. And that makes us love it so much more. 🐟

Trained as a biologist, **Nick Hawkins'** photographs have appeared in *Canadian Geographic*, *BBC Wildlife* and *Canadian Wildlife* magazines. He has been fishing the Miramichi since he was 6-years-old. Freelance writer **Tom Cheney's** last appearance in the *Journal* was in Autumn 2016 (*To Free a Salmon is to Set Your Own Spirit Free*). His writing evokes feelings of beauty and inspires an ethic of conservation and ecological stewardship. His children will be the sixth generation of their family to fish for salmon in New Brunswick.



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THE SCIENCE BEHIND LIVE RELEASE

RECENT EVENTS HAVE PUT THE SPOTLIGHT BACK ON THIS CONSERVATION TECHNIQUE. REGARDLESS ABOUT HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT RELEASING YOUR CATCH, LET THERE BE NO MISTAKE ... IT WORKS.



THERE ARE PRECIOUS FEW WILD PLACES remaining in the world—places that offer the kinds of surprise and unpredictability that may be undervalued by some, but never by the Atlantic salmon angler. Anglers travel long distances to wilderness rivers, so that they can swing flies in rivers holding some very large salmon.

The Atlantic salmon has been the focus of my PhD thesis with Dr. Steven Cooke's Fish Ecology and Conservation Physiology lab at Carleton University for four years. It is a species that is mysterious, often defying study, as it does not reveal secrets readily. My studies, based in Norway, have focused on exploring the recreational salmon fishery, with the intention of working out some of the challenges associated with fisheries management and understanding more about salmon's migration in the rocky Arctic rivers in the North. These rivers, like the Alta, Tana and Lakselva, hold some of the largest salmon in the world, and many produce the kinds of trophies that enchant driven anglers.

Historically, a fish of 20-kg (44-lbs) would be wall-mounted in celebration, however, increasing awareness of how valuable these individuals are to a river is leading more and more anglers to consider voluntarily releasing their catch.

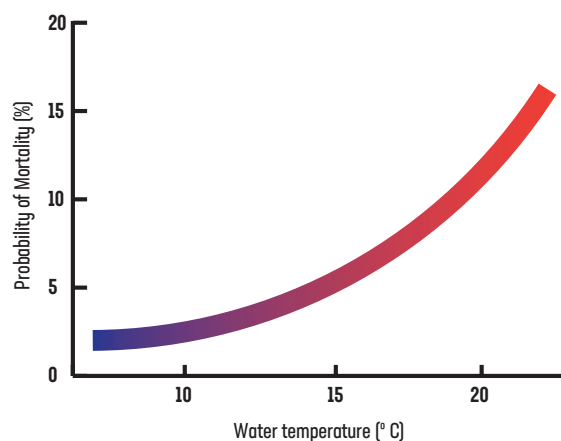
Everywhere Atlantic salmon are fished, anglers are becoming more interested in live release and fishery managers are becoming keener to adopt this technique as standard conservation practice. The concept of releasing Atlantic salmon, however, is not new. It dates at least as far back as the 1800s when Richard Nettle, Fisheries Superintendent for Lower Canada, discussed the importance of returning captured salmon to the water. Live release angling began to be popularized in the late 1930s, when Lee Wulff suggested that these gamefish are too important to be captured only once.

There is good evidence that many released salmon may be recaptured by anglers, literally living to fight another day. Early studies involved marking salmon that were released with small plastic tags. Although this technique is effective for



A live release on the North Branch Sevogle. When water temperatures move above 20 degrees centigrade, the probability of mortality after live release can be greater than 10%. In colder water the probability of mortality approaches zero.

NATHAN WILBUR



demonstrating that fish do continue to thrive after catch-and-release, it does not provide accurate information on survival rates because many salmon will survive but not be recaptured.

The question of Atlantic salmon survival in recreational fisheries has been studied since the 1990s using a variety of techniques. Often quoted is the work of Richard Booth and associates, who reported 100% survival in a study on the Miramichi River in 1995. Research teams led by Mark Brobbel (1996) on the Miramichi and Brian Dempson (2002) on the Conne River, recorded 88% survival. These “catch and cage” study designs, which hold fish following angling, can be stressful, increasing mortality. Or, the cage may protect fish from predators, such as seals or birds, that could take advantage

of a weakened salmon. This could diminish the validity of such estimates.

As electronic tagging technology has improved, researchers began using these tools to track the migration of salmon after release by anglers. Electronic tags transmit radio signals or acoustic beacons to receivers that detect the tag and the unique ID code associated with each fish.

Electronic tagging is effective for studying post-release survival of fish in recreational fisheries because the fish are free swimming, although the additional stress caused by the tagging procedure may increase mortality. Tagged salmon are then tracked in the river with receivers, and their positions can be plotted to analyze movement patterns. Salmon that die following release are generally tracked downstream and do not move throughout the season. Tags that move within the river can confidently be considered to represent fish that have survived catch-and-release. Any uncertainties about the survivors can be solved by tracking the tag to a point in the river and snorkeling to visually confirm whether the tag is still attached to a live salmon. This technique has proven to be highly effective in ensuring accurate estimates of catch-and-release survival.

Electronic tagging studies have been carried out in rivers around the world to determine how many released Atlantic salmon survive. These studies rely on collaboration and cooperation with local anglers that volunteer to release fish with electronic tags, meaning that many of the salmon tagged and followed in these studies are captured and released by ordinary anglers that hook, fight, handle, and photograph their catch in a natural setting (although it must be acknowledged that they may modify their behaviour to some extent knowing that they are being watched by scientists). Across peer-reviewed studies that have used electronic tags to follow Atlantic salmon released by recreational anglers, most fish survive, but there is some mortality, generally less than 10%. This provides compelling evidence that Atlantic salmon are resilient to catch-and-release in recreational fisheries.

Kevin Davidson (1994) and Booth (1995) and their associates provided further evidence of the hardiness of Atlantic salmon to the stress of being captured and released. In separate studies, these researchers found no difference in the quality of eggs and fry produced by Atlantic salmon that were caught and released, and those fish not exposed to recreational angling. Antoine Richard (2013), working on the Escoumins River, used genetic markers in fry to demonstrate that captured Atlantic salmon produced similar numbers of progeny to uncaptured salmon.

The story on catch-and-release of Atlantic salmon is remarkably consistent across all recreational fisheries. Still, there remains a need for information that anglers could use in their fishing and handling practices when preparing to release Atlantic salmon, and that managers could use to provide evidence-based advice. Working with Dr. Eva Thorstad and Dr. Ingebrigt Uglem from the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research, we assembled a team of scientists to compile the catch-and-release data from Atlantic salmon tagging studies around the world. We then analyzed the data to understand what the key risk factors were that most frequently contributed to mortality of Atlantic salmon. If we could identify factors

that significantly contributed to post-release mortality in the recreational fishery, this information could be communicated to anglers, guides, and managers to increase awareness of the potential hazards in capturing or handling Atlantic salmon.

The team included scientists from the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research, the Quebec Ministry of Forests, Wildlife, and Parks (Ministère des forêts, de la faune, et des parcs), River Dee Trust, Belfast Agrifood and Biosciences Institute and Inland Fisheries Ireland. We shared data from studies in which Atlantic salmon were captured by angling, tagged with electronic transmitters, released, and tracked within the river. Information included the time of year, water temperature, fish size, playing time, hook location, presence or absence of bleeding and fishing gear type (flies, lures or bait).

The research suggests that almost all salmon released by anglers can be expected to survive and also reproduce.

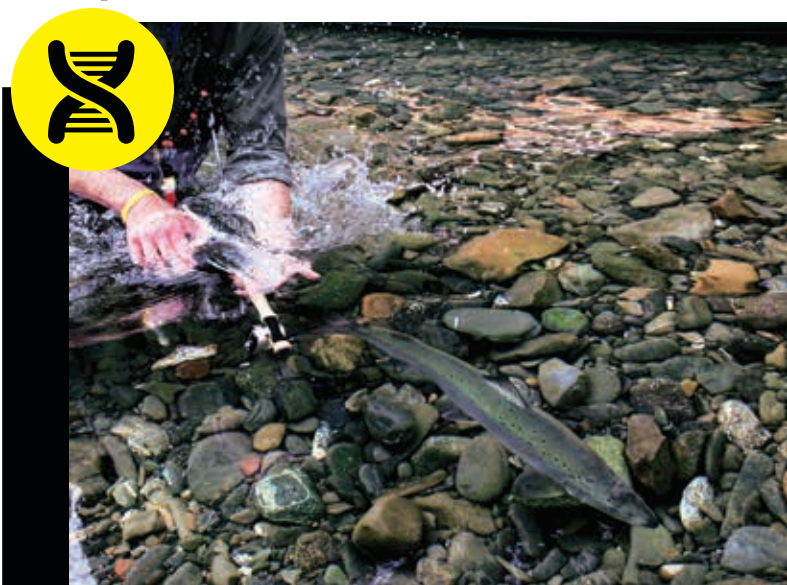
These metadata were analyzed to determine whether any of these factors contributed to the mortality of released Atlantic salmon. Our sample included 512 Atlantic salmon captured and tracked in 12 rivers. The fish ranged in size from 44 to 122 cm in length. Among all these tracked fish, only 34 died, a survival rate of 93%, which increased to 94% when only fly-fishing was considered. We created a statistical model to evaluate whether the time of year (date), hook location (shallow or deep hooked), gear type (fly, lure or bait), playing time or water temperature at capture were predictors of mortality. Using these studies in combination gave us an advantage over any of the previous studies in which sample size was too low to identify significant predictors. The larger sample size allowed us to form a more effective model on Atlantic salmon catch-and-release mortality.

We found that there was no effect due to time of year, size, playing time or hooking location on mortality, however, water temperature was a significant predictor of mortality (Figure 2). This suggested that when water temperatures become elevated, the mortality of Atlantic salmon increases. We also found that salmon captured with bait (worms or shrimp) were more likely to die after release, than those captured by lures or flies.

Although most of these fish were lifted out of the water following capture, there was not enough consistent information on the duration of air exposure for us to include this factor in our models. What we do know, however, is that all fish are sensitive to air exposure to some extent. Clearly, prolonged air exposure will result in mortality, however, the threshold is highly species specific and is greatly affected by water temperature. It is worth noting that Antoine Richard, in his Escoumins River study (2013) which used genetic markers to track progeny, found that air exposure had a large potential impact on the reproductive output of salmon. Thus, underwater photographs of Atlantic salmon are a precautionary approach to handling fish which improves their chances of survival.

The research on this topic has been remarkably consistent across rivers, nations, years, and size classes of Atlantic salmon. It suggests that almost all salmon released by anglers can be expected to survive and also reproduce. In rivers with highly endangered populations any kind of mortality, even a few fish, may be unacceptable. Even in these cases, however, live release can be a way to keep anglers involved in the recovery process and to maintain watchful eyes on the river.

The opinion of the public may also differ, some perhaps believing that any post-release mortality of salmon is unacceptable on ethical grounds. These opinions are an important component of a civil, balanced, and fair discussion of management. There must be no misinformation, however, about the facts as it pertains to the survival of Atlantic salmon released by anglers. Given proper handling (i.e. seasonal water temperatures, not bleeding from gills, brief air exposure prior to release), it is overwhelmingly clear that salmon do survive and spawn.



Seeing a fish swim off in fine health is the true reward of a good live release.

How the scientific data are used moving forward is a topic for further discussion, one that requires engagement with many different stakeholders. Generally, however, the findings suggest that catch-and-release has great potential to be an effective component of any Atlantic salmon management plan in rivers throughout their native range.

