



# Trout Hunting

## Streamcraft

By Ben

# Know your quarry

- Trout are often touted as a mystical creature with the ability to scrutinise both angler and fly. It has been proven scientifically that trout aren't capable of such critical thinking.
- They do however possess finely tuned survival instincts which have been tuned over thousands of years. If we can learn what they are and keep these in mind while fishing we can not only get closer but also start to consistently catch more fish.
- If you were rabbit hunting and not trout fishing you wouldn't approach your quarry heavy footed, standing upright and in full view and then fiddle with your firearm before pointing in the general direction and pull the trigger. Why then do we do it with trout?

A scenic landscape featuring a river flowing through a valley. The foreground is dominated by dry, golden-brown grass and scattered rocks. In the middle ground, a river winds through a green, grassy valley. The background consists of rolling hills and mountains covered in dense, dark green forest under a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds.

So You've Arrived  
at Your  
Destination.

- Gear up and remember that more weight means a more uncomfortable day. Never rig your rod at the vehicle.
- Once near the stream position yourself far enough away that movement won't spook fish but close enough that you can observe a nice section. Sit and watch for clues as to what is going on.
- Walk well downstream (or upstream if intending to fish downstream) and look in and on the river for insect life. Shake bushes along the streamside and see what insects come out. These will give clues as to what has been on the trouts menu.
- After five or ten minutes rig your rod whilst in the position you chose where you can observe the stream. You will be surprised how often you spot the first fish of the day.

A scenic view of a river flowing through a lush, green landscape. The river is in the foreground, with water reflecting the sky. The banks are covered in dense vegetation, including tall grasses and shrubs. In the background, there are more trees and a hillside under a cloudy sky.

# Moving In and Around the Water

- Approach the water with care. Stop and look every meter or so. Look into the edge of your vision into the water. If you spook a fish at this stage it will race through the pool/run and put down most of the fish.
- Be mindful of shadows on the water as well as your silhouette against the skyline.
- Excessive movement of your hands, face and rod are the most forgotten culprits for spooking fish.
- Try not to simply walk along the bank but rather give the bank a little breadth when moving only approaching when you find a vantage point where you can observe a large area.

- When polaroiding if you think you are moving to slow move slower. Search the water at the very edge of your vision. If you spot a fish well inside your window of vision the chance is the fish has seen you.
- Don't enter the stream unless you have no choice.
- Remember noise travels much more easily under water
- If you must cross the stream do so two pools/runs down from the water you intend to fish next
- When fish aren't working a beat they will always hold station facing into the current flow. The current doesn't always flow downstream though (eddies, backwaters, etc).
- When releasing fish try to release well downstream and ensure they swim down stream.

A photograph of a person fishing in a rocky stream. The person is wearing a dark jacket and a cap, and is standing in the water, holding a fishing rod. The stream is surrounded by large, light-colored rocks and dense green vegetation on the banks. The water is clear, and the scene is peaceful.

# Presentation, The One Shot Kill

- Everyone should strive towards making effortless accurate casts. The only way to get there is practice. You can practice on your limited fishing opportunities or you can practice for half an hour once a week and make the most of your fishing opportunities.
- If casting to a sighted fish make sure you know where the fish is before casting. This may mean waiting a minute for the fish to rise again.
- Think about your angle of attack. Look for currents, seams, structure or anything else that may affect the drift
- Try to present the fly with some slack in the leader so as to maximise drag free drift. Slack leaders can also help nymphs to sink quicker.

- Learn to judge how much line you have stripped off without false casting. Stripping off the reel while false casting to a fish is a sure fire way to spook it.
- Get your distance by rolling your line down stream or cast well out side of the visual and audible zones of the fish.
- NEVER LINE THE FISH (fly line lands across the fish). This will immediately spook the fish.
- If the fish doesn't take the first time let the fly drift well away from the fish so it neither sees nor hears your pickup off the water.
- Apparent rejection of the fly is often a result of drag or a poor presentation. Try to get it right before changing the fly.

- The trout are looking for certain behaviours or cues from their food. Although drag can be bad there are times when movement is beneficial (e.g. when a nymph is rising through the water column)
- Learn to maintain contact with your flies without creating unnatural drag.
- Control/pickup your slack line.

A close-up photograph of two black fly larvae (pupae) resting on a wet, reddish-brown rock. The rock surface is glistening with water, and the larvae are dark, segmented, and have a pointed posterior end. The text "Which Fly?" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

Which Fly?

