

Riffles & Pools



Dedicated to the preservation of Nova Scotia's trout

President's Musings....

As thoughts turn towards next season I hope you take a moment to renew your TNS membership, buy some raffle tickets in support and drop by to say Hi, or better still volunteer to help at the Outdoor Show booth. Also, I know this year you'll want to turn out and participate at the March AGM; it's going to be a great event with a new format.

We are a volunteer organization and without you and your continued support little would happen to ensure a bright speckled future for trout in this province. So take a run at that list above, if you are committed to the future of trout I know you're ready to help.

Your Directors continue to work hard, keeping the focus on trout and we are seeing results. For example, just a few years back TNS pushed for the Special Trout Management Areas (STMA). It's been a hard sale, but when I go to public meetings now, it's like listening to trout sipping mayfly to hear people talking (even the detractors from years ago) about improvements in trout within the STMA's. Now that's progress. Encouraging words as we are now on the verge of having our first province wide Trout Management Plan! It has taken the better part of two years so far, with lots of badgering, pushing and meetings, but the first draft is now circulating for comment. When a more complete Trout Plan goes before the public for input later this year, we will need your support. For conservation of trout and an improved fishery, turn out and help make the Plan effective and worthwhile. For the future of trout, let's make it one of the best plans possible!

As an organization we are moving to put more focus on angler and public education through programs such as Project Hook. We plan to reach more people with the conservation message so we can make an even greater difference for trout in this province. Project Hook is in its infancy, so if you can help out please step forward; there are lots of interesting and fun things to do.

Trouting is a great experience for all ages and people; let's keep it alive!

I hope you enjoy this issue of Riffles & Pools,

Jamie Steeves

"If you want to keep them you have to release them."

Bring a friend, cause there's live & silent auctions, door prizes and a chance to meet old friends and tell some tall tales... its Trout Time!

Trout Nova Scotia's AGM *"The Future of Trout"*

Featured guest

Warren Duncan,

internationally acclaimed fly tyer

Moderator: Jim Gourlay

Panelists:

Perry Munro, a guide's perspective

Mike Brylinsky, a biologist's perspective

Warren Duncan, a conservationist's perspective

Open forum with Audience participation welcomed

Bedford Legion

March 25th, doors open at 6pm start time 7pm

Come see us at our new location at the
Sport & RV Show.

March 18, 19, 20 and 21

Volunteers still needed to run the TNS booth.

Please support TNS

Renew your membership

&

Purchase some raffles tickets

Project Hook needs donations of rods & reels and volunteers (fly tyer, caster, boat handling or some other outdoor or fishing skills) for teaching school age kids about fishing.



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The Executive meets the second full week of each month.

Rifles & Pools is published three times per year.

Deadlines for 2004 submissions are: January 23, April 8, October 8 2004.

The Editor reserves the right to edit for length and clarity.

Trout Nova Scotia
P.O. Box 8442 Stn. A
Halifax, N.S.
B3K 5M2

e mail:
secretary@troutnovascotia.ca
www.troutnovascotia.ca

Submission guidelines on page 8

Trout Nova Scotia

TNS is the leading advocate for the trout fishery in Nova Scotia. Our volunteers work with government and other organizations towards program and policy development that positively impacts trout, trout habitat and sustainable trout fishing practices. Our purpose is to ensure an improved and sustainable trout fishery in the province of Nova Scotia for future generations.

Habitat Stamp licked again!

After two years of discussion with NS Inland Fisheries and two Provincial Fisheries Ministers later, it was a disappointment for many conservation groups to hear that the current Minister, Chris d'Entremont has decided to hold off on the Habitat Conservation Stamp for 2004. He cited insufficient information and a lack of time for the various government departments involved to work out the details surrounding the stamp's introduction.

Minister d'Entremont also said that given the current political climate, the Government does not want to introduce the stamp at this time because it might be perceived as a tax on recreation and therefore reflect negatively on the Government. If the stamp were worth \$5 it would have generated \$285,000 towards much needed habitat conservation projects in Nova Scotia in 2004.

