

Shallow coves filled with lily pads and weeds harbor largemouth bass that will hit topwater weedless frogs.



Miles Corayer caught this largemouth on a green worm fished on a weedless hook in two feet of water.

ESCAPE TO VACATIONLAND

RE-BOOT YOUR SENSES WITH A LONG WEEKEND IN THE LAND OF LINCOLN, MAINE.

BY TODD CORAYER

Looking for deep woods, open waters and great fishing close enough to warrant a long-weekend escape? Push away from your desk, abandon your lawnmower and travel into northern Maine on Interstate 95, the highway to hundreds of lakes and ponds rich with large and smallmouth bass, pickerel, pike, perch and trout. You'll likely find yourself a sweet spot somewhere north of Augusta, where the land begins to open up to endless angling options in areas with low fishing pressure. Lodges and campgrounds spread out among pine-forested highlands that offer tremendous views of sprawling, birch-lined lakes. With proper planning, a new DeLorme map and a well-stocked tackle bag, you can make memories to last a lifetime without spending a fortune.

From Houlton in the east to Allagash Lake on the western edge and north to Fort Kent, water meets the trees at every turn. You can narrow your choices down by deciding how long you are willing to drive and what level of comfort you desire; the



Smallmouth bass grow chunky in Maine ponds by feeding heavily on crayfish.

area offers everything from tents and campfires to comfortable lodges serving delicious meals.

Our trip brought us to the town of Lincoln, set on the eastern edge of the Penobscot River about 50 miles north of Bangor. From there, 20 minutes on twisting gravel roads took us beyond where the power lines end and delivered all the open water we dreamed of: Folsom and Crooked Ponds, home to large and smallmouth bass, perch and pickerel.

We stayed at Eagle Lodge and Camps, a comfortable lodge on Folsom Pond that is open year 'round for fishing and hunting. Besides a dry bed and the novelty of gas lamps, there are some serious benefits to staying in a lodge that caters to fishermen.

If you're not a local or a regular, you'll benefit from insider knowledge; there's a lot of water to cover up there, and time is precious. Paying the extra money for the American Plan - the one where someone else cooks for you so you can keep focused on fishing and relaxing - not only saves you important time, it puts you at the supper table with other anglers who are likely to share



Escape to a Maine fishing lodge to settle into a lakeside Adirondack chair and listen to the calls of the loons.



Expect to catch smallmouth bass without seeing many other fishermen among the mostly cabin-free shorelines.

info, tips and spots.

Plus, the owner is a licensed Maine Guide; if you make arrangements ahead of time, he can lead you on a half-or full-day trip down the fishing heaven that is the Penobscot River.

A 12- to 16-foot aluminum boat with a 6 or 10 horsepower motor is all you need for navigating these two adjoining lakes, although you may see the occasional fully-rigged bass boat with a 150 horsepower outboard; you will know they are "from away!" You can save the hassle of trailering and rent boats at the lodge as well. Some fish from canoes up here, which is a lovely way to experience the day if you have plenty of time. A motor boat will get you around much faster,

which yields more actual fishing. Be sure to check in advance if the pond you choose allows gas outboards, as some are limited to electric-only.

Your first step is to get a license, most easily accomplished with the Maine Online Sportsman Electronic System. Order it before you leave; fines are expensive and the embarrassment unnecessary, so don't get caught without one.

If you are fishing from a small boat or canoe, I find it helpful to keep rods to about 6 feet. The shorelines are heavy with timber, and tree limbs sag over mossy glacial boulders. A shorter stick will still allow you to deliver baits up close to low-lying limbs and to target small clearings. It will also help you plop

a weedless frog onto a dense patch of lily pads, twitch it from side to side and then swim it through the open areas. A longer rod can be cumbersome in a confined craft and might result in more lures landing in overhanging oaks and pines.

I'm a big fan of 30-pound-test braided line for this type of fishing as it allows for accurate casts and will easily outlast the biggest fish in the pond.

