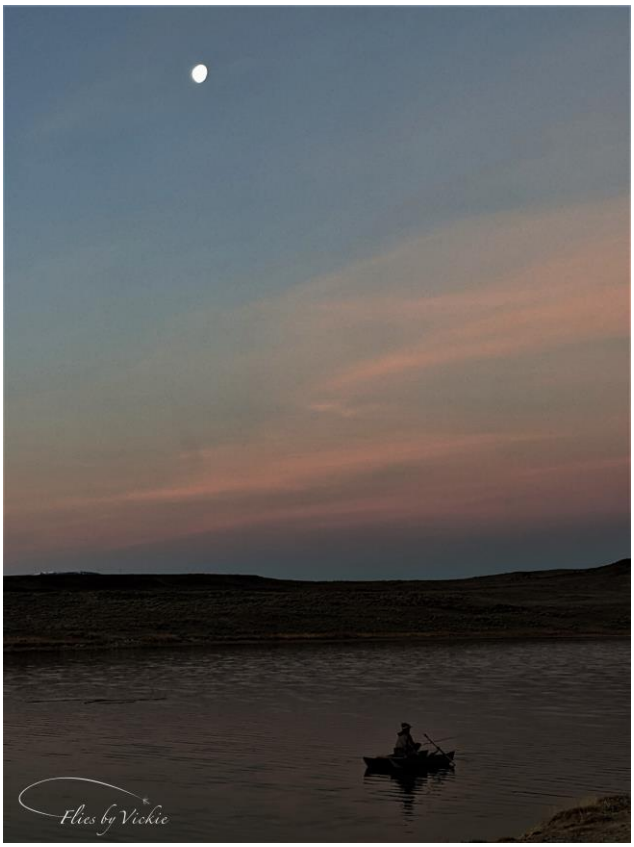
Taking Advantage of Wind and Low Light

Successfully catching trout requires not just knowing where they are feeding, but also *when*. That may sound like a simple proposition – that is until you understand what it might demand of you to be on the water when the fish are feeding.

Taking advantage of natural cover such as low light and windy conditions may help to increase your catch rate. This might include enduring blisteringly cold early mornings before the sun warms your fingers, getting blown by fierce winds to the other side of the lake, or watching your cast get buffeted by the wind and land in pile. Trout feed during these challenging conditions, and it can certainly test your resolve – especially when you might prefer more comfortable times to be on the water.

While there is no guarantee that trout will always show up along the shoreline at first light or feed during windy conditions, when natural cover is in place, trout are more likely to feed.

Fishing During Low Light Conditions



The first and last few hours of the day – before the sun hits the water when the lake is barely illuminated, and at the end of the day when the light is fading – are magical times to fish. Trout, especially larger trout, feel safer to venture into shallow shoreline areas to feed because low light provides a safe haven from predators.

When the sunlight hits the surface, larger trophy sized trout retreat to the protective cover of underwater structure or deeper depths. Here they stay until the bright light fades sufficiently and they feel safe enough to return to the shallows to feed at dusk.

Don't overlook the benefit of fishing at dusk. For example, after suffering a day of 20 mph north winds with gusts up to 30 mph and a barometer falling to 29.5 inches putting a dead stop to the bite, I retreated from the water and sought the comfort and safety of my truck.

I watched as an intrepid angler headed out in the fading evening light and landed over 10 fish in an hour. The barometer had not changed, and the north wind still buffeted his boat. What had changed was the low light conditions and he successfully landed trout until it was almost completely dark.



This dramatically reminded me the value of getting on the water before first light and saving some energy for fishing at dusk. Perhaps cocktail hour will have to wait, but you will be rewarded with more fish stories to share, maybe even one as surprising as this early morning catch!

Eight-inch crayfish caught before sunrise. Breakfast, anyone?

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As the water temperature continues to warm during the summer, focus on the shallow shoreline areas during low light to target trout hunting in those areas. Use streamer patterns such as leeches, buggers, and minnow patterns at first light before the morning sun moves the fish into deeper water. Use streamer patterns again at the end of the day when light is fading.

Once the sun has begun warming up the surface at approximately 9 AM, switch to a smaller pupa pattern to mimic emerging midges, mayflies, damsels, and caddis.

At dusk, larger trout will be back cruising the shallow shorelines, especially brown trout whose genetic advantage grants them better low light vision than other species.

Fishing During Windy Conditions



Windy Conditions at Hartland Lake

Over the years, I heard variations of this old sailor's fishing adage:

Wind from the east, fish bite the least
Wind from the west, fish bite the best
Wind from the north, few sailors set forth
Wind from the south blows bait in their mouth

Years of fishing have clarified how wind direction impacts the bite: A north wind usually brings in a cold front and causes a rapid drop in air temperature which negatively impacts the bite. A west wind usually occurs before a storm hits. Fish seem to sense the change just before a storm hits and, in my experience, trout will become active. South winds blow during warmups in the spring, summer, and fall, and will not negatively impact fishing.

Strong winds can be anathema to the angler by disrupting the cast and creating a challenge in maintaining the boat's position. The upside is the chop caused by winds provides trout cover encouraging them to actively hunt.

These four suggestions will help you navigate and take advantage of windy days:

1. **Keep the wind at your back**. This allows you to maintain control of your position and landing a fish which is doing everything it can to avoid your landing net.

2. **Position your boat close to shorelines directly buffeted by wind**. The waves dislodge aquatic food sources and fish will move in to take advantage of the smorgasbord.

3. **Cast perpendicular to the wind and avoid casting downwind**. Trout face into the wind as they inhale food blown downwind. By casting across the wind, more fish will see your fly and increase your chances for a hook up.

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4. **Use an intermediate sink tip or sinking line during windy conditions**. Wind will create a bow in floating lines and create slack. When there is slack it is difficult to feel the bite and set the hook.



Trout caught at Hartland Lake on [Vickie's Blood Red UV Midge]

Vickie Loftus

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