



# POND FISHING *for Brookies*



**By Jonathan Fieroh**

A lone canoe drifts silently on the cool waters of a wilderness pond. The stillness of the scene is broken by a sharp tug on the end of the angler's line. When the brief struggle is over, the angler is rewarded with a view of one of the most beautiful fish in North America—an Adirondack brook trout. As the day progresses, the experience is repeated many times, and the angler thinks, "It doesn't get much better than this."

Little compares to the excitement of a wilderness pond teeming with hungry brook trout. Angling can be fast and furious, and anglers often have these areas to themselves. New York has an abundance of both roadside and remote brook trout waters. Many hold excellent numbers of fish and the abundant forage and limited angling pressure in some lakes can produce brook trout of exceptional size. In fact, the current state record brookie was caught in a pond in the West Canada Lakes Wilderness area of the Adirondacks.

Like all kinds of angling, pond fishing for brook trout can be frustrating at times. Locating and getting fish to bite can be difficult. But for those willing to take the time to master the necessary skills, the rewards can be extraordinary.

The time of year, time of day, and weather are all key considerations when deciding when to fish and what type of lure or bait to use. Water temperature and light level are particularly important factors. In many ponds, especially those with a limited amount of cover, brook trout are easier to catch when the light level is low, such as early or late in the day and during periods of cloudy weather. Unsettled, even unpleasant, weather can produce excellent brook trout angling.

For the tenacious pond angler, the cool or even cold weather of spring and fall

very often produces the best angling of the year. This is when active hungry trout are found near the surface. As the season progresses and surface waters warm, brook trout will seek deeper water to locate acceptable temperature and oxygen levels.

The physical features of a lake, including the amount of available cover, the shape of the lake basin, and the inlets and outlets, can also play an important role in fishing for brook trout. In some lakes, brook trout stay close to cover for at least part of the time—they will tuck themselves under the edges of bog mats



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or underneath logs where it is dark and where they are partially protected from predators. Brook trout will also hang around underwater features like drop-offs, particularly if there is an associated inlet. Inlets allow the trout to remain fairly stationary as food is transported downstream to them. Inlets that add cold water to a lake or pond can concentrate brook trout during the warmer months.

The type of prey available in a given lake will also determine where brookies can be found. Like most wildlife, brook trout are looking for an easy meal. So knowing what brookies like to eat in a given body of water can help an angler know where to fish as well as the right bait or lure to use.

