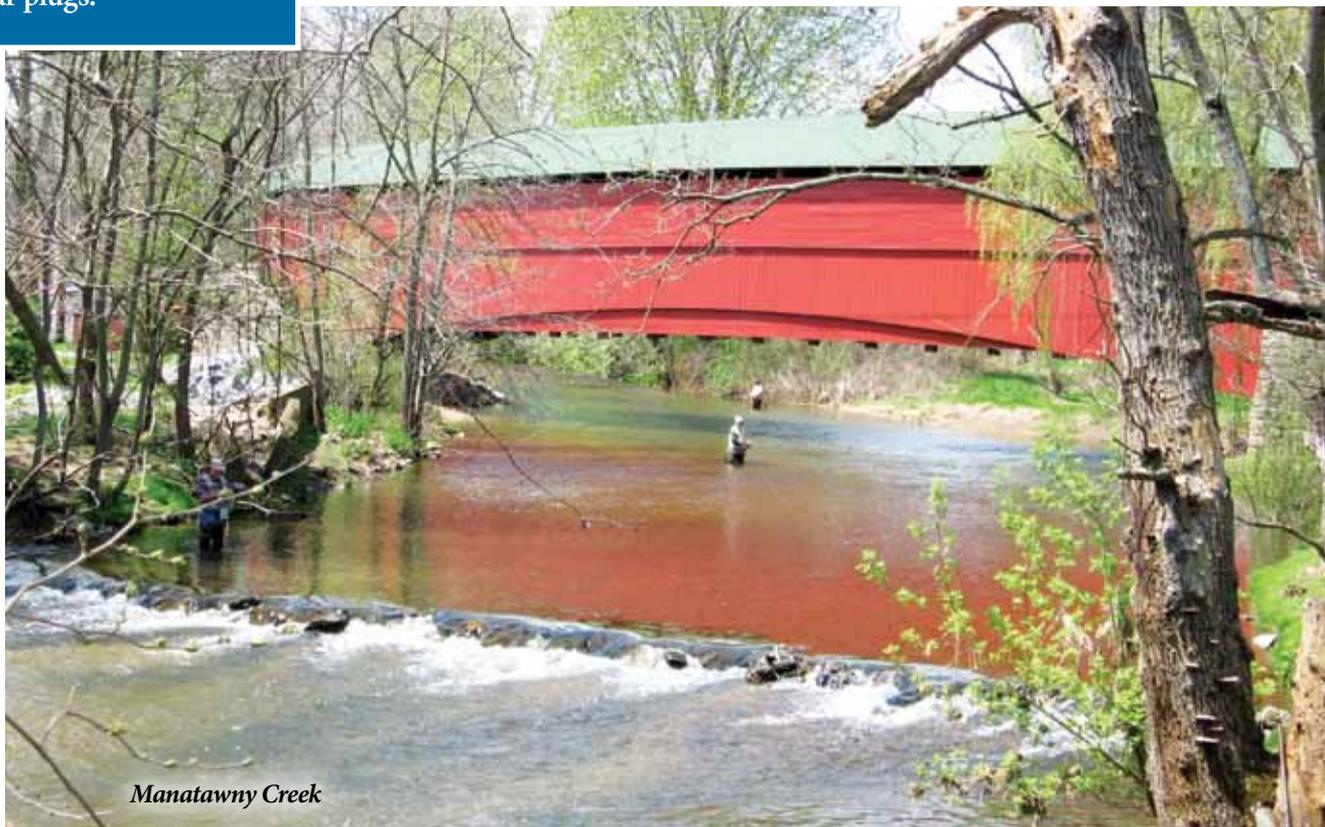


I like a little scenery with my trout fishing. Scads of trout near busy roads are okay, but my preference leans towards a peaceful spot where I can fish without ear plugs.

