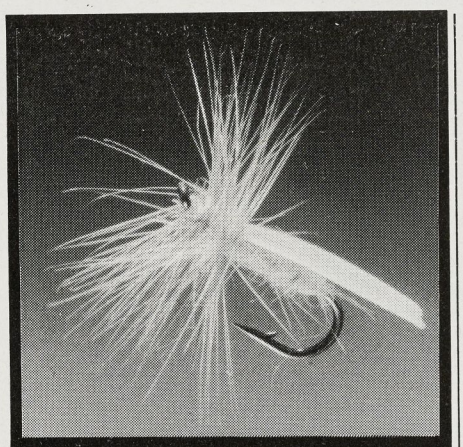
A fly-tyer's favo

Trout don't feed on yellow flies, Taff Price had always believed, until he tied on a harlot of a fly called Sally



Yellow Sally

Hook: Mustad 9579A size 10-12
Thread: Primrose pre-waxed
Tail: None
Body: Mixed yellow and light-olive Antron or other dubbing
Rib: Yellow thread
Wing: Yellow goose or swan cut to shape and tied flat on top of the hook
Hackle: Pale ginger cock

I HAD SEEN the fish rise under the far bank in a difficult spot beneath a weeping willow and alongside a half-submerged fence-post on which a trailing length of barbed wire slowly rusted its life away in the flow of the dappled stream. I sat on the bank and watched.

The fish rose again, showing himself to be no foolish fingerling — the sort of fish that rose to every bit of flotsam that passed close to it. This was a *real* fish — a fish with feeding purpose, a fish that had seen many seasons pass in the sanctuary of the overhanging-willow pool. This trout must have seen better fishermen that I, for it fed with an arrogance that comes with disdain for the angler and his pathetic attempts at its downfall.

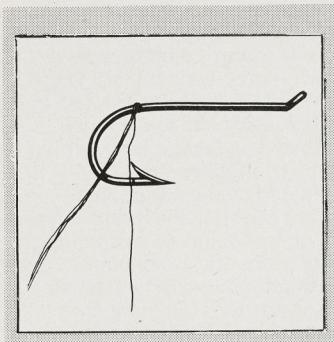
But on what was it feeding? I scanned the surface of the river for the usually predictable olive. No Mayfly fluttered up from the stream, no black gnat cartwheeled in the surface film: all I could see was the occasional yellow fluttering of a weak-flying stonefly, the Yellow Sally.

"Trout do not feed upon yellow flies". I had read that somewhere and the words stood out on the page in my mind's eye. But the book was wrong: the trout *was* feeding on yellow flies.

Before I had read those words — which on tnis particular day were so wrong — I had, in a rash moment, tied some yellow flies. I opened my dry-fly box and there they were — two bright-yellow flies looking like flashy harlots midst the sobriety of the rest of the box.

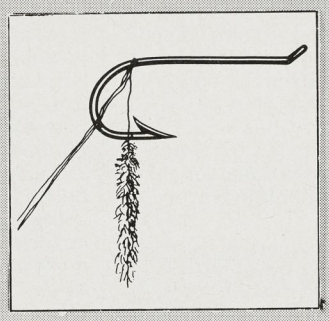
"If it's yellow the trout wants, then yellow he's going to get!" I thought as I tied this garish fly to the end of my leader.

I waited for what seemed a lifetime as my bright fly dried itself in the sun and reassumed its pristine full-hackled glory. My line snaked out and the fly landed with a delicacy that surprised even me. It floated on the surface restrained by coils of leader which unwound with syrup slowness. At that point I could hear my pulse drumming at my temples as anticipation echoed through my whole body. Would the fly uncoil itself from the nylon shackle of the bunched leader and go racing across the surface, out of view of the waiting trout? No. As the leader slowly straightened the fly bobbed slightly on the surface and one minute it was there; the next it was gone. I felt the rod jerk forward and knew that the fish



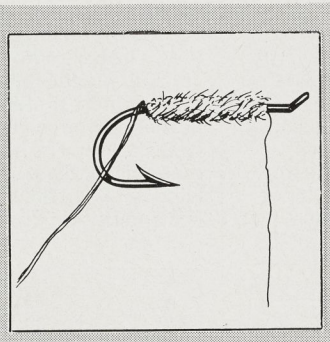
STEP 1

Take the tying thread down the hookshank and tie in a length of yellow thread for the rib.



