

# FISHING HOLE SUCKER RIVER

**WHY GO:** This St. Louis County stream just outside of Duluth has a decent stretch of water that is accessible to lake run species, such as steelhead, Kamloops and even pink salmon at various points in the year. There's also brown and brook trout on the inland portion of this stream.

**ACCESS:** There's a decent amount of public access on this stream, both via multiple bridge crossing and a lot of easements, according to fly fishing guide Carl Haensel, whose business Namebini is located along the stream.

**VITALS:** This 17.4-mile stream drops 830 feet from Paradise Lake in the Cloquet Valley State Forest and 2.4 miles of the stream are below the posted boundary, which generally corresponds to the area accessible to anadromous trout and salmon. That's a considerable amount of water by North Shore stream standards, Haensel pointed out.

**GAME SPECIES PRESENT:** Brook trout, brown trout, coaster brook trout, Kamloops rainbow trout, pink salmon, steelhead trout.

**STEAL YOUR RAINBOWS:** Haensel notes the stream isn't stocked, hasn't been for a couple of decades, yet pulls lots of steelhead rainbow trout to its spring run.

"It varies from year to year, but we need to continue to protect it," he said, as talk of opening up steelhead trout harvest was heating up in DNR halls.

It's mainly a spring run, but when there's been "enough" water, it is possible to get a few steelhead to show up in the fall.

Haensel noted that the stream in the spring also gets a few Kamloops rainbow trout, and he encourages anybody catching one of these to harvest any rainbows they catch missing their adipose fin. Steelhead anglers are particularly concerned about the genetic integrity of the steelhead popu-

lation upon a recent genetics study showing Kamloops and steelhead trout are widely crossbreeding, creating a genetically inferior hybrid.

Haensel recommended stone flies for steelhead, noting the stream drops fast here. "It is not conducive to long casts and swinging flies," he said. "You have to get down to find the fish...You have to make sure you are on the bottom to have a shot at it."

**ACCESS ISSUES:** Haensel urges anglers to know where they are going, and not to step onto private property. It's to be noted that the mouth of the stream is privately held, though the landowner allows access. That was in jeopardy last year after some visitors to the land left trash on the land.

"People need to strongly respect the land," Haensel said.

**LITTLE PINKY:** As mentioned, there is a pink salmon run in the fall.

"It is pretty small, and they don't make it much farther than the scenic route," Haensel said.

**STREAM TROUT:** The inland portion, both middle and upper sections, of the Sucker is an excellent brook trout stream, Haensel said, encouraging catch and release angling for this species. There are also brownies, particularly on the middle.

This fishing is best from late spring to early summer, or the middle of May through the end of June, and picks up



again in September.

Haensel said to use small streamers and fluffy dry flies for these trout.—*Javier Serna*

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