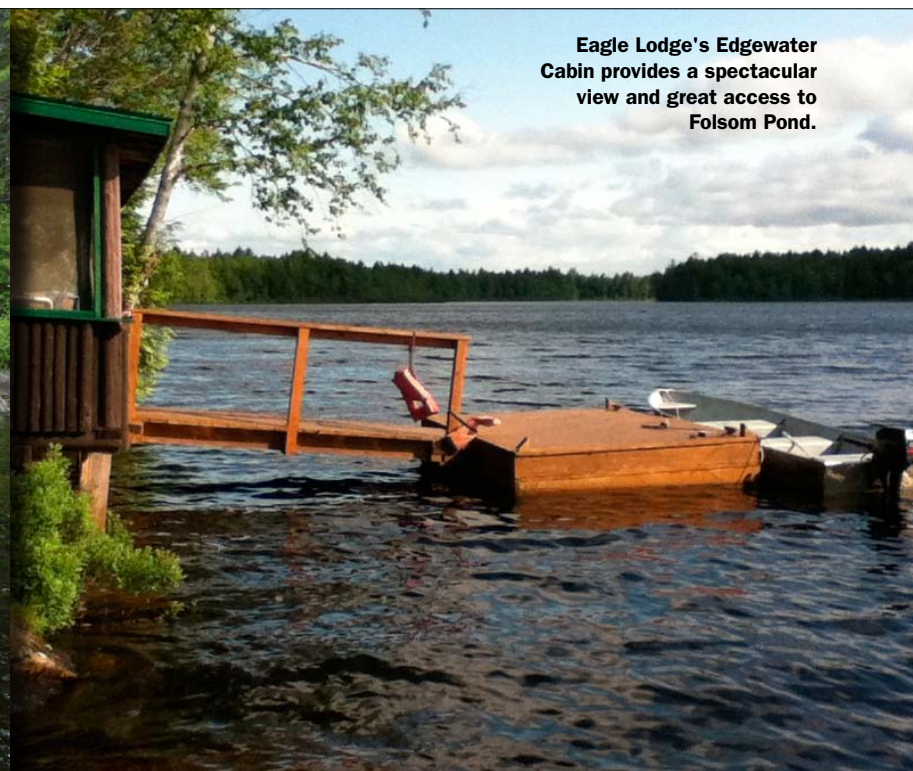
Always bring at least one back-up rod and reel for each angler. Fishing the backwoods means you need to be well-packed and prepared. Gear breaks, soft baits get chewed up, and occasionally things just fall overboard. Pack wisely, and bring extras. Senko worms, 3/0 and 4/0 hooks, an extra spool of line, soft-

plastic frogs and spinnerbaits are all required. I also recommend including a few topwater lures for early mornings and late evenings. My personal favorites are the Heddon Tiny and Baby Torpedoes. These are dynamite plugs; try the frog, green craw and natural perch patterns. The whirring sound of the tail propeller and the detailed colors make these deadly bass baits.

For soft baits, salt-impregnated 5-inch and 6-inch worms do the trick. Try them rigged Carolina-style or on weedless hooks. Outside of the weed lines, toss a few rigged "whacky" style - the hook is simply fed through the halfway point of a Gary Yamamoto Senko worm and retrieved at a glacial pace. The action



Targeting rocky shorelines with jigs and crankbaits is a good strategy for smallmouths.



Eagle Lodge's Edgewater Cabin provides a spectacular view and great access to Folsom Pond.

is all in the rod tip: raise it slowly, then retrieve some line as you fade the tip lower, letting the worm slowly sink to the bottom. This up-and-down motion will give you great action that's sure to draw strikes in the clear water. Green, root beer and watermelon colors all seem to work well. Given the exposed hook, it's not a great rig for the weeds and lily pads.

If you have the time, each lake should be fished on a separate day. There is plenty of water to explore, lots of shadowed edges and underwater contours that require some time for prospecting, small rock piles and drop-offs that can become your own secret spots.

