

Cohocton River Guide

(Lower Trout Section)

The Cohocton River flows through the scenic Finger Lakes Region of western New York. It begins in a drainage area centered on Route 37, about seven miles south of Honeoye Lake. Once the river passes through the Village of Cohocton it flows basically in a southeasterly direction, eventually joining with the Tioga River at Painted Post and becoming part of the Chemung River.

Although the portion of the Cohocton River upstream of the Village of Cohocton provides some fine trout fishing, this brochure primarily addresses the section of the river that flows from the Village of Cohocton to Bath. This section of the river provides excellent habitat for trout and is more suitable for fly and lure fishing. Below Bath the river is primarily a warm water fishery with smallmouth bass being the primary catch.

The river varies between 15 and 45 feet in width from the Village of Cohocton to Bath. In most places the river has a firm bottom of coarse gravel and small river-stones that is only moderately slippery; therefore, it is generally easy to wade. This section of the river contains a nice mix of deep pools, flat runs, and shallow riffles. The majority of the river runs through quiet, rural areas that include fields used for agriculture, alder wetlands, and stands of hardwoods.

The lower trout section of the river gets a good supply of cold water all year round from small tributaries and underground springs. Although some pools are over four feet deep, in most areas it is easy to walk along the shore or wade along the edge of the river. The water is generally very clear except during major rainstorms and when a large amount of snow is melting in the spring.

One of the best tools available to fishermen in New York is access by computer to U.S. Geological Survey stream data. These data show both the current water level and the trend for the past six days for most of the fishable rivers in the State. With a little experience you can look at the graphs to decide when it is prudent to go fishing in a specific river. For example, if you look at the graph for the Cohocton River near Campbell and see that the stream is 2.5 feet above datum and rising, it would be better to go to a river in another watershed. However, if the stream level is less than 2 feet below datum and no steep rise is occurring, then it would usually be a good time to try the Cohocton. USGS stream data can be found at <http://ny.usgs.gov> or www.canandaigua.com/tu (click on Stream Reports).

To ensure good access to the Cohocton the State has purchased over 20 miles of public fishing rights along the river. It has also developed several parking areas and footpath right-of-ways. The general locations of the public parking areas are shown on the map on the other side of this page. Keep in mind, however, that much of the land bordering the section of the river portrayed on the map is privately owned and should be respected accordingly – the river should only be entered and exited at places designated as public access points.

Although portions of the Cohocton contain brook trout and some rainbows, the section from the Village of Cohocton to Bath contains primarily brown trout. Each year the State stocks over 10,000 browns in the river, to include a large number of two-year-old fish, which add to the substantial holdover population and natural reproduction. Brown trout over 20 inches long can be caught in the Cohocton.

The river's bottom structure is ideally suited for a wide variety of aquatic insects to include mayflies, stoneflies, caddisflies, and midges. There are also a lot of shrimp, scuds, and other crustaceans in the river. During the summer, grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, and ants that fall in from the side of the river substantially add to the types of insects that are available to the trout. The trout also feed on worms, minnows, and crayfish.

Many dry, emerger, and nymph fly patterns work very well on the Cohocton. For the fly fisherman the main secret to success is matching the size, form, and color of the naturals the trout are feeding upon as closely as possible. Taking the time to look under a few rocks, observe what insects are in the air, and watch how the trout are feeding can substantially add to your level of success. During the summer when the

water is very clear and relatively shallow it is very important to use a long leader, light tippet (6X or 7X), and careful approach. It also helps to use a thermometer to find the colder water where springs come into the river since trout often favor these locations. Some favorite flies are listed below:

Drys: Slate Drake (12-14), Adams (14-18), Light Cahill (14-18), Hendrickson (12-18), March Brown (12-16), Quill Gordon (14-16), Elk Hair Caddis (14-20), Usual Comparadun (14-20), Blue Wing Olive (16-22), Ant (16-22), Griffith's Gnat (18-22), Trico Spinner (18-22), and Parachute Midge (18-24)

Emergers: CDC Caddis (14-20), Antron Shuck and Hair-wing (14-22), Usual Emerger (14-22), Harrop (12-20), and Miracle Midge (18-24)

Nymphs: Hares Ear (12-20), Pheasant Tail (12-20), Atherton (14-16), Light Cahill (14-18), Dark Hendrickson (12-18), March Brown (12-16), Black Stone (10-18), Little Yellow Stone (16), Caddis Pupa (14-20), Cased Caddis (14-18), Prince (12-16), and Krystal Midge (18-24)

Anglers using spinning tackle with lures will find their best success comes with small silver or gold spinners and spoons that are fished on light line (6 or 4 pound line). Small lures such as Mepps, Blue Fox, Panther Martin, and Kastmaster work quite well. Key rules of thumb are to use the smallest possible lure for the water conditions at hand; cast well above where a trout is expected to lie to avoid alarming the fish; and fish deep and slow, letting the current help you to tease a trout into striking.

Bait fishermen generally do best using nightcrawlers or garden worms that are allowed to roll with the current along the bottom and around objects in the river. Salted minnows also work quite well, but some action should be added through the rod as the bait drifts along in the river. Bait fishermen should make a special point of looking for places that may hold trout, but are difficult to work using fly rods or lures (e.g., under overhanging branches or places where there is no room to make a back cast). Remember, however, that possession of bait is prohibited in the two stretches of the river mentioned below as special regulations areas.

When this brochure was prepared in the spring of 2001, within the following two special regulations sections (artificial lures only), up to three trout of a minimum length of 12 inches could be kept daily all year round: 1) from the north boundary of the U.S. Veterans Facility upstream to the first Route 415 bridge and 2) from the north boundary of Avoca upstream to the mouth of Neils Creek. In the remainder of the Cohocton, within Livingston and Steuben Counties, up to five trout of any size could be kept daily all year round. Before fishing in the Cohocton you should check the State fishing regulations to ensure that no changes have been made since this brochure was published.

Keeping trout is permissible as noted above; however, you are urged to follow good "Catch and Release" practices to help ensure that great trout fishing continues to be available to future generations. As stated by Lee Wulff, "trout are too valuable to catch only once." You are also urged to wade softly within the Cohocton, leaving the river as you found it or making it even better if possible.

The Cohocton River is a great trout stream, in a beautiful part of the country. We invite you to join us for a day in one of the nicest environments that nature has to offer. A copy of this brochure and other information related to trout fishing in western New York can be found at www.canandaigua.com/tu.

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Courtesy of:

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