

# TROUT STREAMS OF WINNESHIEK COUNTY

## FISHING GUIDE



AN ANGLER'S COMPANION TO THE PUBLIC STREAMS & RIVERS OF WINNESHIEK COUNTY

Photo by Larry Reis

## NORTHEAST IOWA'S HOTTEST HATCHES

Below is a month-by-month breakdown of the best hatches found in Northeast Iowa along with recommended dry and wet flies for each.

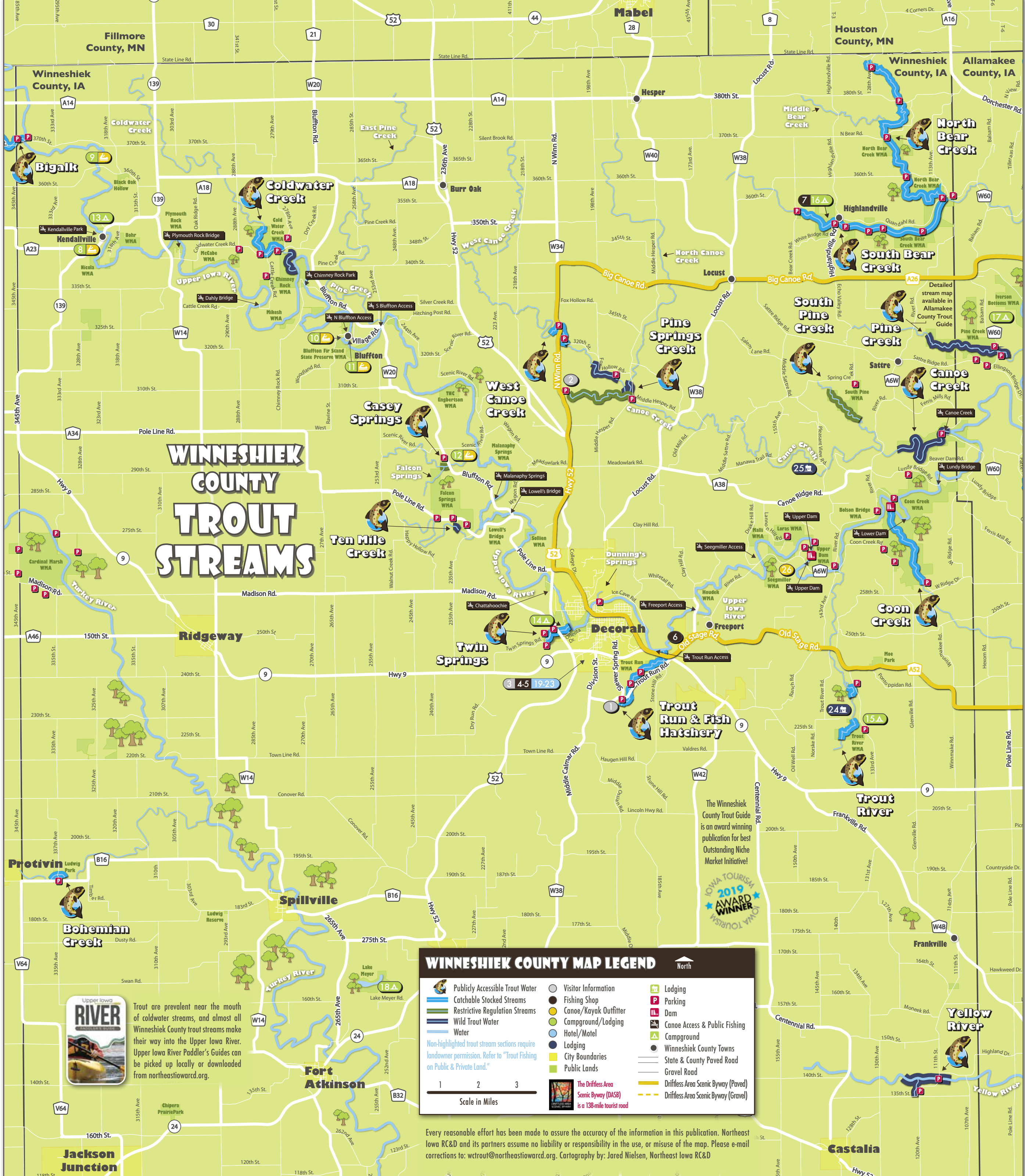
■ Insect hatches ■ Prime time for fishing each insect