Southeast's Top Scenic Trout Waters

by Vic Attardo



Manatawny Creek

Photo-Vic Attardo

In the southeast, no stream is picturesquely perfect from its headwaters to its outflow. However, listed here are some southeast corner streams where you can escape the clang of cars and the scenery is as soft as a fresh spring day. The trout fishing is good, as well.

Manatawny Creek

Years ago, the first trout I ever caught on Manatawny Creek jumped high against the background of the red covered bridge at Pleasantville. The broad, rosy stripe of the rainbow melded perfectly with the sunlit bridge that stretches across this farmland section. I'm a Pennsylvania boy through and through, and this was just too perfect. The Manatawny Creek had me hooked.

Coming out of the eastern side of Berks County into Montgomery County, Manatawny Creek is not just a farm-country flow. It eventually meanders into the concrete pavings of Pottstown where it joins the Schuylkill River. But, its upper reaches are rural and pleasant. There are even two covered bridges within a short distance.

Along most of its length Manatawny Creek is a state-stocked stream with a reputation for being kind to all trout-fishing persuasions—bait, hardware and fly. This is a stream where I fish bait and spinners during the first week of the season then, when the crowds thin, I uncase the fly rod.

Spring hatches between Route 73 and Route 562 include Hendricksons, March Browns and Blue-winged Olives. Later in the year, there is some fine Trico activity, but by then the number of trout has dropped and their space is taken up by fallfish. I've found some wild brown trout upstream of Rt. 562, but they come and go with good and bad years.

In late April, when the bluebells and violets are in bloom, I've frequently encountered good numbers of bolting Hendricksons. Later on a warm day, I've seen female spinners with greenish-yellow egg masses at the end of their abdomens. I have rarely encountered trout rising for the fresh duns or the spinners, but they are very willing to take a Hendrikson emerger swung across the current.

Besides the Pleasantville area, Manatawny also twists around Earlville and Amityville where you'll find some solid fishing and good scenery south of Rt. 562.

Tohickon Creek

Tohickon Creek is beautiful—it's certainly in the top southeast three—but, it also tries my patience. I've had days on the Tohickon Creek with caddis popping off like candy, but no Tohickon trout rising to take them. I offer these caddis-challenged trout a streamer—a Tar's Heavy Metal Minnow—and they're perfectly willing to swipe at it. Go figure.

Tohickon Creek in the popular Stover Mills Park in Bucks County, east of Route 611, is relatively flat with frequently featureless water which is, perhaps, the reason its trout are so particular. In close quarters, I've had fish stare back at me like I was some kind of lawn ornament.

Further downstream in the Ralph Stover State Park, closer to the Delaware River, there are more knots and twists in the stream. This makes bright-day trouting a little better. The state park dam was removed several years ago, so the big pool at the park is gone.

Tohickon Creek is stocked by the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission. Also, the stream has a surprisingly myriad spread of aquatic insects. One incidental that does me good is the orange cranefly. On warm spring evenings, I prospect with an adult cranefly pattern and often, to my surprise, encounter previously uncooperative trout.



photo-Spring Cacahart

The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission stocks many southeast trout streams.

French Creek

Every year, I pick one southeast stream to fish harder or beat to death more than any other southeast stream. Last year, I chose the middle section of French Creek in Chester County. This creek taught me a new language.

In the past, I'd fished the upper section of the stream around Warwick Park and Coventryville, along Route 23 south of Pottstown. But last spring, I fished downstream of Route 100 towards Phoenixville. This is a long slice that travels through many miles of upper crust Chessey countryside. I think I counted three covered bridges.

I've always been taken in by the rural character of French Creek. Now, I can add the middle section east of Pughtown. Here, French Creek is wider and frequently a deeper stream than in the shadow of French Creek State Park.

About a week after Opening Day, I went after these mid-French trout with streamers and a tandem nymph rig consisting of the Beaverkrat and Tar's Olive Flash. The fish had already seen a lot of hardware and bait, so the nymphs became an accepted change of pace.

