Gearing Up for Big Fish, Part 4 of 5: Landing Nets

When selecting your landing net for stillwater, consider the following four factors: size of landing basket, basket material, length of handle, and depth of the basket.

Basket Size: Having the right size net increases the odds of successfully landing a large trout. Compare the two nets below with the 30-inch ruler. Now imagine attempting to land a 30-inch trout in the smaller net. That would be an impossible task – even for the most determined and skilled angler. The larger and deeper basket in the larger net would be a better net to select for stillwater.



Even with the larger net, however, landing a fish that is 30 inches or longer will still present an exciting challenge. This is obvious in this video of me attempting to land a monster trout at Pronghorn Lake in Oregon.

Click for video: Need a bigger net

Basket Material: Nets made from rubber remove less of the coating of slime that protects the trout from parasites, bacteria and fungus. Maintaining the protective coating places less stress on the trout, increasing their survival rate.

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Fish caught on Vickie's Predator Minnow at Wildhorse Reservoir in NV



Vickie's Predator Minnow

The second benefit to a rubber net is that gills, fins and hooks are less likely to get caught in the netting material. This makes it easier to remove the hook while keeping the trout in the water. These factors allow for a quicker fish release and a higher survival rate.

Length of net handle:

If you are fishing out of a boat or float tube, having a longer handle makes it easier to guide the trout into the net without having to overextend your reach. Fish can easily be lost during landing because once a trout sees the net it will react, quickly bolting away. A longer handle provides the flexibility to make quick adjustments without leaning over to reach the trout and risk tipping over or potentially falling out of your boat. Add an elastic lanyard, attaching one end to your net and the other to the pontoon boat to reduce the chances that the net will be lost.

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Depth of the basket:

It is much easier to land a fish in a net with a deeper basket. If the basket depth is too shallow, catching a large trout is like trying to stuff a moving, oversized sleeping bag into a shoebox – it is virtually impossible.



A deeper basket also makes it easier to quickly remove the hook while the fish is still in the water. This causes less stress to the fish. The shorter the fight, the better chance the fish will survive upon release.

Summary:

I always gear up so that the tackle is prepared for any size fish. Having a large enough net with a deep basket is important. Don't take a chance of losing the fish of a lifetime due to a small net. Be kind to the fish and choose a basket made of rubber.

Be sure to read the other parts of this 5-part series on Gearing Up for Big Fish!

Part 1 of 5: Rods
Part 2 of 5: Line Selection
Part 3 of 5: Leaders and Tippets
Part 4 of 5: Landing Nets
Part 5 of 5: Putting It All Together

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