

Trout Unlimited

Little River Chapter

President's Thoughts

Well this didn't turn out like we expected! We were all looking forward to a great year. Some of our plans will be postponed possibly until 2021. I want to acknowledge the hard work of our board members and volunteers. We had fantastic speakers lined up for all of the monthly meetings thanks to the hard work of Charles James. Richard Barnes works countless hours coordinating our volunteer opportunities, Larry Davis planned our camping and fishing trips, Ernest Frey heads up the Pistol Creek Project and educational opportunities through Maryville Parks and Recreation. Stream clean-ups and picnics were planned and we were ready to go. So let's take a big breath and tie a few more flies. The Board of Directors met to brain storm and discuss potential events that we can have that will follow the governor's social guidelines. Needless to say our plans will evolve as the guidelines evolve. If you have some creative ideas please share them with us. We will eventually have meetings again and we will also have opportunities to volunteer. In the meantime let's



**Who thinks the inset photo is
Steve with the largest trout ever
recorded in the GSMNP?**



nurture our friendships and hone our skills. Give a couple of friends a call and go fishing. Fishing is the main reason we got involved in Trout Unlimited to begin with. So, we really haven't lost our primary motivation at all. This is not the time to throw in the towel it's just time to adjust and renew our faith in each other. We will be seeing one another again soon. I hope to see you on the streams and rivers with a stringer of stories and pictures.

Be safe, be well and have fun.

-Steve Darnell

5 Tips To Catch More Summer Trout

Thanks to Chris Schaffer

[See Web Link](#)

Summer can be the best of times or the worst of times to catch some summer trout. Use these tips to beat the heat and use the weather to your advantage. With weather conditions the best they'll be all year, you won't find a more comfortable time to target trout than the summer months.



However, the season also brings more anglers to reservoirs, ponds and natural lakes than any other time of year. And while trout will likely be active, you may need to employ a few tactics to catch more fish than the guy next to you.

Here are five tips to help you catch more summer trout than you have in the past.

1) FISH EARLY AND LATE

During the warmer months, don't discount the idea of fishing early and late in the day. There are several reasons for this, and some deserve more of an explanation than simply, "Trout feed at first light and again near dusk."

Consider that during the summer months, the most common deterrent is sunlight. With the sun hot, bright and overwhelming most of the day, trout are more apt to head into deeper portions of the water column. Often you'll notice trout creeping to the top 10 feet of water from an hour before sunrise to 8 a.m., and then again from 5 p.m. until an hour or two after dusk. Not that trout won't



feed throughout the day, but they are most active when the sunlight is the weakest. When water temperatures rise to peak summer levels, trout are often more sluggish. That's part of the reason why it's best to find early and late portions of the day to approach them.

Another factor is activity. Whether you are talking about a popular well-stocked reservoir, a local pond or a natural lake in the high country, summertime spells peak use. Throughout the day, there will be more boat activity, float-tubers, kayakers, swimmers, kids throwing rocks, dogs chasing after sticks and people feeding ducks than any other time of year.

This forces trout into deeper water, keeping them from feeding actively through much of the day. When focusing on when to fish, something else to consider is the moon phase. When the moon is full or nearly full, many trout will feed throughout the night when it's cooler, disturbances are fewer and there's still plenty of light to make prey visible. In some portions of the West, where it's legal to fish at night, it's a good idea to try trolling through the twilight hours. You'll quickly realize that night fishing can be very productive. If night fishing isn't legal or you aren't keen on the idea, simply try to avoid fishing within a few days of the full moon. There can definitely be a lull in the action.

2) FIND THE THERMOCLINE

Anglers often overlook the value of the thermocline. Hands down, it's one of the most important factors when looking to catch summer trout.

In any body of water, the thermocline is a zone of greatest temperature change. For those of us who aren't scientists, all you need to know is the thermocline is a trout magnet. In summer, when surface temperatures can rise well above of 80 degrees, the thermocline is a sanctuary for trout because it harbors cooler water and food. To elaborate, in the summer when the surface temperature might be 80 degrees throughout the first 15 feet of the water column, there's a layer below the warm water. This layer is considered the middle layer -- or scientifically, the thermocline, that section of the water column that experiences a drastic drop in temperature. The thermocline is the smallest of the three layers in lakes, ponds and reservoirs, but will possess the widest range of temperature. The bottom layer harbors the coldest water and is consistent, like the upper layer. But the bottom layer doesn't hold as many actively feeding trout as the thermocline does.