In three spring trips, I learned that this part of French Creek is highly fly-fishable. It has an ample width—about thirty-feet—a respectable gradient and plenty of short riffles,

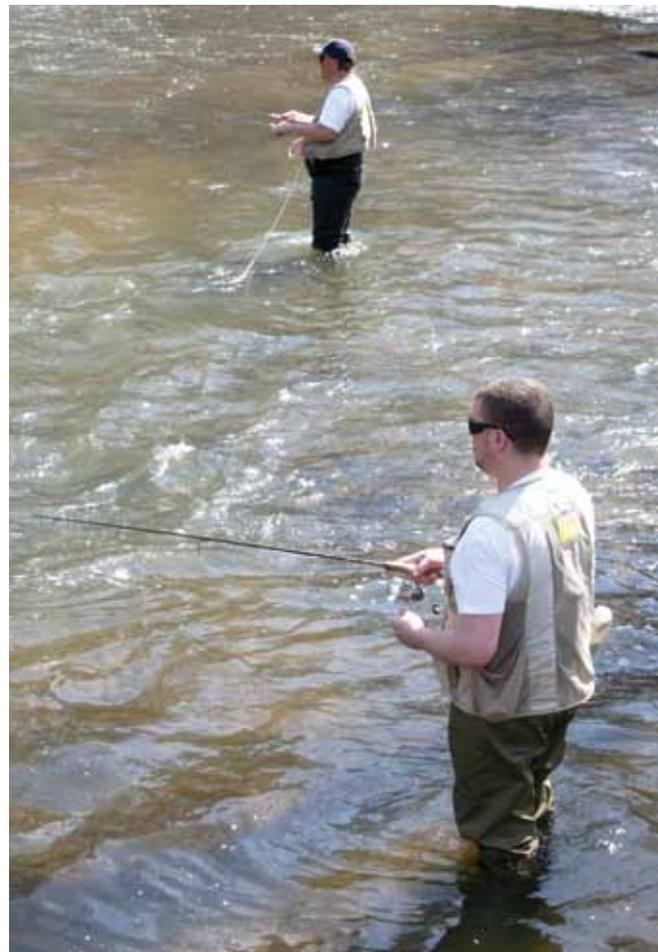


photo-Vic Attardo

The middle section at French Creek, Chester County, is a great place for bait and hardware anglers.

runs and longer pools. There are also shallow, drooping shorelines, pile-ups and dams, which make this portion of French Creek a great place for bait and hardware anglers. I enjoyed wading in the shallower sections and working the twists and turns with long fly presentations. Except in limited spots, the stream isn't built for high-stick nymphing, but down-and-across work is viable.

On the natural front, caddisflies are seen in spring. Everything else is a mystery to me. From rock-turning, I suspect other hatches may be thin.

There is intermittent access to middle French Creek on the side roads off Pughtown Road.

Pickering Creek

You can hardly fish French Creek without going next door to Pickering Creek. And yes, the neighbor's house is also quite nice.

Pickering Creek is mostly narrow, less than 20 feet and frequently dense with overhangs. In these portions, fly fishing can be tough. However, Pickering Creek has a 1.5 mile Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only section, closer to Phoenixville, which is perfect water for deep-nymphing.

A Chester County trout club has been installing deflection rocks in portions of Pickering Creek and the broken water fishes very well. At these spots, shallow water cascades through gushing chutes and the side rocks provide little

pockets with a roof of froth. As long as Pickering Creek stays full, these pockets provide excellent hiding spots for newly stocked fish.

Unami Creek

Triassic Intrusive Diabase—that's what enfolds and floors Unami Creek in northern Montgomery County. While many think the giant rocks found in and around Unami Creek were pushed into place by a mammoth glacier, the geologist's truth is that the rocks are from the Triassic period between 144 and 248 million years ago. The rocks are intrusive, meaning that it is volcanic rock that seeped out through the surrounding sedimentary rock.

