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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 presently a staff member of the University of Minnesota's Bell Museum of Natural History. Mike has also been an area fishing guide since his high school days.

THE TROUT FISHERMAN'S FAVORITE — BROOK TROUT



Of all the species of the salmon family inhabiting our waters the brook trout remains the favorite among trout fishermen. Why else would a fisherman tolerate the brush, wood ticks, mosquitoes, and rainy days in pursuit of a "brookie." For its size, many consider it to be a better fighter than any other fish. Its elusive nature provides a challenge for even the well-seasoned angler.

The brook trout, also known as the speckled trout, is one of our most brightly colored fishes. Its wormlike markings and white lower fin edges distinguish it from its close relatives, the brown and the rainbow trout. The males possess more red and are always more colorful than the females, especially as the breeding season approaches. Brookies taken over bright shallow bottom are usually silvery, with pale spots, while fish taken from beneath logs or shady undercut banks are much darker with deep pink to red spots. Trout taken from spring ponds are often more colorful than those taken from streams. The variation in flesh color is due to their diet. When feeding on water fleas or crayfish the meat takes on a deep pink color. Tests have shown that the pinker the meat, the higher the oil content, resulting in richer flavor.

The increasingly shorter days and cooler temperatures of fall induce spawning which takes place from late September through October. Flowing or upwelling water is another essential. A round depression from one to two feet in diameter is fanned out by the female, while the male is kept busy fighting off intruders. Immediately after fertilization the female agitates the bottom and covers the eggs with several inches of small gravel. About 50 days later the young emerge and will grow to about four inches by the next winter. Brookies are short lived compared to their close relatives. The expected life span is three to four years. A twelve-inch trout is about four years old. A six-pound "old-timer" was found to be seven years old.

Few dishes are better than a pan full of golden brown fried brookies, making them a valuable resource. Brook trout need cool, clear, unpolluted and undisturbed streams and spring ponds for good reproduction and survival. Let's all do our share in the preservation of our waters.



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