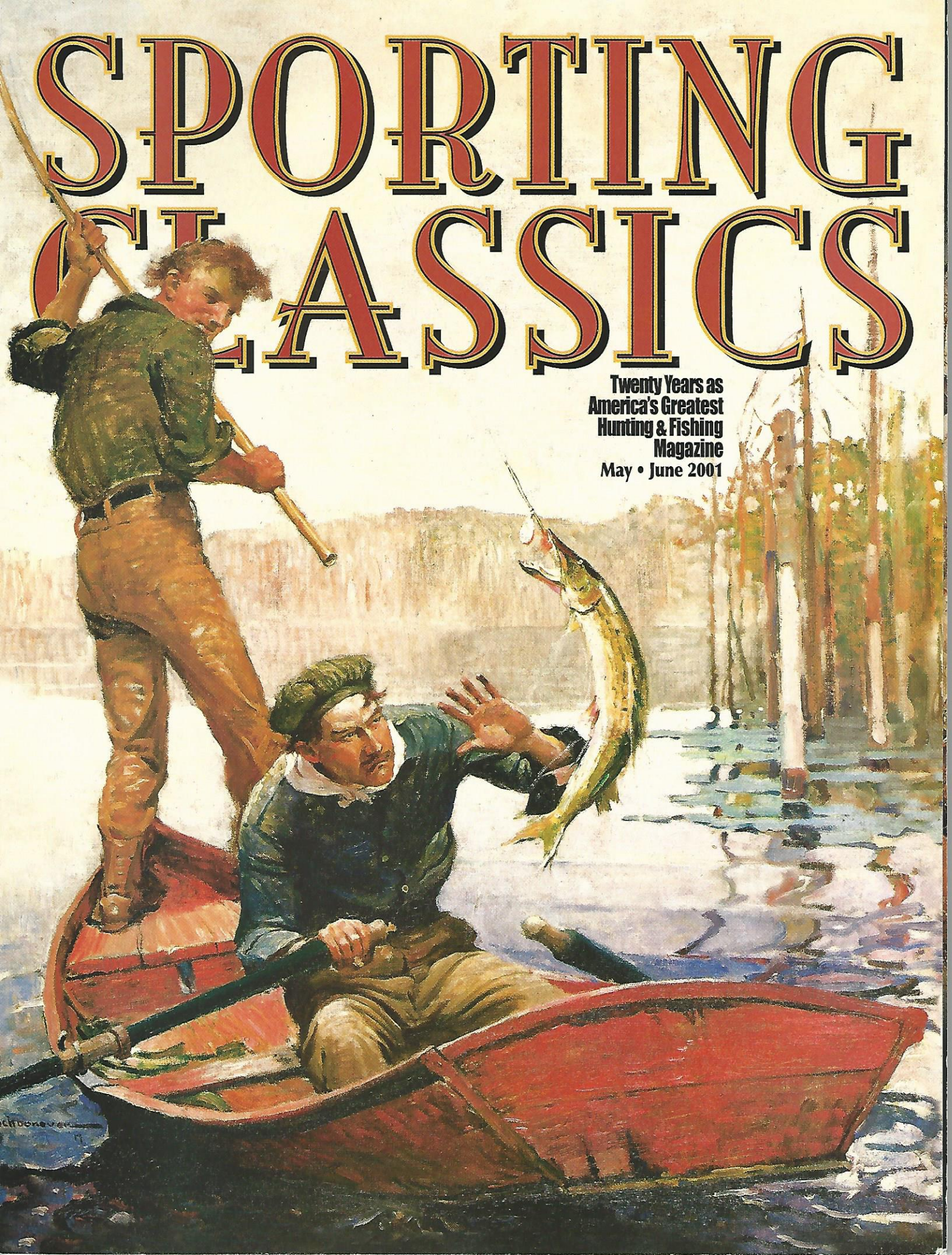


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Twenty Years as
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Hunting & Fishing
Magazine
May • June 2001



T r a v e l

By John Ross



That lake trout and landlocked salmon bite best just after ice-out is a well known fact.

They come close to the surface, well within reach of fly-rodding streamer patterns that imitate baitfish. Hit it right, and the fishing is easy. Too early and you'll be hard-pressed to coax a strike. If you're late, these big guys will have begun to sound.

*Seven-pound brookies.
Lake trout on the fly. Just follow the nearest rainbow to this golden angling adventure on the Quebec-Labrador border.*

In mid-June, the four of us – Siegfried, Tom, Craig and I – had hit it right indeed up at Joe Stenfanski's place on Lac Ternay one hundred miles west of the Quebec-Labrador border. Lakers up to twenty-three pounds attached themselves to my bright orange Clousers and six-inch chartreuse snake-flies. All I needed was a sink-tip line and seven-foot leader tapering to 2X. We fished

the mouths of rivers that boiled into the lake and caught fish after fish.

