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Michigan's Black River. Photo by Jim Enger.

Locating the Brown Drake in Michigan and Wisconsin

GARY BORGER

FLY FISHERS PLANNING a trip to the Midwest in early June will find spectacular angling during the Brown Drake hatch. This insect is widely distributed in streams of all sizes and in many gravel-bottomed lakes.

Wisconsin offers nearly 9,000 miles of trout streams, and the state can be divided into three geographical regions, each with its own characteristic water systems that vary from limestone spring creeks to tea-colored rivers.

A fertile crescent of limestone starts on the shores of Green Bay and runs south along Lake Michigan, across the southern border of the state, and up along the Mississippi River to its confluence with the Saint Croix. This limestone band is thirty

to sixty miles wide, and the streams originating in it are all small and highly productive.

Casting About

Heavy industry and large population centers have hurt trout streams along Lake Michigan, but there are a number of pleasant little creeks in the Door County Peninsula and along the western side of Green Bay. The



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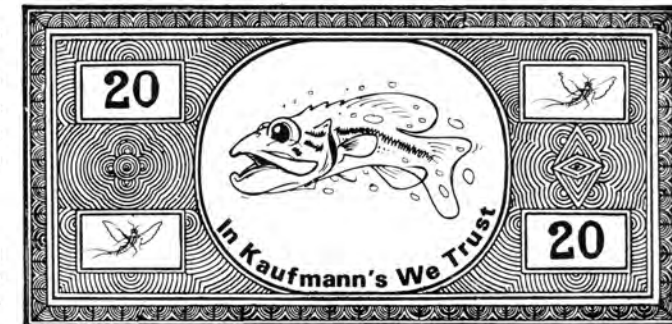
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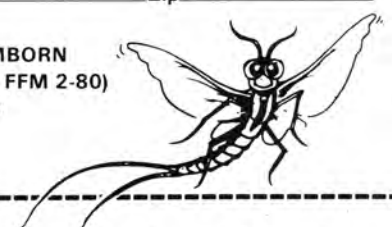
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Brown Drake . . .

best streams in the limestone crescent lie along the southern part of the state west of Madison and up along the Mississippi. This is the unglaciated, hilly Driftless Region.

Brown Drakes are not especially widespread on these limestone streams because many have silty bottoms. However, where there are clean, gravel bottoms, the drakes are quite abundant, and large trout are often taken from these streams during the hatch.

Lying within the limestone belt is a crescent of sandstone bedrock. It is twenty to thirty miles wide on the eastern side of the state and one hundred to one hundred twenty miles wide along the southern and western regions of the state, and it extends northward along the Mississippi and Saint Croix to the shores of Lake Superior. This region is covered with deep deposits of glacial outwash and constitutes the sand counties described by Aldo Leopold. The streams meander through meadows and have dark, undercut banks that are heavily overgrown with orchard grass, reed canary grass, alders and willows. In the swifter portions of these streams, where bright gravel predominates, the Brown Drake population is excellent. South-central streams like the White, Willow, Pine, Roche-a-Cri, Robinson and others can provide spectacular dry-fly fishing over

large trout when the drakes are hatching. The northwestern sand counties are famous for such rivers as the Bois Brule, Namekagon and White. These large north-country streams have superb Brown Drake hatches.

The north-central portion of Wisconsin is a domed area of granite bedrock that is part of the massive Canadian Shield and is overlaid with glacial till of varying thickness. This Highland Region is the birthplace of all the largest river systems of Wisconsin. Such fine trout streams as the Montreal, Pike, Pin, Popple, Peshtigo and Wolf rise in this upland area. Conifers such as white cedar, balsam fir, white pine, hemlock, white spruce and jack pine mingle with streamside hardwoods such as sugar maple, basswood, yellow birch, aspen and paper birch. Bogs are numerous and act like giant sponges to collect the rains and slowly release them to the streams, often adding a tea-brown color to the water. Gravel bottoms afford fine habitat for the Brown Drake, and fishing these north-country streams is both productive and esthetically delightful.

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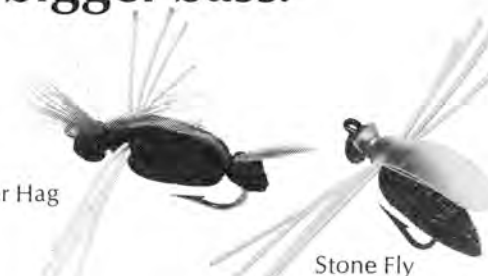
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Brown Drake . . .

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Anglers unfamiliar with Michigan's trout streams will find great assistance from these publications: *Michigan County Maps and Recreational Guide* (\$7) and *Trout Streams of Michigan* (\$2.95). Both are available from MUCC, P.O. Box 30235, Lansing, Mich. 48909 (there is a \$.35 handling charge per item). Anglers headed for Wisconsin should get a free copy of *Wisconsin Trout Streams* from the Department of Natural Resources, Box 450, Madison, Wis. 53701, and *County Maps of Wisconsin* (\$3) from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Map and Document Sales, 2B Hill Farms State Office Building, Madison, Wis. 53701.



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