



WINTER TROUT at Buffalo Creek



by Ralph Scherder

photos by the author

Every angler has what they consider their home waters, those streams or rivers where large chunks of their fishing life were spent learning their craft. For me, that place is Buffalo Creek, Butler and Armstrong counties, specifically the Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only (DHALO) section. Buffalo Creek is where I spent many evenings after school as a teenager learning how to fly fish and many days as an adult philosophizing about life and continuing to learn how to fly fish.

Buffalo Creek begins near the town of Chicora, Butler County, and flows almost 30 miles before emptying into the Allegheny River near Freeport, Armstrong County. Five sections of the stream receive trout stocked by the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, from the municipal park in Chicora all the way to Boggsville, Armstrong County.

Most years, with the exception of very hot, dry summers, you can catch trout along the entire stocked length of the stream any time of year. Many of the big pools in the lower sections are deep enough to offer thermal refuge for trout during summer, and sections around West Winfield, Butler County, and downstream can produce great fall and early winter fishing for Smallmouth Bass and Walleyes.

For the most consistent winter trout fishing, though, focus on section three, the DHALO area, which is also part of the Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters program. Here, you will still find



Buffalo Creek is a Keystone Select Stocked Trout Water, which means it receives stockings of larger-than-average fish such as this beautifully-colored Rainbow Trout.

holdover trout from the spring as well as new arrivals thanks to the fall stocking program.

Buffalo Creek's DHALO section is easily accessed by Route 422. Bridges and pull-offs along Fenelton Road, Morrow Road, and Nichola Road all provide ample parking. The DHALO section is 3.7 miles from Little Buffalo Run downstream to 0.6 mile above SR 4035 in Craigsville.

Although the bridge on Fenelton Road is roughly 100 yards from the top of the DHALO section, the best way to access the upper portion is to park along Morrow Road and walk. A trail follows the stream most of the way, or you can walk the railroad tracks to the trestle where Little Buffalo Run enters Buffalo Creek.

Easier access can be found on Fenelton Road, where it eventually parallels the stream until it intersects with Nichola Road, which continues following Buffalo Creek another mile or so. A good chunk of the lower section of the DHALO section flows through secluded forestland that can be accessed by the bridge on Nichola Road, or you can turn north onto Hindman-Hill Road, cross over the railroad tracks, and turn right onto Bottom Creek Road. A moderate downhill hike from any of the pull-offs along the road will take you to the stream.

Buffalo Creek's DHALO section offers a variety of water types to explore. The upper section is smaller with a few nice pools and lots of pocket water and riffles. As you get closer to the bridge on Morrow Road, the stream widens considerably, and the pools get bigger.

Years ago, the sharp bend upstream from the bridge held a classic fishing hole that always seemed to have trout. When I close my eyes, I can still see that pool with its deep, swirling waters and overhanging tree limbs. Unfortunately, deposition took its toll and that pool gradually filled in. However, thanks to extensive work by the Arrowhead Chapter of Trout Unlimited over the years, both in that section as well as the

whole length of the DHALO area, new pools have taken shape, and there is a lot of quality holding water to be found.

Fish Buffalo Creek's DHALO section often enough and you will become familiar with stream improvement devices such as log frame deflectors. High water typically washes out nice pools behind these deflectors and trout certainly take advantage of the cover. Even in shallower areas, trout like to lie up under the logs. Countless times, I thought a pool was empty only to have a trout dart out from underneath the device to grab my fly.

