

Terrestrials tempt trout as summer starts to wane



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CHASING PISCES**

The slow, steady hum of a cicada droned like a power line and was accompanied by a relentless chorus of crickets. The tall grass and short brush exploded with life as I pushed through. A battalion of grasshoppers leaped ahead of me while swarms of bees and butterflies bustled from flower to flower. I stepped around a massive anthill, its diligent soldiers engaged in frantic activity. Caterpillars inched their way over leaves, avoiding patrolling wasps, and patient spiders tended their webs, ready to pounce on the hordes of passing flies, bugs and beetles.

I reached the river's edge and studied the shoreline. Hapless insects and spiders floated by, some struggling valiantly, others drifting aimlessly toward oblivion after giving up the fight. I picked a spot just upstream from a small pool and waded into position. I had a small ant pattern tied on. It was barely visible on the water as it floated down into the pool.

Mid- to late summer is a tough time to catch trout in Nova Scotia, as the speckles and rainbows that have not migrated into the coastal bays and estuaries as sea

runs have most likely retreated into deeper, cooler water or higher mountain streams, where there is more cover and oxygenated water. Brown trout have more staying power, but tend to be nocturnal, and to get a rise during daylight is truly a feat of prowess — or more likely, luck.

But as insects and other creatures rev into high gear preparing for winter, they provide a unique feeding opportunity for trout. Terrestrials, or insects that spend their entire life cycle on land, inevitably end up in the water from time to time. And drifting protein is an awful temptation to even the most cautious trout.

Having no luck with the ant pattern, I tied on a bulky grasshopper fly. My cast tried to imitate an errant jump from a streamside field. The leggy presentation entered the pool, and I hoped it was hovering above some holding trout.

If you happen to be at the right place at the right time, you can take advantage of natural terrestrials.

Wasps may be swarming on given day, or flying ants may be hatching. If you have imitating flies, these moments can prove as fruitful as the mayfly hatch.

After an hour, a tiny bee pattern brought a rise and renewed my faith in the pool. A little

while later, a cricket pattern produced a strike and a one-pound resident brook trout.

I released the speckled gem back into the pool, where it could return to watching the ceaseless throng of terrestrials floating overhead.

Joe Fitzgerald is a freelance writer living in Halifax.

TERRESTRIAL FACTS

● Unlike aquatic insects, terrestrials live their entire life cycle on land. It is usually by accident that they end up in the water, and therefore are not a major food source for trout. However, in mid- to late summer, trout sporadically feed on terrestrials as the insects become more abundant.

● Terrestrial fly patterns are dry flies. There are many versions of grasshoppers, crickets, ants and bees. There are also patterns imitating beetles and spiders. Fishing Fever in Halifax has a great assortment of flies for the beginning or advanced fly fisherman.

● When fishing terrestrials, give the fly slight twitches to imitate struggle, or fish with a dead drift. On windy days, try casting further out into river pools or lakes, as terrestrials will be carried past the shoreline.

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