

Muskegon River Trophy Brown Trout



Muskegon Brown Trout History

- Stocked in late 1800's with German strain browns
- By the 60's-through 80's, Swisher/Richards/Pobst were catching huge browns on the dry fly
- Hatches have become "out of control" with mayflies, caddis, stones
- New tailwater 2009-new cold water bubbler at Croton Dam



- The Muskegon is a trophy brown fishery despite liberal regs. Has the potential to be Big Horn/ Delaware.



- 2005 saw browns like this showing up. There are 187 cold limestone spring seeps on Muskegon from Thornapple to Henning. The nature of the steep gradient river forms the cold water springs.



- Trout have a 1 to 2 inch growth rate because of the tremendous food sources of Micro and Macro benthic aquatic invertebrates. The smorgashboard of diet right now in June is massive(explain)



- When Rich Aruela was stripping in his tandem egg and Merlino's Sculpin Hex flies at the end of his drift, his rod began to throb and caught him totally off guard. Being their guide, at first I thought it was a good dark buck Steelhead that liked to chase stripping and swinging flies. But with the water at a balmy 33 degrees F and a cold day with the air temperature in the teens, Steelhead don't usually chase the fly upstream that well.

- The fish fought very well with solid head thumping, but something didn't feel quite like a steelhead. At first I thought it was a large spring pre-spawn fat and huge Walleye, which can approach 10 pounds in late February, early March. As I was getting ready to get my net out, I screamed "Oh..my..God! I saw the double red spots and I knew right away it was an enormous Brown.

The Sculpin/Hex was firmly buried in the side of its mouth. As we "High 5'ed" and admired its beauty, I observed the spotting on this fish while photographing it. It has the quintessential double-linked red spots of the Gilchrist Brown Trout that the DNR stocked years ago in the Muskegon. These Just think, if we managed the river for trophy Brown Trout and stocked the right strains, who knows how many large holdovers we could achieve. Some will say this is a "Lake-Run: fish -- I disagree! I've caught hundreds of Lake Run Browns and all share a common identification factor. They lack vibrant color and don't have the double-lined red spotting. They are also more drab and silvery in color like a Sea Run Brown Trout. Brown Trout were found to have a very high holdover rate, be extremely wary and could tolerate warmer water periods than other Brown and Rainbow Trout.

- Unfortunately since these fish were planted and disappeared for a year the meat fisherman were not catching them. Since the DNR's policy is to manage the resources for a stock-catch-keep philosophy, they yanked the stocking program on these fish on Muskegon. Mysteriously, a year or two later these Gilchrist fish showed up being very large and very healthy. That is the nature of this strain. So it would behoove us, given the complexity of the Muskegon River food chain to stock a Trout that has trophy sized potential as opposed to one that is put in the five gallon bucket as a 10 incher.
- In our tough financial times here in Michigan, it's time to be thinking of tourism and what a better way to attract more out-of-state traveling seasoned Anglers than with large trophy sized Brown Trout! It costs no money to create this fishery, just a pen to create regulations that would foster this type of fishery. Besides, 10 inch Rainbows in a five gallon bucket taste better than Big Browns for the meat-minded Fisherman! **BON APPETIT!**



- *A 16 Inch Gilchrist Brown Trout From the Muskegon Years Ago with Double-red spots. Could this fish be that monster in its adolescence? Something to think about.*





- Mayfly life has taken a staggering increase as of this year, 2009.
- Here is the gray drake. John Miller Image



- Gray Drake spinner flight as of last Saturday at 7 PM.Unbelievable!



- The trout's bellies become huge and fill up quickly for rapid growth.



- Story of the choking brown trout in March.



- New mayfly emergence take place each year. Stenos, Epeorus, Heptagenia, Callibaetis, etc.-now tricos. This is the result of 16 years of “run-of river” FERC RE-LISCENCING.



- Resident Rainbows can approach 21 inches like this Eagle Lake strain. Muskegon stocked annually with 80,000 rainbows and 40,000 browns near Newaygo. 40,000 Gihlchrist strain Browns stocked near lake. They are cutt/bows(explain)



- Large Muskegon Brown taken on Isonychia hatch.



- Isonychia –meaty mahogany steak for the trout!



- Gorgeous Brown taken below salmon beds gorging on eggs by young Marley from Toledo.



- A fall resident brown-lake-runs are more silvery in color.



- Muskegon fishes selectively like a spring creek tailwater



- Precise imitation and fly patterns necessary.



- Magic time on the Muskegon-dusk and bug heaven!



- A z-bang gray drake spinner tied by Matt Supinski.



- Gorgeous Gihlchrist strain brown- we need to preserve these fish!



- Huge hawg! Caught in 2008 by Jeff Bacon on the Gray Drake spinner.



- Guide John Miller with a slab male on the Cahill Hatch.



- John Haggerty from New York City with a 24 inch brown on a #16 Hydropsyche caddis Pupae.



- Muskegon has stunning sections of river for fly fishing.



- WHAT WE ARE PROPOSING TO DNR FOR REGS CHANGE-2010
- New category-"experimental trophy brown trout fishery"
- Slot limit -2 fish, 10-14 inches-all fish below 10 inches and over 14 inches must be released.Season opened from last Saturday in April till Sept.30th.3-5 year experimental periods with evaluations,DNR ELECTRO-FISHING, and online surveys from anglers.



- Come and see us at the Gray Drake Lodge.www.graydrake.com !