The mid-January meeting with the Minister, Deputy Minister, Inland Fisheries Staff and various conservation groups concluded with the promise to have the Conservation Stamp in place for the 2005 Angling Season. Conservation groups still don't know the details of how the proceeds of the fund will be administered and awarded to habitat conservation projects.

Delaying implementation of the Habitat Stamp continues to put serious strain on volunteer groups who have been without project funding since 2002. For example the Nova Scotia Salmon Association, is scrambling to keep the highly successful Adopt-A-Stream program afloat. Without project funding, valuable volunteer time has been squandered and some estimates suggest that a million dollars in volunteer time will be lost.

Interestingly, most anglers are probably not aware of the contribution they make to the economy of Nova Scotia. Based on year 2000 survey information, 59,000 anglers in Nova Scotia spent 57 million dollars on expenses related to fishing. In the same year approximately a million dollars was collected in angling license fees. Angling is an important contributor to the life and economy of all Nova Scotians. Perhaps it's time the government was more on side, more of the time.



Habitat restoration projects are run by volunteers using a combination of private and government funding. One of the most successful programs was known as Adopt-A-Stream. Shown above is one of 14 habitat improvements (a wing deflector and digger log) identified for a section of Lake O'Law Brook, an important trout spawning tributary of the N.E. Margaree. The project, in its' initial stages, is a joint partnership between the Margaree Salmon Association and Trout Nova Scotia. Details of the project were reported in R&P Vol3 Issue 3, Fall 2002.

ATVs in the headlights

by Jamie Steeves

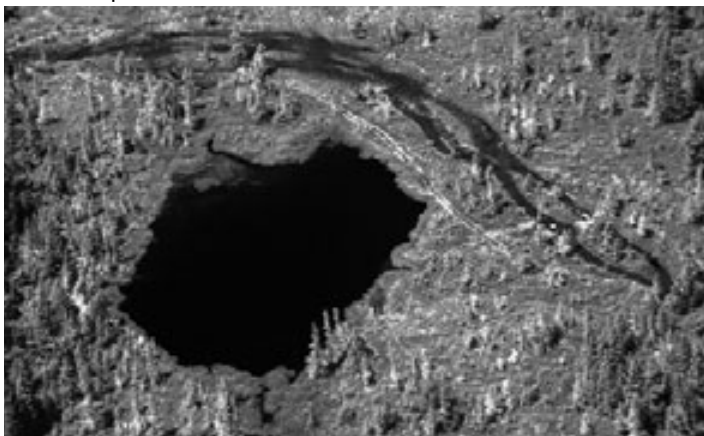
Last fall, through a series of public meetings organized by the Voluntary Planning Committee, the Government listened to the public's views, ideas and solutions regarding Off Road Vehicles. One such meeting was held in St. Margaret's Bay and attended by some Trout Nova Scotia members. The recommendations emanating from the public meetings went to the Minister in January 2004, the results are still pending.

In the absence of a TNS policy regarding ATVs, I made a written presentation to the committee which were mostly my own comments, but I did make a short reference to TNS...

"I am currently the President of Trout Nova Scotia representing a group of more than 200 sport anglers from all areas of this province. What we see is a disturbing misuse of off road vehicles in and around watercourses and environmentally sensitive areas. Operators of these vehicles continually demonstrate a lack of understanding of the importance of our provincial watersheds to the health, economy and social fabric of all Nova Scotians."

