

Article on the Restigouche and early salmon fishing.

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## A River Running Out Of Eden

**The salmon has long lured millionaire sportsmen to Canada's Restigouche. They came first by houseboat 80 years ago and later built stately lodges. Today anglers instinctively return—but the fish are scarce**

Pat Ryan

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Spring comes slowly on the Restigouche. Just now the birch and aspen are leafing out in the cold Canadian forest. In the clearings plow horses hunch their backs to the slanting rain, and smoke curls from shack chimneys. Only dandelions along the road edges brighten the winter-worn land, and children gather bunches of them, delighting in the gold profusion. The potholes rutted in roads by winter storms are marked by sticks topped with red flags, and drivers run a slalom course between the poles. The sparse, dour settlements where wrecked autos, discarded tires and rusting Coca-Cola signs are hoarded (for a rainy day and a leaky roof) stir languidly. The green canoes used by fishermen on the Restigouche are hoisted on saw-horses, painted and left to dry. Families pick fiddleheads along the river, and nine- and 10-year-olds with match-stick rods wade the narrow trout streams. They stop at the Robinsonville Bridge looking—hankering—each morning and each night for the first run of salmon. The young eyes know the riverbed, its eddies and dark shadows. Generation after generation of guides have taught their sons—"No, salmon will not lie there. Look beyond the rock, or down there by the pilings." The river seldom changes, its bottom or its banks, and salmon and fishermen return each year to these same pools, marked by a white stone, a bent fir or a ripple.

The Restigouche River, with its wealthy fishermen and wealth of fish, its eccentric guides, its lore and its tradition, probably bespeaks the sport of salmon fishing better than any other body of water on this continent. Ninety years ago, in bowlers and knickers, the biggest of America's new-money men with names that still shake the halls of finance—Belmont, Whitney, Lorillard, Vanderbilt—went north to fish the Restigouche. Ham and bacon hung from the rafters of their sod-sealed cabins and whiskey was on the shelves.

They were hardy men who slept in spruce-bough beds and enjoyed the roughness of the wilderness sport, but there were limits. The pork got rusty and the flour wet, so eventually

Stanford White, the architect of these men's marble-and-vermeil palaces in Newport and New York, was brought to the Restigouche to build more lavish camps. White's weathered lodges still stand on the river bluffs, remarkable structures made of hand-hewn balsam, with dovetail corners and cedar shingles. The grand rustic simplicity established then became a way of life on the Restigouche. Other Americans bought fishing rights on the river, and their presence became so pervasive that the river people for generations have set their watches by U.S. time, which is an hour different from local New Brunswick time.

The Restigouche, strong and vigorous, runs north along the Quebec-New Brunswick border. Salmon and snake fossils are found along its banks, the shards of prehistory; a man's boot that has turned to stone is picked up on the shore. The area's Micmac Indians recount legends of a primeval age when God made their first canoe of birch bark, cedar, hemlock and juniper, and set it in this Eden, bountiful with salmon, shad, wildfowl and moose. In the 1500s French Explorer Jacques Cartier, looking for a sea route to the East, sailed up the Bay of Chaleur and encountered the Micmacs and their verdant land. French traders and missionaries followed, and afterward the British, who, with a final naval skirmish on the Restigouche, won Canada from France. By the end of the 18th century thousands of barrels of salted salmon, cod, herring and fur and feathers were being shipped each year from Restigouche trading posts. In 1824 a trader wrote of the Micmacs' taking 3,000 salmon in their nets in two nights. Many of the fish had weighed 40 and 50 pounds, some even 60. Stylized engravings of the Indians spearing salmon on the Restigouche appeared in London shops, and by the 1850s sportsmen were fly-fishing on the river.