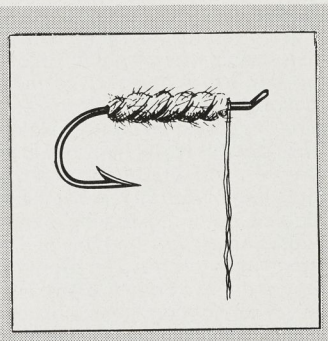
STEP 2

Mix a pinch of yellow Antron with a small amount of olive Antron and dub on to the tying head.



STEP 3

Wind the fur-laden thread down the shank to the point shown.



STEP 4

Follow the fur body with the rib. If you wind the body clockwise, wind the rib anti-clockwise, and vice-versa.

Letters

rewarding study for any length of time, it is destined eventually to be seen as a serious dis-service.

As for Mr Jones, how can he possibly imagine that erudite people of all sorts — among them lots of medical men and biologists — have failed to understand correctly the effects of the natural laws governing the solution of oxygen in water, while he, Mr Jones, has got it just right? Sadly, however, it is simply a case of a little learning being a dangerous thing.

Mr Jones should ask someone to explain to him the effects of the changing point of saturation as the temperature of the water rises or falls. At the same time, he should acquaint himself with the facts concerning the differences in the metabolic requirements of the salmon and those of the parr, the brown trout, and for that matter, the sea-trout.

With the wish to encourage young anglers to keep their minds open to a better understanding of the salmon problem, I should like to mention that the salmon, being the only fish mentioned that is unable to absorb nourishment by digesting food in freshwater, is practically equivalent to being a hibernated animal. Hence, the settled salmon requires the lowest suitable intake of oxygen to support a healthy but relatively inactive life. And the fish can cope best when there are only very slight variations in the availability of oxygen.

☆ ☆ ☆

When, as is normal on a good salmon river in moderate conditions, the water is fully saturated with dissolved oxygen, and a little rise in the temperature occurs, it produces a slight super saturation. To the salmon with a strictly regulated rate of respiration, this amounts to a boost in the oxygen intake and the fish becomes instantly very alert — in other words, a taking time starts. At the same time, there will probably be a resultant hatch of duns — a sure sign of the boost in the availability of oxygen.

A fall in the temperature of the water causes a tendency towards under saturation — certainly the reverse of a boost as far as the salmon are concerned. But if the particular fall in temperature started from a point of super saturation — say during the final phase of a relatively warm afternoon, when the fish would be very inactive in order to avoid an excessive intake of oxygen — the level of availability would probably eventually reach a point which would once again give the salmon the alert feeling that makes it responsive to the angler's lures. According to the time of the year and the speed of the fall of the temperature, this renewed taking period could be at any time from about four to ten o'clock, but most usually just nicely before dusk.

☆ ☆ ☆

Mr Jones has failed to notice in over 60 years' experience the consistency of behaviour of the salmon which I, in the very good company of a great number of other anglers, and in about the same length of time, have seen, enjoyed, and profited from. My advice to younger anglers is to watch for it, read its meaning, and take full advantage of the guidance it gives.

And in addition to being as observant as he can, the young angler should not allow himself to be influenced by ignorant attitudes, no matter in what guise they appear, nor from what source they come.

R. V. Righyni

Barbon, Cumbria

☐ Mr Righyni misses the main point of Mr Jones's letter — that cold water contains a higher concentration of dissolved oxygen than warmer water does. That is a physical fact but apparently many anglers think the reverse is true. — Editor.

man and the sport angler, is that of Iceland. There all fishing is confined to the estuaries and rivers, except for a limited coastal fishery which was allowed to continue, for social reasons, when Iceland banned all other sea netting in 1932. This is the sort of national salmon policy the Trust is aiming for.