HATCH	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	FLIES
Baetis			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Blue Winged Olive #16-22
Caddis				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Elk Hair Caddis #14-20
Hendrickson				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Adams & Dark Hendrickson #12-16
Hexagenia					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Adams & Brown Drake #10-12
Midges	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Griffiths Gnat & Brassie #16-22
Scuds	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Olive, Gray or Tan Scud #12-16
Stoneflies	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Beadhead Prince Nymph #10-16
Sulphurs				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	March Brown & Gray Fox #14-16
Terrestrials					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Hoppers & Crickets #10-12
Trico					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	White Wing Black Trico #22
Other	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Muddler Minnow & Woollybugger #4-10

## IOWA'S FISHING REGULATIONS

Below are guidelines that will be helpful when you fish Iowa. However, it is not a complete list of all fishing regulations and always be sure laws haven't changed. For more information, visit [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov) or contact the DNR Central Office in Des Moines at 515-725-8200.

- STREAM CLASSIFICATION.** Before you plan your trip, it is important to understand how trout waters are classified in Iowa. The trout management in Iowa divides trout fisheries into the three categories listed below. Please read each definition to gain an understanding of which stream segments contain catchable trout or are open to the public.
  - CATCHABLE STOCKED STREAMS** are open to the public and stocked regularly with catchable-sized trout that measure 10 to 12 inches in length and weigh on average one-half pound.
  - RESTRICTIVE REGULATION (RR) STREAMS** are open to the public and can only be fished using artificial lures. Restrictive Regulation streams in Winneshiek County have a catch-and-release regulation for brook trout—all brook trout must be immediately released when caught.
  - WILD TROUT WATER** is open to the public and managed under statewide regulations. Nearly all wild trout waters have wild brown trout present. However, no stocking occurs.
- IOWA'S TROUT SEASON.** Iowa's trout season differs from Minnesota, Wisconsin & Illinois in that the state offers continuous year-round fishing for brook, brown and rainbow trout.
- DAILY BAG LIMIT** The daily bag limit for trout is five and the possession limit is 10.
- FISHING LICENSE & TROUT FEE.** Anglers who fish for trout are required to pay the trout fee in addition to an Iowa fishing license. Both expire each year in January. However, children under 16 years of age may fish for free and possess trout if they fish with a licensed adult who has paid the current trout fee and they limit their combined catch to the day limit of five trout. If young anglers want to fish for and keep their own limit of trout, they only need to purchase the trout fee.



### WINNESHIEK COUNTY MAP LEGEND

Publicly Accessible Trout Water	Visitor Information	Lodging
Catchable Stocked Streams	Fishing Shop	Parking
Restrictive Regulation Streams	Canoe/Kayak Outfitter	Dam
Wild Trout Water	Campground/Lodging	Canoe Access & Public Fishing
Water	Hotel/Motel	Campground
	Lodging	Winneshiek County Towns
	City Boundaries	State & County Paved Road
	Public Lands	Gravel Road
		Driftless Area Scenic Byway (Paved)
		Driftless Area Scenic Byway (Gravel)

Non-highlighted trout stream sections require landowner permission. Refer to "Trout Fishing on Public & Private Land."

The Driftless Area Scenic Byway (DASB) is a 138-mile tourist road.

Scale in Miles: 1, 2, 3

Every reasonable effort has been made to assure the accuracy of the information in this publication. Northeast Iowa RC&D and its partners assume no liability or responsibility in the use, or misuse of the map. Please e-mail corrections to: [wctwout@northeastiowarc.org](mailto:wctwout@northeastiowarc.org). Cartography by: Jared Nielsen, Northeast Iowa RC&D

# WELCOME TO IOWA'S TROUT COUNTRY



North Bear Creek

There are 19 spring-fed creeks in Winneshiek County that comprise over 32 miles of fishable water, four of the state's 10 most-visited trout streams and one of only three trout rearing stations in Iowa. Located in the heart of Iowa's trout region, Winneshiek County's tranquil landscape attracts more trout anglers than any other county in the state. Anglers are attracted to this area for its high concentration of prime trout waters, fish counts, trout stocking plans and year-round opportunities to catch brook, brown and rainbow trout. Iowa DNR efforts have also contributed to making this region of the state a world-class trout fishery. On average, the Iowa DNR stocks approximately 76,000 catchable trout into catchable stocked streams within Winneshiek County from April 1 - October 31. In addition to stocking catchable rainbow trout, the Iowa DNR also stocks fingerling brook trout to help restore wild trout fisheries. Streams with wild brook trout populations include South Pine, Pine Springs, Pine, Falcon Springs, and Casey Springs. In addition, excess adult brood trout that typically measure between 14 and 24 inches in length and weigh anywhere from two to eight pounds, are released into streams each year. For more information about Iowa's stocking season, including a list of the streams that are scheduled for stocking, call the Decorah Fish Hatchery at 563-382-8324 or visit the DNR website at [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov).

