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Outdoors

Speckled trout a thing of beauty

ART BRIGG-JUDE
Correspondent

It seemed like only yesterday, as our light craft drifted along on the strength of a fresh breeze, when my son asked, "What's so special about a speckled trout?"

Actually, his tone of voice seemed to challenge our very presence at this remote place and after a day of fruitless fishing, the lad's impatience could have become contagious.

After a few more casts, I came up with an answer. "When you see a good one up close, Bob, you'll never ask that question again."

We had arrived at this spring-fed lagoon after several portages through some rugged Temagami landscape.

Pleasant Lake was well named.

It was a long sliver of pristine beauty that mirrored the emerald of the surrounding forest.

Down towards the centre, a boulder-fringed island rose above the shadowed surface. It was our campsite.

Near the water's edge, and protected from the sun by a rocky overhang, chunks of ice still resisted the warming trend.

It took a little time to fashion an icebox by scooping out the mossy soil and replacing it with

the fish demanded more line and then after several more leaps and mad dashes, it began to tire.

In the fading sunset, my boy's face beamed like a full moon as he gently removed the folds of the netting.

When it was clear and he had an unobstructed view of the trout, he looked up happily and said, "You're right, Dad, they're the best."

There are several features that make the speckled trout number one in my book.

With its dark olive-green back showing a light marbled pattern, its lighter sides marked with a hue of multi-colored

spots and reddish bands, and the lower fins fronted with white, there's no question the speckled or brook trout is a thing of beauty.

But apart from its attractive

inroads there

And whereas all trout signify clean water, the speckled trout especially is a natural monitor in this regard.

Unfortunately, its silent presence is often overlooked in the rush of development, for the sake of a term all too often referred to as progress.

On April 28, Ontario's inland trout fisherman were out in force, from the ice-choked waters around Sudbury to the little gurgling streams of the southern counties.

Up on the Beaver River at Thornbury, shoulder-to-shoulder

enthusiasts have been landing big rainbows, while down in the Niagara Glen, the locals were out after some trophy-sized browns.

There are canoes cruising the clear waters of Algonquin Park and the creeks and rivers flowing into the north shore of Lake Ontario are dotted with eager fishermen.

And somewhere in between, in this paradise we often take for granted, a boy and his dad were spending some time together drifting worms in the quiet pools of a tinkling stream.

When they turned home, with some 10-inch speckles in their creel, the lad would have lifted the lid one more time and smile

The slip clutch squeaked as the fish demanded more line and then after several leaps and mad dashes, it finally began to tire.

appearance, the speckled trout stands for everything that is pure and clean in our out of doors.

For when you locate a stream or lake that contains these striking beauties, you know that pollution has not made ugly

Our little black book has the best numbers in Newmarket.

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a large square cookie tin. Now, with the ice packed all around and a soil and leaf covering, we had the ideal arrangement for keeping our fish cool. But what fish?

It was now seven o'clock and none of us had raised as much as a fin.

Then while changing lures for the umpteenth time, it all started. The trout erupted on the calm surface in a feeding frenzy.

With renewed excitement, we began casting at the largest rings. Yet our spoons, spinners and streamers were non-productive. Finally, in desperation, I put on a little gold spinner dressed with a red-feathered hook.

