

Subject: : Paflyfish General Forum

Topic: : Big native!

Re: Big native!

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URL:

For two consecutive years (I believe 2007 and 2008), I had the haunting experience of encountering several 15-18" brookies in the wild. I never caught them, and even if I did, I don't think I could unequivocally say if they were wild or four-year-plus holdovers. They haunt me because they exist(ed) and I never had the chance to positively ID them. The colors and patterns on the fish were absolutely stunning - vibrant red fins tipped with white, green vermiculations and beautiful spot patterns. They were just what I imagined a large wild brookie should look like, but again, my imagination does not necessarily dictate that they were wild fish.

Two encounters were close up. One occurred where a small feeder stream flowed into the larger stream. The base of the stream was shale and it was no more than a foot or two deep along the edge, where a large old tree was in the water. After thoroughly fishing the run, I move up through the water, only to be stunned to see a large (18"+) brookie shift out from under the log. It was no more than three feet away, in shallow clear water. It hung there, for a moment, enough for my buddy I was with to see it too, and then it made a dash about ten feet upstream, into an undercut bank.

The second encounter was fishing a larger pool, with rock ledge walls. There are all kinds of nooks and crannies for fish to hang out in and I watched my brother drift something along the edge of the pool and then watched dumbfounded as a 15"+ brookie cruised out to inspect whatever he was drifting, deemed it inferior, and dropped back to its lair. This area of the pool also had shallow, clear water, and we had the four-foot eagle eye vantage point to inspect the fish.

So yes, I have no doubt such fish exist, but I think its extremely rare that they are caught on freestoners. And, even if they do exist, it would be hard to unequivocally prove that they were wild. Wild or holdover, that doesn't stop me from pursuing them..