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FLY FISHING

July/August 2019

Incredible fly-fishing destinations



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Chartreuse Tiger



Masters at the Bench

Norm Domagala

EXPOSURE

Washington's Yakima River













Cover: A perfect day on the Bull River, near Fernie, British Columbia Photo by: David Lambroughton



Orange Fusion Page 10

Northwest FLY FISHING

Volume 21, Number 4 • July/August 2019

Incredible fly-fishing destinations

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Sometimes to save a river, you have to buy it.

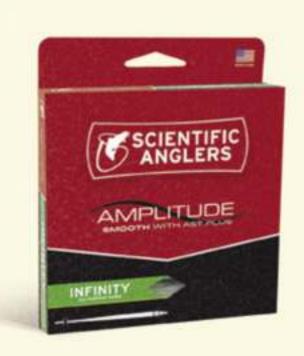
Western Rivers Conservancy focuses on one thing: buying land along the West's greatest streams. We do it for the sake of fish, for the benefit of wildlife and to improve angler access along our most treasured waters. Most of all, we do it for the river.

One of those rivers is the Methow (above), which flows through Washington's spectacular Methow Valley. WRC is working to protect habitat, open space and public access on two Methow Valley streams. These are among 25 active WRC projects on rivers around the West. Please support our efforts at westernrivers.org.









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From the Editor

If You Can't Beat 'Em ...



don't like hot weather. Not at all. Give me 70 degrees and a light cloud cover and I'm happy.

But then comes summer proper, and 70-degree days are memories for two or three months. I deal with heat by using the bookends of the days or escaping to rivers and mountains and beaches. So when my buddy Dan suggested we team up for a mid-July fishing trip to a remote canyon-bound reservoir in some of the hottest country around these parts, I was torn. The temperature in that canyon would hit three digits, but that heat would warm the water enough to spur smallmouth bass and channel cats into feeding frenzies.

I don't get to fish with Dan very often. But as I said, I don't like hot weather. In the end, the promise of good times, with just the two of us camped out on a sandbar and hammering bass, won the day, and off we went. After a seven-hour drive, we descended the gravel road into the canyon late at night. We'd both fished there before, but never together, and as we drove in the inky darkness, we took turns touting our favorite campsites.

In the dark, though, neither of us could locate that little cove along a 20mile stretch of road running along the reservoir, so when we knew we'd driven too far south, we just pulled over in a wide spot, assembled two camp cots, and hit the hay. In the morning we retraced our route along the reservoir, searching for my favorite campsite or Dan's. We'd decide which was better after looking

Turned out we'd been talking about the same spot.

We erected a canopy, anchored it against the wind, and assembled fishing gear. Dan is a gear fisherman; he has nothing against fly fishing. I'm a fly fisherman who has nothing against gear fishing. We both offered to swap gear, but the problem was that the fishing was just too good to take time out to learn new things. We hammered the bass, Dan fishing by kayak and me by float tube. Just as the triple-digit heat threatened to rear its ugly head that first day, clouds rolled in, dark and ominous; thunder echoed across the mountainsides; the skies opened up in a deluge. Ninety-plus degrees instantly turned to 80-ish. We

sat out the storm, then went back to work on the bass.

It's about time to plan my next trip with Dan to the exact same place. Even if it's 105 this time, I can live with that. I got lucky last year, so no need to use up my mojo hoping for more of the same-other than the hungry, hyperactive bass, of course.

John Shewey

Editor in Chief

Northwest

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They say you can't buy soul

Trout Steelhead Saltwater Spey

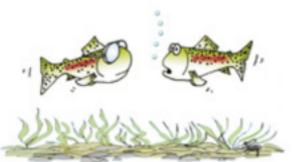
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July/August 2019 Contest





May/June 2019 Finalists

- "Cool shades." Rober Nethaway, Roseville, California
- "It's no wonder you got hooked so many times. You needed glasses!"
 Mike Chiodo, Weedville, Pennsylvania
- "OMG—is it midge season already?" Quentin Keefe, Conway, New Hampshire



March/April 2019 Winner!



"My ex-wife also wants half of the fish I catch."

Del Henry, Milton-Freewater, Oregon

ach issue we present a Gene Trump cartoon in need of a caption. In return, we ask that you, the readers, submit captions online from which we choose finalists. Caption submissions for this issue's contest must be received online by July 10, 2019. Above left are the finalists for the May/June 2019 contest; please go online to vote for your favorite. The winner will be announced in the September/October 2019 issue and will receive a one-year subscription or extension to the magazine of their choice. The March/April 2019 winner appears above right.

To cast your caption, go to

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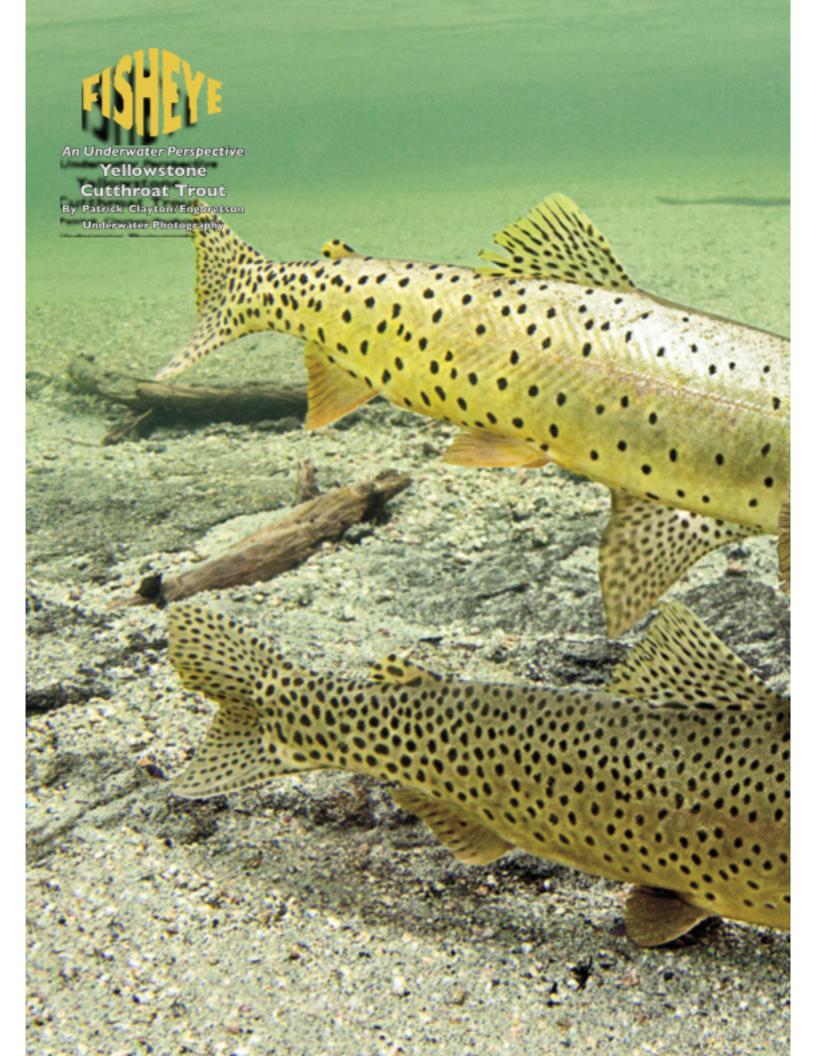


