

## where the Guides Fish

A dedicated trout fishing guide is also a dedicated fisherman, when he is not fishing for profit he fishes for fun, when the fishing is right on a certain stream, if he is not engaged, you'll find him fishing like his income depended on it, but really just ~~for~~ fun, because he loves to fish.

This phenomenon I've observed among trout fishing guides, for I see them and talk with them year after year as they migrate to streams such as the Firehole river in Yellowstone Park. The Madison river in Montana or the Henry's Fork of Snake river in Idaho.

Late May or  
early June the ringing telephone will  
produce a voice without any

ceremony saying "hey Bud have the hatches started on the Firehole"? Hatches of May flies occur earlier on this classic little river in spring before most others in the mountainous area do. At an elevation of 7200 feet the air temperature may not be hot at this time of year but the fishing is. Guides around the country know this and arrange to be on hand often before streams in their neck of the woods are productive.

Located in a National Park where there is no agricultural siltation or industrial pollution, the Firehole river is always clear enough for ~~fly~~ fly fishing. Spring run-off this river as well as several others in Yellowstone National Park is restricted to fly fishing. Spring run-off causes a slight coffee color and the flow is above normal but not so much that fishing is affected.

(2)

This condition produces the exceptional fishing that lures the guides here. Nymphs and streamers bring out lunkers not usually seen and when the hatches come off the trout are visible feeding everywhere.

The Firehole is a small river by western standards. Meandering meadow stream with abundant food and featuring brown and rainbow trout. Water temperatures are warmer than the glacier or spring feed streams. The geysers and hot springs bordering the river raise the average water temperature but not beyond the range of excellent trout production.

The warmer water provides a longer growing period for the aquatic plants that is responsible for the myriads of insects, the

trout so dearly love. If you haven't experienced these sun darkening hatches and sucking rises of feeding trout then you won't understand why trout fishing guides sneak off from home to glory in the action.

Bonus attractions of fishing on the Firehole is the presence of feeding wildlife, Elk, Buffalo and of course bears. Sometimes trout fishing guides are known for unbelievable fish stories, but they can also relate stories equally as unbelievable about happenings on the stream. Incidents such as a cow elk so curious that it was tough to avoid hooking her on the backcast, a black bear suddenly swimming along side you while you stood chest deep mid-stream desperately trying for a perfect float to a head brawler of a brown trout, a grizzly bear crossing a few

yards downstream. Speaking of grizzlies, reasonable alertness means absolutely no danger from this bear. They respect you, you respect them too.

~~The~~ Water temperature of the Firehole brings this stream on early in the mountains in spring and slows it early in summer season too. Big trout feed on heavy hatches occurring at night and will not be seen often again until late September and through out October. These migrating guides that have finished their guiding seasons elsewhere appear again for the real cream of this fine river. Dry fly fishing is again very exciting here and the guide's appetite is set for this ~~kind of activity~~ method of fly angling that he hasn't seen for weeks elsewhere. Of course between hatches the trout are again taking nymphs out.

streamers with the same  
enthusiasm as in late May  
June and early July.

Guides that get their  
fisherman into good trout fishing  
don't have secret places to  
fish, but have secrets of what  
period of the season and what  
time of day a portion of  
a stream will have feeding  
active trout. The guide  
knows when to fish a stream  
or a specific area of that  
stream.

This idea of a secret "fishin'  
hole" <sup>that</sup> the guide keeps for himself  
is obviously a myth. ~~when~~ <sup>when applied to</sup>  
the Firehole. ~~the~~  
The guide is easily observable from  
a black top highway paralleling  
the Firehole for most of its course  
~~and~~ fishing water that could not be  
more accessible. The secret is that  
trout are now feeding there.

(4)

The last <sup>week</sup> in June that telephone does its work again. No one says "hello" before stating the purpose of their call, but I'm greeted with "where's the hatch". Guides I'm acquainted with ~~around~~ after asking this question offer excuses of high water or something comparable in their area and ~~express~~ the hope that I'll locate the "hatch" for them when they arrive.