A thermocline develops in most lakes, ponds and reservoirs in the West. However, most of the time it doesn't form until early to mid-summer as warmer water floats on top of the cold water. By mid-summer, that middle layer -- the thermocline -- becomes more visible and stands out as a greater fish-

holding zone. Algae and other zooplankton hide out in this zone, while pond smelt, shad, minnows and other baitfish stay near the upper and lower layers of the thermocline. Baitfish and game fish are commonly found in the thermocline throughout the warmer months, partially because of ideal water temperatures and also because their food is here.

In summer, you'll increase catch rates by trolling spoons, stickbaits, spinners and night crawlers through the thermocline. It's also effective to drift salmon eggs, dough baits, worms, crickets and grasshoppers.

Locating the thermocline isn't as challenging as it might seem. Most reservoirs take daily or weekly readings to keep track of it, and the officials often make their findings public. High-end fish finders can also indicate where the zone is. Your best bet may be to call local marinas, tackle shops and lake offices to ask how deep the thermocline is. Most can give you up-to-date information, which will help you catch more trout. If you are a troller, you'll probably need downriggers or lead-core line to fish the thermocline, which

wanders from 30 to 150 feet or deeper, depending on water temperature, elevation, recent wind and weather patterns, the size of the lake or reservoir and its depth.

The thermocline can vary by week. From July through September, this will likely be the zone you'll want to target for the best trout-fishing action. When working the thermocline, experiment. Try running some lures near the top of it, others in the middle and a few towards the bottom. Once you discover where the fish are most active, then it's safe to concentrate your efforts close to that depth.

3) TARGET TOP AREAS

During the summer, knowing where to fish is imperative. Regardless of what water you fish, there are certain locations that draw trout. These spots can differ from lowland reservoirs to high mountain lakes, but knowing where to target can mean success over failure. Whether you're fishing in an urban area, lowland reservoir, mountain lake or natural pond, two spots you'll want to focus on during the heat of summer are inlets and outlets.

These areas serve to transport oxygen, food, cool water and nutrients into the lakes. Trout are naturally drawn to these sections. "We don't get a lot of summer rains in the West. But when we do, it brings a lot of nutrients in," said Buzz Ramsey, a former Luhr Jensen designer who's now in charge of freshwater fishing for Berkeley in the West. "If you get a shower or a thunderstorm, you are going to



want to fish the inlets. "Oxygenated water almost always comes in with inlet water, but if you get a little extra push of water, the fish know, Ramsey said. "They are often there anyway. But if you get that extra push of water, it's going to bring more bugs and insects in." Whenever you fish in the summer months, target inlets. This can be achieved by tossing salmon eggs, night crawlers, spoons or spinners from the bank, or the same lures from a boat anchored offshore. Springs are the most overlooked spot in all waters that harbor trout, but especially in high mountain lakes and natural ponds.

Most of these waters have springs. They can be small and hard to locate or they can be strong and highly visible. Often the easiest way to find a spring or upwelling is to look for bubbles. Lake operators should also know where these areas are. Springs tend to attract trout for several reasons,



the most notable being that they bring much-needed cool water and oxygen to the system. They also serve as nurseries for juvenile fish and baitfish.

"Sometimes where there are areas of upwelling coming into the lake, like seeps where groundwater is seeping in and underwater springs, you'll find a lot of trout," Ramsey said. Once you locate springs or upwelling sites, you have two choices. Trolling lures through the spring is one option, or simply anchor and use baitfish. "Those trout are going to be fairly close to the bottom if the water is warm," explained Ramsey. "But

they will come higher in the water column, particularly in the evening. A lot of times, the big fish will come up near the surface in the evening." He targets springs at high mountain lakes the same way that he does in lowland reservoirs. "I start off my season fishing the lowland lakes, because I can't get to the high mountain lakes. Then in the summer, I fish my same tactics over at the high mountain lakes." Ramsey said his tactics don't change much, but his location and where he puts his focus do change. "With springs, however, you fish them the same, no matter where they are," he said. Dams are another spot that lures trout in the summer months, especially in lowland reservoirs where water temperatures are likely to rise in the summer. Dams attract trout for several reasons. The three most important are that:

- They maintain deep water
- They serve as habitat for baitfish and other food sources for trout
- There is colder water available.