There were lots of ATVerers at the meeting (who recognize some of the problems), a number of ATV Club Presidents, also folks who sell the machines and a few woods users like myself, a couple of neurosurgeons, private land owners, moms & dads (you get the picture). Overall, it was a somewhat intimidating audience for anyone contrary minded about free wheeling ATVs. My overriding concern about the attendees at the meeting was that very few had any idea about the environmental damage these machines create. I hope the final recommendations to government go beyond age, health and safety issues of riders. A few interesting facts came out:

- There are an estimated 75 to 80 thousand off road machines out there of which some 20,000 are registered. Only 2200 of these are involved with organized clubs.
- About 5000 ATVs are sold in NS each year.
- Looking at percentages, of all the dangerous vehicle related accidents ATVs top the list for debilitating accidents (list includes cars, snowmobiles, seadoos etc).
- The surgeons attending pointed out that it will cost the public some 3 million dollars per injured person for health care for the balance of their lives. Most of these injured people will never leave an institution following the accident.
- Accidents have happened to all ages from 3 yrs to 82 yrs and 78% of reported accidents involve alcohol.



Damage the width of a highway and half the width of the small lake is caused by ATVs crossing a bog on their way to a river in southern N.S. In my work as a photographer, I fly over many areas of the province. What I see is very disturbing. The impact of ATVs and the extent of the damage everywhere is astounding. The damage to the bog pictured above will be in evidence for decades into the future.

NS Trout Plan, News !

TNS has received a copy of the Draft Trout Plan.

As this issue of R&P goes to press, copies of the draft document are circulating amongst TNS Directors. TNS will be submitting a response to Inland Fisheries by mid February.

At a glance, the document makes for interesting reading with lots of good information. John MacMillian, the author has made a good effort in summarizing what is known about the trout fishery in the province i.e. the problems, trends, management techniques, issues, species, management structure, public interface etcetera. This is a good first step and needs to be included in any final plan.

It is hoped that as we move forward with the next draft that there will be more detail included surrounding specific management options and the timing and implementation strategies planned for each of the RFAC Zones in the province.

We applaud John and contributors to this first draft Trout Plan. At last we are on the road to having a tangible management strategy for trout in this province.

TNS meets with WRWEO

In January, TNS Directors Jamie Steeves and George Taylor attended a meeting with the Wooden's River Watershed Environmental Organization, Water Quality Committee.

Wooden's River is one of very few hook and release Trout Special Management Areas in the province. The headwaters of the Wooden's River Watershed will be impacted by the twinning of Highway 103 when Cranberry Lake is in-filled. Two other watersheds will also be affected with the in-filling of Flat Lake, and construction of the Nine Mile River Crossing. Following an environmental assessment, compensation by the Department of Highways for loss of habitat will be forthcoming. Unfortunately the effects from runoff and siltation during construction two years ago on the very productive Blueberry Lake system (another STMA) has been overlooked. Last year the once robust insect population of Blueberry Lake crashed and the trout no doubt will soon follow.

The WRWEO group which has done a lot of environmental assessment work in their watershed were seeking ideas on fish habitat restoration projects in the Woodens River system. They are in the process of completing a joint partnership agreement with the Sackville Rivers Association to oversee in-stream work on the Nine Mile River crossing section of Highway 103.

DFO representative, Ms. Anita Hamilton, attended the meeting to explain the process behind a Determination and Authorization of Harmful Alteration, Disruption or Destruction of Fish Habitat (know as a HADD). It's the decision framework of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Habitat Management Branch (HMB). As it turns out, Federal funding for fish habitat restoration work is almost non existent. The importance of the Habitat Conservation Stamp is underscored once again!

It was clear from the meeting that despite the concerns and hard work of volunteers, the process is frustrating and often loses sight of the primary objective of conserving fish habitat.

Trout Nova Scotia mourns the sudden passing of Barbara Ruddock of South Milford on August 30, 2003. Barbara was an accomplished canoeist, an avid fly fisher and a loyal supporter of Trout Nova Scotia. Our sympathies are extended to her husband, Kenneth and family".



Project Hook needs your help !

TNS needs equipment in working condition that can be used by kids during the hands on portion of the Project Hook presentations.

We also need volunteers to help run the program.

