

S.F. BOISE RIVER

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| Date | Early September | Time | Late afternoon and evening |
| Location | S.F. Boise - Mountain Home, ID | Weather | Clear |
| Fish Species | Wild Rainbow Trout, Whitefish | Size Range | Mostly 16 – 20" |
| Fish Caught | A dozen between the two of us | | |
| Flies Used | Conehead Wooly Buggers, Hopper, Pink Albert, PMD | | |
| Techniques | Mostly nymphing but some dry fly action during hatches and in the evening | | |
| Comments | Fish over 18" is typical for this river in my experience | | |

The S.F. Boise River is managed as a wild trout fishery. It is a tailwater fishery about 90 minutes from downtown Boise. You'll never find yourself alone on this river. It takes a licking but keeps on ticking. The ten mile stretch below Anderson Ranch Dam is easily accessible and receives the most pressure. Fisherman can find more solitude floating the canyon stretch which I'd love to do someday. It is a year-round fishery for catch-and-release. You can keep fish over 20" during fishing season but you might get an evil glare. It's well known around these parts that you release these fish and perhaps that is the reason for the current state of this fishery.

I don't know why it is not considered Blue Ribbon but it is by far my favorite fishery in southwest Idaho. It doesn't get the notoriety of Silver Creek or the Henry's Fork and locals like it that way. I have hooked into a 20 incher almost every time I go and it seems like 18" fish are common. We caught a dozen fish and nine of them were greater than 18". That's the best I've ever done percentage wise for big fish. They fight like the Steelhead dumped in the Boise River in town during November.

Releasing one of my 18" Rainbows caught on a dry



I caught three of my fish on dries and another using a great nymphing technique that my friend Robert taught me. He cleaned up using this technique with seven fish over 18", the largest being 20". Welcome to Idaho! Robert just moved from California and said this is one of his favorite fishing memories which I can see why. He also caught a few Whitefish but we don't count them even though they can be fun during a trout drought. Robert has been asking to go fishing all summer and I was finally able to get out. I'm glad he got me out because it had been a few years since I had fished the SF and he taught me some good stuff. We took the scouts on a high adventure in July where everyone caught several small Rainbows on an alpine lake but this is different.

I took him to my favorite spot on the river that has never failed me. It is a place where the channel splits and has a few cross flows creating three or four small plunge pools in the one channel. His nymphing technique worked great at these pools. I was able to catch an 18" Trout on the fly thanks to a small mayfly hatch. You can pretty much count on the evening hatch but a midday hatch on such a clear warm day was a bonus and quite unexpected.



Robert fighting the 20" Rocket



Robert landing the 20" Rocket



Both of us admiring the 20" Rocket

The evening found us on a different section of the river where we both hooked into a few more fish. Robert hooked into a nice 18" fish on his first cast. There was an early hatch where I picked up a few more fish on the dry including a Hopper which was very exciting. That ended when five or six River Otters swam upriver into my hole and scattered all the fish. I actually think it was worth seeing the River Otters at close range. One of them came up with a small fish in its mouth taunting me.

We did not experience the typical evening hatch when the water boils like I have experienced on other evenings but it was a great day. We both had a great time and came away with some more great memories from the South Fork.



Robert with a nice 18" wild Rainbow

Bonus: Robert had such a great time that he let me in on a little secret. He told me of a pond near our home where you could catch Largemouth Bass on the fly. He showed me a picture of an 18" Bass that he caught by twitching a Hopper on the surface. That got me very excited and seemed surreal. The following weekend I had two hours to spare before my girls soccer game and he said that would be enough time. He took me to his honey hole and what you see on the next page was my first Largemouth Bass on the fly.



My first Largemouth Bass on the fly (19" Bass using a Hopper)

I saw it all unfold from the bank. I could see a few big Bass resting on the bottom in the weeds. Robert told me that I needed to keep any fish I hooked out of the weeds or they would wrap my line around the weeds and break me off. I was able to get away with using 12lb tippet. Unbelievable!

I nervously cast my Hopper onto the water. As the hopper hit the water I could see movement from below. A big Bass moved toward my fly and stopped. My heart was pumping as Robert told me to give it a little twitch. It moved closer until it was almost nosing my fly but still no take. One more twitch and the big mouth opened and closed around my fly. I gave it a nice jerk, for a fly rod anyway, and the fight was on. I was in disbelief. I may be inexperienced but I didn't think big Bass and dry flies mixed. This was a rare opportunity in my mind as I thought I have to land this!

The Bass made a big splash and dove toward the bottom. I applied pressure to try to finesse him upward without breaking off. I was able for the most part to keep him out of the weeds even though it didn't always go my way. I'd say with a little luck I was able to bring him toward shore. I gave a big sigh of relief as Robert scooped him into the net. There were high fives and big smiles as we examined it closer. This will always be remembered as one of my WOW moments!