

THE NORTHERN KENTUCKY FLY FISHER'S, INK

ELK CREEK FISHING TRIP NOTES



Dan Zanbon with a beautiful Elk Creek Steelhead

By: Dan Zanbon

Sunday, 23 Mar 03:

Tom Ellingson, Ralph Ranard and Dan Zanbon drove to western Pennsylvania for a guided steelhead fishing trip on Lake Erie tributaries. On the way up, we inspected Conneaut Creek at the Rte 7 and Old Main Street bridges. The creek appeared somewhat high and muddy – approximately 1-2 days from being fishable. We continued on into Pennsylvania and got PA licenses at Elk Creek Sports on Rte. 5 (PA licenses must be displayed on clothes, so we also bought tag holders). Also bought a crude map of Elk Creek, showing public access points. Drove to ‘Elk Creek Access’ (site #1 on map) and saw about 30 cars parked there. From the parking lot, we could see several anglers with fish on stringers. We drove up to Legion Park (site #9) and fished down to Old Route 20 bridge (site #8). Water was cloudy, ~1.5 ft visibility. Did not spot any fish. There were about 20 other anglers present. Did not see anyone catching fish. Tom fished various colors of #10-12 sucker spawn with a #10-12 nymph dropper. Dan fished a Tellico pattern with a dropper. Ralph fished sucker spawn with a sparkle maggot (caddis pupa pattern). No fish caught.

Got back in the car and drove downstream to Elk Creek Access, off Rte 5 (site #1). Used same rigs, got same results. Saw one fly guy catch a couple, and one spin fisherman catch one. One guy said he caught 7 on a fly rod that day – some of which he caught on Walnut Creek to the east – using small jigs. There were about 30 other anglers present.

Discovered a bulge in left rear tire of the Explorer. Put on the spare. Checked in to the hotel – the Best Western Presque Isle in Sterrettania, PA. The hotel was fine. The guide (Don Mathews) gets a discount on a large suite, which he had reserved for us (Room #116). It was a huge room with two beds and a couch, TV, wet bar, fridge, stove, and microwave. The package also included a complimentary breakfast at the hotel restaurant, which had good food. The hotel also has a saloon with live bands every night. After checking in, we went in search of Sears Automotive shop at the mall on Rte 79 in Erie, but it was closed for the evening. Had dinner at ‘Smoky Bones BBQ’ near the mall – great BBQ, cheap draft beer, and lots of TVs to watch the basketball tourney. There are several restaurants in this area, including a food court in

the mall.

Monday, 24 Mar 03:

Hooked up with Don Mathews, our guide, at 0800 hrs at the hotel. Went to the ‘Gas Pipe Hole’ (site #14) and fished downstream from there. Don rigged us up with 10’ 6wt St Croix rods with Reddington 8wt reels. He used 6wt floating line with a 1 foot section of 20lb amnesia that was used at a strike indicator – no floats were used with the fly rig. Attached to the amnesia section was a 7foot 0x or 1x leader. Then 2’-3’ of 4x or 5x fluorocarbon tippet depending on circumstances. He put a split shot right above the leader-tippet connection to keep the weight from sliding. Don makes his own leaders and uses his version of a blood knot at all line to line connections. The morning started out cool, but air temperature reached 62F by noon. Water temperature was 39F. The water was much clearer in this stretch, with ~4 feet of visibility and a slight greenish tint. Don explained that the water downstream was usually considerably cloudier due to a couple smaller tributary streams that bring in silt and clay.

We did almost all sight fishing. The 10 foot rod came in very

The morning started out cool, but air temperature reached 62F by noon. Water temperature was 39F.



Tom Ellingson with a huge Elk Creek Steelhead.

Volume 16, Issue 5

(Continued from page 6)

handy when swinging flies into a feeding lane. We were usually able to spot and target specific fish and watch the fly go to it. The fish would open and close their mouths very quickly, so when the fish opened its mouth, the hook was set. Patterns used were small micro eggs and glo-bugs – various shades of orange seemed to work the best (Not coincidentally, this matched the color of steelhead eggs). Had some success with white glo-bugs and sucker spawn. All flies were dead drifted, with the objective being to get the fly downstream of the tippet. Fish were very leader-shy, and would shift position to avoid leaders. Adjusted the amount of weight to the current speed. Ralph's spin rig: 8lb line to 4lb fluorocarbon for the last 24 inches. Float used was a clear pen-type float with an orange tip for visibility, about 2-1/2 - 3 inches in length. The last 24 inches of leader had 5 split shot various weights, with the heaviest directly under the float and the lightest directly ahead of the bait/fly, evenly spaced. He used single eggs, egg sacks, and some grubs/maggots. Other spin fishermen present were mostly using minnows. Don also had a bottle of orange-ish colored goop that he applied liberally to the flies and bait. It's called something like "LAKE ERIE FISH SCENT".

This supposedly is available at local tackle shops. We will need to buy this on the next trip. Incidentally, Matt Supinski recommends this stuff as well. Had lunch. In the afternoon, we moved upstream and parked at a small unnamed road off of West Road(?). This is private property, but Don says the farmer that owns the property doesn't mind fishermen parking there and walking to the river. The walk to the river took us down a steep hill – would be a tough hike in snowy or muddy conditions – and through a stretch of wooded area with no clear trail to follow. This part of Elk Creek was beautiful, but didn't seem to hold as many fish. We still managed to catch a few here though.