Graham Swanson

Warminster, Wiltshire

Who sells large waders?

THERE HAS been considerable correspondence recently in *Trout and Salmon* concerning the quality of thigh waders. I wish to present a different, although admittedly minority, problem which affects me every few seasons with waders, and that is size.

I take size 13 shoes which I can easily buy from shops specialising in the larger fittings. When it comes to waders it appears that I am asking the impossible. Tackle specialists and other well-known suppliers and manufacturers were most sympathetic, amidst talk of having a special last made, or even a cast of my foot, and absolutely enormous costs, but the result was an inability to supply me with the goods. Surely it's not asking too much for manufacturers to make bigger waders available to meet the requirements of each growing generation?

I have finally obtained some waders from abroad, brought into this country by Malcberry (wholesalers) of Beckenham, Kent (an extremely helpful company), who charged an extremely competitive price compared with prices of "normal size" waders.

I. F. Stamford

Bexley, Kent

Salmon dressings sought

I AM TRYING to find information about three types of salmon flies which seem to have faded into obscurity: the Grub, Dee, and Spey flies. If any reader can tell me anything about their history and dressings, or can recommend a book on them, he will receive an example of any type of fly he chooses, provided I have the dressing.

A list I have so far, but without the dressings, is: **Grub** — Glow-worm, Grey Palmer, Hornet Spring Grub, Tippet Grub.

Dee — Akroyd, Grey Eagle, Jock O'Dee, Yellow Eagle, Glentana, Tartan.

Spey — Black, Red, Green, Purple Kings; Black, Grey Herons; Gold Riach, Lady Caroline, Gold and Silver Speal, Dallas, Lord March, Miss Grant, Elder's Fancy, Canon fly.

S. J. Illingworth

Bearshank House, Wadenhoe, Peterborough

'Oxygen myth' re-examined

I REFER to the letter (February issue of *Trout and Salmon*) from Mr W. Glynne Jones, under the heading "The 'oxygen myth' dispelled". In view of the number of salmon anglers with much and varied scientific training who consider the oxygen theory to be valid, one would have thought that you would have hesitated before introducing such a note of finality in the composition of the heading.

The choice of words 'myth' and 'dispelled' clearly suggests that *Trout and Salmon* supports this would-be debunking of the oxygen theory. But what concerns me most is the interests of your young readers who may accept your heading at face value. If it influences them to ignore this most useful and

Could this explain why trout quit while flies are still around?

Tight Lines . . .

Continued from page 10

We've set our sights and goals high. Since most of our members (the Bavarian Fly Fishers is open to Germans for membership) are beginning or novice fly anglers, it will take time to achieve some goals. We need help. Any donation of fly-fishing items would greatly enhance our teaching efforts. Used rods or reels would be superb. (It's humorous to watch 15 people waiting in line to use one of our few rods.) We'd appreciate any aid your readers can pass our way.

BERRIS D. SAMPLES
Formative Committee Chairman
Bavarian Fly Fishers
Bamberg, West Germany

pH: The Missing Link

The article "When Trout Feed" (March 1988) by Leonard M. Wright, Jr. was extremely interesting reading. It does, however, raise some interesting questions.

The article correlates peak trout feeding activity to oxygen intake and temperature. The temperature fluctuation was related to the latitude, altitude, time of year, and the duration and intensity of sunlight (photoperiod).

There is a third and important variable that Mr. Wright didn't discuss. The dominant factor in fish behavior is pH. It determines how a fish uses oxygen. Oxygen, temperature, *and* pH are extremely important interrelated factors affecting fish metabolism.

Water at saturation contains only three percent as much oxygen as the air we breathe. But even if the water is saturated with oxygen at any temperature, the fishes' ability to use the available oxygen is determined by the pH. The presence of free CO_2 may depress the affinity of fish blood for oxygen (O_2). This is known as the root effect.

The optimum pH is 7.6 to 7.9. But as we all know, each stream or body of water may differ, and the fish will adapt, within limitations, as much as is physiologically possible to the individual water conditions. Most importantly, the pH will fluctuate for various reasons. As the pH fluctuates, the trout adjust metabolic and physical activity accordingly.