- A fish looks for visual and chemical cues as to whether the fly is indeed food. When a fish takes a fly it is often testing the fly as much as eating it. We merely need to get the fish to test the fly in order to catch it.
- During heavy hatches when fish become keyed in on a certain food type we see what many call selective feeding. This is also when the fish are most vulnerable as they throw caution to the wind and try too consume as much as possible.
- Certain visual clues and behaviours of the food tell the trout that it is food. Work out what these are and you'll have a blue ribbon session.

- The earlier stages of the hatch is often when the fish feed the hardest hence why nymphs, emergers and parachute flies are so deadly.
- When selecting your fly think size, shape, colour and in that order.
- Hatches though only equate to a minority of fishing situations in Australian streams.
- When no hatch is present we need to take a more general approach.
- In this case don't agonise too much. Tie on the most likely candidate and fish it until you are absolutely confident the problem is the fly and not the presentation.
- When fishing dries and you get rejections first look at your presentation. If it is definitely not your presentation go smaller.
- If fish aren't coming to your dry at all go to a larger fly.

- Emergers and parachute flies are very effective and offer the best of both worlds. Subsurface visibility to the fish as well as clearly identifiable takes.
- The old adage a good nymph fisherman will out fish a good dry fly fisherman rings true.
- Fishing nymphs is no different to dries except you have to visualise what your nymphs are doing rather than being able to see it.
- So long as a fish hasn't spooked it remains catchable if it won't take a dry after numerous attempts get a nymph down to it.

# Finding Fish



- Fish are after three things; food, comfort and security but not always in that order.
- For example on a bright sunny day they may go deep or be under banks as they give security the priority due to risk of predation, they will also want to be in water with cool temperature and good oxygen levels. These fish are typically hard to catch. As evening approaches, the light dims, the risk of predation lessens and food becomes more available these fish will move into open water throwing caution to the wind and give food priority with comfort a distant second.
- If you think about what the trout's needs are going to be you will most likely find fish.

- Ultimately the best stretches of river are those with a good food source near secure fish holding structure/pool that offers good oxygen levels and stable temperature.
- Polaroiding fish is the holy grail of trout fishing but in reality outside of New Zealand streamside polaroiding opportunities are limited. Learn to look for disturbed and nervous water instead. If you think it may have been a fish it probably was. Stop and watch some more before casting.
- When fishing blind keep moving don't get bogged down.
- When you catch a fish pepper that spot again before moving on. Contrary to popular belief there is quite often more than one fish in a lie.

# The Hookset and Fight



- The more slack line out the harder it is to react and set the hook
- The ultimate time to strike is when the fish has closed its mouth and turned down away from the surface.
- The strike should mirror the take i.e. a long gentle take means waiting a second before striking. An aggressive take should mean an immediate strike.
- Try to fight and keep fish away from undisturbed fish.
- Don't fight fish with your leader inside the rod tip.
- Use side strain if possible but at the same time try not to let them bury into the bottom.

# Equipment



- Your rod and line combination should be optimised for the distance at which you are fishing. Most peoples rods are underlined for stream fishing. More “feel “ in a rod translates to fewer false casts and greater accuracy.
- The trend in recent years has been to go to lighter and lighter rods. Until you become proficient with a normal five weight it is not advisable to go lighter unless the water really calls for it.
- Make sure if using a floating line that it floats and floats well. It will give better drifts and make less disturbance on the pickup.
- Use a line that is supple.

- When using dries always grease and regrease your leader and first foot or so of line. Grease to within a foot of the fly.
- Your leader needs to turn over effortlessly. This is not possible with a lot of commercial leaders. Learn to tie leaders.
- Leader recipes need to be aggressive i.e. 60% butt and 40% tip. Rely on your casting ability and the 3 foot or so of tippet to make the presentation
- Try to use slim knots in leaders as thick knots can spook fish in clear water.
- Most people apply too much floatant to their flies. Apply gel sparsely. Powder floatants or desiccants have come a long way and are now my choice for traditional dries with the gels used on the leader.

- Think about how you grease the fly i.e on a klinkhamer it is only necessary to grease the hackle.
- Never grease a wet dry fly. Use the powders.
- A chamois cloth can be handy for drying flies while on the river.

# Recommended Reading/Viewing

- Trout Fishing Downunder – Peter Julian
- Trout Hunting – Bob Wyatt (from whom the title was borrowed)
- Trout Streams of Mainland Australia – Bill James (out of print)
- Scientific Angler: Anatomy of a Trout Stream (Video)
- Casts That Catch Fish – Carl McNeil (DVD)
- [www.sexyloops.com](http://www.sexyloops.com)
- <http://thefiberglassmanifesto.blogspot.com.au/>
- <https://paracaddis.wordpress.com/>