

OPENING DAY GOLD

by *Blake Garlock*



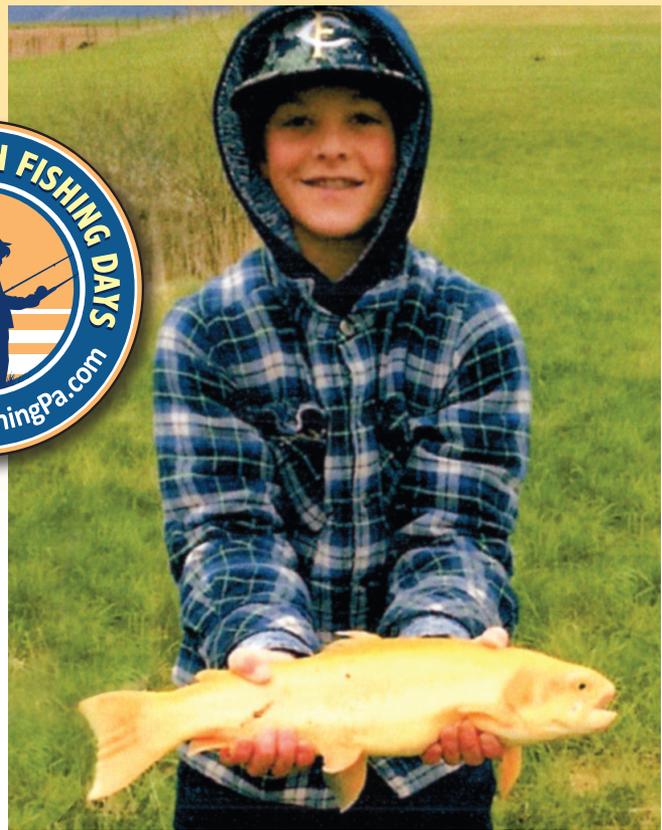
In Pennsylvania, trout season is one of the most anticipated times of the year. People, young and old, squeeze into any opening they can along a local creek. However, for those who are young enough and cannot hold off for another week or two, there is a solution. Pennsylvania offers Mentored Youth Trout Days, just before the opening days of trout. Although I am not considered a youth, I have a little brother who loves to fish.

On the morning of April 9, 2016, I rose from my bed around 6 o'clock. My younger brother was in my room, dressed and ready to go. We were not going to be the last ones to the creek. After a cup of coffee and some eggs, we headed out to one of our honey holes. On the drive, my brother complained that he wanted to get a tea. I, in a hurry to get to the creek, told him the only way he could have a tea was if he caught a Golden Rainbow Trout. I did not know it, but I would eat my words.

In Fulton County, trout season is a big deal. People throw parties, have contests and enjoy each other's company while trying to reel in an angler's dream. My brother and I packed into my small Dodge Dakota and shoved off. We were going to fish Cove Creek. Although trout fishing is not my favorite thing to do, I enjoy it. My little brother, however, lives for it. He loves to fish in general. Any free moment he gets is spent at a pond that has been in our family for generations. The first day he can fish for trout offers an excitement like no other.

Upon arriving to the creek, we realized that we were not the first ones up that morning. In the pull-off, there were two vehicles. We did not let this dampen our day. Even though there were other people along the water, no one had taken our spot. We fish on a large rock, that sits about 2 feet off the bank. It serves as a great vantage point to cast throughout the stream. In front of the rock is a section of fast water with a calm pool on the other side. This pool holds trout, giving us the ultimate trout hole. I put my brother in the hot spot, hoping that he could pull out a few trout. It was not long until we got a little action. After a few minutes of fishing, Doogie, my brother, hauled in an 11-inch Rainbow Trout. It was a great start to the day. However, the best was yet to come.

After pulling out a few more trout throughout the morning, Doogie's luck started to slow down. Trout tend to slow their bite after a few hours. Noticing the slow bite and some snow flurries, the other groups cleared from the area. This left Doogie and I alone at the creek. We fished in our same spot for another 40 minutes before we decided to



Doogie Garlock

make a change. Doogie came up with the idea that we should head upstream and try to find a new hole. I agreed.

We headed out through an open field that ran parallel to the stream and scouted out several holes that turned out to be duds. We were just about to call it quits when we came upon the next spot. We walked up to the hole, and it instantly stunned us. It was a shallow, wide pool that held over 50 trout. On either side of the hole, the creek narrowed to a width of 5 feet. However, the large pool was almost 15 yards across. We could see trout swimming in the middle of the stream, and one caught our eyes. It was a large Golden Rainbow Trout that was on the other side of some rapids. I decided that the odds were against me, so I did not bother with the fish. But, Doogie was dead set on catching it. Time and time again he cast in and came up short. Meanwhile, I stood next to him pulling out Rainbow Trout after Rainbow Trout. Finally, his luck changed when Doogie cast his pink worm about 10 feet ahead of the trout. It landed directly in the rapids and began to flow with the current. Keeping a close eye on it, he watched as it neared the prized fish. The lure drifted into the calm pool, and the fish struck.

The fish hit the lure hard. Right as it hit, Doogie set the hook. The trout bolted straight up out of the water and fought hard. Still, Doogie soon got the fish to the bank where I was able to pull it up. After safely removing the hook, we began to celebrate. Doogie was quick to remind me of the deal we made earlier in the morning. We took a few photographs and headed to a local country store to celebrate the fish over some lunch and tea.

Now, the fish hangs over Doogie's bed. It's the only Golden Rainbow Trout he has ever caught and bigger than any I have ever caught. Anytime I go into his room, I'm quickly reminded of the day we struck gold. ☺