

# FISHING

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## forecast

### Lakes Region

#### ANGLERS' PARADISE

By Don Miller, Region 2  
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Biological Technician

Central New Hampshire's cold, deep-water lakes offer a variety of fish and habitats – enough to satisfy anglers in search of an array of angling opportunities, from big-water trolling for salmon and trout, to shallow shoreline angling with bass and panfish as prime targets.

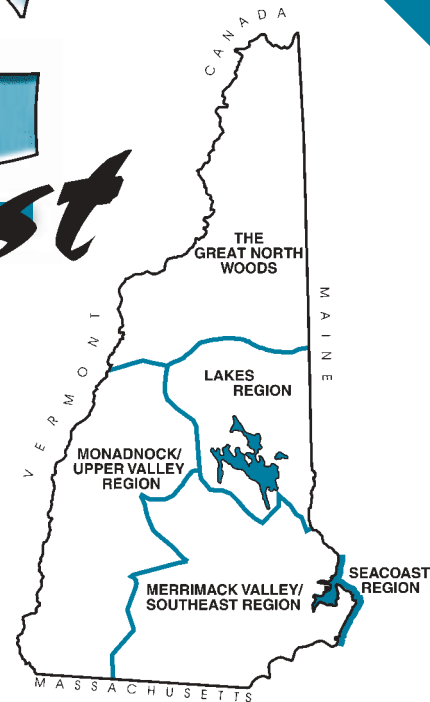
The start of April will find the true landlocked salmon angler fishing in natural openings around islands, bridges and tributary mouths in search of these silver beauties. Because ice-out won't occur until mid to late April, shore

anglers can rejoice! Public docks on Lake Winnepesaukee at Glendale, Meredith, Weirs Beach, Center Harbor and Alton are great places to fish live bait (smelt or shiners) for salmon. These areas are kept free of ice throughout the winter by aerators placed around dock pilings, and are magnets for large predatory fish such as lake trout and landlocked salmon. The Squam Channel, which connects Big and Little Squam lakes, usually has good, fishable water at both ends and is accessible via the Fish and Game boat ramp in Holderness.

Spend some time scouting the water with polarized glasses at bridges and tributaries to large lakes. Try the bridges on the Fowl River and the outlet (Newfound River) at the lower end of Newfound Lake. Some impressive rainbow trout and landlocked

salmon frequent these areas. Long Island bridge and Governor's Island bridge (watch where you park!) are famous for early season catches of landlocked salmon and some great rainbow trout. On Lake Winnisquam, the Winnepesaukee River is a natural attraction for salmon and rainbow trout, which can be caught either from shore or from a small boat. The outlet of Lake Winnisquam in Lochmere is also a great place to shore-fish for salmon and rainbow trout.

The 2003 fall trap netting of landlocked salmon revealed some pleasant surprises. The average size of salmon in Big Squam is nearly 20 inches and over 2.5 pounds. Please note that the minimum length for landlocked salmon in the Squam lakes is now back to the statewide minimum of 15 inches. The salmon stocking rate reduction has had a



positive effect on salmon growth already, while the lower minimum length limit should further stimulate growth.

Winnepesaukee salmon were a bit smaller in average size this year, with many 2-year-old fish in the

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### Monadnock/Upper Valley Region

#### TROPHY TROUT, CLEVER CRAPPIE AND BEAUTIFUL BASS

By Gabe Gries, Region 4  
Fisheries Biologist

Dublin Lake has long been known for great brook trout fishing, and now it may be getting even better. In 2002, Fish and Game began a fall brook trout stocking program, in addition to the lake's usual spring stocking. An angler survey last spring showed that these fall-stocked fish were being caught in good numbers by anglers and averaged 1.3 pounds and almost 14 inches in size. Fall stocking won't work on all lakes, as an adequate forage base for the trout is required. Fall netting surveys in Dublin Lake during 2003 revealed that 17 percent of trout sampled were holdover fish, averaging 1.9 pounds and just over 16 inches in length. In addition, spring-stocked yearling trout grew an average of 2 inches and gained

an average of 0.3 pounds between spring and fall. Hats off to the staff at the Milford Hatchery for raising such fine fish!

Other lakes and ponds to try for trout this year include: Forest Lake (Winchester), Swanzey Lake (Swanzy), Willard Pond (Antrim), Center Pond (Nelson) and Whittemore Lake (Bennington/Greenfield). Popular trout streams include Mill Brook (Westmoreland), Roaring Brook (Richmond), Souhegan River (New Ipswich), Baboosic Brook (Merrimack) and Beards Brook (Hillsboro). New for 2004 is a "delayed harvest" stretch on the Souhegan River (Greenville/Wilton; see page 50 of the 2004 *N.H. Freshwater Fishing Digest* for details).