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Masters at the Bench

Norm Domagala/By Glenn Zinkus



eart is poured into every fly spun at the vise of Norm Domagala.

This congenial Oregonian creates innovative patterns that are fish-catching craftwork, derived from trials and observations on the water over many seasons. His inquisitive nature, coupled with a flair for finding original ways to use materials, provides Domagala, his friends, and his clients with an ever-expanding arsenal of deadly flies.

In the 1970s, Domagala serendipitously settled on a rented 50-acre farm in Lobster Valley, Oregon. At the time, Lobster Valley was an angler's utopia, and Domagala immersed himself in the opportunities. His angling world was anadromous-fish-centric during his early fishing days, when he frequented the Alsea River tributaries, including Lobster Creek, as well as Five Rivers, and the North and South Forks of the Alsea. He fished with spinners and jigs, frequenting Eugene-area fly shops to pick up the marabou he used to make his jigs. Allen Klein, who later opened Homewaters Fly Shop in Eugene, eventually told Domagala that he should go beyond tying jigs and start tying flies; after all, Klein suggested, the natural progression from spinning jigs is tying flies. Domagala took that advice and hit the ground running, tying flies for the prolific runs of chinook and coho salmon, and steelhead, in the Alsea system; his backyard streams were proving grounds where he could observe fish and strive to refine his fly patterns.

He soon began floating the coastal rivers and creeks in a neighbor's wooden McKenzie-style drift boat. He and his angling buddy floated the well-known rivers, such as the Alsea and Siletz, and also explored smaller, lesser-known streams with runs of prized wild steelhead. Again he branched out, and by the 1980s was towing that boat to the big-trout lakes of central Oregon: Hosmer Lake, Crane Prairie Reservoir, Wickiup Reservoir, and East Lake. The stillwater action engendered creating, testing, and refining a litany of lake

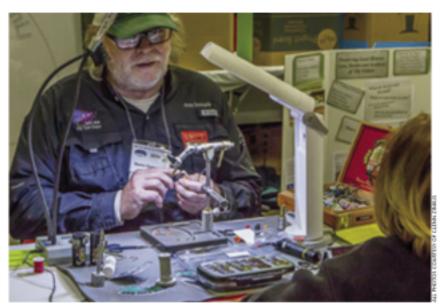
Domagala further broadened his fishing horizons in the 1990s with sojourns in British Columbia. The Nitinat River on the west coast of Vancouver Island became an angling laboratory where he continued to adjust his salmon patterns. The British Columbia angling opportunities became addictive, and Domagala soon began fishing the lakes in the Kamloops region. He established his base camp at Dragon Lake, and to this day returns each season to Dragon and nearby lakes.

Having gravitated toward stillwater fishing, Domagala fondly remembers meeting esteemed central Oregon still-water expert and fly tier Jim Cope. On one of the lakes in that region, Domagala was struggling to find a fly the fish would eat. Cope came to his rescue, paddling over in a float tube and offering Domagala a few deadly patterns, including a JC Emerger, a deer-hair/









As events such as the Norshwest Fly Tyer & Fly Fishing Expo, held in Albany, Oregon, Norm Domagala always attracts a crowd. Always congenial, he enjoys sharing his fly-tying techniques and ideas about pattern design (above). Domagala especially enjoys plying the beautiful trout-filled lakes of the Century Drive region in central Oregon. These fertile waters are ideal for testing his latest still-water patterns (below).

rabbit-hair concoction that is elegantly simple, and deadly on mountain lakes.

Some years later I enjoyed watching Domagala pay it forward with a similar act of generosity when he gave another angler a small selection of flies that seemed to be the only patterns taking large Crane Prairie rainbows that day. I've never forgotten how astonished this stranger was, no doubt because successful flies and techniques tend to be guarded secrets among lake-fishing cultists (and beyond).

After their chance meeting on a Cascade lake, Domagala attended one of Cope's tying classes and learned the finer points of still-water fly tying. This included Cope's style of dressing ultra-thin bodies on flies such as damselfly nymphs and patterns to mimic each stage in the relevant life cycle of the Callibaetis mayfly. Domagala, who uses paintbrush bristles dyed in shades of olive, tan, and dun as a primary material to tie Cope-style still-water nymphs, insists that "the Cope-style damselfly nymphs are the most effective that I tie to this day."

Oregon is richly blessed with fly-tying and angling talent, and in those early years of his fly tying, Domagala was also befriended—and influenced—by Bob Borden, founder of Hareline Dubbin. The two began fishing together and have logged many days, not only in British Columbia, but also at the mouth of Oregon's Rogue River in pursuit of fresh-from-the-sea chinook. Domagala also immersed himself in tying classes taught by such well-known experts as Buz Buszek Fly Tying Award winner Stan Walters, author Dave Hughes, and the late steelhead angling icon Alec Jackson. "I got to learn and refine my techniques with some really great teachers," Domagala says.