Please contact Claude Cochrane 902 757-2996 or Tom Lee 902 420-8211

Loons & Lead in the news

by George Taylor

(From a response to a letter received by the Sackville Rivers Association, forwarded to TNS)

A dead loon washed up on the shore of MacCabe lake this summer. Natural Resources came and took it in for testing. The results showed the loon died of lead poisoning due to ingesting lead sinkers and lures.

Recreation anglers loose about 500 tons of lead in Canada each year. That's about 14% of all non-recoverable lead released in Canada. It's the small weights and jigs less then 50g and smaller then 2cm that kill most loons. Most often the loon ingests lead sinkers when it consumes a lost bait fish with hook line and sinker still attached.

Canadians spend about \$17.9 million on lead sinkers each year and more in the form of jigs. The majority of the 550 tons sold ends up in the environment with no chance of recovery. Even with all of the education and exchange programs, the use of lead has only been reduced by 1%. If lead is on the store shelves and it's cheaper then the alternatives, fishermen still continue to buy it .

The best solution to the problem is to push for a band on the sale of lead sinkers and jigs in Canada and force the manufactures and businesses to come up with and sell only the alternatives.

Trout Nova Scotia will continue to bring this issue forward to the Inland Fisheries Advisory Committee and make a recommendation to the Minister of Fisheries. If enough people demand action from our government this may get attention on a national agenda.

Area 5 RFAC Meeting Nov03 in Kentville

An announcement was made by Inland Fisheries that the Department was going ahead in partnership with Parks Canada to act on a proposal to protect the Upper Mersey River watershed as well as the waters flowing into the park from the Tobetic Wilderness as "Wild Brook Trout Habitat" and manage it accordingly.



Cape Breton TNS Member, Peter Hill showed Directors Jamie Steeves and Lyle Goldberg the Middle River last fall as they successfully "researched" the river for large rainbows.



Catch & Release - A Panacea? by Gary Corbett

Many advanced fly fishers advocate the practice of catch- and- release as a cure-all for depleted fisheries. Is it the panacea that many suggest? Lets look at it from a scientific perspective.

Part of the joy of catch-and-release is catching fish, but also putting them back with the least number of mortalities as possible. This reduces another form of mortality over the natural ones of disease, predation, accidents, old age, etc that affect fish. And, angling mortality can be very high in some watersheds. About 30-35% of trout caught on baited barbed hooks will die if released, down to only 3% of those caught on barbless hook flies if released. So, in principle, if everyone used pinched barbless flies, most fish released would survive to be caught again. That is if all anglers used good technique and equipment.

Dr. Paul Downing wrote an interesting article on the pros and cons of catch-and-release in a recent issue of the Fly fisherman. His main point being that fish populations display compensatory dynamics whereby environmental conditions dictate how many fish survive through summer, fall and winter to start the next year's season. In simple terms, if one trout is removed from a system, that action allows for another fish to survive that might not otherwise. One can see how this would be true in stocked waters or anywhere that is highly productive, i.e. there are more fish produced from spawning than can survive the harshness of summer or winter and the population is at the carrying capacity of its' watershed. Lightly fished waters might also display this situation. Despite this idea, Dr. Downing still supports and practices catch-and-release for preserving wild trout populations.

Additional support for Dr. Downing's continued use of catch and release practices can be seen here in Nova Scotia. For example, many waters in Nova Scotia have trout spawning areas that are impacted by acid rain, siltation and other affects. Situations where pre-existing environmental conditions were suitable to support more trout, where now the mortality of eggs and fry is poor and overall trout numbers are subsequently depressed. Without catch and release angling, the trout in these depressed populations are possibly at risk. Of course, it would be best if we could resolve the acid and siltation problems. If we could increase the number of eggs laid by our brook trout in the fall by preserving more spawners (catch & release), perhaps we could boost the spring population when winterkill of adult fish is severe.

