Don’t just mill around ...

Get X-Stream on Mill Creek

High in south-central Wyoming’s Sierra Madres, Mill Creek begins as a trickle through a boulder-strewn channel. As it follows gravity’s pull, it then winds through a broad meadow, slowly gathering additional water from seeps and springs before it pitches down a steep-sided canyon to its confluence with Big Sandstone Creek. The meadow section of the stream is easily accessible by vehicle, but few people are compelled to frequent the distal ends of this pristine stream.

The Fishery

Though relatively small, this stream provides important habitat to native Colorado River cutthroat trout. Though the genetic purity of this species has been compromised by hybridization with non-native rainbow trout in some streams, the fish in Mill Creek exhibit nearly pure genetic characteristics.

Flow in this stream is especially prone to the effects of drought, and several years ago, it was feared that low flows might have seriously depleted the population.

However, recent investigations documented the resiliency of these fish that have come back strong in recent years. This ability to persist in the face of severe drought is due entirely to the presence of beavers that provide critical refuge for “seed stock” fish in their ponds. Though abundant, cutthroats here seldom reach more than 10 inches in length. But true to their reputation, they are among the most eager of all trout species to bite about any fly or bait you want to fish with.

Brook trout are also present, and in the event you wish to harvest any trout, bear in mind you may harvest up to six fish, but only one may be a cutthroat trout.

How to get there

From the town of Encampment, go approximately 23 miles west on Wyoming Highway 70 to the junction of Forest Service road 801 (the Deep Creek Road). Turn north and go about 6 miles to the junction of Forest Service road 871. This road is not clearly numbered or marked, so you need to pay close attention. Turn right on this graded road (heading northeast) and go about 3 miles. When you come to a “T,” turn left and you’ll cross the stream in about a quarter of a mile. A bit further on this road is a gate that marks the beginning of a small parcel of private land where public access is not allowed.

To get more information about instream flow, visit the Wyoming Game and Fish Department’s Web site at http://gf.state.wy.us/fish/instreamflow