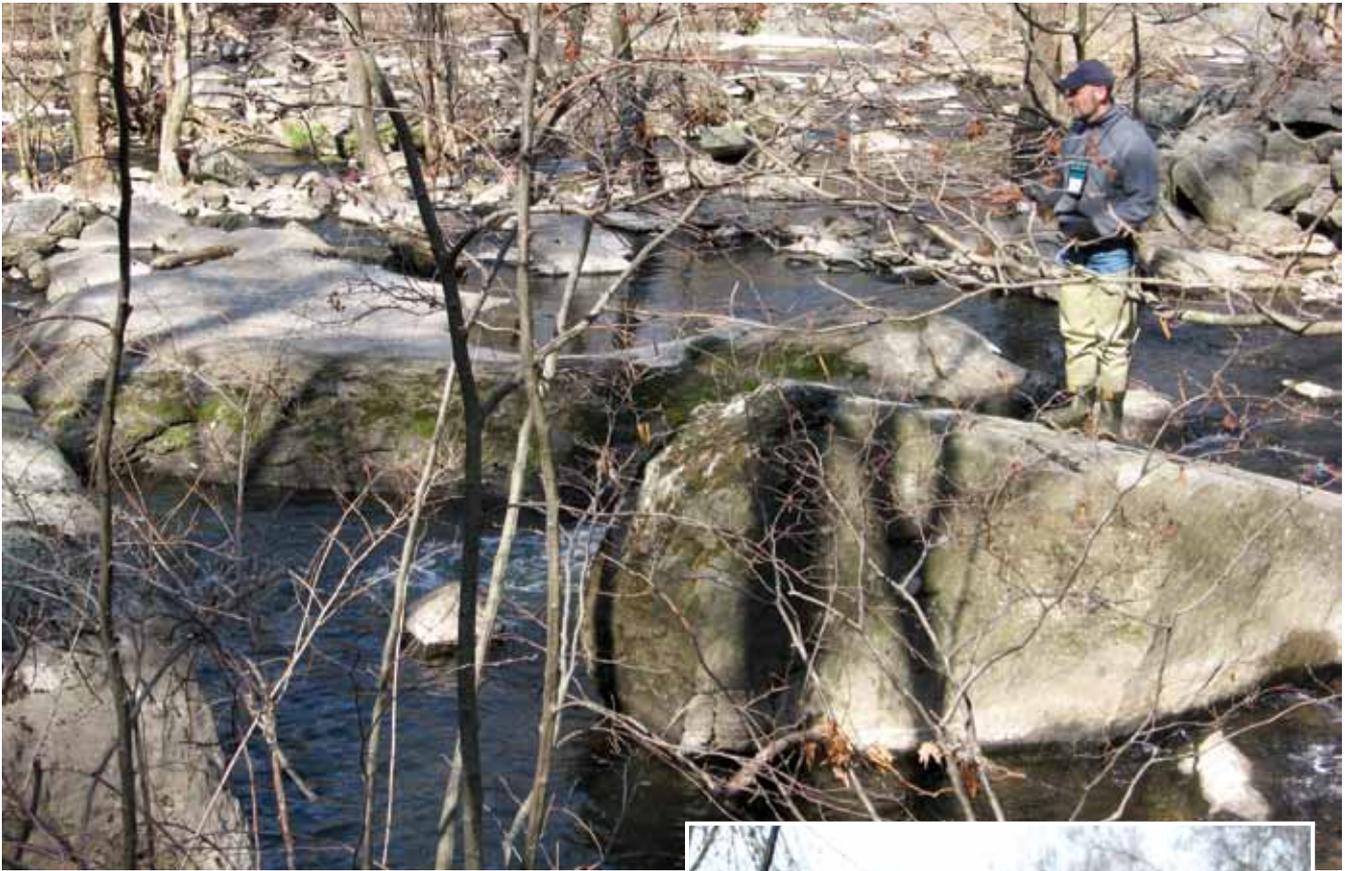
Take a book and squirt caulk into its core. Then, close it. The diabase edges out along the sides and cools into immense pillows.