Now, let's get to the point. As light increases, pH decreases. It has also been suggested that light acts through the nervous system of fish and affects metabolism in a manner similar to temperature. Therefore, it may be safe to theorize that light is the catalyst providing fluctuations in temperature and pH, which in turn determine the metabolic and physical activity of the trout.

This might explain why oxygen intake increases dramatically at certain times when the temperature does not fluctuate. This might also explain why trout turn on and off suddenly in limestone streams and spring creeks when temperatures do not fluctuate appreciably. This might provide a reason to Mr. Wright's observation that cloudy days seemed to depress feeding activity. It would take only a small fluctuation in the pH to affect the trout's ability to use the available oxygen and thus affect the trout's activity.

Does pH also have a measurable effect on the other aquatic organisms in the food chain? If so, to what degree? Does sudden activity after a rain occur because of temperature or pH change? Is pH perhaps the hidden key to trout feeding activity? Does the fluctuation of temperature, light exposure, and pH follow the same curve on a graph? If so, it explains why temperature can be a reliable indicator.

Since Mr. Wright states that total oxygen intake is *not* the cause of trout-feeding activity, perhaps pH plays an important role. In fact, pH may be the final piece in the jigsaw pattern of the trout's environment.

H. DALE PIATTI
Florence, Ky.

Clarification

A misconception about the New York State trout season on the Beaverkill and Willowemoc rivers may have been generated by Art Lee's "Falling for 'Beamoc' Trout," December 1988 FLY FISHERMAN, pp. 43-44. The New York State trout season closes on September 30, *except for special-regulation waters which may have extended seasons*. There are special-regulation sections on the Beaverkill and Willowemoc rivers, and anglers are urged to consult the state fishing rules supplied when they purchase their license to make certain they are fishing legally for trout after September 30. If a state conservation officer observes a fisherman on closed water *obviously* fishing for trout after the closing of the regular season (for example, an angler fishing dry flies to rising trout), the fisherman can be cited for fishing out of season, regardless of whether he hooks, lands, and safely releases the fish. *Catch-and-release fishing on water closed for the season is illegal in New York*. The best plan is to always check the rules compendium if there is a question about the legality of fishing for trout anywhere in New York after September 30.

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First find your fish

The key to trout fishing in running water is predicting where the fish will be lying, says ***JON BEER,*** *who describes where to look and why when there are no fish rising*

FOR ME THE most magical moment of any trip to a river is the first rise. Perhaps it is just a "blip" heard while I am tackling up, or a ring seen on a distant bend. Either way, it can be a long time coming in March!

I am not asking for miracles in March. I don't expect to see a slashing whorl or a large nose breaking the surface to be followed by a dorsal fin and tail in a serene glide. Anything will do — a modest "flip" in some small eddy, a brief flash of a turned flank down below, a bobbling of the surface as some fishy turbulence breaks through — anything that tells me there is something in there and that the something is eating something else. That is all I ask. And in March that is probably all I will get.

There is a Catch-22 situation in spotting these small rises or the fish themselves. In the same way as a bank will be only too happy to lend you money if you don't need it, it is easy to see the fish or their tiny movements if you already know where they are. So how do you know where they are? To my mind this is the key to trout fishing in running water: predicting where the fish will be lying.

Happily, trout are just like us. Outside the breeding season they want plenty of food and security and they want to expend as little energy as possible. The problem for the trout (as for us) is that these three modest requirements are to some extent incompatible. Everywhere the trout takes up station will be a compromise between maximum food, maximum security and minimum effort. Exactly what compromise each spot offers will determine the lifestyle and the size of the fish that lives or feeds there. It will also determine whether — and how — the angler should have a go for him.

It is usual in any discussion of trout lies to give a list of the sort of places in which trout can be found in a river. The trouble with these useful-looking lists is that to be comprehensive they have to include almost every bit of water in the river. Trout can, and do, lie almost anywhere, depending on the general conditions.

