

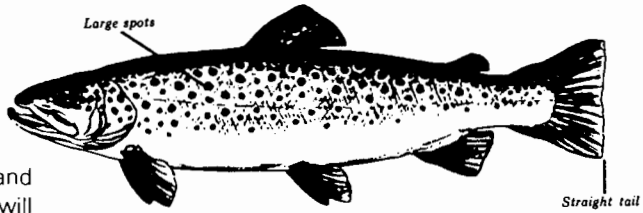
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Natural History Notes



MIKE DOMBECK grew up in the Moose Lake area and graduated from Hayward High School and the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He has a B.S. degree in Biology and an M.S. degree in Aquatic Biology. He has taught Zoology at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and is currently a fisheries biologist with the U.S. Forest Service, living in Munising, Michigan. Mike has also been an area fishing guide since his high school days.

THE BROWN TROUT



The brown trout is a most intriguing and popular species. Every experienced angler will agree that the brown is discouragingly shy and wary and one of the most finicky of all the trout species. All the tricks in the book are hurled at the brown until the water is given up as barren, then a few hours later a lunker is taken. At other times, however, the brown can be easily caught using almost any lure.

In the late 1800's the brown trout was introduced into the United States. Some of the stocked individuals came from Germany and are often called German browns. Other stock came from Loch Leven, Scotland, and are called Loch Leven trout. Experts have agreed that various strains of this species exist in Europe but the mixing of strains in the United States has all but obliterated these different strains.

The brown is a true trout like the rainbow and Atlantic salmon, while the brook and lake trout are not real trout but are char. The easiest way for the angler to distinguish the trout and salmon from the char group is by general body markings. The char have light markings on a darker background and very small scales, whereas the trout and salmon have dark markings against a lighter background and larger scales.

Browns have olive brown or greenish sides blending to a yellowish white on the belly. Their sides are covered with large dark spots interspersed with large red-orange spots with pale margins. Numerous dark spots are present on the dorsal fin while the tail fin has a few spots confined to the upper half. This distinguishes the brown from the rainbow trout whose tail fin is entirely covered with spots. The brown is distinguished from the brook trout by its large dark

spots in contrast to the worm-like streaks and light spots of the brookie. Another easily distinguishable characteristic of the brown trout is its square tail fin while other species have a deeper V-notched tail.

The increasingly shorter days and cooler temperatures of fall induce spawning which takes place from late September through early October. The males become brightly colored and develop a kype or protruding, hooked lower jaw. Brown trout which inhabit lakes are called lake run browns, while others inhabit fast flowing streams their entire life. Flowing or upwelling water is an essential for spawning. The female fans out a depression or redd while the male fights off intruders. Eggs and sperm are deposited simultaneously with a vibrating motion. The female then stirs up the bottom of the redd to cover the eggs. This entire process may be repeated several times until all the eggs are laid. About 50 days later the young trout emerge and will reach a length of 4-6 inches during their first year. By the end of their second year they may be 10 inches long. The Wisconsin record brown trout is 29-1/2 pounds. Browns 2 to 5 pounds are taken by anglers and occasionally a lunker may be a surprise catch -- and then, what a thrill! The brown may not leap like the rainbow but it pulls like a bulldog. And it is excellent fried over a crackling fire after a challenging day of fishing.

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