

Suckers go best with cream soda



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CHASING PISCES**

Whether a moment is special or not often depends on your perspective. And obviously, childhood innocence is something we all lose at some point; it's hard, if not impossible, to recapture.

Many years ago, on a hot summer morning, my friend Chris and I hopped on our bikes and rode to our secret fishing hole. On the way, we stopped at the store to buy some "Joe Louis, Flakies, bubble gum, and cream soda, all necessary survival foods for a day in the "bush."

When we got to the spot, we baited our hooks, clipped on bobbers, cast out, and proceeded to sit back and sip our pop, eat our snacks, and discuss baseball, cars, girls, and other world affairs under a warm, lazy sun.

We soon realized we could dangle our hooks from the rock and, lying on our stomachs, watch the small perch and bass circling and nibbling at the bait.

While we debated whether the Red Sox had a chance at the World Series or whether a Chevy SS Nova could beat a Ford Mach 1 Mustang, a large shadow cruised into view. We silenced, turned and looked at each other wide-eyed, then immediately began jockeying for position to get

our hook close to the monster. I swung my hook and let the worm lie on the bottom. My heart skipped a beat as I saw the creature move toward it.

Later that day, Chris and I paraded down our street, me proudly carrying this unknown fish like the great white hunter. People came out to view the spectacle.

An older gentleman looked at the beast and nodded his head. "That's a mudsucker," he said.

All the kids, including me, thought the same thing: Cooool.

Years later, I was seeking early June brook trout, and stumbled upon what I thought was a treasure trove. A school of fish

was clearly visible in the stream, and I flicked my line in front of them, hoping for a mess of brookies. One grabbed my hook and I reeled it in. When I saw it, I shook my head in disgust, like a man who had just been conned. Suckers.

It's funny how age and experience change the way we view things.

This year, looking back on that childhood moment of discovery, I decided to actively fish for suckers. I was in a small brook near Chester and had even brought along a Joe Louis and a bottle of

cream soda. It wasn't quite the same, but it seemed like a proper tribute.

Suckers spawn in early June, and this brook was full of them. A snelled hook with a piece of worm was enough to land fish after fish. None of them matched my childhood trophy, but suspending my adult prejudice led to a great day of fun and nostalgic whispers of conquest.

Joe Fitzgerald is a freelance writer who lives in Halifax.

SUCKER FACTS

- The White Sucker, sometimes known as the mudsucker, is the only member of the sucker family indigenous to Nova Scotia. It is identified easily by its blunt snout, fleshy lips and sucker-like mouth. It ranges from black to coppery-brown to golden.
- Most anglers don't seek out Suckers. But the unattractive fish can provide action when no other species are biting. They are easily caught with worms, doughballs, small spinners, and even wet flies.
- When suckers spawn in late spring, up to 500 fish can pass a single point within five minutes. It is a spectacle worth witnessing, whether or not you are angling. During the summer, suckers are most likely to be found in the warm, shallow waters of lakes and quiet rivers, cruising the bottom for aquatic insects, small clams and snails.



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