Such data allows us to clearly see the benefits of releasing that 20-kg “trophy” fish, versus mounting it on a wall. Anglers who have travelled so far to connect with this iconic species on wild rivers can be confident that after release, their salmon will survive. Instead of a mounted fish hanging on a wall, the real prize is confidently knowing that your catch will continue its epic journey upstream to spawn. 🐟

Robert Lennox is a PhD student at Carleton University in the Fish Ecology and Conservation Physiology Laboratory, under Dr. Steven J. Cooke, Research Chair and Professor. More information on the work being done at the lab can be found at www.fecpl.ca.

ALIVE AND WELL

A WELL EXECUTED LIVE RELEASE FEELS AS GOOD, OR BETTER, THAN A FISH'S TAKE.

Findings suggest that catch-and-release has great potential to be an effective component of any Atlantic salmon management plan in rivers throughout their native range.



Keep the fish in the water; this is where it can breathe and recover



Do not press on gill plate or squeeze its sides



If a weight estimate is desired, keep the fish in the water while measuring it from the fork in the tail to its snout. Convert length to weight by referring to ASF's salmometer.



RAY FLOURIE



Retrieve the leader and release fish quickly, cut the leader if necessary.

Remove the hook carefully; a barbless or pinched hook makes fly removal easier for fish and angler!



NATHAN WILBUR



Hold the fish gently in a natural swimming position, facing it upstream to allow it to revive .

LA VITA LOCALE

IN THE GASPÉ, CATCHING A SALMON IS ONLY PART OF THE FISHING EXPERIENCE. A SUPPORTING CAST OF PASSIONATE, RESIDENT ANGLERS HELP MAKE EVERY DAY A UNIQUE ADVENTURE.

MAN I WAS BEAT. IT'D BEEN A LONG WEEK ON THE ROAD ENDING WITH a couple of hot, fishless days on the York. The water was low, the glaring sun was giving me a headache, and the heat made my legs feel so heavy I didn't think I would be able to wade the river back to our car.

Then I met her. Her brown eyes reflected kindness and her smile brought back memories of other times with friends, of laughter and companionship. And as we sat in the cool shade by the river, I wouldn't have traded hooking the biggest, freshest salmon for the few minutes we shared talking of life and love of salmon and nature beside Fairbanks Pool.

There is no medical term for what cured my midday fatigue, however, I drew energy from the passion and enthusiasm of a group of local anglers I've come to call the Gaspé Gang. This disparate collection was born and bred here and have chosen to live and work in this land's end hamlet. A comparison might be the ski bums that work the lifts and kitchens of mountain towns in winter to be able to pluck the finest powder after snow storms, or the surfers that follow the breaks and waves around coastal hotspots.

The Gaspé Gang is not transient, however, as this is their home. And for four months a year, the rivers that slip into the salt at the tip of this famous peninsula—the York, Dartmouth and St-Jean—and many of the other salmon streams around the coast, become their playground, office, passion and spiritual retreat.

Trouble is, trying to organize a get together with salmon-mad locals when the fish are running is a little like trying to herd cats. The best I could do was hitch a ride to Gaspé with ASF's Quebec program director, Charles Cusson, and head to a salmon river. As it turns out, that was the best way to get to know some fascinating resident anglers. Here is but a small sampling of the wonderful characters from this salmon-mad town.



WITH TOURISM SEASON AT ITS PEAK, CUSSON HAD ARRANGED FOR US TO STAY at the old Malbaie River Lodge (now Grey Ghost Destinations) with Don Bourgouin. Don's credentials as a local are untouchable. Anglers from away call Don "The Godfather" because of his knowledge of what is going on, not only in Gaspé, but also the other salmon spots on the peninsula. He knows everyone in the region, having either gone to school with them or played or coached hockey with or against them. Off-season, Don is a jack-of-all-trades, building homes and tending to his investment properties, and serving as a rep for the local school board. His salmon qualifications are solid titanium. He spent many years as manager of the famed Pavilion on the St-Jean.





On their days off from work, Dave Adams and Geneviève Fournier can often be found fly-fishing. Here they exit a Dartmouth River hot spot. Location? Sorry, it's a secret, but run into them on a river and they are likely to share some of their local knowledge.



COURTESY OF JEAN-GUY BÉLIVEAU



MARTIN SILVERSTONE (2)

Our first night, we shared the elegant old club with a party of anglers from France. After Don had fed his guests—he does much of the cooking and hosting himself—we settled down in front of a crackling and roaring blaze in the camp's main room (the building has four fireplaces!). As the scotch flowed, Bourgouin entertained us with stories of the history of this one-of-a-kind camp and the constant reno work he and his partner Tony Patterson have to do to keep it in working condition.

We met Tony the next day. Watching Bourgouin, who is Scottish-Irish-French-Canadian and Patterson, who is an English Quebecer, interact is like seeing characters from the novel *Two Solitudes* by Hugh McLennan. The title of this Canadian literary classic refers to the perceived lack of communication between English- and French-speaking Canadians, and focuses on one character that has a foot in both worlds.

There is no lack of communication between these two, however. They poke jabs at each other and joke as if they were still rivals back in the French and English high schools. Most of it revolves around Tony's absolute aversion to mending a fly line after casting. Don used this idiosyncrasy to bait him on everything from his upbringing in the anglo enclave of Sunny Bank, just outside of Gaspé, to his ancestral connections to the famous General Wolfe.

As much as Bourgouin knows the background of almost everyone in Gaspé, spending a day with Tony as your guide is an experience in the culture and history of the region (according to Tony). His ancestors were among the first settlers here



Not a trace remains of the York River Salmon Club, although Tony Patterson stands on the original site of the main buildings at Still Pool (left, bottom), where he once worked as a teenager. The club in the early 1980s (left, top), was demolished after it closed. Above, Geneviève Fournier and Don Bourgouin pose in front of one of the surviving York River Salmon Club's cabins at Fairbanks/Dexter Pool. Behind them is a remnant of a bygone era, a chimney where the club's river guardians cooked their meals.

and no one is prouder of the role they played in and around the area from the earliest days of European settlement.

History is never far off in Gaspé. It lives in the present, especially among the ghostly ruins of bygone eras. As Charles fished with Don one morning, I wandered off into the woods and came across one such artifact, a large chimney standing alone. I'd seen one of these before in a Jean-Guy Béliveau photo. No one seemed to know what they were for. It looked like they should be the remains of a house, but there was no foundation nearby.

Bourgouin told me this is one of many old chimneys all up and down the river, but even he had no clue about them. Tony knew, however. When he started guiding at 15, he began as an apprentice at the old York River Salmon Club. Sharing a lunch at Still Pool, one day, he described how river guardians lived in tiny cabins up and down the river. Their shelters were so small, cooking inside with a wood stove would make the cabins too hot to be liveable, so these stone fireplaces were built to use as outdoor ovens. I asked him why there were no chimneys at this site. It seemed like a perfect spot, flat and high up, overlooking a long stretch of the river. Tony told us that the old club had stood right here. He described the building and pointed out where the kitchen and staff quarters had been on a small rise. I had trouble believing him, as there was not a shred of evidence of any structure, no foundation or remnant of any kind, nothing. Tony explained, and I could detect a tone of sadness, that after the camp had closed, the ZEC had bulldozed and buried the remains for safety reasons.

One sunny afternoon, with very little action on the river, Charles, Don and I went upriver to see where a couple of guardian and guest cabins were still standing at Dexter

La Vita Locale: Jean-Guy Béliveau enjoys a campfire on a fishing expedition with friends (right, bottom). When he isn't fishing or guarding the rivers of Gaspé, he pursues his favorite pastime, photography (right, at Bluff Pool on the St-Jean). Capturing this freely leaping wild fish (below), required standing in Whitehouse Pool for hours with his camera on a tripod and finger on the shutter release.



JEAN-GUY BÉLIVEAU (3)

THEIR PASSION, SKILL AND RIVER KNOWLEDGE IS MATCHED BY A PROFOUND CONCERN FOR *SALMO SALAR*.

Pool. Seated at a picnic table by the old buildings, with their nearby stone chimney, was Jean-Guy Béliveau and Geneviève Fournier. I suspected Béliveau would be around as we had talked earlier, but the presence of Fournier was a very pleasant surprise. I'd wanted to meet her ever since she and her partner, Dave Adams, had volunteered to star in a video on live release produced by FQSA and ASF.

Even better, they invited us to join them for a delicious lunch featuring some local delicacies, including lobster, pickled calamari and forest-picked mushrooms. I stayed with Béliveau most of the afternoon, watching him fish, and talking photography. He began playing around with taking pictures as a hobby, but has grown into a top-notch nature photographer (his photos have graced the *Journal* cover on many occasions). It would be fair to call Béliveau the official photographer of the Gaspé Gang. His images of Gaspé landscapes, wildlife and angling scenes are saturated with feeling and a familiarity for time and place. A qualified scuba diver, he also takes excellent underwater photos. When world-renowned nature photographer Paul Nicklen was in Gaspé on assignment to shoot underwater images for *National Geographic* magazine, he asked Béliveau to be his assistant. This valuable experience, together with Béliveau's constant and close proximity to a large number of rivers, allows him to get some of the most stunning shots of wild salmon anywhere.

And many of his best angling pictures are of Fournier—"la nympe" he calls her affectionately—releasing fish. If there is a heart and soul of the Gaspé Gang, it's Fournier. Off-season she works at the Café des Artistes, the unofficial social ground zero



of the village. During the school year, she and a friend, Lise Nadeau, voluntarily run the local *Fish Friends* school program, introducing salmon biology to a new generation of conservationists throughout the region.

Everything about this lady is steeped in the romantic. She met her partner, Dave Adams, at the Café. He is also a talented guide and fly tier. One of their first sorties together was up at Dartmouth Falls. When she spoke, she pronounced it "*Dartmoot*" and every time she said it, my heart skipped a beat. Their first dates involved salmon angling, so she fell in love with Adams and the rivers of Gaspé at the same time.

I had never met Adams, but I knew of him from the live release video. The video is very instructional, but it is the couple's passion for angling that make it such a great promotion for live release. After meeting Fournier in person, I could tell there was little acting involved in the making of it. She, as well as Jean-Guy, Tony and Don are incredibly gifted anglers. Their passion, skill and river knowledge is matched by a profound concern for *Salmo salar* and the woods, waters and people who share this unique corner of the world with the fish.



Fournier and Adams make their home by the York River. Every spring they host a party to welcome back both the salmon and the friends who want to reconnect with this iconic species. English, French, local or visitor, all are welcome.

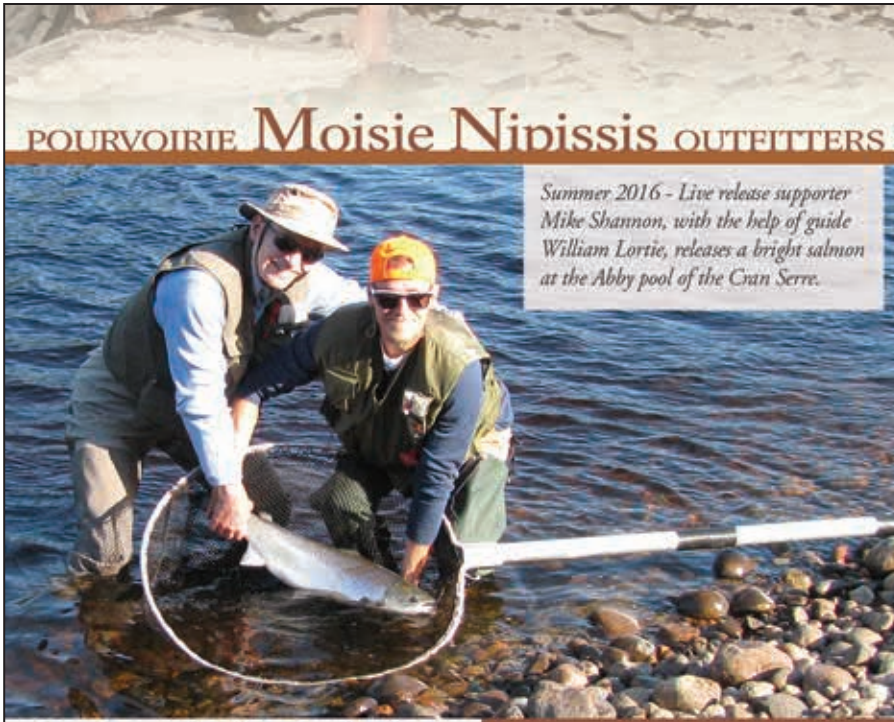
As we sat by Fairbanks Pool, I thought of Béliveau's nickname for her, "la nymphe," and how Webster Dictionary's definition of that mythological spirit of nature as a beautiful maiden inhabiting rivers, woods, or other locations, seemed to suit her to a tee. Too soon Fournier had to leave, but not before inviting me to her spring party next year. I climbed back up the hill to meet my companions with a bounce in my step, and that headache was long gone and forgotten. 🐟

Martin Silverstone is editor of the *Journal*.

