



THE WISCONSIN COUNCIL
OF
TROUT UNLIMITED
WINTER NEWSLETTER

FISHING THE MINOW IN WISCONSIN TROUT STREAMS. - Chris Doyle

We have all heard, at one time or another, that TROUT UNLIMITED has a reputation of being a group of elite fly fishing snobs. The intent of this article, in addition to the expected informative purpose regarding the fine art of bait fishing, is to dispell that notion.

While most of our members are at least part time fly fishermen, there are many of us who realize that at certain times of the year, in many of our trout streams, bait fishing is the best approach to the angling problem.

There is a time and place for everything. So, from one bait fisherman to another, here are some tips on perhaps the most productive method of fishing for stream trout in our state.

Unless our drought conditions continue, we're likely to be faced with the typical early spring fishing conditions that change fly fishing from a challenge to a near impossibility. The streams are usually high, dirty or cold. All too often all three factors will prevail. Few insect hatches take place under such conditions and even when they do the water is usually too cold to bring the trout off the bottom.

In any case, why bother to come to the surface for tiny caddis or mayflies when the swift current will bring a grab bag full of water and land borne goodies right to your door step? One factor that escapes most trout fishermen is that trout, particularly big trout, are most vulnerable under high water conditions. In many of our small and medium sized streams, the mature trout will remain hidden during the day under normal water level conditions. With the type of undercut bank, overhanging brush cover that predominates in these streams, there's no way to get at them.

What this is leading up to, Mr. Fly Fisherman, is that unless you can regularly catch trout under these tough conditions, consider giving bait fishing a try.

The list of live baits are endless and range from your common garden worms and salmon eggs to the more exotic water worm (Crane Fly larva), Stone fly and Helgramite nymphs, Crayfish, and terrestrials such as beetle larvae, crickets, and grasshoppers. All of these baits can be extremely effective.

Strong Stand Needed on Trout Stamp



There's a good chance that when you go to buy your 1977-78 fishing license there'll be a \$2.50 to \$2.75 trout stamp fee tacked on if you want to fish for trout. Here's why.

In his 1977-79 executive budget submitted to the Legislature, Governor Patrick Lucey supported a recommendation by the Department of Natural Resources calling for the trout stamp. With strong support from the Governor, DNR and Trout Unlimited, it's quite likely legislation requiring the stamp will be passed this year.

Past effort to get such legislation passed have failed due to strong objections by the tourist industry (373,806 non-resident fishing licenses were sold in 1975) and some sportsmen's groups. The strongest supporter of such bills in the Legislature has been Senator Thomas Harnisch of Neilsville. We applaud his efforts and those of Trout Unlimited in getting the DNR and the Governor to again seek approval for such a stamp.

We find it difficult to understand the objections voiced against the trout stamp. The funds derived from the sale of the stamp would be earmarked solely for the purpose of habitat improvement. There have been enough studies done to show that trout stocking programs are losing propositions in the long run. What needs to be done is improve the carrying capacity of the streams where there is natural reproduction.

Wisconsin has 2,244 trout streams, of which as many as 1,300 need some form of protection or improvement to raise them to maximum carrying capacity. By its own admission, the DNR figures less than 100 of these streams, or about 9 percent of the total, have had any work done on them. Where some work has been done,

such as on Lawrence Creek in Marquette County or Mt. Vernon Creek in Dane County, the carrying capacity has increased dramatically.

Currently the DNR is spending only about \$140,000 a year on improvement of fish habitat throughout the state. If a \$2.50 trout fee went into effect, an estimated additional \$250,000 the first year and about \$500,000 the second year of the biennium would be raised. All of this money would be earmarked for trout stream improvement.

While we support the concept of a trout stamp, there must be iron-clad assurances that all the money collected from the sale of the stamps goes for habitat improvement. We also feel the DNR should provide matching funds from other sources, even if the funds come from current fishing license revenues.

It's shocking to think that only \$140,000 is being used each year for habitat improvement when the DNR collects close to \$4 million from both resident and non-resident fishermen. We feel its time a closer look was taken at how the revenues from fishing license fees are allocated to the different fish management functions.

However, habitat improvement doesn't come cheap, and even if the trout stamp fee is approved fishermen shouldn't expect a big return for their money immediately. Habitat improvement is a long-range program needed to increase fish numbers, but costs are going up all the time. Just cutting and removing unwanted vegetation costs between \$1,500 and \$2,000 per mile.