John Roberts in *To Rise a Trout* (an excellent book) says, quite rightly, of rocks in the stream that: "There are basically four lies around a rock: immediately in front, where the current has created a quiet cushion of water through back pressure; on either side of the rock, if the current is not too strong; and, in a moderate current, the space immediately behind a rock may be occupied by a trout". That does not pin it down much in a rocky river.

Clarke and Goddard in their modern classic *The Trout and the Fly* say much the same, and both books go on to list weedbeds, the heads of pools, tails of pools, centres of pools and many other places so that I cannot think of a place on a river that is excluded as being a place where no self-respecting trout could be found. They are, of course, right: trout *can* be found almost anywhere — but that is not much help when you want to know where to cast or concentrate.

If we take a closer look at the trout's concerns of maximum food, maximum security and minimum effort, and more especially the interaction between these three, we can make a reasonable stab at predicting the most likely or most favourable lie on any particular reach of river. That is where to look for any movement or to cast if there is no movement to be seen.

The trout gets his food in two broad ways. He can pick it up as it mooches about its business on the bottom or in the weed. Caddis larvae, snails, some nymphs and shrimp come into this category. Fish have to forage for this food, which forms a minor part of their diet, particularly in the warmer months of the fishing season.

The majority of the food, particularly in summer, more or less floats past on the current. The usual analogy is of a conveyor belt, and the faster the conveyor belt the more food per second passes by the trout. The problem for the poor trout is that he is on the same conveyor belt so the faster it goes the faster he has to swim to keep up, and so he uses more energy.

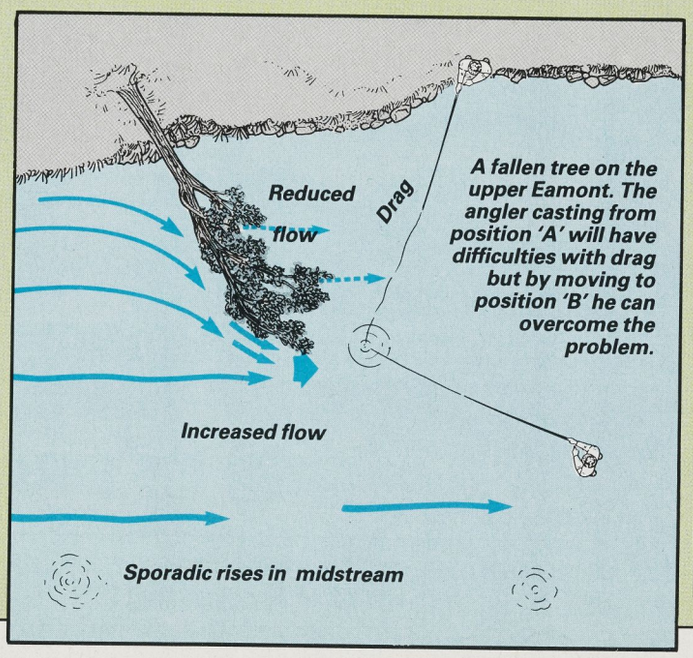
Happily for the trout, the food is not evenly distributed throughout the current. Much of it is on or near the surface. This is because the greater part of the food floating past comes from outside the river — terrestrial insects and other beasts that fall on to the surface and remain trapped in the film until turbulence or their own weight pulls them under. The floating food that does come from the water — the aquatic flies and nymphs the artificial fly often imitates — is usually on its way to the surface, at which point it is at its most vulnerable, or has returned to the surface film to lay eggs and die.

On most rivers the action of the stream as it meanders and deflects from pool to pool concentrates the surface film with its food into a recognisable channel, marked by floating bits and pieces and bubbles. This surface food channel is usually, but not always, the fastest part of the stream and the furthest from the slowing friction of the river bed. The problem for the trout is to keep station in the slower part of the stream while keeping a greedy eye on this faster food channel.

There will also be a concentration of food just downstream of any food source, such as overhanging bushes and vegetation for terrestrials and weed for aquatic species.

