

Salmon twists to throw George MacArthur's hook. Action like this makes Grand Lake one of the hottest landlock spots in U.S.

LANDLOCK BREAK-OUT



George nets salmon for me. It clobbered a trolled streamer

Maine's salmon usually go wild in May, but for us they celebrated the 4th of July By HAROLD F. BLAISDELL

T WAS the Fourth of July, the traditional time for fireworks, and, as though by arrangement, the water in the vicinity of my trolled streamer suddenly exploded. My fly rod bucked, and some 70 feet behind the canoe a gleaming landlocked salmon made like a skyrocket.

Pete Terwilliger and I, 400 miles from our homes in Pittsford, Vermont, yelled in unison as the hookstung salmon went through a lightning-fast series of acrobatics, but our guide, Kenny Wheaton, stayed as cool as a cucumber. He glanced upward to determine the angle of my

wire-tight fly line and gunned the motor to bring the 20-foot squarestern canoe broadside to the fish. Then he switched off the motor, picked up a paddle, and skillfully held the canoe in position while I went through the anxious give and take of gradually bringing the salmon alongside.

Despite all his wild leaps, the fish still had plenty of zip, and when the net came out he went into a dazzling tailwalk. Fortunately, I was ready for his last-ditch flurry and turned him loose against the drag of the reel. One last sizzling run drained his energy, and moments later Kenny had him thrashing in the net.

In the next few days this exciting drama was to be repeated time after time, and the remarkable thing about it was that, according to the books. it shouldn't have happened at all. Landlocked salmon come to the surface as soon as the ice goes out, but they remain there only as long as the water on top stays cold. By mid-June, rising surface temperatures drive them into the depths. This is an inexorable fact of life all landlocked-salmon fishermen recognize and grudgingly accept.

It was for this reason that, as Pete and I drove to Maine's Grand Lake region on July 3, salmon fishing was farthest from our minds. The previous year we'd fished the area for



Guide Eddie Brown hauls one aboard for Pete. Most fish went two or three pounds



I'm taking these ashore for lunch

such warm-water species as small-mouth bass, pickerel, and white perch (see "Weatherproof Fishing," Outdoor Life, June, 1964), and now we had visions of three-pound small-mouths clobbering our fly-rod poppers. We talked bass and more bass as the miles rolled under us, and the fact that Grand Lake is probably the hottest landlocked-salmon water in the country at present seemed unworthy of comment.

Grand Lake is just one link in a connected chain of lakes making up the Grand Lake waterway, which extends for miles. The waterway starts in an area just west of the southern tip of the New Brunswick border and west of Calais, Maine.

Our host, Bev Weatherby, who, with his wife Alice, operates Weatherby's Camps in Grand Lake Stream, had written in May regretting that we couldn't shake loose for a go at the salmon fishing in Grand Lake. It had suddenly soared out of this world, he said, and we were to learn from area guides, and others, that he hadn't been kidding.

One guide reported that a party in three canoes accounted for 50 landlocked salmon in just five hours the day after ice-out. Fishing May 9, 10, and 11, the three-canoe party caught 122 salmon. This guide served among a group which never exceeded three craft, and I have his word that

during the first two weeks of fishing over 300 salmon, plus a number of togue, were taken—most of which, of course, were released. All were taken at the surface with fly rods and streamers. Other parties enjoyed the same action.

You can't fully appreciate the excitement of such fishing if you haven't yet had a slashing landlock sock your trolled streamer and take to the air. It's a heady thrill, and when it's repeated over and over it's a fisherman's dream come true.

When I'm not out fishing, I spend

my time teaching school in Pittsford, Vt. Pete Terwilliger is my next-door neighbor and a hunting-and-fishing partner of long standing, and in the course of our fishing we've had some exciting days with landlocked salmon in Maine and Vermont waters. Any reasonable prospect of tangling with these silvery acrobats would have driven all thoughts of bass from our minds, but, for reasons related, we arrived at the village of Grand Lake Stream without even having considered such a possibility.