For the love of a river: Dave Adams and Geneviève Fournier release a salmon at Macdonald Pool on the St-Jean River.

JEAN-GUY BÉLIVEAU

POURVOIRIE Moisie Nipissis OUTFITTERS

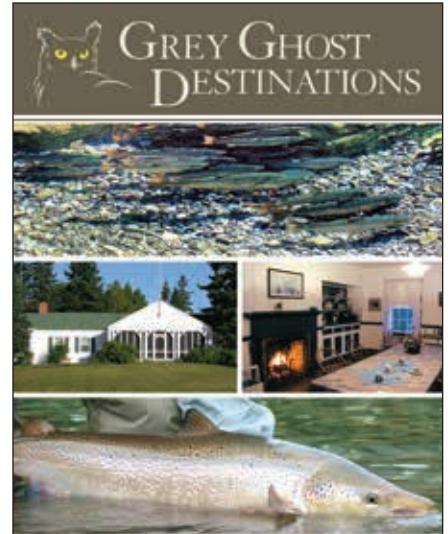


Summer 2016 - Live release supporter Mike Shannon, with the help of guide William Lortie, releases a bright salmon at the Abby pool of the Cran Serre.

Seasonal average of 290 salmon released over last 10 years. Several salmon over 20 lbs released every season. The Fork's camp can lodge up to 8 anglers. Rods available in prime time for 2018 season. Moisie Nipissis Outfitters is a live release camp.

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BAKER'S RUN

AFTER 40 YEARS FIGHTING FOR *SALMO SALAR*, A CONSERVATIONIST HAS NO PLANS TO SLOW DOWN ANY TIME SOON.

NATHAN WILBUR

HE'S A TOUGH OLD BUGGER, THIS 79-YEAR-OLD BOB BAKER, LET'S BE clear about that. I'm in his basement surrounded by decades of salmon angling paraphernalia, awards, newspaper clippings and boxes and files of meeting notes, research data, reports and newsletters.

I came to Bathurst in this unseasonable warm weather to pay tribute to the recently retired Nepisiguit Salmon Association (NSA) president of 40 years, but he will have none of it. Baker is raking me over the coals about a *Journal* article on stocking which he feels ignored the successful streamside incubation project that has helped restore the Nepisiguit, and make it arguably the healthiest salmon river in New Brunswick (see the author's response on page 6). So, he is in no mood to talk about his four decades working tirelessly for the river association he helped form. He is out for blood, and I'm doing the bleeding.

Nathan Wilbur examines another memento in the "Salmon Cave"—Bob Baker's basement cache of Nepisiguit River Association files, conservation awards and salmon angling memorabilia.

Above: Bob Baker on the Nepisiguit.



MARTIN SILVERSTONE

Still, even if he won't be a cooperative witness and describe his many years of volunteering in aid of Atlantic salmon, it's easy enough to read between the numbers, facts and figures. What emerges is a picture of a man who may display a harsh exterior, but scratch just a bit below the surface and a very, very kind and generous hearted person emerges.

Outside the cool, but not so calm, of the Baker basement, accolades for the longest serving salmon association president are easy to find. Later at The Flats, a favoured fishing spot on the river, under a setting sun that renders the landscape ablaze, we run into angler Jay Valley. "Bob isn't scared of much," he says. "He won't back down from anyone he sees trying to hurt this river."

Bob's love affair with the Nepisiguit predates the formation of the NSA. It was likely a series of events that essentially destroyed the salmon run in the late 1960s that awoke a passion in him that burns fiercely to this day. Back in 1969, he and Bob Chiasson fished the river regularly and witnessed how mining operations and acidic rainfall combined to leach copper into the river, decimating juvenile salmon and hence returning adults over time. Mine cleanup response was rapid, but it took years for water quality to recover enough to support salmon.

For most people, small runs in 1974 combined with first stocking efforts were cause for some muted celebration, but for keen anglers like Baker and Chiasson it was a revelation. "When the fish started to show up we were like kids in a candy store," Chiasson remembers. The excitement was put to good use, and on October 20, 1976 the NSA was formed with Baker as its first president. There was much to do on the river and over four decades of meetings in the Baker basement, plans were continually being hatched to obtain grant money and to expand the group's membership.

As we talk, I can't help but let my gaze fall on the dozens of awards, including ASF's Happy Fraser, on the walls and shelves. If only these walls could talk. Roméo Leblanc, a Governor General of Canada who, when DFO minister in the Pierre Trudeau cabinet, fought hard to protect Canadian fish stocks from foreign fleets, once participated in a meeting here. I can only wonder if Leblanc was moved to take such definitive action, like banning Soviet ships from Canadian ports, after getting a tongue lashing similar to mine. From government ministers to magazine editors, Baker has spread the same message from his basement pulpit on Raymond Street for more than 40 years—a cooperative approach to assessment and enhancement, if it is properly funded and executed, can work wonders.

Cooperation came in the form of a partnership like the one with the Pabineau First Nation, the first joint enhancement project between an angling group and a First Nation in New Brunswick. At the counting fence, 11-kilometres up from the river's mouth, Mi'kmaq Elizabeth Prisk is eager to talk about the program which has kept her on the job for 23 years and now employs her brother Noel.

"The Bobmeister?" Noel jokes, but then turns serious. "You've got to admire what he's done to improve this river and help it reach its full potential."



NATHAN WILBUR

Last call? Bob Baker stepped down after 40 years as president of the NSA, but he will continue to be a familiar sight on the river he loves.

When I ask Elizabeth what effect Baker's retirement might have on the river enhancement project, she puts two fingers of each hand up in the air to emulate quotation marks, "Retirement?" she asks sarcastically. "We've seen Bob up here even more since he supposedly retired."

His wife agrees wholeheartedly. "He talks about the river all the time," she told me. "A lot more than when he was the president." Although he has stepped down as president, it's clear Baker has no plans to stop fighting for the river he loves with all his heart. And for those working to continue his legacy, that is good news. In a simple hut on a bluff high above the river, against a backdrop of radiant foliage, the reds and golds framing the dark Nepisiguit, Wayne Clowater, the new association president and Denis Frenette, a longtime director, take stock of the task ahead. "There is so much to learn, and much of that Bob holds in his memory," he says. "We'll need him around for a while yet."

Up and down the river, voices echo the same dual themes of toughness and love for the river, often saying of Bob Baker, "Don't cross him when it comes to the Nepisiguit." Others are more direct, simply calling him "god of the river."

When we were in the basement, Baker handed me data from the results of a five-year review of the streamside incubation project. The numbers are clear, showing an additional 30% increase in salmon returns. No wonder that when Jay Valley, up at The Flats, is asked whether anglers like himself associate Baker's tireless efforts with the improved health of the Nepisiguit, he quickly replies, "the smart ones do." 🐟

Martin Silverstone is editor of the *Atlantic Salmon Journal*.



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My name is Dory Shipley and I have made provisions for the Atlantic Salmon Federation in my will. I am honored to make this Legacy pledge to ASF and it gives me great joy to know that I am part of ensuring their good work will continue long after I am gone.

My family shares a love of the outdoors and my parents instilled in all of us from a very early age, the importance of philanthropy. My mother has passed away now but she was an inspiration to us all, encouraging us to support the causes we are passionate about by giving back in whatever way possible.

If you are reading this magazine then you believe our future needs to include wild Atlantic salmon. We need ASF to make that happen so I encourage you to join me by making a Legacy gift to the Atlantic Salmon Federation.

*If you would like to make a Legacy Gift to ASF and as such become a member of the ASF Royal Wulff Society, please contact Kirsten Rouse or Bill Taylor.
krouse@asf.ca (506) 529-1037
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Shipley family pictured at New Derreen camp, Cascapedia River,
 left to right: Allison, Barb, Walter, Dory, Pam. Absent is John





In the 1800s Roosevelt wrote that: "Wilson's habitation was a quaint-looking log house, perched on the edge of a bank overhanging what is called the interval ... lying between the river and the hills, and its evident antiquity bore testimony that it had belonged to one of the earliest settlers." Today the main lodge and new building can be considered a little more than quaint—more like spectacular—and these days Wilson's is a world-class, multi-season destination.

A FAMILY'S AFFAIR

FOR OVER 200 YEARS THERE'S BEEN A WILSON ON THE MIRAMICHI, "DOING THE RIGHT THING FOR A REASONABLE FEE."

■ MORNING SUN PEEKED OVER THE DARK WOODS, as Karl Wilson steered our canoe upstream from Big Murphy to Dudley Pool. It gave the mist, which hung low over the valley, a magical, and almost otherworldly quality. Fishing new water can be challenging, but much less so when your guide is the latest in a family line dating back seven generations.

We were at "Wilson's on the Miramichi." There was something about that name that reminded me of some of the world's great places of elegance and beauty. Like Beaulieu-sur-Mer in France, or Stratford-upon-Avon in England. To me it had always sounded so exotic. And indeed, for salmon anglers this is hallowed ground.

Situated near the geographic center of New Brunswick, along the beautiful Southwest Miramichi, Wilson's lies at the very heart of salmon country. And the fishing here is the stuff of legend.

On our first pass through the swift flowing pool, Robert and I did not see a fish. But as the sun burnt through the fog, setting the autumn hues aglow, salmon began to roll on the surface. The sudden change in light had apparently "awoken" the fish. Some anglers have named this "the silly 5 minutes" (or 10 or 15 minutes if you're lucky), when a group of quiet salmon will suddenly become restless in their pool and start acting like fresh-from-the-sea grilse. For others, it's known as "the magic moment" but whatever it is called, it's as memorable as it is fleeting. In no time we were into fish. Robert released a fat, two-sea-winter salmon that jumped and ran like a demon possessed, and I hooked and lost his twin when he spit my hook near the end of our tussle.

Connecting to the wildness of a Miramichi salmon is an almost indescribable thrill, so a "long line release" is just fine for me. "Never even needed to handle the fish," I told Karl.



Enjoying the view from up high: Keith, Bonnie and Karl Wilson on the porch of the main lodge, with the new building in the background.

He laughed and nodded in agreement. As if to drive home the point that salmon angling isn't all about the catching of fish, we later took a trip downriver, passing under the famous Priceville Footbridge that spans the river between the communities of McNemee and Priceville, to access Stanley's Front Pool.

In late September, in this part of the country, the fall palette seems to intensify right before your eyes. Robert broke out a double-hander and gave Stanley's big water a good going-over. I was content to sit on the bank listening to the history of the Wilson clan according to Karl, and taking in the entire scene—the angler, the kaleidoscope of color and a swirling, wild river. It was a very good morning indeed.



