

Gangler's North Seal, Manitoba, Canada  
July, 2023  
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This July, I had a great fishing adventure in northern Manitoba. I had to step out of my comfort zone on two counts: I almost always fish with a guide, and I always fly on commercial airlines. The place was Gangler's North Seal, a remote lodge with five outposts. I was one of six anglers at the Stevens-Nicklin Lake outpost, where we spent one week alone with a camp manager/guide on a 21-mile lake. The target fish are Northern Pike, Walleye, Lake Trout, and Arctic Grayling. I had never caught any of these fish.

To get to Gangler's, I flew to Winnipeg via Minneapolis. On Saturday morning, with the help of paid expeditors, everyone bound for Gangler's (40-50 people) was to board a charter flight 2.5 hours due north. There were airplane maintenance issues, however, so our group of six flew separately later that day. The Gangler's landing strip is made of sand. Upon arrival, our group boarded a sea plane for a quick trip to our remote outpost, where we saw no other humans for the next week. Our basic provisions also flew from Winnipeg on the same planes.



Our outpost was two identical cabins that can sleep four each. The power came from generators, the water from the lake. The camp manager had to maintain all of this in addition to guiding the six of us upon request, which we did for two days. We had three 16' boats with 25hp outboard engines to get us around the area, and Garmin GPS devices to keep us from getting lost. The local fauna of note are black bear, caribou, moose, deer, and wolf, of which we saw none the whole week. When autumn rolls in, so will they, and it will be hunting season.

I relied heavily on David Baker from Quest Outdoors to help me gear up for the trip. I have a Hardy 8-weight and an Orvis 9-weight rod which were perfect for this trip. David made sure I had proper fly lines, flies, and leaders with steel tips and snaps so I didn't have to worry about tippet or tying on my flies, for the most part. Pike and Walleye are not leader-shy, so presentation was not a primary concern.



For Pike, we had the most success with big streamers that had a lot of white. Other colors could include red, yellow, or green, but white had to figure prominently. Some of you like to fish for Muskellunge. Now I understand the nuance of getting a toothy fish off the hook, which included jaw-spreaders and long-handled pliers. It was also essential to crimp the barbs on those big hooks. Not surprisingly, the water up there was pretty clear, so watching a Pike move rapidly through the water to strike my streamer was as big a thrill as seeing a big trout rise to a dry fly. My biggest Pike was every bit of three feet. Trophy sizes go into the 40" range and beyond, but we didn't catch those. The hardest part for me was remembering to set the hook by stripping rather than raising my rod. Pike are aggressive alpha fish who will strike repeatedly if they miss the first time. Setting the hook by stripping keeps the fly in the water.

Walleye were the best-tasting fish on the menu. They seemed to like to be at the bottom of about 6 feet of water, and Clouser streamers seemed to work best, again with plenty of white. Since I was still using



my steel-ended leader, I was able to get the fly to the Walleye without a sinking line. One of the Walleye I caught clearly had been wounded by a Pike earlier in life. I wouldn't wish that on anybody.

We spent a half-day fishing for Lake Trout. This was a moment to put away our fly rods and start spinning. The Trout were holding at a depth of about 60 feet. Simply drop a heavy lure (white, of course) until it hits the bottom, then start retrieving. A fly rod could have done this, but with much less efficiency. We caught more dinner than we were able to eat in the week. Honestly, this wasn't a test of anyone's angling skills, but some days on the water are just blessed, right?



Yet another adventure day was spent boating to an outflow from the lake, presumably the Laurilla River, where we dry fly fished for Arctic Grayling. Grayling are a salmonid species, a Trout's cousin. We had to park our boats and hike in several hundred yards amid hungry mosquitoes, who honestly weren't as numerous as had been advertised. Once on the river, we wet waded and I caught all I could stand on a size 10 yellow attractor. These fish rarely if ever see human attempts to fool them. This was real traditional fly fishing, and the Grayling behave quite like Trout, although they're not as pretty. As I've said, I usually fish with a guide, so I suffered through the hardship of tying on my own fly and tippet. I can do a nice blood knot, it just takes me a while.



Here's the web site for Gangler's: <https://ganglers.com/>

The site boasts five-star accommodations. I would add the caveat that five stars is relative. It's not five stars compared to a visit to 21C in Louisville. It is five stars compared to primitive camping. Not that I'm complaining.

Again, I can't thank Quest Outdoors and David Baker enough for sending me up there with some degree of confidence that I had the right stuff. You might not think an outfitter in Louisville would know how to approach a trip like this, but they were spot on. I'm also grateful to my brother-in-law Michael who was a terrific host, travel partner, and hook-remover. He's from Louisville originally, but is now a Florida/Maine resident.

My wife Laura and I will try to attend an upcoming DCF meeting, at which time I'll be happy to tell you about the Pike that got away.