Folsom has options on all sides. To

the south is a wonderful wide cove with downed trees, some sandy bottom and enough growth and structure to challenge any angler. There are a few small islands, some highly productive points and lots of bumps where fish will hold. Don't overlook the point to the east with the small camp right at the water's edge. The sunken trees are a great place to start your adventure.

Farther to the north are additional coves, more structure and a scenic dam with clear water ready for a spinnerbait. As you move north, it's a great idea to work the two coves on your right. Sneak up to the lily pads on the edge of the first cove with a weedless frog for some

exciting action. The second cove is all about ambush. There are all types of growth hanging over and sticking out of the water. Approach quietly; where the water gets skinny you'll spy fins slicing through the greens and browns looking for prey. I like to throw my grandfather's faded yellow Jitterbug in this spot. This is a perfect sunset location, where you can work all the openings right until the loons begin to sing and it's time to head back to camp before dark.

Folsom Pond connects to Crooked Pond with a flood plain that is shallow and full of fish along the banks. The southern edge has great cover, with sunken trees and lumber filling up two nice coves. Working these areas can keep you out of the wind and rain if the weather is heavy. The other side of the cut has lots of low-hanging cover and brush. The whole area is rich with structure and weeds, perfect places for 3-pound bass and big pickerel to hunt. Just to the left is a smaller cove with a thin, wood-strewn creek feeding the pond where you might find bass in the shallows. This is a great place to sneak up on a trophy. This area has so much cover that you are almost forced to bounce soft baits and lures off downed trees to get to some of the most productive spots. It's a magical setting where you can drift through long stretches of shoreline and brush; every few feet there's a new target just begging for a cast.

Inside Crooked Pond there are miles of sandy coves where, depending on the time of year, you might find beautiful circular beds where bass stand guard over the next generation. There's ample opportunity to pitch a weedless worm or a Carolina-rigged crawfish under branches and through the grasses. You might see another boat or canoe, but usually this is a quiet place, exactly the type of idyllic

scenery we fishermen need.

The far western shore has a marshy section where beavers build their lodges and tall trees hold huge eagle nests. Look up for large pieces of drift wood and brush hanging from tall pines, and if you're lucky you might hear the loud "cheep" of the chicks or be treated to the magnificent display of a bald eagle soaring overhead.

When you enter Maine, you'll see the welcome sign proclaiming "The Way Life Should Be." A few hours at enchanting Folsom Pond and you'll fully agree. If you travel to Lincoln and spend some time enjoying this amazing fishing, make sure you tread lightly, pack extra soft baits and don't forget the camera. You'll need those photos to sustain you through all the work days before your next northern Maine vacation.

Eagle Lodge & Camps Lincoln, Maine



Stay With Us & Enjoy The Great Outdoors Of Maine!

www.eaglelodgemaine.com Call: (207) 794-2181

Everything you need for a day of great bass fishing –

- a quiet private lake
- no large boats
- no jet skis
- no houses



Where the bass call home.



Call and inquire about our one day passes

413.243.5761

www.berkshirefishing.com

Fully Equipped Bass Boats and Gear
Fly and Bass Fishing Classes Available

Lincoln Lodging

Eagle Lodge

Folsom Pond
(207) 794-2181
www.eaglelodgemaine.com

Nesting Loon Cabins

Caribou Pond
(207) 794-6480
nestingloon.com

Penobscot River Cabins

1-800-670-7531
www.penobscotriverscabins.com

Nicatous Lodge

(207) 356-7506
www.nicatouslodge.com

Porter Point Camps

(207) 944-1463
www.porterpointcamps.com

\$1.00 Off Admission (w/Ad 1/adult Code: OTW)

Fishing & Hunting Expo

January 7th & 8th First Weekend Annually

www.RockinghamExpo.com

Hunting, Fishing, Boating, Outdoors Show

Rockingham Park - Salem, NH - Sat 10-7/Sun 10-5

Adult Admission: \$8.00, Ages 6-15: \$3.00, Under 5: Free

Now Over 150 Exhibitors

50 Free Seminars & Hourly Door Prizes

www.RockinghamExpo.com