We feel trout fishermen will want to see their streams improved and a return to natural reproduction rather than stocking, and should let their representative and senator know they support the trout stamp.

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Why fish minnows then? The big advantages are; large minnows will consistently take larger trout than any other bait, either natural or artificial, and live minnows can be fished in a manner that no other fishing method can successfully duplicate.

Any trout fisherman that's been around a while is likely to realize that really big trout are cannibalistic. They like their food in large bites and the only food that usually fits that requirement is fish. This is particularly true of Brown Trout and probably 90% of all our stream trout that weigh in at two pounds or more are brownies. Common sense would indicate that a lively minnow, cleverly presented, will take more large trout than any other method.

Now consider the real key to the unique advantage that live minnow fishing offers. What other bait looks completely natural while remaining completely stationary in the current? All terrestrials are at the mercy of the current. They may struggle and twitch but their general movement is one-way, downstream. Water borne insects scuttle along the bottom or rise to the surface as they are emerging but they're always moving, never stationary in the current. Crayfish can move very quickly, even against the current for a few seconds, but again they can not remain stationary in the current. Only a minnow can be fished naturally while it's fished downstream in the current.

Here's the problem we all face in our narrow brush choked streams. There will be overhanging brush on both sides with little room to maneuver a spin rod much less a fly rod. There is a good hole or undercut bank downstream of you. No chance to approach from below because of over hanging trees or brush or downed tree limbs prohibit an upstream cast. If you drift a bait down stream you may very well connect with a nice trout but if you allow your bait to drift too far you'll find yourself snagged in a hurry and when you break your line you're likely to spook that good fish hiding under the log jam or under the bank. A spinner or streamer cast down stream may work but only with a perfect cast to an eager, impulsive fish since both baits require movement. If they are held stationary with the current to allow Mr. Big a chance to look it over he'll spot the lure for the fraud it is. If you still fish a heavily weighted worm on the bottom you may fool some hatchery reared trout but you also run a high risk of hanging up on an underwater root or tree limb.

Clearly what's required here is a bait that can be presented in a natural manner in front of the nose of Mr. Big yet fished stationary off the bottom to keep your hook away from the woody tentacles down stream and on the bottom. Only a live minnow fished downstream can fit the bill!

Hook your minnow through one lip on a small, short shank hook. I prefer to use dry fly hooks #10 or #12. The thin wire will cause less injury to the minnow and can often be pulled straight when snagged to avoid line breakage and the time involved in tying on a new hook.

Attach only enough split shot to keep your minnow only a few

inches under the surface when fished on a tight line down stream Keeping your bail open, allow the bait to drift slowly down stream as you feather your line between the thumb and index finger. When you've judged that the minnow has drifted to a foot or so above the suspected trout lie, pinch the line with the thumb and index finger. The minnow will be pulled straight down stream on a direct line to your rod tip and headed up stream a few inches under the water and swimming in a natural upright manner.

Now Mr. Big can look over his nest potential meal without foresaking the security of his favorite lie and when he looks over his favorite food dangled in front of his nose presented in a natural manner, he's going to like what he sees!

When the strike comes he'll usually bushwack the minnow from behind and below and consequently will grab it tail first. Don't hit him at this point. You'll only pull the minnow out of his mouth. Instead, loosen the pressure applied on your line with the thumb and index finger and allow the trout to take the minnow and sink back to the safety of his lie. Don't allow the trout to feel any tension on the line or he'll spit the minnow every time. Give him a minute or so to turn the bait and swallow it, then close your bail, reel in the slack line and bust him!

Don't ask how you keep him out of the snags. A little prayer and a little luck often does the trick.

Try this method this spring before the water drops and the hatches come off. Chances are you'll take the trout of a life time.

EXCELLENT FUND RAISING IDEAS.

The Southwestern Chapter has come up with two pregnant ideas in the fund raising area. They have developed a map of their county which indicates all the streams containing trout and small mouth bass. There are 71 counties remaining. Many counties have maps locating streams, but few indicate good trout water. Trout fishermen have a tendency to wander occasionally, but they don't like to spend days probing strange waters fruitlessly. If we are gentlemen, and we assume we are, let's help each other - and produce a little revenue at the same time.

The second project is one of collecting deer hides during the hunting season from those who have no need for them and selling them to taneries who have a tremendous need for them. They made some \$450.00 in this manner last fall.

Both of these projects require planning and leg work. NOW is the time to get started on them! The Southwest Chapter is going to prepare their planning process and send them to me. I will have them copied for distribution to the chapters.

