

# The lakes of HARRISON

By C. CONLAND

*Another close-to-Vancouver fishing area,  
the well-known Harrison. But, with a bonus lake, that  
according to the author, few fishermen have tried.*

"Where the heck did you come from?" said a gruff voice, startling me out of the dream I was having . . . landing my first trout of the day on a dry fly!

I turned in the direction of the speaker; there, just off the road, rising from where he had been sitting, came a man who, I was soon to find out, objected to my presence in this area!

"I hiked the mountain trail after leaving my car at the Forestry Office this morning," I said . . . "it is my intention to try this first lake—"

"Well you just get right back where you came from . . . and never mind fishing trips into this area — this is private logging, and all roads and trails are closed . . . you had better think yourself lucky that I am letting you go with just a warning," he snarled through a mouthful of snoose.

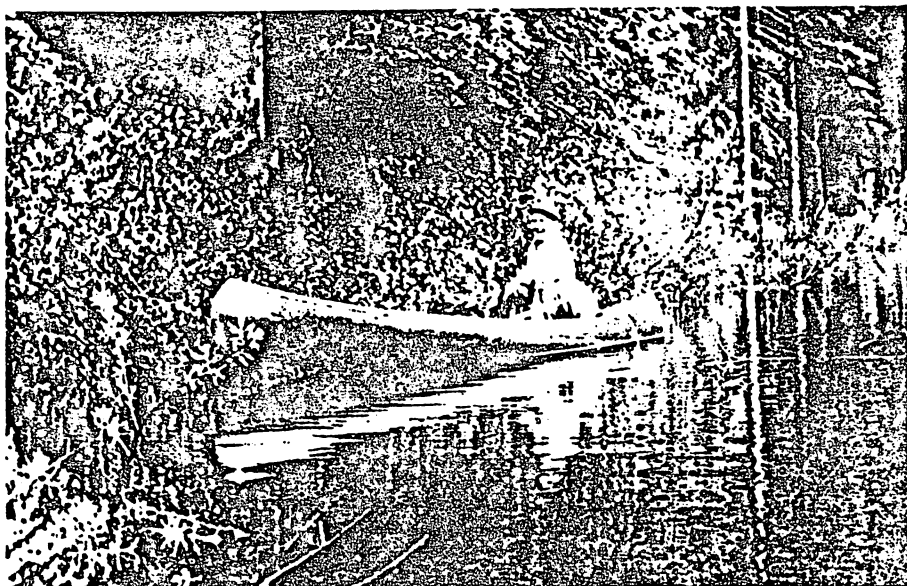
That was my first introduction into the lakes in the Harrison area: the year was 1954! I had driven my old Ford out from Vancouver that particular morning, and had gone as far as the road would permit —

