

Muddling Along October 11

Panther Again

Panther Lake never ceases to surprise me with its consistent good fishing.

Most fishers would have been reluctant to continue on with a trip to the mountains on looking at the weather from the area of Harewood Dams. The sun was out in Nanaimo, but towards the Nanaimo Lakes, there were black clouds trailing tendrils of what looked like torrential amounts of rain coming down. But the intrepid trio of yours truly, Bruce Murray and John Baine, were anxious to confirm that the positive weather report would come to pass and the winds would die off and the rain slow to a slow drizzle.

We headed off up Nanaimo Lakes road thinking positive thoughts and trying to ignore the trees waving in the wind and drops of rain spattering on the windshield. "Panther is down in a hollow with shelter from the worst of the winds" Ian said confidently! "We can put up with some rain, as long as the wind doesn't get too strong", he assured the other unsuspecting pair.

On the way up the G Main, the rain eased off and the wind didn't seem too bad. However, by the time we arrived at the launch, there was a full blown gale going, with rain starting to sluice down again. We thought we would wait a bit and see if things changed and the wind actually dropped off a bit and the rain eased. We decided we might as well get out on the lake and set about the long process of assembling and pumping up the pontoon boats. No surprise, an hour later as we ventured out on the lake, the wind was whipping in from the southwest and the rain was coming in sideways.

I paddled away from shore and promptly got blown down into the Thule at the east end of the lake! I was mightily trying to make headway to head up to the west end of the lake where there was a bit of a lee. This being my first time in a pontoon boat, I wasn't aware of some of the details of making progress against the wind. I assumed that if I kicked with the swim fins and rowed mightily with the oars I would be able to progress against the wind. Nope! After 15 minutes of mighty effort, I had achieved all of 5 metres progress down the lake! I finally realized the fins were dragging me back, not really helping at all. As soon as I put my fins up on the foot rests, I was able to make decent headway, and got down to the lee in about 10 or 15 more minutes.

Once in the lee I dropped my anchor close to the lily pads and commenced fishing with a sink tip line and damsel nymph. Fish started hitting immediately and I landed two 12 -13 inch fish. The wind had dropped considerably, only to be replaced by a cloudburst of rain. The rain continued for the rest of the day, soaking us thoroughly, but not dampening the spirits of the fish at all. I saw a fish splash and used a dry fly (Elk hair caddis) for a while. It was not feasible

to keep it “dry” with rain pouring on it, but that didn’t stop the fish from smacking it. A 15 inch fish topped a flurry of activity, then they quit, so it was back to the nymph. This fishing continued on for the next few hours with some quieter periods and we worked our way back down towards the East end of the lake. With the wind picking up again it was difficult to hold and cast toward the reeds, but we managed to connect with a few more fish. The last one was a 17 inch beauty (no pictures—couldn’t get the camera out from all the rain gear!). That’s the largest trout I have had on Panther. I would have liked to try some more there, but the wind had other plans. With a sound like a freight train coming, it came up to a full force gale which sent us scurrying over to the launch to get out before we were blown into the shallows away from the launch.

We packed up and headed for Nanaimo, with the wind dropping as we went, the rain stopping, and by the time we got to Harewood, the sun was out! We all agreed it had been a great day, despite the Weather Gods trying to stop us from enjoying another Panther Lake adventure.



A typical bronzy Panther Lake fish.