Catch-and-release is also about catching a trophy fish and enjoying catching more fish. In Nova Scotia, a trophy trout is five or more years old. Studies show that the number of these large fish in a population is usually low, maybe a few percent. This is partially due to the fact that year-to-year survival of trout is poor. By the time a trout reaches 3 years of age, 75% of its' year class have succumbed to some form of mortality. The remaining 25% of three year olds are a long way from reaching trophy status. Survival beyond 5 years is limited to very few trout. Studies have demonstrated that in conditions where trout could live 5 years or more, most have been harvested. If every angler released these big fish, not only could they be caught again and possibly be larger, but they would have a chance to contribute their superior genetic robustness to the gene pool by breeding. Maybe we need to start thinking about releasing the big ones. If you want to keep fish, harvest some of the smaller ones. For the good of most of our trout populations in Nova Scotia perhaps we all need to update our fishing strategies? Something to think about!

Worms, an un-natural choice

Once believed to be native to north america, earth worms mostly died off during the last glaciation of the northern half of the continent. Since that time people have re-introduced them mostly as a way of improving soils and breaking down wastes. The largest commercial application of worms is still for fishing bait.

The same reasons that worms are used to help aerate damaged soils can damage wild ecosystems. In forests, leaf litter normally accumulates on the ground creating a thick mat (tuff) that is crucial to the forest as insulation and for nutrient storage. This layer teems with micro-organisms that break down leaves and organic materials into fertilizer that will be used by the forest. Unfortunately invasive worms eat the leaf litter and change the chemical and biological properties of the forest floor often to the detriment of native plants survival. Temperate hardwood forests in US border states are known to be affected and studies at the University of Calgary have demonstrated that worms can change underground insect communities in the lodgepole forests of southwestern Alberta. Research has shown in the USA that earthworms become voracious and destructive when they invade forests. Of particular note are the areas around popular fishing spots where decades of fishermen have dumped unused worms in the belief that they will help the ecosystem.

Steps to curb the worm invasion might eventually require rinsing of off-road vehicles and tires before travelling into forested areas, making the dumping of live bait illegal and even banning the use of worms for bait all together.

An easier solution might be just to walk to your favorite fishing spot and take up fly fishing!

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TAiLS from the waters

TAPPING FOR TROUT

By Claude Cochran

Tapping for trout is not a new or novel method of trouting, especially to our older readers. My introduction came from my grandfather about.....years ago. At the time, growing up in rural Nova Scotia any method of providing good, nutritious food for the table was approved. None more so than "Tapping" for trout.

The use of baits, mainly worms, grubs and the fly during its various stages of development were of course always used. Indulge me and I will explain "Tapping" as it was explained to me. In using this method we are taking advantage of the trout's keen sense of hearing. One that provides its main defense against most predators, such as, larger fish, otter and of course man.

I wonder if our readers realize how many "poor fishing days" are self-inflicted by one's sloppy approach to a fine trout hole. By that I mean stumbling into a pool and banging rocks together under water, in the excitement to reach a certain destination without "falling". Long before the first of many non-productive casts, the fish have left their feeding lie and are safely under cover. Clueless, the fisherman eventually leaves the pool and blames everything from "acts of God" to faults with the rod for not hooking fish.

With the tapping method we take advantage of the trout's curiosity. In a crouching position, we cautiously approach the water with the sun behind us providing a clear view of the bottom. After spotting a good fish, carefully position your oversized, camouflaged handled landing net in front of you (having first placed a few stones inside to keep the mesh from floating). Move slowly to a crouched position at the end of the net handle. Take two stones of a similar size and type. Take it for granite that both will make a similar sound when tapped together under water. Tap the stones lightly together, watch for any movement of the fish. Repeat, with a little harder tap. Now two taps close together. The fish will probably leave its lie and slowly start to circle the pool in an attempt to locate the sound. Make a triple tap and two light taps, similar to the spacing used in calling migratory birds. Keep very still, the fish has by now located the sound. Two more light taps should have it over the net. A quick upward sweep and the fish is yours. This method requires some practice, patience and a lot of stealth.