In 1867 one traveler, crossing the portage to the headwaters of the river, "found the trunks of trees covered with names, initials and ancient dates nearly overgrown with newly formed bark. It was the custom of all those who crossed the portage to make his mark." Early journals described the singular men who settled along the river. An English bachelor built a miniature Norman castle, a house eight feet high and 30 feet long, with many turrets. In splendid solitude he consumed large quantities of plum pudding and vintage wine and read the *Edinburgh Review*. There was a retired sea captain who had shuttled porcelain and opium in the China Trade. And there was Daniel Fraser, described as a "monarch of no small realm." Fraser employed more than 100 men—fishing, trapping, lumbering and farming. He cleared a thousand acres in the swale where the Matapédia River flows into the Restigouche and planted the fields in grain. He had a dairy herd, horses and sheep, and operated a blacksmith shop, store, trading house, inn and a telegraph and post office. It was to Fraser's in 1880 that the first American millionaires came with their fly rods in quest of the salmon.

One of these men was Dean Sage, heir to a lumber fortune and owner of forests that spanned the U.S. He left a vivid description of those early days in a book he wrote and published

privately, *The Ristigouche and Its Salmon Fishing*. (The spelling of the river's name has varied.) The gold-embossed volume was printed in Edinburgh in 1888. Only 105 copies were made—25 for sale in the U.S., 25 for sale in England, 50 for private presentations and five for public libraries. Sage, a Victorian gentleman from Albany, N.Y., was sometimes amused and sometimes a little horrified by his discoveries. He visited a Micmac camp and saw there a painting showing St. Anne appearing before a warrior. The Indian had a head of curls, whiskers and a uniform with epaulettes like a British admiral, but "his lower extremities were clad in a less civilized manner," Sage noted.

Efforts made to put an end to the Micmacs' gusty swearing were apparently fruitless. "It was impossible," Sage wrote, "to convey to them any idea of the morals of the thing." If an Indian were asked at breakfasttime to cook an egg, the man would exclaim heartily, "By God, I'll do it," and disappear to the kitchen. The cooking could hardly be called *haute cuisine*. No breakfast, lunch or dinner was prepared unless the fishermen specifically ordered the meal, because the Micmacs did not understand the white men's custom of eating three limes a day.

On one occasion Sage ordered a festive meal for some lady guests who were arriving in camp that evening. (Female guests were not uncommon. Some were wives. Some were not.) The Indian cook was given the menu in the morning and several hours later, as an afterthought, Sage told him, "You may give us some of that canned corn for dinner." The man discarded the first menu and served in its place a heaping bowl of corn. Sage concluded, "The Indians have imperfect mental development." After a few such experiences, fishermen took to bringing along Cordon Bleu cooks (one, as a parting but futile gesture, left his recipe book with the Micmacs).

For several summers Sage and his friends lived in tents and then in 1885 they built a rude cabin at the point where the Restigouche bends and meets the Upsalquitch. Mornings and evenings the men would fish and afternoons they would sit on their piazza, as they called it, with a meditative pipe. They named the place Camp Harmony. They would stay six weeks (marking off the days on a beam) and kill perhaps 800 salmon. On their departure a guide would play a wailing tune on his fiddle, providing the only unharmonious moment of the season.

Three fishing clubs—Camp Harmony, Kedgwick Lodge and the Ristigouche Salmon Club—were established in those first days and they remain the most prominent camps on the river, controlling the prime fishing waters. In 1895 Stanford White replaced the log cabin at Camp Harmony with a stately lodge. The wood was hewn by hand and the marks of the axes are still visible on the age-blanching pine. The camp is typical of White's Restigouche architecture, built at an elbow of the river looking both up and downstream. Two wings of unfinished pine-plank bedrooms (eight in all) run out from a central clubroom. Since the first days when the bewhiskered founders hung their buffalo and caribou trophies on the walls and settled in, little has changed. On any late afternoon these summers the sitting room is drowsy with comfort—deep chairs and a spluttering fire. Packs of cards are stacked on a green baize-covered table. The Aladdin gas lamps have been converted to electricity but third- and fourth-generation Sages use the old stiff pens on the inkstand to record their angling triumphs in the leatherbound club

books. The camp's present membership also includes former du Pont Company President Lamot du P. Copeland and several other members of the wealthy Wilmington family.

