SRBTC Member Steve Dewick of the Merrymeeting Bay TU Chapter fishes at the lower end of a small stream near Freeport, ME.

The Salter
March 2018

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Sea Run Brook Trout Coalition is a grassroots organization made up of anglers and conservationists alike, dedicated to the protection of remaining salter brook trout populations as well as the restoration of America’s first game fish.


To read the articles please visit the following links:


Extra special thanks goes out to TU’s Joe McGurrin and Mark Taylor for the wonderful placement.
SRBTC is growing up. And we need your help.

Letter from the Executive Director: Geoffrey Day

Dear Readers,

Our last newsletter was published in January 2017. Since then, there is a lot to report, and this marks our first use of a shorter format with links to some exiting Internet copy. For new members who are burning to read back issues, they are available on our website in the Updates section.

2018 also brings some very sad news to SRBTC. Our former president, founder and my dear friend of 37 years passed away a couple of weeks ago. Mike Hopper’s passion and commitment to nature, history, angling and restoration through a broad coalition of partners will live on forever. We will be dedicating a future issue to Michael’s memory.

Mike’s vision was the driving force behind the founding of SRBTC. Back in the early years, Mike and I would drive from Cambridge down to Steve Anger’s office down in South Easton to meet with Steve and Warren Winders. Then, as now, we were talking about building membership, building bridges with other organizations, doing scientific research and ultimately working to make the world a better place for future generations. Since then, we have accomplished a lot – but it is also true that there is always more work to do.

Back then, we were all obsessed with getting publicity in Trout Magazine. Yes, it took nearly 10 years, but the most recent edition of Trout Magazine featured a six-page spread about salter brook trout restoration work on Red Brook and the Quashnet River, as well as the great potential for sea-run brook trout restoration work in Maine. Two pages were devoted to a subject near and dear to me – getting young people involved with sea-run brook trout angling and conservation.

Mike should also be remembered for his tireless interest in extending salter brook trout restoration into other regions. We all agreed that what we, as volunteers, had learned as members of TU working together on the salter streams needed to be shared with other states and other countries as well.

These past few months have also brought us opportunities to work with new leadership. This issue formally welcomes new board members Tim Purinton and Mark Hudy to the board of SRBTC. Tim is now working for The Nature Conservancy out of Bethesda, MD, and has always been a good friend and informal advisor since he was Director of the Division of Ecological Restoration, Department of Fish and Game. Mark is now retired from USGS as Senior Science Advisor in Fisheries as well as and former Senior Science Advisor to the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture.

Welcome Tim and Mark!

Geof Day
Executive Director
After Dam Removal – Tracking Trout and Herring

By: Warren Winders

The recent removal of Tack Factory Pond Dam on Third Herring Brook in late 2017 has opened 8.5 miles of that stream’s main stem and tributaries to herring for the first time in over 300 years. It will also reconnect brook trout living in Third Herring’s tributaries with the tidal river that Third Herring flows to, the North River.

River herring begin their journey up the North River toward their spawning waters in April. Of those herring it is estimated that about 2000 will swim from the North River up into Third Herring Brook where, until recently, they were stopped by Tack Factory Dam.

The question that the folks at North and South Rivers Watershed Association hope to answer is: With the dam now gone, how far upstream will the herring travel to spawn? To learn the answer to that question, SRBTC, along with Sara Grady of MassBays and NSRWA, spent the past summer building PIT tagging stations there that will track not only the native brook trout found there, but also, with approval from MA Department of Marine Fisheries, the alewife and blueback herring. The tagging method will be passive integrated transponders, the same technology used by Easy Pass.

PIT tags have proven to be very useful for tracking fish because they are small (just a little bigger than a grain of rice), are easy to implant, and have a very long work life. If you’ve been to Red Brook, you may have seen the PIT tag receivers that are placed at certain locations on the brook. These receivers are PVC pipe structures with cable running through them. By encircling a section of the brook from bank to bank, the cable (powered by solar panels and deep cycle batteries) generates a mild force field through which the fish will be
swimming. The tag in a fish registers in the receiver as a number that was assigned to the tag before it was implanted in the fish. When a fish is tagged, its location at the time of capture and its size, along with any distinguishing scars or other characteristics, are entered into a log. That data is then entered into a computer database that makes the individual fish’s information available (for comparison) when it is recaptured, or when it passes through a distant receiver. In this way, brook trout have been tracked moving between the Quashnet River and the Childs River and back again, a distance one way of some three miles through the waters of Waquoit Bay on Cape Cod.

