

# The benefits of trout fishing

**F**IRST, THERE'S the thrill of the catch. And part of that is anticipation. Our whole lives the invitation "Hey, let's go fishing" promises a joyful activity and the challenge of trying to outwit fish. For those of us who don't go ice-fishing, a trout is our first catch of the year. It's exciting to hike up a stream, breathe in the cool spring air and read the flowing waters. We toss our lure or bait into a pool and spot the flash of silver as the trout attacks. One second later, we set the hook and feel the pure wild energy of a sportfish on the line. Later we wet our hands and hold the trout for one brief moment to admire the graceful shape, the prominent fins, the artful spots and speckles, the shades of faint color on belly and back. Then we release it into chill waters to swim again another day.

We also love the natural places that trout fishing takes us to. Wild brook trout especially make us wander deep into the spring and summer forest, where we may encounter deer, squirrels, wild turkeys, black bears, and more. And where we walk up on one idyllic vision after another: the sun's morning rays angling through dark green hemlock boughs, runs and rivulets of moving waters flow-



**DON FEIGERT**  
The Evening  
Campfire

ing gently downhill from one pool to another, massive sandstone boulders that stand sentinel above the valley floor and budding hardwoods that will launch later

in May up the hillsides into an outdoor spectacle of greenery.

And we slow down from our usual hurried workaday lives while fishing to relax and forget about our watches and calendars, to claim woodland experiences that remain rewarding and unchanging over the decades. We gain healthful exercise and a calming of the mind. We establish a connection with the outdoors and with earlier peoples who lived much closer to the earth than we do now. We think about our own lives, what's important and what's not, and we learn to treasure being there among the ferns, wildflowers, oaks, chipmunks and mountain laurel.

We contemplate the value of the wild brook trout, our state fish, our symbol of healthy soil, clean air and pure waters. We recognize the

fact that the presence or absence of wild trout speaks powerfully toward the health or sickness of our public and private lands. The wild trout fishing experience encourages us to rejuvenate and preserve these outdoor places of uncommon beauty. We vow to join Trout Unlimited or Wildlife Forever, or perhaps just resolve to carry a trash bag along from now on as we walk the streams.

We also go trout fishing with friends for the company of like minds and like values. We enjoy the social experience of hiking upstream together and whispering encouragement under the hemlocks. We show off the fish we catch and make up stories to tell about the ones that got away to share later over the campfire flames.

Other times our fishing experience is a solitary, almost spiritual one. We wander from glade to glade in the forest, and each little setting is like a chapel, with sunlight streaming down between branches to enlighten our journey. We banish petty troubles and seek joy in the simple and ancient acts of walking, casting, catching and walking some more. The experience can make us healthier in body and mind and soul.

For these reasons and



TODD PULEO | Contributed

**The Herald and Allied News Outdoors columnist Don Feigert casts into a deep pool at Porcupine Creek in Venango County.**

more, each trout fishing trip is a blessing and a wonderment to cherish and repeat as often as possible.

Good luck out there. And have a great week outdoors.

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