

Have you wondered why are there some years when fishing in a place appears wonderful, out of this world, and then without explanation there are years in which in the same place there is difficult or poor fishing the entire season? In general, and for many this is anecdotal, it constitutes a mystery that is also an attraction which gives fishing a special spice. But there are also those like me who need more information on the subject, and want to know how to interpret it. These lines are specifically meant to help those like me who want to understand more about these variations.

Talking about the variations of fishing, there are two types of changes. The first are changes within the same season which are, in turn, related to changes in the weather conditions, such as: atmospheric pressure; the amount of water in the river due to recent rainfall; the sun; luminosity; heat; clouds; wind; and the migrations and phases of the moon. These factors only determine the quality of the fishing for a short horizon, a week or a few days, and are therefore difficult or impossible to predict months or weeks before. However, at the time when we are tackling up and ready to fish, we already know how they are going to affect the fishing. And we will already have an intuitive feeling, that in the case of more experienced anglers will be more than a hunch, it will be a suspicion based on how things will be, although the good thing about this is that it will not preclude an element of surprise.

That understood, there is a second type of change that, at least for me, allows one to predict how good the fishing is going to be for some months ahead, and helps to define with a high level of certainty where the best spots will be. These variations will define what is going to happen with the water flows and the water temperature prevailing in the coming fishing season. A cold year --when there is also a lot of accumulated snow-- is generally ideal for fishing since, in general, fishing is good in most locations under those conditions. The amount of snow that accumulates in the medium and high mountains ensures a constant flow of water for the summer, which enables water to have a good temperature and adequate oxygenation throughout the summer. Also where the speed of the current is neither too high nor too low, the conditions for developing a favorable insect environment are generated, especially for those species like the stonefly, which is more demanding in oxygenation and water purity, and small fresh water arthropods such as river shrimps. In a year with less snow, fishing requires a better knowledge of trout behavior, for example, to know where they migrate or move when there's less water. High river temperature is bad for the trout environment because they need higher oxygen levels in the water compared to other species such as perch or carp. High water temperature could result from low flows in the river, and reduce oxygen levels (the higher the temperature, the lower the oxygenation), which in turn cause the appearance of small bodies of weed, micro weed, fungus, bacteria, and other small contamination in the water. These conditions cause eutrophication, which is an excess proliferation of these micro-organisms. They proliferate in favorable temperature conditions and also when there is less water they exist in greater concentrations. The ecosystem which sustains the existence of shoals of trout may be out of balance and damaged. In drier years and less cold winters, the trout will have a more difficult existence and without any doubt will need an adaptation process.

In Chile, we have only been fishing for trout for a century maybe more, and we have only started fly fishing for this wonderful water specimen, considered by many as a classic because it gives such a great fight and entertainment, within the last 20 to 30 years. All this is especially true for the fly fishing fanatics, as we get involved to the point of trying to crack the fishes

behavior patterns, which are of course very difficult to interpret even for an expert.

To all this complexity today we have to ask new questions: What is going to happen with this species in a changing world? What is going to happen with the greenhouse effect if this exists? It is not sure but could be a fact that summers are drier and hotter, that winters are less rainy and less cold. Would Chile still be a country with the lowest greenhouse effect? What would happen with trout in Chile in case the greenhouse effect exists? Would they become more anadromous or migratory? How would they adapt? What behavior patterns would they have?

Since there are few if any studies in our country about such issues, we need to try to make some kind of prediction. Undoubtedly, there will still be some exceptional and excellent fishing for at least a few more decades, but it is undeniable that every year the challenge to interpret when and where to go fishing would be more difficult. Fishermen need to adapt, and therefore need to be more perceptive to these changes.

Lets just hope that we will have the necessary studies to determine how to protect the environment and the habitat of the species that interest us. Under the current conditions it's even more important, as today we have a greater population density than in previous decades; more pollution; more pressure on fishing resources; and almost irrefutable climate change. For while it's more important to teach to more and more people how important is to practice catch and release.