



# Late Season Trout Adventures

*by Jeff Woleslagle*

*photos by the author*

We loaded the car and pulled out of the driveway at 3:00 a.m. for the 4-hour drive to Erie's famed waters of Elk Creek. Stopping only once for coffee and fuel, we were in the access parking lot about 20 minutes before daylight and tried to rest before putting our waders on and hitting the trail to the water. The temperature was in the upper 30 degrees F. There was no wind, so we knew we would be comfortable. One angler was on the trail ahead of us, and he turned right on the trail where we turned left. So, the odds of having the water we wanted to fish to ourselves that morning just increased. Wading across at a shallow bar, we eased up to the nice fishing hole that was our chosen destination and found the deeper water to be a milky green. We could not see the fish holding in the current, but we knew fish were located here. As usual during late season trout and steelhead fishing, we fished for almost an hour before the first hookup. It took a little time to figure out the proper drift, as the fish were becoming more active as

the sun warmed the water. My son and his friend hiked back to the car to retrieve another fishing rod. While they were gone, I hooked a large male steelhead that immediately had me regretting my choice of 4-pound-test line that morning. I was just about ready to start guiding the fish toward my friend's net when it gave one more good head shake on the surface and broke the line. I was feeling dejected but knew we had the rest of that day plus two more days to fish. My chance would come again. About 1½ hours later, my son was using his fly rod and drifting an egg fly pattern of his own creation when his rod bowed with the weight of a heavy fish. He did a great job fighting it. When we got the fish into the net, we were all amazed to see not only his fly in its jaw but the egg sack that I was fishing. Incredibly, he landed the same fish that I lost earlier in the morning. We snapped a few quick pictures before he eased the beautiful steelhead back into the flow, and we watched it swim to deeper water. One of the great things about fishing that keep anglers coming back for more is that you never know what may happen on any given outing.

Late season trout adventures always seem to provide great stories to share in the warmth at home or at the hotel.



*This wild Brown Trout fell for waxworms drifted along an undercut bank.*

Odds are good that there is a stream within a reasonable drive of most anglers that holds trout throughout the year and provides good fishing if the water is not iced over. A little online research may reveal which waters in your neck of the woods may be good places to try. I am known for fishing whenever an opportunity arises, but I tend to be more selective about the days I fish in the late season. Look for a



*Deep holes are excellent locations to look for late season trout.*

warming trend or a few stable days without high winds to be successful.

A 6- to 7-foot light action spinning rod with a properly sized reel that is spooled with 4- to 6-pound-test monofilament or fluorocarbon line is ideal. Great baits in the late season include waxworms, live minnows, and paste baits. For live and paste baits, use small baitholder hooks from size 8 to 12 and enough BB-sized splitshot to keep it deep down. For artificial baits, small jigs in natural colors such as brown and black are good. Small 1/8- to 1/32-ounce inline spinners with silver or gold blades fished slowly along the bottom can be deadly. Cast across the current, and let your bait or lure drift down through each hole thoroughly before moving on. During this time of the year, focus on deeper holes and runs to locate fish. Fish undercut baits along deep water.

For fly fishing in the late season, I usually carry an assortment of nymphs as well as Sucker Spawn and egg patterns. On some days, midge hatches occur, so always keep an eye out for rising fish too.

Late season is an excellent time to fish for trout in Pennsylvania. More anglers every year are discovering the hot action that can be experienced, even in the cold. Now is the perfect time to plan your own late season trout adventure. □



*Paste baits, waxworms, small jigs, and inline spinners are effective when the water is cold.*