



58. BROWN TROUT / BACHFORELLE / SEEFORELLE (*Salmo trutta*)

IDENTIFICATION: The brown trout (brown or brownie) is a member of the salmon family and as such has an external structure not present in many fish. It possesses an adipose fin (the fatty fin without rays located between the dorsal and caudal fins) characteristic of all the salmon family. The brown trout's name reflects its color. The back is olive to greenish brown, lower portions are usually yellow, fading beneath to gray or white. Large dark spots appear on the back and sides, but not on the tail fin. Reddish spots appearing more or less abundantly over the upper part of the body have pale (light blue or white) borders. The front edge of the ventral and anal fins frequently have a yellow margin.

HABITAT: The brown trout is Europe's native trout. It lives in streams and lakes from the Mediterranean basin to the Black Sea and north to Arctic Norway and Siberia. The species is less tolerant of warm water than the rainbow trout. But it is reputed to resist environmental change when the habitat is favorable. Therefore, brown trout can be found also in the Grayling and Barbel Regions of streams. These fish seem to prefer larger streams and rivers, although they are not uncommon in smaller streams. They prefer water regions with stony and gravelly bottoms, especially during spawning season. Brown trout demand cool and well-oxygenated waters. Brown trout normally don't desert their favorite lie for long periods of time. Large trout do not tolerate any other fish in their immediate domicile and they chase away intruders. Brown trout vary greatly in size according to the abundance of food and their environment. This species has been known to reach a weight of 40 pounds, although fish heavier than 10 pounds are considered exceptional in most waters. Most brown trout caught weigh less than 1 pound. In some of the better trout streams, skilled fishermen can land catches substantially heavier than the 1-pound average.

FOOD: The brown trout feeds on both aquatic and terrestrial insects. Worms, insects, and small fish constitute much of its food. Large trout will feed occasionally on frogs, birds and mice: however, these are not part of its ordinary diet. The brown trout forages freely on the surface when mayflies, caddis flies, and stone flies emerge and, by doing so, becomes a significant quarry for the fly fisherman. Trout are cannibalistic and at times prey on their own species. The brown trout is the most cautious of all trout, feeding only when so inclined. At other times it can in no way be induced to take a fly, worm, or other lure.

SPAWNING: Brown trout spawn from October through January. Under extreme conditions, they may spawn as early as September and as late as February, depending on location and water temperature. A female deposits the eggs in shallow reeds, (excavations) in the gravel of the stream bottom, and a male fertilizes them. The female then moves upstream and by agitation churns the gravel down to cover the eggs. The number of eggs depends on the size of the female and may vary from 600 in small fish to 3,000 in a large one. Newborn fish live for a considerable time on the food material in the mother's yolk sac, visible on the underside of the fish. The yolk sac is entirely absorbed after 3 to 5 weeks. And the fish must start feeding itself.