



2020 Esnagami Times Annual Newsletter

Volume 32. January 2021.

Happy New Year to Guests, Friends & Fellow Anglers,

Well 2020 is finally over. I think it's safe to say that everyone is looking forward to a brighter year ahead. Typically, at this time of the new year, we would have our lodge display booth packed up, and ready to hit the road to attend a few sport shows. Unfortunately with the pandemic still very much upon us, that is not going to happen. The COVID 19 pandemic has changed all of our lives in many ways. Families, schooling, jobs and even fishing trips are just a few aspects of our normal day-to-day routines that have been greatly affected. There are better times ahead though, as the COVID vaccine begins to be administered through Canada, the United States, and the rest of the world.

Last spring, by April/May, it became very apparent that we would be facing a much different operational season at Esnagami Lodge. With the Canadian/U.S. Border closed, and no solid guidance on when it may reopen, we reluctantly began to accept that our U.S friends and guests would not be able to join us. Shifting gears, we focused on generating as much Canadian business that we could in a short period of time. Thankfully, between an already solid Canadian clientele, and some opportune marketing, we were



MEDIA: We were excited to host Scott Gardner, who is the associate editor and fly fishing columnist for Outdoor Canada magazine, for some mid-summer fishing at Esnagami. Scott was

able to put together a successful season.

Sue, myself, and our 2 children Liam and Rowan, along with 8 staff members, flew to Esnagami the last week of May. With a province wide lock down still in place, we were unsure “when” and “if” lodge businesses would even be allowed to operate. Our thinking was, in the worst case scenario, we could spend at least one month working around the lodge, doing repairs, dock and cabin maintenance and spending time in a truly COVID free environment. As timely luck would have it, just one week after our arrival at the lodge, the province gave us the green light to re-open! With COVID protocols in hand, and hungry fish waiting, we were thrilled to welcome our first guests on June 5th. When the float plane pulled up to our dock, we all had big smiles on our faces behind our protective masks. It truly felt great to be open again! Thus began a uniquely different, yet very enjoyable season at Esnagami Lodge.

“UBER EATS” - Lodge Style

One of the first challenges was to adapt normal lodge operations to accommodate COVID 19 protocols. Hand sanitizing stations were installed in each cabin, and in all of the entrances to the main lodge. Masks, gloves and disinfectant cleaners were stock piled. Initially, without being able to serve meals in the lodge dining room, we were faced with the challenge of getting breakfasts and dinners out to the guests .. sort of an “uber eats” service, only lodge style.

We purchased thermal style bags and designed a special stacking rack for transporting plates. Between the culinary expertise from **Chef Troy** (who returned for his 4th summer) and the extra efforts of our dining room staff **Rowan, Amy and Cassandra**, we implemented an efficient system to deliver delicious, hot meals to the cabins. Once Troy plated and packed a thermal bag, the girls took turns running the

joined by his fishing partner Cameron Tait, a cert chef du cuisine, Food Writer, Culinary Instructor and avid Angler and Hunter. Besides showing off their expertise in fishing for Pike and Walleye (Scott with a fly rod and Cameron spin fishing), we enjoyed delectable shore lunches and all around good times. Check out the full article in Outdoor Canada February Fishing Special Issue. Also on the web at www.outdoorcanada.ca and you can follow Scott Gardner on Twitter [@outdoorgardner](https://twitter.com/outdoorgardner).

We also had the pleasure to welcome “The So Fly Crew” (Mitch, Aldo & Yilma) to Esnagami for the first time. “So Fly” is a fly fishing podcast, media, video and photography group based out of Southern Ontario. These guys are PASSIONATE fly fishers and we were looking forward to introducing them to the fishing opportunities on Esnagami. After unloading their gear off of the float plane, it did not take the guys long to gear up their 8 to 10 weight flyrods and get out to chase after some Walleye & big Pike. We also took the crew on a couple of adventures down the Esnagami River to experience some of Esnagami's Trout fishing at its finest.

food to each cabin. After a couple of weeks of this process, any one of the girls would have lead their cross-country running teams to a first place finish!

