

LIMIT OUT on LAKE-STOCKED TROUT

Launch a Small Watercraft for Stocked Trout Beyond Shore Dwellers' Reach



by Tyler Frantz photos by the author

I don't mean to incite envy among my fellow angling friends from locales further north and west, but early April means trout fishing in my neighborhood.

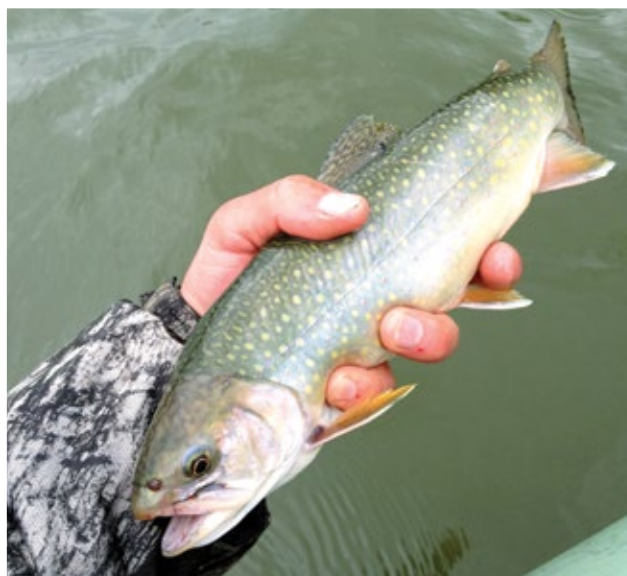
For several years, the 18 southeastern counties experiencing early warming waters have been granted a 2-week head start for the regional trout season opener. With this privilege, however, we often experience an influx of anglers from near and far seeking trout fishing action as early as possible.

One of my favorite ways to catch plenty of stocked trout early in the season when angler pressure is at its maximum is to hit a small lake with trolling motor in tow. By utilizing a small watercraft, anglers can separate from the crowds, where they may fish in peace until they limit out.

Last year, I decided to forgo the streamside congestion for a more relaxed lake fishing experience using my jonboat. It's a tactic I've utilized before in a manpowered canoe with much success. However, the extra space and added convenience of an electric motor made it even more enjoyable.

Packing all the necessary essentials, I headed to a popular still-water destination near my Lebanon County home and launched my vessel before dawn.

Trolling over to a 12-foot-deep location where a subtle point of land juts out toward the water, I dropped the anchor and settled in for the morning. Despite a slow on and off drizzle, I was dressed appropriately for the weather, enjoying a hot thermos of coffee as 20 other boats took their places and dry land casters filed in around the lake's perimeter.



Stocked trout look up to feed and will often chase inline spinners worked high in the water column.

The hour preceding 8 o'clock was spent rigging my rods, organizing lures and snacking on cold breakfast items to pass the time. I watched children chasing geese on the bank (and being chased in return), only to be scolded by their parents. This great angling "melting pot" produced people of all races, genders and ages turning out for the anticipated occasion.

By 7:50 AM, a young boy in the boat next to me already had a worm on his hook and was standing at the bow, anxiously waiting for his father to give him the green light. He must have asked his dad what time it was over a dozen



Slow trolling with a simple hair or feather jig is an easy way to land multiple trout from stocked lakes.

It was a good three hours on the lake. I witnessed many families having a great time together, and a good number of people left with their limits. A lot of folks turned out, but I still had plenty of elbowroom for casting thanks to my ability to get away from the crowds.

If you're thinking about taking a small watercraft for lake stocked trout, read up on all boating laws and safety regulations, as there are several rules in place to ensure you have a safe, enjoyable outing. Certain lakes require

Nothing is more relaxing than a day on the water catching stocked trout.

launch permits for unpowered boats, while all powered vessels require a boat registration.

I foresee small watercrafting for lake-stocked trout becoming a new opening day tradition for me. Perhaps this year, though, I'll follow the lead of one boat that made me jealous last year. They brought along a camp stove for waterside bacon and eggs. We all know a hot breakfast trumps a cold one, even when trout fishing. ☐

I recall the days of my youth when the final 10 minutes felt like hours. Seeing this youngster's eagerness made me smile.

Finally, the clock officially struck 8:00 a.m., and believe it or not, an air horn sounded from somewhere in the distance. Within seconds, dozens of trout were wiggling on the business end of taught fishing lines, bringing whoops and hollers from excited anglers all around.

During previous outings when the sky was blue, I'd had terrific luck casting silver spooned spinners with rainbow-colored bodies and working them back toward the boat, as well as slowly trolling a simple hair or feather jig behind the boat using my motor's lowest speed setting.

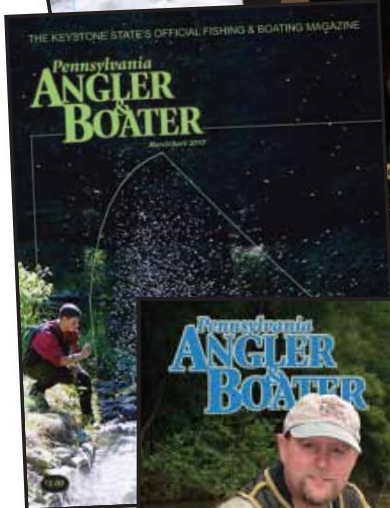
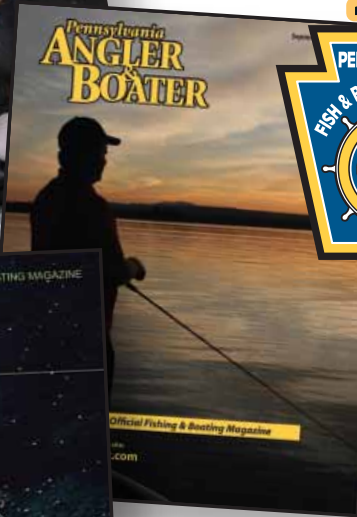
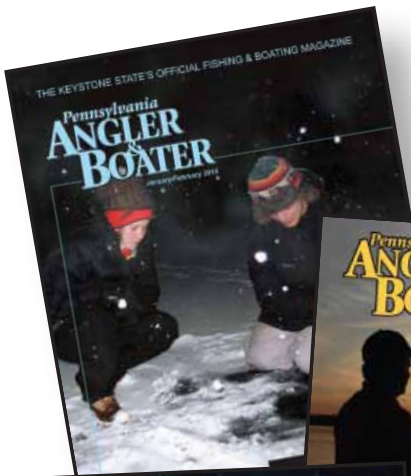
Stocked trout are used to feeding higher in the water column, so this technique typically yields better results than weighted offerings on the bottom, though scented dough baits and live minnows will produce well on occasion too.

Last year, a slowly retrieved black and gold inline spinner proved to be the ticket for me in this slightly murky tint, as it landed the majority of my 16 trout. All were released back into the water to be caught another day.

Small vessels are perfect for fishing areas that are otherwise hard to reach from the shoreline.



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