

Here we go again! A guy catches a really big trout and a picture posted online to document the event becomes part of a phenomenon I've discussed before on this site. Sometimes, a picture is taken in such a way to make a fish look bigger than it is. Often, this isn't done intentionally by the angler or guide, or whoever is in charge of the picture taking. Some images just create false impressions.

The underlying causes for this are numerous. Small people make big fish look bigger, for instance. Holding fish away from the body does the same thing. The angle with which the fish is held in relation to the lens of the camera affects the image profoundly too.

More importantly, when one of these pictures that make the fish look gigantonomous appears online, a frenzy of sorts develops in the commentary about the image. Inevitably, the frenetic interest over the image causes a kind of myth to develop. The fish begins to "grow", as claims are tossed around like frisbees at the beach.

Recently, this whole cycle of events played out again, after guide Brett Sweeny's customer caught a 30 1/4", 10 1/4 pound trout. One of the pictures posted of the two men and "their" fish makes the fish look freakishly huge. Almost immediately, people on the internet began speculating about various things, mostly about the size of the trout. As of a couple of days ago, Chester Moore of Texas Fish and Game said the fish was a 40 incher! He also mistakenly listed the Laguna Madre as the bay where the fish was caught.

I find it incredible that someone with as much experience with the fishing community as Mr. Moore would fall prey to playing such a silly game this way. Looking at a picture and estimating the size of the fish in the image is tricky business indeed. Taking information about the location where a monster trout was caught as the gospel and repeating it in print is just plain stupid.

I'd like to give Captain Sweeny some credit here. He's gone out of his way to discredit the people making ridiculous claims about the fish in the referenced picture. Of course, his efforts have done little to settle the frenzy. People don't really want to know the truth; the myth is much more interesting.

What troubles me is this. A 10 pound trout is a rare fish, an exceptional fish, one whose dimensions need no exaggeration to make them impressive. However, when these idiots stir up the stupid soup, they essentially diminish the importance of the catch. "Oh, it's ONLY a 10," they might say when confronted with the truth. Really people, ONLY a 10? Get a grip.

I called Brett personally to get his permission to discuss this issue in this format. I am impressed by his attitude about the whole thing. He sees it the same way I do. We should all "keep it real" when posting lengths and weights and should avoid making ridiculous claims about other people's fish. Brett and I are perhaps in the minority in the guide business in this regard.

Many people out there think "If I am not stretching the truth a little, I'm not trying hard enough." That potentially puts people like Brett and me who post things honestly at a disadvantage, making it appear that our accomplishments are less than what they really are. Doesn't matter to guys like us, in the end--we will keep telling the truth about the fish we catch. And, sometimes, we will have to correct the throngs of idiots who make up stuff about

those same fish and make bogus claims on the internet. It's part of the deal as we see it.

Pictures like this one are like logs in a raging river. The roll up and appear at the surface for a while, then turn and disappear into the depths again, only to resurface later, further downstream. The furious hyperbole related to this image will die down in the near future, but it will also pick up steam again as months and years pass. Mark my words, some of you will be texted this picture in years to come. Along with the image will be claims about where, when and by whom the fish was caught, and most of those claims will be false!

Check out these two pics below....and guess which fish was bigger, if you don't already know. But please don't start a firestorm of false chatter on the internet about one of them being a "pending state record" at 39 inches, because it just ain't so!



For the record, the fish on the right is bigger....32", 9.25 pounds....the fish on the left, 28", 9 pounds....