## TROUT FISHING PLACES OF INTEREST

- DECORAH TROUT HATCHERY. Rearing station. FLA. 563-382-8324. 2321 Siewers Spring Rd, Decorah
- SEED SAVERS EXCHANGE. Visitor Center. 563-382-5990. 3094 North Winn Rd, Decorah
- DECORAH VISITOR CENTER. Help desk. 563-382-2023. 507 W Water St, Decorah
- ROD & RIVET. Full service fly shop, lodging, and guide service. 106 E Water St, Decorah
- DECORAH HATCHERY. Outdoor wear. 563-382-4103. 406 W Water St, Decorah
- WALMART SUPERCENTER. Fishing gear. FLA. 563-382-8737. 1798 Old Stage Rd, Decorah
- HIGHLANDVILLE STORE. Fishing tackle. FLA. 3497 Highlandville Rd, Highlandville
- UNDER THE STARS @ CHIMNEY ROCK CAMPGROUND & OUTFITTER. 563-203-0653. 3312 Chimney Rock Rd, Cresco
- HARVEST FARM CAMPGROUND & OUTFITTER. 563-883-8562. 3690 318th Ave, Cresco
- WHITE'S RIVERSIDE BLUFFTON CAMPGROUND & OUTFITTER. 563-547-4566. 2633 W Ravine Rd, Decorah
- BLUFFTON RESORT, BAR & OUTFITTER. 563-735-5738. 2619 W Ravine Rd, Bluffton
- HUTCHINSON CAMPGROUND & OUTFITTER. 563-382-3054. 2299 Scenic River Rd, Decorah
- KENDALLVILLE CAMPGROUND. 563-547-2897. 3501 K Park Rd, Cresco
- PULPIT ROCK CAMPGROUND. FLA. 563-382-9551. 505 Pulpit Rock Rd, Decorah
- SAMPSON SPRINGS CAMPGROUND. 563-382-4849. 2271 133rd Ave, Decorah
- BEAR CREEK CABINS & CAMPGROUND. 563-546-7722. 3497 Highlandville Rd, Highlandville
- PINE CREEK CABINS & CAMPGROUND. 563-380-4962. Old Spruce Dr, Decorah
- LAKE MEYER CAMPGROUND. 563-534-7145. 2546 Lake Meyer Rd, Fort Atkinson
- FAIRFIELD INN & SUITES. 563-382-8800. Iowa State Highway 9, Decorah
- SUPER 8 INN & SUITES. 563-382-9646. 1202 Iowa 9, Decorah
- QUALITY INN & SUITES. 563-382-2269. 705 Commerce Drive, Decorah
- HOTEL WINNESHIEK. 800-998-4164. 104 E Water St, Decorah
- SUPER 8 MOTEL. 563-382-8771. 810 Iowa 9, Decorah
- TROUT RIVER LOG CABIN. 563-419-5634. 2336 Trout River Rd, Decorah
- CANOE CREEK LODGE. 563-382-1380. 2881 Pleasant View Rd, Decorah
- DECORAH CANOE & KAYAK. 563-380-3902. 2662 River Rd, Decorah

## FISHING GUIDE SERVICES

BEAR CREEK ANGLERS. Call 563-419-4433 or visit [www.bearcreekanglers.com](http://www.bearcreekanglers.com)  
 TIGHT LINES TROUT GUIDE SERVICES. Call 563-419-7878 or email [tightlinesrtr@gmail.com](mailto:tightlinesrtr@gmail.com)  
 DRIFTLISS ON THE FLY. Call 641-257-9025 or visit [www.drifflissonthefly.com](http://www.drifflissonthefly.com)  
 DRIFTLISS FISHERS, LLC. Visit [www.drifflissfishers.com](http://www.drifflissfishers.com) or email [drifflissfishers@gmail.com](mailto:drifflissfishers@gmail.com)  
 NEI FLY FISHING. Visit [www.neiflyfishing.com](http://www.neiflyfishing.com) or email [neiflyfishing@gmail.com](mailto:neiflyfishing@gmail.com)  
 UP NORTH ADVENTURES. Call 563-535-7296 or email [snowdog@acegroup.cc](mailto:snowdog@acegroup.cc)

## IOWA'S TROUT FAMILY

**BROOK TROUT** are native to Iowa and are recognized by their distinctive olive-green body with yellow and blue-rimmed red spots, white and black edged orange fins, and light wormy streaks on their back called vermiculations.

