

Get in Some Extra Trout Fishing with **Summertime Terrestrials**

by Tyler Frantz

photo-Tyler Frantz



photo-Tyler Frantz

A black ant is one of the most deadly terrestrial fly patterns for Pennsylvania trout.

Sun beats down overhead as I wade the crystal clear waters of a spring fed mountain stream. It is mid-day in late July, long after many of the most notable hatches of the year have already come and gone.

While many are bait casting from boats on warmwater lakes, I stealthily seek out shaded trout pools with a 5-weight fly rod. There's not an aquatic insect tied to the end of my 6x leader though. Instead, today's fly of choice is foreign to these waters, an alien of sorts.

As I cast and drift the land-borne imitation downstream, I first observe a subtle swirl and a quick sip before an eager fight ensues. A vibrant Brook Trout just couldn't resist the temptation of a little black ant floating past his underwater hideout. It appears even aliens seem appetizing to a trout.

Just because the dog days of summer have arrived doesn't mean bass anglers need to have all the fun. Quality trout fishing still remains throughout the middle months of the calendar, but traditional fly selection needs to be thrown to the wayside. Trout lovers looking to elongate their season with midsummer fly fishing action should consider going "extra-terrestrial" with earthly imitations.

Terrestrial flies are intended to mimic non-aquatic insects, which make up a large portion of a trout's diet in mid- to late-summer when land-dwellers are numerous yet underwater specimens are sparse.

These flies come in a variety of patterns and styles from bees and inchworms to grasshoppers, but the most popular terrestrials for fishing Pennsylvania streams are typically ants and beetles.



photo John Allen

Timing an emergence of terrestrials just right can provide some incredible fly fishing action. Here, the author shows off a pretty Brown Trout that fell for a cicada imitation.

Anglers knowing when, where and how to fish terrestrials will discover that summer trout are often more compliant than one would initially guess. But first, it is important to locate a stream where the conditions are right for this time of year.

By July, many of the southeastern creeks I fished during April and May have warmed, and it's likely that any remaining fish are stressed from rising water temperatures. To avoid placing an unnecessary burden on these trout, I'll often head north to shaded mountain streams, which consistently run cold from refreshing springs and overhanging vegetation.

The best time to work terrestrial flies is late morning through evening, since it often takes a few hours of sunlight to get most six-legged creatures stirring. It seems windy days are also productive, because it's more likely for bugs to be blown into the water from streamside vegetation.

Ant varieties are a reliable choice any day of the week, but timing a natural emergence of Japanese beetles or periodic cicadas with hook-hugging lookalikes can result in some of the best fishing of your life.

Last summer, I spent a day skipping big foam cicada flies off the water's surface while thousands of the real thing buzzed in treetops overhead. My gaudy, floating imposters fooled more than one hungry trout that day, even with air temperatures climbing into the mid-80s.

Deep collection pools situated downstream from riffles, long indented turn-holes and undercut banks seem to be the best locations for targeting trout with floating terrestrials.

Try casting upstream and dead-drifting a winged-ant or beetle through these slow-moving pockets, and you will often see a rise if not an immediate take. If the fish seem to be nosing the flies, consider downsizing a bit or rig a secondary dropper fly off your floater with a 12-inch section of tippet.

A few years ago, I caught a beautiful Rainbow Trout on a drowned brown wasp pattern, which I ran as a wet fly through a deep bend in the creek. Several passes with a floating parachute ant proved unsuccessful, but as soon as I dropped below the film layer, it prompted a strike.

In fact, I know several guys who use a high-visibility Foam Beetle as a strike indicator to double their odds when fishing subsurface with nymphs. More times than not, they catch just as many on the indicator fly as they do underwater. With this in mind, trailing a small Pheasant Tail or Zebra Midge below your terrestrial probably isn't a bad idea.

When casting terrestrials, the otherwise critical element of finesse is greatly reduced. Flies that land with a subtle "plop" or momentarily drag, realistically imitate a struggling insect.



photo-Tyler Franz

An assortment of terrestrial flies should have a well-respected place in every angler's fly box.

Likewise, a long, swinging, unmended drift is usually satisfactory too, because trout will often follow the fly for a considerable distance downstream before taking it. In essence, being patient is more important than being pretty.

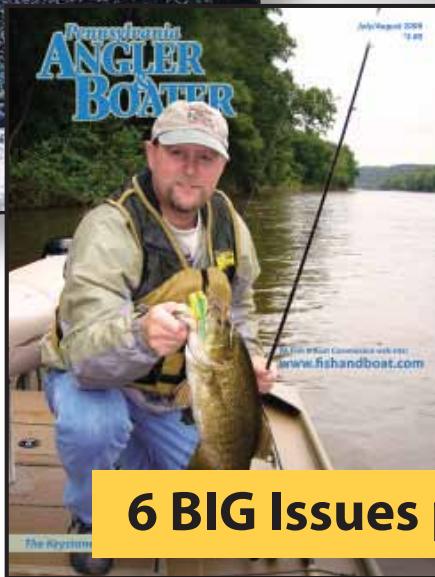
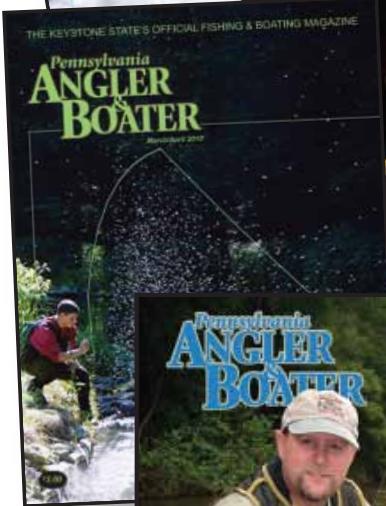
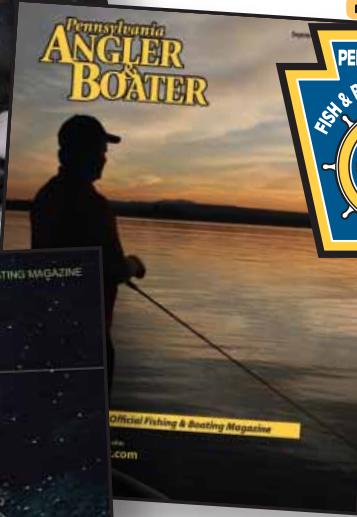
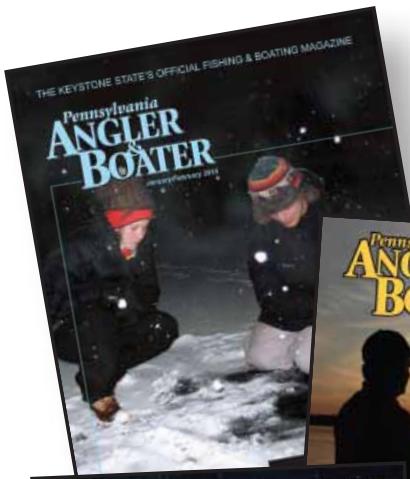
Keep in mind that trout are a coldwater species. Understandably, they're going to be a bit more sluggish throughout the summer months, but they still need to eat. Tempting them with land-dwelling delicacies is a great way to lure them out of hiding for some fun in the sun.

It's fair to say that you probably won't catch a fish on every cast you make when fishing with "extra-terrestrials," but the trout you do hook are sure to give you an experience that is simply out of this world. ☐



photo-Tyler Franz

This beautiful Rainbow Trout took a drowned brown wasp fly in the middle of summer.



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