

Small Stream Fishing

WITH EVAN MCDOUGALL



Why fish small streams?



“They say you forget your troubles on a trout stream, but that's not quite it. What happens is that you begin to see where your troubles fit into the grand scheme of things, and suddenly they're just not such a big deal anymore.”
John Gierach



“Maybe your stature as a fly fisherman isn't determined by how big a trout you can catch, but by how small a trout you can catch without being disappointed.” John Gierach



“Trout aren't naturally as selective as they've become in crowded tailwaters... I've seen tailwater fish that are so hysterical they'll refuse naturals. You wonder how they get enough to eat.” John Gierach



“Down at the core of every fisherman's heart is the belief that on any day something wonderful and unlikely could be made to happen, and that if you're careful and patient it could happen to you.” John Gierach



“Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after.” - Henry David Thoreau

Gear

The Essentials

1-5 wt. with any reel (or a Tenkara rod) *as long as practical*

Fly line, knotted leader (6'-9'), & Tippet (4x and 5x)

Floatant

Strike Indicators

Small fly box



Nice-to-Have's

Nippers

Forceps

Camera, tripod, and filters

Snacks

Net?

No net? No problem.



Clothing

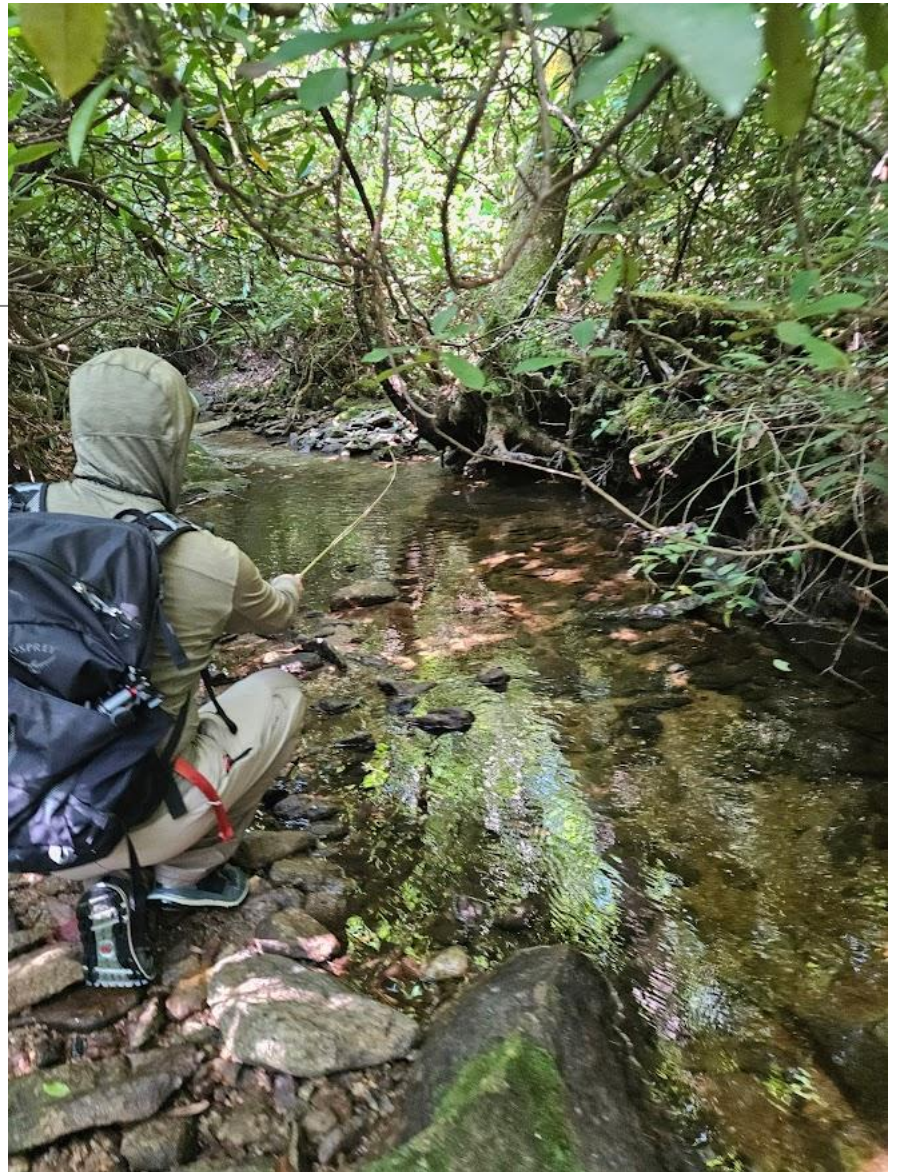
Polarized sunglasses & hat

Long-sleeves (hoodie preferred)
treated with permethrin

Long wading pants

Wool socks

Astral shoes



Safety

Water (or water filter)

