

# Fishing Quest

The I-93 Path to twenty fishing spots in 48 hours

BY MARK BEAUCHESNE



It was the dream assignment for a lifelong New Hampshire fishing junkie: find the best fishing opportunities along the 120-plus miles of Interstate 93 that run through our state. I turned it into a personal challenge to actually fish those waters during a single weekend.

My high-speed angling journey will take me from Salem to Littleton, from the suburban flatlands to the hilly high altitudes. My colleagues asked for 6 or 8 favorite spots. Too limiting; I'm gonna fish 20 sites in 48 hours. Quixotic? Yes. Will I do it anyway? Why not! Of course, any *one* of these destinations would be perfect for a relaxing day of fishing.

## The Gear

Road trips of this nature take careful preparation. I have gear for any fish, any time, so deciding what to leave behind is a struggle. Before overloading the truck, I ask myself:

- What kind of fish will I be catching? (I always say "catching"...confidence booster.)
- Will I be keeping the fish?
- What type of tackle do I need?
- Will I be fishing from shore or a boat?
- Who wants to join me?
- What waters will I be fishing?
- Will I camp out?
- How much food do I need to bring?
- What about other gear?

The kind of fish I could be catching has never been a huge factor for me. I like catching them all! I don't plan on keeping fish on this trip, so I don't need the extra cooler.

Figuring out exactly what to pack and how is one of my favorite parts of a trip. I've cleared a spot in the basement to collect the necessities for my quest. This time, the only stuff that stays home is my ice-fishing gear and saltwater outfits.

I select four spinning rods, along with two fly-fishing outfits. Two of the spinning rods are six-foot medium action — these are my all-around tools. Toss in two five-foot ultra-lights for panfish and the small streams I'm bound to encounter along the way. Add one seven-weight rod and reel for bass and larger trout and salmon; plus the five-weight rod and reel for trout, panfish and smaller bass.

Six rods may sound like overkill. But, I'm on a quest, and you know me...I need to have backup, just in case I have a gear problem. For the average person, one rod is plenty!

Next I lay out tackle. I've been known to say, "You can't have too many lures." That statement haunts me now — fishing 20 different locations in 48 hours, my tackle needs to be both easily accessible and compact enough to carry into my fishing spots. With limited space in the truck, I decide on three tackle boxes. Not the usual monster I carry, which weighs in at 37 pounds. Three small boxes will have to do — I've got some clear five-section plastic ones that will be just right. I label all three: Trout, Panfish, Bass.

Flies are easy to pack. They take up very little room, and the boxes fit in my pocket. A selection of trout flies, panfish flies and bass flies are added to the growing pile in the basement.

I load my fanny pack with the other tools and accessories I'll need: camera, clippers, two pairs of needle-nose pliers, small first aid kit, wildflower ID guide, water bottle and flashlight.

Time to pack my camping gear. I'm keeping it simple — sleeping bag, toothbrush, etc. — it's just one night. Same with the food. "Fish now, eat later," I always say!

Waders are helpful, but not always needed. I throw them into the pile, just in case.

Now, will all this stuff fit?

No problem, I think I'll even have some extra space!

This is a solo trip without the boat. When I complete my itinerary, I'll leave a copy behind with Mom and Dad. I always leave a note telling my loved ones where I have gone, what I'm doing and when to expect me back. My family knows to add an hour onto my return time when I go fishing.

## On The Road

Finalizing the itinerary for my I-93 fishing quest is a challenge. There are so many great places to choose from! I try to put some boundaries on the bonanza:

- Shoreline access for fishing.
- Within 15 miles of I-93.
- Mix of both warm- and coldwater species.
- Catch fish, then move on — no matter how good the fishing is.
- Set a time limit for each location. I decide on a minimum of one hour, not to exceed an hour and a half at any one location. Plenty of time to catch a memory!