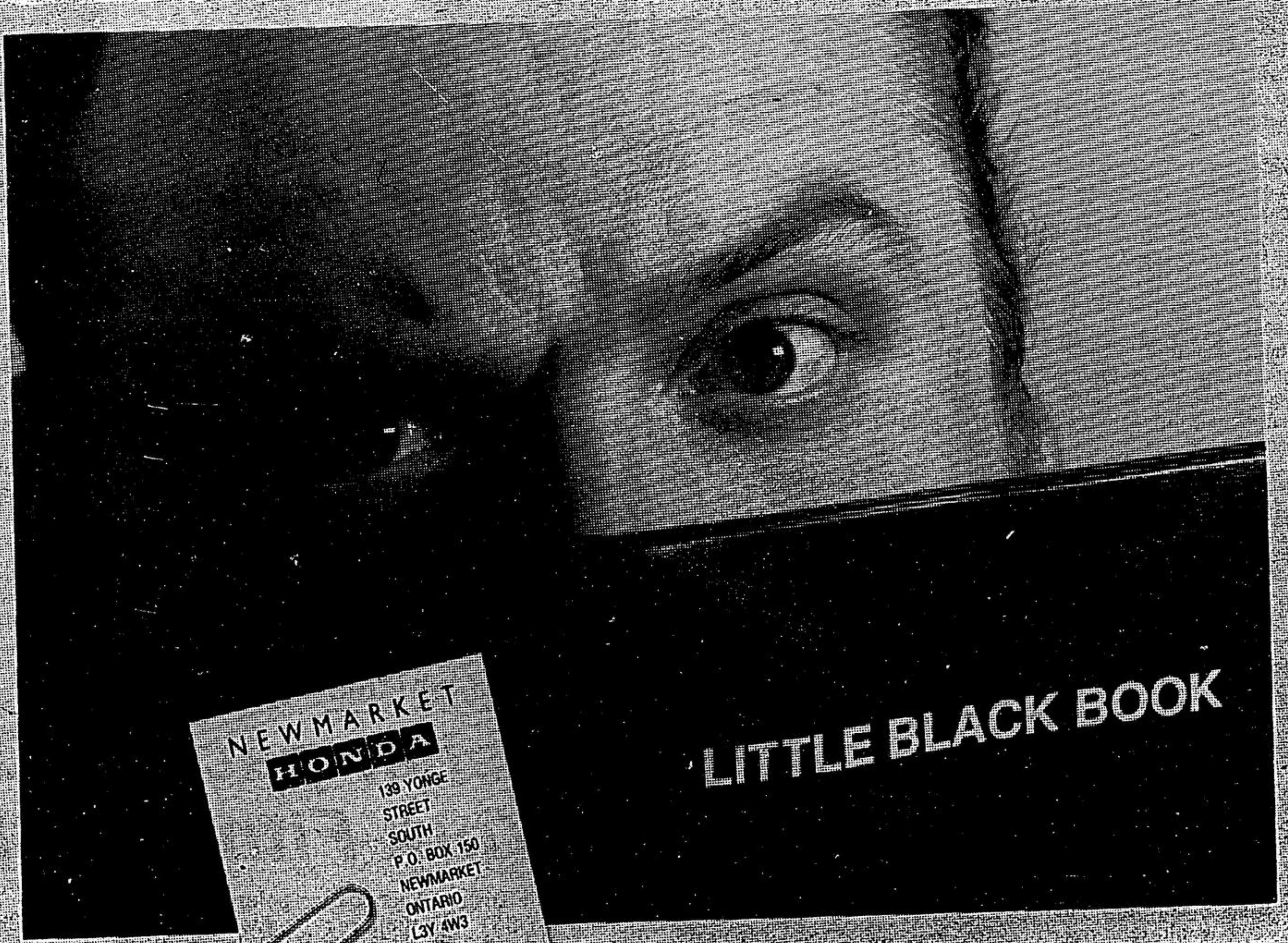
The lure settled into the depths at the end of my cast and as the slack was taken up, I felt the line stiffen and instinctively struck back.

My question about a snagged limb was quickly dispelled when an answer came back on the line: FISH!

It was a good four-letter word and judging by the way it was moving, the letters were all capitals.

It headed for its favorite hole and took most of the bend in my seven-foot rod to try and restrain it.

The slip clutch squeaked as



NEW MARKET
HONDA
139 YONGE STREET SOUTH
P.O. BOX 150
NEW MARKET, ONTARIO
L3Y 4W3
PHONE: 896-4500
TORONTO: 773-1200
FAX: 773-8496
north on Yonge Street

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