JOHN WILSON HAD A GOOD EYE FOR REAL ESTATE WHEN he arrived in the new Dominion of Canada in 1803. Fresh from Scotland with his young wife, he ascended the Miramichi River for the first time. Attracted by colonial land grants and the opportunity to forge a new future in the wilderness, he chose his new home well. Recognizing good soil for crops in the river valley, good timber in the nearby forest and an astounding abundance of salmon and trout in the river, he established his homestead in what would become the small village of McNamee on the Upper Miramichi. In so doing, John Wilson would become the patriarch of a long lineage of salmon fishing guides and outfitters. It began in 1855, when his daughter, Agnes, began guiding anglers up into the headwaters of the Miramichi.

Among other notable anglers, Robert Barnwell Roosevelt, uncle to American president Theodore Roosevelt, spoke affectionately of the time he spent fishing at Wilson's. During his trip to the Miramichi in 1862, Roosevelt had very high praise for the man himself. "Instead of preserving and increasing the fish, they obstruct the channel entirely with nets, striving by one grand haul to destroy the supply forever. To this general rule Wilson is the only exception, and may be relied on, not only to do whatever in reason is required, but to do it at moderate price," he wrote in an extensive section of his book, *The Game Fish of the Northern States of America and British Provinces*, dedicated to the time he spent at Wilson's.



The thrill of crossing the Priceville Footbridge to cast over Stanley's Front Pool is matched by the famous Wilson family's hospitality at their camp overlooking the mighty Miramichi River (see page 40).

John's great-grandson Willard and his wife Sarah were very entrepreneurial, operating a general store and post office out of their home, even providing amateur veterinary and undertaking services to local families. They kicked things up a notch in 1928, when they built the first of Wilson's Sporting Camps and began receiving sports, primarily from Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire where their daughter Marie Grace worked as a

nurse in the college infirmary. Marie's tales of the phenomenal salmon fishing "back home" in New Brunswick spread quickly through College staff, generating a steady stream of clients for the new enterprise. Over time, anglers from around the world would beat a path to the Wilson's door.

Today, Willard and Sarah's great-great grandson Keith, along with wife Bonnie and son Karl, continue the family tradition of offering warm hospitality and excellent fishing. And in continuance of their ancestor's entrepreneurial spirit, they have expanded the business, building one of the finest new lodges on the river, just upstream of the old homestead at Wilson's Landing.

The new lodge and cabins sit high up on a bluff overlooking Big Murphy Pool with a sweeping view of the valley below. The "cabins" are nothing short of luxurious, and the main lodge and licensed dining room are beautifully appointed with lots of local salmon memorabilia and art collected over the years. It is here that Bonnie serves delicious homemade meals, including her renowned cream of fiddlehead soup, a true New Brunswick delicacy. The fishing experience is second to none. Wilson's owns or leases a great deal of water on the Miramichi with many miles of productive pools and a strict no-crowding policy, ensuring quality angling and loads of room to stretch out, explore and enjoy.



IT'S NO SECRET THAT WILD SALMON POPULATIONS are struggling. A few years ago, rivers everywhere suffered a particularly tough season. It was a bad year for most salmon runs in North America, yet dire headlines postulating imminent doom seemed to focus on the Miramichi. The subsequent years would be better, but the river's reputation as the greatest salmon-producing river in North America took a hit.

For Keith Wilson it was a wake-up call. He decided to diversify his outfitting operation in order to spread out his business risk across a broader range of seasons and services (perhaps much in the same way his ancestors had offered veterinary and undertaking services from their general store). He recognized that ecotourism was one of the fastest growing segments of the global outdoor market, one which offered new opportunity that would dovetail nicely with their salmon fishing operation. After all, the Wilson family had been providing outdoor adventures for over 150 years.

Wilson divided up his weekly operations in the summer with a focus on salmon outfitting on the weekdays and holiday-makers on the weekends (although weekend guided fishing would also continue to be available). He also recognized he could extend his season by catering to the growing number of ATV and snowmobile riders, who were literally passing by his front door. The new lodge was fortuitously situated along an old rail bed, which runs along the river and has become Snowmobile Route 42, a central artery in an extensive provincial recreational system of over 7,000 kilometers of groomed trails. With a restaurant, lounge and private cabins and rooms to rent, the shoulder season and winter "staycation" market opened up. The addition of meeting facilities likewise launched a burgeoning corporate retreat market.



THE SUDDEN CHANGE IN LIGHT HAD APPARENTLY “AWOKEN” THE FISH. SOME ANGLERS HAVE NAMED THIS “THE SILLY 5 MINUTES.”



An angler casts over Big Murphy Pool, top. Above, Karl Wilson watches as a salmon is carefully released to continue its journey upstream to spawn.

“We built the new lodge in 2005, and began an ambitious and very expensive diversification process in 2012, with the construction of new lodging, a meeting room for corporate retreats and a licensed bar,” says Keith. “The entire plan was seen as a way to supplement our short fishing season by adding business income from other services during the other months of the year. Anglers are happy to see and feel that we are still an exclusive salmon fishing lodge in season, and happy that our company has found a means of maintaining our independent outfitter presence on the Miramichi River, given that the river is primarily a club or corporate destination these days.”

By 2015, Wilson’s on the Miramichi had fully diversified into a four-season resort with “prime time” salmon weeks exclusive to anglers and a day-pass system for local anglers to access otherwise unused pools. “It’s allowed us to keep doing what we love and to carry on a longstanding family tradition,” says Keith. “Salmon numbers continue to struggle, and there are additional new challenges in all Canadian salmon regions. I hope that other clubs, camps, and people with an interest in seeing our sport survive will embrace a business model such as ours.”

His son Karl sees a bright future. “It’s actually brought us a lot of new clients who might come for a snowmobile vacation with their families in the winter and then come back in the summer to try salmon fishing. We’ve introduced a lot of new people to the sport, who’ve never fished for salmon before. It’s really great to see that, at a time when some of our older, regular fishing clients were declining.”



THE FISHING WAS VERY GOOD DURING OUR STAY AT Wilson’s, with action of some kind on every outing. There were lots of raises and several short takes or “burns,” with the final tally of ten landed fish between Robert and I over three days. But it was more than just the raises and hookups and near-hookups that impressed. The Miramichi is alive and teems with life.

Coming from Nova Scotia, where we’ve lost too many salmon rivers to the scourge of open net-pen aquaculture, acid rain, forest clear-cutting and other human abuses, I know all too well what a dead salmon river looks like. It’s pretty much devoid of fish. The Miramichi is anything but. Everywhere I splashed my boots, juvenile fish of all sizes would dart for cover or the safety of deeper water. And in the deep pools, big fish jumped and rolled. It was as heartening to see this abundance of life, as it was to feel a hard tug at the end of my line. Mother Miramichi is still very much alive and well, and she clearly retains her productive ability as one of the greatest Atlantic salmon nurseries in the world. If the problems in the marine environment can be solved, the fish certainly have plenty of healthy habitat to come home to.

Out on the river on our final morning, I asked Karl if he thought his young son Gage might someday become the 8th generation of Wilsons to guide sports here. “Well,” he chuckled, “I’d love it if he did end up doing it too, but I guess that will be up to him . . . and the fish.”

On that note, we are all hoping for many more generations of Wilsons guiding on the Miramichi. 🐟

Raymond Plourde is a regular contributor to the *Atlantic Salmon Journal*.

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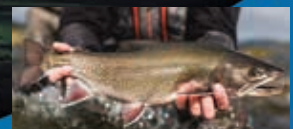
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CONSERVATION NEWS FROM OUR AFFILIATES
NOUVELLES DE NOS AFFILIÉS DU SECTEUR
DE LA CONSERVATION

"Given the challenges smolt face in the open ocean, we want to give them the best fighting chance."

—DR. EDDIE HALFYARD (SEE STORY, PAGE 48)



« Vu les obstacles que les saumoneaux doivent surmonter dans l'océan, nous voulons leur donner les meilleures chances de succès possible. »

—DR EDDIE HALFYARD (VOIR L'ARTICLE À LA PAGE 48)

An old pool-and-weir fish ladder on the Sydney River being retrofitted to accommodate the swimming abilities of gaspereau (above). The final design involved reconfiguring the inside dimensions to allow for more depth and less turbulence (see story page 48).

Rénovation d'une ancienne passe à seuils déversants sur la rivière Sydney pour tenir compte des capacités de nage du gaspereau (photo ci-haut). Le plan final prévoyait la reconfiguration des dimensions internes pour augmenter la profondeur et réduire la turbulence (voir l'article à la page 48).



PREPARING FOR THE DOSSIER. SEE P. 48, AMY WESTON

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- Décomptes à Terre-Neuve
- Rivière Cow
- Ruisseau MacPherson
- Travaux sur la Mitis
- Suivant les traces de Richard Adams

NOVA SCOTIA

A Better Ladder

Sydney River fish passage improved.

In the spring of 2014, the Nova Scotia Salmon Association (NSSA) NSLC Adopt-a-Stream program undertook an assessment of fishways in the province. At the Sydney River, in Cape Breton, field staff witnessed thousands of gaspereau schooling at the base of the dam used to provide freshwater for the Sysco Steel plant. Gaspereau (also known as alewife) are important to productive ecosystems, bringing biomass (nutrients) into freshwater systems.

In 2016, NSLC Adopt-a-Stream's Aquatic Restoration Biologist, Bob Rutherford, and fish passage technician, Will Daniels, surveyed the old pool-and-weir fish ladder and worked on designing a retrofit that would accommodate the swimming abilities of gaspereau. The final design involved reconfiguring the inside dimensions to allow for more depth and less turbulence, and provided access into the fishway for as much of the tidal range as possible. Rather than a conventional chute, the project designers chose a short (just 3m long) Alaska Steep Pass, to be set at a 20% slope, which would provide for more depth.

The project was funded in part by the federal Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program, and had lots of local support, not only from the dam owner—Nova Scotia Lands, which provided help with site planning and preparation—but also from ACAP Cape Breton, a community group active in fish habitat restoration, and from the Membertou First Nation.

"The folks from ACAP and Membertou were a huge help and made the project really doable. Besides their manual labour, an excavator was used to place the Steep Pass into position and armour-rock the fish ladder in place," says Daniels, who led the construction team on-site. "I'm looking forward to see if next June's gaspereau run makes use of our handiwork."

—Amy Weston



Workers retrofit an old pool-and-weir fish ladder on the Sydney River with Alaska Steep Pass type chutes. / Des travailleurs transforment l'ancienne passe à seuils déversants sur la rivière Sydney en passe à ralentisseurs de type Alaska.

NOUVELLE-ÉCOSSE

Une passe migratoire plus efficace

Amélioration du passage des poissons dans la rivière Sydney.

Au printemps de 2014, le programme Adopt-a-Stream NSLC de la Nova Scotia Salmon Association (NSSA) a fait l'inventaire des passes migratoires de la province. Dans la rivière Sydney, au Cap-Breton, le personnel sur le terrain a aperçu des milliers de gaspareaux se rassemblant en banc au pied du barrage utilisé pour approvisionner en eau douce l'aciérie de Sysco. Le gaspareau est une espèce importante pour la production des écosystèmes contribuant de la biomasse (nutriments) aux écosystèmes d'eau douce.

En 2016, Bob Rutherford, biologiste du programme, et Will Daniels, technicien spécialiste en passes migratoires, ont examiné l'ancienne passe à seuils déversants et collaboré à la conception d'un plan de rénovation qui tiendrait compte de la capacité de nage du gaspareau. Le plan définitif prévoyait la reconfiguration des dimensions internes pour augmenter la profondeur et réduire la turbulence ainsi que permettre l'accès à la passe à partir de la plus grande amplitude de marée possible. Plutôt que d'aménager une chute conventionnelle, les concepteurs du projet ont choisi une courte passe à ralentisseurs de type Alaska (d'une longueur de 3 mètres) devant être installée sur une pente de 20 degrés pour une plus grande profondeur.