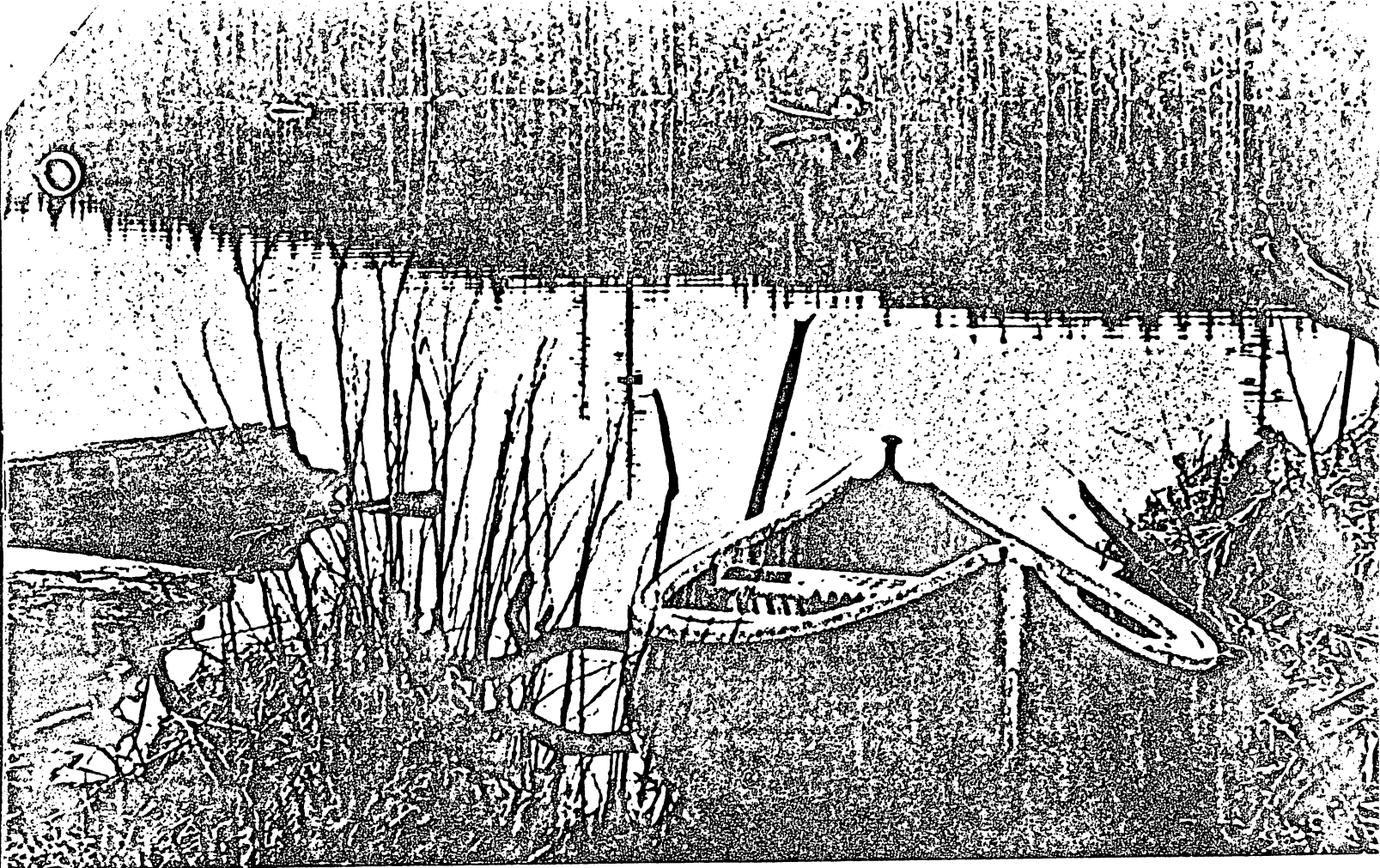
the B.C. Forest Station on the east side of the Harrison Lake. From this parking spot I had taken out my map and started on the three-mile hike that would take me into a lake known as "Trout." The trail twisted and climbed along the shoreline, and ended at the place where—today—Green Point Park is established.

I find it hard to believe now as I drive along the good road from the village of Harrison to Green Point Park that this whole area is open to the public. Before you arrive at the picnic tables at the Park, there is a stop sign. Off to your right is a good gravel road, and in a matter of minutes you can be parked at the end of Trout Lake. This lake is well fished in the summer months, but it is stocked regularly so there is always some action. Today the water level has been dropped, leaving a wide rush-grass shoreline that is free of snags. In my estimation it is the ideal lake in this area for teaching youngsters the art of fly fishing. When conditions are right, the twelve-inch rainbows respond very well to the dry fly, and you need not worry about being thrown out as I was in '54!

Two miles farther up the road, keeping to your right, there is a "Y" fork; left will take you on to "Deer Lake," right to "Hicks." To me Hicks Lake is the "jewel of the

*The author and his "black" canoe, ready for another day on one of his many lakes.*





Moss Lake, with its trout to 3 pounds, yours to try if you care to make the effort.

mountains"—it is a large lake with a wonderful shoreline, small, secluded sandy beaches—lots of privacy for the family campout, and mountain peaks that are sufficiently separated to allow you to relax on a long, sunbaked day in complete isolation from your neighboring campers. The water is shallow around most of these beach areas, and by mid-July it is beautifully warm for swimming. This is one of the few lakes I have found that is comparatively free of mosquitos during the summer months! Why I do not know—maybe it has something to do with the sand, but during the day mosquitos seem hard to find!

