

The Cool Side of **HOT WEATHER FISHING**

TWO REGIONAL FISHERIES BIOLOGISTS OFFER
A TRIBUTE TO MID-SUMMER ANGLING

BY ANDREW **SCHAFFERMEYER**
AND DON **MILLER**

Whoever coined the phrase the “dog days of summer” must not have been an angler. Had they been, it would surely be called the “fishing days of summer.” I can’t imagine anything more synonymous with summer than fishing.

One big advantage of summer fishing is simplicity of clothing. In contrast to trout fishing outfitted in waders, a 40-pound vest and a wading staff, I can bass fish in July wearing only a pair of shorts and a baseball cap. The feeling is liberating, to say the least. Except for bug spray, my accessories are a fraction of what they are on other adventures, allowing me to spend less time preparing and get to the water quicker.

I also love the long hours of daylight afforded the summer angler. Where ice fishing days end around four o’clock, the bass boat doesn’t leave the water until nine. Watching the sun set over

calm water, disturbed only by my casting, provides tranquility to my life like nothing else. Even during the week, you can often get in a lot of fishing after work before the day ends!

Longer days also translate to a period of greater growth for fish. They follow predictable patterns on long summer days, seeking shallow water at dusk and deep water during the day. Fish hold on drop-offs or submerged cover and wait for any feeding opportunity. A good angler can find action all day.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of summer fishing is the opportunity. Black bass (large and smallmouth) are found in so many waterbodies that I can fish a different spot every week. They feed aggressively, grow quickly, and trophy fish over three pounds are not hard to find. On bigger lakes, you can find new water day after day. I never waste time wondering if water temperatures will be cooperative, or which spot is fishing better than another; I just keep moving around until I find the fish.





With it's abundant and varied insect life, summer is a fantastic time for dry-fly anglers to fish New Hampshire.

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A Royal Wulff (left) looks little like a natural food source, but works wonders attracting small water brook trout this time of year.

Ghosts and Streamers

For the dry fly fisherman, summer can be a fantastic time to fish New Hampshire. Where early season hatches can be slight and very specific, mid-summer insect life is abundant and widespread. While watching trout sip at size 28 midges, less-experienced anglers can throw a foam-bodied beetle in the middle of it all and occasionally get a hit. By mid-summer, fish have seen a lot of bugs floating over their heads, and they have tried to eat most of them. A Royal Wulff looks little like a natural food source, but it becomes my favorite fly for small-water brook trout. The fly is easy to see, for both angler and fish, and usually induces aggressive strikes.

An additional advantage for summer fly fishermen is that young-of-year fish (those hatched in early spring) have started to reach a size where they become a valued food source for larger fish. This translates into good streamer fishing and allows me to try some "old faithful" patterns. If I could own only one streamer, it would be a Black Ghost. The white marabou and black body trigger an instinct in fish like no other pattern. They are easy to tie and can be modified in many ways – just adding a few strips of peacock hurl can dress them up in a good way. I also have a lot of luck on Grey Ghosts and squirrel-tail streamers. They can be easily fished and work well when long casts are used, either through runs or pools.

~ Andrew Schafermeyer

Fishing the Lazy, Hazy Days of Summer

We've enjoyed the fleeting spring season, fishing trout ponds and fast-flowing rivers and streams for brook, brown and rainbow trout, and the big lakes for landlocked salmon and lake and rainbow trout. Now, with the arrival of summer and those long, hot days and sticky nights, what is a fisherperson to do?

Certainly your gear changes, perhaps from light monofilament to heavier lead-core lines that enable you to seek out colder waters. Fly-fishing gear may require the use of heavier, wet lines to present flies to deep-water trout. Anglers who seek landlocked salmon and lake trout will use a wide array of electronics, such as GPS-based depth sounders with electronic maps and downrigger systems to ply the deep, cold waters of the big lakes.

If you're looking for a more relaxed, laid-back type of fishing experience, summertime angling can be just that! Start with a simple spinning rod, a few #6 hooks, a red/white bobber, and a can of good old garden hackle, worms. New Hampshire is blessed with numerous small ponds that will provide plenty of action for shore anglers. Late summer afternoons, when the sun sinks low in the west, are optimal times for sitting back in a lawn chair and watching the bobber. Bring the kids. They can splash along in the shallows chasing minnows while keeping a watchful eye on that bobber! Pumpkinseeds, bluegills and red-breasted sunfish



© ANDREW SCHAFERMEYER

For summer fishing fun with the kids, all you will need are a basic spinning rod, #6 hooks, a bobber and some worms. Panfish, like this colorful pumpkinseed, provide hours of fishing action.



