

Hunters' Corner
(Continued from page 6)

...nor have I ever spotted any 10 or 12 inch smelts in the... of commercial fishermen... watched nets being pulled and I've examined pyramids of frozen smelts on the ice without discovering any that even remotely compared in size and quality with those caught with rod and line off our sea wharves or from boats anchored in deep sea channels.

LIKE SEA TROUT
In this respect smelts act like our sea trout. Do smelts and trout stop spawning after they have reached a certain age? Do they spawn on our seaward bars without moving up to fresh water gravel beds? are questions I have been asked on numerous occasions if there is an age limit over which trout become barren. Like pheasants for instance, I do not know.

On the other hand it is my own personal belief that both trout and smelts move up into fresh water to spawn. I base this opinion on the fact that I have never examined a trout or smelt caught in the sea during late fall or winter that showed any indication of having spawned or contemplated spawning. All were in the pink of condition. Winter poachers of trout have also confirmed this line of thought.

In the early thirties in mid August I was standing on the tip of Boughton Island Bar. At the time I was investigating reports that shore birds and ducks had been shot out of season in the area. It was a beautiful day, sunny and pleasantly cool. I was doing a bit of day dreaming with thoughts of gulls and the plaintive notes of plover a soft accompaniment to my thoughts, when I snapped wide awake — a school of trout the size of mackerel was swimming leisurely past. They were in two feet of water on the edge of a sand lip overhanging a deep drop into the murky depths.

A PARADE
It was a breath taking parade of trout. The first school was followed by a score or more in the three and four pound class and then off the bar tip three monster trout were in sight. They were near the surface, under maybe three feet, and at least a yard long. Compared to the 18 and 20 inchers they looked like baby submarines. Deep down beyond the range of clear vision vague shadows drifted past — shadows that could have been trout even larger than the three close up and I placed them in the 10 pound bracket.

Later when talking to commercial fishermen I was told that trout every bit as large hover off Wheeler's Bar, Panmure Island. One that got itself wrapped up in a net weighed 8½ pounds hours later. I have often wondered what is the history, habits and longevity of those over size trout that are better seen in fresh water — at least not in our ordinary streams and rivers. Some say our trout biologists will have the answer. They probably have a partial answer now but its not their nature to make snap judgments and such studies consume time that is measured in years.

BIG ONES
Early last season a trout was hooked below the railway bridge, Morell, that the angler never even glimpsed. There were no spectacular rushes just a steady, unceasing cruising around. When the net was pumped it felt like the line was fast to a sunken log that was drifting by. After 10 or 15 minutes of see-saw action the leader parted and that was that. Two such trout were hooked at Vernon Causeway in August during the past season. One just above the Causeway embankment and the other a mile up opposite the mouth of Finnegan's (Chapel) Creek. The trout off Finnegan's was on for about 20 minutes and put on a fair show. It kept circling the boat with a few short zippy rushes thrown in for good measure but didn't try for a get-a-way break. The leader went slack when added pressure was applied and the fish was over-frayed off on its jaws most likely. Like the Morell heavy weight neither of the Causeway trout broke water. One can only guess at the weight of those trout but I'd be willing to bet they were record breakers.

STEELHEADS
Steelheads (Rainbow trout that have gone to sea) have moved into the Hillsboro (East) River and its tributaries. Two were caught below Cummysky's Bridge, Johnson's River, in 1956 and another at Haggerty's Wharf below Mount Stewart last season. None exceeded the pound and a quarter mark. Steelheads were quite common in the Sturgeon River last year.

It is evident they are moving along the south side of the province and it is quite possible Steelheads are present in The Belle, Flat, Pinette, Orwell, Vernon and Seal rivers although there is no official report to that effect. It is not probable that they would by-pass all those rivers on their way to the Hillsboro and its tributaries. Approximately 15 years ago the late Osbert Enman, Vernon River, caught a large Rainbow in Ross's Mill, Head of Vernon River but this trout was suspected to have worked its way down from O'Keefe's Lake, Avondale. This lake held a good population of Rainbows at the time. I do not remember off-hand the weight of this trout but have an idea it crowded the seven pound mark.

FILL POWER
It is in the Cardigan where the big tackle busters really give anglers the business. Three of acquaintances, one of them a repeat, lost their gear last summer. When a Steelhead feels the sting of a hook he takes off with the rattle wide open. If an angler has not enough line on his reel, around 150 yards of it, he might hook a 10 or 15 pounder if he with-holds his first mad rush. The Cardigan is a good river for a man with a weak ticker to stay away from. No one ever knows just what may be his offering.

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