Satellite navigator/communicator

Insect repellent (not DEET)

Wading staff (depending on stream)

Cold Weather

Waders & wading boots

Wool longjohns

Nitrile gloves under fingerless
wool gloves



The Fly Box

Dries	Nymphs	Streamers	Junk
Parachute Dry (10-18)	Pheasant Tail (14-18)	Simi Seal Buzzer (6-12)	Squirmy Wormy (12)
X Caddis (12-16)	Soft Hackle Hare's Ear (12-16)		Chartreuse Mop Fly (12)
Chubby Chernobyl (10-14)	Blow Torch (12-18)		Clown Egg (12)
Puff Daddy (14-18)	Zebra Midge (12-18)		Pat's Rubber Legs (10)



Purple Haze



X Caddis



Pheasant Tail



Soft Hackle Hare's Ear



Simi Seal Buggy



Blowtorch



Mop

Tactics



Navigating

Fishing tactics

1. Stealth
2. Presentation
3. Fly selection



Stealth is key

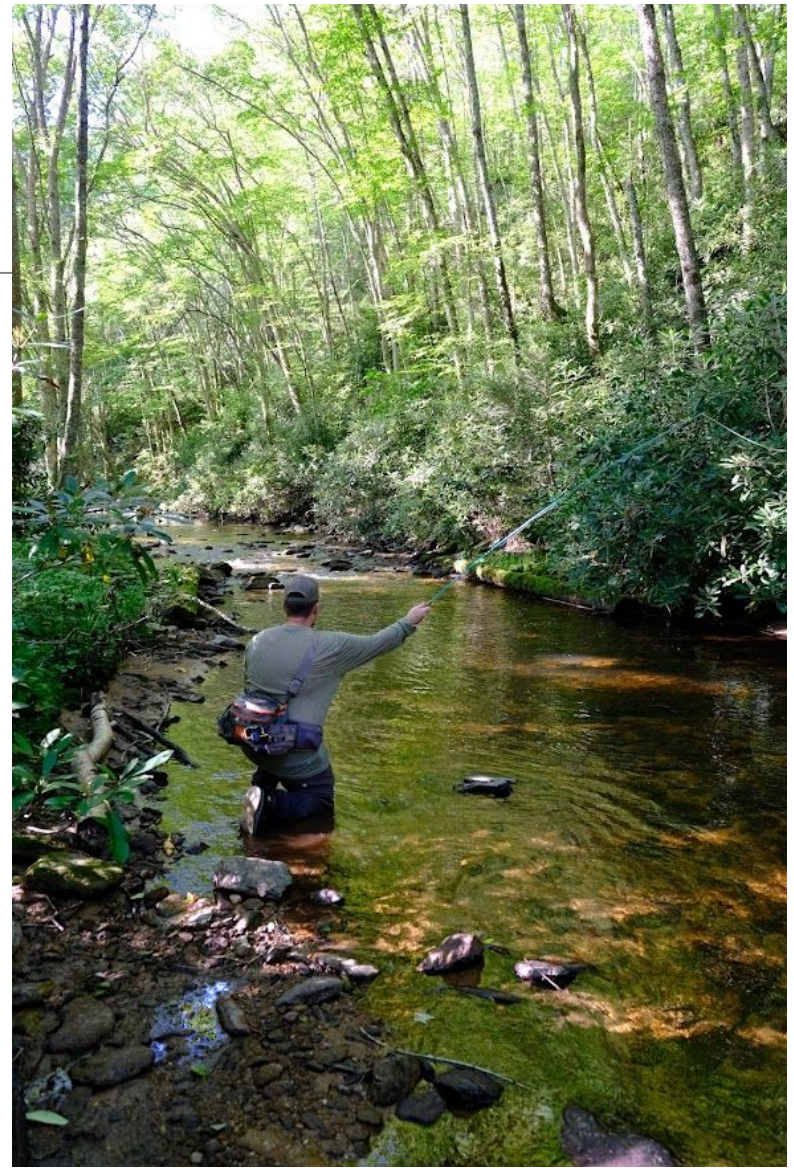
Casting

1. Nothing good ever happens past 3 rod lengths

2. Load the rod differently when room is lacking:

- Roll cast
- Water load
- Bow and arrow

3. Only present twice to each spot.





Where was the fish?



