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Subject: : Paflyfish General Forum

Topic: : Large (Dead) Brookies

Re: Large (Dead) Brookies

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URL:

Like anything else, there are a lot of indicators. None of them foolproof. If a fish has all or none, things are about as certain as they get. If they have some but not others, it can be tough.

My #1 for brookies is probably the white/black line on the anal (and caudal) fins. If it's dark black and bright white, with a sharp, straight line distinguishing the two, it's likely wild. If it's a muddy divide, or the black is kind of marbled into the white, it's very likely stocked. Of course there are tweeners too, such as sharp divides that aren't perfectly straight lines.

Fin condition is a good one. Especially anal fins and tail. But occasionally wild fish do have rough fins, especially older fish. And occasionally stocked fish have good fins, especially if stocked as fingerlings or long-term holdovers.

And wild fish can often have fairly transparent fins. True on browns too. Stockies are usually opaque. But wild can be opaque too, so it's more a "if it's transparent, it's wild, if opaque, who knows" thing.

The anus itself can be a decent indicator of stocked. A distended anus is almost always stocked. If not, well, it doesn't tell you much, because not ALL stockies have this, though wild fish almost never have it.

Overall shape. Stockies are more football shaped, often with big bodies and small heads. Whereas wild fish often have larger heads in comparison with body size. But this is only a stocked/wild indicator indirectly, and is easily fooled. It's an indication of growth rate, not origin. If a fish feeds well and grows fast, a wild one can have the small head, thick body. And a long term holdover will continue to grow it's head while slimming down as it spends time in the stream.

Genetics are harder on brookies than on browns, as wild brookie populations are highly variable. But in general, stockies have a high number of red spots. If it doesn't have many, it's likely wild. If it has a lot, it's not much of an indicator either way.

Color is a poor indicator. Fresh stocked fish are pretty pale. But after 6+ months in a stream can color up nicely. Also, wild fish in deep, dark muddy holes or in large waterways can be pretty pale.

I have noticed the "mustache" you talk about. But I'd say it's only on about 50% of the wild brookies I catch, though pretty rare on stockies. Seems more common in certain areas of the state than in others. Some wild ones also have a dark "cut" under the mouth, like where the red would be on a cutthroat.

And of course, circumstance shouldn't be ignored. If it's a tweener, the location and situation can turn a true tweener into a lean one way or the other, and bring others that you would otherwise be confident in back into

question.

But none of the above, including circumstance, are foolproof. Hence, I am NEVER 100% sure on ANY fish. There are only degrees of confidence.