Thankfully by early July, restaurants and dining rooms were allowed to be used again to serve food indoors. This allowed us to return to serving meals in a manner that were were more accustomed to ... with social distancing in mind of course.

LODGE IMPROVEMENTS: As most weeks had somewhat fewer guests in camp, we kept our staff very busy none the less. Most cabins and decks got a fresh coat of paint, several docks were rebuilt and a couple of major renovation projects were undertaken. The foundation in Cabin # 4 had been shifting for a few years now. With little room to access the cabin from underneath, we cut large enough holes inside the cabin to access the foundations. Through these points, we jacked up, leveled and reset the main support beams. After sealing the access holes, installing new flooring and applying a fresh coat of varnish throughout the entire interior, Cabin # 4 was ready to accommodate lodge guests again. Special thanks goes out to one our guides **Jack Bell**, who spearheaded this challenging job!

The other big project was a collective effort by the rest of the guide staff. Amity cabin ... now renamed "**Spruce Lodge**" underwent a major transformation. We decided to implement a complete resurfacing of the exterior of the cabin, including installation of new roofing, as well as a new bathroom renovation. Over several days, our guides took turns doing a selective harvest of black spruce trees from the shores of Esnagami Lake. I can assure you that cutting down trees, dragging them out of the bush, and transporting them back to camp is a younger man's game. From there, these

Make sure to catch So Fly's story, featured in the upcoming Ontario Out of Doors Magazine, Spring Fishing Annual, due out in February. Follow @thesoflycrew on Instagram, Facebook, and through Esnagami's social media platforms to see all of the videos and pictures from their trip. Many thanks Aldo, Mitch & Yilma!



Esnagami Wilderness Lodge
– The Ultimate “Staycation”

Stay what? “Staycation” A word that has become part of our regular vocabulary now that we are living with, or some might say in the shadow of COVID 19. [Read more.](#)

We would also like to give a SHOUT OUT to long time guest Keith Betz. Keith used his down time over last winter to construct a beautiful replica of Esnagami's main lodge, complete with

spruce logs were debarked, branches cut off, then carefully cut in half with the use of chainsaws and an Alaskan chainsaw mill. With a stockpile of halved logs ready to go, the fun part of the project began. The guys carefully hand picked each log to install around the cabin in the vertical log format. The transformation of “frame cabin” to “log cabin” was striking, and in a couple of weeks the “Spruce Lodge” cabin took on a whole new look. A big shout out goes to the whole crew that was composed of: **Ethan, Dakota, Liam, Eric (Landriault), Jack and Nick**, with special mention to **Kris Jaśkielewicz**, for all of their hard work in completing this project!



finished interior, decking and even a miniature dinner bell. Absolutely a work of art!



[Beautiful Wild Brookies](#)



Guide Dakota Adams



River Guide Ethan
Tupala



Spruce Lodge

FISHING REPORT: With the season opening being delayed a couple of weeks, our first guests stepped right into Esnagami fishing at full throttle. Early season spawning was behind them and the bait fish were teeming in the bays and river mouths, which meant the Walleye, Pike and Brook Trout were in active feeding mode. A number of groups put together some impressive entry numbers in the “**Trophy Catch and Release**” program. The Pike fishing in particular was extremely good ... all summer long. **Rob Giardulli's** group of four racked up 37



Geoff Inwood



[Fly Fishing Esnagami](#)



[Esnagami Map](#)

trophy Pike in total from 30" all the way up, including 2 in the 40" + range. **Paul Giardulli** with a solid looking 42" Pike, and Rob tying with another guest for the largest Pike of the summer, with a magnificent trophy at **44 ½"**!!



