

Ice Fishing

We talked about it for a month. Where to go? How far from home?

When to go? What to bring? We finally decided on a lake 85 miles south west of Dawson city, my hometown. So it's on the 2nd day of April that our flight would take place. We took 2 airplanes that we put on skis. A (2 seater) Chinook and a Stork. Being so late in the season would pose a small problem for us though:

It has been above freezing for the last week, there's no snow left on the runway and the ski runway is in rough shape. The only place where there's enough snow left is on the ramp. After getting permission from the local authority, we were able to take off.

We stayed close to the Klondike highway and flew at 3500'. The flight would take us 1 1/2hr as we were grounding 55 miles/hour, we had a south wind. Finally we spotted the lake, did a few passes over it, wondering if it were safe to attempt a landing as the ice looked really choppy, so we opted to land near shore instead.

We put on our snowshoes and took out the auger and started digging some holes. I couldn't believe how thick the ice is here, 4 feet! Anyhow, I get my little chair out, get my fishing rod ready and start fishing. It's a bit different fishing out of a hole than otherwise. My friend Dan tells me that there are huge pikes here, up to 30 lbs. I have difficulty visualizing those big fish getting out of that little hole, but he convinced me that he did it last year.

Dan is the best bush pilot I've ever known, being an outfitter for the last 30 years; he had to fly in and out of the mountains in all conditions. I've seen him land in places that no one would even consider being a landing strip. On this trip, he has brought along a neat little camera in the shape of a fish; he keeps on digging holes so he can look through this fish finder. After a few hours and no fish, I start thinking that this whole trip is perhaps an excuse for him to try out this new toy...

Finally, a bite: Here I am struggling with this fish, my rod bent right over. My thought was right, this fish is way too big to get out of this little hole, so with chagrin, I have to let it go if I want to hang on to my fishing rod.

Another couple of hours of fishing, the same thing happens, I wonder if it's the same fish. Once again, I have to let it go. I'm getting a little frustrated by this so we decided to get some lunch and as the wind picks up quite a bit we call it the day. Our flight back home is a bit faster, with a nice tailwind; we make it in one hour. Even though, I didn't catch anything, I loved the experience and you can bet that I going to try this lake again next year.

Keep flying high!

Marielle Veilleux

Private Pilot, in the Yukon.