Harmony has had histrionic moments, not the least of them when Harry Payne Whitney tipped over his canoe and was rescued, thrashing on the river bottom in his knickers. And there is the unappetizing story of the dead man in the drinking water. The Micmacs had been told never to set foot in Mill Brook, the spring that supplied Harmony's water. Heedless, a group of them was diving for a 50¢ piece in the clear pool one afternoon when one Indian drowned. The others, apprehensive about the consequences, left the drowned man there and did not confess what had happened for several days.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the Indians' antics and their incorrigibly rough manner, some fishermen liked having them as guides. The experience was usually entertaining, at least in retrospect. Once a lady at Camp Harmony insisted that her Indian guide sit for his portrait. When she completed the sketch she asked the Indian what he thought of it. "Damn ugly," he said and stomped off. At another Restigouche camp a Micmac guide was noted for taking sportsmen out fishing in the morning and—before they had made their first cast—sniffing the air and declaring, "By God, no fish. Guess we go home." The anglers would object, and the guide, if he was in a contrary mood, would threaten to upset the canoe in mid-river. The men waited until they were on more solid ground before continuing the argument.

The most celebrated confrontations between millionaire and guide were the Archie Rogers vs. Peter Gray matches. Rogers was a bristling man who spent his life and much of his money in sporting pursuits; Gray was his guide of long standing. The scene was Kedgwick Lodge, the second of the river's distinguished clubs. The bellows of the two men could be heard for half a mile. "You damned old red man," Rogers would shout. "You don't know where to fish." Gray's replies were usually equal to the occasion. One afternoon, after being drenched by a downpour while fishing, Rogers took Peter to the lodge and poured him a jigger of whiskey. It was a rare occasion, certainly, for sportsmen on the river never gave liquor to an Indian. Rogers held the small glass to the light and, relishing the moment, said, "Now, Peter, I want you to know this is over 100 years old."

"By God," Gray declared, "he's small for his age."

This uncommon fellowship lasted 46 years until Rogers died. Now Peter Gray's grandson guides Archie Rogers' great-grandson at Kedgwick Lodge.

The Indians remain terse, blunt and moody (and most camps have replaced them with Scots-Irishmen). A recent guest at Kedgwick tells of trying to ingratiate himself with an Indian guide. "Through the first morning's fishing I talked with considerable enthusiasm about my experiences

on the river and the places that I had fished. I know a lot of the guides on the Restigouche. The Indian didn't say anything. He just sat there mute in the bow of the boat. At lunchtime my host asked if we'd done any good. 'Much talk, no fish,' the Indian mumbled."

Heavy fish stir in the deep pools at Kedgwick and for weeks each season fishermen see them and tempt them but get little response. Three hundred salmon will lie in the placid Looking Glass Pool and scores in Jimmy's Hole (which is 30 feet deep and gets its name from a local boy, Jimmy Gillis, who jumped into it and was not seen again).

Because of the water's depth at Kedgwick Lodge, its fishermen use a special method called patent fishing. Instead of shooting the line straight out on the water, the patent fisherman stops his cast abruptly at the halfway point of his follow-through. He pulls some of the slack line toward him, and the fly, a large hair one, lands lightly on the current and quickly sinks. When the angler sees a salmon take the fly, he strikes the fish, something never done in standard salmon fishing. Several people claim to have invented this very successful way of casting, but the story told on the Restigouche is that its originator was a chorus girl, who was invited to Kedgwick Lodge many years ago. The woman was killing salmon when no one else was getting a strike. One of the fishermen at the camp was intrigued. He and his guide climbed to the rock that overlooks Jimmy's Hole to watch the star angler. The woman cast a tangle of slack line. Some plunked into the river and the rest fell at her feet and over the gunwale. The fly would sink, its hair spreading out; it would pulsate invitingly and the salmon would hit it. Such was the ingenuous beginning, the river people say, of patent fishing. The two men refined the style considerably but the basic principle remains the same.

At the time it was not unusual for a lady of the stage to be found angling on the Restigouche. It was the Mauve Decade, after all, and passions were sometimes purple. From time to time suspicious wives, riding in buckboards, would appear unannounced in the wilderness to check the guest list.

The fishermen were men of power, and their enthusiasm for the sporting life was immense. Consider some of the members in those early years of the third great fishing establishment on the river, the Ristigouche Salmon Club:

August Belmont, lamed in a duel (a pistol ball in the groin). He drank wine from Prince Metternich's cellar and was chairman of the Democratic Party.