It was late in the afternoon, but



Pete broils our salmon as George, left, myself, and Arthur Christie look on

LANDLOCK BREAK-OUT



Pete holds catch. Kenny Wheaton at rear



An expert with the net, George was all prepared when my landlock came in close

after stowing our gear in our cabin we had half an hour to kill before dinner, so we walked the few hundred yards to the landing at the foot of Grand Lake. Canoes were coming in from Junior Lake, Junior Stream, and other outlying points, and all had catches of smallmouths. But two canoes also had a pair of salmon each, which we soon learned they had picked up coming down Grand Lake.

"Go deep for them?" we asked the guides.

"No. They took streamers at the top."

These were surprising words to hear on July 3, and we made mental



I pose with three salmon, two bass

note of them. The following day, the Fourth, this paid off in spades.

Our guide for the day was Kenny Wheaton, a quiet, competent out-doorsman who, at the time, was serving as acting postmaster in the village and was free to guide only on weekends and holidays. Kenny is a self-taught craftsman of extraordinary skill, as became apparent when we learned he had made the superbly designed, fiberglass canoe from which we were to fish.

Our plan was to run up Grand Lake to Junior Stream, about 12 miles, then work the stream and sections of Junior Lake with bass bugs. Kenny was dubious. He said bass hadn't been hitting well at the surface. Good catches were being made by trolling and stillfishing, but the bass didn't seem to be on the shorelines where they must be for good bugging.

Results confirmed this opinion. After bugging Junior Stream and some choice coves in Junior Lake, we had taken seven smallmouths, virtually a skunking in those famed bass waters.

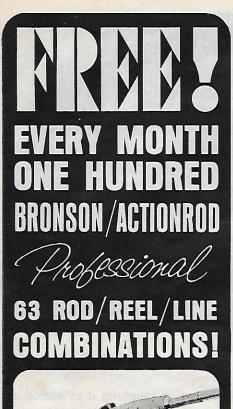
After we had demolished steaks for lunch, I began thinking of the salmon we'd seen the day before, and, when by 3 o'clock the bass fishing hadn't picked up, I suggested we move back into Grand Lake and give the salmon a try. Kenny was doubtful; years of fishing and guiding had convinced him that surface trolling for salmon in July was like hunting woodcock in a cornfield.

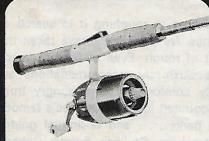
Yet we hadn't trolled far before I was fast to a rambunctious salmon, as already told, and in the short time remaining before supper, Pete and I boated three more and missed as many strikes.

This was the kind of salmon fishing you hope to hit in May, but common sense insisted it had to be a fluke. Salmon just aren't at the top in July, and the smart thing seemed to be to forget the four we'd taken and go back to bass.

So the next morning we lashed Cret MacArthur's canoe atop the station wagon and headed for the Saint Croix River, some 25 miles away. Cret had shown us a week of good fishing the previous year, but he had since taken a full-time job as guide and caretaker at an island estate on Grand Lake, and could guide for us only the one day.

We slid the canoe into the Saint Croix just above the dam at Grand Falls, and spent the day casting over stump- (continued on page 96)





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camp. Half an hour later, I walked to the top of the rapids and found three jubilant fishermen. They were keeping fish to take out and had quite an assortment of trout and char. The char were bright like those we had seen at Nachvak Fiord.

The pink-fleshed char we ate for supper that night is a close relative of the brook and lake trout. Modern authorities place all three species in the same genus. Circumpolar in distribution, char are found all across the high latitudes. They may be both sea-run and landlocked. Like other anadromous fish, sea-run char are silvery when they enter fesh water and gradually assume their spawning colors as they work inland. Male char, in particular, develop fiery-red undersides, prominent white lacings on the fins, and hooked jaws. At this point, they may somewhat resemble spawning male brook trout. An easy way to tell the difference is to look at their backs. The dorsal surface of a char will be uniformly colored (usually a sort of green), while a brookie's back will always have vermiculations, or wormlike

Because the ranges of trout and char overlap in Labrador, you can sometimes take lakers, brookies, and char from the same hole. While the average weight of char coming in to spawn may be five pounds, there is considerable variation in size. Ten-pound fish are common at Tasiuyak, and much larger ones have been taken. Doctors at the Grenfell Medical Mission know this place as a good fishing spot, and one is said to have caught a 26-pounder here. Paul told me of a 30-pound specimen landed by a member of a geological party he had flown up this coast.

