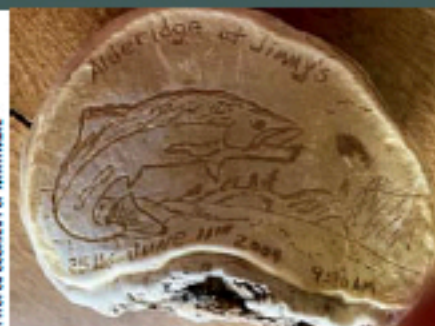


ELDRIDGE HARDIE

1940–2021



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANN HARDIE

Kedgwick guide Tommy Larocque carved this bracket fungus in honour of a salmon released by "Aldridge" (Eldridge) Hardie in 2004, and saved and presented it the next time he saw the artist in 2013.

"What I remember most vividly about fishing with El was his enthusiasm," says Bob Goodyear an ASF director (US) who often hosted the artist and his wife Ann at Kedgwick Lodge. "He was always up early to get a cup of coffee to bring to Ann. After breakfast, he was ready to go fishing and pestering Ann to hurry up. What a wonderful marriage they had. I admired their relationship, and Ann was everything to El."

Salmon fishing, by its very nature, is more about not catching salmon than catching them. And when an angler is lucky enough to feel that bump and tug, it's a moment they hold onto forever. Eldridge Hardie became an expert in recreating the essence of Atlantic salmon angling.

Throughout his life, Eldridge pursued his passions of bird hunting and fly-fishing, which inspired his career in sporting art. Eldridge summed up his long career by saying "I was born to hunt, fish, and make art about these passions."

In recent years, Eldridge focused on completing the second of two books of his art. *The Sporting Art of Eldridge Hardie* was published in 2019. There isn't much writing; the book is really a remarkable record of this award-winning artist's broad scope of work. He did reserve a chapter and some words about Atlantic salmon, however. It opens: "My guide positions his twenty-six-foot cedar canoe, and his bowman drops its lead killick to anchor along the run at the head of the pool."

In that short bit of writing, Eldridge describes the people, the canoe, the cast, the take, the battle, and the release. In the following pages of the chapter on Atlantic salmon, each painting captures all of these elements, the essence of angling for *Salmo salar*.

He closes that soliloquy with: "From one season to the next I hold in my head this image of Campbell's Pool on the Restigouche River in New Brunswick, Canada." Thankfully, his paintings allow us to visit many such scenes time and time again.

At Jimmie's Hole, Restigouche River (24"x36", oil on canvas), above. "In Looking Glass", Restigouche River (24"x36", oil on canvas), above, left, is the next to the last Eldridge painted. At the time he was experimenting with different kinds of colour, light and brush work. All paintings are owned by Bob Goodyear.

Reflecting on his own experiences, Eldridge always included a guide if not also a bowman in his paintings. His work details a world where Atlantic salmon are king—a forested wilderness streaked by cold, clean rivers. Here Atlantic salmon rule not just the streams but also the minds of men and women obsessed with their beauty and wildness. Each of his salmon paintings freezes a moment where the sky, the trees, the water, and the people revolve around a fish—and the hopes and dreams it instills in all of us.

"What I admired most about El was that he was one of very few people I have known who lived the life he wanted to live, painting, hunting, and fishing with many friends and a loving family that he and Ann created, El was a kind soul and a gentleman, but he did have an intensity around fishing and painting," Goodyear remembers. "He was very particular about how he presented a fly and always looking to improve his casting technique and to hook fish on a dry fly. In the afternoons waiting for evening fishing, El in his late 70s, would push himself to run a mile or so, and my three daughters always laughed at the fact that El would wear his hunting boots on his runs. He laughed with them."

Eldridge Hardie will be missed. His paintings and his books may temper the loss somewhat, but it's those moments when the day is done that he will come to mind most. "After evening fishing and sitting around a warm fire, El would tell us every detail about the fish he caught, the ones he lost, the rises he had, the hook ups he missed," says Goodyear. "It was wonderful listening to his stories and absorbing his enthusiasm."

Tight lines, El.

—MS

To order *The Sporting Art of Eldridge Hardie*, visit eldridgehardie.com.