



As soon as we got the boxes of [June's Signature Tyer, Gunnar Brammer's flies](#) in the office we knew we had to get on the water and test those bad boys. The giant flies, some longer than 12 inches, were big, pushy and full of flash, so we knew they'd be the perfect flies for chasing down big northern pike on the Housatonic River with our good buddy Harry Desmond of [Berkshire Rivers Fly Fishing](#).

After loading up Desmond's drift boat and sliding it down the steep banks of the Housatonic, tucked in the sleepy town of Great Barrington, MA, we started rigging up the big Predator flies for action. We were still sorting out gear and just lazily floating across the river to the opposite bank of the put in, not 20 feet away, when I cast next to a downed tree branch. A northern pike exploded on the perch imitation, straight up into the air and I set the hook, still not sure I really had a fish on after only my second cast.

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Gunnar Brammer's big Predator flies will catch you fish as long as your leg.

It was a mad scramble to try and find the net and fight the fish without any warning, but I managed to get it beside the boat. Brian Runnals, Postfly's founder, had the net ready when the pike made one last ditch run underneath the boat. Before I could even react the line came tight between my fingers and the rod handle and the steel leader popped from the fly line. I didn't even have time to try and get the line to the reel before it was gone. It was either going to be an epic day or we were truly screwed.

We did eventually hook up, but not before we were forced to work for it. We were grinding it out in the hot sun on a bluebird day, looking for signs of fish in the river that kept changing from gin clear to a muddy mess, depending on what the banks were like. For the most part though the river was heavily stained, with only a foot of visibility near the surface, which



Desmond said was perfect for chasing pike with big, flashy streamers.

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It's not the size of the fish in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the fish--this guy packed a punch.

A few session IPAs from Desmond's cooler helped to make the midday fish-less lull pass quick enough. After a quick lunch break anchored up before a bridge, we sat in the shade and compared sun burns. Desmond pointed to a deep pool on the other side of the bridge and said that was the spot we were going to hook up with a good fish. "Sometimes I skip the whole first section of river just to fish that hole," he told us, downing the last of his sandwich and pulling up the anchor. It was time for battle.

Fly Fishing For Pike With Berkshire Rivers Fly Fishing

As we were drifting up to the spot we saw a flash from a massive northern, but Desmond assured us there would be more than one big fish down there. "They really stack up in here," he said, "we can probably move two or three fish." Two casts later and I set the hook on something massive. This fish was so big that when I set the hook I thought it was a log, because it just didn't move. Once it shook its head and made its first run, then I knew I was into something good.

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Apparently Gunnar Brammer's pike flies are so good even smallmouth bass can't get enough.

The bad karma ruined me again though, because as I started to



get the fish onto the reel it made another run. I was trying to get a hand on the reel to slow the fish down, but the mixture of line in the air and sheer panic made me break off-again. Runnals had just tied on a different fly and cast into the same spot two minutes later, after I stopped shaking. Right away he was into a good fish. "How much do you want to bet this fish has your fly in his mouth, Ben," Runnals said. As great as I thought that'd be, I secretly hoped it wouldn't be-of course, there it was once we got the fish in the net. That fish (pictured at the top of the page) was a true giant, the kind of fish that you talk about for years, and it was almost mine. "Thanks for wearing him out a little first, Ben," said Runnals after the fish swam away. Hilarious.

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Who could fish for trout when even a small northern pike is larger and fights harder?

Even though I didn't get the pike of my dreams, I did get some nice smallmouth and one small pike. Even the little guys pack a big punch, especially on the fly. Some think fishing these big flies makes you give up the smaller bites for just a few big fish, but they're wrong. The small pike were hitting these big flies just as fiercely as the big boys. So were the bass; if they missed the fly they'd come back again and again until they could slam it.

If you've cut your teeth on smaller bass or trout and you're looking to add a little more excitement to your fly fishing life, then chasing big northern pike or musky might be your next addiction. Like other trophy hunting endeavors though, fly fishing for esox usually means smaller numbers for bigger fish. Just take one look at the giant Runnals caught at the top of the page though, and you'll probably be as eager to spend a day chasing these predators as we were. Who wouldn't want to hook into a dinosaur like that?



Convinced you need to fish for northern pike and musky as soon as possible? Good, [pick up a box of June's Signature Tyer, Gunnar Brammer's flies right here](#). Want to fish with Harry Desmond? Check out his site [Berkshire Rivers Fly Fishing](#) and book a trip.



