

" My Good Friend Tommy"

October 17

Sam Potter - www.TightLine.Biz

It was a bright sunny "Blue Bird" day when we arrived. We didn't get to the river until late morning and there was only one car in the parking lot. Late morning isn't a sin in the Fall or Winter, because the Baetis and the Midges are just getting started about that time of day. I noticed a fisherman casting dry flies in the pool at the parking lot, so I went down to watch him while Tommy took care of the coffee he had on the trip down. There were some small fish that were rising and I asked the man fishing what he was using. He told me that they were feeding on Trico spinners, but that he couldn't get them interested in what he had. Puzzled I looked closely and noticed that there were indeed some Tricos flying but I knew that this time of year usually had very few Tricos coming off. I asked the man if he had tried any tiny olives, and pointed out that the majority of the flies in the air did not have extra long tails, and that I suspected they were keying on olives instead of Tricos.

It was time to get dressed for a day of fishing with my good friend Tommy. When I returned to the river the fisherman had moved up stream and Tommy decided to go down stream. I decided to try to catch some of the fish that were still rising in the pool by the parking lot. Moving slowly (the subject of my next article for the White River Journal) into position for the fish rising at the head of the pool, I tied on a spent wing olive in #24. A half dozen casts later I had the first brown of the day. Not a big fish, but I didn't expect it to be. Usually the average size trout feeding on insects this small is about 10-12 inches. Occasionally we will catch some 15 or 16 inch fish and every now and then an 18-20 inch trout will take them. I ended up taking 5 browns out of the parking lot hole and headed down stream to catch up with Tommy.



Current River in October

He was set up on a nice fish and he said that he had been in the same spot for about 20 minutes. While working his way down stream the fish had come up for something on top and that is how Tom found out it was there. Two hours later, Tom had not moved, and the fish he was after wasn't interested in anything he was throwing. Tommy ended up taking about 5 or 6 fish from that spot but never did hook up with the one he wanted.

While Tommy was trying to get "his fish" interested in one of his flies, I was fishing down stream below him in a shallow flat using an elk hair caddis, and a caddis emerger for a dropper. It was getting late afternoon and I knew they were coming soon. About 3 PM I started seeing the first ones and by 4 it was a full hatch. The caddis fly on the Current River is almost always a sure thing, late afternoons in the Fall. Tommy and I worked our way back to the truck, stopping every now and then to make casts with our dry flies. Unfortunately we both had to get back to town early and did not have an opportunity to finish the day on the river.

Recently I helped the MDC with an electro-shock survey. During the survey we measured some trout that had puncture wounds in them just behind their heads. I was told that the punctures were from Great Blue Herons, and recently a National Park Service

agent told me that some friends of his watched a heron spear and try to eat a large sucker, but he never did get it down. The photo below is one that I took this past Saturday, of a rainbow I caught on the Meramec River, that has the exact same type of wound we observed during the electro shock survey.



© Great Blue Heron puncture wound

When trout have a serious injury they get a dark, sometimes black area around the wound. You can tell from the photo, that the front third of this fish is very dark compared to the back 2/3. A heron can't eat a fish this large, this rainbow was 17" long, but they still try. If the heron can spear the fish and get it up and out of the water, and on shore he will then try to pick up the fish and swallow it whole. The problem is, that fish this large are too heavy to pick up and almost always get away, but carry a life long scar. Sometimes the puncture wound becomes infected and the fish dies.

Until next trip...remember "A bad day fishing is still a Great Day"