



CATCH AND RELEASE

#KEEP FISH WET



**FIGHT EM FAST
HANDLE GENTLY
RELEASE QUICKLY**

Modern catch and release has changed the game for trout fishing. Putting them back is the new standard. But understanding how to care for and handle a trout is critical if we are to put them back healthy and ready to fight another day.

FIGHT EM FAST

Don't exhaust them!

Remember this: You do not have to exhaust a trout to land it.

Bigger trout may need to tire a bit, before they cooperate enough to guide them into the net.

- Use the right rod weight for the river and size of fish in it
- Tippet size, use the strongest possible. Fluoro – greater abrasion resistance, sinks faster, less visible. Nylon – floats, more flexibility and stretch
- Keep the trout up-stream of you if at all possible so that the river is helping you and not the fish. Be prepared to move to keep the trout upstream of you. Pulling a large fish against the current is more likely to result in a lost fish.
- Don't have a tug of war. Learn how to throw the fish off balance by moving the rod left and right to create side strain. Bring the fish into slack water to net it.



HANDLE GENTLY

Minimize your time with the trout

- USE RUBBER NETS - Rubber nets are less abrasive and do less damage to fish slime, scales, fins, and gills than knotted nylon mesh nets.
- USE BARBLESS HOOKS - Crimp the barbs on hooks. Not only do barbless hooks cause less damage to a fish's mouth, but they are also much easier and quicker to remove, especially helpful when one ends up in your ear or finger!
- CARRY HOOK REMOVAL DEVICE - Carry easily accessible pliers or other hook removal tool, which will enable quick and careful hook removal. If a fish is deeply hooked, cut the line instead of trying to remove the hook. Try inverting the trout to keep it calm.
- ELIMINATE CONTACT WITH DRY SERVICES - Fish have a layer of protective mucus (slime) and scales that protects them from disease. Contact with dry, hard, or rough surfaces (such as hands, rocks, sand, and boat bottoms) can remove slime and scales making fish more susceptible to diseases, especially fungal infections. Keeping fish in or over the water, and holding them with clean, wet hands or a soft rubber net will help keep their slime layer and scales intact and the fish disease free.
- NEVER LAND A TROUT BY DRAGGING IT UP THE GRAVEL BANK OR BEACH
- RELEASE THEM– straight from the net if no photo is being taken or
- REST THEM – In the net before taking a photo



MINIMISE AIR EXPOSURE

Just like humans, fish need oxygen to support essential bodily functions and keep them alive. What's different is that fish get their oxygen from the water (it is dissolved), not the air. Fish respiration ("breathing") involves moving water into their mouth and over their gills, whether by pumping it or when swimming with their mouths open.

Also, like humans, fish need to respire more during and after exercise, including when they are fighting on the end of a fishing line, as well as after they are landed. Maximizing the ability for fish to get oxygen when they are recovering from the stress of angling is essential for a speedy recovery.

Holding a fish out of the water prevents recovery and can lead to death if done for too long. Even short durations of air exposure (as little as 10 seconds for) can harm fish.

You can reduce negative impacts by keeping a fish's mouth and gills fully submerged in water as much as possible. It's simple - **#KEEP FISH WET**



THE HERO SHOT

Being anglers we want to show off our catch

Do we need to photograph every fish ? Properly not !

PHOTOGRAPH WET FISH - Try photographing your fish while it is in the water. This shows the fish in its element, and ensures that it can breathe. If you do quickly lift the fish for a photo, keep it as close to the water as possible. Also, let the photographer call the shots – 1, 2, 3...raise the fish...and get your shot. Keep air exposure to a minimum .

HOLDING TROUT FOR A PICTURE

- **KEEP THEM CLOSE TO THE WATER** - pictures look better with water in the frame
- **NO FINGERS IN THE GILLS** - The gills are delicate and easily damaged
- **AVOID SQUEEZING** – This can damage the trout and makes it more stressed and harder to handle
- **SUPPORT THE FISH** - Trout calm down when they don't feel threatened. By cradling them, by supporting their weight and not squeezing, trout are more likely to cooperate
- **REAR HAND AT THE TAIL** - the bony part at the base of the tail. This is one place you can squeeze a trout without scaring or hurting it. A good firm hold with an overhand or underhand, provides a lot of control and support
- **FRONT HAND AT THE FINS** - You probably take hero shots of large fish, not small ones, and the big boys have heavy heads. So support them. Extend a finger under the jaw bone. Then allow the fin to rest between your two middle fingers, while the palm of your hand supports most of the trout's weight from underneath
- **THE LONG ARMING HERO SHOT HAS BEEN OVERDONE.** Try some new angles, and don't worry so much about your pretty face in the picture
- **HOW LONGS TO LONG OUT OF THE WATER** - When the water stops rolling and dripping off a trout's body, put it back in the river. That's usually just a handful of seconds. If you need another shot, put it back into the net in the water to recover for a minute or two and try again.
- **NEVER PLACE A FISH ON THE GRAVEL OR BANK TO TAKE A PHOTO** - # KEEP EM WET
- **IF FISHING SOLO** – Use timer mode on your camera with a mini tripod and use voice mode on phones . Or just don't take a photo and look after the trout .

RELEASEING THEM

Point the nose of the fish into the current so that water is flowing over its gills.

You need a reasonable flow but not a torrent, and clear water, not water full of sediment. If you have done a really good job, the fish will instantly kick away. If the trout is stressed, it may take a minute or two to recover before swimming off. Hold the trout gently in the water until it moves off.

Do not move it backwards and forwards. Water needs to flow through the mouth and out over the gills for the fish to breathe. The unnatural backwards movement pushes the delicate gill lamellae in the wrong direction and hinders their breathing, potentially damaging the gill, causing additional stress and prompting the fish to swim away before it is actually ready.







**#KEEP
FISH
WET**





DOCUMENT PREPARED BY: Darren Malatesta

RESOURCES: troutbitten.com, keepfishwet.org

PHOTOGRAPHY: Darren Malatesta, Dan Root