

Black Hills Trout Fishing Techniques

ANYTIME IS A GOOD TIME to fish in the Black Hills Trout Management Area. Fishing is legal year-round. Anglers can take advantage of seasonal conditions and trout movements to maximize chances for fishing success. Open-water angling can be pursued throughout the year in some waters due to normally mild Black Hills winters. Ice fishing in high elevation lakes is also popular. Light tackle and a stealthy approach are important regardless of water type or time of year. Natural baits such as worms, grasshoppers and salmon eggs are permitted in most waters. Use of minnows within the Black Hills Trout Management Area is severely restricted. Check a current year South Dakota Fishing Handbook for restricted areas and techniques. Tackle shops are an important source for current information on fishing conditions and effective lures.

Spinning gear and fly tackle are most effective on small streams and reservoirs. Trolling with downriggers works well during the summer on deep reservoirs such as Pactola and Deerfield. Lightweight spinning gear spooled with 4- to 6-pound test line is recommended for casting lures or when fishing with natural baits. A 4 to 5 weight, 8- to 9-foot flyrod is ideal for anglers wanting to try their luck fly-fishing. Floating weight-forward fly line will allow anglers to overcome the gusty winds sometimes present. Spin fishers can use a "bubble" to cast flies when trout prefer insects over lures.

Rainbow and brook trout feed primarily on small insects, while brown trout, especially large browns, feed on fish. Size 0-1 spinning lures, as shown below, are good choices. Deerfield has a sizeable population of crayfish, making crayfish imitations successful. Natural baits, where legal, are best if the objective is to catch, keep and eat a fish.

Small streams and waters in the Hills demand a stealthy approach. Do not let your shadow fall on the water, make loud noises, splash or make rapid movements to alert fish to your presence. They may stop feeding or flee the area. Approach stream reaches from downstream. Trout normally face upstream and cannot see an angler approaching from behind. Success is also improved if the angler matches the insect hatch of the day or uses lures or bait likely to mimic natural prey of trout. Fish during early morning or evening to maximize success. Fishing from float tubes is popular on small reservoirs.

A small tackle box can hold flies or lures necessary for anglers fishing the Black Hills. The chart on the following page is a brief guide to successful fly patterns for the Black Hills.

Ice anglers can normally expect to find safe ice conditions by the last half of December, with ice cover persisting on Deerfield until early April.