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(collectively known as kibbees) are the target fish.

Anglers with boats, canoes or kayaks will find that a panfish popper cast along the shoreline in the evening will produce plenty of action. This is a great way to introduce kids to fly-fishing. A few short casts will entice strikes. I learned to fly fish on Lake Winnisquam many moons ago, fishing submerged rock piles in front of my grandfather's camp from an old rowboat with a rudimentary fly rod, a short leader (four feet), a Royal Coachman fly, and yes, a small piece of worm on the tip of the fly. This even taught me the practice of catch-and-release, as every kibbee I brought back to camp had to be cleaned and eaten. That got old real fast!

Down Under

Lakes and ponds have now undergone the spring turnover and settled into stratified layers of water, each with its own chemical/physical properties. As depth increases, temperatures cool. Because of the differences in water density at various temperatures, lakes and deep-water ponds exhibit three distinct layers: warmer, well-mixed surface water (epilimnion); the thermocline, where the temperature drops at least one degree per meter (metalimnion), and the cold bottom water (hypolimnion). Warmwater species like sunfish, largemouth bass and bullheads can be found in shoreline waters, where temperatures often exceed 70 degrees. Cool-water species (white and yellow perch, pickerel and smallmouth bass) inhabit – you guessed it – cooler water.

To enjoy fishing large natural lakes that thermally stratify in the summer, you'll need a boat to find the deep, cold, well-oxygenated waters where trout and salmon spend those long, hot summer days. Some specialized gear is required. The most common tool for reaching the cold-water depths is lead-core line. Through trolling, a considerable amount of this line is trailed behind the boat while travelling at a slow speed (about two mph). Any type of spoon or wobbler will do just fine, and there are myriad colors to tempt the angler (and fish!).

Using this method (or downriggers – more expensive, but highly effective), you can fish for landlocked salmon, lake and rainbow trout. When fishing deep, remember that trout and salmon experience considerable stress as they fight upwards through increasingly warmer water. Catch-and-release fishing is fine when waters are colder, but salmonids fought to exhaustion and handled do not release well when surface waters are warm.

Hornpoutin'

A time-honored pastime during the heat of summer is to go hornpouting. Also called catfish or bullheads, horned pout are fun to catch, and a "mess of pout" deep fried to a golden brown can't be beat! Tactics are simple. My early days of hornpouting were in the old rowboat, with a gas lantern providing light. My grandfather used hand-lines, with a heavy sinker and long-shanked hook on the business end. Bait was generally nightcrawlers, hand-picked during previous nights (another fun pastime for kids).

We would anchor the boat offshore; any sandy/mud bottom is a good place to start. It was quite a thrill to hold that Dacron line between your fingers and feel that unmistakable bite of a horned



Largemouth bass (above) and smallmouth bass provide some of the best fishing opportunities during the hot days of summer.

pout. Nothing fancy here, just pull up to set the hook and bring it in hand-over-hand until the "pout" lay flopping in the boat. Gramps always was careful unhooking the pout, as they have quite the defense mechanism with pectoral and dorsal spines that leave a painful wound if grasped incorrectly.

Casting from shore with a sinker and worm, left on the bottom, is equally efficient. Shore anglers can easily fill a pail with horned pout. A simple forked stick pushed into the sand makes a great rod holder. Again, a lantern will make life easier baiting hooks, handling pout, etc. I like to leave slack line off the rod tip, so it sags into a loop. Just watch that loop for movement upwards, and set the hook!

Hornpouting is a simple, yet fun, way to spend a summer's evening with friends. The large rivers in New Hampshire are perfect for this type of fishing. The Connecticut, Merrimack and Pemigewasset rivers all have good bullhead populations, and in the case of the Connecticut, you may encounter a "new" species, the channel catfish, the horned pout's much larger cousin.

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Whether you're hornpouting, trolling the big lakes, or casting a lazy line from the dock, summertime fishing is truly one of life's great pleasures.

~ Don Miller




Andrew Schafermeyer is a Regional Fisheries Biologist based in Lancaster. Don Miller is Fish and Game's Large Lakes Regional Fisheries Biologist, based in New Hampton.

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