Rob Giardull - 44 1/2"

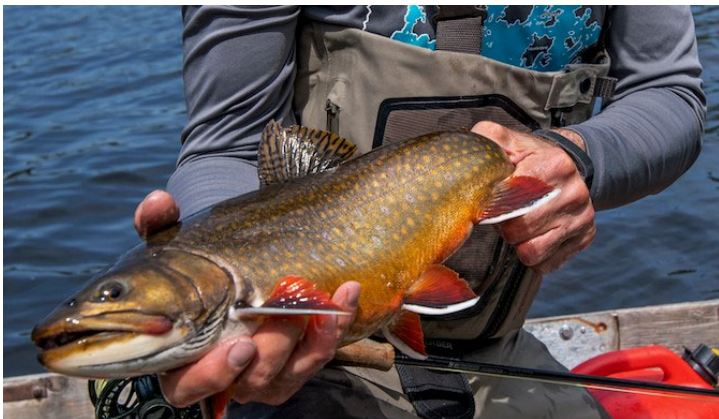
By mid summer the weed beds were in full bloom. First time guests Doug Langhorn and his son Matthew Langhorn, wasted no time in adding their names to the Trophy Catch and Release program. Doug and Matthew added 8 Pike to the Trophy count in the 30 – 33 ½" range. Well done!! The "Makarchuk" gang, who are long time guests, also had some admirable big Pike numbers. Ed Makarchuk, Doug Reid and Glen Cameron, collectively caught and released 17 trophy Pike ranging from 30" to 38". In the very last week of the season, veteran guest Eric Winterstein, Ron Davison and Ken Davison added 11 nice Pike and Walleye to the trophy count. Ron's 44 ½" beast put him in a tie with Rob's fish for bragging rights in the 2020 season.



Ron Davison - 44 1/2"

ESNAGAMI BROOK TROUT: Guests that took the trip down the Esnagami River experienced some amazing fishing for Brook Trout. Mike Garbowsky's group, who usually stay at one of our Outpost Camps, were at the lodge this year. As a result they had a different perspective of the river .. from the top down. Mike and Howard Donald landed close to 30 Trout with several in the 4 – 5 lb range (18 – 20") ... both with spinning gear and the fly-rod.

Perhaps the most impressive day on the river was with Harold Ball and myself on a training run, with "up and coming" River Guide Dakota Adams. Dakota navigated the 20 mile run without getting Harold or myself wet, and put us on an incredible number of trophy Brookies!! A veteran of many trips down the Esnagami River, Harold has perfected the art of catching Broot Trout "on the fly." We lost count at 2 dozen Trout that day, which most were caught fly fishing by Harold.



Although the majority of Trout were in the 1 ½ lb to 2 lb class, Harold landed 5 in the 4 – 6 lb range as well, finishing the day off with a huge 21 inch beautiful Brookie, which turned out to be the biggest of the season.

WALLEYE'S EVERYWHERE: We enjoyed another excellent season of Walleye fishing as well. Most guests tallied up outstanding numbers of Walleye on a daily basis. Catches of over 50 fish per boat in a day were the norm. One of the more skillful efforts was put forth by first time guest Bob Donaher, who with fly rod in hand, had several days of 30 + Walleye just on his own!! The largest Walleye of the season was a hefty 29 ½” and was caught by Edith Prout, who showed her husband Bill how to catch the big one!!

Please check out the “Top 10 Leaderboard” as well as the annual big fish tallies for the full details of all the trophy entries. This brings us to our winners of the 2020 Trophy Catch & Release Contest. This summer we drew 2 names for a free trip from all of the entries. Congratulations to Jeannie Cooper and Geoff Inwood who caught and released 36” and 37” Pike respectively. They are both winners of a free trip to the lodge in 2021.

Well .. that's a wrap for 2020. Thank you to everyone that was able to join us last year.

2021 will be better and we are hoping to see you next summer!

Stay safe!

Cheers!

Eric, Sue & Family

**Ready to book your adventure or need more information?
Contact your host: Eric and Sue Lund.**

Winter Telephone: 519-474-6988, Summer Telephone: 807-329-5209





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