

Letort Spring Run



This stream is made up of three sections. The first section is the upper waters, which is what most anglers are looking for when they come to Letort Spring Run. This is the most popular stretch of the stream. It is highlighted by a 1.7-mile section of Catch and Release Fly-Fishing Only waters that can be accessed almost entirely by using the Letort Spring Run Nature Trail. This section is characterized by its swampy shoreline, overhanging brush, undercut banks and watercress beds. Fine gravel bottoms wind through this section, creating one of the most technically challenging streams in the world. It contains the famous meadow stretch or better known as Marinaro's Meadow. This area is best accessed from Spring Garden Street at a designated parking area where anglers will find monuments dedicated to Marinaro and Fox. A lot of the famous stories written about this stream originated from this section. Most first-time anglers will see a lot of trout searching for cover as these trout are startled by the slightest movements and vibrations. Long, light leaders and the ability to cast from a distance are a necessity. You will spend countless hours in Marinaro's Meadow trying to figure out how to properly position yourself and your fly without first startling the trout. Due to the history in this spot and the skittishness of the fish, it tends to be both the first and last spot most anglers visit.

by John Allen

photos by the author

Stepping onto these hallowed grounds for the first time should give any fly angler goose bumps. Most anglers who visit this stream come to either step foot on the same stream as some of the great fly anglers of our time or to see for themselves just how difficult wild Brown Trout are to catch. Letort Spring Run, Cumberland County, in a way is the mecca of fly fishing. Every fly angler needs to experience this stream at least once in their lifetime to fully gain an understanding and appreciation of why this stream has been so highly regarded over the years by the likes of Vince Marinaro and Charlie Fox.



A Brown Trout from Letort Spring Run, Cumberland County.

Below this section, the stream enters Letort Park, where it receives a large amount of pressure during the peak of the spring season. These fish are not as skittish, because the fish can hide in the deeper pools within the park. However, fish are still not very willing to take an anglers' offering. From this location, the stream goes into downtown Carlisle, where the fishing drops off a bit before entering the Carlisle Barracks. This stretch of stream has only the occasional deep pool.

The third and final stretch is from Post Road, where the stream exits the Carlisle Barracks, to where the stream enters the Conodoguinet Creek. This stretch of stream is greatly underappreciated. It receives a good amount of pressure year round but nothing close to the upper section. This stretch has plenty of cover as it winds through patches of woods, meadows and private yards. It

contains the occasional riffle, lots of cover and many deep holes. I always recommend this stretch to people who have been completely defeated in the upper section of the stream. The fish are a little less skittish and sometimes a little more willing to cooperate, but you still need to be stealthy.

The hatches on Letort Spring Run are nothing spectacular but are large enough to create rising fish. The only hatches of any significance are the Blue Winged Olives in the early spring, the Sulphurs in late spring, the Tricos in late summer and early fall. When all else fails, midges are around on sunny winter days when the water is

above 32 degrees F. Most anglers who come to the Letort Spring Run to fish with dry flies are here for one reason, terrestrials. Due to the many surrounding meadows, grasshoppers, crickets, beetles and ants are always present along the stream during the summer and early fall months. When surface activity is absent, cress bugs and freshwater shrimp can always be found in excellent numbers throughout the entire stream in enough abundance to allow anglers to nymph.

If you long to walk these hallowed grounds and enjoy the challenge of matching wits with some of the wildest trout in the world, you will want to add this stream to your list. There really is no other stream like it. Take it slow and know that you will startle trout. Remember, it runs almost entirely through private land, so be respectful of the landowners who allow access to this magnificent gem. ☐



Marinaro's Meadow