We, here in Southeastern Chapter, have successfully developed a Fly Fishing School in the last two years. We now have in our possession a complete kit of ten Fenwick fly rods, Pflueger Medalist

reels, and Courtland DT6F lines with leaders attached. We are also preparing our own text, strictly basic but complete in scope. When the text is complete this kit, including text, will be made available to all chapters along with plans for developing a school in your own area.

FISHING PRINTS OFFERED.

Bob Frankowiak, a TU member and artist employed by the Milwaukee County Museum, offers two beautiful prints for sale. Both are of lone fishermen; one on the Brule, the other on the Wolf. You should have examples of his work in your possession. He was the artist involved in the covers for the TROUT magazine of the fall of '75 (Grayling) and the winter of '76 (Lone Fisherman).

These are limited editions of 300 full colored prints sized 16" x 20". The prices range from Signed and Numbered, Unframed at \$45.00 to Signed, Numbered, Remarqued, and Framed at \$105.00.

No one expects to buy a "pig in a poke", so drop him a line at 4972 S. 20th. Street, Milwaukee, WI., 53221 if you are interested, he will be happy to send you a descriptive brochure.

THE KIAP-TU-WISH - DNR "FISH FOR FUN" PROJECT. - Bob Hunt

Roger Fairbanks, of Kiap-Tu-Wish, recently sent me Bob Hunt's report for the research done on the streams during 1976. Keep in mind this is a four year project. During the first year (1976) the research consisted of determining the populations immediately before the season opened and immediately after the season closed in both stretches of water. Regular state fishing regulations were in force. Restricted regulations do not start until this year; 1 trout, 13" or more, fly and spin fishing only. The control stretch is 1.03 miles long and has a surface area of 4.90 acres. The research stretch is 0.77 mile and an area of 5.17 acres.

The stream survey man was on duty last year. To gain a random sample his hours were selected randomly also. Some surprising statistics were developed. The stream is fished as heavily as any stream in the state if not heavier. 75% of the fishermen on the research section were from out of state as were 60% of those on the control section. The Twin Cities are only a short distance away.

With the exception of average length of trout creeled, the statistics reflect a more intensive and higher quality sport fishery in the research area: 15% more angling trips/acre, 9% more hours/acre, 17% more trout creeled /acre, 39% more trout released/acre, 19% higher ratio of trout released to trout creeled, 7% higher catch/hour of trout creeled and 29% higher catch/hour for trout released.

It is likely that some trout were caught more than onee, especially in the research area. The combined catch of trout creeled and trout released in this area was 786/acre, a figure 75% greater than the estimated abundance of 448/acre in April.

Total harvest/area amounted to 72.0 lb/acre for the research area and 73.5 lb/acre for the control area. These values are equivalent to 64.1% and 65.6% of the April biomass in the research and control areas respectively.

Monthly patterns of angler use and harvest were similar in both areas. More than half of the total angling hours and harvest occurred in May, the first month of the five month season. Fishing effort and harvest steadily declined during June, July and August and then increased somewhat in September. Angling effort was slightly higher on the control area than on the research area during May and September but over the season total angling hours/acre were 9% more on the research area. Harvest/acre/month was higher on the research area every month but September and was 17% greater for the season.



Monthly catches of brown trout released were consistently higher on the research area all season and exceeded the seasonal catch on the control area by 39%. As with angling effort and harvest, more than half of the trout caught and released during 1976 were taken in May.

Average length of 1,323 brown trout harvested from the research area was 9.1 inches. Trout in the 8-inch group comprised the most dominant inch-group in the harvest (30.0%). In the control area, average length of trout creel was 9.5 inches but those most numerous were also in the 8-inch group (27.5%). In the control area, a greater proportion of the total harvest consisted of brown trout in the 9-12 inch size groups than was true for the harvest from the research area.

Despite the large number of trout creel during the season, few interviewed anglers had limit catches of 5 in May or 10 during June-September. No catches of more than 6/day were recorded on the control area during June-September, based on interviewing 159 anglers who had completed fishing, and only one of 226 anglers done fishing on the research area had kept 10 trout during the June-September period.