In the 1990s, Domagala became a fixture at the Northwest Fly Tyer & Fly Fishing Expo, which at that time was held in Eugene (it is now held in Albany). There he found an ideal venue for teaching fly tying and swapping ideas with other tiers. He soon branched out as a demonstration fly tier and fly-tying instructor at other shows, including the Fly Fishers International conclave held each summer.

Ever the cerebral tinkerer, Domagala continues to refine his patterns and create new flies based on observations in the field and input from other anglers near and far. Some of his still-water flies have vibrantly colored accents. He borrowed that idea from his salmon and steelhead flies, and finds them to be especially effective at times. His European fly customers have also influenced his tying, especially in regard to blending synthetic and natural materials and adding color to each fly.

Scandinavian tiers in particular, he points out, use more color in their flies. Perhaps more importantly, Domagala keenly observes life happening around him. Last year, at Dragon Lake, he watched an orange worm crawling up his shirt. Based on that, he whipped up an orange midge-style pattern with an orange bead, orange wire, and tan thread, and the new fly quickly became the rock star of the trip. He later found more of those worms around the lakeshore and in his boat, and deduced that they were falling out of bankside cottonwood trees.

Domagala has been a pattern designer for Montana Fly Company nearly since the company's founding, and is a member of the Whiting Pro Team. He also sells his

flies to individuals and fly shops (email him at fshrnorm@peak. org). Decades after he completed his first fly, Domagala now ties more flies than ever, and keeps thinking up improvements every time he sits in front of the vise. He is motivated by his desire for constant improvement and inspired by the many people who taught him.



Glenn Zinkus is a freelance writer and photographer who lives in Oregon.



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Fish Food

Terrestrial Beetles:

Mother Nature's Cleanup Crew/By Don Roberts

eetles are bigger than us. Collectively speaking, that is. When it comes to Coleoptera versus primates—namely, Homo sapiens—the amassed weight of all the beetles on earth far exceeds that of humanity, all 7.7 billion of us.

So if there are so many beetles, why don't we see more of them (notwithstanding those outliers that somehow always manage to invade the garage, scuttling across the concrete like miniature black tanks)?

Essentially, it boils down to a "trust me, they're here" proposition. Although beetles, that ungainly group of



insects that forms the order Coleoptera, occur in every conceivable habitat, from silt-filled crevices in coastal rocks to clumps of thyme on windswept mountainsides, they tend to operate on the down and low, dwelling for the most part in the shadows, in the dank underworld. Turn over a rock or a log or, well, a carcass, and you'll find them. Beetles do everything—from predation to sanitation—and reside everywhere, from water, trees, and soil to algae and apartment complexes. The ectoparasitic beaver beetle (Platypsyllus castoris), for example, thrives in the pelts of beavers, gnawing a living from dead skin and sebaceous secretions.

One shudders to think what writhing Tim Burtonesque nightmare would ensue should every beetle on the planet suddenly and simultaneously reveal itself—think of the unveiling of the Oogie Boogie Man on a global scale. Of course, given their cryptic blend-in lifestyle, that's not about to happen.

Ironically, there was a time when finding and capturing beetles turned into something of an art form. During the Victorian era, collecting and classifying beetles—trapping them in glass vials and pinning them to corkboards—rose to the level of ultimate pursuit among amateur entomologists. Many of these self-appointed naturalists, particularly those from wealthy families, were inexorably drawn to the darkly concealed bounty of the Amazon and other far-flung rain forests. Many did not return, having fallen victim to disease, parasites, cannibals, and epicurean anacondas. Early on, Charles Darwin drew inspiration from the inherent vastness and variety of Coleoptera, the largest of all orders, with (currently) some 400,000 recognized species and who knows how many yet to be discovered. As a young man attending Cambridge, Darwin often cut classes to collect beetles. He was known to resort to holding a live beetle in his mouth while both hands were otherwise occupied—with other bugs of course.

Noted entomologist Richard Jones, author of the book *Beetles*, makes no bones regarding the scientific significance of Coleoptera. He wryly observes, "If an alien civilization arrived on Earth and, with limited time and limited resources,



wanted to understand how life here operates, all it need do is to study beetles and dismiss everything else as a sampling error. Beetles are, without any doubt, the most important organism on the planet."

Despite the scientific community's esteem for the critters, beetles get a bum rap because so many of their species are phytophagous (plant eaters). To ardent gardeners and agriculturists, it sometimes seems that there's a voracious beetle (usually their larvae) lying in wait, greedy mandibles agape, ready to devour the crop, whatever the crop may be, from fruits, nuts, grains, and vegetables to Aunt Jenny's lilies. True, there are plenty of bad hombres—the boll weevil, bark beetle, potato bug, and, the scourge of the West, the mountain pine beetle spring to mind—but on balance beetles are beneficial, including untold species of specialized predator beetles that attack their pestiferous cousins, and the legions of beetles that lay waste to waste. Were it not for the ubiquitous housecleaning species of beetles, life would be untenable—sheer hell on earth, with rot, decay, and excrement everywhere. Simply put, there are not enough bulldozers on the planet to equal even a fraction of the disposal power of beetles. Not to mention that the beetles' work never ends up festering in landfills.

Now to the crux of the story: which beetles do trout see? All kinds, it turns out. Some species of terrestrial beetles spend their entire lives in shoreline and floodplain habitats and therefore provide a reliable food source for fish, especially during the summer months when elevated temperatures bolster insect mobility. But many of the literally hundreds of beetle species from far afield may become trout fodder at any given moment. The name of the beetles' taxonomic order says it all. The identifying term Coleoptera was derived from the Greek word koleos, referring to hardshell forewings, and pteron, meaning wing. Equipped with both armor and wings, beetles are inveterate wayfarers, taking to the skies to find food, habitat, or mates.