**BROWN TROUT** have silvery sides and obvious black spots outlined by orange coloration. Males, during the breeding season, often exhibit vivid yellow to reddish-yellow colors along the belly region.

**RAINBOW TROUT** have bluish-green backs, silver sides and bellies, and speckled with black spots on their bodies and fins. They also have a prominent pink-red horizontal stripe along their sides, which is what gives them their name.

# TROUT FISHING ON PUBLIC & PRIVATE LAND



Trout Stile Leading to South Bear Creek

Anglers may fish in waters found on public land such as Iowa State Forests, Parks, & Wildlife Management Areas. In the Iowa Driftless region, many of the trout streams flow through private land. On private property, the landowner owns the streambed and angling is only allowed with landowner permission. On private property, the Iowa DNR works with landowners to allow the opportunity for public fishing in two ways:

- **THE "HANDSHAKE AGREEMENT"** is simply a verbal agreement between the landowner and the state, allowing fish stocking and public fishing. On private property where a verbal agreement is in place, one will see white signs which read, "Private Property. Public Fishing Only". Stiles, allowing one to easily cross a fence, may also be present.
- The second system is the **ANGLER CONSERVATION EASEMENT** that allows public fishing, fish stocking by the DNR, and habitat improvement on the stream. The easement consists of a corridor of 75' on both sides of the centerline of the stream; therefore, the corridor moves as the stream changes direction. This allows continual access to the stream. On private property where an easement is present, DNR staff post white access signs as well as grey signs reading, "Open for Public Fishing. Stream Easement Area".
- **IF IN DOUBT**, and neither sign is present, stay out or ask the landowner. There are plenty of fishing opportunities in the region.

## BIGALK CREEK



**LENGTH & TROUT:** 0.6 mile stream with rainbow trout  
**DESCRIPTION:** This little stretch of water (pronounced bee-yalk) would make an interesting side trip from Coldwater Creek. Bigalk is a spring-fed, coldwater creek that is one of only three streams in Iowa with inconsistent natural reproduction of rainbow trout. The landowner has cooperated with several agencies, and extensive habitat improvements were made between 1995-1999 and again in 2013, which included reshaping the stream bank, installing rock riprap, constructing fish hides and reseeding the bank. Today, this stream measures three to seven feet across and flows in a rough west to east direction before joining the Upper Iowa River near the truss bridge with parking access. Although the stream is somewhat narrow from the Upper Iowa River to the intersection of 370th Street and 345th Street, the waterway does widen as you enter the Bigalk Wildlife Management Area and head west parallel to 30th Street and into the Bigalk Trout Stream Wildlife Area that is lined by palisade limestone bluffs. Nearby lodging options include Harvest Farm Campground.

## COLDWATER CREEK



**LENGTH & TROUT:** 4.0 mile stream with brown & rainbow trout  
**DESCRIPTION:** Coldwater Creek has the most interesting headwaters of all the Iowa streams, as the creek's "s" source" begins at Coldwater Cave. Known as Iowa's longest and most spectacular cave with over 17 miles of passages documented, the stream begins from the base of a 100 foot-tall bluff located within the 232-acre Coldwater Creek Wildlife Management Area. Coldwater Creek is considered by many to be one of the better trout streams in the state due to its length and fish counts. Although some stream segments are surrounded by dense foliage, pasture and prairie surround the majority of this medium-sized creek that is known to be home to naturally reproducing rainbows. Coldwater Creek also features many runs between obvious deep pools, which makes it an ideal stream for bait fishers and fly fishers alike. The streambed offers enough room for anglers to get their offering to where it needs to be without much difficulty, due to the twists and turns of the creek. For a weekend getaway, nearby lodging options include Chimney Rock Campground and Randy's Bluffton Store & Campground.

