

Marvelous Marinette

Isolation on the Peshtigo is the cure-all

By Dick Ellis

If anything was ailing John Faucher and me on a hot August morning in Marinette County, it was cured immediately when we stepped from an old, beat up truck worthy of the worn logging road that had brought us in and looked down on the Peshtigo River. Standing on the sand lip that served as a northeast Wisconsin version of a cliff, we watched the sun-splashed river work its way down among a thousand rocks, feeding more pools and leaving more rapids here and there in its wake.

It called us like spring pond with new life after a long winter will call boys on their way home to school. Boys just must step into the pond and get their shoes and pants wet to the knees at least, to maybe catch leopard frogs making so much welcome racket after a long, cold reprieve. At least boys did when I was young.

Not everything changes with gray hair. We just had to step into the river too last week, at least to the knees, and chase the smallmouth that we heard were there. It didn't matter though, not one little bit, if we caught fish or not. It was one of those rare places where we could play all day, not see another soul, not catch fish, and still not want to leave. We



John Faucher of New London looks for another smallmouth bass in the running water of the Peshtigo River in Marinette County and cools off at the same time.

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would catch smallmouth thanks to John, as a matter of fact, pretty many early and none too big, but it really did not matter.

Faucher went down to the river first. He is an editor for the County Post East newspapers working from Waupaca and a talented outdoor writer and photog-

rapher. I shot John as he shim-mied down on the loose sand, my camera clicking. That was big of me, I thought, letting my friend lead the way. I also wasn't sure if rattle snakes sunned themselves on river banks in this part of Wisconsin.

Once down and in the water, I

worked my way out into the pools and tried to work my flyrod with a grasshopper offering. There's nothing quite like a smallmouth coming up for a meal. More importantly, I tried to take photos but not take a spill in the current with a very nice camera at stake. It's always an outdoor writer's peril, and I think the risk for some reason is greater for me. I wreck things.

John jumped from rock to rock, catching smallmouth and big shiners from the pools, taking pictures and trying not to wreck his own camera. He gave up soon, safely storing the camera on shore to wallow waist deep among the pools and current and feel the cold water of a rare, hot August day.

There wasn't much to finding this place when we decided to fish near Crivitz, but we found out there was a lot to this place when we got here. Marinette County Tourism Director Jamie Darge set us up with information and fishing options and reservations for one night for Lori and me courtesy of Shaffer's Park Resort. The resort is a starting point for outdoorsmen and women who come to hunt, fish, hike, bike, boat, golf, white-water raft or relax. A highlight was eating at the Mrs. Shaffer's restaurant renowned for its fried



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For more information on Marinette County, contact Jamie Darge and Marinette County Tourism at 1-800-236-6681 or connect with www.therealnorth.com. For more information on Shaffer Park Resort, connect with www.shafferparkresort.com or 715-854-2186. For additional fishing information on Marinette County, call Frank Harth at Hook Line 'N Sinker in Crivitz at 715-854-2073.

chicken and celebrating its 70th year.

On short notice, owners Amy and Mark Shaffer could not set us up to rendezvous with Amy's brothers or father who fish Marinette County religiously. But the Shaffers' and Darge pointed us to several spots to try ourselves. Frank Harth, owner of Hook Line 'N Sinker in Crivitz added to our options and provided maps and his time to help us find the rivers. We chose the Peshtigo and a chance for both trout and smallmouth, although it wasn't an easy choice.

According to Darge and the Tourism website at www.therealnorth.com, Marinette County offers fabulous fishing of multiple species in numerous flowages and streams. "If an angler can't find a place to their liking in Marinette County, they might as

well quit fishing," the website states.

High Falls Flowage, according to the site, has historically produced big walleyes in May, some record muskies recently, and is a good choice for the angler seeking a fish of a lifetime. Caldron Falls Flowage is a Class-A musky water and labeled the premiere musky lake in northeast Wisconsin with the "perfect balance between numbers and quality fish." Largemouth bass, crappies and gills are all recommended targets on the Caldron Falls Flowage.

At 2400 acres, Lake Noqueby is the largest in the county. Big panfish, walleyes, northern pike and the chance at a lunker largemouth during the underfished fall season are each mentioned as prime targets. Scattered throughout Marinette County are

smaller lakes that also offer good panfish and largemouth populations while some have trout. They're easy to fish and are perfect for fly fisherman or anglers with a small boat.

Forming the border of Wisconsin and Michigan, the Menominee River flows through some of the most pristine areas in Wisconsin. The river boasts a world-class smallmouth fishery with anglers, according to the website, finding some of the largest smallies in North America. The river also offers good walleye, sturgeon, musky, northern pike and perch fishing. The Lower Menominee where the river enters the Bay of Green Bay offers both numbers of walleyes and trophy class fish.

Ice fishing is also excellent, in particular for giant panfish on Caldron Falls Flowage, High

Falls Flowage and Lake Noqueby. With so much to choose from, the Peshtigo State Forest and its suggested fly-fishing areas located on the Johnson Falls Flowage seemed a great place to start for two anglers who had to start somewhere. We were not disappointed.

Faucher and I spent literally the entire day fishing the Peshtigo. It is a place to get lost in, to find fish, and to be left with a very good idea that Marinette County is a place to visit again. When we climbed up the sand wall again to our truck, the sun behind the trees told us the time had somehow crawled into another night. The final tally was two tired but very satisfied outdoor writers, and two fully-working cameras.

Simply, it just doesn't get any better than that. *OWO*



Carrying camera and fishing rod, Wisconsin outdoor writer John Faucher begins the climb down from the forests of Marinette County to the smallmouth bass in the Peshtigo River below.



Outdoor writer John Faucher is only a silhouette as he works his way out of the Peshtigo River and back to the truck after a day of smallmouth bass fishing in Marinette County.



Dick Ellis is captured working the Peshtigo River in Marinette County for smallmouth bass with a flyrod by Wisconsin outdoor writer John Faucher.



The sun falls on another day of fishing the Peshtigo River in Marinette County and John Faucher pauses after the climb up to the truck parked on a logging road in bordering forests