Pierre Lorillard, the snuff-and-tobacco king. He bought sterling-silver horseshoes from Tiffany's for his stable of thoroughbreds.

Chester Arthur, 21st President of the United States, known as "a man of simple tastes." He cut the number of courses at White House dinners from 29 to 14.

William C. Whitney, street railway baron and President-maker (Cleveland). Henry Adams wrote of him—"He swung the country almost at will..."

Harry Payne Whitney, William C.'s sportsman son. He played tennis for \$10,000 a set and poker for racehorses—"I'll call that with a half-brother to Perverse. I'll raise you with a filly by Whisk Broom...."

William K. Vanderbilt, who had a penchant for fast cars. He built 75 miles of paved highway on his Long Island estate to have a place to drive.

The list continues—Railroad Tycoons Frank Thomson, William Seward Webb, James J. Hill; New York Bar Association President John L. Cadwalader; Rubber-man David M. Goodrich; Merchant Marshall Field; Oilman Oliver H. Payne; R. G. Dun of Dun & Bradstreet; and Boston's elite—Ameses, Higinsons, Seares and Saltonstalls.

The Ristigouche Salmon Club purchased Daniel Fraser's farm at Matapédia in 1880 and turned the clapboard inn, hard by the railroad tracks, into a Spartan clubhouse. And so it remains, a strange exclusive meetingplace for sporting millionaires. Today the diesels of the Canadian National Railways roar past its front gate. The plank floors now lurch with age, some pitching at 30° angles. A heavy-headed moose presides over a bare refectory-style dining room. Plaster buckles through the wallpaper, doors hang crooked on their hinges and drafts whistle up the stairs. A Victorian fringed shawl covers a parlor table and on it is a framed photograph of a royal couple on a throne. Only in the oak-dark members' lounge is there a sense of warmth and comfort. A *Wall Street Journal* and gin-rummy scorepads lie on a burnished table and the conversation is of Phippses and Mellons.

Remembrances of the club's rich past hang on the walls—photographs of waistcoated gentlemen and veiled wasp-waisted women, an inscribed portrait of Winston Churchill, a poacher's devilish tools from long ago, paintings done by appreciative guests. Embedded in the lawn is a sundial that members used to tell the fishing hours, and green rockers and ladderback chairs, now listing a little, still line the porch.

A day on the Restigouche begins about 8 a.m. when the guides gather in the yard. For half an hour, while the club members breakfast, there is a sing of reels as lines are stripped and readied. The guides talk in a low murmur, and laughs and challenges puncture their conversations. Among them is Murray Fraser, a guide for 52 years and old Daniel's great-nephew. He recalls appreciatively the grand fishermen of the past, praising Standard Oil's Oliver Payne, who bought him a manure spreader, a horse and furniture, and referring to Henry de Forest, who ran half a dozen railroads, as "a gruffy sort of lad."

Fraser remembers when the Ristigouche Salmon Club members used to travel upriver in houseboats, taking three weeks for such trips and fishing wherever the water looked inviting. If the club itself did not own the fishing rights, undoubtedly one of the millionaires' friends did, for sportsmen from New York controlled nearly all of the 50-mile length of the Restigouche (the river has another 150 miles of tributaries—the Little Main, the Kedgwick, the Upsalquitch, the Matapédia and the Patapédia). In 1883 the fishing rights had been established by law. People who owned land on the riverbank as of that date were granted riparian rights—they owned their own waters. But on the stretches of the Restigouche where there were no property owners the provincial government assumed the fishing rights. The government then leased these miles of the river at 10-year intervals. From the beginning, Americans were the high bidders in the auction of leases.

Houseboats—transformed lumber scows—were used for river trips until the 1930s. Luxury cabins were built on the 50-foot boats, and one industrialist of the time called them "more comfortable than home." There was a lounge, bedroom, pantry and kitchen and behind that a room for the cook. On the aft deck were tethered lambs and caged chickens that would be slaughtered during the trip—sometimes even a cow was carried for fresh milk. Farm horses towed the houseboats

upriver, their iron shoes clattering on the gravel banks. They would wade and swim the heavy currents three abreast to the cajoling of their mounted driver. The salmon fishermen would sit on the verandah in the bow. "They'd be dressed like they were going to Parliament," a guide recalls. Smudge pots would be lit to ward off sandflies. It was a time of pleasing ease and grace.