## PINE SPRINGS CREEK



**LENGTH & TROUT:** 4.3 mile stream with brook & brown trout  
**DESCRIPTION:** Located on the Seed Savers Exchange's (SSE) 890-acre organic Heritage Farm, Pine Spring Creek and portions of North Canoe and West Canoe creeks offer an idyllic setting for fishing both brook and brown trout. Visitors may keep brown trout, but SSE asks visitors to release brook trout, which have been the subject of ongoing preservation efforts since 2009. SSE has worked with the Iowa DNR, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Trout Unlimited and Hawkwey Fly Fishing Association to improve the habitat for brook trout in Pine Springs Creek by restoring the flow of the original stream bed and improving habitat for spawning. The brook trout, an indigenous species, has been reintroduced to Pine Spring Creek and was last stocked in 2004 from the South Pine Creek strain. Today, Pine Springs Creek is included in the Iowa DNR's List of Outstanding Iowa Waters for its water quality. While you enjoy Pine Spring Creek, the rest of the family can enjoy Heritage Farm's eight miles of trails, views of Ancient White Park cattle, a Historic Apple Orchard, picnic tables, a visitors' center and display gardens for children and adults.

## NORTH BEAR & SOUTH BEAR CREEK



**LENGTH & TROUT:** 11.2 mile stream with brown & rainbow trout  
**DESCRIPTION:** Bear Creek is an 11.2 mile-long tributary of the Upper Iowa River, joining Waterloo Creek for a short distance before entering the Upper Iowa just east of where Highway 76 crosses the river in Allamakee County. Its branches, North Bear and South Bear are considered by many to be two of the top trout streams in Iowa. With more angler visits to these two streams than any other in the state, a trip here will guarantee you great water, willing browns, and abundant fishing access since both are almost entirely under public ownership. Altering segments of pasture and bluff-lined woodlands are what you will experience while fishing the Bear system. Be prepared to outfit yourself properly with waders and the right equipment to navigate through the brush, stream crossings, and close-quarter casting conditions. South Bear Creek begins west of Highlandville, which is also home to Bear Creek Cabins and the Highlandville General Store & Campground. If you need gear or a snack, the General Store is a one-stop-shop for fishing tackle, bait, groceries, fishing & hunting licenses and the locals' favorite "Spring Grove Soda." One feature that makes South Bear Creek different from other nearby streams is the number of beaver dams. There are at least five past or present dams, which make for large pools that have been known to produce hefty browns. The eastern portion of South Bear has a noticeable drop to it, where riffles drop off into runs, pockets, pools and undercut banks that are easy to wade in and fish. North Bear joins South Bear along Quandahl Road and has one of the largest populations of wild brown trout in Iowa. From access along Quandahl Road to the 2nd Bridge known as the "Tackle or Bjerke Bridge," you can expect to loop through woodland, while occasionally edging around limestone cliffs and cuts. Many consider this two-mile stretch to be one of the most scenic sections of the Bear system, and also a trout habitat hot spot with excellent numbers. The small, quiet section of water from the "2nd Bridge" to the "4th Bridge" known as the "Headwater or Lane Bridge," will take you through a mixture of continuously-grazed pastures and lush-green spring grass. Typically, these two segments receive less angler pressure and would be ideal sections for those new to the sport of fly fishing who are looking for an open pasture with good back cast room and water access.

## TEN MILE CREEK



**LENGTH & TROUT:** 0.2 mile stream with brown trout  
**DESCRIPTION:** The stream has a small population of wild browns that move into the stream when flows and water temperatures are acceptable. With only a small segment of stream open to fishing, anglers shouldn't expect to spend much time here.

## TROUT RIVER



**LENGTH & TROUT:** 3.0 mile stream with brown & rainbow trout  
**DESCRIPTION:** Out of all the trout streams in Iowa, there are only a handful as beautiful as the upper reaches of Trout River. Here, scores of mature brown and rainbow trout can be seen feeding at all levels of the water column. You might even be so lucky as to land a wild brown trout, as they have begun to reproduce here naturally. Known as a coldwater pasture stream, Trout River has two segments open for public fishing. The northern half-mile section of stream is private but can be accessed along 133rd Ave. The landowner has cooperated with several agencies, resulting in extensive habitat improvements that include embedding native prairie lands, bank stabilization and tree planting. The southern segment of stream is located on the 171-acre Trout River Wildlife Management Area and can be accessed from a parking lot across the road from Sampson Springs Campground. Please note that the stream segment highlighted in yellow above is on private land and does NOT allow public fishing. This unfishable segment is marked by signs and barbed wire running across the stream.

