

FISHING HOLE

NIPIGON RIVER

From Alexander Falls to Lake Superior

WHY GO: This section of the river, up to Alexander Falls, is runnable by any fish coming in from Lake Superior. And there is a wide mix of game fish that can be found in the river at various points in the year, but in the spring time, it's an option for steelhead anglers. While the upper stretches of the Nipigon River are best known for producing the 100-plus year old world record brook trout, this stretch also boasts an excellent population of brawny coaster brookies, though they are best targeted in late August and early September.

ACCESS: Nipigon Marina is a good place to access the river, with a free boat launch that is open from June 1 to Sept. 8. The marina is also popular with shore anglers, with access up to the 11/17 bridge. Red Rock Marina, in Red Rock, also offers a boat launch, though fees are charged here to launch. There's also a boat ramp on the west side of the river downstream from the Alexander Dam.

VITALS: This section of river is about 11 miles from Nipigon Bay on Lake Superior to the Alexander Dam.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Chinook salmon, coaster brook trout, Coho salmon, lake trout, northern pike, pink salmon, steelhead trout, yellow perch, walleye and whitefish.

STEELHEAD: Spring is the best time to target steelhead trout on the Nipigon Riv-

er, as it is in other North Shore streams. Steelhead on this river are known to run large, and most of the fishing for them occurs at Alexander Dam down to the railroad bridge.

"Most of the steelhead fishing around here is done on the smaller rivers," notes Ernie Benson, a fly fishing guide with Nipigon River Adventures. "It is difficult to go after them on the Nipigon unless you have a boat for drift fishing."

Because of the big water of the Nipigon, Benson advises fly anglers to fish streamers.

The most popular techniques are drifting roe, or using plugs from boats in the larger pools and runs. Shore anglers can try below the dam and below the Trans-Canada Highway.

COASTERS: The river is renowned for its large brook trout, or speckled trout as they are known here, but on this section of the Nipigon, late August and the beginning of September is the main window when they move up the stream from Lake Superior.

"The fishing can actually be quite good in the late summer," Benson said. "It closes on Labor Day. You want to go for a couple days in September. That is one of the highlights of the river, those fish coming in for spawning."

Casting spoons, trolling crankbaits and fly angling are the more popular ways to target them.

Anglers with light spinning gear will use worms under bobbers, spinners and jigs.

A special regulation exists for brook trout on the river, with one fish over 22 inches allowed.

FALL SALMON RUNS: While the odd Coho or pink might be found in the river, most of the salmon action in the river is from Chinook salmon. This typically starts up in late August into September.

The fish tend to congregate at the Alexander Dam, and can be caught on spoons. But they can also be targeted up and down the river, and trolling is a popular way to get after them with big plugs.

THE REST: You'll find northern pike, whitefish and walleye on this stretch of river, though walleye fishing is closed on the river year round. Lake trout used to run the river, but failed to show up last spring.—*Javier Serna*

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