I get out my worn copy of the *New Hampshire Atlas and Gazetteer* from the DeLorme company and get down to business. The page and map section numbers shown below refer to this atlas. You don't *have* to have a copy of DeLorme's in your vehicle, but you'll be a lot happier road tripping in New Hampshire if you do!

Route 93 heads north from the Massachusetts border and traverses southern New Hampshire and the White Mountains before reaching the Vermont border. Along the way, there are hundreds of places to fish within 15 miles of the highway. An hour and a half at each of 20 spots is 30 hours of fishing time total — cool! Factoring in sleeping, eating, and my somewhat leisurely

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### TACKLING YOUR BOX

#### Trout Box:

- 24 #8 bait holder circle hooks
- 24 tin sinkers, mixed sizes
- 10 in-line spinners (Mepps & rooster tails) — smaller sizes
- 6 Joe's Flies spinners (flies attached to in-line spinners)
- 4 baitfish imitations (Rapala)

#### Panfish Box:

- 2 slip bobbers with 4 extra stops
- 20 ball-head-style non-lead jigs — 10 each  $\frac{1}{16}$  ounce and  $\frac{1}{24}$  ounce (small stuff)
- 40 soft plastic baits. 20 each tube baits and 1-inch curl-tail grubs, half in natural colors, half in bright colors.
- 10 Beetle spins: 5 of  $\frac{1}{8}$  ounce and 5 of  $\frac{1}{16}$  ounce
- 10 marabou jigs —  $\frac{1}{8}$  ounce

#### Bass Box:

- 4 topwater lures — 2 poppers and 2 torpedoes
- 10  $\frac{1}{4}$ -ounce ball-head jigs
- 40  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch curl-tail grubs
- 40 soft plastic worms — the do-nothing "stick" type
- 4 spinner baits — 2 natural colored, 2 bright colored



driving pace, I'll have to plan carefully.

My first stop is just north of the border, in Pelham: **Beaver Brook**. This small brook is less than five miles off of Exit 2 (DeLorme pg. 22, J5). As I recall, there is a pulloff on Route 38, just south of the Pelham Police station. I remember taking kids on a field trip here and catching brook trout and meeting a good friend. This spot has a nice pool to fish, along with nice pocket water. The fly rod and the spinning rod will get a workout here.

Stop number two is **Lake Massabesic**, a great spot to bring a kid or a friend. **Clair's Landing** in Auburn is off of Route 93 to 101 west, Exit 2, Route 121 south (DeLorme pg. 22, A5). Sounds tricky, but it's really only three lefts. Clair's Landing has plenty of fishing access from shore. I come here for the bluegills. In a word: outstanding. The ultra-light rod is the tool of choice at Massabesic.

Miles to go before I sleep! Stop number three is the **Merrimack River** in Hooksett. Exit 11 onto Route 3A will bring you along the river (DeLorme pg. 28, G3). Two bridges cross the river just behind the fire station; one is a regular bridge for cars and trucks, the other is one of the longest angled rail bridges in the state. There's good shoreline access here and a chance at smallmouth bass, perch, trout and possibly a brood stock salmon. I've fished here before — I don't recall

what I caught or just how the access looked back then, but I'm sure I'll find a spot to cast near the bridge.

Back onto the highway. Next stop on the list, **Turee Pond** in Bow. I turn onto Route 89 and immediately get off at Exit 1 South to Logging Hill Road (DeLorme pg. 27, E14). Turn right at the Bow fire station, then turn into the high school. The access site is past the school. This is another one of my favorite spots — a very nice little pond. With no houses in sight, I feel like I've gotten away from it all. I know for a fact there are some huge largemouth bass in this pond. I've also had a blast with the sunfish that are in easy reach from the shore. Turee Pond boasts unique features: the large wetland bordering the pond has a large stand of tamarack trees, bringing that North Country feel to this southern pond.