Fall electrofishing surveys by Fish and Game show large numbers and healthy populations of wild brook trout in five brooks in southwestern

New Hampshire now managed for wild trout: Flint's Brook (Hollis), Gulf Brook (Chesterfield), Meadow Brook (Sharon), Sand Brook (Hillsborough) and Witches Spring Brook (Hollis). These streams will no longer be stocked with hatchery trout. Specific angling regulations can be found in the *Fishing Digest*. While a "trophy" brook trout in these brooks is 6 to 7 inches long, it is hard to not be overcome by the beauty of these fish and the fun of fishing for them. The small size of these brooks can make the trout tricky to catch; anglers often have to sneak up on the fish, so as not to spook them.

Black crappie has become a popular sport fish throughout most of New Hampshire. Fishing for crappies can be quite challenging, and they are great to eat! Typical tackle includes light-action spinning rods and jigs tipped with small

plastic grubs, tubes or live minnows. Monadnock area anglers will find abundant black crappie populations in Meetinghouse Pond (Marlborough), Surry Lake (Surry), Highland Lake (Stoddard), Sportsman Pond (Fitzwilliam), Mountain Brook Reservoir (Jaffrey), Half-moon Pond (Washington), Horace Lake (Weare) and the Connecticut River (Hinsdale).

Bass fishing should continue to be good this year in the Monadnock/Upper Valley Region. Warmwater surveys conducted in 2003 indicate good populations of bass in Ashuelot Pond (Washing-ton), Sip Pond (Fitzwilliam), Crescent Lake (Acworth) and Lake Warren (Alstead). During the spring, try the lower stretches of the Ashuelot and Cold Rivers for some great smallmouth action.

MONADNOCK *continued on page 2*

## Big Salmon for the Merrimack in 2004

### BROODSTOCK FISHERY OFFERS ANGLING ACTION

By Jonathan Greenwood,  
Fisheries Biologist II —  
Anadromous Fisheries

In preparation for the 2004 season, New Hampshire Fish and Game has tagged 1,500 brood stock Atlantic salmon at the Nashua National Fish Hatchery. The 2004 stocking schedule will release 1,100 salmon in the spring and 400 in the fall. The spring release will include 140 five-year-old salmon, averaging 11 pounds each; 760 four-year-olds, averaging 9 pounds; and 200 two-year-olds, about 3.5 pounds each. Some of the larger five-year-old salmon weighed 16 pounds when they were tagged in December!


Since 1993, Fish and Game, in cooperation with the U.S. Fish

and Wildlife Service, has stocked huge Atlantic salmon into the Merrimack and lower Pemigewasset rivers every spring and fall.

The special brood stock Atlantic salmon season runs year-round, but all salmon taken from October 1 through March 31 must be immediately released. Anglers need a \$10 Atlantic salmon stamp and an all-species New Hampshire fishing license. Each angler can keep one tagged salmon per day and five for the season. Please note that area 1a is catch-and-release only.

The best time to fish for brood stock is in April and May and again in the fall during October and November when temperatures are between 45 and 65 degrees F. Try fishing fast, free-flowing sections below the dams in Bristol, Franklin,

Bow, Hooksett and also the Stirrup Iron Brook area in Boscawen and the Sewalls Falls Recreation Area in Concord.

New Hampshire's brood stock fishery is a unique U.S. fishing opportunity — it cannot be found in any other state and boasts a 40 percent success rate! For a free brochure, including a map of salmon-fishing access points, call (603) 271-2501, or, visit [www.wildlife.state.nh.us](http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us) for a list of license agents. 



*A great way to support the Atlantic salmon brood stock program is to purchase collector-issue salmon stamps. The 2004 salmon stamp, the last in a 5-year series, features the classic "Durham Ranger" fly pattern. Single stamps, plate blocks of four and full sheets of 12 stamps with numbers are available. All salmon permit and stamp revenues are set aside for the Merrimack River Anadromous Fishery Restoration Program.*

## Seacoast Region

### FROM SHIP TO SHORE: YEAR-ROUND FISHING IN STORE

By Douglas Grout,  
Marine Fisheries Biologist

New Hampshire's coastal waters continue to offer amazing fishing opportunities. Saltwater fishing in New Hampshire gets going in April and May, with party, charter, and some private boaters going out after groundfish. After years of poor catches due to over-fishing, cod, haddock and pollock numbers continue to rise, resulting in some of the best groundfish catches in years.

