

Taken from Rivers and Woods

Adventures in the outdoors

By: Len Rich

Labrador's hidden secrets

Everyone who can be labeled an avid fly fisher will tell that favorite dream is to find a place where water runs pure, cold and clear, and where few people have ventured before. It helps if there are numerous fish around, and especially if they can be coaxed to accept a fly every now and then. Most of Labrador's hidden places have been discovered but a few still remain. This is a story about a couple of them.

The part of our trip we anticipated was "fly-out" trips to nearby streams. A Cessna 185 on floats was stationed at the Lodge for the purpose of this trip, and carried two anglers and a guide on day trips to investigate pristine waters in nearly complete isolation and privacy. The fly-out trips proved to be most exciting, providing an opportunity to scout new sites and river pools in an area virtually unexplored- and un-fished!

Our first fly-out took us to the Mckenzie River. About 30 minutes by air, and we landed at the outlet of a sizable lake where the lodge had stashed a small inflatable raft. Jim, ken and I squeezed into the tiny craft and with the aid of two flimsy paddles made our way down river on the slow current.

We crossed a large pond which emptied into an enticing rapid, but Jim just shook his head. Not yet, he cautioned.

We worked through the fast section and came onto a second large pond, and helped by the wind we crossed in about ten minutes. It narrowed to a second rapids, but Jim said, "This section is for another pair to follow us on the next flight. We'll go a little further."

At the bottom of the second rapid we emptied into a very large pond. The far shore looked a half mile away, and Jim nodded. "Over there, boys, that's the spot. I've only fished the top part once, and never been any further down. We'll try below. "

It was worth the effort, even though we eventually had to drag the raft back up the river a good three miles at day's end. The water was, as Jim had suggested, virtually untouched, and the angling was absolutely fabulous. At each turn of the river was a new pool holding big brook trout, and they came readily to a large dry fly or bright streamer. Ken caught two fish in a row which weighed over 4 pounds each, and remarked that these were the biggest Brookies he had ever taken on a fly rod. They simply hammered his orange-hacked Bomber salmon fly which had been designed for Miramichi salmon angling!

My luck was as good, although my flies varied from buck bugs to bright muddlers variations and a large hair mouse. My best trout of the day, a five pounder, hit a mylar-bodied muddler on a dead drift, and my best fish overall was a bright land-locked salmon which we guessed weighed over eight pounds. That Ouananiche took a ragged hair mouse which had been battered by several brook trout and looked simply terrible.

I had worked the mouse along the edge of a wide flat at the head of a white-water rapids, a lie where you would normally find its sea-run Atlantic cousins. While far from the IGFA world-record land-locked salmon of 22 pounds-plus which came from this same watershed, this chunky fish put up a tough battle comparable to any fresh run Atlantic. Like the other fish we caught, it was released back into the Mckenzie to provide sport for the next anglers to follow.

We had enjoyed a long day of tremendous fishing, the kind of adventure you dream about, and had caught and released countless numbers of trophy trout. Although capped by a fatiguing walk back along the shore dragging our rubber raft, it was an exhaustion we felt good with.

This was the Labrador we had come to experience!

Len Rich