### Concord Area Hotspots

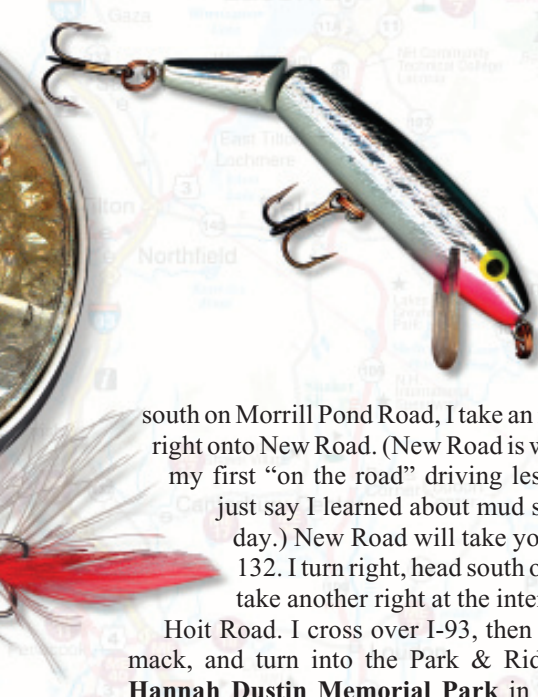
Next stop, **Turtle Pond**. For years I thought it was Turtle Town Pond...it will always be that for me. To get there, I take Exit 16, cross Route 132 (DeLorme pg. 28, C1), go straight up the hill and follow the brown boat signs to the pond, which is on the left. I have spent a good part of my life fishing here; big bass, yellow perch, black crappie and horned pout keep me coming back. There is no way I'm passing up a chance to fish at Turtle Pond.

Back down the hill to Route 132 North, and in three miles or so, I turn right onto Hoit Road. In another three miles I go past the marsh (another good spot). A right turn at the brown boat sign (DeLorme pg. 28, B1) and I'm there: **Hot Hole Pond**. This is a local favorite with plenty of shoreline access on what's called the "front porch." This is a put-and-take rainbow trout fishery. I understand there are some mighty big bass in the pond, also.

Getting back onto Hoit Road, I head west to spot number seven. Just past the marsh, I turn onto Tallant Road, which becomes Morrill Pond Road (DeLorme pg. 28, A1). I park at the gate to **Morrill Pond** in Canterbury. This spot is great, with plenty of shoreline to walk around and explore. I have been here many times. Bass, sunfish and horned pout make up the list of fish here.

We're still in my old neighborhood, so I'm taking some back roads to the next spot. Heading





south on Morrill Pond Road, I take an immediate right onto New Road. (New Road is where I had my first “on the road” driving lesson. Let’s just say I learned about mud season that day.) New Road will take you to Route 132. I turn right, head south on 132, and take another right at the intersection of Hoit Road. I cross over I-93, then the Merrimack, and turn into the Park & Ride. This is **Hannah Dustin Memorial Park** in Boscawen (DeLorme pg. 27, B13). There are two rivers to fish here, the **Contoocook and the Merrimack**, and a bounty of smallmouth bass, sunfish, yellow perch, trout and brood stock salmon. I’ll want to spend some time exploring on both sides of the rail bridge, and on the “island.”

More back roads bring me to spot number ten. I go west on Route 4 just past Hannah and take a left onto Tremont Street at the bottom of the little hill. Just over the bridge, I turn right onto Bridge Street, then left onto Merrimack Street, right onto Penacook Street, left onto Snow Street, left onto Manor Road, then left onto Sewalls Falls Road, and right onto the access road for the **Sewalls Falls Multi-use Recreation Area** (DeLorme pg. 27, C14). (Sounds confusing, but it’s well-signed.) This is a great spot, with so much water to explore and so many fish to catch. I’ve spent many enjoyable hours fishing at Sewalls Falls, and it’s terrific for just about anything that swims.

Crossing the bridge to Route 132, I head south to get back on Route 93. It’s getting late and I need to think about calling it a day. I’ll make number eleven my last stop before sunset: the **Winnepesaukee River** off of Exit 20 in Tilton (DeLorme pg. 35, H14). I access the rail trail behind the “golden arches.” The river is just stunning to see, not to mention a great place to catch a trout on the fly rod. I will walk down river until I can’t hear the highway. The old railroad bed along the river makes access outstanding. There is almost too much water, how can I do it justice? I plan to see and catch plenty of fish here — and get back to the truck after dark.