We all thought the guide was well worth the money (\$100 each). The session was very informative and he really tried to put us on the fish. We learned where to go, what to use, and what to look for. Some specific lessons learned:

1. This far up the creek, the fish were essentially all in spawning-mode. Find gravel or small pockets behind rocks, and you'll find fish. This was not a moral dilemma for Don, as he says there is virtually no natural propagation occurring on Elk Creek. Pennsylvania stocks over 250,000 steelhead smolts annually in Elk Creek.
2. Use small flies and light weights. Almost all egg patterns were #14. Nymphs were #12-14. Woolly buggers were #10. Put the weight just above the leader-tippet connection to keep it from sliding.
3. Long, fine leaders are not necessary. No floats are needed when flyfishing. Use a short piece of red amnesia line at the butt of the leader as a strike indicator in deeper water. To this attach a 6-7 foot tapered leader in 0x or 1x, then add a 2-3 foot section of fluorocarbon tippet in 4x or 5x.
4. Sight fish as much as possible. Watch the fish take the fly in shallow water, and set the hook as if you were beginning a back cast. In deeper water, use the amnesia as a strike indicator, and set the hook if the amnesia starts to bend and take on a 'fish hook' shape.
5. Make sure the fly is downstream of the leader. Fish are very leader-shy. Swing the fly into the feeding lane upstream of the targeted fish and then let it drift drag-free to the fish. Upstream mend as necessary to keep the fly ahead of the leader. A longer rod helps here.



Ralph Ranard with Elk Creek Steelhead.

Patterns used were small micro eggs and glo-bugs – various shades of orange seemed to work the best (Not coincidentally, this matched the color of steelhead eggs).



A Successful trip for Dan

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Above: Guide Don Mathews

For an exciting steelhead trip like Dan's contact: **Don Mathews** owner of **Dfishinfool's Guide Service** at: Home: 330-898-5894 Cellular: 330-565-5457 **E-mail:**

info@dfishinfool.com

Or visit his web site at: <http://hometown.aol.com/dfishinfool/GuideService.html>

ALL PARTICIPANTS

MUST ATTEND THE

MAY 30th PARTNER

DRAWING. Held at

Bass Pro Outdoor

World.



Kaufmanns stonefly

(Continued from page 7)

6. Don't waste time fishing the same fly to the same fish for more than 10 minutes.

Change flies frequently or move to new fish frequently.

7. Once fish is hooked, play it until it tires. Don't try to horse it in. Also stay even with it on the river, if possible to steer it away from obstacles like branches, log jams, boulders, other fish, and the legs of people trying to net the fish for you. Occasionally need to physi-

cally approach the fish to spook it and make it swim away and tire itself.

Tuesday, 25 Mar 03:

Fished the same stretch that we fished with Don on Monday morning. Air temperature was 62F this morning. Water temp was probably the same today - 39F. Saw significantly more fish than the previous day, all paired up and on gravel. Threw the same type of flies as Monday - various shades of orange glo-bugs. Did good with 8-1/2 - 9 foot, 6wt rods with 8wt/6wt reels and 6wt floating lines. The

10 foot rods were nice but not a must-have. We fished until about 1100 hrs and then drove to Poor Richard's tackle shop on Rte. 5, about a mile East of Rte. 98. They offer a fish swap for smoked fillets for \$8 and will clean a fish for \$2. Other local tackle shops include Elk Creek Sports/BP gas station on Rte.5 about 1/2 mile East of the Elk Creek Access (site #1), and BAC Bait & Tackle at the corner of Rte. 5 and Rte. 98.

FLY FISHING TOURNAMENT AT BROOKVILLE TAILWATERS

Bass Pro Outdoor World is holding a Fly fishing Tournament Saturday, May 31 6am-2pm. Check In location - 52 Pickup Convenient Store on US-52
6:00 AM Check In
6:30 AM Begin Fishing
2:00 PM Report In and Awards Presentation

This will be a team event with 2 fishers per team. Drawing of names for teams will be held at Bass Pro Outdoor World on FRIDAY EVENING MAY 30th at 7PM.

Winners determined by TOTAL length of ALL TROUT caught; length of LONGEST RAINBOW; and length of LONGEST BROWN TROUT.

RULES:

All participants must have valid Indiana License and Trout Stamp.
ONLY FLIES may be used and all hooks must have barbs removed. NO TIPPING OF FLIES WITH LIVE BAIT OR SCENTS.

ALL FISH MUST BE RELEASED UNHARMED.
NO Bass Pro Outdoor World employees may participate. Weigh-In is promptly at 2PM at 52 Pickup.
NO Trespassing on Private Property.
ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST ATTEND THE MAY 30th PARTNER DRAWING.

GULF SHORES, AL - FFF/SEC CONCLAVE, NKFF TRIP CANCELLED

NKFF'S trip to this event have been CANCELLED due to lack of leadership. Mike Arnold cannot attend this year. If you were planning to go and still wish to, contact Mike at 859-781-9396. He can give you information about where to fish around Gulf Shores and has the conclave seminars schedule.