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To a stream angler, the month of May brings the chance to finally get into the water and have a chance at the fish species that have been lying near the streambed, dormant throughout the winter. Fish are an exothermic organism, meaning their internal temperatures are regulated by their environment. As we know, a fish's environment is water. As April showers bring warm runoff into our streams, the fish species that inhabit them come to life. And after such a long period of lethargy, you better believe that they are hungry.

An example of this wonderful and perennial aquatic awakening occurred to me at a place not too far from home, for us Alum Creek aficionados. It was in May of 2007 when I had my most memorable experience with this waterway I had adored and explored for over a decade. I relentlessly tossed my Rapala Husky Jerk (a suspending minnow-like lure) into the babbling tail waters of the broken remnants of Old Refugee Rd. near Three Creeks Park. After already landing a number of smallmouth and largemouth bass, longnose gar, white crappie, and a half dozen reservoir escapee saugeye (Sauger x Walleye Hybrid) in the same general area, I was feeling quite optimistic for continued action.

While reminiscing aloud with a fellow Alum angler, only a strand of my concentration was directed towards what lurked and stalked around my submerged lure. As I gave the lure an erratic jerk to simulate a dying baitfish, my motion is met by a resistance of greater strength, almost jerking the rod from my hand. Big fish on!

Although immediately excited and feeling an adrenaline rush, I attempted to deescalate the initial excitement by convincing myself and my friend that the fish was probably a carp, a large fish species common within Alum Creek. As much as I wanted to keep thinking this goliath was just a carp, the way it fought was not similar to the way the hundreds of carp I had caught prior to now. The fish then leaped into the air, thrashing about in its predatory magnificence. I now knew that I had hooked into an Ohio angler's greatest reward, the Muskie (Ohio Muskellunge). After some a series of breathtaking leaps, this state threatened species was landed, photographed, and released back into Alum to continue its existence.

Experiences like this can be enjoyed along Alum Creek throughout many of its lower stretches with only basic fishing knowledge. Alum Creek holds healthy populations of smallmouth/largemouth bass, rockbass, sunfish, white bass, freshwater drum, longnose gar, saugeye, sauger, carp, various catfish, and even more! Here are a brief series of recommendations for Alum Creek enthusiasts who want to take their stream experiences to the next level by fishing:

1. Don't be afraid to get your feet wet! Wading during the late spring and summer is the most productive way to catch fish in Alum Creek. Make

sure the water is at low-flow, as a swift stream is dangerous to navigate.

2. Use small lures that replicate minnows, crayfish, worms, or insects. Throw these baits in deep water areas adjacent to swift water, or in pools in between riffles. If the water is too deep to wade in, throw a line into it and give your lure a lifelike appearance by always keeping it moving. Most sport fish species reside near the bottom, so keep those baits deep!
3. For beginners, use live bait! Throw a small hook with a chunk of night crawler or a live minnow into deep water very close to cover. I have had a lot of success catching sunfish, bass, and carp with this method. Try to keep the hook hidden with the bait you are using. The glare of bare metal scares fish!
4. If you are having success with smaller fish, but want something bigger, use a bigger lure! I recommend the two hook variety of a Rapala Husky Jerk or an Original Floating Rapala lure. Cast these baits in deep areas adjacent to swift moving water, or deep pools.
5. Location, location. As mentioned, the less impacted stretches of stream SOUTH of Bexley and all the way to the confluence produce the most species of gamefish. Three Creeks Metro Park constitutes much of this area, with great access by bike path. The other section I recommend begins at Ohio Dominican University all the way to Alum Creek Dam in Delaware County. Both stretches are less impacted by human effects than the section in the highly urbanized Bexley region. Contrarily, with the habitat restoration efforts by the removal of the two lowhead dams at Wolfe and Nelson Parks, the Bexley section will be the next premier spot for fishing Alum Creek. I speculate that this area will be as good, if not better than stretches to the north and south.

Most importantly, fishing is a challenge for even seasoned veterans. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again! Fishing is free for children 15 and under. For adults, the state of Ohio license fee is \$19. For further exemption listings, refer to <http://www.ohiodnr.com>.