



LOWER OXYGEN CONTENT

Increased mortality rate
for trout at 68°+

Brown trout can tolerate slightly
warmer temps than rainbows.

Rainbow trout feeding range is 40°-68°
Optimal rainbow trout range is 52° - 64°

Brook, bull, and cutthroat trout feeding
range is cooler than rainbow trout.
30° - 40°

HIGHER OXYGEN CONTENT

▶ *HOW TO FISH AT THE UPPER (WARMER) END OF THE OPTIMUM TEMPERATURE RANGE:*

- 1. GIVE A HOOT** — Check regulations to make sure there aren't temperature-related restrictions, like Montana's hoot owl restrictions. Check the water temperature and answer: Is the water so warm that it is causing the fish undue stress if I catch it? If the water is over 68 degrees Fahrenheit, catch-and-release fishing becomes impractical if not unethical. Time to call it a day or find somewhere cooler to fish.
- 2. TROUBLED WATER** — Look for places where water is more turbulent, thus aerated, such as below waterfalls, lake waves, pocketwater, rapids, and riffles.
- 3. BIG STICK** — Use rods and line weights that are heavy enough to bring fish in quickly without a long fight. The longer fish struggle, the harder it will be for them to recover in warmer, less oxygenated water.
- 4. EARLY BIRD** — Get up and at 'em early in the morning or late in the evening, during the coolest parts of the day when fish are most actively feeding and not stressed.
- 5. SIGNS** — Look for springs and groundwater seepage, shady banks, and ledgerocks.
- 6. FLIES** — Early summer calls for large attractors, Salmonflies, Golden Stoneflies, and baitfish streamer patterns. In midsummer consider adult mayflies and wild attractor patterns. Late summer often demands smaller caddis and midge patterns, and fall calls for ants, beetles, hoppers, and sculpins.

▶ *HOW TO FISH AT THE LOWER (COLDER) END OF THE OPTIMUM TEMPERATURE RANGE:*

- 1. LEGALITY** — Always confirm your state's wintertime regulations and open seasons.
- 2. SAFETY!** — Ask yourself: Is this water safe for me to wade or row in? Is there a likelihood of hypothermia? Am I properly dressed? Is this temperature safe for fish? Is it free of anchor ice and frazil ice that can hurt fish if I catch them here?
- 3. HANDLE WITH CARE** — The gills and eyes of trout are fragile and can freeze if the fish is taken out of the water in freezing air temperatures. This is another reminder to keep the fish in the water when netting and releasing it. Don't touch fish with your gloves—the fabric may remove the important skin mucus that provides fish a barrier against disease.
- 4. SLOW DOWN, LOW DOWN** — Fish are working with a slower metabolism in colder seasons, so they don't want to use energy by holding in fast water. Fish deeper, slower pools, slow down your presentation, drop nymphs to the bottom as well as testing different depths, and be patient since it takes longer for fish to digest their food in the cold.
- 5. LIGHTEN UP** — Winter water is often clear, and slow-moving trout have plenty of time to inspect your setup. Consider going without an indicator, or use a smaller, less conspicuous one.
- 6. SLEEP IN** — The fish won't be active until the warmest part of the day, so there's no need for dawn patrol.
- 7. FLIES** — Beadhead nymphs (caddis, mayfly, stonefly), worm patterns, soft-hackles, midge pupae, and adult midge clusters. Mild days with a few extra degrees of warming call for #16-22 Blue-winged Olives.