Most of a trout's security problems come from above — herons and other fishing birds and, with any luck, you and me. The closer to the surface (and all that surface food) the greater the danger. There are ways that this danger can be minimised; with cover overhead from close bushes or a bridge the fish will feel more secure and will benefit from the shade while scanning the surface for food. Deep water also gives security but interacts with the trout's other concerns. Greater depth means a slower current as we shall see when we look at energy consumption and so it also means slower service at the trout's dinner table.

The greater the cross-sectional area of the stream (*ie* the deeper



A fallen tree on the upper Eamont. The angler casting from position 'A' will have difficulties with drag but by moving to position 'B' he can overcome the problem.

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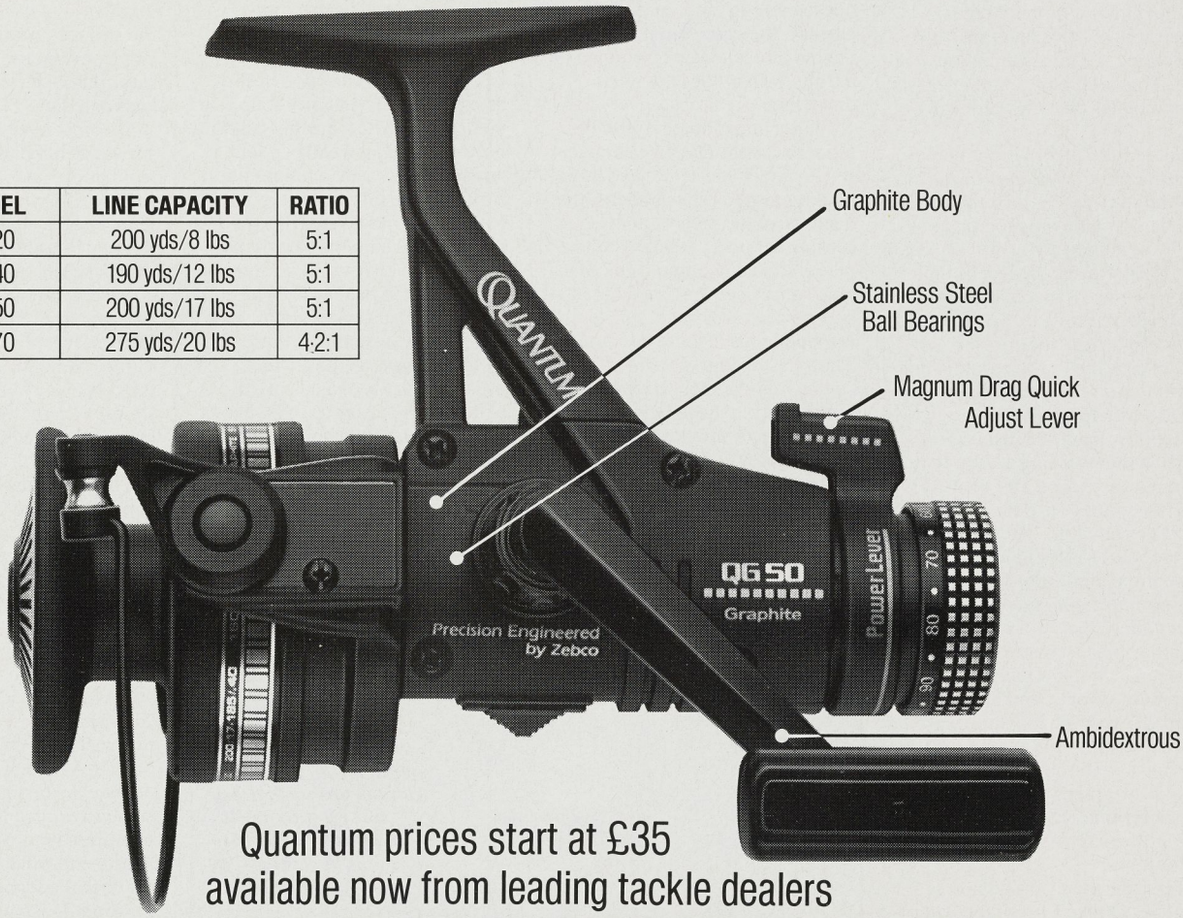