A conspicuous Restigouche figure in those days was Stanford White. He lived with a lusty verve and died flamboyantly—shot dead by Harry K. Thaw for a dalliance with his wife, whom White had occasionally sent soaring through the air in a red velvet swing. White was the arbiter of taste for America's new wealth, for those not to the manner born. He built Renaissance estates for Vanderbilts and Whitneys, designed their yachting cups, croquet shelters, indoor squash and tennis courts, swimming pools and rifle ranges. White was called "the Moses and Aaron and Mahomet" of Society. He modeled New York's Tiffany & Company on a Venetian palace and the Herald Building on the town hall in Verona. So diverse and remarkable were his talents that White was commissioned to design parlor cars for the Pennsylvania Railroad, mausoleums for Morgans, yachts, necklaces, churches, stables and picture frames. He even left his mark on the White House. Few people get to view its grounds from the topmost floor, but a number of Presidents' wives might have been shocked if they had looked south from this personal vantage point and seen, outlined by White's walks and shrubbery, a lady of Rubens proportions with well-groomed knolls providing her full bosom. Stanford White's gargantuan joke went undiscovered by many Administrations. Certainly Mrs. Harding and Mrs. Taft must have lived in ignorant bliss of the supine lady in their backyard.

Another of White's unheralded creations stems from his Restigouche days. It is a salmon fly that he designed and named for himself—the Night Hawk. So successful was the Night Hawk that fishermen throughout the world still use it. Old guides on the Restigouche recall White tying flies, his artful fingers wrapping the shanks of hooks. Goog Mowat, now 75 and retired, remembers selling White a fly as a child. "I'd made it on a bait hook with rooster feathers," he says, "and I'd been using it trout fishing on the bank by the clubhouse in Matapédia. My father worked for 50 years for the Ristigouche Salmon Club as head warden, and the members didn't mind us children throwing out some line. This day I hooked a 12-pound salmon and landed him, and Mr. White came down to look at my tackle. He was a big man with a red mustache. He offered me 25¢ for the fly and asked me how many more I could get for him. I made him six and he paid me \$1. I was a rich boy then."

Other famous salmon-fly patterns have originated on the Restigouche. One of the most effective, the Rusty Rat, was devised by Joseph Pulitzer, the publisher of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. He first came to fish on the river in the 1930s and bought his own camp—Grog Island—three miles above Matapédia. Pulitzer was nearly blind. "He had no vision in the left eye and only 20% in the right," says Frank Fitzgerald, who guided him and managed his camp for many years. "But there

was never a gamer or better fisherman. He could never see the fly on the water. If a cast was good I'd say nothing, but if it wasn't I'd say, 'Do that over.' " A 37-pound salmon killed by Pulitzer hung until recently in the lobby of the Matapédia Hotel.

Pulitzer's pride in designing the Rusty Rat is reflected in a letter he wrote to the "Sports Editor" of FORTUNE in 1949:

"Having devised a new salmon fly on the Restigouche River this summer, I took it to J. C. Arseneault, the local fly-tier...and had him tie a number for me and others and told him to name it the Rusty Rat. He informed me that to have this name officially adopted I should write to FORTUNE Magazine. Whether this information is correct I have no means of knowing....

"For your information this fly is an imitation of an old, worn-out Black Rat Bucktail on which I took a 41-pounder, and from which the black body had disappeared, leaving the rusty-colored dental floss wrapped around the body of the fly. Rusty Rat proved quite effective and I hereby make formal application to have the name officially adopted."

Fortune, which probably has among its readership the highest number of salmon fishermen per capita, printed Pulitzer's letter, thereby establishing his claim as designer of the Rusty Rat, but suggested Pulitzer file a similar notice with the U.S. Patent Office. The fly has become a standard pattern which can be bought from London to Auckland.