Having deeper, cooler water is a given. But many anglers overlook the value of dams as a home for other species. Dams provide havens for small baitfish, crawdads, insects and other smaller fish that trout eat.

These species use the rocks on the face of the dam as protection from predators, and in turn, trout come to these areas to feed. If you spend more time targeting dams in the warmer months, you're likely to see your catch rates increase.

4) EXPERIMENT

Summertime tends to be the best time of year to find active trout, which means it's also a great time to experiment. By trying lures and baits that you don't normally use, you are bound to stumble upon patterns, sizes and colors that will increase your probability of catching more trout in the waters you're fishing already. "In the summer, the trout are the most active," said professional trout fishing



guide Mike Nielsen, a Pautzke, Bomber, Rebel and Silver Thread pro staffer. "They have a high metabolism. You'll find them feeding on a variety of baits. You can get them on pretty much anything." Nielsen said he uses more types of lures than at any other time of year.

Variety is the key. Use an array of sizes, colors and patterns until you find one that works. This could mean testing spoons, spinners, stickbaits, small swimbaits and flasher and dodger combos. "Summer is when I get away with using my largest baits. The feeding fish are looking for a big meal.

They are active. They aren't afraid to chase big baits at high speeds and they are feeding more consistently, too," Nielsen said. "That's the beauty of summer. If they aren't biting on something they normally would, you can try other stuff. Try odd colors. Summer is the time to use those kind of lures."

If you are looking to catch trophy fish, don't restrict yourself to one area of the lake. Try fishing offshore and use your fish finder to locate active trout. You might have better luck approaching single, suspended trout rather than large schools of fish. "Even though most people fish on structure, I'll look for suspended fish," said Nielsen. "Those fish have been pulled away from shore and are out there feeding. I find a lot of big trout in the summer months away from shore and out in the open water, suspended." Seeking out suspended fish is easier than it might sound. Suspended fish aren't near the surface feeding, nor are they hunkered on the bottom or pinned close to structure. A suspended fish isn't always a sign of a trout that's active or feeding, yet it's a good indicator that the fish is in that portion of



the water column to feed. For the most part, it's likely there to chase down schools of bait or smaller trout. "When I see suspended fish, I'll drop my downriggers to the exact depth I see that fish," Nielsen said. "And I might make a few passes at that fish before I move on, because I know that fish is suspended because it's hungry."

5) AVOIDING PRESSURE

Common advice in trout fishing is the famous saying, "Don't leave fish to find fish." However, when fishing pressure becomes high in the summer months, trout can be overwhelmed and might develop lockjaw.



This occurs when too many boats are dragging lures through an area, or when the shoreline is packed with anglers tossing spinners, spoons and soaking bait repeatedly in one portion of the lake. When this happens, my advice would be to search for a different water to target in your area. This might mean having to drive further, but it can also drastically improve your fishing experience. Too much pressure can put a damper on fishing, and you don't want to get caught up on this situation. So many waters in California, Oregon and

Washington harbor trout year 'round that you won't have a problem finding spots with less fishing pressure. Another option would be to move to different portions of the water you are currently fishing. Articles in Web sites, newspapers and magazines often refer to a single hotspot, and that place will get overrun by anglers. But there are always more than just a few great spots to target. Locating sections of the waters that haven't been advertised lately is a sure way to find aggressive trout.

Keep in mind, trout aren't restricted to one part of the water. During the summer, you'll have them around springs, near dams, off ledges, close to inlets and outlets and near marinas and launch ramps (because they are stocked here). Therefore, any of these spots are go-to areas when anglers are overrunning other areas of the lake.

Happy fishing.



Believe it or not, that's it. We wish you well and hope you have a wonderful summer outdoors. And remember, try to leave no trace!!

-your friends in the Little River Chapter