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Subject: : Conservation

Topic: : good article on brookie restoration (w/ image of WVA brookie, big as a largemouth)

Re: good article on brookie restoration (w/ image of WVA brookie, big as a largemouth)

Author: : KenU

Date: : 2013/2/20 15:55:27

URL:

I have done a fair amount of research on the brook trout of Pennsylvania. We did grow them up to about 20 inches in the past, both in the limestone streams and our large freestone streams.

Brookies in the limestone streams got big - just as brown trout do today - because the water stayed cold year round and there was plenty of food. When brown trout were introduced into these streams they took to them very well...too well, because they almost completely displaced the brookies. Not entirely though; we still have some pretty fair-sized brookies in Fishing Creek where both species thrive.

The story of the big freestones is a little more complicated: According to old angling literature, brookies living in these streams only spent about half their time in the big water. As the big streams warmed in the summer they would move upstream into tributaries and headwaters where the water stayed cold. And you can bet they survived by eating little brookies as they went. After spawning in the fall they moved back downstream to the bigger waters to winter over. They fed heavily on minnows and crayfish and the massive spring hatches. This gave them an advantage over the upstream fish and allowed them to reach sizes we can only imagine today. Foot-long brookies were not unusual.

The massive logging of the forests obviously caused this life-cycle to become much less viable. I do wonder, however, what would happen if we stopped stocking and plundering some of these lower stream reaches for a while. I have caught native brookies all the way down to the swimming hole at Ole Bull Park as late as mid-June, and they seemed to be doing just fine. And stocked trout do just fine during the period (October - June) when the old-time brookies once utilized these waters.