Knowing such esoteric facts is part of the enjoyment of salmon fishing. One looks at a Rusty Rat with nostalgia. History intrudes on angling—or makes it. And to describe the present Restigouche scene is to savor the past. The rhythm of a fishing day, with its long pauses and interludes, lends itself to tale-telling, and nearly everyone who spends time on a salmon river is master of the art. The guides admit to small larcenies, of filling fish with stones to make them weigh more and win bets. There have been instances of proud sportsmen dispatching their salmon immediately to New York banks to have sworn affidavits drawn up regarding their weight.

Chick Chisholm has heard a lot of stories in his 39 years as a warden on the river. From late May until November he lives in a cabin on the bank. "There are places out there," he says, "where the river seems to talk to you at night." Occasionally the voices are real. "When salmon are concerned you can't trust anyone," says Chisholm. Almost everyone who works along the Restigouche is related to him—a cousin or an in-law. In lean times they might just become outlaws, and he knows it, for poachers get a good price—60¢ a pound—for salmon at Black's Seafood Market in Campbellton (the retail price is \$1.75 a pound). Wardens hired by the fishing camps have guarded the Restigouche since 1889, for poaching is an old and honorable profession. Today 16 wardens patrol the river in canoes, day and night, and two or three times a week Chisholm says he "runs into something. It's usually not serious enough to take to court.

You seize their rods and give them a chance." But horses, cars and nets have also been impounded. Only the drift netters are truly menacing, for they can take in 30 minutes as many salmon as a fly-fisherman will land in a year.

The local people, for the most part, accept the sovereignty of the American fishing lords, though they may put it to a sporting test now and then. The local economy depends on the American fishermen—\$2.5 million is spent each year by the anglers for leases, licenses, wardens, cooks, guides, supplies and refreshments. Camp Harmony, for instance, pays \$12,000 in school taxes for its 4½ miles of riverfront. Over \$28,000 is paid annually to the provincial government by the 24-member Ristigouche Salmon Club for the fishing rights to 20 miles of river (it owns another six miles outright). The club hires 48 guides during the season (at around \$15 a day) and another 40 to 45 people as servants.

It is understandable, then, that the river remains the guarded preserve of the very rich. Some years ago a photographer for a national magazine had to hire a cook and handyman to pose "fishing" in a canoe, so shy of publicity are the club members themselves. The caption under the published photograph identified the two as "sportsman and guide," much to the hilarity of the guide fraternity.

The anglers' names along the Restigouche have not really changed in 50 years, but the anglers have—and so has the once-serene nature of their sport. Today's fishermen own jet planes and most of them are in a jet hurry. "They don't appreciate the sport," says Frank Fitzgerald, who still manages Grog Island Camp. "Rush, rush, rush. They fly in to catch a salmon and get away as quick as they can. The old Ristigouche Salmon Club members used to come for three or four weeks and would take that long to go upriver. They'd stop for at least three days, and often six, at their camps along the way—Cheater's Brook, Red Pine Mountain, Pine Island, Indian House, Red Bank, Downs Gulch. Now it's a race against time; they go up and down, up and down in their motorboats. Greed, greed, greed. They're in such a hurry that they don't properly fish the water they have. The old men used to hate to see the horse towing a houseboat so much as jogging on the beach. Three miles an hour was fast enough for everybody then."

The slow pace and primitive nature of the Restigouche, circa 1900, made the sportsmen and guides dependent on each other and on each other's company. Friendships were formed of a type that are rare today. Frank Fitzgerald's father guided the governor-general of Canada one season, and the next spring when he was passing through Matapédia in his private railroad car, the governor-general stopped, hired a horse and buggy and drove to the Fitzgerald farmhouse for tea. Such courtesies are unusual now. Telephone lines run into the fishing camps and America's richest men no longer must drive three and four miles to the nearest grocery store, where they used to share the party line with local housewives. Gone too are those moments

when fishermen put a whiskey bottle on the kitchen table and invited their guides in to help them cook. In recent years the Ristigouche Salmon Club has employed an English butler.

