



A Maine Blast and Cast Part Two

by
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Photos by Ed Felker

The first half of this article appeared in the April-May issue of The Virginia Sportsman. The author told about hunting woodcock in the Maine woods, the “blast” portion of his trip north.

We had now been in Maine for a couple of days, and it was time for the casting portion of our blast and cast to begin—but first, breakfast! For the morning meal the Captain had prepared his famous breakfast frittata—layers of potatoes, grilled onions, cheese and eggs baked until golden brown in a giant old camp skillet.

After breakfast, my buddy Ed

Felker and I headed into Greenville to meet our guide, Dan Legere, at his fly shop. The others had decided to save their fishing for later in the week and were going back to the woods for more woodcock hunting. The morning was overcast and a little chilly—perfect fishing weather and a nice change of pace from the 90-degree October we had been experiencing in Virginia. Dan’s shop, The Maine Guide Fly Shop & Guide Service, is a fly-fishing institution in that part of the state. The large store is well equipped with all the rods, reels, flies, fly-tying supplies and clothing any fly angler could ever need. We were quite excited that Dan would be guiding us our first day on the water.

Dan is “the” guide on the Kennebec River, which flows out of Moosehead Lake. He brought the first Western-style drift boat to the river in the mid-1980s and has been providing the area’s finest guiding ever since. Dan was born in Maine and grew up hunting and fishing its many forests and rivers. Prior to opening his shop, he spent a couple of years in the fly-tying business. He and his wife Penny operate the fly shop and guide service year round, varying their hours with the seasons. Once everything freezes over around the end of December, they switch to providing bait and tackle to the ice fishermen who descend upon Moosehead Lake with snowmobiles and ice-fishing shacks.



Drift boats hooking up on the Kennebec



A landlocked salmon

Brook trout



We arrived at the boat ramp with our drift boat in tow and began preparing for the launch. The excitement was building as we took our rods out of their tubes and rigged up. It is so easy to miss a guide on your rod or put a reel on upside down when

you are thinking about all the fish to come. I took a deep breath and made sure everything was done properly.

The fish we were seeking were large brook trout and landlocked salmon. The brook trout look very much like the

brook trout you would find in the Rapidan or Rose rivers in Virginia—if they had been fed a steady diet of steroids and growth hormones. These fish have all the colorful markings of our Virginia brook trout but on a canvas five times the size. They are incredibly beautiful fish. The other species that we hoped to find was landlocked salmon. These fish are also quite stunning, looking similar to a brown trout but with a slightly more golden body and a more striking pattern of green, black and orange spots.

We each rigged two rods for the day. I set up a 4-weight with a double-nymph rig and a 5-weight with a streamer. Most of the flies that we used were patterns that Dan had tied and used for years with good results. It wasn't long before I had my first strike on the dead drifted-nymph rig. But unfortunately I set the hook either too fast or too slow, and it was "fish off" instead of "fish on."

Ed landed and released the first fish of the day, a beautiful male salmon with a striking kyped jaw. I missed another and Ed landed another, this one being the female match of the first male he'd caught. At this point I was beginning to get a little anxious. It's always interesting how two people fishing out of the same boat can have different results even when they are fairly matched in fly-fishing skill. But just then I had a big one hit my strike indicator.

Dan quickly handed me the streamer rod that was loaded with one of his favorite fall-attractor patterns called the Montreal Whore—a flashy fluorescent orange and silver-ribbed number with a white maribou wing tied on a long streamer hook. I cast out over the rock ledge that had just produced the rise to my strike indicator—strip, strip and WHAM! My line went taut, and I had a Kennebec brookie on the line. After a fair amount of give-and-take I landed, photographed and released my first big brookie! The two pound-plus lunker was truly an impressive fish, dressed in his spawning coat of many colors. We

proceeded to fish the ledge area for another half hour, landing four more of these awesome brookies.

As noon rolled around we were getting hungry, and Dan pulled into a little spot on the side of the river to prepare one of his famous streamside lunches. This was no cold-cuts-and-storebought-cookies kind of meal. We started with Dan's specialty, spicy pickled green beans, followed by homemade beef stew heated on a propane stove and freshly baked brownies. The stew warmed our whole bodies on a day that was 40 degrees and as damp as it could get without raining.

The afternoon was spent drifting and wading shallow areas of the river. Ed caught a couple more nice salmon, and I caught my first salmon, a kype-jawed male, and a few more nice brook trout. As we finished our four-mile float, the sun began to set. Dan hooked up a little outboard motor to push us across the outlet of the river and then into and across beautiful Indian Pond—a large, isolated body of water with no signs of development save a few remote campsites accessible only by boat—to the boat ramp where his truck had been shuttled. It had been a great day on a great river with a great guide.

The Maine blast and cast was everything I had hoped for—good friends and fellowship combined with great hunting and fishing in the beautifully rugged Maine woods. No doubt we would be back to hunt the woods and fish the Kennebec. Now if only we could only figure out how to get brook trout to grow that big in Virginia!

Douglas Dear is the owner of Rose River Farm, a popular trophy-trout fly-fishing destination located on the Rose River in Madison County (www.roseriverfarm.com). He also serves as chairman of the board for Project Healing Waters, a nonprofit organization dedicated to healing our wounded veterans through fly fishing.



Indian Pond



Dan Legere and his team of regular guides

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