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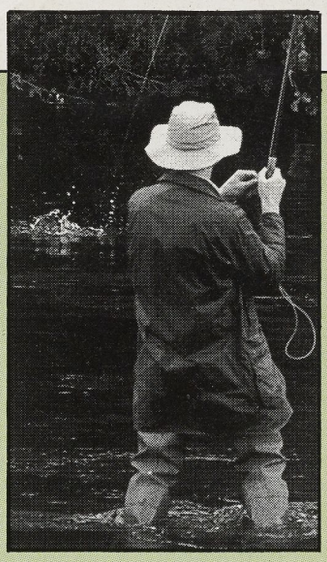
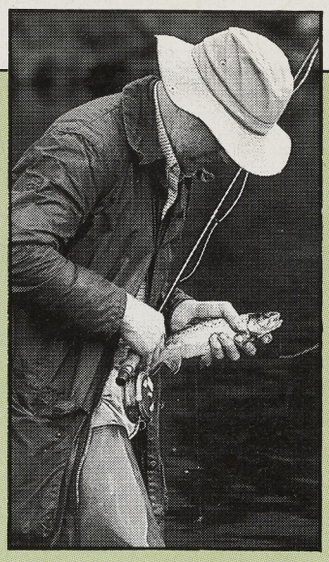


Right: Got him! Jon Beer lifts into a nice brownie from a shady lie.



Left: The writer about to return an Eamont brownie.

First find your fish

and wider), the slower the water. This has to be so because the same volume of water per second must pass every point along the river (ignoring tributaries coming in) otherwise the stuff would all be piling up somewhere! If the water in one part of the cross-section is moving quickly, the rest must move very slowly. If this fast channel moves *very* fast (rushing in from a pool above), then the rest must move backwards to balance the equation, and a back eddy is formed. In these cases the trout's problem is solved; he can hold station in the slow water alongside the fast surface current entering the deep pool, a favourite spot.

There are other solutions to the problem of finding slow water close to a fast-surface food-channel. The pier of a bridge or a rock provides a cushion of slow water upstream, ideally in the middle of the faster food channel. Again, if that food channel lies close to one bank, often on the outside of a bend, there will be slow water hard against the bank either in some irregularity or from the slowing friction of the bank itself.

A third solution shows the interplay of all three factors.

At the tail of a pool the water may shallow before spilling down a weir or riffle to the pool below. As the water shallows the surface speed will increase, but in the shallow water there will be slower water close beneath the faster surface caused by the friction of the bottom and any small pockets it can shelter in. Ideal, but the trout is vulnerable in shallow water with little room to manoeuvre behind.

If the food is coming fast enough a trout may be tempted into the shallows despite the insecurity. Often in the day, however, this is the haunt of the smaller fish who have no better alternative. Come the dark, the balance changes. The shallows are less dangerous and the advantages of the spot bring the larger fish into the tail of the pool.

Every pool of every river is a unique combination of configuration and currents. The problem for the trout is the same — where to get the most food for the least effort in the greatest safety.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate this interplay is to look at a couple of stretches from two ends of my favourite river, the Eamont in Cumbria. At the top end the Eamont springs fully grown as the outflow of Ullswater and is a broad river of even depth (just under thigh-wader), with a bottom of large smooth gravel. Pockets in this gravel provide lies for small fish across the width of the river, but with no obvious food channel the margins are the likeliest spots for better fish with the best chance of terrestrial food stumbling on to the water.

It was late afternoon, several years ago. Not a lot was happening apart from some sporadic "flipping" of small trout across the river. These are rises to be ignored if at all possible, although this can be hard if nothing else is obvious. On such a wide, smooth expanse of water several rises are visible at the same time. It can look like steady feeding. It isn't! The visible water must hold many hundreds of fish and four or five small rings (which last a long time on the smooth water) represent a tiny proportion. I was waiting for dusk and the descent of bigger fish from the lake above.