But what of brookies? There were few moving in the Lac Ternay system. Too early, we reasoned, and so we headed 200 miles south to Mabec, a lodge of five private cabins, located on the Manitou River about half-an-hour's flight from Sept-Îles.

Rising in a lake more than a hundred miles from the ocean, the Manitou

Mabec's camp, situated on the glaciated shore of the Manitou River.



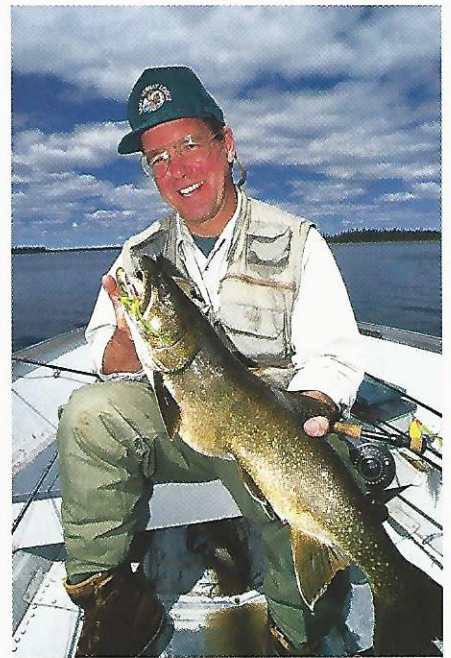
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The author used chartreuse Clousers and snake flies to catch the Ternay's lakers.

heads due south, plunging into a narrow valley that becomes a 2,000-foot deep gash in Canada's shield. About mid-way down its course, the river slides into a lake more than 1,000 feet deep, flows like cold molasses for twenty miles before welling up and breaching the dam of glacial till gouged up by continental ice of 12,000 years ago. The barn red cabins of Mabec line the low ridge facing up the lake.

Below the lodge, the river chases through sixteen miles of shallow rapids. Here it trips over a gravel bar, there it flows sedately along a forest of deep black spruce, only to pick up the pace again at another shoal. Three lakes – Canot, Brezel and Eudistes – widen the river along its dancing course. Only two species of sportfish are found here – brook trout and land-locked char – cousins that are virtually indistinguishable to the untrained eye.

Ice had left the river not two weeks before our Otter dumped us at the lodge's dock. Black as it appeared from the plane, Manitou was as clear as thin tea. Eager to fish as I always am, I convinced Mabec's

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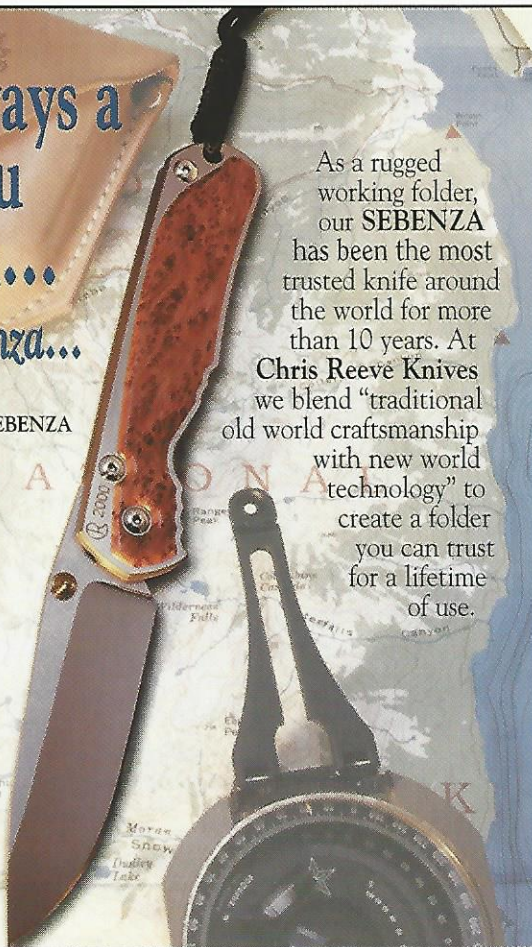
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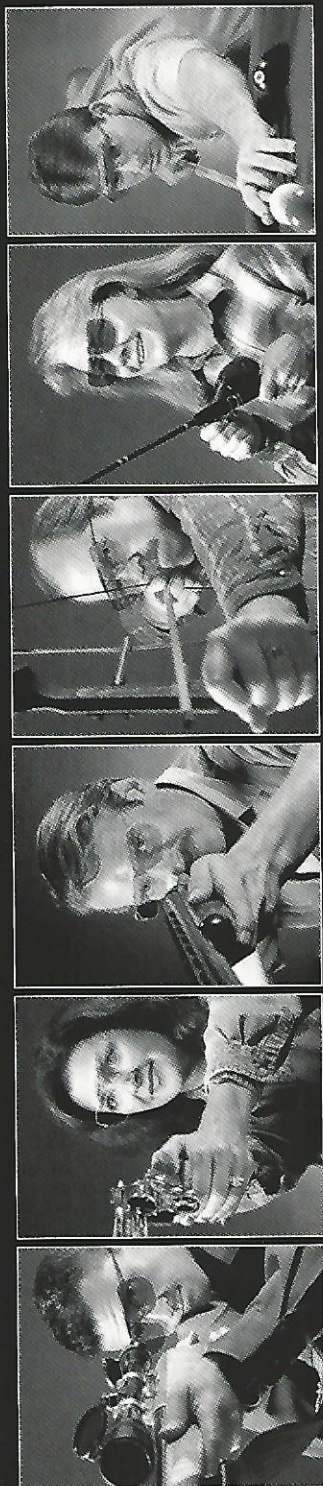
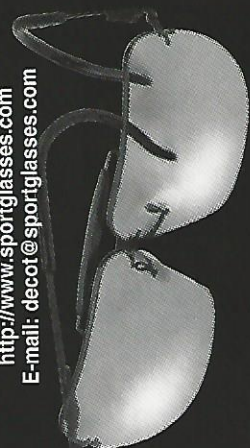
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in the book: fast, slow, jerky, hand over hand with rod in arm pit tucked. You name it, I gave it a shot. Bending the shank about mid-way between eye and hook on streamers actually did produce more strikes. But nothing like what the boys with the spoons and plugs were doing. I accepted my fate gracefully.