Paradoxically, owing to skimpy wings in proportion to body size, beetles tend to be clumsy flyers, resulting in a lot of misdirection and mishap. Water, of course, is anathema to airborne terrestrials. As accidental tourists in trout country, beetles become meals on a rather intermittent basis-more like tapas than feast. Consequently, trout rarely key solely on beetles. One notable exception occurs in southern Chile and Argentina, where the Cantaria, a species of stag beetle, often outshines conventional aquatic insect hatches as the primary trout staple. For the most part, though, don't expect to see beetles crashlanding on the water or, post-crash, drifting by. Just recognize that they're always around and that trout will be looking for them; from their low-lying



Unsinkabeetle Hy courtesy of Falling Mill



Mohawk Beetle By couriesy of Umpqua



June Bug Beetle By courtesy of Baire's



Tim's Beetle

By courtery of Umpqui



Pink Target Beetle



Seu's Bionic Gnane
By courtesy of Bainy's



Whitlock's Bright Spot Beetle Fly courtesy of Bairs/s



J's Regal Beesle



Nick's Hi-Viz Beetle Fly courtesy of Rainy's

vantage, fish see beetles in the surface film far better than we do. Also keep in mind that beetles offer a protein-dense, chewy morsel, which trout dearly love.

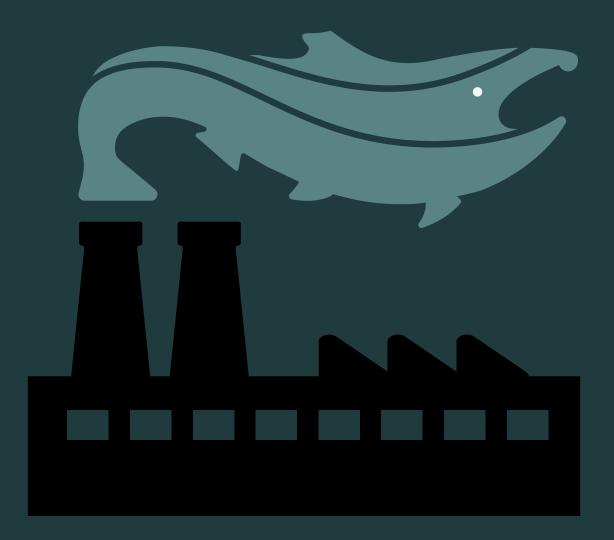
The beauty of beetles, as concerns anglers and fly tiers, lies in their morphology. Although specific organs and appendages vary considerably, the general anatomy of beetles abides by a certain predictable uniformity-a bulbous appearance. Like all insects, beetle bodies are composed of three sections: head, thorax, and abdomen. Yet the immediate impression, even without squinting, is of a bulbous creature with a roundish or oblong-ish silhouette. This makes life easy for the fly tier. Simply fold over the right color (usually black) and the right-size strip of foam, lash it to a hook, and you're there. Of course, you may opt to get fancy by adding legs and antennae or a ritzy underbody, peacock herl being the magical, go-to material.

Perhaps the most germane question regarding beetle imitations concerns size: whether to go large-Chernobyl Ant (not really an ant), Turck Tarantula (not really a tarantula), or Cantaria Beetle (really a beetle)—or whether to hew to the smaller, more-prevalent-innature beetles—Rainy's Beetle, Steeves's Japanese Beetle, Rosenbauer's Parachute Beetle, Cathy's Super Beetle, and just plain old unsigned foam beetles. Rubber legs, though not always called for, lend stability, like outriggers, in heavy current, and some movement, albeit twitchy, in soft current. Because beetle imitations can be devilishly difficult to track, a bright-colored post of some sort should be deemed mandatory.

Two centuries ago, while speaking to self-reliance and the value of holding up one's head, poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson admonished that if you spent your whole life walking around looking down you might come out 10 cents ahead. But good old RWE neglected to mention that you'd also see a lot more beetles.

Oregon resident and itinerant fly angler Don Roberts is a frequent contributor to Northwest Fly Fishing, Southwest Fly Fishing, and Eastern Fly Fishing magazines.

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Conservation

Protecting Montana's Paradise Valley

By Jeff Erickson

o piece of Montana's spectacular geography is more aptly named than Paradise Valley, hugging the Yellowstone River between Livingston and Gardiner, north of Yellowstone National Park. A prime reach of the Yellowstone winds between ancient Absaroka Range volcanoes and the soaring Gallatin Range, where formative geological forces left valuable minerals, mined periodically since the 19th century.

Two new mining proposals sparked controversy, resulting in unusually concerted opposition. Leading the fight, more than 300 area business united to form the Yellowstone Gateway Business Coalition. Tourism and fishing—potentially threatened by new mining—are critical to the local economy. In recent years, Park County benefited from approximately \$200 million in nonresident tourism spending; fishing alone generates \$70 million.

One mining area is located between Emigrant Peak and the Chico Hot Springs Resort below. Mining claims line Emigrant Creek, an important Yellowstone tributary. Gold prospecting began in 1863, and in 1941 the world's second-largest dredge worked Emigrant Gulch, leaving massive tailing piles. The Jardine claims, another historic mining district, are tucked above Gardiner just few miles from Yellowstone. Gold was discovered along Bear Creek in 1866, with large-scale mining beginning in 1884 and activity ebbing and flowing before grinding to a halt in 1996.

New mine contamination could affect more than 100 miles of excellent trout water downstream. Heavy truck traffic on narrow roads is another concern. Both sites are surrounded by the Custer Gallatin National Forest; expansion onto and beneath public lands would likely



help both projects, wherein lies part of the controversy. The new mining proposals generated concerns from local businesses, landowners, fly-fishing guides, and conservation groups.

The strong, organized, multifaceted opposition eventually caught the attention of Montana politicians on both sides of the aisle. As 2018 ended, the Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act—protecting 30,000 acres of public land surrounding the private claims—was narrowly detained in the Senate, part of a larger bill including reauthorization of the popular Land and Water Conservation Fund. The bill subsequently passed Congress in early 2019 and was signed into law by the president.

As Senator Jon Tester said in support of the legislation, "It's a bipartisan bill. It's a bill that will help support the hundreds of small businesses in the Paradise Valley ... and we need to keep it paradise by preventing large-scale mining in the region."

Or, as all the yellow yard signs sprouting like valley poppies declare, "Yellowstone is more valuable than gold."



