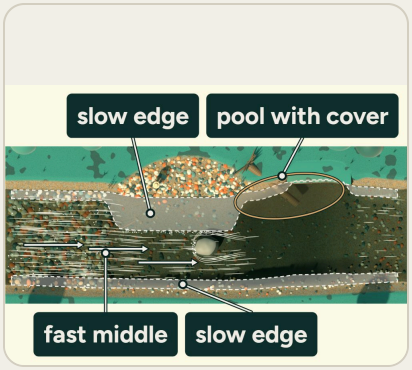
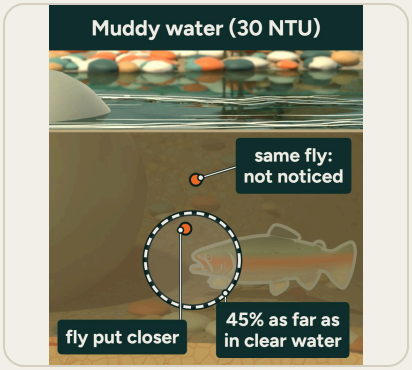
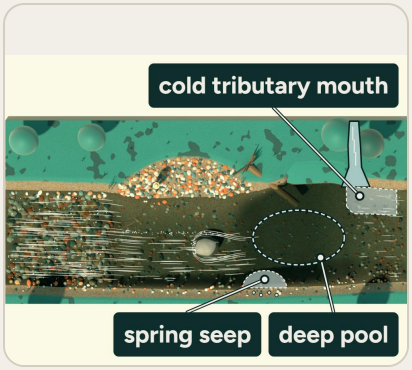
WHERE ARE TROUT WHEN THE RIVER IS HIGH, MUDDY OR WARM?

High water: adult trout mostly stay in the same stretch; look in the slow water along the edges and in pools with cover. Muddy water: trout can keep feeding but notice food from a shorter distance; fish near the bottom and put the fly close. Warm water: trout move toward colder water, such as tributary mouths, springs and seeps, and the cool bottom of some deep pools.







	HIGH WATER	MUDDY WATER	WARM WATER
WHERE TO LOOK	The slow water along both banks, and pools with cover such as wood and undercut banks. Studies disagree on which, so check both. At bankfull, try side channels and tributary mouths too.	No study has measured where adult trout hold in muddy water. If the river is also high, use the high-water places.	Cold tributary mouths, springs and seeps, and deep pools that stay cool at the bottom. Prefer cool, moving water to warm, still pools.
START WITH	**A nymph near the bottom (method: under an indicator, with split shot to get it down).**	**A nymph near the bottom. No study has tested fly color against water clarity for trout: carry light and dark.**	**Take the water temperature first. Whether to fish at all: flyfindr.co/learn/too-warm-for-trout.**
HOW TO FISH IT	Work the edges before the middle. If the river is still rising, expect a slower day; wait for it to settle if you can.	Put the fly close to where a trout would be and make more casts to each spot. Don't assume a streamer works better.	Fish crowded into cold water are stressed: catch fewer, keep fights short, keep them in the water.
WHAT STUDIES SAY	Rising flow put more insects in the drift within 24 hours of the start of rain (catch was not measured). Adult trout did not leave their reach in the floods that were tracked.	Trout saw prey from shorter distances as water got muddier: at 30 NTU, small wild rainbow trout reacted to food from 45% as far as at 4 to 6 NTU.	When rivers reached about 72 to 77 °F, trout moved into cold tributaries, springs and seeps, 5 to 16 °F cooler than the main flow.

Drawn on the Fly Findr model river at normal flow. The tributary, seep and circle sizes are drawn, not measured.
Illustration: Fly Findr

What the studies don't settle. Where trout go within the reach in high water (one study found pools with cover, another found runs). Where adult trout hold in muddy water. Which fly color works in muddy water. Whether trout feed on worms or stonefly nymphs in high water: no trout diet study was found. Where your river's Fly Findr page has a live gauge, set a **flow alert** to hear when the flow is back in range.