The "hatch" is the stone fly or salmon fly hatch emerging along the Madison river a few miles farther upstream each day.

The first flies show on the stream near ~~Three Forks~~ <sup>Norris</sup>, Montana about mid-June. At this time the river may be high and noisley. By late June or early July the flies have progressed to that section of the river near Ennis, Montana.

The fly fisherman waits for this time when water flows are near normal and running clear. Forty miles of Madison river becomes the playground of anglers following the "hatch".

from  
Ennis  
to  
West  
Yellowstone

Guides study this hatch to know its general location, how long it has been heavy in an area, the leading edge of the hatch and the trailing edge. These factors determine if the trout are full of the large  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " insects, if they are just starting to feed on the surface insect or the main body of the hatch is past, but the trout ~~are~~ still looking for them.

The "Salmon Fly" or stone fly hatches from a sizeable brown black nymph that crawls from the stream, clings to grass and

(5)

willows to molt its shell to become the huge double winged adult with orange tinged abdomen. The adult is blown into the water or falls in after flying its egg laying mission over the rivers surface to start another life cycle. This is when guides lose their cool. Big trout that are rarely seen, begin grabbing the drifting "salmon flies". ~~with~~ The rise is a slashing one, throwing a shower of spray visible for some distance, even though the river here is a fast, rushing, rocky mountain stream. The madison river rocks make this hatch possible and this kind of insect life results in big trout. The rocks do make wading a slippery and uncertain adventure.

Guides that come back season after season know that their success is determined by how carefully they select the portion of river for a days fishing. They learn all the signs and know when a section is not ready or has passed its prime ~~and~~ they move quickly to a different portion, always seeking that pot of trout gold where the really big ones are feeding.

About two or three weeks and the hatch extends itself some 25 miles North of West Yellowstone, Montana. Fishing continues good on this river, the Madison, but the guides are looking to greener pastures. There are those that will be back in September to test their skill on a "hatch" of May flies on another river nearby.

(6)

The Henry's Fork ~~of the~~  
Snake ~~in Idaho~~ <sup>river</sup> rising out  
Big Springs, Idaho just over  
the Montana border affords  
the visiting guide a complete  
change of pace. Fly hatches  
on this pristine stream range  
from the "salmon" or stone fly to  
mayfly midges. Trout population  
is exclusively rainbow, but the  
trophy rainbow exhib. but the same  
selectiveness of the wisest  
brown trout.

The large stone flies are hatching  
in the rocky canyon runs of this  
river the end of May and into  
June. The broad meadow glides  
of the river outside of the  
canyons usher forth clouds of  
may and caddis flies. The trout  
prefer the mayflies. Hatches are  
sometimes so dense and the

trout so specific that catching fish is difficult. This is very unerving when literally thousands of trout are breaking the surface and some big ones too. By careful timing of your arrival on the stream for the day you will have short periods when the rainbow actively take your fly. But when the summer turns toward fall the hatches become less dense. Flies are on the water for shorter periods. Now the trout have fewer choices of drifting naturals your fly looks good too. ~~and~~ Its not really unusual to catch and release rainbow 10 to 16 inches almost one after the other for several hours. Th~~rough~~ in a leaping rainbow 18" to 24" once in awhile and

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You've had a pretty good day. Another luxury of this period is rising fish begin about 10:30-11:00 A.M. and cease at 5:00 or 6:00 P.M.

Guides that make the scene here on the Henry's Fork in mid-September may taste the stream earlier in the season for the challenge of ~~the~~ selective hatches. ~~but~~ For sheer ~~speed~~ <sup>up to</sup> ~~and~~ amazement ~~of~~ <sup>seeing</sup> such taking fish, it's hard to resist that magic period in September and October, so they return.

Another season will see a similar pattern with a few days variation in timing as conditions dictate, ~~but~~ the returning guides will be the same. They know their own areas and also know when to get the best of other others too.