

Autumn Angling

It's usually during the spring, after waiting for the snow to melt, that our thoughts turn to fishing. But Yellowstone in the fall, after early-season runoff has ended and the summer heat subsides, can be one of the best times to fish in the park. We talked to a few local experts to get the hot fishing spots for the cool weather.

By Stephen Camelio
Yellowstone Association

GARDNER RIVER

Thanks to spawning brown trout coming up from the mighty Yellowstone River, the little Gardner River is home to big fish in the fall. "A rig with two nymphs is the way to catch the fall runners," says Richard Parks, author of *Fishing Yellowstone National Park*. "Try big beadheads and stonefly imitations like Minch Stones, the 20-incher and Minch's bead, hare, and copper."

FIREHOLE RIVER

Too hot to fish during the summer months, the Firehole once again becomes the dry fly fishermen's go-to river in the park during the cooler autumn weather. But Parks says don't go looking for the Pale Morning Duns that the fish loved so much in the spring. Instead, he recommends that from late morning to early afternoon anglers be on the watch for hatches of Blue Wing Olives and caddis.

LAMAR RIVER/SODA BUTTE CREEK

Despite the fact that heavy summer fishing with terrestrials makes the trout wary and hard to catch, Rhea Topping, instructor for YA Institute fly fishing courses, loves to fish the park's northeast corner because of the Lamar Valley's spectacular fall colors. And it doesn't hurt that cloudy September days can mean hatches of big, size 10-12 drakes, both gray and green, which are a favorite food for large, hungry cutthroats preparing for a long, cold winter.

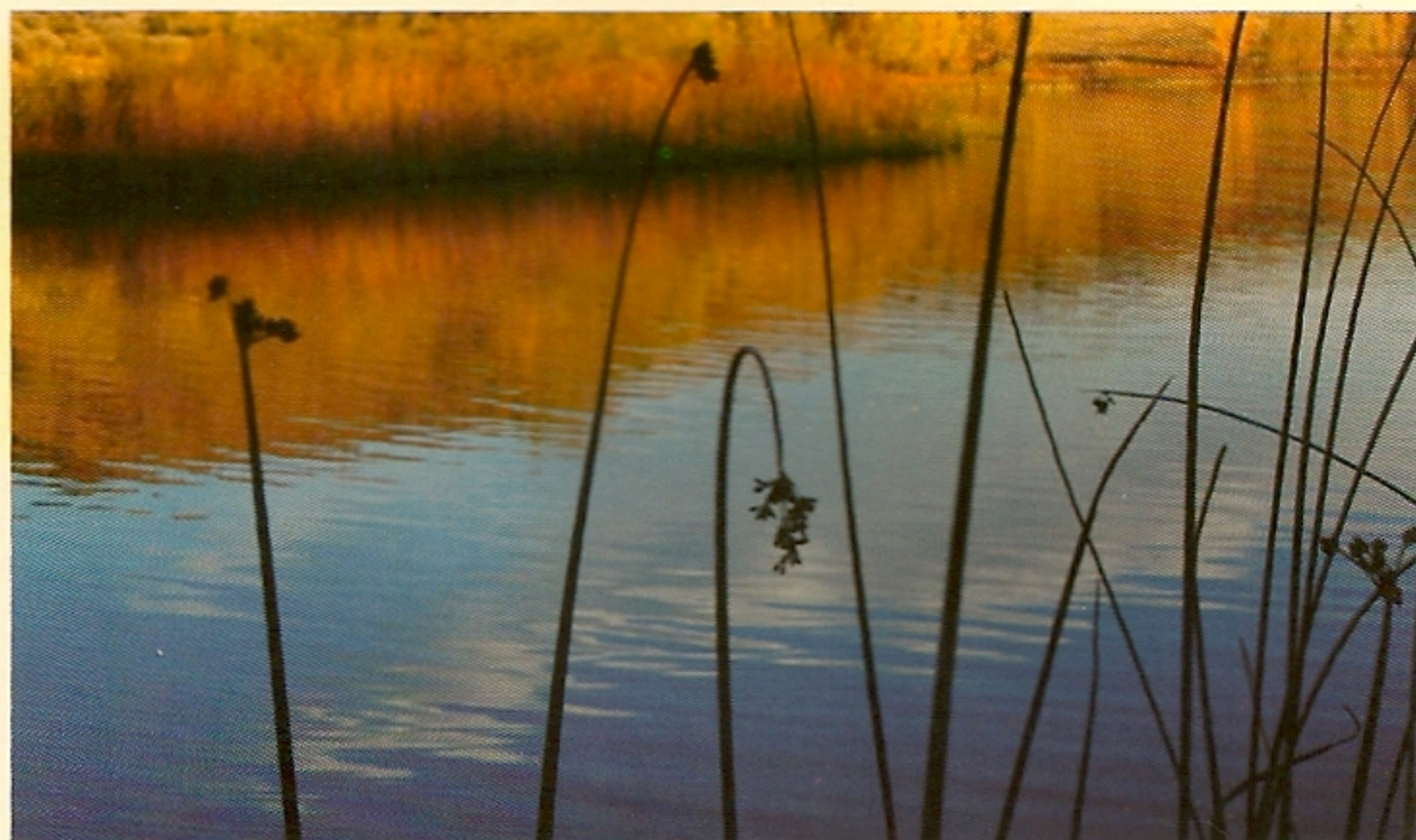


Photo: Scott Morrison



Brown Trout. Photo: Scott Morrison

MADISON RIVER

Working upstream from Hebgen Lake, trophy brown trout make their annual pilgrimage to spawn in the Park near West Yellowstone. If you want to land a Madison monster, Craig Mathews, co-author of *The Yellowstone Fly-Fishing Guide*, recommends going big with a size 6 streamer tied onto short, heavy leaders or, on overcast days, trying smaller BWOs or soft hackles.

BECHLER RIVER

Insects are usually a fisherman's best friend, but before September the mosquitoes in the park's southwestern corner can drive even the most dedicated angler crazy. But come autumn when the pests disappear, the gin-clear, meadow stretches in this remote area can be productive for big rainbows, so long as you have long leaders and sight fish downstream with hoppers or ants.

Fishing in Yellowstone requires a license, which can be purchased at NPS visitor centers and local outdoor retailers. Regulations require barbless hooks, non-toxic tackle and catch-and-release for all native fish, as well as all fish in Wild Trout Enhancement Areas. All lake trout in Yellowstone Lake must be killed.

This year fishing season runs through Sunday, November 5.