



The Lure of Silver

By Steve May

Fall is a time of the year when many outdoorsmen turn their attention to their rifles and shotguns. I don't mind because this leaves more open space on the rivers for some of the best fishing of the year.

Migratory rainbows that have spent the full summer fattening up in the lake come into rivers in prime shape. They are sleek and powerful and addictive. These fish are acrobatic and will use a variety of tactics to get a hook out of their mouths. A cold day is immediately warmed up with a hit from a silver rocket. The nice thing is that you can often wade to excellent fishing areas.

Timing the runs is a big part of being successful with these fish. Different rivers react differently to rain events and if you do a little homework you can get in tune with your local waters. What you are looking for is water that is receding and clearing. The initial flush of water usually attracts the fish and when the water recedes the fish will be in the river ready to take your fly.

Great Lakes steelhead are different from their west coast counterparts. These eastern migratory rainbows feed heavily while in the river. For this reason your trout nymphing techniques that will get you hooked up consistently. Fishing with egg flies or various caddis larvae or stonefly imitations work wonders on these Great Lakes fish. Just remember the clearer the water the more finesse you must use to fool fish. In clear water you may need 4X or 5X tippet to fool these steelhead.

Fishing with a strike indicator, weight on the leader and simple flies is the best way to get started. But, fish fresh from the lake will also smash big ugly flies when the water is off-color. Big gaudy patterns will get you hooked up more often simply because the fish can see them better. Fishing these bigger flies with a sink tip is one of the most exciting ways to get hooked up. The take of a fresh run chrome rocket will leave you with a

lasting memory. But be sure to use a heavy tippet with these bigger flies, or else you may only get the chance to remember the initial take!

Long rods will help with line manipulation to get the right drift for these fish. A longer rod provides a better spring to cushion the runs and antics of a fresh steelhead. I like using 10' rods for most of my steelheading on small to medium sized rivers. For larger waters it is worth considering a two handed "Spey". These rods are often 13-15 feet long. A Spey outfit allows you to cast a country mile and to mend line a considerable distance away from where you are standing. These are both advantages that you will appreciate when you are on big waters.



Hiring a guide or going out with an experienced steelheader is another great way to learn the ropes. Many people spend several cold and frustrating days on the water before their first fish when trying to learn this game on their own. Having an experienced friend along will definitely get you up to speed quicker.

Fall steelheading isn't for everyone. You actually look forward to cold and rainy November days. But, it will only take a couple of fish to have you coming back through rain and snow to mine for fall silver.



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