

## SALMON CLUBS & GUARDIANS

While the Restigouch Salmon club is the oldest and best known it is not by any means the only one. There are also many private establishments. One of these belongs to the Straus Family, which owns Macy's department store in New York. It costs \$100 a day to keep this open even when no guests are there.

A conservative estimate is that wealthy Americans have made investment of \$7,000,000 to \$10,000,000 tied up in angling rights and buildings on the Restigouche, the Patapedia, the Matapedia, the Upsalquitch and the Kedgwick.

They own most of the water outright, having purchased it from people with old deeds which included the water with the water over land. Through the years, the price of the better pools has multiplied.

Max M. Mowat, of Campbellton, sold some property on the Patapedia River to Americans 30 years ago, for \$11,000. They, in turn, sold it for \$60,000 and it afterwards changed hands again for \$125,000.

The water not owned outright is leased from the government of New Brunswick and Quebec, and the New Brunswick treasury.

Why are the Restigouche and its tributaries worth so much?

The answer is that the Atlantic silver salmon is the most highly prized game fish of all, and that these rivers offer the best Atlantic silver salmon angling. Multi-millionaire devotees of the great salmon angling will pay fantastic sums for the privilege of this Restigouche streams.

That leads to a second question: why is the fishing on the Restigouche and its tributaries so good, when salmon angling elsewhere either vanished or deteriorated. The answer, here is the Restigouche Riparian Association.

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A private organization, which, in a sense, is like a police force, this river has more than 50 guardians, who protect the rivers from poaching.

It has a budget of \$40,000 or \$50,000 a year and all individual clubs contribute to its support in accordance with the amount of water they hold.

The first chief guardian was Max M. Mowat. When he assumed office 51 years ago, salmon fishing on the Restigouche was distinctly on the downgrade. In that day there was a continuous procession of scows carrying supplies and provisions to upriver settlements and logging camps. Each scow had a net and poachers made a practice of dynamiting the pools, killing scores of fish with one blast. Mr. Mowat's instructions were to stop illegal fishing, regardless of expense. He once spent \$3,000 to track down and prosecute one poacher.

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As a result of his efforts, angling came back. Today Mr. Mowat is retired but his son, G.A. Mowat, succeeded him as chief guardian and upholds Max Mowat's tradition of relentlessly pursuing poachers.

On top of that, many of the commercial fishing stands, the sites below the head of tidewater, have been bought up by the Restigouche Riparian Association, and nets eliminated. With these out of the picture, more salmon succeed in breasting their way upstream. This season members of the Restigouche Salmon Club alone caught close to 2,000 mature salmon and more than 500 grilse or young salmon.

The fish on the average were large, with hundreds weighing more than 20 pounds apiece. The bag limit on the Restigouche is 30 salmon a week, and most anglers got the limit.

All kinds of amateur statisticians have tried to figure out how much anglers leave in New Brunswick for each salmon they take from the Restigouche or its tributaries. The estimates go as high as \$100 but probably \$400 or \$500 is nearer the mark.

The Multi-millionaire who spent \$35,000 bringing to New Brunswick the party that only caught two fish was the exception to the rule. He was just unlucky. Tut his experience did prove that an Atlantic silver salmon, in the Restigouche and its tributaries can be worth its weight in gols and then some.