Fishing for cod and haddock in New Hampshire waters is best in the spring, but in recent years, good catches have continued right through the summer. To catch these delicious fish, you need to go offshore. If you don't have your own vessel, New Hampshire has several party and charter boat companies that can take you to the fishing grounds.

Near-shore fishing picks up at the end of May and the beginning of June with the arrival of mackerel, followed by striped bass. During June, catches of 50 to 100 mackerel per trip are not uncommon. Lighter catches of mackerel generally continue throughout most of the summer, with a second



pulse of fish hitting during the fall as they move south for the winter.


Stripers are a favorite target of shoreline anglers, because they're found near the coast as well as in tidal rivers and estuaries. Striped bass fishing usually starts in earnest by the end of May, when large numbers of "schoolie" stripers begin to show up, followed by the larger "cows" in June. While catches tend to slow a bit during the heat of the summer, the fishing picks up again in September as stripers start heading south for the winter. Catches in New Hampshire have been averaging about a quarter million fish per year over the past eight years, and are dominated by 14 to 24 inch fish, with good numbers of fish in the 30 to 40 inch range.

For a list of shoreline access points along the New Hampshire seacoast, as well as contact information for party and charter boat companies, pick up the *N.H. Recreational Saltwater Fishing Guide*, available for free from Fish and Game headquarters or the regional office in Durham.

By the end of July, bluefish begin arriving in New Hampshire waters. They peak in August before heading south again in September. Most bluefish caught off New Hampshire's coast range from two to three feet in size, though in some years, schools of smaller bluefish called "snappers" invade our estuaries in search of food to satisfy their ravenous appetites.


In late fall, marine anglers can try their skill at sea-run brown trout fishing in Berry Brook in Rye. Fish and Game stocks about 5,000 brown trout into this river each year. Be patient: many more brown trout are seen than caught.

If you're a striper angler, or plan to fish Berry Brook for sea-run brown trout, Fish and Game is

looking for anglers to participate in our Volunteer Angler Survey Programs. Participants fill out provided logbooks with information about their fishing trips and catch, helping Fish and Game monitor and manage these resources and the fisheries for them. To take part, call Fish and Game's office in Durham at (603) 868-1095. 

#### MONADNOCK *continued from page 1*

Soft baits continue to be the hot lure for bass. Try out some new methods this year such as the drop shot and Mojo rig. Experiment with these new techniques in an area that you know holds good numbers of bass to help yourself gain confidence with these new methods.

Remember to help stop the spread of aquatic nuisance weeds by removing all vegetation from your boats, trailers and canoes when leaving a waterbody. Enjoy fishing this year in the Monadnock/Upper Valley Region, and please take a kid fishing whenever you can. 

### WATER TEMPS KEY TO TROUT FISHING SUCCESS

By Andrew Schafermeyer  
Region 1 Biological  
Technician

Water temperature monitoring has been quite a project for North Country Fish and Game staff, but it promises to yield valuable information for both anglers and fisheries biologists. Since June 2000, we analyzed water temperature

trends at 66 different sites.

When plotting temperature readings on a graph, it's easy to see why some waterbodies are better than others when it comes to fishing for trout. An unofficial threshold of 70° F has been set as a sub-lethal level for salmonids (trout and salmon). This doesn't mean immediate death at 70° F, but it may help to explain prolonged periods of inactivity and lulls in fishing success. Keep all of this in mind as you plan your fishing: Water temperature can tell you where the fish are and where they are headed. The rest is up to you.

Our water temp study results offer the following locations as those with the most favorable fishing conditions. The Connecticut River was sampled beginning in Pittsburg and never saw a single reading of 70° F until it reached the town of Columbia. This translates into fantastic habitat for all stages of trout lifecycles. Other fishing destinations with great temperature regimes include the Mohawk River in Colebrook, Greenough Pond in


Wentworth's Location and both First and Second Connecticut Lakes in Pittsburg.

If fishing is slow and you suspect thermal limitations, it may be time to target a new area or species. The happiest anglers are often the most diversified. When it's time to search out a new spot, try a location that you've never been to before. You may find a waterbody that becomes your new "fishin' hole" for years to come.

When trout and salmon become too finicky, I like to fish some of the bass ponds that seem to get better every year. Large and smallmouth bass populations are now widespread throughout northern New Hampshire. After work, I can make it to Moore Reservoir in Littleton or Forrest Lake in Whitefield with enough time to fish for five to six hours – and boat 20 bass.