Though there are other streams within a mile of Unami Creek, none display the boulders that are the heart of Unami Creek. It's a most unusual place and probably should be recognized as such.

The Unami Creek is also unusual in another way. In past Fish & Boat Commission surveys of the stream, it housed more mayfly families than perhaps any other in the Region 6 area, according to PFBC Bureau of Fisheries biologist Michael Kaufmann.



Pickering Creek



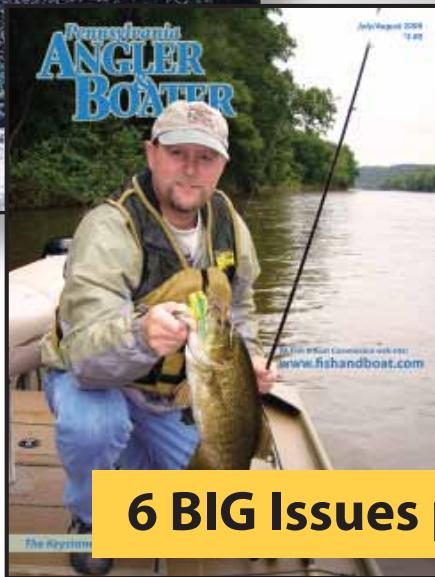
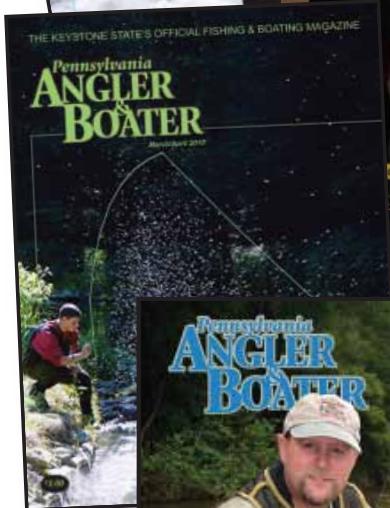
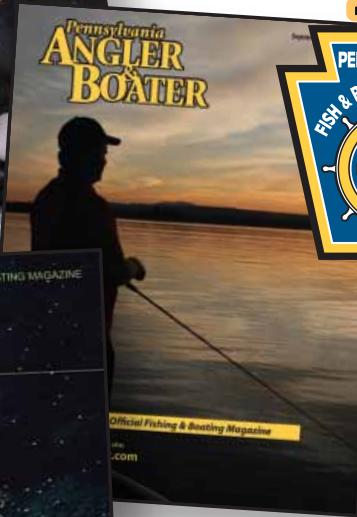
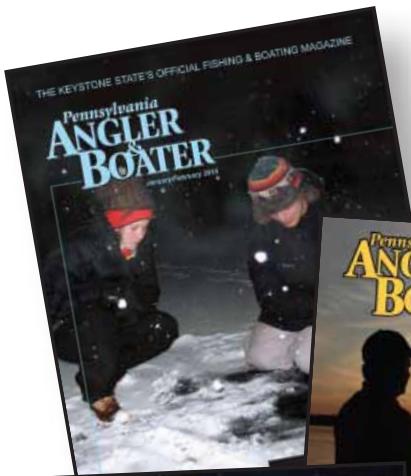
There are other streams within a mile of Unami Creek, but none display the boulders that are the heart of Unami Creek.

One would think that this would make Unami Creek a great place to fly fish. Unfortunately, its mammoth boulders make wading very difficult and the cross currents of the jumbled bed don't make it nice for drifting.

In this chugging current, the Unami Creek is primarily a hardware stream and a bait and hardware flow in its slower pools. Those with minnows, worms and putty bait do exceptionally well in the Unami Creek east of Route 63 at Sumneytown. Hardware, particularly small crankbaits and tungsten-bodied spinners, work well in its slower water. ☐

Unami Creek is primarily a hardware stream and a bait and hardware flow in its slower pools. Those with minnows, worms and putty bait do exceptionally well at this location.





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