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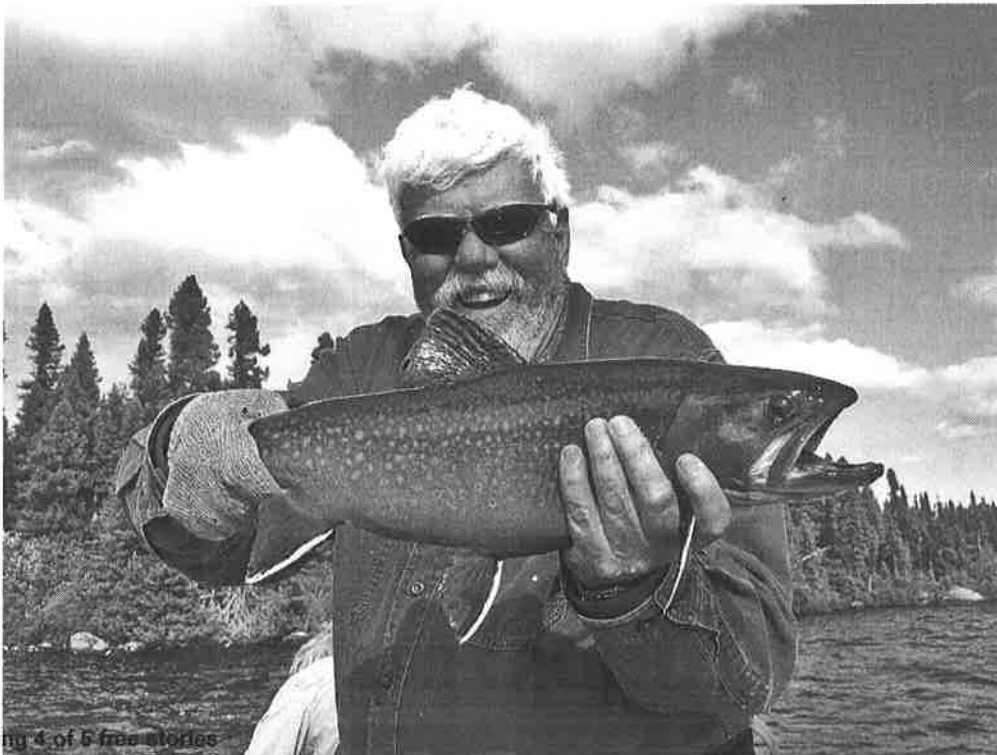
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PITTSFIELD, MASS. FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2017

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The Berkshire Eagle

Berkshire Woods and Waters: Labrador fishing trip came close to a washout



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PHOTO PROVIDED BY GENE CHAGUE

Posted Saturday, October 7, 2017 3:24 pm

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By Gene Chague

Last week I wrote about the Alberta, Canada fly fishing trip that Allen Gray, Paul Knauth and I took a few weeks ago. If you recall from my Sept. 24, 2017 column, good fly fishing buddy Michael Shepard, of Dalton, returned to fly fish in Labrador with eight other anglers, most of whom he had fished with in Quebec and Labrador before. Last year, you may recall, they fished the Minipi River system. This time, the anglers fished out of Igloo Lake Lodge on Igloo Lake, a different river system. Like last year, Mike Miller of Athol arranged the trip.

While we arrived in our cottage in Blairmore, Alberta the same day we left home, Mike's trip was a bit more entailed. They first had to drive to the airport in Montreal on Wednesday, Aug. 16 and spend the night there. They flew out the next morning, with a stop in Halifax, Nova Scotia before landing in Goose Bay, Labrador. They spent that night in Goose Bay and then flew out by float plane to Igloo Lake, arriving on Friday. When they returned, they did the same, with one exception, which I will get into later.

Mike's fishing partner on this trip was William Waite from Westminster. You may recall him from my article last year. He was the least experienced fly fisherman who caught the largest brook trout at eight pounds. Remember? His guide had forgotten the net and had to net it with a five-gallon pail.

Igloo Lake is located about 70 miles southeast of Goose Bay. Jim Burton is the owner of two lodges on that lake. According to Mike Shepard, the facilities were beautiful, the boats were topnotch, his guide was the best he ever fished with and the food was restaurant quality. The lodges are located in one beautiful part of Labrador. Burton also owns a float plane, which allows him to fly anglers out to other water bodies. There is a one-mile stretch of river near the camp which flows into the lake, but the waters were low because of a drought there this past summer. The first day, Mike and Bill fished that stretch, catching smaller trout.