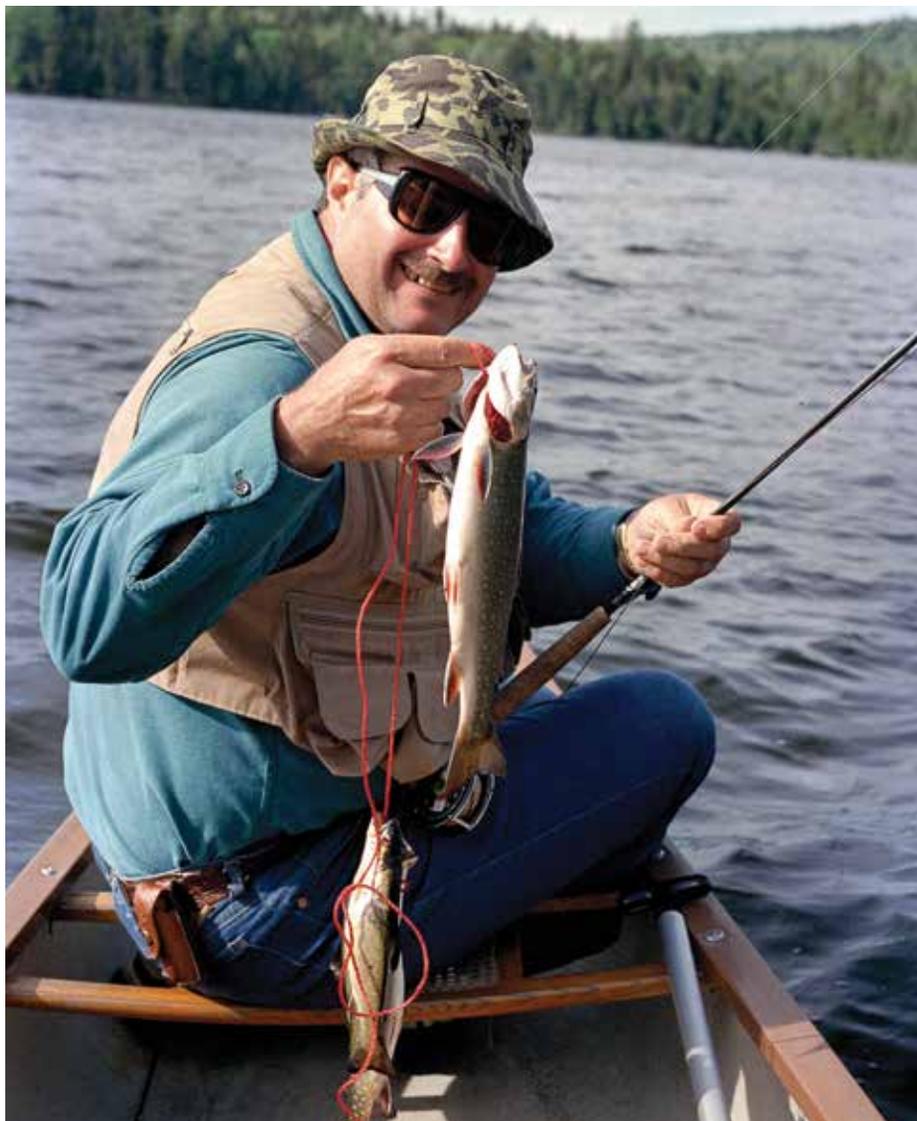
Among the state's trout species, brook trout have a reputation for being relatively easy to catch. They eat a wide variety of organisms, with aquatic insects such as dragonfly larvae, midges, mayflies and caddisflies making up the bulk of their diet. Brook trout also eat leeches, crayfish, and terrestrial insects when they are available. While larger brookies are fully capable of pursuing and eating small forage fish, brook trout populations in ponds and lakes actually do best when there are no other species of fish present.

Anglers use a variety of methods, techniques and tackle when pursuing brook trout. While jigs and spinners are popular lures, trolling a spoon and a baited hook such as a Lake Clear Wabblers with a worm



James Clayton

Some examples of commonly used trout lures.



John Major

is a time-honored Adirondack method that has taken innumerable brook trout, including some of the largest specimens. Anglers often use a light fishing rod and troll the rig so that the spoon wobbles back and forth, but does not spin. Adding split-shot to the line allows a person to fish deeper—important during the summer when fish move to cooler, deeper water.

Fly fishing is also a popular method of fishing for brook trout. A standard fly-fishing outfit for pond fishing consists of: an eight- or nine-foot rod designed to cast a five- or six-weight fly-line; a standard fly-fishing reel; and both floating and sinking tips or full-sinking lines with a 4X (0.007 inch-diameter) tippet (part of the leader at the end of the line to which the fly is tied).



John Major



While fly fishermen use a nearly endless variety of fly patterns to catch brook trout, there are a few standard patterns that most anglers carry. Black or olive wooly buggers, either un-weighted or tied with a weighted bead on the head of the fly are very popular. Other classic brook trout flies include: Blacknose Dace, Mickey Finn, Hornberg, Muddler Minnow, Baby Brook Trout, Black Ghost, and the Grey Ghost. Casting these streamer flies along the edges of cover can produce good results. While streamers are often the most popular flies, nymphs (weighted and un-weighted) can also produce brook trout.

One of the most exciting times to fly fish for brookies is during an insect hatch. An early spring midge hatch is a sight to behold, and few angling experiences can rival hooking a large brook trout rising to feast on the newly hatched insects.

If you've never been brook trout fishing, now is a great time to try it. Spring is the perfect time to fish, especially just after the ice leaves the ponds (known as ice-out) when brookies are very hungry. New York has excellent pond fishing for brook trout, and while many of these ponds are located in the

Adirondacks, there are a number of great ponds scattered across the state. Your DEC regional office ([www.dec.ny.gov/about/50230.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/50230.html)) can help you locate a nearby water. In addition, local guides and sporting goods or fly shops are other great sources of information.

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*Author's note: DEC reminds anglers that the use of fish as bait is prohibited in many brook trout waters. This restriction protects the fish community against the introduction of harmful non-native bait fish and also protects brook trout from competition that can devastate their population.*