

Fishing worth getting up for

'You could be at work or you doing this. Think about it.'

By Wanda McConnell
Herald Editor

What I'd like to know is, why is it necessary to rise before dawn to go fishing?

Guide Bob Devigne just laughs at the Transcontinental Media team's com-

plaints. "Wimps," he's probably thinking, as his boat pulls away from The Forks docks at 6 a.m.

It's another year and another attempt to win bragging rights at the Fish Winnipeg Media Challenge.

Every June, the Urban Angling Partnership – a group of government, business, agency, and pro-fisher-

man types – invite the media out onto Winnipeg's rivers to see for themselves what first-class fishery lurks in the murky waters of the Red and the Assiniboine.

There may be thousands of catfish, walleye and fresh water drum (to name but a few of the species) beneath the surface, but alas our team caught just one lousy

fish – a 62-centimetre catfish – in the two-and-a-half hours we were out.

But what a glorious two and-a-half hours. The sun slowly rose over the trees and the river came alive in silver sparkles. Lush green trees hung over the river bank and mallards with their glistening green heads, floated by. Suddenly, getting up at 5 a.m. seemed worth it.

Devigne, a part-time guide with Cats on the Red and a full-time corrections officer, echoes the thought.

"You could be at work or you could be doing this. Think about it."

Fishing easy

Winnipeggers who want to get away for a day of fishing truly don't have to go far. The evidence of that is in the fact a group of Fish Winnipeg participants never left the docks at The Forks and within 30 minutes, managed to reel in about 10 good-sized fish.

Todd Longley, who operates City Cats Guiding Service, says the city's rivers are teeming with fish. "You could get 20 nice-sized cats in a day," he says, adding, "They're the most exciting to catch because they're the most powerful. They put up a big fight."

Whether you're fishing to catch and release, or to catch and eat, "it's pure joy and relaxation and a chance to enjoy the outdoors," says Carl Wall, manager of the Manitoba Fisheries angling program.

Quality table fare

The rivers, which are much cleaner now than they were 40 years ago, before high-tec sewage treatment began – offer up good quality table fare, he says. "You just need to wash and cook the fish well. It's the same precautions you would take with any food."

For those who want to become anglers, the Winnipeg Fish Festival July 7 at The Forks is the place to be. Information on all things fishy will be available at this free family-oriented event.

For kids 8 to 14 years old, the city offers week-long fishing camps, beginning July 16. Headquarters are at the Fort Rouge Leisure Centre but each day, campers climb into a van and go fishing, visit a fish hatchery or engage in other fish-themed activities. (Phone 986-5015 for information.)

The Urban Angling Partnership also raises money to sponsor inner-city kids in a free learn-to-fish program, and it's working on building more fishing docks within the city.