

# Strawberries sure sign of sea trout



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CHASING PISCES**

Last week, a good friend of mine mentioned that he and his girlfriend were going to pick strawberries to make jam. Mmm ... strawberries. The mention of the juicy treats triggered me to pack my gear and take a Sunday drive along the No. 7 highway, or Marine Drive.

Near Clam Harbour, a woman and two children walked alongside the road carrying buckets. I pulled over and looked at the roadside flora. Wild strawberries. But it wasn't homemade strawberry jam on my mind.

In Nova Scotia, the appearance of wild strawberries means sea trout. Schools of them hang around estuaries, waiting for the right moment to make their run. The Strawberry Run is a distinctly Nova Scotian angling tradition as exciting as the mayfly hatch. And because most of the rivers that have good sea trout runs are for fly fishing only, it's a great way to introduce yourself to the art of fly fishing.

I started at the West River in Sheet Harbour, and fished some tiny pools near the mouth of the river. It was windy and the water was fast, because of all the rain this June. This is exactly what the trout are waiting for, a rise in water levels that entices

them back into fresh water.

The problem is that the water needs time to settle out. I was a little early. Combine that with the occasional gale-force gust that blew my fly back in my face, and it was a frustrating few hours. I did manage to hook a small brown trout on a fluorescent red bug, but it was not the sea run fish I was after.

Working my way back toward Halifax, I stopped at the Musquodoboit River. The sun had finally appeared, just as it threatened to dip under the horizon, and the wind had died down.

I tied on a Mickey Finn and sighed in relief as a deep glass-surfaced pool beckoned. I also had some salmon flies with me, as summer salmon often accompany their smaller cousins on the Strawberry Run.

The rhythm of unhindered casting soothed me after a day of fighting wind and current. However, my streamers weren't producing any action.

Something splashed a few feet away. Over the remnant ripples, and some insects moved on and over the water. Time to change flies.

The colour of a tiny bee pattern attracted attention. Using short strips, my little bee struggled erratically until something rolled on it from below. I reeled in the slack line as the fish broke the water twice. When it relented, I held it up for inspection: a true sea trout,

its telltale silvery sides glinting in the setting sun. The lustrous fish promised a good week of fishing, and confirmed my love of strawberries.

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## KNOW YOUR SEA TROUT



● Sea Trout are not a separate species of trout. They are only speckled, rainbow, or brown trout that have entered the ocean. In Nova Scotia, sea trout, especially ones caught during the Strawberry Run, are mainly speckled or brook trout

● Sea trout enter the ocean to escape low water levels and to access better food sources. They travel in schools and stay within range of their home rivers. They are generally more robust than full-time freshwater trout, and become extremely silvery.

● Sea run trout are often accompanied by summer spawning Atlantic salmon. It pays to have a salmon licence when fishing sea trout. The trout will often take salmon flies, and vice versa.

● Though spin casting is legal at some rivers, there is nothing like catching a sea trout on the fly. Streamers like the Mickey Finn are popular, as are brightly coloured bugs and butterflies. If spin or bait casting, try river mouths and the bays where rivers empty into the ocean.