In Saturday morning's bright sun, everything that moved in the pale-green depths of the rapids was visible. Backs blending with the bottom, clouds of husky char rolled and swayed with the current. We went after them with spinning gear and bright spoons. A lure would hit the water and stop with a jolt. Then there would be a battle, for char are dogged, surging fish that don't give up easily. Sometimes one of us would hook one that just took off and kept going. We kept the better fish to be frozen when we got back to Schefferville.

Paul packed along the makings for a lunch, and, when we stopped that noon by a big pool, Ray caught brookies to be broiled over coals. Lazing in the warm sun after this meal, it was hard to believe that this beautiful spot was the cold and barren Labrador most people picture. "Get your fill of this while you have a chance," Paul warned us, "because we'll be pulling out this evening or in the morning."

That was the signal for a last assault on a stretch of water none of us will ever forget. We fought and released gleaming char, brookies, and lakers until almost 6 p.m. Then Paul told us if we took off by 7, we could get halfway to Schefferville before dark and he could home-in on the radio beacon

there for a night landing. "I'm for a hot bath on Saturday night," Morrie announced. "Let's go."

Winging southwest in a velvet twilight, our route took us over the great fracture trench of Tasisuak Lake in the Fraser River, past Indian House Lake of the upper George, and over the tangled bays of Attikamagen, the Deer-spear Lake of the Indians. Ahead of us, a fiery sun dropped out of sight, and a full, golden moon came up. It was a great way to end a memorable trip.

The cost of package-deal flying tours like ours runs \$600-\$900 a man, depending on such factors as distances flown, type of aircraft used, and so on. This covers everything out of Schefferville. Round-trip airline fare there from a point like New York City is about \$180. It can also be reached by car and train via Sept Iles (Seven Islands) on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River. Anglers interested in a trip into this country should write to Laurentian-Ungava Outfitters in Schefferville.

Don't forget your camera. This is one place where the proof is better than the tall story.

LANDLOCK BREAK-OUT

(continued from page 60)

studded water for bass. Plenty rose to our bugs, but most were small. Pickerel kept the fishing lively, but the vision of dealing with three-pound smallmouths gradually faded.

We had planned to spend the next day, Monday, bugging for bass on Third Machias Lake, but the feeling that we were chasing a lost cause had deepened to conviction. We talked things over in camp that evening, and toyed with the possibility that maybe, just maybe, the salmon in Grand Lake were actually at the surface in numbers—and with nobody tending them. The off-chance seemed worth the gamble.

We were to have two canoes, and our guides, George MacArthur and Eddie Brown, were ready and waiting when we reached the landing the next morning. Pete was to fish with Eddie, I with George.

George MacArthur, Cret's uncle, is a 67-year-old native of the region who has fished, hunted, trapped, and guided since he was old enough to paddle a canoe. He knows his landlocked salmon as a skinner knows his mules, and on top of that he's a natural-born entertainer. Even while salmon were hitting hot and heavy, he kept us convulsed with yarns and songs and poetry.

Eddie Brown, an equally competent guide, is a self-educated authority on Indian lore. He devotes much of his spare time to excavating ancient Indian campsites in the vicinity, and he has gathered a magnificent collection of over 3,000 artifacts. Archeologists have said some of his finds are unlike any previously discovered.

Our guides agreed we should start

FISH IN THE WEEDS







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fishing near Mayberry Cove, about four miles up the lake, and during the run Pete and I strung up our rods. I was using a four-ounce fly rod eight feet long and made of impregnated bamboo, a single-action fly reel, sinking fly line, and plenty of backing. The backing is important, for flies are trolled about 70 feet behind the canoe, and salmon are quite often into the backing seconds after hooking. For a leader I used six-pound-test monofilament about the length of my rod. Following George's advice, I tied on a No. 6 Golden Head streamer. Pete rigged up the same way, but picked a Gray Ghost.

On our previous try, salmon had seemed to come readily to our bare flies, but our guides had brought buckets of tiny chub and insisted that one of these mites, hung from a streamer, would tease up more strikes. They were hardly more than 1½ inches long, and the twinkle of life one added to a streamer impaired its action very little. Had we not added bait, I'm sure we still would have made out. But we went along willingly with the guides.

