



NATURE AT RISK

By Carol Hillestad for the Brodhead Watershed Association

Brookies then and now – worth protecting

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Beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, but it's hard to imagine a more beautiful, elegant fish than our native brook trout. This is the fish that enticed anglers from around the world to Brodhead Creek – the birthplace of fly fishing in America.

Starting in the mid-1800s, countless inns and boarding houses provided travelers with simple accommodations, pure air and water, and the pleasures of a day on the creek. The famous and the unknown converged here, part of the new industry called “tourism” that was to remake the Poconos.



Native brook trout (Salvelinus fontinalis)

“Brookies” need cold, clear, pure, oxygen-rich water to survive and thrive. In the late 1800s, when industry arrived in the form of clear-cutting hemlock forests for the tannery trade and other development, the creeks quickly warmed. Without the cooling canopy of native hemlock and rhododendron, the fish disappeared. And so did the fly fishers, who moved to more hospitable waters in the Catskills.

Over the decades since, our forests have regrown. The waters of the Brodhead and its headwaters again support breeding populations of wild fish – brook trout among them.

Salty runoff, flooding, erosion, invasive plants and warmer-than-normal summers still pose risks. Trout Unlimited, fishing clubs, and responsible creekside landowners are vigilant caretakers of wild brook trout.

You can help, too! Support land protection in your community, especially along creeks and streams. Take steps to prevent stormwater from running off your property into nearby waterways. Volunteer to remove invasive streambank plants. And follow catch-and-release guidelines when you hit the waters yourself.

For information about local flyfishing: www.flyfisherman.com/editorial/fishing-historic-brodhead-creek/151776

For information about where public fishing is allowed on the historic Brodhead Creek, find out where to get your copy of “Finding Fun in the Brodhead Watershed” at brodheadwatershed.org/gopoconos