Le projet a été financé en partie par le Programme de partenariats relatifs à la conservation des pêches récréatives du gouvernement fédéral et a bénéficié de beaucoup de soutien à l'échelle locale – non seulement de la part du propriétaire du barrage – Nova Scotia Lands, qui a contribué aux plans et aux préparations du site, mais aussi de la part d'ACAP Cape Breton, organisme communautaire qui se consacre à la remise en état de l'habitat halieutique, et de la Première Nation de Membertou.

« Les membres d'ACAP et de la Première Nation de Membertou ont été d'un grand secours et ont permis de mettre le projet en œuvre. En plus de profiter de leur labeur, nous avons utilisé une excavatrice pour mettre la passe en position et la fixer par enrochement, déclare Will Daniels, qui a dirigé les travaux de construction. J'ai hâte de voir comment le banc de gaspareaux utilise les fruits de notre beau travail. »

—Amy Weston

Rivière West, Sheet Harbour, 2017

« Une année couronnée de succès. »

—Dr Eddie Halfyard

Le 24 octobre dernier, deux énormes grues ont installé un silo mesurant 53 pieds de hauteur sur les rives de la rivière Killag, principal tributaire de la rivière West, Sheet Harbour, sur la côte est de la Nouvelle-Écosse. Ce « doseur » contiendra de la chaux en poudre nécessaire pour créer un lait de chaux qui sera déversé le long du cours d'eau au taux de 600 à 650 tonnes par année en vue de faire passer le pH de l'eau à 5,7.

C'est la deuxième fois qu'un doseur de chaux est installé dans cette région pour s'attaquer aux répercussions causées par les pluies acides, considérées comme l'une des principales causes de l'effondrement des populations de saumons et d'ombles de fontaine. Le premier doseur a été installé en 2005, sur le cours principal de la rivière West. Le processus a donné de bons résultats comme le confirme la production de saumoneaux (ainsi que les données empiriques sur les stocks d'ombles de fontaine plus sains), ce qui

AMY WESTON

2017 West River Sheet Harbour

“A tremendously successful year.”

—Dr. Eddie Halfyard

On October 24, two large construction cranes installed a 53-foot high silo on the banks of the Killag River, the main tributary of the West River Sheet Harbour, on Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore. This “doser” will hold powdered limestone to create a lime slurry that will be metered out into the watercourse at the rate of 600-650 tonnes annually, with the objective of raising the water pH to 5.7.

This is the second lime doser to be put in place to address the legacy of acid rain in this region, which is considered one of the main causes of collapsing Atlantic salmon and trout populations. The first installation took place in 2005, on the main branch of the West River. It produced favourable results in terms of smolt production (as well as anecdotal reports of healthier trout stocks), leading the Nova Scotia Salmon Association (NSSA) to expand what was, initially, a 10-year pilot project.

The NSSA's comprehensive plan for this watershed also includes terrestrial liming, a somewhat experimental treatment whereby helicopters are used to broadcast powdered limestone over parts of the watershed. In 2016, an area of about 66 hectares was treated, at the rate of 10 tonnes per hectare. In 2017, a comparable area was covered, though with considerable improvements in efficiency. The Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources supported the project by providing expertise, innovation, aircraft and personnel.

In addition to water quality remediation, the project involves channel restoration work aimed at restoring physical habitat on the main branch. To date, 19 rock-sill structures have been installed over a two-kilometre stretch, serving to re-establish the river's meandering course, resulting in a more natural pool-and-riffle pattern that is conducive to salmon migration and spawning behaviour.

Results from a counting fence indicate that most salmon were utilizing the upstream habitat, unlike in previous years, when the majority dropped back to a downstream lake. Snorkeling surveys confirmed that salmon were occupying newly created pools two to three metres deep above the fence.

“The West River Project addresses all the freshwater life stages of Atlantic salmon, with the goal of increasing annual smolt production—maximizing the quantity and quality. Given challenges there, we want to give them the best fighting chance,” says Dr. Eddie Halfyard, project research scientist.

—Amy Weston

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Down Home Solution

A designed and built-in-PEI fishway.

Last June, the Souris and Area branch of the P.E.I. Wildlife Federation installed a specially designed fish ladder on a culvert on the Selkirk Road, at Cow River. Before the fish ladder was built, only larger fish such as Atlantic salmon and bigger brook trout could make the leap to head upstream. Later in the summer, the fishway was removed and improved before being reinstalled, something that was possible because the three meter (10-foot) long aluminum structure was designed and built in P.E.I. Local construction also kept the cost to only a fraction of more expensive fishways elsewhere.



AMY WESTON

Two cranes help place a second doser silo in the West River Sheet Harbour watershed. / Deux grues installent un deuxième doseur de chaux dans le bassin hydrographique de la rivière West, Sheet Harbour.

a amené la Nova Scotia Salmon Association (NSSA) à prolonger ce projet pilote qui devait, à l'origine, durer 10 ans.

Le plan d'action exhaustif de la NSSA pour ce bassin hydrographique comprend également le chaulage des sols, technique de traitement à la chaux quelque peu expérimental, qui prévoit l'épandage de chaux en poudre par hélicoptère sur plusieurs parties du bassin hydrographique. En 2016, une région d'une superficie de 66 hectares a été traitée à la chaux, au taux de 10 tonnes par hectare. En 2017, une région d'une superficie comparable a été traitée avec des améliorations sur le plan de l'efficacité. Le ministère des Ressources naturelles de la Nouvelle-Écosse a appuyé le projet en contribuant l'expertise, l'innovation, les hélicoptères et le personnel.

Ce projet, qui vise à améliorer la qualité de l'eau, comprend également des travaux de remise en état de chenaux en vue de restaurer l'habitat physique du cours principal de la rivière. Jusqu'à présent, 19 seuils rocheux ont été aménagés sur un tronçon de deux kilomètres afin de rétablir les méandres du cours d'eau et de créer une succession plus naturelle de fosses et de radiers qui favorise la migration et le frai du saumon.

Les résultats à une barrière de dénombrement ont révélé que la majorité des saumons utilisaient l'habitat en amont, contrairement aux années précédentes où ils préféraient un lac en aval. Des relevés en apnée ont confirmé que les saumons occupaient les fosses nouvellement créées de deux à trois mètres de profondeur en amont de la barrière de dénombrement.

« Le projet de chaulage de la rivière West vise à améliorer l'habitat pour tous les stades du cycle de vie en eau douce du saumon atlantique, avec comme but ultime d'augmenter la production de saumoneaux tant sur le plan de la quantité que de la qualité. Vu les obstacles qu'ils doivent surmonter dans l'océan, nous voulons leur donner les meilleures chances de succès possible », précise le Dr Eddie Halfyard, chercheur scientifique.

—Amy Weston

“The true test will be next spring when we can see how well the fish use this,” said Fred Cheverie, Souris and Area Wildlife Branch’s Watershed Coordinator. Other groups who want to install fish ladders at problem culverts will be watching closely as well.

—Martin Silverstone

NEW BRUNSWICK

Keeping It Cool

Bank restoration helps protect Nashwaak cold-water tributary.

One of New Brunswick’s great historic Atlantic salmon rivers, the Nashwaak is a tributary of the Saint John. Its headwaters come close to those of the upper Southwest Miramichi near Napadogan, and in fact, the river served as an ancient travel route between the two watersheds. Along with the rest of the Saint John River system and Bay of Fundy rivers, there are no longer Atlantic salmon fisheries on the Nashwaak due to low returns—no First Nations food fishery or recreational angling.

But salmon on the Nashwaak keep trucking along. The river sees annual returns of around 300-700 adults, and even exceeded 2500 adult returns when marine survival hit a recent 15% high in 2010. The Nashwaak Watershed Association (NWA), an ASF affiliate, works to ensure that good quality freshwater habitat is available for fish like Atlantic salmon. Consistent with ASF’s Recovery Strategy, the NWA set out to identify root cause issues in the watershed by hiring Parish Aquatic Services to complete a large-scale geomorphic assessment along the river. The study qualified processes such as erosion, deposition, stream widening, sediment movement and health of the riparian zone. It categorized sections of the river as healthy or perhaps not so healthy, and identified where improvements can be made.



An excavator re-grades the stream bank and installs a rock toe. L-R: Jill Hudgins, NWA Project Manager, Jeff McIsaac, landowner and Nathan Wilbur, ASF NB Program Director. / Une excavatrice nivelle les berges de la rivière et installe une clé d'enrochement. De gauche à droite : Jill Hudgins, gestionnaire de projet de la NWA, Jeff McIsaac, propriétaire foncier, et Nathan Wilbur, directeur des programmes au Nouveau-Brunswick, FSA.



FRED CHEVERIE

A fish's eye image of a new ladder on the Cow River, specifically designed for the kind of culverts commonly found in PEI. / Une image en grand angle de la nouvelle passe migratoire sur la rivière Cow conçue pour le type de ponceau que l'on retrouve fréquemment dans la province.

ÎLE-DU-PRINCE-EDOUARD

Solution terre à terre

Une passe migratoire conçue à l'Î.-P.-É. pour l'Î.-P.-É.

En juin dernier, le bureau de Souris et région de la Fédération de la faune de l'Î.-P.-É. a aménagé une passe migratoire dans un ponceau de la rivière Cow, sur le chemin Selkirk. Avant la construction de la passe migratoire, seuls les gros poissons comme les saumons atlantiques et les ombles de fontaine de grande taille pouvaient remonter la rivière. Plus tard au courant de l'été, la passe a été retirée et améliorée avant d'être réinstallée, ce qui a été possible parce que la structure en aluminium de trois mètres (10 pieds) a été conçue et construite dans la province. Le fait qu'elle ait été construite localement a permis de réduire le coût à une fraction du celui des passes migratoires plus coûteuses construites ailleurs.

« Ce n'est qu'au printemps que nous pourrions évaluer l'efficacité de la passe, indique Fred Cheverie, coordinateur du bureau de Souris et région de la Fédération. D'autres organismes qui veulent installer une passe migratoire à un ponceau à problème surveilleront de près la situation.

—Martin Silverstone

NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK

Abris d'eaux fraîches

La restauration des berges contribue à protéger le tributaire d'eaux froides de la Nashwaak.

La Nashwaak, l'une des rivières d'importance historique pour le saumon atlantique du Nouveau-Brunswick, est un tributaire du fleuve Saint-Jean. Son bassin versant se situe à proximité de celui du cours supérieur de la Miramichi Sud-Ouest, près de Napadogan, et d'ailleurs, la rivière a servi d'ancien corridor entre les deux bassins versants. Tout comme le reste du système fluvial de la Saint-Jean et des rivières de la baie de Fundy, il n'y a pas de pêche sur la Nashwaak en raison des

NASHWAAK WATERSHED ASSOCIATION INC.

The study revealed that the Nashwaak is widening and shallowing, in part due to excessive sediment inputs from erosion. This in turn causes the river to warm. Recommendations to benefit salmon included focusing on cold-water enhancement and reducing sediment input. When the NWAJ Project Manager, Jill Hudgins, and I embarked on a tour of the river to identify potential restoration sites, the mouth of MacPherson Brook in Giant's Glen fit the criteria for a good project. Together, ASF and NWAJ prepared a conceptual restoration design and they submitted an application to DFO's Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program. After receiving appropriate funding this summer, NWAJ hired Hillcon Consulting to prepare the design, and then a contractor to carry out the work. Today, the mouth of MacPherson Brook is stable, no longer discharging excessive amounts of fine sediment into the Nashwaak—another important cold-water stream that will provide quality rearing habitat for juvenile Atlantic salmon.