I've borrowed one of my latest bass tactics from my trout-fishing mindset. It involves a "dropper" or "drop-shot" system. Simply stated, a dropper is one active fishing set-up attached to another. For example, I'll

tie a six-inch plastic bait (worm or lizard) a foot or two above a heavy tube bait and slowly drag and bounce them both around some bass cover. Another method involves tying two plastic swim-baits a foot apart on the same line. Hungry bass, pike and walleyes may be more tempted to strike at a school rather than a single fish. (Note that a two-hook setup is not legal on all waterbodies; see pages 30-31 and 42-52 of the 2004 *N.H. Freshwater Fishing Digest* for restrictions.)

For many of us, half the sport of fishing is prioritizing – finding a way to balance it with the many responsibilities of fast-paced modern life. One has to believe that even New Hampshire's most die-hard anglers probably don't fish as much as they want! With this in mind, I'm creating the following resolution for the 2004 fishing season and recommend its adoption to anyone with a similar lifestyle: I will be a good husband (or wife), parent, homeowner, employee and citizen, and I will still be a great angler. 



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## Merrimack Valley/Southeast Region


### AN ARRAY OF ANGLING OPPORTUNITIES

Ah, spring — time to mothball the tip-ups and cast your line! From the Mass. border to the Connecticut River and on up to the Lakes, anglers will find a great variety of conditions, challenges and potential catches. Don't overlook the Merrimack River — its miles and miles of water offer several easy-access points and more species than you can shake a stick (or a hook) at. Here you'll find trout, black crappie, the occasional walleye; plus bass, pickerel and pout, and don't forget the Atlantic salmon (see page 2).

Results from last year's warmwater electrofishing surveys show a growing black crappie population in waterbodies throughout the region. Turtletown Pond (Concord) is one place that shows abundant crappies, and is still very productive for largemouth bass. The Nashua River appears to have a strong forage base of small fish, providing largemouth bass and other predators with lots of food. In Hudson, Otternick Pond and Robinson Pond show the usual host of bullheads, bluegills, largemouths,

crappie, yellow perch and pickerel. Researchers caught (and released) a BIG 16-inch bullhead out of Canobie Lake in Windham — and lots of his relatives. Try Little Island Pond (Pelham) for more bullheads, plus largemouth and smallmouth bass, bluegills, pickerel and yellow perch.

Folks from the Manchester/Nashua region have several close-to-home angling options; Lake Massabesic, the Piscataquog River and Mine Falls Park are a few favorites. Call (603) 271-3211 to request a Manchester/Nashua shorebank fishing guide, with a handy fish ID and bait guide, plus access ideas.

Anglers will find early season opportunities on the Exeter and Lamprey that are stocked throughout the spring with brook, brown and rainbow trout. Other stocked streams include the Winnicut River (Greenland), Piscassic River (Newfields to New Market); and the Isinglass, Suncook, North and Soucook Rivers. 


#### LAKES *continued from page 1*

sample. That means we can look forward to high catch rates for three-year-old salmon in 2004! Trophy-sized salmon (greater than 6 pounds) will constitute a good percentage of the catch as age 5 fish in 2004. Overall, Winnepesaukee salmon were a respectable 20 inches in length and weighed an average of nearly 3 pounds. Rainbow trout averaged 18 inches in length and weighed 2.4 pounds in Winnepesaukee. Fall fishing for lake trout was phenomenal there, and should translate to an excellent open-water fishery in the weeks to come.

Newfound Lake, with its 15-inch length limit, continues to have a strong population of lake trout. For a real adventure, try Big Dan Hole Pond in Ossipee for some great landlocked salmon and fat lakera.

Plentiful wild brook trout are one of the most overlooked resources in New Hampshire. While they rarely attain sizes of more than 9 to 10 inches, with

average fish being 4 to 7 inches, it's hard to describe the magic of fishing small, intimate brooks in unsurpassed scenery. Look for small branches off such main stem rivers as the Bearcamp, Saco, northern Pemigewasset, East Branch of the Pemigewasset, Swift and Baker. You can't go wrong in the White Mountains, where many small brooks are teeming with crimson beauties.

Call Fish and Game's New Hampton office at (603) 744-5470, or e-mail us at [reg2@starband.net](mailto:reg2@starband.net); we'll be happy to talk fishing with you! 

#### SPORTFISH RESTORATION: Working for You and the Resource.

Your purchase of a fishing rod, reel, lines and other tackle or motorboat fuel helps the cause of fisheries conservation. The items are taxed to fund fisheries management, research and restoration; fish culture and stocking; aquatic resources education; and access to public waterways.

For more information, visit  
[www.wildlife.state.nh.us](http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us).

