



Spring Creeks for Sexyloopers



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Fly fishing in spring creeks is on a different order of difficulty and challenge than other venues for fly fishing for trout. The water is generally very clear and not fast and the window through which the fish see, is generally not broken by rough current. It's usually best to see the fish before it sees you.

The source of spring creeks can be saturated rock layers or underground caverns and rivers. The flows are stable since ground water fluctuates little throughout the year, unless there are agricultural or drinking water diversions. The water is usually constant in temperature around 50 F., until exposed to the climate and has more minerals than most surface water. Some spring creeks even flow all the way to the sea and have sea-run trout moving in and out of them.

Since spring creeks exist mostly in low gradient areas, they usually lack tributaries with mud or silt runoff. They can be a godsend when other freestone or glacial rivers are too turbid to fish. The water tends to be alkaline and conducive to the growth of aquatic plant life. This in turn is food and habitat for insects such as mayflies, scuds and caddis.

Spring creeks usual run slowly and tend to have bottoms with a lot of silt and organic matter. This is good habitat for burrowing mayflies like the Eastern Green Drake, the brown and yellow drakes and the hexagenia. The hatches

can be long lasting with multiple species coming off simultaneously and because of the fertility, the hatches can be very prolific, even more prolific than on freestone or tailwaters. The number of fish per mile spring creeks can support and the size of some of their inhabitants can be staggering, even in very small streams. You will generally find the rainbows in the faster water and browns where it slows.

The fish in such streams that have such an abundance can be more selective and lazier than those that must grow-up in the more inconsistent habitat and diet that exists in freestone rivers. This has an affect on the way we must fish on spring creeks.

In the Eastern U.S., in the state of Pennsylvania, these streams are called limestones and Big Spring Creek and Penns Creek are arguably the two best. The Henry's Fork of the Snake River and Silver Creek in ID, the three private creeks in Paradise Valley, MT, and the Metolius River, OR, are excellent examples of spring creeks.

Europe, in which fly fishing originated, has many rivers whose source is ground water, or aquifers, beneath the surface of the earth. Anglers in the U.K call theirs chalkstreams because of the mineral bedrock. The River Avon, River Itchen and River Test are their most sacred. The countries in the Balkan Mountains in the former Yugoslavia, have spring creeks too. Croatia has its River Gacka and Bosnia has the River Ribnik. These are wonderful spring creeks that emerge from sources that look like a large blue hole in the earth. In addition to the introduced rainbows, wild and native brown trout of various genetic backgrounds, many European spring creeks are inhabited by European grayling. Anglers in Europe are polarized on their liking of grayling in their trout streams.

South America also has good introduced trout fishing in the Argentinian and Chilean Andes. Surprisingly, brook trout introduced from New York around 1904 flourish in some of their rivers. Argentina has a region called Junin de los Andes, which is known for its good spring creeks. These are Filo Hua Hum, Malalco and Calfiquitra. Chile's Rio Cisnes has some spring creek tributaries with great fishing. Chile is also full of small spring creeks on private ranches, or estancias.

New Zealand is famous for its spring creeks and big trout. Here, introduced browns and rainbows flourish. Two South Island rivers are well known spring

creeks. Two stellar examples are the Tussock Lands in the Canterbury region in the northeast and the La Fontaine River on the West coast. Small unnamed or unpublicized spring creeks are rumored here as well.

One thing almost all of these have in common is steep banks and either tall grass or bushes on the banks that goes to the water's edge, or beyond. Many also have choking aquatic vegetation in the water. Spotting fish, approaching them and casting to them are the three major areas of fishing technique to be addressed.

Wild trout in spring creeks use all available shade, cover and depth to conceal themselves, unless an easy supply of food brings them out. You can target concealed fish by reading the water. The best methods to offer them would be nymphing, or casting streamers. If the water doesn't offer any place for fish to hide and there is no surface feeding occurring, sight nymphing should produce. If on the other hand, the fish are cruising or holding to eat nymphs, emerging mayflies or blown terrestrials, I would enjoy matching the hatch and picking individual fish to target.

Fish that have never seen humans, or been habituated by them, are the toughest to approach and present a cast to. Approaching fish is difficult on a spring creek when there is too often, no background to obscure your outline and camouflage your movements. When you spot a fish, first make mental notes of where the fish is using shore or stream reference points.

If the creek's edge permits and you can make the right cast without spooking a fish and without getting your feet wet, do it. The bow and arrow cast can work well in these situations. If there is no cover, I recommend getting down on your knees or belly and crawling into position. If the banks are too steep or have plants and trees that prohibit an approach from land, you're going to have to go in. I either like to keep to an edge and use a bank or brush as a background, or when wading a small stream and there no particular environmental concerns, I'll wade upstream in the middle. This gives me room to cast and approaching the fish from behind, help keeps me undetected.

First, in slowly moving water, fish have more time to look at your fly. Floating presentations need to be fairly realistic and look like easy, vulnerable prey. Most of the time for mayfly imitations, this means floating nymphs, CDC emergers, parachutes, Comparaduns and No-Hackles. When I've exhausted

these, I might even show them something different with a Catskill dry. Terrestrials are a very important type of fly to have ready and use, when the conditions are right. Winds blow a variety of them into the water when the temperature makes them active and when they are participating in mating swarms. These include ants, hoppers and beetles. They can sometimes be effective as a search pattern, or to un-match the mayflies in a blizzard hatch.

Second, if the trout seem leader shy, you might need to downsize tippet diameter and/or, lengthen the leader. I usually don't use a tippet less than two feet in length and sometimes as long as five. Don't use a larger size line than you have to, considering the casting distance and wind you will need to cast in. The smaller the line, the softer and quieter it presents. Did I mention you will need to have good casting skills here too?

Accuracy is important where food is abundant because trout won't move far from their lane or lie, to intercept bugs. A drag free drift is important to use when presenting flies that don't swim or skate. For surface or subsurface presentations, the reach mend, slack casts, water mends, and others, are essentials for your success.

These casts and mends intentionally add slack for the current to consume before moving your fly unnaturally. This prevents the fish seeing drag and refusing, or hiding as a result. This can mean the difference between getting a strike or putting the fish down. You can also extend your drift by adjusting your tippet length so it lands with small "S" curves in it, since that too is a little slack. If the tippet piles, it's too long and must be shortened. This can tangle, or shorten the effective leader length. If it's straight and you want it to be snakier, make it longer until it's just right. The three bears taught me that one.