## SOUTH PINE CREEK



**LENGTH & TROUT:** 2.0 mile stream with brook & brown trout  
**DESCRIPTION:** There is only one stream in Northeast Iowa that maintains an undisturbed population of Iowa's native brook trout. These trout are genetically distinct from all others, may be decedents of fish from pioneer days, and are possibly even survivors from the last ice age. For those drawn to wild fish, South Pine Creek provides a truly irreplaceable experience. It isn't an easy stream to find though, and the fishable portion of this stream is a little over a mile hike from the only parking access within the 217-acre South Pine Creek WMA. The walk is pretty easy for the most part but does include steep gradients leading to and from the stream. One mile from the parking access, the terrain opens up into a picturesque clearing with the main stem of South Pine Creek located in a wide, grassy valley, seemingly untouched. If you are lucky enough to land one of these amazingly colored brook trout, don't expect anything over a pound, but be ready for a fight. With that said, consider approaching South Pine Creek as a naturalist rather than an angler given that this is genuinely one of northeast Iowa's special resources.

## TROUT RUN & FISH HATCHERY



**LENGTH & TROUT:** 2.2 mile stream with brown & rainbow trout  
**DESCRIPTION:** Trout Run Creek follows both Trout Run Road and the Trout Run Trail just south of Decorah. The stream has excellent access with several parking areas, including parking at the Decorah Fish Hatchery. At the hatchery, the catchable trout waters of the stream begin at the base of the waterfall fed by Iowa's second-largest spring, Stewer Springs. Here, water surges out of a limestone outcropping at 3,000-5,000 gallons per minute, forming the Trout Run trout stream and providing the only water source for the Decorah Fish Hatchery. The hatchery welcomes visitors and popular pastimes during visits include feeding the trout being reared in the raceways and viewing the famous "Decorah Eagles." The birds are frequent visitors to the hatchery and nearby stream, feasting on trout and small animals. Trout run is a large stream by Driftless standards, perhaps 20-75 feet across, flowing through the 106-acre Trout Run WMA before joining the much larger Upper Iowa River at Trout Run Park. The entire length of this stream is fishable, and with five universal access fishing points, is one of the most accessible in Iowa.

## CASEY SPRINGS



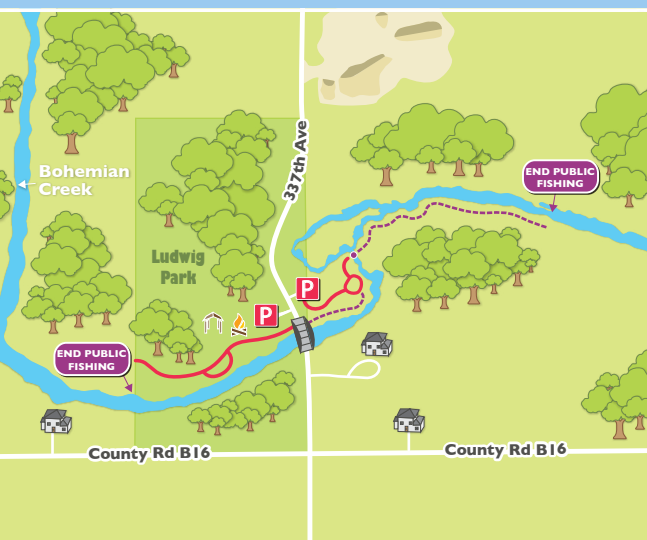
**LENGTH & TROUT:** 0.5 mile stream with brook & brown trout  
**DESCRIPTION:** Casey Springs has healthy, naturally reproducing populations of both brown and brook trout and is one of only seven streams in Iowa with restored populations of brook trout originally acquired from South Pine Creek.

## TWIN SPRINGS



**LENGTH & TROUT:** 0.5 mile stream with brown & rainbow trout  
**DESCRIPTION:** Twin Springs is a small, coldwater stream that flows through a city park and Pulpit Rock Campground before emptying into the Upper Iowa River. It is heavily fished because of the campground and frequent stocking schedule. Old traces of a historic trout hatchery, a hiking trail, and numerous picnic areas can be found in Twin Springs Park. Beginning the first weekend of June, a children's trout fishing pond offers a safe and convenient location for young anglers to learn the basics. A youth trout fishing clinic is offered at the pond each year during free fishing weekend for Iowa residents.