After dusk insect life increases, and this is the best time to fish. In my experience I have found that the fish come into the shallow water in that last hour before dark; and I have caught my limit during this last hour by trailing any small, brown wet fly behind the canoe.

Hicks is the ideal lake for the family headquarters. If the family members are not as ardent fishermen as you, they should not have any complaints at being left alone

here for the day, while you go off and explore Trout and Deer Lakes; I have found that these other two are not as suitable for the family campout.

Deer Lake is a hard lake to fish, and it is almost essential that you have a small boat with you. I have talked with scores of disappointed anglers over the years who have come all the way from Vancouver and Seattle to fish this lake, only to find, when they reached it, between the road and water there is a steep hillside thick with vine maple and devil's club. The lake is so hidden from view that it is possible to drive well past it before you realize it is down below the road. There is only one place to put a boat in the water, and that is at the extreme west end—but this also has its problems and it is not advisable to venture down to the lake without first checking the road. I have been down this road in mid-August, and if we have had any amount of rain, my 4-wheel drive has had a job to make it through to the lake. However, if you find the road good, take a supply of insect repellent along! At this lake there is an abundance

of mosquitos.

As with the other lakes mentioned, Deer is stocked regularly with trout. Conditions permitting, you will find this to be an excellent lake for the dry fly; my favorite is a brown, black or grey bivariable and the fish here grow up to two pounds!

At this point I will open my "Pandora's Box" of local fishing information for the Harrison Lake area. A side road branches off to your right immediately before you come to Deer Lake—it is fairly steep and you many find the average car cannot make the grade; but a 4 x 4 can normally climb it, with an occasional helping push! The shale on the hill is the chief cause of any trouble you might experience—and more often than not, if you do not know why you should bother climbing this grade, there is no apparent reason why you should make the effort to get to the top! My disclosure to the reader is about a lake that the average weekend fisherman never seems to find—do not look for its name on the map because it is not marked;

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start justifying our use of the resource more effectively, or we run the risk of democratising ourselves out of existence . . .

License fees levied for freshwater fisheries in B.C. have certainly not led to any decline in non-resident anglers so there is little fear that tourist and marina operators would suffer to any extent. The possibility of a blanket license to cover casual fishing through marina and charter operators should be considered.

We would recommend:

1. That a substantial license for non-resident (non-Canadian) anglers be instituted in keeping with the license fee levied for non-resident use of other provincial fish and wildlife resources.
2. That a season limit for non-resident anglers be established.
3. That a licensing system for resident Canadian anglers be considered to facilitate the collection of data. Whether or not this license should be used as a means of generating revenue, to assist in the management of the fisheries resource is, we would suggest, a political decision. We would point out however, as a body representing the largest single block of outdoorsmen in the province, that the B.C. Wildlife Federation believes that the sportsman will be able to safeguard his stake in resource allocation by being prepared to pay for the resource that he uses, and justify its use on the same economic ground as other resource users." ●

### THE LAKES OF HARRISON

(Continued from page 17)

it sits on the ridge above Deer, and local fishing buffs call it "Moss."

Are you interested . . . ? Then let me guide you in: I take it that you have already found Trout, Hicks and Deer Lakes; and just to make sure you are heading up the correct mountain—the road is on your right as you drive between Hicks and Deer. The first 500 yards is easy; on your left you will see Deer L. below you—*now* the road starts to get steep, and you will soon find yourself on the grade mentioned earlier. If the car cannot make it . . . park to the side and walk, the exercise will do you good! There is a problem however—to fish Moss you must have a light boat or canoe; a rubber raft will suffice, but some water transportation is essential. If you cannot get a light craft up the

mountain with you, you will be disappointed!

Simply driving or walking the hill is not enough to find this secluded paradise; I think that this is why it gets so few fishermen. It is possible to drive up and over the mountain and locate other small lakes (I know of the existence of at least another four, but none of them produce trout), and you could return to the Hicks Lake road without knowing that you had passed one of the best fish producing lakes in the area—so here are my instructions: when you get to the top of the mountain you will come to a "Y"; the road is twice as wide in this location so park here. There are signs of old campfires, cigarette packages, etc., but if you follow the above information you will be in the right area. There is a further check you can make to ensure you are in the right place: on your left-hand side, which is the direction in which your lake ought to be, walk into the bush about twenty yards and you find a stream; this fast, bubbling stream comes out of Moss, and it flows all the year round.