—Nathan Wilbur

MAINE

Solid Returns

Salmon numbers up in Maine.

Atlantic salmon returns on the Penobscot River hit a six-year high in 2017, with 845 returning fish. The run consisted of 535 multi-sea-winter salmon and 310 grilse. All of these fish were trapped at new fishways that had been built at a dam in Milford, on the mainstem of the Penobscot, or in Orono on the Stillwater Branch. These dams are located above a number of lower Penobscot River tributaries, such as Souadabscook Stream and Kenduskeag Stream. So, it is likely that additional salmon came back to the watershed this year, but were not counted.

In addition to salmon, the Penobscot has seen a resurgence in the numbers of American shad, alewives, blueback herring and other sea-run fish in the years since the removal of the Veazie and Great Works Dams. The run of river herring—consisting of both

piètres retours de saumons – aucune pêche d'alimentation autochtone ou de pêche récréative.

Mais les saumons de la Nashwaak continuent de rebondir. Entre 300 et 700 saumons adultes y retournent chaque année et leur nombre dépassait le cap des 2 500 lorsque la survie dans l'océan a atteint 15 % en 2010, son niveau le plus haut. La Nashwaak Watershed Association (NWAJ), organisme affilié de la FSA, veille à ce qu'il y ait de l'habitat dulcicole pour les poissons comme les saumons atlantiques. Conformément à la Stratégie de rétablissement de la FSA, la NWAJ a entrepris de cerner les problèmes fondamentaux dans le cours d'eau en demandant à la compagnie Parish Aquatic Services d'effectuer une évaluation géomorphologique d'envergure de la rivière. L'étude a permis d'identifier les processus problématiques comme l'érosion, la déposition de sédiments, l'élargissement de la rivière, le mouvement des sédiments et la santé de la zone riveraine. Elle a permis de caractériser les sections de la rivière comme étant en santé ou en moins bonne santé et d'identifier les zones où des améliorations s'imposaient.

L'étude a révélé que la rivière s'élargissait et diminuait en profondeur, en partie à cause d'apports en sédiments excessifs causés par l'érosion. Ce phénomène entraîne à son tour le réchauffement de l'eau. Parmi les recommandations formulées pour améliorer le sort des saumons, mentionnons l'amélioration des zones d'eaux froides et la réduction de l'apport en sédiments. Lorsque Jill Hudgins, gestionnaire de projet de la NWAJ, et moi-même avons entrepris une tournée de la rivière pour repérer les sites qui profiteraient d'une remise en état, l'embouchure du ruisseau MacPherson, dans la région de Giant's Glen, semblait répondre aux critères. La FSA et la NWAJ ont préparé un plan de restauration et l'ont soumis au Programme de partenariats relatifs à la conservation des pêches récréatives du MPO. Après avoir obtenu les fonds nécessaires cet été, la NWAJ a retenu les services de Hillcon Consulting en vue de préparer le plan final et un entrepreneur pour effectuer les travaux. Aujourd'hui, l'embouchure du ruisseau MacPherson est stable et ne déverse plus une quantité excessive de sédiments fins dans la Nashwaak. Il s'agit donc d'un autre cours d'eaux froides important qui fournira de l'habitat d'élevage de qualité aux saumons atlantiques juvéniles.

—Nathan Wilbur

MAINE

Une montaison solide

Montaison à la hausse dans le Maine.

En 2017, la montaison de saumons dans la rivière Penobscot a atteint son plus haut niveau en 6 ans, 845 saumons ayant remonté la rivière dont 535 pluribermarins et 310 madeleineaux. Tous ces poissons ont été capturés aux passes migratoires nouvellement aménagées aux barrages situés à Milford, sur le tronc principal de la rivière, et à Orono, sur la branche Stillwater. Les barrages se trouvent en amont d'un certain nombre de tributaires du cours inférieur de la rivière comme les ruisseaux Souadabscook et Kenduskeag. Il est donc fort probable que le nombre de saumons remontant la rivière ait été encore plus élevé, mais que ces poissons n'aient pas été dénombrés.

En plus des saumons, la Penobscot a vu réapparaître un certain nombre d'aloses savoureuses, de gaspareaux, aloses d'été et d'autres poissons anadromes au cours des années qui ont suivi le démantèlement des barrages Veazie et Great Works. La montaison d'aloses faux hareng, qui se composait de gaspareaux et d'aloses d'été, se chiffrait probablement à plus de 2 millions de poissons cette année. Ce nombre comprend les poissons dénombrés au barrage à Milford et dans le ruisseau Blackman où la FSA a aménagé deux passes migratoires, ainsi que dans les tributaires où les montaisons ne sont pas dénombrées.



Atlantic salmon and alewives in the fish lift at Milford Dam on the Penobscot. The fish lift was redesigned to be more effective and less abusive to diadromous fish returning from the ocean into the Penobscot. / Des saumons atlantiques et des gaspareaux dans la passe migratoire au barrage à Milford, sur la rivière Penobscot. La passe a été réaménagée pour en améliorer l'efficacité et la rendre moins dangereuse pour les poissons diadromes retournant de l'océan.

alewives and blueback herring—was likely well over two million fish this year. This includes fish counted at both the Milford Dam and on Blackman Stream, where ASF has built two fishways, as well as on tributaries with runs that are not counted.

The number of shad counted at Milford was 3,868, which was actually down from 7,870 in 2016. Anglers have begun to fish the Penobscot in larger numbers the past few years, targeting both shad and striped bass in the newly restored and free-flowing section of the Penobscot below the Milford Dam. These fish species were unable to make it this far up the river when the Veazie and Great Works dams were still in place.

Salmon returns were also up on the Kennebec, Saco, and Narraguagus Rivers this year, compared to returns over the past several years. Following fall redd counts, state biologists will estimate the run size for rivers that do not have counting facilities, such as the Sheepscot, Machias, East Machias, Pleasant and Dennys Rivers.

—John Burrows

NEWFOUNDLAND

Worrisome Numbers

Early trends continued to season's end.

The 2017 salmon run situation in Newfoundland and Labrador did not improve in the second half of the season. By mid-July, DFO declared that there would be no retention of salmon for the remainder of the 2017 season.

Many salmon were saved, but by the time hook and release only angling began, most fishers had probably already filled their tag quota for the season. In hindsight, no salmon should have been killed in 2017, considering the return data.

How do we know whether to kill or not to kill at season's start? Maybe salmon should not be retained until we get some indication of improved returns. There are anglers who would be upset by such an approach. Indeed, there were folks who wanted their license fees back when retention was halted this past July. Politics should be set aside and conservation must be the driving consideration. In 2018, let us hope we proceed with much greater caution.

When I reported on NL salmon returns in the Autumn 2017 issue of *ASF*, major rivers on the island seemed to be down about 50% from their previous five-year averages. And that's how it ended. The Exploits totaled 15,563 for 2017, compared to a past five-year average of 29,416. Salmon Brook, a tributary used as an indicator of the Gander River, had only 394 fish compared to 1,480. Conne River was down from 1,865 to 712. Harry's fared not quite so badly with 2,396, down from 3,645. The data is very limited, so it is essential that we count salmon at more locations.

In Labrador, only a few minor rivers have counting fences in a vast wilderness with a myriad of lakes and rivers. Given dismal returns on the few rivers that have counting fences, little action has been taken to kill fewer fish. The Sandhill River, for example, has not met its minimum spawning requirement for the past eight years, yet DFO allows a four fish retention. In world-class salmon rivers like the Flowers, Hunt, Lewis, Eagle, Pinware and Forteau, we have absolutely no solid data. The Pinware which seems healthier by anecdotal measurement, has only a two fish limit, albeit still justified. Essentially, anecdotal data is all we have and management strategy for the next season can only be based on information gained from anglers.

Le nombre d'aloses dénombrées au barrage à Milford s'établissait à 3 868, accusant une baisse par rapport à 2016, où il s'établissait à 7 870. Il y a un plus grand nombre de pêcheurs sur la Penobscot depuis quelques années qui sont à la recherche d'aloses et de bars d'Amérique dans la section nouvellement restaurée et aux eaux libres de la Penobscot en aval du barrage à Milford. Ces espèces de poissons ne pouvaient remonter la rivière jusqu'à cet endroit lorsque les barrages Veazie et Great Works étaient encore en place.

Les montaisons de saumons étaient également à la hausse, cette année, dans les rivières Kennebec, Saco et Narraguagus, comparativement aux années précédentes. Les biologistes évalueront la taille de la montaison dans les rivières qui ne sont pas équipées d'une barrière de dénombrement comme les rivières Sheepscot, Machias, East Machias, Pleasant et Dennys en procédant à un dénombrement des nids.

—John Burrows

TERRE-NEUVE

Des chiffres inquiétants

Les premières tendances observées se sont poursuivies jusqu'à la fin de la saison.

Les montaisons de saumons de 2017 dans les rivières de Terre-Neuve ne se sont pas améliorées au cours de la deuxième moitié de la saison. À la mi-juillet, le MPO a déclaré que la rétention des saumons ne serait plus autorisée pour le reste de la saison de pêche.

De nombreux saumons ont été épargnés, mais la plupart des pêcheurs avaient probablement déjà atteint leur contingent quotidien lorsque la remise à l'eau a été rendue obligatoire. À bien y penser, on n'aurait pas dû pouvoir conserver de saumons en 2017 vu les données sur les montaisons.

Comment déterminer au début de la saison les périodes où l'on devrait permettre ou interdire la rétention des prises? Peut-être ne faudrait-il pas conserver le saumon jusqu'à ce que l'on ait confirmé une amélioration de la montaison. Cette approche déplairait à de nombreux pêcheurs. Certains d'entre eux ont, en effet, demandé le remboursement de leurs droits de permis lorsqu'ils n'ont plus eu le droit de conserver leurs prises en juillet dernier. Nous devrions mettre la politique de côté et faire de la conservation



More counting facilities are needed on Newfoundland rivers. This counting fence on the Conne River recorded a dramatic drop in fish numbers in 2017. / Il est essentiel d'installer plus de barrières de dénombrement sur les rivières de Terre-Neuve. Cette barrière de dénombrement sur la rivière Conne a enregistré une baisse spectaculaire du nombre de saumons en 2017.

DON IVANY

I fished the Pinware ten hours a day for two weeks. I did well, but I may have just been lucky, fishing at a time when salmon were moving through. Depending on anglers' success, or lack thereof, isn't scientific and not good enough. We must find ways to count salmon in these rivers. Otherwise, how can we manage stocks with almost no knowledge of their dynamics? It is time for anglers to make their feelings known.

—Paul Smith

QUEBEC

Mitis River

Major financial investment to repair wild Atlantic salmon migration infrastructure at a key in-river obstacle.

On October 4, the Ministry of Forests, Wildlife and Parks (MFFP) announced that major infrastructure work on the Mitis River had been completed. Since 2016, \$150,000 was made available to restore the bypass barrier and to repair the riverbed to optimize wild Atlantic salmon migration.

Since the construction of the salmon trap infrastructure in 1964, the salmon population of the Mitis increased to 1,000 fish, on average.

Sport fishing for wild Atlantic salmon on the Mitis generates more than 1,600 rod days, maintains six direct jobs and contributes nearly \$1 million annually to the economy.

The project was realized through the partnership and support of the Corporation de gestion de la pêche sportive de la rivière Mitis, Hydro Quebec, the Quebec Wildlife Foundation and the Fédération Québécoise pour le Saumon atlantique.

—Charles Cusson



ZEC RIVIÈRE MITIS

Hydro Quebec technicians complete repairs to infrastructure on the Mitis to improve fish passage. / Des techniciens d'Hydro Québec s'affairent à améliorer les infrastructures de migrations sur la rivière Mitis.

notre principale préoccupation. Espérons qu'en 2018 nous ferons preuve de prudence.

