

The pollock frolic in a magical world



JOE FITZGERALD CHASING PISCES

Some people consider angling a fine art, which it definitely can be. Years of studying a particular river or lake lead to personal knowledge of its resident species and their habits. What type of bait do the fish prefer? What colour or size lures work best? What fly patterns match the local hatches?

To know which pools consistently harbour fish or what time of year spawning runs occur takes considerable experience or study to master. And then there are licences to buy, regulations to be followed, and gear to be purchased.

What if there was a way to experience the thrill of catching a fish with minimal skill, minimal expense, minimal gear, and no licence required? And imagine catching fish after fish, every cast even, immersed in the raw, natural splendour of Nova Scotia, a short drive from downtown Halifax. Well, such a magical world does exist.

The trail that led to my destination at Duncan's Cove was high up on the bluffs. A point in the distance looked like a good place to cast. An invigorating hike brought me to an old concrete structure overlooking the entrance to Halifax Harbour. I imagined someone in an age past scanning for prowling U-boats. It was a precarious climb

down to a point where jagged rocks cut into the ocean. Irritated waves slapped the intrusive granite, sending foam and mist into the air. My chest swelled at the meeting of land and sea.

My gear consisted of a telescopic rod neatly tucked in my back pack and handful of mackerel jigs. I took a quarter out of my pocket and scraped a jig until it shone. Then I positioned myself on a ledge and cast, admiring the distance achieved with the heavy lure.

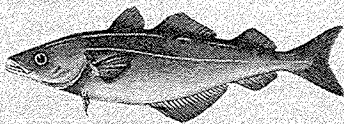
After I retrieved the jig halfway back, the rod bent unmistakably. It caught me by surprise, after spending most of the season so far stalking ingenious finicky trout. A short fight produced a plump greenish-brown fish. It was a pollock, or Boston bluefish. Turning the jig upside down and giving it a quick shake released the fish easily.

On the next cast, it took three strikes before I had one on, but the result was the same. Another cast, another fish. Pollock do not break the water, but some of them reach a good size. They were fun to play, by loosening my drag and using light gear. While I shook another pollock off my hook, a grey seal stuck its head out of the water and stared at me, studying my technique. Seagulls circled overhead, hoping

to nab an easy meal, and in the distance a massive container ship slowly disappeared on the horizon. Eventually the tide turned, and the receding water had me snagging more kelp fronds than fish. I packed up and climbed back to the trail, leaving the pollock to frolic under the eternal booming waves.

Joe Fitzgerald is a freelance writer who lives in Halifax.

POLLOCK FACTS



- Pollock are groundfish of the cod family, and resemble cod without the spots. They are sometimes called Boston Bluefish and are fished commercially. Pollock is the main fish used to make imitation crab, and in Europe pollock is used heavily in fish and chips.
- Pollock are abundant along all of Nova Scotia's coastlines and can be caught year round, but in June and September they are extremely active.
- Fishing high tide is most effective, as more fish move in and there is less chance of snagging kelp and other underwater obstructions. Be aware of the dangers of fishing on exposed rocks. Try to fish on calm days and always keep an eye out for rogue waves. If taking children or pets, fish from a wharf.
- There is no special technique for catching pollock. Anything shiny will produce strikes, but mackerel jigs or other shiny jigs without bait are cheap and as good as any expensive lure.