

## BIG HOLE RIVER MONTANA



## BIG BLACKFOOT RIVER MONTANA



## CLARK FORK RIVER MONTANA



"IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT CATCHING FISH. IT'S ABOUT BEING IN BEAUTIFUL PLACES WHERE FISH ARE CAUGHT."  
-UNKNOWN

The following morning was sunny and I headed for the Big Blackfoot River east of Missoula on Highway 200. The morning sun had all of the Tamaracks in brilliant gold. I couldn't help but notice the car thermometer falling as I got closer to the river. It registered 24° by the time I stopped to suit-up at the first hole along Nine Mile Prairie Road. At least the wind wasn't blowing. Areas of still water along the riverbank were frozen solid. Trees, rock outcroppings and tall willows along the riverbanks prevent one from making back casts along most of the river. I had to "roll-cast" most of the time. This type of cast is difficult at best to perform accurately. Dozens of casts and a box full of flies produced the same results from the day before. I usually catch fish. Again, I found myself alone on a river surrounded by scenery that left me in constant awe. By noon, I decided to tie on a fly that— compared to the other "bug" looking patterns in my fly box— looked more like a dead chicken. It was heavy and difficult to cast. And... it produced a beautiful Native Rainbow about 12" long. I caught my fish! After releasing him, I unsuited and continued driving west along Highway 200 along the Clark Fork River northwest of Missoula. The Clark is big water... best fished from a boat. The scenery— simply outstanding. Again, there were no other fisherman sighted along the drive that paralleled one of the biggest drainages in the Northern Rockies. What I did see was a part of the Universe during a setting sun that let me know just how privileged I was to be there at that moment. I felt very alive and for the first time in decades, knew I was home. I am forever connected to Montana.