

FISHERMEN'S VOICE

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News & Comment for and by the Fishermen of Maine

FREE

Autumn in Maine

There are probably more than a few reasons to be in Maine for the fall. Me, I've a pocketful as am sure most of us who call Maine do. Been fortunate in this respect. Missed the best in only 6 of 63. Three years to be born and grow a bit in Oregon and Virginia during WWII. Two for Uncle Sam in Germany and one year, the hardest, leaving Oct. 7th on "Helen J" for Florida.

My year is not complete if I can't catch that time when cold air begins to form vapor over warmer water, when fog banks break to pick out clusters of color and form mountain reflections in the water. There's an irrefutable loss if I couldn't stop on Route 11, Township Mt. Chase, soak up the full compass view with its riot of color rebounding off nearby mountains and woodlands, all this bathed in sunlight so clear eyes ache. I want to walk up Beech Mountain, climb the fire tower (my old duty station of many summers ago), and look out past the offshore islands halfway to England, out to Blue Hill Mt. and the Camden Hills then back into Hancock County and breath in the mix of salt air and spruce on a southwest breeze.

Passage would be much the more difficult to snow months if I hadn't walked the tote roads. I'd not enjoyed the earth smell of decaying leaves or peered through an alder swale for birds to be blessed with a glimpse of swamp maple standing tall in resplendent red and gold leaves. Leaves I'd swear were hand painted.

Not to be forgotten, placed high on the list is last of landlock salmon with its bite of cold on the knuckles and a hint of "drip on the tip of your nose." Higher up there still is bird camp. That wondrous ritual where great friends I might see once a year come together to overindulge in conversation, food and libation. Where we reconnect our lives for another year. That time and place when we manage to bag a few birds just to keep score.

Yes, there are a few negatives. Transition from shorts to long pants is difficult. I suppose I could do without the late September and October "Easterlies" when the power flickers and I lay awake and wonder if the frayed painter on the fishing skiff will hold till daybreak. Then, dwell on the efficacy of leaving it and the docks in the water for the last week of salmon fishing. Yes, as years pass, the thought of getting all the toys put away and place battened down for winter will go from minor annoyance to work status. But, that's okay. I like to work and there's a simple pleasure found in chores accomplished. In total this all amounts to, as my mother would say, "a hill of beans" in comparison.

This fall, AJ and I were splendidly gifted. Tagging on to a string of absolutely gorgeous days and in the company with bird chasing partners, the MacQuinns and offspring, we decided to do a Sunday afternoon cookout at Lower South Branch Pond in Percival Baxter's Park.

I'd never been in Percival's park and AJ only in teen years. Read the biography. Seen Katahdin a few hundred times driving I-95. Park was always there like the Empire State Building or Eiffel Tower to New Yorkers or Parisians respectively. Always knew someday I'd land there. Should have gone sooner. It truly is Maine's crowning jewel. Magnificence does not do this park justice. I will go so far as to say for a "Mainer", Baxter State Park should carry mandatory visitation status and the book about it required school reading. This park and Mt. Desert Island are "Quintessential Maine".

The beauty of that afternoon shared with friends amidst canopies of brilliant gold Poplars while two young children splashed and kayaked, and we quietly talked the sun drenched hours away will remain in special memory file long after the old man has come a'calling for my spirit.

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AJ and I have enjoyed visiting and hunting with good friends Mike and Dottie Fitzgerald this week at Madawaska Lake. There we again sampled of the great repertoire from "Dottie's Kitchen" (see article "Cooking with Dottie", May 2006, Vol. 11, No. 5 of Fishermen's Voice). Aside from being delicious, Dottie makes food prep look too easy. One morning I mentioned, as a lover of cole slaw, if she could pick some up in town. Thought would go well with the chicken that evening. Her quick reply, "Certainly not, I'll make some." This is Dottie's Cole Slaw. A different and elegant twist to an American staple.

Dottie's Cole Slaw

Cabbage and carrots cut to Julienne length; slice carrots as thin as cabbage leaves. Toss lightly with a mixture of 1 tablespoon sugar, 3 tablespoon vinegar, 2 tablespoon salad oil, and 1 teaspoon salt.

Same dressing combo can be used with greens, apples and/or pears, cranraisins, walnuts or pecans and bleu cheese (or other cheese).

Fair winds and good roads.

Lee S. Wilbur