

Hatches: trout bounty



Insect hatches on the Driftwood Branch have been nothing short of phenomenal. Over the past week, I've witnessed the heaviest hatches of my life -- mayflies and countless spinners flying upstream 10 feet above the water -- and one can literally hear the buzz.

After last summer's lye spill, surveys showed no significant damage to the aquatic insect community of the Driftwood Branch. An entirely different story was found upstream on the Sinnemahoning Portage Creek. If there were still any doubts about the Driftwood, this past week's hatches have certainly erased them.

My cousin Sam Johnson advanced an interesting theory on these hatches. If not for spill, there would have been thousands of fish present all summer, fall, and winter, feeding on the aquatic insects. Perhaps in the absence of all of this predation, populations of aquatic insects such as mayflies were able to explode.

Despite the incredible hatches and trout fishing, one must keep in mind that none of these trout were in the stream last summer. They have all been stocked this spring. Absent from the catch are fallfish, rockbass, and smallmouth bass. There are only a handful of baitfish present in the stream compared to what was there before the [accident]



Hatches on the Driftwood Branch have been occurring right at dark. There really has been no action on the stream before 8:00 p.m. Stream temperatures have been climbing each day. If we don't get some rain soon, flows will continue to drop and temperatures will rise. Trout will leave the stream, find a coldwater refuge in the stream, or die.