



photo-Marshall Nych

Place of Two Streams

by Marshall Nych

Few cultures have sensed the pulse of nature's wild heart clearer than Native Americans, who are credited with naming the Neshannock Creek's green flowing waters in Lawrence and Mercer counties. To the native tongue, Neshannock translates to mean "place of two streams." Our

English language alludes to Neshannock as being a white-fleshed variety of potato. We will go with the former.

Neshannock Creek starts in eastern Mercer County, where Cool Spring Creek combines forces with other small feeder streams. From there, it flows southwest as the Neshannock Creek enters Lawrence County and welcomes the tributaries of Beaver Creek, Pine Run, Indian Creek, Potter Run and the Little Neshannock Creek along the way. The Neshannock Creek's mouth can be



Brown Trout

heard surrendering to the Shenango River in downtown New Castle. Maps clearly illustrate the unique aquatic borders of Neshannock Township. The Shenango River builds momentum to the west while, to the east, a smaller, friendlier Neshannock Creek flows.

Though Neshannock Creek offers a wide variety of fishing, including Smallmouth Bass, its triumphs with trout are what have bolstered its reputation. Within a single outing, be it a leisurely morning or a brisk evening, one can fish Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Stocked Trout Waters, Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only and Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters.

The “place of two streams” is a place for all angling, fly fishing and spin fishing alike. With respect to spinning equipment, a light to ultralight setup is an ideal starting point. Budget for the expense of fluorocarbon line. Through experience, I have found its properties outperform other lines. Though some of the fish far exceed it, I spool 4- to 6-pound-test line. Some anglers fling longer rods with success. I have found a short rod gets the job done while avoiding vegetation and overhanging branches, often majestic sycamores.

Spin fishing lures and bait are dictated by the stretch in which one is wetting a line. Sections outside of the Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only and Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters are fished well with minnows, mealworms, salmon eggs and other baits. Add some weight, because this water is larger than the typical trout stream. Stocked sections include the bridge at Millburn, upstream from the Mill Dam in Volant, and downstream of the covered bridge.

Typically not much wider than one’s living room, vibrant aquatic life flourish within the Neshannock Creek’s nutrient-rich waters. Those who know more about entomology than I eagerly share information on matching the hatch. With April showers comes caddis of tan, olive and dark brown. As May brings its blossoms, so too does it usher a mayfly

bloom. Light cahill at the beginning of the month are followed by olives as time progresses. Into late May, the creek boasts a prolific March brown and brown drake hatch. Fly anglers should note Neshannock Creek’s year round population of small blue winged olives. June enjoys sporadic caddis hatches. As summer heats the waters in July, terrestrials are the standard.

Conveniently, a knowledgeable fly shop sits atop a charming bank in Volant, just below the start of the Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only and Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters. Specifically, the special regulated

waters start 2.67 miles from the base of the Mill Dam in Volant downstream to the covered bridge on T-476.

Once within the Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only area, all lures must be constructed of metal, plastic, rubber, or wood. Carrying a small assortment of proven lures is both convenient and effective. I have done particularly well with small spinners.

To tackle the waters with the fly rod, anglers cover all their bases by swinging a 5-weight rod and reel with floating line. Though not a necessity, waders will get anglers deeper into the action. The stocking months of March, April and October find fish readily hitting egg patterns, Woolly Buggers and anything with a flashy bead. As the number of anglers increase, the size of the fly needs to decrease. Schools of fish are quickly educated by the pressures and presentations of anglers.

Access to the creek is fair to good, with roads paralleling the stream at many points. Ample parking exists at a variety of locations including near the Iron Bridge on Route 19 at public parking lots in Volant and at other pull-offs along Neshannock Creek.

Covering a lot of water can be an effective method. If a hole looks promising, give it a few extra casts. Otherwise, cast slightly upstream while slowly working with the current. Since much of the stretch is float stocked, fish are dispersed throughout the creek. Also, when other places have been fished out, Neshannock Creek is dependable for a few holdover trout.

The landscape varies from steep hemlock canyons to fertile, flat Pennsylvania farmland. The watershed, fair in size, is greatly affected by precipitation. Where other creeks bounce back in a short time, Neshannock Creek can take a few days.

The mere words I have casted cannot convey the experience. I suggest not being a couch Neshannock (the potato) and encourage you to claim your spot along the place of two streams. ☐

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