

"Dead Fish"

My basketball season ended last week in the District Semi-Final game. The ending of the basketball season, with a loss, is never pleasant. Unless it happens to be for 2nd place in the state final 4. A coach always wants to end the season with a win. The end of basketball season means the beginning of fishing season for me. Although it never officially has a beginning and an end for me, the winter months just means a lot less time on the water, when I have to share my time with my team.

One week after the opening of the trout season in the Trout Parks, I decided to drive down to the Current River and fish below Montauk Park. I knew there would be a few fishermen hanging around from the first weekend of the Park Season and I wasn't disappointed. I saw about a dozen fishermen along the road in the park as I drove by the camp ground. I decided to park at TanVat, walk the road back up to the Montauk Park boundary and fish downstream to the truck. When I arrived at the boundary, I met a new found friend parked along the road, getting ready to do the same thing. Norm Crisp of Stream Side Adventures, was just getting his gear ready when I walked up. We had met on the stream about two weeks earlier. Norm had been on a week long fishing excursion hitting Capps Creek, Crain Creek, the North fork and was finishing his week on the Current. While we were standing there exchanging stories, the owner of the cabin next to the road at the park boundary, walked up and accused us of cutting his fence to get through to the river. I tried to explain that we had just arrived and that we had nothing to do with his fence. I was explaining to deaf ears. This man was yelling at us to move the vehicle and that we weren't suppose to be on the road next to his cabin, we were suppose to be in the parking lot in the Park. There was no reasoning with this man. It didn't matter what I tried to say to him he wouldn't listen. Norm decided to drive down stream and fish

another section so we said our goodbyes and I walked down to the stream.

I knew there would be plenty of stocked rainbows to catch that swam downstream from the park. I immediately began to see some dead trout, all of them rainbows. Occasionally I see a few that wash down from the park but this was an abnormally large amount. The farther downstream I fished the more dead trout I saw. By the time I got to the second bend in the river I had counted 18. From the second bend to the parking lot at TanVat I counted another 14. These were just the fish that I saw, who knows how many others there were that I didn't see. 32 dead trout in less than a mile, is the highest mortality I have ever seen. I don't know what to attribute the kill to, but it has been my experience that when a group of guys fishing with bait hits that particular section of the river there are always dead fish left behind. I'm just guessing here, but I would say that it was illegal fishing below the park or culling stringers in the Park. Usually, when a bait fisherman catches a trout in the park, it goes on a stringer. Bait fishermen usually don't release fish unless they are culling their stringers, which does occur, but it is not the norm. Most honest bait fishermen keep and eat what they catch.

I did manage to catch several fish, mostly rainbows, using a variety of flies. The fish of the day was a very fat 20" brown.



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