Lorsque j'ai fait état des montaisons de saumons dans les rivières de Terre-Neuve dans le numéro d'automne 2017 du *ASJ*, celles-ci semblaient accuser une baisse d'environ 50 % par rapport à la moyenne des cinq dernières années. La montaison sur la rivière Exploits s'établissait à 15 563 en 2017, par rapport à sa moyenne quinquennale de 29 416. Le nombre de saumons dans le ruisseau Salmon, tributaire utilisé comme indicateur de la rivière Gander, n'a accueilli que 394 poissons comparativement à 1 480. Le nombre de saumons dans la rivière Conne a connu une baisse, passant de 1 865 à 712. La rivière Harry's s'en est assez bien tirée, sa montaison s'établissant à 2 396 comparativement à 3 645. Les données sont très limitées. Il est donc essentiel de procéder à des décomptes dans d'autres cours d'eau.

Au Labrador, seules quelques rivières de moindre envergure sont dotées d'une barrière de dénombrement dans une vaste région ponctuée d'innombrables lacs et rivières. Compte tenu des montaisons déplorables observées sur le faible nombre de rivières dotées d'une barrière de dénombrement, peu de mesures ont été mises en place pour réduire le nombre de poissons conservés. La rivière Sandhill, par exemple, n'a pas atteint le minimum de conservation au cours des huit dernières années, pourtant le MPO permet encore aux pêcheurs de conserver 4 saumons. Nous ne disposons d'aucune donnée solide sur les rivières de calibre mondial comme les rivières Flowers, Hunt, Lewis, Eagle, Pinware et Forteau. La rivière Pinware, qui semble en meilleur état si l'on se fie aux données empiriques, a une limite quotidienne de prises de 2, certes encore justifiée. En gros, nous ne disposons que de données empiriques, et la gestion pour la prochaine saison de pêche ne peut être déterminée qu'en fonction des renseignements fournis par les pêcheurs.

J'ai passé deux semaines à pêcher la Pinware 10 heures par jour. La pêche a été bonne, mais j'ai peut-être eu de la chance, ayant pêché à un moment où les saumons étaient de passage. Mais fonder les mesures de gestion sur le succès ou l'échec de la pêche n'est pas une méthode scientifique et est inacceptable. Nous devons trouver des façons de dénombrer les saumons dans ces rivières. Autrement, comment pourrions-nous gérer les stocks sans données probantes? Il est grand temps pour les pêcheurs de faire connaître leur opinion.

—Paul Smith

QUÉBEC

Rivière Mitis

Investissements majeurs dans les infrastructures pour la mise en valeur du saumon de la rivière Mitis.

Le 4 octobre dernier, le ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs a annoncé que des investissements majeurs sont réalisés dans les installations servant à la mise en valeur du saumon de la rivière Mitis. Depuis 2016, plus de 150 000 \$ ont été investis dans la restauration de la barrière de déviation et de l'aménagement du lit de la rivière afin d'optimiser les montaisons de saumon.

Depuis la construction en 1964, les installations destinées à capturer les saumons ont permis d'augmenter la population pour atteindre 1 000 saumons par année en moyenne.

La pêche sportive au saumon sur la Mitis génère plus de 1 600 jours/pêche, permet de maintenir six emplois directs et représente près de 1 M\$ en retombées économiques.

Le projet a été réalisé en coopération avec la Corporation de gestion de la pêche sportive de la rivière Mitis, en partenariat avec Hydro-Québec et la Fondation de la faune du Québec et avec l'appui de la Fédération québécoise pour le saumon atlantique.

—Charles Cusson



Work was done along a 37-meter stretch of the Causapschal River to repair damage caused by erosion. / Les travaux complétés sur la rivière Causapschal visent à empêcher l'érosion riveraine.

Team Effort

CN – Shoreline stabilization on the Causapschal River at the Marais pool.

This past September, work was completed to repair and stabilize the northeast shoreline above the Marais pool sector on the Causapschal River. This project had been on the drawing board for more than two years, and is part of the mitigation work that CN agreed to complete in the watershed, in the wake of the 2015 emergency work done in Shoemaker Pool on the Matapedia River, to address a serious erosion problem close to the rail line.

Work was done along a 37-meter stretch in accordance with strict guidelines agreed to by local stakeholders. It repaired damage caused by erosion that was threatening to open new channels that would allow salmon to migrate around the barrier fence.

The CGRMP, which manages the river, classified the stabilization work of the shoreline as a high priority. The completion of the repairs will not only ensure the protection of the Causapschal River's wild Atlantic salmon, but also help to maintain sport fishing activities and the important associated economic spin-offs.

Federal and provincial governments, Native community and local municipal government representatives were all involved in giving the final approval for the project.

Follow-up inspections will be done in 2018 and 2020 to evaluate the physical stability of the work and the state of vegetation along the shoreline.

—France Moreau

Director – Environmental Impact Evaluations CN

Travail d'équipe

CN - Stabilisation d'une rive à la fosse des Marais sur la rivière Causapschal.

Des travaux de stabilisation de la rive nord-est en amont du secteur de la fosse Les Marais dans la rivière Causapschal ont été conclus en septembre. Ce projet, en développement depuis plus de deux ans, vise à compenser les impacts potentiels des travaux d'urgence réalisés par le CN en 2015 dans la fosse du Cordonnier afin de freiner la problématique de surcreusement du lit de la rivière et l'affouillement de la rive en bordure du chemin de fer.

Les travaux complétés, développés en étroite collaboration avec les intervenants locaux, visent à empêcher l'érosion riveraine qui risque de ouvrir des brèches créant des couloirs d'échappement des saumons vers l'extérieur de la fosse de protection.

Les travaux ont été réalisés sur une distance d'environ 37 mètres en amont de la barrière d'arrêt de la fosse Les Marais. La méthode de stabilisation est celle du perré en empierrement combiné au génie végétal en haut de talus.

La stabilisation riveraine de cette section de berge était classée hautement prioritaire pour le gestionnaire de cette rivière, la CGRMP. La réalisation du projet permet d'assurer le maintien de la protection de la population de grands saumons de la rivière Causapschal ainsi que de l'ensemble des activités de pêche sportive et retombées économiques s'y rattachant.

Les travaux ont reçu toutes les approbations environnementales requises. Les ministères fédéraux et provinciaux, les Autochtones, la MRC et la municipalité ont également été consultés dans le processus d'autorisation.

Un suivi des travaux de stabilisation sera réalisé en 2018 et 2020 afin d'évaluer la stabilité physique de l'aménagement et l'état de la végétation.

—France Moreau

Directrice, Évaluation des impacts environnementaux CN



Journal editor Martin Silverstone met with Joe Tremblay (photo) on the banks of the Matapedia River at Glenn Emma, last July. / Martin Silverstone, rédacteur en chef du *Atlantic Salmon Journal*, a rencontré Joe Tremblay (photo) sur les rives de la Matapédia, dans le secteur Glenn Emma, en juillet dernier.

MARTIN SILVERSTONE

NEW BREED

A young man on the Matapedia takes up guiding as a career. First in a series on Atlantic salmon guides.

They had their tricks, those old guides. Like Richard Adams, who had a technique of hopping from rock to rock in his hip waders, as if he was walking on water, to net a salmon. Warren Gilker could carve a working pair of wooden pliers out of a single piece of lumber, while François Mastenapeo of the Etamamiou River would stop to smoke a cigarette before telling his sport to recast to a raised salmon. Each acquired these bits of knowledge through years of experience. Adams worked as a log driver which helped his balance, Gilker perfected his carving skills during long nights spent guarding the Cascapedia River, and Mastenapeo learned from years of practice that exactly two minutes (or the time it takes to smoke a cigarette) was the perfect waiting time required to hook a curious salmon.

Jonathan (Joe) Tremblay, an 18-year-old guide on the Matapedia River may not have had much time to develop a quiver of tricks like these old timers, but he is showing great promise. First off, you don't get hired on at Glenn Emma, a section of limited rods, unless you are a talented, bilingual and informed salmon guide. By all accounts he is doing a fine job, demonstrating knowledge about the river and its salmon. Charles Cusson was certainly impressed. "It was the first time I was guided by someone who wasn't alive when I started salmon angling," said the Quebec regional program director. "He put me over salmon, he was fun to be with and very engaging to talk to."

Tremblay, who at 18 is the youngest guide on the river, was born and raised in Causapscal. His grandfather, Leo Barrest, introduced

NOUVELLE GÉNÉRATION

Un jeune homme décide d'embrasser la carrière de guide de pêche sur la Matapédia. Voici le premier d'une série d'articles consacrée aux guides de pêche au saumon atlantique.

Ils avaient quelques tours dans leur sac, ces anciens guides. Richard Adams, par exemple, qui sautait d'un rocher à l'autre vêtu de ses bottes-pantalons, comme s'il marchait sur l'eau, pour attraper un saumon dans son filet, Warren Gilker, qui pouvait sculpter une paire de pinces à partir d'un morceau de bois, et Christian Meshtoko, sur la rivière Etamamiou, qui fumait une cigarette avant de dire à son client de relancer sa ligne pour capturer le saumon attiré vers la surface. Chacun d'eux a accumulé ces bribes d'information au fil de leurs longues années d'expérience. Richard Adams a travaillé comme draveur, ce qui l'a aidé à demeurer en équilibre, Warren a perfectionné ses talents de sculpteur pendant les longues nuits passées à surveiller la Cascapédia et Christian Meshtoko a appris, au bout d'années de pratique, qu'il fallait exactement deux minutes (ou le temps qu'il faut pour fumer une cigarette) pour prendre un saumon curieux.

Jonathan (Joe) Tremblay, un guide sur la Matapédia âgé de 18 ans, n'a peut-être pas encore eu beaucoup de temps pour acquérir son lot de stratagèmes comme ces anciens vétérans, mais un avenir très prometteur l'attend. Pour commencer, on ne se fait pas embaucher à Glenn Emma, secteur contingenté où le nombre de perches est limité, à moins d'être un guide de pêche au saumon talentueux, bilingue et averti. De toute évidence, il fait un excellent travail, démontrant sa connaissance de la rivière et du saumon. Charles Cusson a certes été impressionné. « C'était la première fois que je bénéficiais des services

SALAR

GUIDES

WINTER 2017 | HIVER 2017

"Joe" Tremblay stands beside a wooden carving of his boyhood hero, Richard Adams. / « Joe » Tremblay debout à côté d'une sculpture en bois de son héros d'enfance, Richard Adams.

MARTIN SILVERSTONE



him to Atlantic salmon fly-fishing at a very young age. It was a solid foundation to build on, as Leo had guided in the days of Richard Adams.

Joe caught his first salmon at 11, and it was the only salmon he ever killed. Tremblay is part of a new generation of guides, for whom live release is the norm. These days, more and more anglers, especially the new, younger generation, are buying into live release. They find it fun and rewarding and they are aware of the socioeconomic importance of the fishery.

Young guides like Tremblay, who can more easily relate to this new wave of salmon angling aficionados, have an important role to play. The Glenn Emma guide, as young as he is, in addition to his motivated and industrious work ethic, also has a royal guiding pedigree. When he was just a baby in the crib, Richard Adams, who knew his father and grandfather, paid the family a visit and said hello to the infant future guide!

Little did Richard know (or perhaps he did), that 18 years later, young Jonathan would be following in his footsteps. Up at 6 o'clock in the morning, he drives (not hitchhikes, as Richard often did) to be at Glenn Emma for 7. There is the usual to and fro with the other guides and then he meets his sport at 7:45 a.m. for the morning's fishing. Around noon Tremblay heads home where his dad will often have lunch prepared. Then it's the 4-8 p.m. session and home again by 9, to be in bed not too long after.