Among the most common baits used (worms, artificial flies, spinning lures), the greatest proportion of angling hours (48.8%), the greatest proportion of angling trips (49.4%) and the greatest proportion of trout released (81.8%) were accounted for by anglers using flies on the research area. More trout were caught on worms and kept (70.7%) than on flies (14.9%) or spinning lures (14.4%) on the research area. On the control area anglers using worms accounted for the greatest proportion of hours fished (44.3%), angling trips (45.7%) and trout harvested (61.5%). More trout were released in this area after being caught on flies (68.0%) than by any other type of bait.

On the research area, trout caught on spinning lures and kept averaged 9.8 inches vs. an average length of 9.2 inches for fly-caught trout and 8.9 inches for worm caught trout. Trout caught and kept by fly fishermen on the control area averaged 10.1 inches; those caught on worms averaged 9.1 inches; those taken on spinning lures averaged 9.0 inches.

The very low catch rates/hour for trout harvested by fly-fishermen in both zones as compared to their catch rates for trout released substantiates the observation that on these two study areas, many anglers were voluntarily releasing trout that could have been legally kept. These study areas already have a clientele of anglers (most of whom reside in in Minnesota) who appear to be ready to accept the kind of severe regulation on harvest that will be imposed during 1977-79 on the research area.

RIGHT HERE IN RIVER CITY

Pat and Betsey Hager took the plunge! They opened the "Pole & Paddle" Orvis shop right here in Milwaukee, April 16th., at 12525 W. Lisbon, phone 414-781-6008. It's just off the expressway at Capitol Drive.

They can outfit you from head to toe and from reel to #28 fly in the very best. Earl Harris ties for them. He has been tying for Orvis for years and will custom tie any fly for you provided you have a sample or the listed dressing. They also handle Mansfield canoes.

Pat, 34 and a native of Appleton, spent nine years as a sales representative for sporting goods companies serving the entire mid-west, the last four in Michigan where he struck up an affair with the Pere Marquette and Muskegon Rivers. Apparently a two timer. He knows Wisconsin fishing well and gets weekly reports from throughout the state.

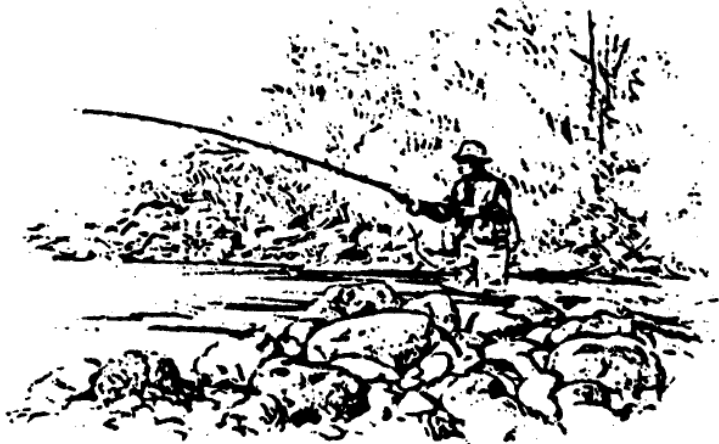
July 20th., Carl Richards, coauthor of SELECTIVE TROUT, will conduct the first of a series of seminars. His subject will be "Mid and Late Season Fly Fishing". He will be followed in August by Dick Pobst, Michigan's best known fly fisherman, with "Fly Fishing for Steelhead and Chinook Salmon". In addition, Pat expects to introduce Fly Tying and Rod Building classes after Labor Day. Casting lessons are available anytime.

(See back cover)



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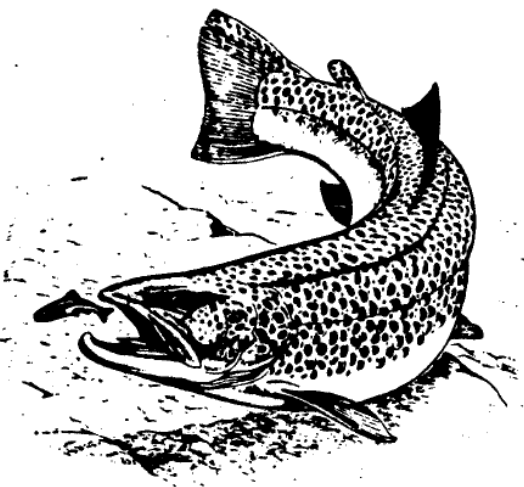
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At the moment he is developing a three or four day week end late in October on the Pere Marquette for Steelhead and the Muskegon for Chinook Salmon. Any takers?

Pat and Betsey, TROUT UNLIMITED wishes you well.

May your line be tight and your creel light.



Pat