A small tree had fallen into the water by the margin. The slim trunk and trailing branches stuck out into the river for about six yards. The current was welling under the trunk but all the surface water was diverted out along the trunk and branches, so all the surface food from a channel of six yards was being pushed out and around the leafy top of the tree, concentrating that invisible food into a slightly faster narrow stream, distinguishable only by a twisting of the reflections. It was a perfect lie in an otherwise rather featureless stretch.

Nothing was rising, but if there were fish in the river then something had to be there. I had nothing better to do as I waited for dusk.

A good trout lie usually has a likelihood of dragging the fly because two speeds of water lie side by side. If a cast falls across the boundary the fly will be whipped across the surface. The obvious place to put the fly was in the accelerated water coming round the trailing branches, so a cast across the slow water downstream of the tree was out.

Luckily the river was just below my wader tops so I could creep down the bank and wade out slightly beyond the line of the furthest branches and then inch by inch move upstream within a shortish cast of the trailing leaves. The accelerated current would slow to the pace of the surrounding river as it passed the constriction, so a fly cast almost upstream into that current would move fractionally faster than the line nearer the rod, producing no drag.

Nothing happened on the first cast, nor on the second, nor the third, but by standing outside the line of the current the line would not be crossing any fish resting in the lee of the branches.

There was no fuss when it took. The fly just quietly disappeared. It was not the biggest fish I have caught on the upper Eamont, but it was perhaps the most satisfyingly logical.

The pool at the other end of the Eamont, close to its confluence with the Eden, is quite different. Here the river is constricted by high sandstone cliffs with deep pools, gravel bars and long riffles. Along the length of one pool a long cast is necessary from wader depth to the much deeper channel along the cliff. This is a perfect run for big fish, and there are big fish there with all the time in the world to examine a fly as it creeps along the wall. The rises are obvious in the calm surface, and everyone has a crack at these fish. Occasionally one is caught, but these rises are really for looking at rather than fishing.

At the tail of the pool the bed rises to form a long shallow over which the water accelerates before tumbling over a long diagonal bar of gravel and small stones and between clumps of streamer weed in summer. Fish lie all along this shallow tail — tiddlers at the near side and respectable fish in the faster water where the food channel fans out to tumble over the bar. There are fish along the bottom of the bar, too, of average size, one or two in each mini-channel formed by the clumps of weed. There is some lessening of current down below the weed and food will also be washed down, but there are too many small channels to provide a really good lie. There is also a smooth stone in the full force of the speeding channel before it splits over the bar. The stone does not quite break the surface at normal level, but it creates an impressive standing wave just downstream of its position.

I had been fishing this pool on and off for a couple of days, wading out along the bar from the bank as the channel alongside this bank was too deep to wade across below, the bar. My target was the larger fish in the fast shallow water at the tail of the pool at the far end of the bar. Drag is a real problem, as it will be on any glide with a smooth acceleration. With a cast from below the line moves faster than the fly, and from above the fly moves faster than the line. In both cases the fly will skitter across the surface in seconds. This can be a winner at dusk as the larger fish wait for the sedge, but it is fatal in bright daylight.

The trick is to cast almost parallel to the bar with the fly and the line reaching the bar at the same time, hopefully with little or no drag for those vital few seconds. An additional problem is the turbulence from that wretched rock, but my clumsy, crumpled casting of a leader is a considerable asset at such times, the current taking valuable moments to straighten it.

It was dusk on my last fishing day of the 1988 season. I had hooked three fish from around that spot during the day, all around 1 lb, and I was thinking I had squeezed the last out of the season when I spotted a tiny something or other sweeping over the standing wave of the rock. It was gone in an instant, but it called my attention to something I should have reasoned out at the beginning: that the rock stands in the direct path of the accelerated food channel. There should be a good fish in front of it, perhaps bigger than those along the wall yet with no time to examine a fly.

I had fished behind the rock for years and had never noticed a rise in the fleeting second before it was lost in the wave. There was no need to worry about drag. The fly was grabbed as it swept directly over the rock for my last cast of 1988 and my best fish of the day.

Why drag is tough on gentle streams.