The guides prefer the old times. Late into the night, with the kettle boiling on the stove and cookies on the table, a man like 72-year-old Winston Ferguson will entertain a visitor with his remembrances. He brings out a drawer of photographs, fading brown prints of wide-girthed men...pictures of their daughters, bloomed and black-stockinged, holding up fish a little uncertainly. "He was president of the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad—left \$71 million," Winston says, picking up one photograph. Somehow in this backwater the details of rich men's wills and the minutiae of their private lives are well known and much discussed.

But reflections of those good days are being edged out now by deep concern for the fate of the Restigouche. The river is no longer so bountiful and blessed. At Camp Harmony 800 salmon were killed in six weeks in the 1880s. In 1969 there were 68 fish killed in 12 weeks. The Ristigouche Salmon Club took 157 fish from its 26 miles of river in '68 and only 295 in '69. Until the '50s members used to take an average of 1,500 a season—and some years more than 2,000. In the club's famed Patamajaw Pool (or, as outsiders call it, the Million-Dollar Pool) one used to see 5,000 salmon on a July day. Now there are perhaps 500. The provincial fish and wildlife office in Fredericton, New Brunswick says 37% of the anglers on the Restigouche failed to take a single salmon during the 1968 season. In the month of August the average catch was 1.9 salmon per angler per week.

The causes of the decline of the river are familiar. Five factories are polluting the waters near the mouth. The virgin forest in the river's watershed has been lumbered, and heavy winter snows (144 inches in 1968) are no longer trapped and held into June by the limbs of the dark spruce. The thaw used to come gradually and the river remained icy cold through the summer. Now the snows melt quickly in the belts of hardwood, the mountainside brooks dry up and by the first of July the river is low and warm. Unless the salmon can find a cool fresh current they are reluctant to head upriver to spawn. Instead, their instincts frustrated, they circle slowly in the Bay of Chaleur. Fly-fishermen blame the operators of stands of nets at the mouth of the river for devastating the salmon population, but commercial fishermen say the fault is not theirs, and they are probably right. They have, after all, been working these same stands of nets for years. One of them, Reid Stewart of Dalhousie, inherited his stand of nets with his 100-acre property. His father and grandfather operated it before him, the original grant coming from the British Crown in 1805. Forty years ago a fisherman could harvest 30,000 pounds of salmon annually in a good stand of nets on the Restigouche. Last year, Stewart says, he took in 3,000 pounds. However, fishing boats in the Northumberland Straits that use radar and sonar equipment are decimating the numbers of salmon. They locate schools of fish heading to the rivers to spawn and haul them in with three-quarter-mile nets. The salmon must contend, too,

with the commercial netting in their winter feeding grounds off the coast of Greenland (SI, Jan. 12).

Efforts are being made to stock the rivers but the results are disappointing. A fish hatchery on the river at Charlo puts 10,000 salmon smolt in the Restigouche each year. Only 5% are believed to survive long enough to make it back to the river as grown salmon. Coddled in a procelain-basin world, the smolt do not have the natural instincts to escape their enemies.

With the sport's increasingly limited returns, salmon fishing on the Restigouche is a dear endeavor. One camp on the river charges \$300 a day (plus extras) per rod. This means if a fisherman has average luck the 1.9 salmon he kills in a week will cost him \$2,100. At a local fish market he could buy a 20-pounder for \$35.

But that, as any Restigouche fisherman will tell you, is a crude statistic—one not to be mentioned, or even calculated. The pleasure of the Restigouche is in the anticipation, in the superstitions, in the stories, in the scene, in the fear, in the failure and, finally, with luck, in a triumph or two. So the river's fly-fishermen will always come back. Some will be arriving next weekend at the airports of northern Maine. They are tanned men with hard patrician features. They carry duffel bags, and rods in silver tubes. A raw-faced Restigouche guide will be there to meet them. The car will turn north when it reaches Route 1 and pass through the flint-gray potato fields. Dogs looking for warmth curl on the tops of seed-potato barrels. The barns huddle close to the ground. At Van Buren the fishermen cross the border and head into the heartland of New Brunswick. A few daffodils, in the shelter of porches, are out. Spring comes slowly on the Restigouche. With it, always, come the fishermen.