

# Legacy

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# Marvelous Meyhem

## Spawning trout offer golden opportunity in fall

Story and photos by David Joy

**E**very year when the foliage transforms into regal brilliance, the surrounding streams experience a chaotic influx of sex-crazed fish.

Wading fishermen expect to see the red fins of spawning brook trout shooting upstream as footsteps draw near. Fall is the time for trout to put on their brightest dress to entice a suitor, and for stealthy fishermen this means one thing: easy pickings.

From September to December, fishermen are likely to catch one of Appalachia's brook or brown trout in the spawning

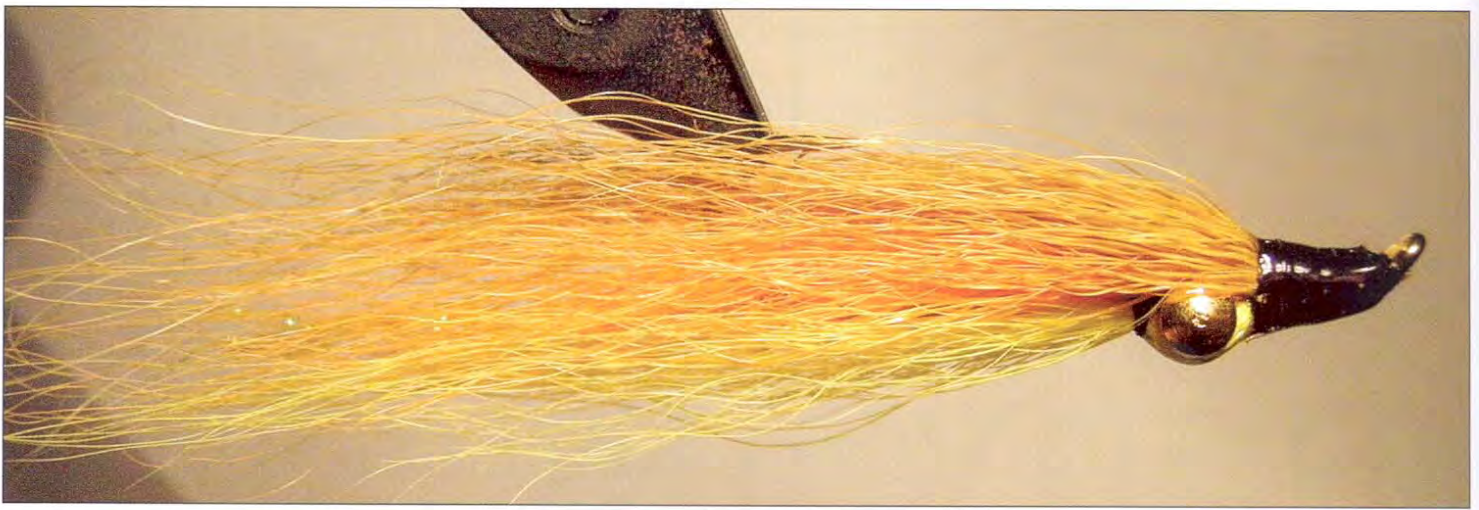
stage. The brook trout are the first of the fall spawn, spawning between mid October and mid November. The browns begin soon after, usually in November and early December, often coinciding with the brook trout spawn.

When the spawn occurs, fishermen will be surrounded by aggressive fish that readily rise to the fly. Spawning fish eat more in order to sustain higher energy levels. As with any other season, matching the hatch is a definite way to fool feeding fish. However, during this time fishermen can take advantage of a few of the spawning trout's vulnerabilities.



**Page 50:** Don't forget to target native brook trout, which turn marvelous shades of yellow and red during the spawn. **Page 51:** Just walking along side a mountain stream during the fall can be a sensory overload.





Spawning fish become extremely territorial, repeatedly running any fish they see as a threat out of their vicinity. Fishermen can use this to their advantage by throwing large streamers meant to mimic other fish, such as large Woolly Buggers, Muddler Minnows and Clouser Minnows.

Casting streamers in the area of spawning fish is a surefire way to take advantage of territorial aggression. Orange is a must-have color, but other bright colors will also draw strikes. Remember, fish during this stage of their life are brighter in color than any other time of the year. So, mimicking these color variants is a must.

Egg patterns are also fantastic flies to utilize during the spawn. Fish often hold downstream of spawning trout in order to sift through the smorgasbord of drifting eggs. Furthermore, spawning trout looking for an easy meal are just as likely to feed on eggs. Casting egg patterns into and below pods of spawning fish will definitely get strikes.

The spawn occurs at higher elevations first, as much of the spawning time is determined by water temperature. When the streams begin to cool, fish the higher elevations first and then work your way into the valley as the season progresses. By doing this you will be able to hit more spawners over a longer period of time.

Feeder streams emptying into rivers are often fantastic spots for fishermen to find spawning trout, as the fish move into the

tributaries to spawn. Fishermen should take advantage of all the major tributaries by fishing the mouths of these streams and on into the smaller pocket water.

Finding spawning fish in any water around the Cashiers-Highlands area should not be difficult during this time of year. However, the choice of where to go depends largely on what the fisherman wants to do.

Fishermen looking to catch large numbers of spawning fish may want to hit the Tuckasegee, Nantahala or Cullasaja rivers. North Carolina stocking efforts resume in October, meaning that large numbers of trout, specifically brooks and rainbows, will be fresh to the river.

However, the greatest thing about fishing the fall spawn is the chance to see a trout in its brightest colors of the year. For this, fishermen should take a trip to the “wild” sections of the Chattooga, Horsepasture and Whitewater Rivers. Wild and native fish are always prettier than stockers, and during this stage in the game the wild and native trout become the most colorful fishes in freshwater.

Remember that fall brings colder water, so it may be that time of year to make the switch from Gore-tex waders to neoprene. Dress warm to stay comfortable, but for the most part just get out and go. Changing leaves are definitely not the brightest colors of an Appalachian fall. Just catch a spawning brookie, and you’ll see why.

**Top:** Clouser Minnows, particularly in spawning colors of orange and yellow, take advantage of a spawning fish’s aggression (tied by David Joy). **At right:** Muddler Minnows are a great streamer to strip in front of spawning trout (tied by David Joy).

