



TROUT CAMP

An essay by Will Davis

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(Congratulations to Will for earning Honorable Mention in the TU Essay Contest!)

Trout Camp is a once in a lifetime experience. The chance to learn from experienced and educated mentors about trout, their diet, where they live, and ultimately how to catch them is an opportunity not many people get. I am extremely grateful to have gotten that chance and to be able to tell what trout camp is all about. The first thing I loved about camp is the mentors. The individuals who help and teach us know what they're talking about and also how to present the information well enough so that a bunch of teenage hoodlums will understand. I also think the mentors were extremely helpful and patient with the campers. One example was my mentor during the Norton Creek activity. His name was Buzz Buffington and he was very patient and helpful during my first casts (which were not coordinated in the slightest) and first hookups. He showed me the best spots to cast and ways to work around the creek effectively. His instruction helped me to be more confident with my newfound knowledge on the water.

THE ACTIVITIES. The things campers experience at camp is a big part of it. We get a very well planned array of things to do that help us become better fly fisherman. From the casting instruction to fly tying we are taught how to do everything we need to fly fish. I also appreciated the first activities that I took part in. The water bucket and board bridge activities not only created teamwork and trust, they also provided a good environment to get to know each other.

THE FISHING. Fishing at Trout Camp is some of the best fishing I've experienced. Not only do we get seasoned and experienced mentors, we also get to fish in one of the most beautiful places on Earth, the Great Smoky Mountains. The Smokies is one the best places for trout fishing, also its one of the few places on Earth where Brook Trout are still doing very well. Getting the opportunity to fly fish in the Smokies is not hard to come by, but being able to do so with great people that know what they are doing and can teach you of lot of what they know is. Another thing that is very special is the chance to catch the trout species native to Appalachia, Brook Trout. Brook Trout may not be large but they fight hard and are in my opinion the prettiest fish to catch. Many spots in the park have lost population of Brook Trout and it's very special to see, that despite their struggles they are in fact there. There were many things I loved about Trout Camp but one of my favorites was the time spent together. During the parts of the week we had extra time I would go up to the Spruce Fir Room and tie with a few of my closer friends. Most of the time I was up there Jim would be up there too. He is a very knowledgeable person and showed us many cool things like boxes and boxes of old flies that he had acquired. Another example of the great mentors at camp was Steve. Steve was extremely helpful and had much to offer and learn from. He knows much about the insects that trout feed on to how to read water; in just a few minutes I was I already learning a lot from him. Trout Camp was an experience I was extremely blessed to have and I loved every second of it: from fishing to tying flies, to playing football with a bunch of rowdy boys. I learned a lot and benefited from camp in many ways; one of them being confidence on the water. I remember about a month before camp I went up to Tremont to fish and I honestly had no idea what to do. My first instinct was to find the biggest pool and just cast randomly in it. I never got any bites and did not really enjoy my time fishing. Camp changed all of that. I now am confident and much more knowledgeable on the water. Trout Camp is something I will never forget.