We had hardly started trolling, when George reminded me it was July 6 and said we probably wouldn't get even a hit. Then a swirl the size of a dishpan boiled to the surface and hung, precisely where my fly was traveling just under the top. I cocked my arm, and when the salmon nailed the streamer on a second pass, I put the hook to him.

"What were you saying?" I asked as the reel buzzed. "Something about no strikes?"

George grinned broadly as he swung the canoe. "I'll be tickled to death if you prove me wrong," he said.

Minutes later Pete let out a whoop, and I turned in time to see a hooked salmon twist high above the chop a fly-line's length behind his canoe. No mistake about it, salmon were on top and feeding, July or no. And by grace of the gods of chance, we were there and into them.

It's common knowledge that the meaner the weather the better salmon like it, and in this respect the weather played directly into our hands. It turned cold, squalls came and went, and twice, after violent downpours, we had to run ashore and empty the flooded canoes. It was a bad day for church fairs and strawberry festivals, but it was made to order for landlocked-salmon fishing. We caught fish, and, of course, we lost fish. We missed many a hard, banging strike, but even while we would be bemoaning the loss, another salmon would wallop one of our streamers. It was incredible and fantastic, much like finding real diamonds in a box of Cracker Jack.

"Nobody's going to believe this," George said on our way downlake that evening. "I've fished Grand Lake all my life, and I've never seen anything like this in July."

Eddie Brown had a previous commitment, and his place was taken next day by Arthur Christie. Arthur is 76,

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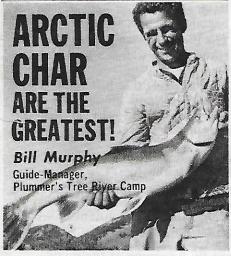


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retired, and given to guiding only when he darn well feels like it. He's as lively as a Morgan colt, and, as word of our unprecedented luck had spread rapidly, he decided to deal himself in on the

We had two more glorious days. The same wonderful, wretched weather held, and the salmon kept on hitting. There were fish for everybody, so Arthur and George rigged up, and all hands trolled. Both canoes sometimes had fish on, and once George and I had simultaneous strikes. We managed to boat both salmon.

We attributed the fine fishing to the rough weather, and when Thursday brought clear skies and a flat calm we figured we'd seen the end of our salmon fishing. George ran us up to Junior Stream, and there we took another crack at bass.

But it took up right where it had left off-small fish, and few of those. After a cookout and some digging which turned up interesting fragments of Indian pottery, we decided to move back into Grand Lake and try again for salmon, flat calm or no. Coming out of Junior Stream we passed Eddie and his party, anchored off the mouth and bait fishing. They were taking hefty smallmouths, Eddie told us, but we continued on in the hope of getting surface fishing. And in water almost as smooth as glass, we got it. In fact, when we drew into Mayberry Cove, we got the impression it was alive with salmon.

Pete got a solid belt almost immediately, and he yelled he had a fish on. He did, but only momentarily, and George and I promptly gave him a bad time for poor rod handling. Then I lost a good fish after letting out a premature whoop, and it appeared that I was in for a dose of my own medicine. But my streamer hadn't gone more than 50 feet when another salmon ripped into it and was solidly hooked.

It was a beautiful, blocky fish, and when it made its first leap, Pete passed his rod to George and dived for a camera. Lines got crossed as George reeled in, and he finally had to cut the streamer from Pete's leader to free the tangle.

Pete focused on my line in anticipation of a leap, but when I drew the fish in close it bored. At the same moment another salmon made a deliberate, swirling roll no more than four feet from my taut line, flaunting its sleek back and broad tail almost within reach of the net. The hooked fish's antics had aroused this second salmon, and it's certain as sin that he would have nailed anything tossed his way.

George was moved to excited oratory and wild gestures. "Here we are in bright sun and smooth water and it's July," he declared. "What happens? Salmon hit us right and left and even come up and swirl around the canoe. I'm telling you, I never did see the beat of it!'

During our trip, we had fished with five reliable guides and had talked with others. All stated that the early season fishing had been fantastic, and none could remember salmon hitting flies in July as they had for Pete and me.

The significance of all this is anybody's guess. Maybe we cashed in on a freak circumstance, or perhaps it was merely an indication of how many salmon are now in Grand Lake. Other than reporting what happened, I decline to comment on that score.