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*Fishing along Interstate 93 will yield an incredible variety of warm- and coldwater game fish. Top to bottom: black crappie; brown trout; brown bullhead; northern pike; smallmouth bass; Atlantic salmon...to name a few.*



FISH ILLUSTRATION © JOSEPH TOWELLER



I continue south on Route 3 to find a camping spot. Luckily for me, I looked into this before I left home — there's a small private campground south of Franklin near Punch Brook. Finally some food and much-needed sleep.

## Day 2: Franklin North

I wake up, have some coffee and a snack, and on to my first fishing stop of the day! Heading north on Route 3 to Franklin brings me to spot number twelve (DeLorme pg. 35, G12). I park the truck at the high school and walk down to the **Merrimack River** — this is a favorite section. Big river smallmouth, trout and brood stock salmon make up the mix here. (This location is very special and has regulations in place to keep it that way. Be sure of your fishing spot, and always check the rules for each waterbody.)

Traveling north on Route 93 to Exit 23, I head a mile and a half west on Route 104 to a good access point on the **Pemigewasset River** (DeLorme pg. 35, B12) on the right-hand side of River road. There's plenty of shoreline access here, and I expect to hook into some smallmouth bass and panfish.

Next, I head east on Route 104 to **Lake Pemigewasset** in New Hampton (DeLorme pg. 35, B13). The access to this lake is only two miles from the highway. Here I find shoreline to fish, plus a nice fishing pier. This lake has some decent bass and black crappie fishing. Having two stops so close together makes me feel like I'm going to actually complete my quest!

Spot fifteen is just up Route 104 east. The access point for **Lake Waukewan** in Meredith is the next left after the lights on the hill. This road becomes Waukewan Street (DeLorme pg. 36, A1). This is a cold- and warmwater fishery, with chances to catch rainbow trout, smallmouth and largemouth bass, along with perch and sunfish. The shoreline access along the old rail bed is your best bet. This is a neat place to fish — so close to the big lake, but without all the congestion.

Location number sixteen is trout water. I take Exit 26 onto Route 3A/25 toward Rumney, and turn right onto Smith Bridge Road (DeLorme pg. 39, G10). Now this is a nice spot! The **Baker River** is very scenic, with the covered bridge as a backdrop. I pull out the fly rod.

Number seventeen features another covered bridge. Exit 27 in Campton puts me back onto the **Pemigewasset River** (DeLorme pg. 39, F12). The access to this stretch of river is at Blair Bridge — another wonderful spot. Trout fishing here is a must.

Entering Franconia Notch State Park, the exit numbers go back to single digits. Exit 3 brings me to **Echo Lake** (DeLorme pg. 43, E11). This will be a quick stopover, but who could resist spending a few minutes fishing here in the shadow of Cannon Mountain? A couple of trout, then I'm back on the road.

The last stop has two fishing spots. Exit 44 is as far as you can go in New Hampshire on Route 93 (DeLorme pg. 46, K7). There are two spots at the dam in Littleton; the first is at the boat launch for **Moore Reservoir**, where I expect to find rainbow trout, smallmouth bass and possibly northern pike. The second spot is below the dam, on the **Connecticut River**. I'm mindful of the current here, but there are a few more fish to catch — smallmouth bass, bruiser brown trout, northern pike and walleye! This should be an excellent way to cap off an unforgettable trip.

After plotting my itinerary, I find myself wondering if my trip is a little...over the top. Can I actually do it — 20 fishing spots in 48 hours? Might as well try! I'll load the truck, hit the road, and let you know how I did this summer.

We have so many great opportunities for fishing in New Hampshire. There's only one problem: Finding the time to fish them all. When I figure it out, I promise to share my secret. WJ

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