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Subject: : Paflyfish General Forum

Topic: : monster trout.

Re: monster trout.

Author: : Mike

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URL:

With only 1.5 percent of the wild brown trout in Pa being 16 inches long and longer (not including Erie tribbs, Kinzua tail-race, Yough, Lehigh R, Delaware R), random sampling is not going to cut it. To have the best chance of catching large BT it would be best to accept that they are clumped in their distribution. Waters that have produced big fish in the past will tend to do so again because of the physical habitat, forage base, and probable limited competition. They also tend to be of at least moderate fertility, although not exclusively so.

A proxy for limited competition is less than ideal habitat for an abundance of trout, but fair to good habitat for large trout. Where good big fish habitat is present but forage is limited there may be many "holes" that are vacant at any one point in time because there are less big fish than the physical habitat would suggest. Large fish may have to move some surprising distances on a frequent basis in order to find appropriate sizes or abundance a of forage for maintenance and growth. Anglers unfamiliar with the forage situation in a given stream may mistake the lack of larger fish in good habitat for the effects of harvest or poaching.

Heavy harvest of smaller fish may help by removing competition for limited forage or habitat. That harvest may be associated with stocking and high fishing pressure. Stocking and high fishing pressure may not harm the big fish population perhaps due to the behavior of large trout, just as it did not in Logan Branch during its prime and as it does not appear to do in a trib to the Lehigh that consistently produces large browns..

Fast growth rates may also be helpful in that there is less time exposure to factors that result in natural mortality before fish achieve a larger size. However, that has to be weighed against the general observation in fisheries that fast growing fish are shorter lived. Nevertheless, fast growing fish are robust fish and their high fat content aids these fish in overwinter survival.

Given the stockpiling of mid-size or smaller fish that occurs in limestoners under C&R regs, I would avoid most C&R areas. I said most, not all. Fishing for big trout is often better outside of and downstream from the C&R stretches, such as in the Letort and Codorus. As for Big Spring, it is a marginal brown trout stream, but it has produced some very large browns despite the relatively small Brown trout population.