To track fish migration in Third Herring Brook, PIT receivers have been constructed in carefully chosen downstream and upstream locations. The PIT receivers will track the movements of brook trout from a Third Herring Brook tributary tagged this past fall.

Presently, DMF’s recent decision that herring will not be tagged this year has reduced the scope of the tagging project to brook trout movements within the system. As a result, any estimate of herring moving past the dam site will rely solely on visual counts made by volunteers until counts are large enough to allow for the tagging of herring. PIT tagging and counting research will go on for a few years and should provide important information about how anadromous fish, like herring and brook trout, respond to the reconnection of a stream to tidewater following hundreds of years of obstruction.
From the Fringe

By: Dwayne Shaw, Executive Director, Downeast Salmon Federation

Stewarding the most stable salter and diadromous fish populations in the eastern US - in an unstable political, economic and ecological climate.

It is said that drastic times call for drastic measures. Eastern ME has a very long history of being on the fringe and in the midst of drastic conditions. Downeast Maine (particularly Washington County) is certainly on the fringe of the US, the fringe of New England, and the fringe of the cultural and ecological changes that have made much of New England, only a faint image of it’s not so distant past.

The Downeast Salmon Federation, is trying to step up to the conservation challenges and great opportunities we face in this unusual region. We are taking drastic measures to “lose no further ground” in protecting the extraordinary sea-run fish populations here, the last location retaining the corpus of the population of many of these species.

Eastern Maine is also the only place on the eastern seaboard where extensive undeveloped forested landscapes meet the sea. This is an ecological hotspot, a gem and intact to a degree that is rare and increasingly so, year by year.

The “fisheries fin-omenon” we see here is, itself, only a glimmer of a once much more prolific fishery, but it is a hopeful living ova – not merely a shell, façade or artifact.

We have trout—wild trout—almost everywhere there is water, and there is a lot of water here, cold water too. The estuaries and extensive clam flats exposed by the Fundy tides are renowned. Washington County is greater in land mass than Delaware and Rhode Island combined and has as much surface water as all of Connecticut. It has the oldest, whitest demographics population of anyplace in the US, with a population of less than 35,000 and shrinking. There are more trout than people here, by far.

Over the years I’ve tried to convince my colleagues in the “fishocracy” that we have sea-run trout in nearly every watershed and that we should assume—until proven otherwise—that every stream east of Penobscot is a salter stream. I have been scorned by sceptics who thought these were fanatical fish fantasies and not a “documented biological fact.” However, the proof really is in the putting– the putting of some time in to fish these
streams at the head of tide and to see for oneself—and this is what we did a couple of times with a coalition of volunteer anglers (see Salter Issue Winter 2017). Those rendezvous revealed that these were no fantasies.

Since I have not spent my 30+ year fisheries career here in Washington County writing peer reviewed papers (measuring the rate at which the ship is sinking), I can see why people may have been skeptical of these claims. Instead, I and the organization I have helped to build have focused on action based on science but, equally importantly, based on angler anecdote—plugging the holes we hear about and being opportunistic in keeping these populations afloat and the watersheds that we care about alive.

After all, aren’t we only borrowing all of this from the next generation? Returning it better than we found it?

This approach translates into conserving habitat, removing habitat barriers and pollutants, sometimes confronting polluters, building a coalition, and getting people—especially young people—out to see and experience and appreciate the streams. We’ve focused on the hearts and minds, time and treasure that we can bring to bear now on the problems. In other words we are implementing trout and sea-run fish BMPs (best management practices) for present and future generations.

**Trout Conservation Best Management Practices:**

The science, the research and the inquiries need to continue. Who could argue with that? But give us a discretionary dollar today and it will probably be applied tomorrow toward immediately conserving the corpus, making more fish or improving fish habitat. Lord knows we have enough research and common sense in hand to know that you better plug the leaks or soon there will be no fish left to study—other than to study the history of fish “that were.”

