



Central PA Fish Camp

by Tyler Frantz

photos by the author

There's nothing more rejuvenating than evening campfire meals, sleeping beneath the stars and waking to a dawn filled with birdsong—unless, of course, one adds fishing to the mix, and the entire experience becomes even more fulfilling.

That's why last June found me doing just that to celebrate the conclusion of another school year and the beginning of a hard-earned summer break. In seeking respite from the day-to-day responsibilities of a busy public school teacher and coach, I was eager for some quiet time in nature—a few days to relax, unwind and sling some fly line amid the peace and tranquility of a quality trout stream.

One of the best places to do so in Pennsylvania is the centrally-located State College, Centre County, where multiple creeks offer top-notch fishing opportunities within an hour's drive from Bald Eagle State Park—the destination I chose to serve as home base for fish camp.

While Bald Eagle State Park offers a variety of amenities, including modern camping areas with full electrical hookups, I decided to keep things simple and select a rustic campsite in a densely wooded area on the backside of Foster Joseph Sayers Reservoir.

A primitive tent pad, metal fire ring and lantern holder located a short jaunt from the pull-off parking area provided bare necessities for a solo camper who intended to spend more time on the water than in camp.

I hastily erected a pop-up canopy, folding table and bucket chair on the tent pad to serve as a rain-proof dining and storage area for miscellaneous gear. A makeshift clothesline served as a place to hang waders and wet clothing, while a hammock strung between two trees provided a comfortable bed for my 3-day, 2-night stay.

The first stream I fished was the nearby Bald Eagle Creek, which has a nice stretch of Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters near the Soaring Eagle Wetland. However, due to a recent downpour, I found the creek running high and muddy, so I



headed to Milesburg, roughly 25 minutes from my campsite to fish lower Spring Creek.

There, I lucked into some nice Rainbow Trout including a 20-plus-inch trout that eventually broke my line, while running a tandem rig of a tungsten ant and beadhead sowbug imitation, before heading back to camp for a ham steak dinner over the fire.

The next day, I again fished Spring Creek at first light with fair results before traveling to the Little Juniata River, where I caught a lively Brown Trout and a Rock Bass under the Ironville Bridge, Blair County, using a flashy Walt's Worm pattern. I returned to Spring Creek, where trout were rising enthusiastically to sulphur dry flies just before dark.

The final day of camp, after packing up in a light drizzle, I headed toward the town of Lamar, Clinton County, to try Fishing Creek before returning home. I was rewarded for wading the slick rocky bottom of this pristine wilderness stream with the gentle tug of a wild Brown Trout that fell for a Pheasant Tail Nymph during a steadily increasing rainfall.

Wet but satisfied, I broke down my fly rod, returned to the truck and headed for home a fully revitalized man—thanks to the restorative qualities of my State College Fish Camp. Nature never disappoints, so long as the trout are biting. ☐



A simple pop-up canopy and hammock strung between trees served as basic shelter for a solo camping excursion in prime trout country.



The Little Juniata is a beautiful stream within reasonable driving distance of Bald Eagle State Park, Centre County.



With multiple trout fishing destinations less than an hour away, Bald Eagle State Park serves as the perfect home base for a fish camp in the State College area.



Cooking over an open flame adds to the overall enjoyment of the fish camp experience.



The author caught a lively wild Brown Trout while fishing the Little Juniata River, Blair County.