Now that you are at the stream do not strike out for the lake without finding the trail . . . thick, short spruce and devil's club make this mountain top an impenetrable jungle! Instead follow along the stream, in either direction, a short distance and you will find a log that has obviously been made into a crossing—on either side of this log you will find the trail. It takes about ten minutes to walk into Moss from where the car is parked . . . and a little longer if you are packing a light boat!

When I go into Moss (about two or three times a year) I pack a light fly rod, red and white flatfish, and my ever faithful canoe. On my last trip I took a friend along who also fishes "fly rod and canoe." It was a holiday weekend, and before we drove to the mountain top we checked Hicks, Deer and Trout—all had fishermen, but Moss had no other anglers.

Moss Lake is not as large as the other lakes I have mentioned, however it has been made progressively deeper over the years by the presence of an active family of beavers. These animals have industriously dammed the complete outlet side of the lake, raising the water by several feet. They have built a massive lodge on the left-hand side of Moss, and this is a favorite location of mine to drift

over with a sixty foot line and wet fly!

I mentioned earlier that in fishing this water it is advisable to have a small boat; or, if you have to hike in, a rubber raft. This is not a lake for an outboard motor! The quiet approach is absolutely essential—I have had tackle-snapping action until the lodge beavers come out in the evening; then KERPLUNK—the first tall splash seems to send the fish into hiding!

On all the lakes around Harrison Hot Springs, I fish exclusively with fly rod and canoe. I have tested the canoe many times against other boats and rafts on small lakes, and backwaters, and I have proved to my own satisfaction that I can take more fish with the silent approach than by thrashing the water with oars and poles, or an outboard motor. I have even tested, and found, that the color of your craft can make an important difference to the final tally of the day's catch.

My canoe may look unimpressive on the top of my Rover but once I have it in the water . . . wow!—its construction is canvas and wood; (in my opinion fibreglass and aluminum craft have a tendency to be noisy when the water becomes choppy) and in my research with

paint and colors, I found the best to be flat black, similar to that used on chalkboards!—and, if you can credit it, I painted my paddles to match the boat!

The far side of the lake (Moss) is nothing but a large, floating, green spongy mat of vegetation—from this the lake derived its name. By plunging a long stick through this mat it would appear that it varies in thickness between a foot to eighteen inches; under this floating moss carpet the water is very deep.

There are two main ways I approach my fishing here: when I first arrive I drift and glide through the lily pads, barely making a ripple on the surface of the water—my fly rod ready with a brown or black bivisible. Silently I watch the pads for a nudge or slight movement . . . this would indicate the presence of a trout! I find this an exciting way to fish; my paddle is barely in the water giving me just enough thrust to glide slowly forward—I find I am holding my breath watching for the sign, then—about twenty feet ahead a lily pad moves as a deep-bodied trout pushes by its stem . . . silently now I make a cast: if I am lucky my fly will land on a pad near the fish!

Then with a slight tip to the rod, my fly is 'ringing' the surface of the water and spaloosh—the fight is on!

Because the tackle I use is light, and the lily pads are thick I do lose a lot of fish . . . but the sport! The excitement! The battle! It's worth every moment I have him on my line. Would you believe Moss has yielded me fish up to three pounds?

Then, when the action at the lily pads subsides, I drift over the beaver lodge changing my fly to a nymph; or if that fails, to the red and white flatfish. Silently I trail my line over the deep water up to the head of the lake then, turning, I bring the canoe back along the side of the floating vegetation. When the fish strike in Moss they strike hard, so I keep the fly rod right out over the edge of the canoe. This gives it lots of spring action and prevents that first lunge from ending in a broken leader.

The lakes I have talked about here will give the resident, or visitor to the Fraser Valley, a complete week of exploratory camping and angling enjoyment.

Back in the 1920's when there was a fish hatchery on the Harrison Lake, a large number of small ponds, streams and lakes in this area were stocked, and quite a num-

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