The following day, Mike Miller and three others flew out to Char Lake, some 200 miles north of Igloo Lake, to fish for arctic char. They congregate there during their spawning run. Because the float plane could only take four anglers at a time, Mike Shepard was scheduled to fly in on the second day. The anglers had phenomenal luck, catching some 80 char and sea run brook trout, many of them caught on char flies that Mike Shepard had tied for them. Well, don't you know, when it was Mike Shepard's time to fly out the next day, there were 50 mile per hour winds and the trip was postponed. Then came the rains and fog and a low ceiling. The nasty weather lasted for three days and Mike Shepard and Bill were never able to fly into Char Lake. It was a big disappointment, because Mike really wanted to catch an arctic char on this trip.

While the other guys were fishing Char Lake, Mike Shepard and Bill fished the pond at the bottom of the nearby river and caught six or seven pike, averaging around 30 inches. Mike caught a 7 -pound brook trout.

The next day, they fished Burton Pond. To get there, they had a 30-minute boat ride across Igloo Lake and then trekked 1 miles across a peat bog. Burton Pond is a big lake, not connected to Igloo Lake, which runs into the Eagle River and ultimately to the North Atlantic. Mike Shepard and Bill trolled Zoo Cougars and green leech flies. They got into some five to six-pound brook trout, which were podding up and boated a dozen or so of those bruisers. Bill and Mike caught 17-18 northern pike in the 30-inch range in Igloo Lake using big green and purple bunny leeches.

On the last day at Burton Pond, Bill and Mike Shepard caught 22 brook trout, all over five pounds. Bill caught 14 trolling and Mike caught eight. In the last hour of fishing, Mike proceeded to catch three, five-pound brookies, as well as a six and seven pounder all on size 8 and 6 green drake dry flies.

Incidentally, all fish were released unharmed. They all had a very successful trip, wouldn't you say?

On the Aug. 25 return trip, they hit a snag. Their luggage was left behind in the Goose Bay airport. They had planned on spending the night in Montreal and enjoying a good meal. However, without their luggage, they didn't even have a change of clothes. So, they drove home that evening. (Incidentally, Mike Shepard never [View all of my free stories](https://www.newzware.com/ss70v2/eni/common/template.jsp?nwmodule=nonsubscribers&nwpage=nonsubstant) for a little as \$13.00 for unlimited web & eEdition access. [Subscribe \(https://www.newzware.com/ss70v2/eni/common/template.jsp?nwmodule=nonsubscribers&nwpage=nonsubstant\)](https://www.newzware.com/ss70v2/eni/common/template.jsp?nwmodule=nonsubscribers&nwpage=nonsubstant) for a little as \$13.00 for unlimited web & eEdition access.

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There's always potential drawbacks when you book a fishing trip to these hard-to-reach Canadian destinations. In order to reserve a spot, you have to book early, sometimes a year in advance, and you never know what conditions you will encounter when you get there. In Mike's case, it was three solid days of wind and rain. If you recall, in our trip to Alberta, it was the fires that closed down our rivers. As they say, "You pays your money and you takes your chances" (An old idiom with intentional grammatical errors).

At the time of this writing, there is another local angler on his way home from a Canadian fishing trip. Rex Channel of Pittsfield, who is a local fishing guide and owner of Allure-Outfitters. He actually fished Igloo Lake a couple of weeks before Mike and then headed west fishing all across Canada and parts of western U.S. Hopefully, I can write about his trip when he returns home.

Berkshire Natural History Conference

On Saturday, Oct. 14, the third Annual Berkshire Natural History Conference will feature presentations by local and regional naturalists, as well as acclaimed authors at Berkshire Community College from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. MassWildlife will have a table set up at the event, and retired MassWildlife biologist Jim Cardoza will make a presentation on wild turkey conservation.

Watch out for moose

MassWildlife urges drivers to use caution because it's mating season for moose. During September and October, moose become more active and cross roads more frequently. Also in May and June during yearling dispersals, when yearling moose are driven away by their mothers. Moose eyes rarely shine because their eyes are above headlight level and their dark color makes them very difficult to spot at night.

I'm sure readers are tired of reading this advisory year after year. However, as you know, each year we have an influx of new young, inexperienced drivers on our roads who may not have gotten the word. It's a good time to talk about this with your new drivers.

Questions/comments: Berkwoodsandwaters@roadrunner.com. Phone: 413-637-1818.

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