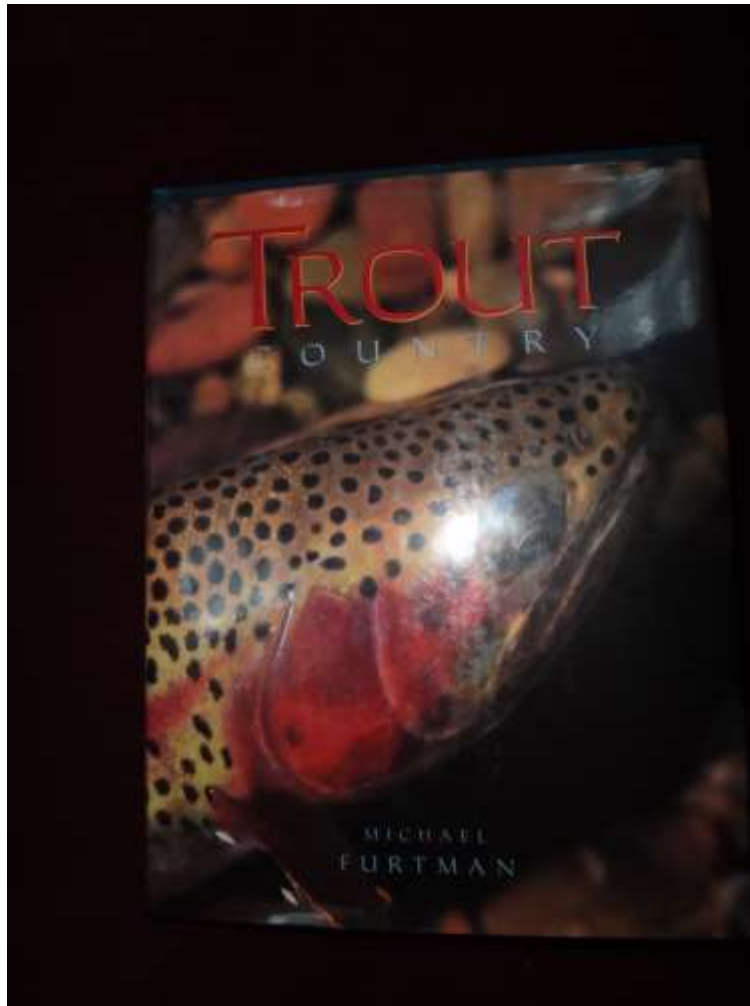


A Review of "Trout Country" by Michael Furtman



This was a delightful book to take in, with a lucid, enthusiastic writing style supported by stunning photographs of trout in their natural habitats. I read the whole book in 2 sittings and thoroughly enjoyed all parts of it.

The author starts out with an easily understood history of trout and their char and salmon relatives. Despite limited fossil evidence, scientists have been able to piece together a fairly detailed history of salmonids including trout, salmon, char, whitefish and grayling starting in the distance past 100 million years ago.

In the next chapter he states "North Americans are blessed with a wealth of trout". Species include true trout (rainbow, cutthroat and rarer Golden, Gilas and Apaches) plus imported Brown trout and the native closely related chars including Eastern Brook Trout, Lake Trout, Dolly Varden and Bull Trout, and Arctic Char. Furtman provides vivid descriptions and even more vivid pictures of the various branches of the trout family. He fills in details of their native ranges, habitats, migration patterns and feeding habits.

Chapter 3 is a more detailed look at the trout feeding habits and the senses they use to move through and explore their watery habitat, seeking out their favourite prey species. This is followed in Chapter 4 by the life cycle of the trout including spawning behaviours and the journey from the fertilized egg to adulthood. Chapter 5 looks at the threats to the continued existence of viable populations of wild trout. As the author points out “. . . that the trout legacy that was found on this continent on the arrival of European people has been severely compromised..” Habitat loss and degradation, pollution, hybridization with introduced species as well as over-fishing contribute to the problem. Even “catch and release” fishing is open to abuse, if not properly carried out and monitored. He finishes the chapter with a look at some trout populations which are in serious danger of being exterminated or extirpated from some parts of their ranges.

His closing comments should ring true to any true fly fisher “. . . although we have the power to decide [which species will survive] we do not have the right. Wild trout deserve their own evolutionary future.”