This practical approach to fish conservation always reminds me of the story of the new agriculture extension agent who is out meeting farmers to tell them of the latest research and greatest new innovation in farming. The old Yankee farmer looks up from his milking to say, “Look son, that all makes fine sense, but I don’t farm so good as I know how already.” This sums it up for me. We know a lot about what needs to be done and often we even have the tools. Now it’s time to get something done!
So in eastern Maine we are using local fish fluency—and using it aggressively. As a result of the effective network we have established, the pressures on our watersheds and on the fish themselves are diminishing—and the fish are responding—we even have some empirical evidence to show that is the case. We are seeing sea run fish in places and in numbers that haven’t been seen in years.

One might ask: What percentage of the trout population has been to sea? What stream produces the greatest number of salters? What is there average size? How far do they travel?

No one has precise answers to any of these basic questions in our watersheds—and we probably never will, precisely. But the fact is, we don’t always need a controlled study to know we are seeing more fish or know we are doing the right thing that will help fish endure into the future.

What we do have answers to are questions like: Is that dam preventing trout access to their habitats? Does that farm impact water quality? Do these invasives have an impact? Do those irrigation pumps present a problem? How about stocking of hatchery fish? Is that a problem? Are the fishing regulations protective enough?

Do you see the difference in the questions? If your instinct is to prevent a train wreck, should you always first calculate exactly when the last minute is to pull the break, or whether it is wiser to apply it now?

The goal of DSF is to “lose no further ground” when applying the brake—and then to aggressively lay that new track down toward our destination. Fortunately, we have some very good partners in this work. While we serve as the boots on the ground, working stream
by stream, landowner by landowner, town by town, dam by dam.... our bigger conservation partners like The Nature Conservancy and Maine Coast Heritage Trust and others are now paying attention to diadromous species in a way that we have never seen in the past, and they are working through and with DSF as an important part of the conservation delivery mechanism.

If there is to be a solid future for salters in the US, there is no doubt that the biggest bang for the buck is in Downeast Maine. The Sea Run Brook Trout Coalition is working hard to provide a vehicle to help make that case and to help prevent what could be a train wreck if we are not careful in this region. Drastic times are upon us. This essay need not detail the threats because you, the readers, are, by definition, well informed. Rather, I pose this question to the readers: Do you think we, as stewards of these important fisheries, “farm so good as we know how already?”

I believe what remains most important for us at the moment is not to see how much we can learn about these fish, but how determined, as a group, we are that these fish and their watersheds shall remain for the future and how well we use the knowledge and tools at our disposal now to make it happen.

From the fringe, Dwayne.

For the Fisherman: A Destination Like No Other
By: Alan Petrucci, Small Stream Reflections

My affair with Red Brook started some ten-plus years ago when I read an article in Trout Magazine titled, “Restoring A Beachead For Salters.” The article went on to tell how a group of individuals along with TU, MassWildlife and The Trustees of Reservations took charge of a special gift of land that Red Brook flowed through—land that was gifted by the Lyman Family.

It was back in the fall of 2008 that Jeanette and I made our first visit to Red Brook. I had no idea what I would find there. Upon walking a trail that led to the brook I was caught up in a feeling I had never experienced. The quiet solitude of the area was overwhelming. We walked until we reached the brook. Seeing its smooth waters, sandy bottom and unmistakable red tint, all of which I had never encountered before. It was at this point that I observed a dam of sorts. On the upward side
of the dam the water was moving slowly; as it flowed through the dam, it picked up speed and released a set of riffles. It was here I would fall in love with Red Brook.

Having fished for brook trout for many years, I selected a fly that always worked for me on small trout streams. I fished that fly and many others without success. After a few hours of frustration, I reached for a bright streamer, a Mickey Finn. On the second cast I was greeted by a hard take and soon a beautiful Red Brook brook trout was at hand. I can still recall the incredible strength of that fish. As I gazed at that precious wild jewel, my thoughts were of how fortunate I was to catch one of New England's icons. The love affair that started that day continues.

I have heard this many times: "There are far more exciting and much more renowned fishing destinations." But not for me. I'll take Red Brook.

Read more of Alan’s wonderful work at: smallstreamreflections.com.

