

## Fall Trout Fishing on the Rapidan

Four TU members enjoyed a late October day of trout fishing on Rapidan. The trip was organized by the Nation Capital Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Our fishing party met the guide in Madison, Virginia at the local McDonalds. Madison is about 100 miles southwest of the district and is sits at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains. From there we drove through the Virginia country side toward our destination. Along the way we passed several inviting stretches of water including the Robinson River and Quaker Run, but we stuck with plan and continued into the Shenandoah National Park on the state road. Upon entering the park we crossed a small ridge on a switchback road. Once over the ridge we descended into the Rapidan Valley and soon found ourselves traveling parallel and overlooking the river. It looked like a scene from a Trout Unlimited calendar for the month of October. Large car sized limestone borders framed the gradient water as we now ascended further into the Blue Ridge Mountains. The fall foliage was at its apex of brilliance. Along the way we ran into an old friend of the chapter, Kiki Gavin, who was preparing to guide a client. We continued up the road another few miles and found parking just below a small steel and concrete deck beam bridge crossing the Rapidan.



photo Russell Outhuse

*Large limestone boulders frame the Rapidan*

By now we were anxious to get our lines wet, but our guide spent a few minutes to explain the features of the river and offered a strategy for dissecting the water. He told us that many people walk by trout rich water to hit the obvious spots such as deep open pools and plunge pools only to find the most worked over and spooky fish in the stream. Casting into the less obvious target such as shallow ripples,

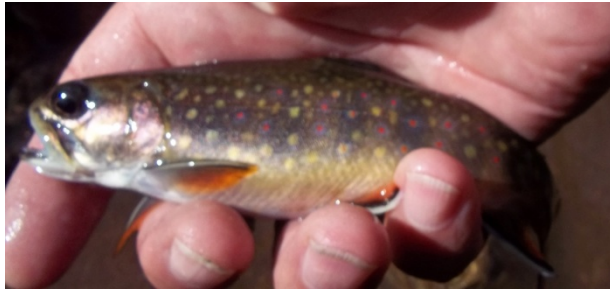
river banks with slight pockets, drift lines and large stones in the stream beds can be as productive as any spot on the stream. Shuffling your boots along the stony bottom can put the fish off. So spending a few minutes looking at the water to find these features and preparing your plan of attack while minimizing your movements can pay big rewards. As Yogi Berra once said "you can observe a lot just by watching".



photo Russell Outhuse

*Davis Pryor Making Upstream quarter casts*

With these instructions in mind our guide distribute our group of four over about a half mile. I was using a dropper rig i.e. an Adams parachute with a pheasant tail nymph attached about 18 inches below using a 6' , 3- WT rod. The section of water I started on was about 20 feet wide with a tight overhead canopy. So short accurate casts were the order of the day. Since it was autumn leaves were in the water and my two hook rig was occasionally snagging them. In the strong current a snagged leaf quickly tangled the dropper rig making for time spent re-rigging. I soon went to a single bead-head nymph below a strike indicator. This simpler rig made encounters with stray leaves less likely and easier to cleanup when necessary. With this new rig I was soon into Rapidan Brookies. These guys were running in the 4-9 inch range. Their coloration was as exquisite as a fine piece of jewelry. This may be because they are entering into their seasonal spawn.



photos Russell Outhuse

*Left: Typical Rapidan Brookie Right: Fallen timber and low canopy make for tight quarters*

Around 12:30 was broke for lunch. A cup of hot tea using Rapidan water took a slight chill off the anglers. We talked strategies, techniques and swapped lies about who was the best fisherman. We were soon back in the water picking up where we had left off. The brook trout were still taking my bead-head at a slightly better rate than the morning. Our guide, who was checking up on each of us, evaluated our technique and offered a few tips. By 4:30 we all met again by the cars and called it a day. We thanked our guide for sharing this special water with us and we set out for home with memories of splendid day of fall trout fishing on the Rapidan.

For more information on upcoming NCC-TU fishing trips come to our monthly meeting. Schedules and details can be found at:

<http://ncc-tu.org/published/meetings/index.html>

[http://ncc-tu.org/published/activities/calendar\\_.html](http://ncc-tu.org/published/activities/calendar_.html)