The next day we headed south down the river, racing over shoals which, when the water fell with the progression of summer, would yield lovely brookies to the fly. The lakes in the lower system do not have the heavy stream in-flows that Lac Manitou proper enjoys. Denis and I worked the water diligently, but to limited avail. The hardware guys had equally slow action. The key, it seems, to fishing lake-run brookies early is working cataracts that enter the lake.

Having seized on this bit of knowledge, I was nonplused when Siegfried and Craig started catching fish. Had their guide, a wily old

Quebecois, imparted some secret to which I was not privy? I glassed their boat, but could see nothing out of the ordinary. I fished on, and harder, and finally seduced a three-pounder from behind a sweeper waving in the current.

Throughout that afternoon, they landed lots of fish. I couldn't buy a bite, couldn't find the pattern, but it didn't rankle. At times it's good to have a little of Minnesota's co-dependency flowing in your veins. It wasn't until we were back at the dock that the truth finally wriggled out of an old cup in the bottom of Siegfried's boat. Amazing how a little garden hackle encourages ice-out trout. ~~🐟~~

If You Want To Go

Mabec fishes best from late June into late September. It's an easy flight via Air Canada into Sept-Iles, and thence by floatplane to the lodge. Full-service rates run about \$1200 for three days. Contact Louis Laurin, toll free at 866-366-6660 or

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Ternay's lakers turn on a week after ice-out, but because the lake is so shallow, good flyfishing continues into September. Bring your own grub to this fly-in lodge where the cost for a week begins at \$1,650. Contact Joe Stefanski, 800-662-6404 or at www.higharcticadv.com.

Angler's Checklist

Packing for a north-country wilderness fishing jaunt? These are the bare essentials:

Health: Two complete sets of medications; pack one in your carry-on, another in your luggage. Copies of prescriptions. In your wallet, carry a written list of serious allergies, name and number of your personal physician, information about medical insurance (get trip insurance!), and contact information for your spouse. Extra eye-glasses are a must.

Safety: Small first-aid is helpful. Bring a three- to four-inch, lock-

back folding knife, windproof lighter (even if you don't smoke), whistle, high-intensity flashlight, tin cup, instant soup and space blanket.

Gear: If it's cotton, leave it at home. Synthetics or natural wool are far superior. Two pairs of waders, pair of wading shoes, wool watch-cap, two pairs of fingerless gloves, Gore-Tex parka shell, two shirts, two sweaters, two pairs of pants. Socks and underwear. Long-billed waterproof hat.

Tackle: Three rods, reels and extra lines; twice as many flies/lures as you think you'll need; extra forceps, nippers, fresh spools of tippet material, hand-towel for wiping slimy hands.

Cash: Equivalent of \$300 in local currency, ATM card, Visa/MasterCard. Two blank checks.

ID: Copy of passport; birth certificate, driver's license should be stored in a place other than your wallet. Also a list of credit cards and the phone numbers to cancel them.

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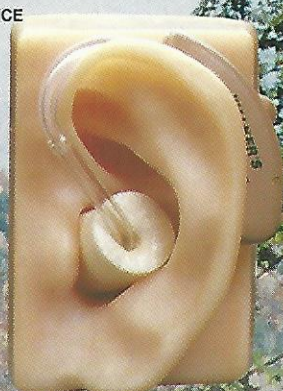
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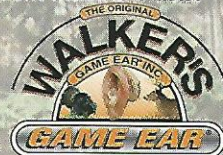
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