

## **A River to Live By**

By Tom Andersen

The Kinnickinnic River is a class 1 trout stream. That designation indicates that it is a stream of the highest water quality and has naturally reproducing trout. Nearly 20 river miles of this special water resource flow through our township. Brook Trout are the native species to the Kinnickinnic River and tributaries. Brown Trout and even Rainbow Trout were stocked at one time. Brown Trout gained a foothold and they have not been stocked in many, many years. While Brook Trout are still present, Brown Trout are more abundant. As residents of Kinnickinnic Township we are indeed fortunate to have such a great resource close to home. In our township over 400 acres of land adjacent to the river as well as significant Department of Natural Resources access on the river is available to us for a whole variety of outdoor activities.

I've been a resident of Kinnickinnic Township for over 20 years. My connection to this area goes back to the 1960's when I attended college at River Falls State University. It was then that I "honed" my trout catching skills on the "Kinni" when it might have been best to spend more time in the classroom. In the spring when the trout season opened I'd spend some of my meager funds on exotic trout flies at Lund's Hardware. The Kinnickinnic River was my first real exposure to the secrets of trout. Little did I know at the time that it would eventually lead me to a rewarding career in the fly fishing industry.

I was amazed at how beautiful Kinnickinnic Township was in comparison to the Jack Pines and Scrub Oak where I grew up. It was the "Kinni" that really captured my attention. After my college years I continued to spend a great deal of time fishing the Kinnickinnic. I fished the water from well above Hwy. 94 all the way to town. We lived in Hudson and later near Burkhart in those days. Many summer mornings were spent on the river near Sumner's Farm and campground. On summer evenings I would often fish the water across from Gibson's on Hwy. 65. I'd listen for trout slurping up Mayflies and get irritated by the distraction of cars going by. Usually I fished with Corky Hope, my landlord at the time and a well known former St. Croix Co. Sheriff and WI Game Warden. He had an intimate knowledge of the "Kinni" and its history. We stood in the river together many nights and I listened to wonderful stories of trout fishing and local anglers of the past.

When we were looking for a new home a local realtor told us about a piece of land he owned in the Township. It wasn't actually for sale but he said he

would consider parting with some of the property. We parked on Evergreen Drive, walked into the woods and sat on a big rock to contemplate our future. The "Kinni" was nearby. This was home.



**A Native Kinnickinnic Brook Trout**

While much has changed since I first fished the Kinni many things have stayed the same. When darkness settles in on a July night and you're standing in your waders waist deep in the Kinni, your legs still get numb from the cold water. The same smells are there, and maybe a Whippoorwill too. And yes, the sound of a trout rising to sample a mayfly or gobbling a mouse bold enough to swim across the river can still be heard. You just might be lucky enough to catch a handsome Brown Trout that will accompany scrambled eggs and toast for your breakfast.



**Brown Trout Breakfast**

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