In view of the fact that we had fast action, even in July, and that all who fished in May and early June caught salmon by the dozens, Grand Lake certainly suggests itself as a potential early spring bonanza of one of our most glamorous species of fresh-water game-

The landlocked salmon is just what its compound name implies. First, the landlock is a salmon, and though it rarely approaches the size of its close relative, the seagoing Atlantic salmon, it has all the other characteristics of this extraordinary gamefish, including the instinct to take to the air when hooked. Any anatomical differences between the two species are so slight as to stump all but the experts. In appearance, apart from size, the two are virtually identical.

Logic seems to indicate that the landlock is a subspecies which evolved when salmon in certain waters were gradually denied access to the sea. Though forced to adjust to fresh water, the landlock lost none of the vitality of the sea salmon, and, in fact, seems to have suffered no adverse effect, apart from a reduction in size.

Landlocks thrive in the cold, pure waters of some of our northern states and Canada, usually only where smelt provide forage. They love the fast waters of streams, and probably do best where these exist in conjunction with cold lakes. They can retreat into the lakes when water temperatures rise. In most cases, landlocks are found where no avenue to the sea is open, but in the rare instances where an avenue does exist, it is claimed that their habits are so firmly established that they do not take advantage of the opportunity.

Guide George MacArthur is looking forward to even better fishing in Grand Lake in 1965, for he expects the fish to run larger.

"Two seasons ago, we caught a high percentage of short salmon," he told me. "Last spring they were averaging just over the keeper mark, which is 14 inches. This season they ran between two and three pounds, with a few fourpounders. They're bound to grow, and Î'll bet that next spring they average half a pound or more heavier."

Again, this is anybody's guess, though wishful thinking tempts me to throw in with George. Pete and I caught hardly a short fish, and nearly all were between two and three pounds. This is a good average for landlocks nowadays, and, because of their explosive nature, sufficient to provide thrilling light-tackle fishing. If the average size of the fish increases, the thrills are going to be intensified. Incidentally, the present limit on landlocks in Maine is $7\frac{1}{2}$ pounds a day, unless the last fish caught increases the combined weight to more than $7\frac{1}{2}$ pounds.

For all the fast and furious fishing of the past spring, it went largely to waste simply because no such salmon explosion had been anticipated. Bev Weatherby told me that during the first week after ice-out, when salmon were hitting anything dragged over them, he had only six fishermen at his camps. These lucky few caught so many salmon that they finally turned to the relatively poor trout waters in the vicinity to escape the monotony.

To reach Grand Lake Stream, follow Route 2 from Bangor to Lincoln, Route 6 to Topsfield, then Route 1 to a wellmarked turnoff which leads to the village. Fishermen will find ample, and varied, accommodations nearby, and competent guides are available. Complete facilities-guide, canoe, and firstclass American plan catering—will total around \$40 a day for one fisherman, and less if two anglers share a canoe. Under this arrangement, all you need to bring is clothing and tackle. Nonresident fishing licenses run \$8.75 for the season, \$5.75 for 15 days, or \$3.75 for three days. A resident license costs \$2.75 for the season.

May is the month of hot fishing, but the weather is just the reverse. Visitors should go prepared for bone-chilling cold, wind, and rain. Take insulated underwear, heavy woolen pants and shirts, a warm parka, and full-length rain gear. No amount of clothing will keep you warm if you get your feet soaked, so include rubber pacs or other

waterproof foot gear. Tackle should consist of fly rods, single-action reels, fly lines, preferably of the sinking variety, plus ample backing on each reel. Also, use six or eightpound-test monofilament for leaders, and have a supply of No. 4 and No. 6 streamers. The Golden Head and Gray Ghost are the favorite streamer patterns, and these, plus others, are tied and sold locally. I doubt that the pattern in streamers is highly important, and my supply usually consists of mongrels tied from whatever lay handiest. The salmon I took hit the two favorite patterns, but they seemed to hit the other patterns I used just as

Nobody makes flat predictions about fishing without soon learning the folly of his ways. But from what I've heard, seen and, glory be, done, Maine's Grand Lake shapes up in my mind as one of the hottest fishing bets for the spring of '65. This is landlock-salmon fishing, mind you, which is in mighty short supply nowadays.

THE END

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