Fly Placement

Target the pockets slow water right next to faster, deeper water or structure.
Drifts of only a few feet are needed!



Fighting Fish

Strategy

Cover lots of water

Cover it fast

Don't worry about the fly choice

Stay concealed (work upstream)

Don't worry about that 1 fish or that 1 good looking hole

Q: Where to find fish?

A: Any relatively clean, flowing water, that doesn't get too hot.

Look for:

Cool water (shade, spring-influence, and/or elevation over 2000')

Gradient-based stream features (riffles, runs, plunge pools)

Stream structure (rocks, logs)



Trout are everywhere!

This is one of handful of wild trout streams in Johnson City

Q: When to fish?

Flow:

- Gin clear and low all the way to off-color and high
- Flies get bigger, heavier, and gaudier with the flow
- Stealth dictated by flow

Temperature:

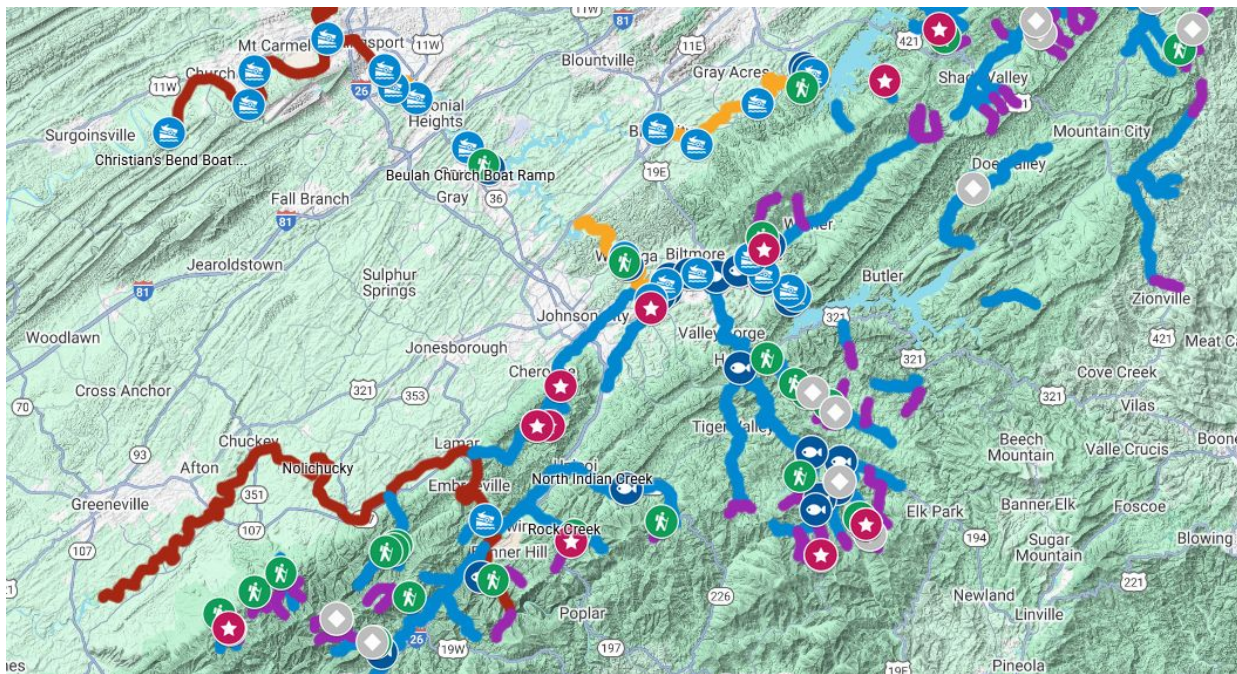
- Water 38 to 68 degrees
- In the winter, look for consecutive days of warming, fish the afternoon
- In the summer, look for reprieves from heat, fish the morning

Sun

- Small streams tend to fish best when the sun is hitting them, especially during cooler parts of the year

Goal: Fish every trout stream in NETN

54 brook trout streams + 58 wild brown/rainbow streams catalogued in our region. Probably another 100 more tributaries holding trout.



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Q&A