

# Finally! Trout season opens Saturday

I wanna go fishin'! I haven't been able to get in enough open water fishing yet, after our long hard winter and I'm getting a bit irritable. Even though the coves on the Connecticut River are open and the trout pond at the Meriden Rod and Gun Club is open for its members, I'm still hurbtin' for certain.

## Woods 'n' Water



Mike Roberts

But all of that is going to end pretty soon because we are now on the countdown towards opening day of trout season which will be 6 a.m. on Saturday. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has announced that 500,000 trout will be stocked throughout

the state in time for Opening Day.

Historically, early March marks the beginning of the trout stocking season for the DEP Inland Fisheries Division. This year, because of the freezing temperatures, snowstorms and up to 30 inches of ice cover on the state's lakes and ponds, the task has become even more challenging.

The DEP has scheduled 230 truckloads of trout to be distributed throughout the state before Opening Day.

The DEP anticipates that 60,000 brook trout, 260,000 brown trout and 172,000 rainbow trout will be stocked prior to Opening Day. Additionally, 800 tiger trout (brown trout/brook trout hybrids), 18,000 larger than average rainbow trout and 1,500 trophy-sized trout (up to ten pounds each) will be released. These trout will be distributed to 86 lakes and ponds and 200 rivers and streams throughout Connecticut.

Opening Day of trout season in Connecticut. It doesn't get any better than that! While many states have just about eliminated Opening Day trout seasons, thankfully it still remains a tradition for many Connecticut fishermen.

There is a mystique about Opening Day, a

promise of good things to come. While spring officially began back in March, the Opening day of trout season in Connecticut that seemingly fires up thoughts of spring for many fishermen. Of course it goes without saying that by having an Opening Day for trout, they will have the best chance of the season for catching trout. On Opening Day, all fishermen are equal.

Come Opening Day, just about everyone has a special place to fish. Some find that pond or lake fishing from a boat is just the thing, and they do come away with some excellent catches.

However, if you are going to fish from a boat on Opening Day, make sure you get there early enough to be on the water before the 6 a.m. starting time. One year I thought I'd try something different and launch at the state ramp on Gardner Lake for opening day. Big mistake! Even though I got there about 5 a.m., the line of vehicles was out into the street as anxious anglers jostled for a spot to launch their crafts. Many of them carried their cartop boats into the launch area. It was about 7 a.m. before I even got my boat in the water.

Like I said, every fisherman has a "hot spot" fishing hole for Opening Day and for those of you that don't, I try to come up with some names that will maybe help you select a spot.

Of course our own Black Pond is one of the hottest spots in our area, and while it no longer has its Black Pond Boat Livery run for years by the affable Eddie Holmes and his family, cartop boats will still be covering much of the pond when the season officially opens and with good reason. Black Pond does receive some generous stockings of trout although over the last couple of years many of the trout have been rather small.

Just over the ridge at Black Pond, many anglers will find the trout they are looking for in the waters of the Coginchaug River. The Coginchaug, the only north flowing river that I know of in Connecticut, seems to handle the trout fishermen that seek its speckled treasures quite efficiently, and it will come as no surprise to this writer to see one or two monster brood stock trout come out of its waters.

While quite small for a river, the Coginchaug is really a nice river to fish, but don't bother fishing it if you are one of those fishermen who casts for distance because you will be losing quite a few lures. Pick a pool, cast short and fish it thoroughly.

Another area favorite is Wharton Brook State Park on the Wallingford/North Haver town line. But keep in mind that Wharton Brook is now a Trout Park (one of many now in Connecticut). A Trout Park means that you may only keep two trout per day when fishing in them. While it is still questionable in some aspects, last year it appeared to supply some decent fishing for fishermen who simply wanted to catch a trout or two for lunch. I fished Wharton Brook a couple of times and while I caught fish the only complaints I had were that the trout were quite small and there were an awful lot of dead trout laying around as fishermen tried to "high-grade" (return a smaller one that was on a stringer for a larger trout) their two-trout limit. It is wanton waste and I don't know how they will solve that problem.

Baldwin's Pond right here in Meriden is a good spot to bring the kids and land some trout. And of course there's my old friend the Quinnipiac River which has seen some highs and lows over the years as a trout stream. At this moment the trout fishing should be the best that it has been in years.

First off, the state stocks the Quinnipiac River quite heavily, and then the Quinnipiac River Watershed Association with the help of the L. Suzio Companies of Meriden also does a pre-season stocking that serves up some really nice sized trout and some of them even carry prizes that allow fishermen to reap a double reward for the trout that they catch.

Last year however, while the trout were stocked by the QWRA between Red Bridge and Carpenter's Dam in the upper river and then from the Oak Street Bridge in Yalesville all the way down to the Quinnipiac Bridge in Wallingford, not too many were caught in the early part of the season and chances are quite good that there should be some nice holdover trout lurking somewhere along the Quinnipiac River.

And speaking of the QRWA trout stocking,

trout chairmen Ben Bryda and Pete Picone are going to need some help with their trout stocking this Wednesday, stocking the Quinnipiac from Red Bridge up to Carpenter's Dam. The stocking will start at 5 p.m. at Red Bridge (now Meriden Lion's Club Park) and proceed upriver. Bring along the kids, they'll have a ball. And then on Thursday, Ben Bryda will need help stocking the Quinnipiac River from Oak Street Bridge (Pragemann Park) and various spots all the way down to the Quinnipiac Street Bridge in Wallingford. For the Wallingford stocking meet at the back parking lot of the Q River Bar & Grill (the old Britannia Spoon) on the corner of routes 150 & 68. Bryda tells me he will be putting in an extraordinary number of golden trout this year.

**Tackle shops set to go:** It goes without saying that all of your local bait and tackle shops are fully stocked and waiting for the invasion of last minute purchasers of fishing tackle and bait. B.J.'s Bait and Tackle on the corner of Ann and Broad Street in Meriden will be open all night prior to the 6 a.m. opening Saturday and will feature sandwiches, coffee and a trout contest. Call 203-634-3474 (FISH) for information.

Vennie at the Fishin' Factory on Route 322 (the old Meriden/Waterbury Road) in Southington says that she is over-stocked with tackle and the store will feature donuts and coffee, a trout contest and they will be open all night. You can call 860-621-8145 for more details.

Uncle B's on North Colony Street (Route 5 next to Friendly's) in Wallingford is also open all night for the Opening Day and will feature a trout contest, coffee and cookies. Call 203-294-1180 for more information.

For those fishing the lower Quinnipiac River, New England Outfitters and Range Center on Quinnipiac Street, abuts the river and you can get more information on what they will be doing by calling 203-284-9999.

Hey see ya' at the trout stockings. God Bless America, and pray that he protects our troops. There's no place else I'd rather live than in America the beautiful! See ya'.