Around the Northwest

News, Views, and Piscatorial Pursuits

Yellowstone Lake, WY

By Sean Jansen

Ilfur wafts through the air and creeps into my nostrils. The geyser a quarter mile away shoots steam several yards into the sky. Footprints left by bear, elk, geese, and fellow tourists line the beach adjacent to where I stand. The wind makes the water slap the shoreline; I'm lucky, because some days the waves could almost be surfed. The far eastern shore is miles away, and the only thing on my mind is trout—big trout—not the fact that I am in the caldera of a sleeping "supervolcano." (According to the U.S. Geological Survey, "the term 'supervolcano' implies a volcanic center that has had an eruption of magnitude 8 on the Volcano Explosivity Index ..., meaning that at one point in time it erupted more than ... 240 cubic miles ... of material."

I wasn't the first to stand on the shore of this lake, of course. Native Americans inhabited the area for thousands of years before European settlers even imagined something like Yellowstone National Park, let alone a lake with 110 miles of shoreline and an abundance of wildlife and geysers.

Yellowstone Lake, deep within the park, is a sanctuary for wildlife: black and grizzly bears, elk, deer, moose, porcupines, myriad birds, and many oth-

ers. Also trout. Yellowstone Lake is home to genetically pure Yellowstone cutthroat trout. Yet these precious natives are being threatened by lake trout illegally introduced to a nearby lake within the park boundaries in the early 1980s.

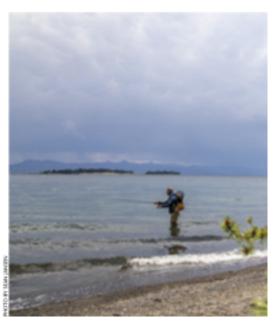
In 1994, lake trout were discovered in Yellowstone Lake. National Park Service (NPS) biologists soon realized the lake trout population in the lake was exploding as these voracious piscivores found cutthroat to their liking. Now the NPS is trying to rid the lake of these invasive char, using gill nets and requiring that anglers kill any lake trout they catch while releasing all cutthroat trout. Using acoustic biotelemetry, biologists are tracking lake trout to find where they breed, making eradication efforts more effective, and are even tagging individual fish with tracking devices and then netting the areas they frequent to reduce their impact. It's an uphill battle, even with these effective techniques; Yellowstone Lake is huge, and totally stamping out the lake trout population is unlikely.

Nonetheless, as lake trout numbers decline, cutthroat numbers are increasing. These fish commonly range from 18 to 24 inches, and they roam the shoreline shallows well within reach of fly anglers casting and slowly retrieving streamers. Prime locations include the Gull Point and West Thumb areas. Lake trout only come shallow late in the season, when they spawn. During summer they reside in the depths, seeking cooler water. A 6-weight rod with a moderate-



density sinking line is ideal. If you fish from shore, fan your casts around to thoroughly cover each area you try. Use olive or brown streamers with a hint of red built in and retrieve then slowly.

Suggesting you'll catch doubledigit numbers of cutts during a day on Yellowstone Lake would be akin to telling you to expect light traffic on the way through the park to get to the lake—both things are possible, but not very likely. On the other hand, it's no exaggeration that these are big cutthroat, and you stand a reasonable chance of landing a beautiful 2-footlong native. Handle these fish gently, keep them wet, and appreciate their beauty as you release them back into their ancestral home.



Amber Lake, WA

By David Paul Williams

"The shout drew my attention to the wake angling directly toward me as I sat low in the water in my float tube on Amber Lake. It was late spring, and the warm weather had stirred creatures, including a mature western rattlesnake out for a swim. I got out of the way, because that reptile can swim as fast as I can fin. Off the water later that night, I spotted a large, dark, roundish shape in the ramp gravel and my heart rate spiked. False alarm. It was just a turtle laying her eggs.

That was my introduction to Amber Lake, a selective-gear-governed rainbow and cutthroat fishery about 12 miles southwest of Cheney. Either 91 or 117 acres, depending on the source, Amber has an interesting past. White settlers, including the five Calvert brothers, arrived 150 years ago. The area soon became known as Calvert Crossing. The Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway began service along the north side of the lake in 1908, and businesses, including a hotel and post office, followed. The hotel became part of a resort, complete with barn dances. Amber got its name when the Calvert postmaster determined mail was being confused with a town bearing a similar-sounding name, so in 1910 he swapped Calvert for Amber, the name of his favorite tea, and in 1913 the lake was likewise renamed.

The post office closed in 1974, the railroad ceased service in 1979, and soon the resort closed as well. In 1952, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) poisoned the lake, eliminating its nonnative carp and spiny-rayed fish, and turned it into a trout fishery. Two more poisonings followed to get rid of illegally stocked species; WDFW now stocks 5,000 to 7,500 rainbow fry and 1,000 westslope cutthroat fry each spring. The lake is open to fishing from March 1 to November 30, with a limit of one trout over 18 inches.



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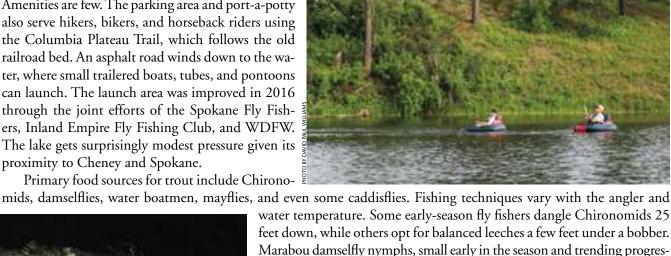


Internal combustion engines are not allowed.

Amber sits in a long, narrow cleft in the Columbia Basin Basalt Group, ringed by a few houses and farms. The north end is deep-25 or more feetwhile the south end is shallow and filled with weeds. Amenities are few. The parking area and port-a-potty also serve hikers, bikers, and horseback riders using the Columbia Plateau Trail, which follows the old railroad bed. An asphalt road winds down to the water, where small trailered boats, tubes, and pontoons can launch. The launch area was improved in 2016 through the joint efforts of the Spokane Fly Fishers, Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club, and WDFW. The lake gets surprisingly modest pressure given its proximity to Cheney and Spokane.