Before describing this method I should have checked with the boys at Inland Fisheries in Pictou to make sure "Tapping" is legal. But maybe you should give them a call anyway. Happy Tapping.

Claude

FLY CASTING TIPS

with Dennis Grant

Selecting the right equipment (a two part article)

When someone asks a question about fly fishing the standard answer is "it depends!" Selecting a the right equipment to get the job done is often a matter of personal choice but many times 'it depends' on what we want the experience to be.

The first consideration for most fly fishers is 'what am I going to catch'? If you are stream fishing for Brookies, lake fishing for Smallmouth Bass or Atlantic Salmon fishing, the selection of equipment can and most likely should differ.

The basic equipment consists of a rod, line and reel. Do not compromise on the fly line. A line of quality will cast better and last longer with minimum care. Buy the highest quality line you can afford.

In most cases the fly fisher will spend more money on the rod, but there is an exception that I will discuss later in this article. Rod length is more of a personal choice and does not relate to the fish size. Today the rod of choice is graphite, although many fiberglass rods are still in use and even bamboo for the traditionalists. My emphasis will not be with regard to the physical weight of a rod, which is generally expressed in ounces, but the weight of the line the rod is made to cast.

Rods are built to cast a specific line weight. It's the weight of the line that makes the rod bend and the manufacturer of the rod will indicate the line weight on the butt section of the rod usually just above the handle. Forty years ago you would purchase a line by grain weight (1 pound is equal to 7 thousand grains). The American Fishing Tackle Manufacturers Association (AFTMA) decided in the 1961 that a number from 1 to 12 would be assigned depending on the grain weight of the first 30 feet of fly line, regardless of the material, diameter or finish.. A number 1 weight line being 54 to 66 grains and a number 12 line, 368 to 392 grains in the first 30 feet.

A rod that will cast a 1 to 3 weight line bends easily. The tip of the rod will react to the slightest tug and smaller fish will give you great feel. Dry fly fishing for brook trout can be a real experience if you are using these light weight rods. A reasonable casting distance of up to 40 feet is fishing range with a 3 weight.

Fly rods that cast 4 to 6 weight lines are most effective when fishing larger Trout, Smallmouth Bass and American Shad. The tip of the rod is stiffer and is more acceptable for casting larger flies and when you need that roll cast of 40 feet. Four to six weight (line) rods are easier to cast than the light weight rods. These rods are also more effective then the 1 to 3 weights when casting on windy days. Casting range is up to 70 feet with 4 to 6 weights. I personally use a 10 foot for a 4 weight line in this range of fishing.

(To be continued in the next issue of R&P)

Questions & Answers with Reg Baird

Q. What do you consider the most common mistake made by novice fishermen?

A. Casting to distant targets and spooking the fish that are in close. Working the close spots first allows one to catch the nearby fish without spooking the more distant ones. Successful fishermen fish "all" the water.

Q. In an earlier issue you described a wiggle nymph but what is a wiggle cast.

A. The wiggle cast, also known as the S-cast or serpentine cast, is a fly cast that puts enough slack line on the water to allow the fly to drift well past a rising trout before drag sets in. It is executed by making a standard forward cast, stopping the rod at a point higher than usual and immediately shaking the rod tip back and forth before the line settles to the water.

Q: How big do brook trout grow?

A: The world record is 14 lb. 8 ounces caught in 1916 on the Nipigon River in Ontario. The largest ever recorded in Nova Scotia is a 7 lb. 8 ounce sea-run fish caught in Halifax County in 1871. In his book "The Tent Dwellers" Albert Bigelow Paine made mention of trout "as long as your leg", however, I have two photos from a 1908 publication (shown below) that were considered to be "large" trout from that same area and the largest appear to be in the vicinity of 20 inches in length which would make them approximately four pounds in weight.

