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SPORT FISHING IN THE KAMLOOPS REGION

The large number of lakes and great variety of fishing experiences available within a short distance of the City has long made sport fishing a major tourist attraction and source of income for Kamloops and region. The earliest settlers make very little mention of fishing for sport though, no doubt, they did a little of it when time allowed. As the population grew, so did the popularity of recreational fishing.

The Thompson River and Kamloops Lake were the most popular places for fishing in those early days. However, some people did travel further afield in search of "fighting fish". Perhaps as early as 1885 Dave Lusk, an American who came to B.C. in the 1860's, built a small log cabin as a fishing retreat at Fish Lake, officially renamed Lac Le Jeune in 1928. This highly productive lake would eventually become the most popular trout fishing lake in the region.

After completion of the railway, the excellent fishing in the Thompson River and Kamloops Lake became attractive to visitors to the area. By 1890 Adam Bell Ferguson of Savona was advertising his Lakeview Hotel as a fishing resort, and there were fishing tournaments at Savona as early as 1897.

In the 1890's, there being no legal limit, 50 to 100 fish in a day was considered a good catch. One three-day expedition to Lac Le Jeune in 1897 resulted in a record catch of over 1,000 fish.

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At that time, a trip to Lac Le Jeune (Fish Lake) was an adventure with rough roads and no facilities upon arrival. But in 1901 George Borthwick and James Benzie built a summer cottage on the shore and others soon did the same.

Seeing a good business opportunity, Dave Lusk, with his partner Robert Cowan, built the first Fish Lake Hotel in 1905. The accommodation was primitive, though it had a bar and was very successful.

Lusk retired in 1906 and the Cowan's built a new and larger hotel, the Rainbow Lodge, which was popular with families for many years. During this time, the lodge and lake became a popular retreat for the top C.P.R. management personnel and other wealthy patrons.

Most of the small lakes in the region were barren with only the Thompson River, the Shuswap lakes, Adams Lake and a few other bodies such as Lac Le Jeune producing fish. These waters produced a variety of trout that was both large and combative. In 1892 a few specimens were sent to Dr. David S. Jordan at Stanford University in California for identification.

The fish bore a strong resemblance to the familiar rainbow trout, but Dr. Jordan noticed some differences, chiefly the larger number of scale rows on the new trout. This relatively minor difference permitted him at the time to identify it as a separate species, which he named "Salmo Kamloops", the Kamloops trout. In reality though, the Kamloops trout is a variety of the rainbow trout.

In 1909 eggs were taken from these so-called "Kamloops trout" in a creek that empties into Squam Bay on Adams Lake and ~~taken~~^{sent} to the Granite Creek Salmon hatchery near Tappen. Five thousand fry were transported and released into Paul Lake, then barren of fish.

The results were dramatic since, as in all the lakes subsequently stocked in the region, Paul Lake had a rich food supply. By 1912 trout caught there ranged from 8 to 16 pounds, and until 1930 adult fish caught were an average of 8 to 10 pounds.

A hatchery was built at Paul Lake in 1922 in order to stock other barren lakes. Knouff Lake had been stocked in 1917 from Paul Lake and Hyas Lake was stocked in 1923. Another hatchery was begun after 1914 at Pennask Lake south of Kamloops, which is one of the few lakes where Kamloops trout were found naturally.

All of these lakes soon became famous far and wide for their spectacular fishing and attracted large numbers of visitors to the area. In 1920, J. Arthur Scott, a former barber, taxi driver and guide, bought property at Paul Lake. A road, completed in 1921 and rebuilt in 1924, opened the lake to large numbers of anglers. By 1922 Scott had opened a fishing resort, Echo Lodge, which in a few years became famous throughout the continent.

Bill Nation, an English born angler and guide, was employed at Echo Lodge where he was a legendary guide to fishing in the region. His fishing knowledge was unexcelled and he left behind a legacy of dozens of the most effective flies for catching Kamloops Trout.

Fishing lodges mushroomed at numerous lakes in the Kamloops district. Knouff Lake, which opened for fishing in 1920, strengthened the reputation of the Kamloops trout as the pre-eminent fly fisherman's fish. The record fish for the Kamloops district was a 23-1/2 pound Kamloops trout caught at Knouff Lake in July of 1932. P.D. Harris of Kamloops caught the 36 inch long fish on a troll. The record for a dry fly catch was a 17-1/4 pound fish, again from Knouff Lake.

Of all the fishing lodges, the one at Pennask Lake has a unique history. James Dole, famous for the Hawaiian pineapple bearing his name, was

introduced to the Kamloops trout at Lac Le Jeune. In 1927 he discovered Pennask Lake, which fulfilled his dream for a great fishing lake where he could establish a private preserve.

He and a group of wealthy friends acquired 2,500 acres of land, giving them ownership of 16 of the 25 miles of shoreline. The Pennask Lake Company Limited was incorporated in 1930, with membership limited to 50 people at fees of \$1,000.00 per year. The Club built a large three storey lodge with all the comforts.

However, the lodge suffered financial losses which were made good from Dole's personal finances. By the 1940's, the Pennask Lake Fish and Game Club took over under Canadian control. Today the private Club includes 165 members, and the lake continues to be the major source of eggs for restocking other lakes. The highlight of the Club's history was the visit of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip in July of 1959.

The 1930's were the great years of trout fishing in the B.C. Interior. After that, over-stocking resulted in a decline in the size of the fish. As well, in the late 1940's the population of Redside Shiners, first introduced as live bait, exploded and gave serious competition to the trout. Sport fishing in the area was in serious trouble in the very lakes that made the Kamloops Trout famous.

In recent decades, careful management of the fishing lakes has maintained a healthy trout population in the fishing lakes of the Interior. But never again will people see the large, fighting fish of the 1920's and 1930's.

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