

Big browns tail-walk on the water at night



JOE FITZGERALD CHASING PISCES

It was an August evening years ago, when my family stopped to have supper in a little picnic park near the Wentworth ski hill. A slow-moving brook wound its way through the park, and after we finished our sandwiches, my dad got his fishing rod out of the trunk to let us "wet a line."

My little brother took the first turn, and all he had on the line was an old, gaudy, rubber worm. Even at that age, I knew there was not much chance of catching something with that. Well, my brother cast over the brook almost to the other bank. Before the rubber worm could even sink, the water detonated as if a torpedo had slammed into it.

We all freaked out as he battled this monster. It leaped out of the water many times, and when it finally came to rest at the stream's edge, we all huddled around to see what it was. It looked like a salmon, but my father assured me it was a trout.

When we got home, a neighbour who had grown up near the Stewiacke River confirmed its identity: "It's a brown trout."

Brown trout are probably the

most sought-after trout for anglers around the world. The reason is simple: they're found all over the world. Originally from Europe, brown trout have been successfully transplanted to North America, and they are found in record sizes from Chile to New Zealand. They are tough, hardy game fish, and can handle warmer, more acidic, and more polluted waters than their brook trout cousins. That is why they are prolific in rivers such as the Cornwallis and the Stewiacke, which flow through major farmland.

Brown trout in Nova Scotia are famously nocturnal. For exciting brown-trout angling, I've been told, fish at night.

One salmon angler stopped near River John on a summer evening just as it was getting dark. He had a huge bug fly pattern tied on, and as soon as it hit the water, a five-pound brown trout hammered it. After he caught that trophy, his bug was immediately hit by another giant brown in the same spot.

Another told me of staking out a spot on the Stewiacke River and fishing with mouse flies at night. Casting across the river, he said, he dragged the imitation mouse into the water. It was instantly smashed by a brown trout.

He said he didn't see the trout, but heard it "tail walk" across the water. I haven't had that experience yet, but I've got some bugs and mice in my fly box now, and a heavy duty flashlight.

Joe Fitzgerald is a freelance writer living in Halifax.

**They are tough,
hardy game fish,
and can handle
warmer, more
acidic, and more
polluted waters
than their brook
trout cousins.**

BROWN TROUT FACTS



❶ Unlike native speckled trout, which are actually char, brown trout are a true trout. They were introduced in the 1920s and '30s from Germany and Scotland, although an unconfirmed report dates the first brown trout introduced to North America to 1906 in Guysborough Harbour on Nova Scotia's eastern shore.

❷ Although aggressive and voracious predators, brown trout rarely show themselves in the daytime. They typically hide in deep riverside pockets and pools and emerge at dusk.

❸ Before fishing at night for brown trout, be aware that only some water systems allow night fishing. Some of the best are River John, Stewiacke,

Cornwallis, and Mersey Rivers. Check the guidelines. (www.gov.ns.ca/nsaf/sportfishing/)

❹ Scout locations in the day for best brown trout hide outs. Also, take note of potential hazards like muskrat holes and exposed roots, etc. Never go alone.

❺ Cast big flies such as mice and bugs, or top-water lures like poppers (where it's legal) upstream of potential brown trout hiding spots. Let the fly or lure drift over the spot creating a "V" when seen from below.

❻ Brown trout are close relatives of Atlantic salmon and often mistaken for them. Be sure of your catch as salmon require a special licence.