



THE PAWISTIK NEWS



A COMPENDIUM OF HARD FACT AND OTHER NEWS FROM THE BEST RIVER IN NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN

Wambach Crew Does Well

The Wambach group with some of the beauties they caught in June.



There were only three, and they traveled all the way from Montana to get to the lodge, but the long drive was worth it. For Matt Wambach, Kirk Vansoest, and Jerry Copp, driving north through foothills and prairie, and then bush, is just like Montana, only more of it.

They came in June, as so many do, but they definitely have their preference, and that preference is to go north. Matt has been both north and south of the lodge, but for him the fishing has been consistently good towards Birch Rapids and beyond. In fact, he hasn't even gone as far as Dog Rapids to be as successful as he wants to be.

They caught quite a few northern over 15 lbs., and their biggest was just shy of 22 lbs. Most guests head down to Attree and a few other bays south of Scoop Rapids for their northern fishing, but as you can see, the big ones are everywhere on the river.

The boys went a little further north when they wanted to catch walleye, but according to Matt, they seemed to be biting everywhere, although some spots were better than others. Once he found them, all three started catching walleye one after the other, and they were a good size.

Matt would like to come back again in 2009, but he still has to pull the trip together. No problem though, as he'll be able to find fish regardless of the month picked.



The Fall IS the Time

June is a favourite time of the year for guests all over the north, and the lodge is no exception. It is our busiest month, and the fish are biting well, coming as they are off the spawn and eager to bite anything that moves. Many avid fishermen will tell you though, that an early or a late spring can play havoc with the fishery. If the spawn is too early, the fish are already dispersed all over the river. If it's too late, you might not see a fish if they are still on their spawning beds. Both walleye and northern can be temperamental at times, and the changeable weather of June can upset them enough to make you have to work for your dinner.

In contrast, the shortening days of late summer and early fall are very predictable, with hot sunshine and cool nights, and the fish seem to respond well to this stability. That is why many fishermen actually prefer August and early September. Weather is not the only reason though. The fish, sensing the shortening days, are hungry and in pursuit of food to take them through the lean winter months. Although the spawn is not until the spring, they are in pre-spawn mode, and that gives an added edge to their appetite.

Todd McCombie takes a couple of weeks off every year at this time, and after entertaining friends from down south for a few days, he takes it easy, fishing in a leisurely but productive way.

It was late morning before Todd and Scott got away, but time was not an issue. They both knew that the fishing was likely to be good and they had plenty of daylight. Choosing to go south, they thought that a couple of spots south of Attree would yield well, but this was a day when they were biting everywhere. At the first speedup past Spruce Rapids, they dropped the anchor, and within a minute they had a double header. This was a day for walleye, and both fish were keepers, about 2-1/2 pounds apiece. As it turned out, these were almost the smallest fish caught that day. In that one hole, Todd and Scott caught close to 25, keeping two more and releasing many in the 3-4 pound range.

This was indeed a good start to the afternoon, but they decided to move to the next speedup, a stretch of the river with rocky shores

Todd with his almost eight pounder!



A good string of 3lb. walleye.

and a few large pines, one of them containing a bald eagle's nest. The same success was repeated here, and it was decided that they would go no further. The walleye seemed a little bigger here as well, and they knew they would have no trouble limiting out with fish in the 3-1/2 to 4 pound range.

The best was yet to come though, as Todd's line stopped about mid-way through his retrieve. At first thinking he was snagged, he pulled a little, and was rewarded by a powerful surge stripping line from his reel. About five minutes later, they got to see what had given Todd such a tussle, and it caused a little excitement in the boat. This was a big one, and Scott could hardly get his hand around the fish behind the gills. When a good grip was ensured, he lifted up the beautiful walleye for them both to admire. It weighed almost eight pounds and was 20 inches long, deep black on the dorsal shading to golden yellow on the belly. The front fins were almost orange, and the bottom tail fin had its characteristic paint dip of white. Todd said, "I guess we're throwing him back," and Scott agreed, as the fish was over the five pound limit requested by the lodge.

Todd slipped him back in the water, and although they fished for another hour, that fish was clearly the one that capped the day. In total, Todd and Scott had caught and released almost forty big walleye, and had kept enough for a couple of good feeds, all in less than four hours.

Any questions now, as to why some of us, whether locals or guests, like to fish in the fall? 

Todd & Scott with the ones they kept.



Proper Filleting All-Important



This stringer is ready to go under the knife.



Andrew is a meticulous, and fast, filleter.



Filleting can also be a social event.

It's one thing to catch a fish for the pan. It's quite another to properly fillet your catch for maximum use of the fish, as well as for the most enjoyment while eating. Next year I'll do it with pictures, but this year a verbal portrayal will have to do. This is how locals prepare walleye for the pan, but the process is much the same for northern. It should go without saying, but a really sharp knife is essential for best results.

- 1) Starting at the head and just behind the gills, make a diagonal cut, angling toward the head to catch as much of the meaty portion just behind the head. Cut only as far as the backbone.
- 2) Turn the knife 90 degrees toward the tail, and using the backbone as a guide, slice cleanly to the tail. You can then cut the fillet off completely at this point, or leave it attached to the body of the fish, which can act as a grip when you remove the skin.
- 3) It is best to bone the rib cage at this point, as the fish is easier to work with the skin on. Feeling with your fingers, slice down at the

meaty part of the fish, following the rib bones and carving out toward the belly. This should remove the rib bones in one piece.

- 4) Remove the skin starting at the tail, holding your knife still and working the skin back and forth while pulling the skin toward you. This should cleanly remove the skin with a minimum of work for you and the knife. If you're freezing the fish, remember to leave a patch of skin for identification purposes.
- 5) Feel for the floating bones just at the top of the rib cage, and cut a long strip on either side of the bones, removing them with that strip of flesh. There is a bit of waste here, but it is the only way if you want completely boneless fillets.
- 6) Repeat the process on the other side, and you have two perfect fillets for the pan.

And now comes a little extra tip. Andrew and Carl, who live at the river for most of the summer, really like to fillet fish, and if you treat them right, which usually means a couple of beer, they might even help you clean your catch. 

Pawistik's Annual Summer Garage Sale

Actually, it doesn't happen every year, but on a fairly regular basis, the lodge and cabin owners host a garage sale in the yard outside the store in the main lodge building. Everyone is welcome to display their wares, and it usually happens on a weekend we all know will be busy with road traffic. There could be a fish tournament, or it could be family allowance day or treaty day, and the garage sale is a big and heavily attended event.

There is usually something for everyone, and the store is really busy, especially on a warm day as browsers enjoy snacks, ice cream, and cold drinks. If you have anything to sell, and have room in your vehicle, bring it up and we'll sell it for you. How's that for defraying part of the cost of your next fishing adventure?



Some of the road traffic seeking new treasures.



Angie & Bernice shopping for bargains.

MORE FISH PICTURES from the Summer of '08



Not big, but a triple header!



PAWISTIK
lodge

www.pawistiklodge.com

For information on rates and availability, please contact **Scott Jeffrey** or **Noreen Robb** at:
500, 900 - 6th Avenue S.W.
Calgary, AB T2P 3K2
Ph: (403) 263-6881
Fax: (403) 263-6886
Toll-Free: 1-800-526-4177
E-mail: scott@northernstar.ab.ca
noreen@northernstar.ab.ca

Lodge Location:
Kilometre 272, Hanson Lake Road
Saskatchewan, Canada "North of '54"