

Trout Tale 2

This is the second of three stories in a series I've decided to share about my adventures in trout fishing. It occurred in the upper reaches of the Laramie River before it flows northward across the Colorado/Wyoming border.

I had passed a beautiful section of the Laramie River dozens of times on the way from Chambers Lake near the headwaters of the Poudre about 60 miles west of Ft. Collins, Colorado and 10 miles north from the headwaters of the Laramie. I passed it on the way to one of my favorite fishing holes near the Tunnel Campground where I could routinely catch my limit of 10 trout.

The stretch of river I routinely passed by displayed a beautiful bend in the river right next to the road. On the near side of the 10-foot wide creek, the water was only inches deep, and on the far side, the water was about 3-feet deep as it flowed along a grassy bank. The bank overhung the water providing an ideal hiding place for trout. There were no trees or bushes to get your line tangled for about 100 feet along the beautiful water.

Normally, I would jump at the chance to fish such an ideal location. But, I knew from experience there would be no fish there. Every fisherman in Colorado who came by that spot would recognize how ideal it was for fishing. It would have been depleted of anything except maybe a few small brookies. So, I never stopped there for four years.

But, finally, late one Saturday afternoon on my way back from fishing my favorite hole further north, where I was still two fish shy of my limit, I decided to pull over and give this spot a try for ten minutes. It was such a beautiful bend in the river, it would be a pleasant memory to have wet a fly there, even briefly.

I snuck up to the edge of the water and crouched low because the sun was behind me. My shadow might spook any fish on the deeper side of the river. I tossed my fly into the current just under the bank and let it drift. It floated gently about 10 feet before it disappeared in a sudden swirl and splash.

Before I could respond, my line headed downstream. I could tell I had a sizable fish but couldn't yet tell just how big. As I began to regain my composure I realized I needed to turn the fish before he ran too far downstream. I ran downstream with the fish and began pulling more strongly on my pole. He began to slow and seemed to hesitate as I continued running to my left. Before I could wind in enough line to hold the fish, my reel spun out again as the fish headed upstream threatening to empty my reel again.

I turned and raced upstream trying to maintain some tension, but not enough to risk snapping the line. I only had 3-pound test leader between my fly and the main line. This was at least a 3 or 4-pound fish and had only started trying to escape. On the next turn back down the creek my fish decided to jump, and I was rewarded with a view of my quarry. He was a large, gorgeous brown trout! I had never hooked a brown. Oh, my gosh, whatever you do, don't let him get away!

I played the fish for over 30 minutes, up and down the creek, with fear I was going to lose him every time he turned or jumped. Finally, he began to tire, and I was able to play him into the shallower water on the near side of the creek and get him into my net.

He was mine, a beautiful 4-pound brown. He was the best fighting fish I ever caught. No one saw me catch him, so I suppose I could have claimed he was even bigger, but it was enough to have caught him where there should have been no fish at all.

And, for those of you who wonder if I kept him. Of course. What else could I do. I don't just catch fish for sport. I ate him the same night. No putting him in the freezer to lose flavor. And, he was delicious. A wild fish, fried slowly in butter, with a spritz of lemon juice, and with his head still on, as any real Colorado fisherman would want!