

Chasing the Fabled Kamloops on Peterhope Lake

By Ron Duncan

As the warmer weather approaches, thoughts turn to getting on the lake. Last spring I had the privilege of travelling to Peterhope Lake with my good friend Sandy for my first experience of fishing for Kamloops trout.

We arrived at the beautiful lakeside campground and found a site at the water's edge with a good spot to launch our pontoon boats. We set up camp and after much discussion about tactics and flies to use, we set up our gear ready for an early start in the morning. We enjoyed a dinner of spaghetti bolognese and wine topped off by my wife's Crème Caramel, "rough camping indeed".

The morning dawned clear and sunny and I took off rowing down the lake on my pontoon boat, trolling toward Sandy's favourite shoal. After half an hour of rowing I saw Sandy gliding by using his electric motor. As I slowly approached after rowing and trolling for 45 minutes with no action, I saw a large fish jump at the end of Sandy's line. After a considerable tug of war, he brought it in and showed me a four-pound beauty, which he had caught on a black and silver choronomid. I fumbled about getting my anchor set, rigged up my rod with a choronomid and started my initiation in that type of fishing. You can guess the outcome –the paint dried.

After half an hour of no action I gave up and switched to a clear camo line and a nymph. My first cast had just settled when I saw a 16-inch fish jump a foot in the air and I suddenly realized it was on my line. It jumped and jumped and fought like a much bigger fish. After bringing it in I cast out again and on my third cast a 17-inch rainbow succumbed to my nymph. I was amazed at the ferocity of these fish and their acrobatic antics, much different than the trout I was used to catching on the Island. The Kamloops trout had hooked me.

Soon the wind came up and of course was blowing in my face as I returned to camp. I arrived back after a long slog, tired but happy with two nice fish in the basket. As Sandy arrived back at camp a few minutes later looking cool and calm. I thought, "I gotta get one of those electric motors"

I woke at 5:30 am the next day to a calm morning with the sun already above the trees. After a relaxed breakfast (after all we had five days to fish) we were on the water, but our first day's success was not to be duplicated. I tried many flies and although I saw fish being caught by other boats nearby, my luck had run out. However, Peter Hope is a beautiful lake and although I had no fish that day it was a pleasant learning experience. We relaxed in camp in the late afternoon enjoying aperitifs and the view. The day was capped off by a meal of Barbequed Ribs, German Potatoes and lots of wine.

Wednesday dawned grey and windy so we took our time and enjoyed bacon and eggs for breakfast as we waited for the wind to die down. Although it was still windy Sandy took off with his electric motor for his shoal. He learned (again) a cool, wet lesson that morning. Don't wear hip waders instead of chest waders in a pontoon boat when it's wavy.

I eventually decided to brave the wind and try my luck just off the weeds by the campsite. Five minutes later "bang" a nice 18 incher took a green Doc Sprately. Soon the wind began to blow harder and I had had enough, so I came back to camp, cleaned the fish and then played some fiddle music. Venison burgers courtesy of Sandy for dinner – yummy.

On Thursday I was on the water by 6 am. It was another calm morning with beautiful light, still and

quiet. Only one other boat briefly disturbed the silence as he buzzed off down the lake. The silence returned and I enjoyed quietly paddling around and enjoying the beautiful soft light and fabulous view. Sandy took off at 7am determined to catch fish for dinner. I returned to camp and while chatting with the guy next door, he advised me to use a floating line, a 6-foot leader and a mayfly nymph under an indicator. I put on a gold bead P. T and soon after the indicator hit the water it disappeared being pulled under by a nice 14 incher. After moving a little further down the lake I cast close to the weeds and hooked a fat 18 in. trout of about two pounds. Once again, the fight it put up amazed me. Soon I could see dimples on the water as the trout started rising, so I switched to a floating P.T. and a 10-foot leader. I had great fun as several smaller trout took the fly over the next while.

Sandy returned to camp having caught and released several trout but he kept two nice ones for dinner. We had a Panko crusted trout dinner and of course copious amounts of wine. We finished the day with Jack Daniels and Scotch. I just managed to get the dishes washed before crawling into bed.

My intention to fish the next morning was abandoned when I heard the wind rattling the awning, so I turned over and snoozed for a while. It was leaving day so I had a relaxed pack up. Sandy invited me for breakfast in his camper and put fresh baked muffins on the table – yes I know “rough camping” - what a host.

My first trip to Peterhope was a great learning experience. Choronomid fishing, anchoring a pontoon boat and indicator fishing were all new experiences for me.

Although the big fish that others were catching eluded us and the number of fish caught was not high, I had a great time. Sandy is a wonderful fishing companion/guide. The weather was good but a little too windy most of the time, but that is Peterhope.

I shall visit Peterhope in the near future, having learned a little bit more about fishing, hopefully more prepared to catch the big one (well maybe a bigger one) – the fabled Kamloops trout.