Early to bed and early to rise might make a man healthy and wise, but it doesn't give young Jonathan much time to spend with friends. They understand, he says, and most are envious of his career, as are many of his sports. Tremblay himself can't get enough of the outdoor life, and following the fishing season is also hoping to guide hunters for deer and moose in the fall.

There is no doubt that as time goes by, his guiding skills will steadily improve and he'll accumulate his own bag of tricks, as did lifelong guides like Adams, Gilker and Mastenapeo. As a matter of fact, the process has already begun. "The day he guided me," Cusson says, "it was so very windy. Still, somehow he managed to use his pole to keep the canoe steady and in perfect position."

Poling is an ancient technique, still used but not taught in any school. In the old days, it was learned the hard way floating lumber down raging rivers. So where might Tremblay have picked up this almost-forgotten skill? Perhaps Richard Adams himself may have somehow transferred the knowledge when he visited the baby Tremblay in his crib.

—Martin Silverstone

d'un guide qui n'était pas encore né lorsque j'ai commencé à pêcher, a précisé le directeur des programmes au Québec. Il m'a placé au-dessus du saumon et nous avons passé d'agréables moments ensemble à jaser. »

Joe, qui à l'âge de 18 ans est le guide le plus jeune sur la rivière, est né et a grandi à Causapscal. Son grand-père, Leo Barrest, l'a initié à la pêche à la mouche à un très jeune âge. Cela a constitué un solide fondement pour lui puisque Leo avait lui-même été guide à l'époque de Richard Adams.

Joe a pris son premier saumon à l'âge de 11 ans, le seul qu'il ait tué. Il appartient à cette nouvelle génération de guides pour qui la remise à l'eau est devenue la norme. Ces jours-ci, de plus en plus de pêcheurs, surtout ceux de la plus jeune génération, préconisent la remise à l'eau de leurs prises. Ils trouvent la pratique amusante et enrichissante et sont conscients de l'importance socio-économique de la pêche.

Les jeunes guides comme Joe, qui peuvent plus facilement établir des liens avec cette nouvelle génération de pêcheurs à la ligne avertis, ont un rôle important à jouer. Ce jeune guide, malgré sa jeunesse, qui vient s'ajouter à sa motivation et à son éthique de travail remarquable, peut se vanter d'être originaire d'une lignée noble dans le domaine du guidage. Lorsqu'il était encore bébé dans son berceau, Richard Adams, qui connaissait son père et son grand-père, a rendu visite à la famille et salué ce futur guide!

Richard ne pouvait pas s'imaginer (ou il le pouvait peut-être...) que 18 ans plus tard, le jeune Jonathan prendrait la relève. Debout à 6 heures, il se rend à Glenn Emma en voiture (pas en stop comme le faisait souvent Richard) afin d'y être à 7 h. Après une jasette avec les autres guides, il rencontre son client de la matinée à 7 h 45. Aux alentours de midi, il rentre chez lui où son père aura souvent préparé le dîner. Il retourne ensuite pour la séance de pêche de 16 h à 20 h et est de retour chez lui à 21 h. Il se couche peu de temps après.

Il se peut bien que l'avenir apporte santé, richesse et sagesse à ceux qui se couchent tôt et se lèvent tôt, mais cela l'empêche de passer beaucoup de temps avec ses amis. Ils comprennent la situation, dit-il, et la plupart d'entre eux lui envient sa carrière, tout comme bon nombre de ses clients. Joe lui-même ne manque jamais une occasion de profiter du plein air, et après la saison de pêche il espère guider les chasseurs dans leur quête d'un chevreuil ou d'un orignal à l'automne.

Il ne fait aucun doute qu'il ne cessera de peaufiner ses compétences de guide au fil du temps et qu'il aura éventuellement lui aussi plus d'une corde à son archet, tout comme les guides de carrière comme Richard, Warren et Christian. D'ailleurs, ce processus est déjà en cours. « Le jour où il a été mon guide, ajoute Charles Cusson, il ventait beaucoup. Il a toutefois réussi à se servir de sa pôle pour garder le canot en équilibre et en parfaite position. »

Se servir d'une pôle est une ancienne technique, encore utilisée, mais qui n'est enseignée dans aucune école. Autrefois, on l'apprenait à ses dépens, en dirigeant les billes de bois le long de rivières tumultueuses. Où Joe a-t-il donc acquis cette habileté? Richard Adams lui a peut-être transmis ce savoir lorsqu'il a rendu visite au bébé dans son berceau.

—Martin Silverstone



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DOOBIE

A FLY MEANT TO BE SHARED.

Kevin Conway describes himself as a teetotaler. Socially, he drinks non-alcoholic beer or wine. At times, to help join in the mood of joyous celebration on his many fishing trips and other get-togethers with friends, he isn't averse to consuming a little cannabis, or marijuana. He has always been subtle about it because, as he puts it, "many people misunderstood cannabis and some even believed in the demonization of weed programs that were so common in the USA during the 60s, 70s and beyond."

Conway is also a keen Atlantic salmon angler and a talented musician, who has been known to entertain fellow guests on his frequent visits to the Micmac Camp

on the Grand Cascapedia. Back in 2016, when the plan to legalize marijuana across Canada hit the newspapers, the front page of the *Montreal Gazette* motivated his musical creativity. The headline read "O Cannabis," in large type, accompanied by an image of a large marijuana leaf.

It turns out Conway is also a talented songwriter, because he came up with lyrics (to the tune of Canada's national anthem) for an "O Cannabis" song. His plan was to introduce the Doobie fly by singing the tune on July 1 at Micmac Camp as a surprise for fellow guests and staff.

Flash forward to the ASF Montreal Dinner last April. Conway was visiting some of the booths associated with the event, when he met fly tyer Lyne Trudeau. Her famous fly creations, based on the 16 teams of the NHL's Eastern Conference, were being showcased at the banquet.

The intricate, artistic designs impressed Conway and suddenly he was struck with the idea of a possible salmon fly to accompany his "O Cannabis" song. In his own words, "It hit me like a ton of Mary Jane." Trudeau and Conway discussed a concept for a fly which could be part of his upcoming Micmac Camp musical performance. Both agreed that Trudeau would see what she could come up with.

All through the rest of April and May, Trudeau thought about how she could tie a fly based on marijuana. Then, one day working in the garden, a strangely familiar odour wafted over from the neighbour's yard, the unmistakable scent of marijuana! "Because I had not seen a joint since high school, I went to pay my neighbour a visit," she said.

Based on a sample from her neighbor, Trudeau was able to sketch and tie a Doobie fly, which she promptly sent to Kevin for approval. He fished the fly on his lake and was impressed the way the fly behaved in the water. "It is beauty in motion!" he told Trudeau, and placed an order.



LYNE TRUDEAU (2)

DOOBIE FLY

Hook:	Salmon Daichi 2051 #3 or #7 singles
Thread:	UNI-Thread 8/0 white and UNI-Thread 8/0 black
Tail:	AXXEL Flash 8" tie wrap hanks red
Ribbs:	AXXEL flash 6 ply pearl
Body:	Cord (4 strands) on smaller hooks use 2 strands
Wing:	Ginger colour marabout feather, followed by one select ringneck natural spey feather
Collar:	One natural teal feather
Head:	Black, lacquered twice

"My heart was pleased," Trudeau wrote in a letter to the *Journal*. She then tied a number of Doobie flies to give to Conway. After performing "O Cannabis" at Micmac Camp, Conway distributed them to his fellow anglers and the camp's guides. He explained that rather than a Canada Day celebration (it was July 1), this was recognition of the fact that exactly one year hence, cannabis was scheduled to be legalized in Canada.

The Doobie fly is a marriage of musical inspiration and artistic creativity. It is also an expression of the openness and freedom of Canadian society. As it was first discussed at ASF's Montreal Dinner on April 27, which falls, coincidentally, one week after the iconic date that has evolved for the celebration and advocacy of marijuana, perhaps an alternate name for this fly would be the 4-20. Whatever you call it, according to all reports, it is a wonderful addition to any salmon angler's "stash" or fly box. 🐟

Want to purchase or create a fly? Email Lyne at lynetrudeau@sympatico.ca or message her via Facebook at www.facebook.com/lyne.trudeau.96.



COURTESY OF KEVIN CONWAY

Top: Lyne Trudeau at the vise tying a Doobie; above: Kevin Conway and the *Montreal Gazette* front page from October 15, 2016.

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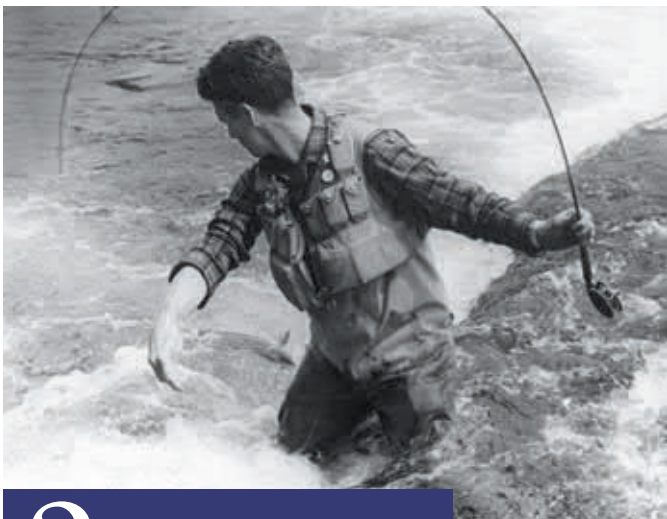
CHARLES GISSON

4 When fishing in Labrador, wear DEET. Sure, it's horrible for you. But so is spending a week getting absolutely annihilated by blackflies.



CHRISTOPHER PATEY

2 If you raise a fish, do not smoke a cigarette before you cast again. That's bad for you. Instead, do as the guide, John Robinson, instructs: "Wait as long as you can possibly wait. And then wait a little longer."



JOAN WULFF

3 Or don't wait at all. Lee Wulff used to go immediately back to a raised fish. Yes, that Lee Wulff.

5 If you are ever offered the chance to fish in Russia, Norway or Iceland, jump on it, right then and there. No more "maybe next year."

6 Get a double-handed rod and learn how to spey cast. It will make you a better angler. And it's really fun.



RAY PLOURDE

7 If someone in your pool hooks a fish, offer to help land it. If that offer is accepted, reel up, stash the rod, stay downstream . . . and keep your legs together when the fish gets near.



ROB SOLO



JEAN-GUY BÉLIVEAU

11

Take a break on the river. Talk to people. Have a seat on the bank. Drink coffee. Consider taking a nap. Salmon fishing is meant to be savored, not rushed.

12

Demonstrate your first-rate intelligence by simultaneously daydreaming while you pay close attention to your every cast and swing.

8

Learn how to tail a salmon without the aid of a landing glove.

9

Don't bellyache about a lost fish. Unless it was a really big one. Then let loose.

10

Use barbless hooks. To paraphrase Thomas McGuane, all of us have chosen to fly fish for the same reason we choose to play with a net in tennis: It's a sport. Pinching down that barb ensures that the "net" is nice and taut.



TOM MOFFATT



ILLUSTRATION BY GORDON ALLEN

13

Keep a journal to record your catches, the weather and conditions, the river scenery, the people you meet.

14

Abide by the old adages: Cast your wet fly 45 degrees downstream and swing it. Use smaller flies in low water. Say "God Save the Queen!" before setting the hook on a dry fly take. And then break the rules: Fish a dry in the late fall. Strip a size-ten Blue Charm. Skate a bomber through the riffles. Use a big marabou fly in the middle of the summer.

15

Do something every year to help the fish and the sport. Donate your time and money to Atlantic salmon conservation. Take a kid or a salmon newcomer fishing. The fish and the sport are both worth fighting for.



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