Alan’s First Red Brook Salter.
Updates

- **Santuit River restoration is well under way** with SRBTC approaching the one-year anniversary of the start of the project. Through several workdays, volunteers and SRBTC Director Justin Fleming have placed woody debris into the river, creating much-needed in-stream structure with the help of the towns of Barnstable and Mashpee, the Mashpee-Wampanoag Tribe, Cape Cod TU, Southeastern High School in Easton and the Bear’s Den Fly Fishing Group. Trout were transplanted from the nearby Mashpee River in the spring, and were found alive and growing in the fall, including a potential natural migrant from the Mashpee. Much work is still needed as all trout recovered in September had signs of bird and otter strikes absent at the time of transplant. For more information, please contact Justin by email. [justin@searunbrookie.org](mailto:justin@searunbrookie.org)

- SRBTC is continuing its work with scientists to develop and deploy eDNA to locate wild brook trout populations in coastal watersheds. This year some 20 streams on the North Shore of Massachusetts were sampled. Unfortunately, only two streams tested positive for brook trout. More testing is necessary to prove both positives and negatives. Stand by for more information.

- **PIT tagging studies continue in four systems while** in 2017 SRBTC and partners began tagging studies in two additional systems. As previously mentioned, the Santuit River and Third Herring Brook join the Childs, Quashnet, Coonamessett Rivers and Red Brook in this study. A huge thanks to MassWildlife and Steve Hurley for their continued support and data collection, as well as the Coonamessett River Trust and the North South Rivers Watershed Alliance for increasing our monitoring and data collection by deploying new 24-hour antennas.

- **SRBTC has begun the process of exploring** habitat restoration and enhancement within the Childs River in Falmouth. Along with Cape Cod TU, the Falmouth Rod and Gun Club and Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, SRBTC is hoping to add significant woody structure to the Childs River ahead of a larger proposed project in the upper reaches of the river. The Rod and Gun
Club has begun acquiring two abandoned cranberry bogs and is seeking funding to remove several dams and obstructions, divert the river, and restore riparian cover. Together, the two projects will enhance the Waquoit Bay meta-population of salter brook trout, increasing numbers, size of fish and their ability to resist climate change.

- **Cape Cod TU and Southeast MA TU Chapters** are always seeking volunteers for the Quashnet River and Bread and Cheese Brook workdays, respectively. Volunteer opportunities vary from spatial data collection through fishing, to placing in-stream structure. Visit each chapter’s webpage for more information on dates, cancelations and expectations. Volunteering on “Work Days” is a great way to get to know the river, and a great way to get involved in restoration work. Please support your local TU Chapters. Without the hard work done by these dedicated individuals, there very well might never have been a Quashnet or Red Brook.

- **Mass Environmental Trust funds Fresh Brook Hydrodynamic Study** – SRBTC presented at the Wellfleet State of the Harbor Conference in November 2017 to discuss the possibility of restoring wild brook trout to Fresh Brook, South Wellfleet MA. Following that presentation, the Cape Cod Standard Times published an article entitled “Conservationists eye return of brook trout to Wellfleet” on the front page of their Sunday edition.

--- **Addendum ---**

Back issues of *The Salter* are available on our website at:

http://www.searunbrookie.org/newsletter/

Additional updates can be viewed here: http://www.searunbrookie.org/updates/

You may also enjoy visiting our Facebook page or YouTube Channel:

http://facebook.com/srbtc.org/

SRBTC YouTube Channel
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Justin Fleming
Warren Winders
Alan Petrucci
Mark Taylor

**Want to see your sea-run brook trout pictures featured in future editions of *The Salter***?

Email them along with a brief description to justin@searunbrookie.org.

We’d also like to thank our partners and sponsors for their tireless dedication to environmental issues including the conservation and restoration of New England’s sea-run brook trout.
Please support the Sea Run Brook Trout Coalition

Want to help support our work or find out more about SRBTC? Please feel free to contact Executive Director Geof Day at gday@searunbrookie.org.

Also, check us out on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/srbtc.org or visit our website at http://www.searunbrookie.org.


Please Join or Renew Today

Please join us in our effort to protect and restore sea-run brook trout! We are a federally recognized 501(c)(3) charitable organization and your contributions are tax deductible to the maximum extent allowed by law. Your membership fee of $35/year helps us to continue to carry out restoration projects, advocacy, public education and outreach, and scientific research on sea-run brook trout throughout the NE United States. You can join online through our web site at http://www.searunbrookie.org/membership or, if you prefer, you may simply send us a check, made out to Sea Run Brook Trout Coalition Corp., to our postal address:

Sea Run Brook Trout Coalition Corp.

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All our members receive our free quarterly newsletter, The Salter, which will keep you abreast of our doings and other matters relevant to sea-run brook trout.