## Water Access for Boaters and Anglers

### NEW RAMP TECHNOLOGY BEING TESTED

By Rich Tichko, Access Program Ecologist

In 2003, Fish and Game began repair work on several boating-access facilities — many of which are now more than 20 years old. While making these improvements, the Department began to try a new and improved boat ramp design. Why a new design? It's no secret that New Hampshire is in an ice belt, and waterbodies that freeze have had a disastrous effect on concrete-log ramps currently in use at most sites. Ice damage and the practice of power-loading are the two main causes of premature boat ramp failure in New Hampshire.

In 2003, Fish and Game began replacing the old-style concrete-log ramps with a new design intended to have a better and longer-lasting life.

Fish and Game also continues to be busy developing new boating facilities and projects that increase shorebank fishing opportunities for anglers who enjoy fishing in streams and rivers. Following are a few of the projects that the Department is working on to increase public water access for fishing and boating:

**Cedar Pond, Milan** – The boat ramp was constantly under siege because of ice-related damage. During the summer of 2003, the old logs were removed and the new ramp design installed. Hopefully, this



design will survive the New Hampshire winter better than

its predecessor. In fact, if this technology does prove to be superior, Fish and Game will share this design with other New England states, which are dealing with the same problem.

**Lake Umbagog, Cambridge** – Access facility improved with the new ramp design.


**Sand Pond, Marlow** – Old-style concrete-log ramp replaced by the new technology.

**Concord Conservation Easement, Concord** – Fish and Game was fortunate to receive an easement for fishing and hunting along the Soucook River, in Concord. This easement restores the Department's ability to stock trout in a section of the river that was cut off to stocking when Route 202/9 was redesigned a number of years ago. In addition, the property provides limited hunting for waterfowl.

**Lake Tarleton, Piermont** – The Department has developed a new boat access facility fronting Lake

Tarleton. This wonderful waterbody provides a two-story fishery (accommodating both warm- and cold-water fish). A new ramp, parking area and an improved access road await anglers who aren't afraid to venture off the beaten path.

**Outlook 2004** – In 2004, improvements are slated for Lambert Park (Hooksett) and Newfound Lake (Bristol). In addition, we are currently working on designs for Archery Pond (Allenstown), Turtletown Pond (Concord), Hawkins Pond (Center Harbor), Manning Lake (Gilmington), Otter Lake (Greenfield), Baxter Lake (Rochester), as well as moving forward with the "Large Lake" initiatives intended to provide public boating access for Sunapee Lake and for Winnisquam Lake.

Fish and Game will continue to look to improve its access program whenever it can. However, the practice of power-loading continues to reduce the useful life of many of the Department's boat ramps. Hopefully, the new ramp design will not only survive ice damage, but will be better able to withstand the rigors of power-loading. 



## Fisheries Habitat Program

### HABITAT WORK IMPROVES ANGLING OPPORTUNITIES

by Scott Decker, Fisheries Biologist II, Fisheries Habitat

Fisheries habitat funds were used to restore and enhance a 1,500-foot section of the Cold River in southwest New Hampshire at the end of last summer. The project was designed to improve "holding water" for adult trout to enhance fishing opportunities in this section of the river. Several pools were excavated, and structure in the form of large boulders was added to the stream. A small rock dam


was re-worked to improve passage for fish migrating up from the Connecticut River. This section of the Cold River in Walpole provides a good opportunity for catching some very nice (18+ -inch) rainbow trout. The site can be accessed via the section of River Road between Routes 12 and 12A in the town of Walpole.

In 2004, an evaluation of the Nash Stream watershed is being planned for future fisheries habitat restoration and enhancement. The Nash Stream State Forest, a roughly 40,000-acre tract in Coos County,

was acquired by the state in the late 1980s. It is the largest state-owned watershed in New Hampshire and features several coldwater streams with wild trout populations. The main-stem of Nash Stream has suffered from past logging practices and is in a state of recovery. Its primary problems include lack of pool habitat and large woody debris.

River habitat restoration through the removal of non-functional dams will continue this year. Dam removals planned for 2004 include the West Henniker Dam on the

Contoocook River, Winnicut River Dam on the Winnicut River, and, possibly, the Fiske Mill Dam on the Ashuelot River. These projects should benefit migratory, as well as resident, fish populations in the long run and also will improve recreational fisheries.

If you know of a lake or stream that might benefit from habitat restoration, contact Scott Decker, Fisheries Habitat Biologist, N.H. Fish and Game Department, 11 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03301; call (603) 271-2744; or e-mail [sdecker@wildlife.state.nh.us](mailto:sdecker@wildlife.state.nh.us). 



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