"Four rods Lake Rossignol" from the 1908 Nova Scotia Sporting Guide. A time when tourism was all about fishing & hunting.



**BIG
NOVA
SCOTIA
TROUT**
over
the
decades

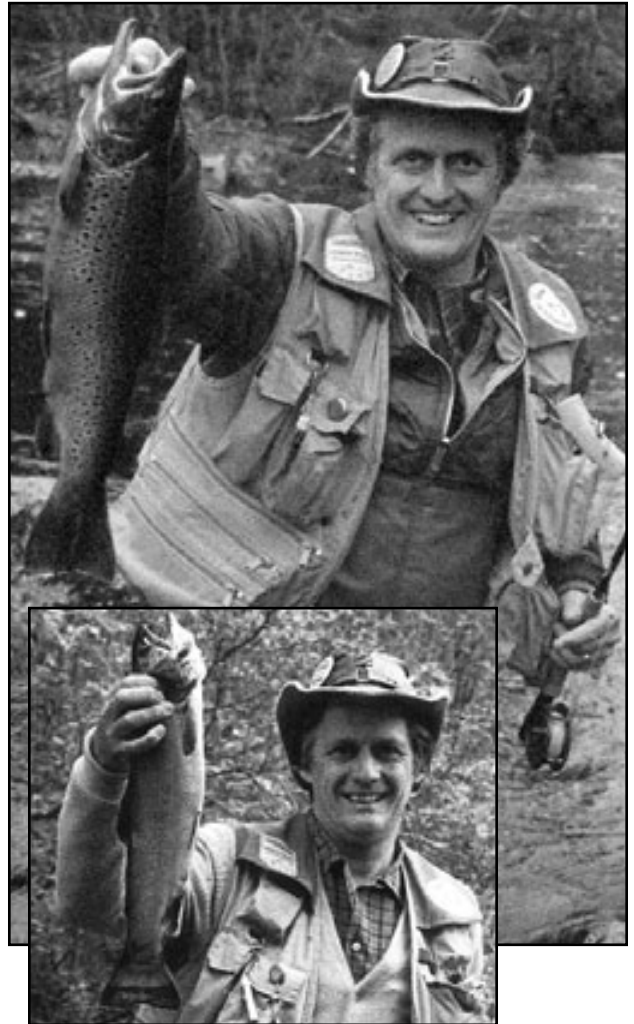
Annapolis County trout string from the 1908 Nova Scotia Sporting Guide.



▲ Circa 1960, Just kidding around Dr. Ian MacGregor shows how to make a 12 inch trout "as long as your leg" by holding it closer to the camera!



▲ A lanky 19 inch Brookie prior to release by the R&P editor in 2003 (in his stories it's 20 inches!). The reel is closer to the camera making the fish look smaller, honest!



▲ Reg Baird holds up two big trout in the 20 inch range from Annapolis / Queens counties Nova Scotia. They were caught on a dry fly in the mid to late 1980's. These days Reg devotes a great deal of his time to studying trout. His hook & release studies have provided a wealth of valuable information about Nova Scotia's southern trout populations.

Join Us, become a member of Trout NS

Yes, I want to be a member of Trout Nova Scotia and help insure an improved and sustainable trout fishery in the province for future generations. For membership information or to send in your membership contact:

Reg Baird, Membership, Trout Nova Scotia,
647 Virginia Road, Clementsvalle, N.S. B0S 1G0
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Deadlines 2004: Final copy, photos and ad materials must be received by the Editor no later than the following dates to ensure inclusion in the next issue: January 23, April 8, October 8 2004.

Articles:

Please contact, the editor in advance for all content, length of articles, ad placements and pricing. Send requests and typewritten copy to the editor at: editor@troutnovascotia.ca

Rates:

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Accounts are payable prior to publication.

Send your email files to editor@troutnovascotia.ca
Please reference TNS in the subject line.



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Ad rates for the next issue are listed above.

If you are interested please contact the editor at: editor@troutnovascotia.ca