

## TOP FISHING SECRETS

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### River Scouring

*Scouring literally cleans rocks, gravel, and boulders laden with algae, fungus, and parasites reenergizing rivers with oxygen and habitable beds ideal for many species of fish.*

Timothy Kuserets



*These two photos are of the same reach of water running high, blown out, and running low. Note the significant turbidity of the image on the right, which is distinctly higher, faster, and muddier than that of the left. As any river blows out sediments and bed loads scour the riverbed cleaning out algae and debris. As the river recovers and clears up oxygen levels increases making the river ideal for fish migrations.*

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Any angler who has fished during fall and spring months has experienced the effects of scouring that creates turbid conditions of stained water. How fast a river rises directly influences the behavior of holding fish. Pressures from suspended-loads of silt and bed-loads of moving gravel and large rocks can easily put fish off the bite.

As silt and gravel are forced downstream, the friction action of scouring literally cleans rocks, gravel, and boulders laden with algae, fungus, and parasites; this is the benefit of scouring. The biggest habitat problem

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with scouring is that it can decimate redds where fish may have laid eggs and suspend choking silt that can deplete oxygen for long reaches.

Scouring happens as a deluge, or flood, abruptly increases the volume of water on a massive scale. It can happen just about any time of the year but is most commonly associated with wetter months of the year. Regions that go without measurable precipitation for extended periods of time are particularly susceptible to scouring. Banks above and below the surface can harden resisting saturation as sudden rainfalls fill and overflow the entire bed within hours. During drought conditions, surrounding soils can also harden resisting saturation that would otherwise slow the rate from which rainfall is transported directly into streams and rivers.

Watching the weather and monitoring hydrographs are the best weapons to ascertain if scouring has or is about to take place. It's important to diligently monitor systems during the height of any season to figure out what pressures fish may experience. It is possible to counter those pressures that put fish off the bite during scouring by looking for holds that are wide enough to be drift fished with shorter leaders, larger offerings and hooks, along with scents added. Anglers who prefer to use baits should also add scent to the offering since accumulating silt can adversely affect the ability of fish to smell.



*Rivers that run low and clear for an extended period of time create optimal conditions where algae and fungus blossom enough to cover every centimeter of the bed sucking the life out of entire reaches. When riverbeds become laden with covered rocks holding fish will move downstream to faster water where temperatures stabilize and oxygen increases.*