## BOHEMIAN CREEK



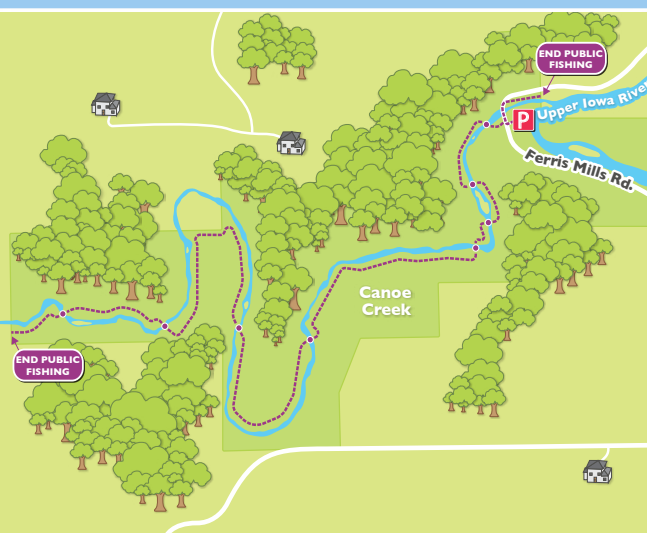
**LENGTH & TROUT:** 0.3 mile stream with brown & rainbow trout  
**DESCRIPTION:** Located east of the community of Protivin, Bohemian Creek is named for the Czech immigrants who settled here on the western edge of the Driftless Area in the nineteenth century. This tributary to the Turkey River is situated within the 20-acre Ludwig County Park that is accessible from parking near the bridge on 337th Ave. Although fishing access is somewhat limited since much of the stream runs through private property, Bohemian Creek features good shore fishing, a shelter, and fire pit.

## WEST CANOE CREEK



**LENGTH & TROUT:** 1.0 mile stream with rainbow trout  
**DESCRIPTION:** One of three streams located northwest of Decorah, West Canoe Creek is an open and accessible pasture stream that winds through Troll Hollow Campground. Although this is a warm-water stream, don't hesitate to wet a line and check it out, especially if you are new to fly fishing. The stream offers beginners the ideal location to set up, relax and cast for rainbows. It is also a short drive's distance from Pine Springs Creek and Bluffton Resort and Bar as well as Hutchinson Family Farm & Campground, making it an ideal stream for a side trip.

## CANOE CREEK



**LENGTH & TROUT:** 2.8 mile stream with brown trout  
**DESCRIPTION:** The lower reaches of Canoe Creek provide anglers with an opportunity to catch a variety of fish species. Most of the year, wild brown trout are found in this section of the stream, but as water temps warm in the summer, don't be surprised if you catch a walleye or smallmouth bass in this area. This section of Canoe Creek is not stocked, but supports a wild brown trout fishery. Anglers may also catch rainbow trout that have wandered into the stream from other stocking locations.

## YELLOW RIVER



**LENGTH & TROUT:** 1.55 mile stream with brown trout  
**DESCRIPTION:** The Yellow River is a diverse fishery that includes both warmwater and coldwater fishes. In this section of the Yellow, water temperatures can get a bit warm in the summer for trout, especially during low stream flows. The stream meanders through well-managed pastures, providing anglers with an enjoyable fishing experience. Riffles and runs end in deep pools that provide plenty of opportunities to hook a trout. This section of stream is not stocked, but has low numbers of wild brown trout. Anglers should be aware that cattle may be present in the pastures.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## STREAM LEGEND

- Gravel Road (3pt white line)
- Paved Road (6pt white line)
- Mowed Trail (MT)
- Pasture/Grass (P)
- Hiking/Single-Track Trail
- Blaze Your Own Trail (BYOT)
- MT Stream Crossing
- P/BYOT Stream Crossing
- Parking Lot/Access
- Public Restroom
- Accessible Fishing
- Public Land
- Natural Spring
- Water
- Road Bridge
- Pedestrian Bridge
- Shelter
- Picnic Area
- Fire Pit
- Trout Stile
- Fence
- Cattle

## WADERS?

Most streams that require walking along a mowed trail or pasture are easily fishable. However, if you plan to fish a section of stream with a stream crossing or BYOT, consider wearing waders.