Primary food sources for trout include Chirono-





Marabou damselfly nymphs, small early in the season and trending progressively larger until the adults hatch in summer, are good choices, especially for anglers who prefer actively retrieving flies. The south end of the lake offers an interesting and sometimes frustrating challenge when the fish feed in and around the weeds. A successful cast resulting in a hooked fish frequently also results in a weed-wrapped leader with the fish long gone. One fish food completely ignored by the reports is the crayfish that come out at night. Amber Lake is a great spot to spend a few hours or a day.

Blackfoot River, MT

By Michael Hamilton

ou probably need a darn good reason to fly fish in western Montana in early August. The thermometer reaches triple digits. The blazing sun is unforgiving. The moon is waxing. Water temperatures hover in the upper 60s. Fish hunker down in deep pools after being pressured for several months. So what reason could I possibly have to challenge these suboptimal conditions? It just landed on my shirt. "So that's what a spruce moth looks like," I blurt out. Blackfoot Outfitters guide KynsLee Scott smiles and says, "The hatch is about to begin."

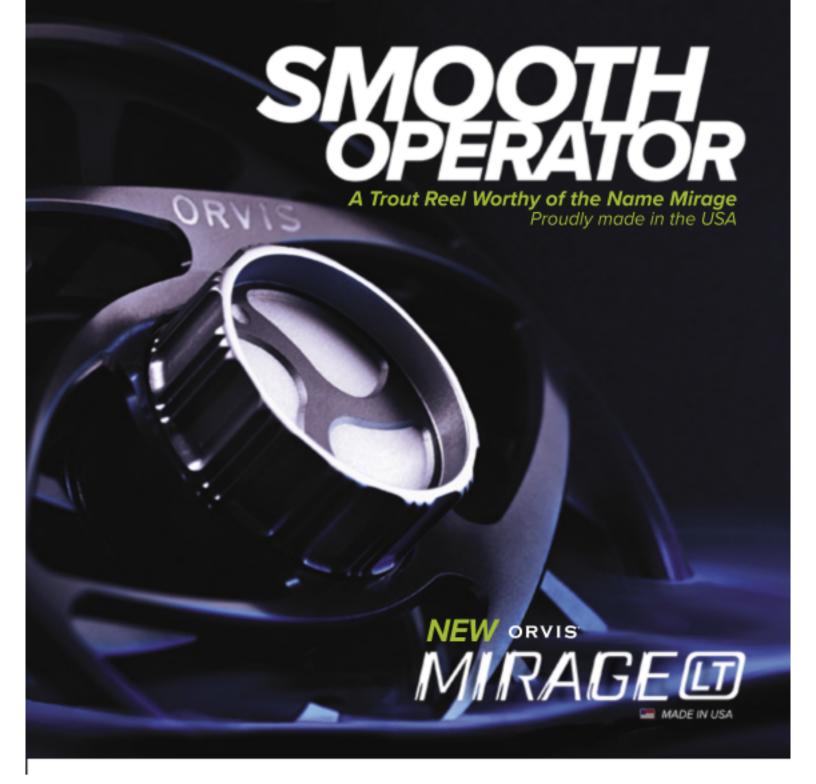
My watch reads 10:30 a.m.

The western spruce budworm (Choristoneura freemani), aka spruce



moth, is slowly being recognized as a big-league player in the majors of fly fishing. Many Montana rivers, including the Madison, Big Hole, Gallatin, Bitterroot, Rock Creek, and Blackfoot, experience a late-July-early-August hatch. The spruce budworm cuts a wide swath through the forests of the Rockies, from Arizona and New Mexico northward into Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, and Alberta.

Unfortunately the moth, in its larval stage, is the destroyer of hundreds of thousands of acres of forest. In their report about the insect for Forest Insect & Disease Leaflet 53 (U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service), David G. Fellin and Jerald E. Dewey write, "The western spruce budworm ... is the most widely distributed and destructive defoliator of coniferous forests in Western North America." Forest entomologist Amy Gannon, pest management specialist with the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Forestry Division, explains that these parasitic insects complete one life cycle, from



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egg to adult, in 12 months: "In spring, when the larvae leave their silken-like sleeping bags nestled in treetops, they will eat conifer needles, bore into buds, and devour new foliage. They keep eating until they pupate into adults in late July and early August. Once airborne, the moths will mate and deposit their eggs, guaranteeing another cycle, then die after seven to 10 days."

Looking downstream, over a boulder-strewn section of the Blackfoot



River, we begin to see splashy rises. Simultaneously, armadas of mottled orange/brown winged creatures about the size of a quarter flutter in dense waves from the trees. "See how they occasionally dip into the river. They look like small butterflies," Scott exclaims. For the next three hours, 14- to 16-inch trout, mostly rainbows, attack a size 14 imitation that I had tied based on a Bob Jacklin pattern. Scott says the most consistent imitation closely resembles an adult Elk Hair Caddis, tied with a blond or grayish wing, in sizes 12 through 16. She recommends using a 4- or 5-weight rod and a 9-foot leader with 4X tippet.

"I like to anchor up on rising fish rather than run and gun," she



explains. Her strategy is spot on. At the height of the hatch, we stop, cast, mend, watch for a take, then move downstream. As the hatch dwindles, we still have unanswered questions. Why do the moths land in the riffles and tailouts? Are they laying eggs? "Because they lay eggs in the conifers, maybe they are drawn to light, especially intensely bright, reflective surfaces of a river," speculates Gannon.

Theories aside, consider moving the spruce moth hatch to the top of your list. No waders, little pressure, thousands of bugs on the water, and fat, hungry trout eager to rise. For guided trips, contact Blackfoot Outfitters, (406) 452-7411, www. blackfootriver.com.

Trillium Lake, OR

By Gary Weber

eologists characterize Mount Hood as a potentially active volcano, although its last major event occurred in 1781. The odds of another eruption are relatively slim, about a 3 to 7 percent chance in the next 30 years. Still, Mount Hood is considered the Oregon volcano most likely to erupt. Fortunately, that's not enough of a threat to discourage fly anglers from visiting Trillium Lake—at least, it shouldn't be, even though the shallow, trout-filled impoundment sits just 7.5 miles from the mountain.

