

WILTSHIRE

August/September 2012

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Nadder!**



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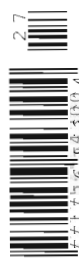
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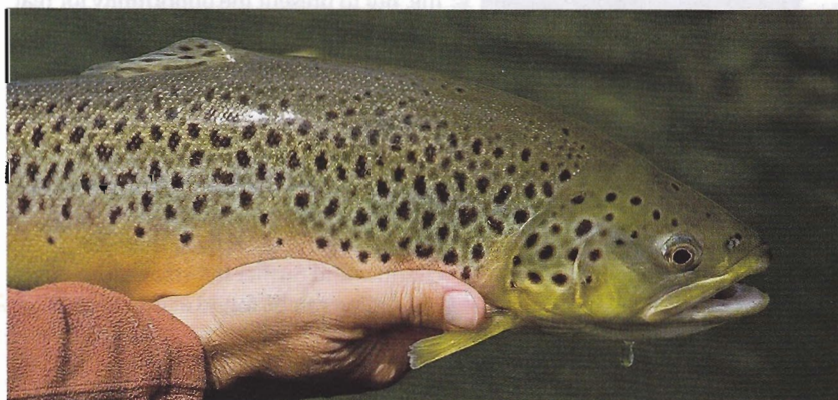




Chalkstreams & TROUT

Simon Cooper tempts a friend to join him on the River Nadder for the 'evening rise'

PHOTOS: KEN TAKATA & IAN FORSYTH



Jake called me from his London office one hot August afternoon to complain that the air conditioning was bust. I, on the other hand, was standing in a gin-clear river, comfortably cool in my waders. Some days I envy Jake his City trader lifestyle, slick Porsche and endless amounts of cash but not today. "Why don't you jump on the train and come fishing?" I suggested. A couple of hours later he arrived at Tisbury and we headed for the River Nadder, a pretty trout chalkstream that runs through one of Wiltshire's most sublime sheep-grazing valleys. It rises just east of Shaftesbury to eventually join the Wylye and merge with the Avon at Salisbury.

Aside from simply going fishing, the real temptation for Jake and me that day was the prospect of an 'evening rise'. This bit



“Brown trout hate bright sunshine – they have no eyelids so they don’t like to look up to the surface on sunny days to feed”

of angling jargon describes a brief moment after dusk, just before darkness falls, when the fish go on a feeding frenzy, gorging themselves on dead insects floating on the surface of the river. Part of the mystique of the rise is that it does not happen every evening, perhaps only one in five.

That afternoon the signs looked good: bright sunshine all day, a slight breeze and a hint of humidity. Brown trout hate bright sunshine – they have no eyelids so they don’t like to look up to the surface on sunny days to feed. They do get hungry, however, so really it’s a case of setting up your rod in the afternoon and waiting, knowing that greed will get the better of them once the sun has set. So wait we did as the heat went out of the day and the light faded. From our vantage point at the

bend in the river we had a good view upstream and downstream, and kept our eyes peeled for the first dimple on the surface or the delicate ‘plop’, which both indicate a trout is feeding.

At the familiar sound I handed Jake the rod, “You have the first cast”. Kneeling behind the bank fringe for cover, Jake made some short little flicks with the rod to pay out the line, dropping it to the surface to check the fly was floating. Satisfied, he lifted the line, gauged the distance to the fish, and with two deft trial casts in the air landed the line on the water with the third, the fly alighting gently on the surface about two yards ahead of where we estimated the fish was holding.

In the gathering dark it was surprisingly easy to see the line and the fly – both look silver against the inky dark of the river. It was made easier still when the water suddenly erupted around the fly, and with a whoop of joy Jake swiftly raised the rod tip to hook the trout. But this trout obviously knew a thing or two about being hooked, for it headed to a weed bed that in the dark Jake couldn’t spot and promptly threw the hook... 1:0 to the fish.

Leaving Jake to curse, I moved upstream as the river started to come alive, with fish rising all over the place. At this point you know you’ve not got much longer. And while the temptation is to cast

like mad, haring up and down the river like a lunatic to cover every fish, the usual rules of fly fishing should apply: pick your fish, cast once and make your one cast your best cast. I observed this rule at least in part, and soon had three fish to my name, one fly lost in a bush and both hands stung by nettles when releasing the fish back into the river. Checking my next fly I realised I was squinting to see it and looked up to realise that the evening had gone from dusk to dark and all activity on the river had suddenly ceased. The feeding was over and it was time to go. ■

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