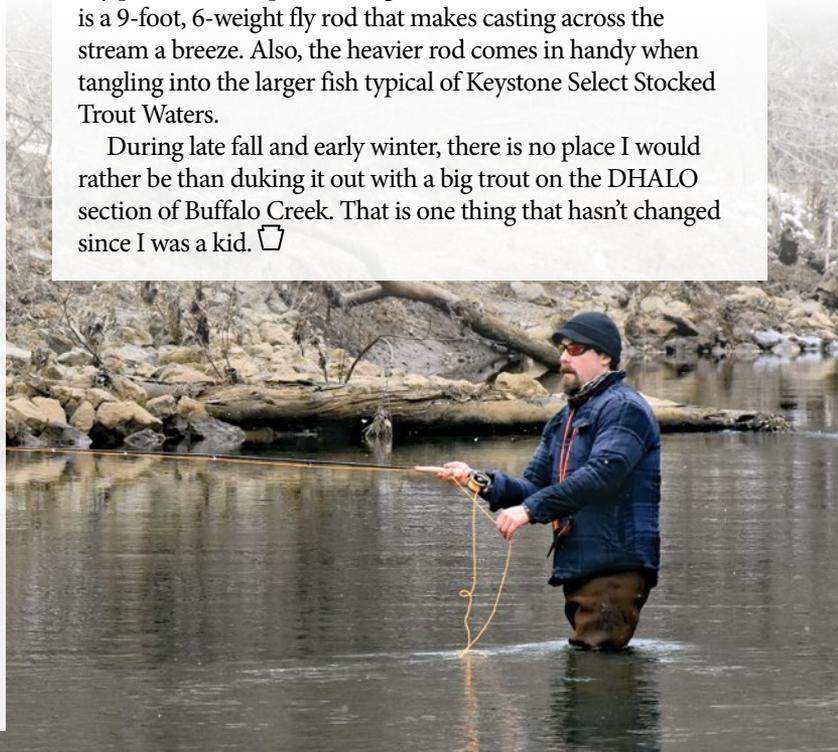
Depending on the conditions and the mood of the trout, these devices can make fishing a little tricky. Last winter, my friend Greg and I were experiencing little luck until I realized that all of the fish were tucked back in the slower water of the eddy and actually facing downstream. Once we figured out

how to get our flies and lures in front of the fish, we had a banner day.

Although roads border much of the upper $\frac{2}{3}$ of the DHALO section, the lower $\frac{1}{3}$ can provide some quiet days on the water for those seeking solitude and do not mind a short hike to the water. There will be plenty of big pools and trout waiting for you there, too.

The stream bottom along the DHALO section is a combination rock and mud bottom. Thanks to a gentle gradient, wading is easy even when water levels are up. Although Buffalo Creek does not offer much in terms of mayfly hatches, traditional nymph and streamer patterns do the job. My preferred set up for fishing Buffalo Creek's DHALO section is a 9-foot, 6-weight fly rod that makes casting across the stream a breeze. Also, the heavier rod comes in handy when tangling into the larger fish typical of Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters.

During late fall and early winter, there is no place I would rather be than duking it out with a big trout on the DHALO section of Buffalo Creek. That is one thing that hasn't changed since I was a kid. ☑



Greg Harold testing the waters along Buffalo Creek's Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only section on a cold winter day.

Pennsylvania ANGLER & BOATER



Get the complete story and read what you've been missing!

Do you like what you're reading? Do you find *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* online articles a valuable resource? If so, why not become a regular subscriber to *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* and receive the entire magazine delivered to your doorstep. With each printed issue, we place only a small portion of our feature articles on our website. If you fish or boat in Pennsylvania, you shouldn't miss a single issue, or even a single article! It's been the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's (PFBC's) premier, award-winning magazine since 1931.

Print out this page and mail the form below with your payment to begin your subscription. Or you can subscribe online through PFBC's Outdoor Shop. **CLICK HERE!**

6 Issues per year!

Subscribe with this form today or online at www.pa.wildlifelicense.com.

SUBSCRIBE TO *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater*

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone (include area code) _____

E-mail (optional) _____

Account # if renewing or extending _____

Payment must accompany orders. Use your credit card, check or money order made payable to the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission. Return this form with payment to: **PA&B Circulation, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.** Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

One year (6 issues) **\$20** Three years (18 issues) **\$48**

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$

Credit Card Purchase: VISA Mastercard Discover

Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Phone _____ Email (optional) _____

Since 1931, Pennsylvania's official fishing and boating magazine.

PAA&B-SUB-5-18