Situated on the south slope of the iconic 11,239-foot-tall stratovolcano (called *Wyeast* by the Multnomah Tribe), Trillium Lake rests in a swampy meadow; it covers about 65 acres and averages barely 7 feet deep, with a maximum depth of around 20 feet. The lake, named for the wildflower that is particularly abundant in the area, was created in 1960 when the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) dammed the headwaters of Mud Creek, a tributary to the neighboring Salmon River. Local historians contend the water body was formed to provide additional eye candy for tourists gazing out the picture windows of Mount Hood's historic Timberline Lodge. Part of the historic Barlow Road, a major component of the Oregon Trail, was covered when the lake was created.

Often clearly reflecting imposing and majestic Mount Hood on its placid surface, and flanked by towering ridges of old-growth conifers, Trillium Lake boasts an unrivaled setting—not to mention consistently productive fly angling—that makes it a popular escape for Portlanders, especially because the lake is only about an hour away. The ODFW maintains a vigorous stocking program at Trillium Lake, annually releasing over 10,000 legal-and trophy-size rainbow trout in addition to more than 10,000 rainbow fingerlings. Anglers can expect to catch lots of fish ranging between 6 and



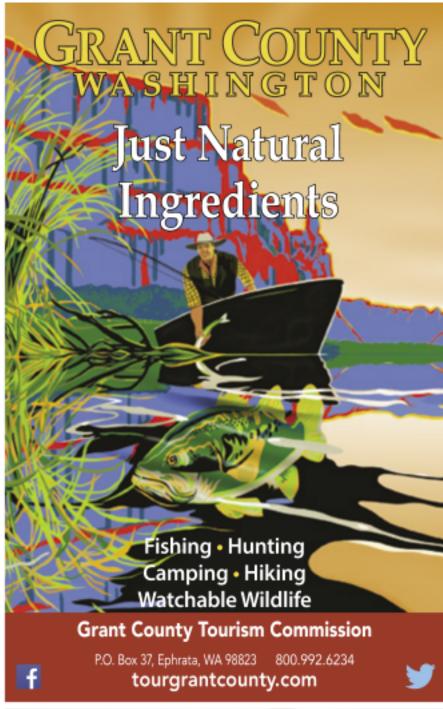
14 inches, and averaging 9 inches; some holdover and planted trophy trout top 18 inches.

Trillium Lake hosts prolific hatches of Callibaetis mayflies, caddisflies, damselflies, and Chironomids, but in light of the hatchery origin of the triploid (nonreproducing) trout, fly anglers find Trillium's fish aren't unusually finicky feeders. Conventional attractor dry flies perform quite effectively when the fish are looking up; otherwise, you can't go wrong rapidly retrieving a streamer pattern full of flash and movement. Most of Trillium Lake is shallow, so a floating line works just fine in tandem with a 9- to 12-foot leader tapered to a 5X tippet and rigged to a 4- or 5-weight rod. Prime angling occurs right after ice-out in late spring; May and June are typically the peak months, but the



lake also fishes well in the fall.

Limited bank access is available at Trillium Lake (including two fishing platforms that comply with the accessibility standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act), but watercraft are advantageous. Trillium Lake Campground has a public boat ramp on the southeast side of the lake; motors are prohibited, but float tubes, pontoons, canoes, and even kayaks are excellent alternatives for navigating Trillium's cool, blue waters. The campground is located off Forest Road 2656, a mile south of US Highway 26, 3 miles southeast of Government Camp. Unlike magnificent Mount Hood, the potential for heated activity-at least as far as trout are concerned-is always high at Trillium Lake.







Woods Lake and Woods Creek, CA

By Don Vachini

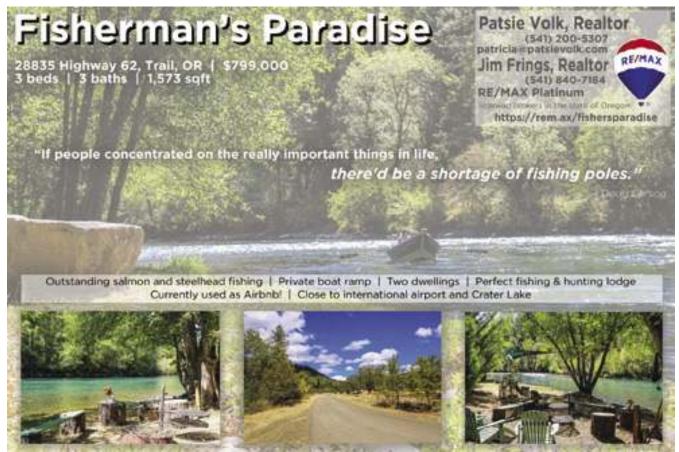
he predawn sun was barely a glow as I glimpsed the glasslike surface of Woods Lake. Set amid smooth granite and surrounded by pine, fir, and alder forest, the lake had a serene, backcountry feel to it—and, thankfully, a few rise forms.

Located at the end of a signed spur road 2 miles off California State Route 88 near Carson Pass, this 16-acre gem rests at 8,200 feet in El Dorado National Forest along the border of the Mokelumne Wilderness. Snowmelt from the hunched shoulders of 9,585-foot Elephants Back and nearby 10,381-foot Round Top feeds both Winnemucca and Round Top Lakes, and their escaping creeks provide sustenance to Woods Lake, nearly a mile below. From here, outflowing Woods Creek tumbles downhill less than a mile to enter Caples Lake, a large storage impoundment.

Woods Lake provides enough aquatic and terrestrial-born food for its rainbow and brook trout to reach about 10 inches. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife augments these populations with modest stockings of 10- to 12-inch rainbows. Occasional holdover rainbows grow even larger. The brookies, fewer in number, are self-sustaining, having washed down from Winnemucca Lake.

That crisp July morning, my son, Matt, and I followed the well-worn trail surrounding the shoreline, gaining easy access to a variety of trout-holding structure. Bypassing the shallow, funneled outlet, we hiked toward the sounds of water cascading off the jagged, rocky cliff

face. From above the most prominent inlet, we watched a half-dozen trout patrolling in a circuitous pattern. An inquisitive water ouzel watched as Matt slipped a tandem rig into a turbulent seam. Moments after the offerings slowed, a silvery, 10-inch wild rainbow lit up the ebony depths while attempting to dislodge the dropper nymph. Amid this mild commotion, the ouzel flitted to a less congested location.





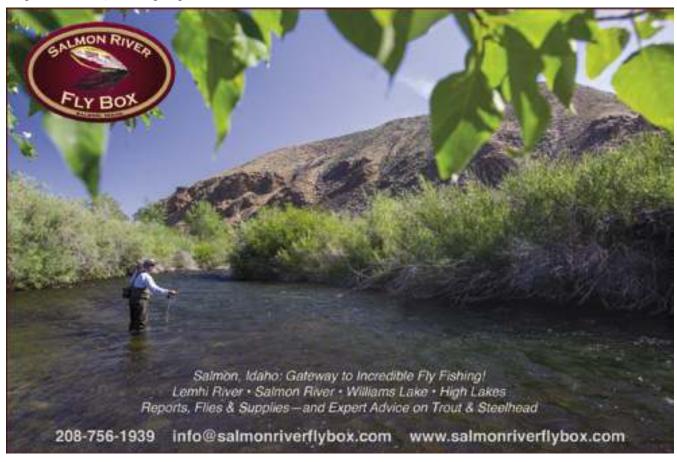
During our hour-long session the action matched the cycles of insects with periods of fish activity. Oxygenated infusions and insects washing in from above kept the trout congregating in the neighborhood of the submerged ledge stretching between the two inlets.

Most of the time, 5X tippet is perfect for presenting size 14 through 18 caddisfly, midge, ant, and mosquito patterns. Comparaduns, Humpies, and Renegades will deceive active feeders early and late in the day. However, the most universally effective setup pairs a beadhead nymph (Bird's Nest, Copper John, Prince) under an Elk Hair Caddis, Mosquito, or Parachute Adams. Fish the tandem in the inlets, over drop-offs, and in the shoreline shallows.

Guarded by stunted willows and home to truncated residents that seem obligated to ingest whatever food form happens to fall in their lap, Woods Creek bounces steeply down from the lake in relative anonymity. The most efficient early-season tactic is to use short-line presentations to drift a beadhead nymph through swirling eddies, seams, and pockets; dancing a tiny dry becomes a solid strategy when flows ebb.

From Jackson, follow SR 88 east for 70 miles to the Woods Lake Road turnoff. The season runs from the end of April through November 15, although the access road can open late or close early. Woods Lake Campground, (530) 622-5061, www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/eldorado/recarea/?recid=78528, and Woodfords Inn, (530) 694-2111, www.woodfordsinn.com, in Markleesville, offer lodging options. Though certainly not trophies, the feisty rainbows and bejeweled brookies of the Woods Lake–Woods Creek complex present refreshing challenges for serenity-seeking anglers.







North Fork Clearwater River, ID

By Jeff Erickson

oad-trip buddy Mary and I happily wound up at the North Fork Clearwater River on a bluebird August day. Suddenly I punched the brakes, and our jaws dropped: a large gray wolf ambled to the center of the narrow gravel road, snarled, glared dismissively, then sprinted back into the dense forest. Primitive country like the North Fork begets large wild animals, some well endowed with teeth and claws.

The North Fork is a mecca for fly anglers who love to roam remote trails and back roads. Much of the 72-mile free-flowing North Fork snakes through Clearwater National Forest, with many streamside camping opportunities.

For backpackers or horseback riders, alpine trout lakes also beckon.

Rising along the west slope of the Bitterroot Mountains on the Montana border, the North Fork is fed by myriad enticing trout-filled tributaries, until it finally slides into sprawling, 53-mile-long Dworshak Reservoir, toward its rendezvous with the main Clearwater and eventually the mighty Snake River. In addition to westslope cutthroat, the river holds threatened bull trout and mountain whitefish. While cutts are the main draw, nonnative brook and rainbow trout also inhabit the watershed.

The North Fork remains remarkably pristine, but it's haunted by ghosts. The river's prodigious salmon and steelhead runs ended when Dworshak Dam was constructed, between 1966 and 1973. The 717-foot-high barrier was built without a fish ladder, an environmental catastrophe that dramatically altered the aquatic ecology of the North Fork and prime tributaries like Kelly Creek: the last



steelhead and chinook smolts passed downstream through the construction site in 1970. Anadromous runs continue below Dworshak and up the Clearwater's South and Middle Forks (abetted by a \$21 million mitigation hatchery below the reservoir), but these fish must run a deadly gauntlet of downstream dams.

Prime time to wade the North Fork is July through September, to



avoid the dangerous torrents of spring runoff, sometimes exceeding 12,000 cubic feet per second (cfs). Even at flows under 1,000 cfs, the North Fork remains a fast, brawling river in places, threading through canyons with giant boulders and massive logjams, punctuated by deep, crystalline runs and pools—excellent cutthroat habitat. Typically, cutts don't hold in riffles or raging pocket water, where you might find rainbows. Also, cutthroat in the upper watershed migrate downstream toward Dworshak in September to spend the winter in larger, more secure water. So the later you push toward fall, the fewer westslopes remain.

North Fork cutts are fools for attractors and terrestrials: Stimulators, Trudes, Humpies, and Wulffs, mixed with ant, beetle, cricket, and hopper patterns. You may need more specificity if you luck into a hatch of caddisflies, Pale Morning Duns, or Blue-Winged Olives. Subsurface, standard beadhead nymphs take plenty of fish, mixed with larger, weighted stonefly patterns bounced along the rubble.

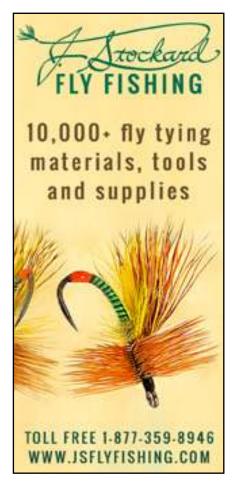
Part of the North Fork's appeal is isolation—including sprawling, roadless mountains—but there are several ways to reach it by vehicle. Most di-



rectly, take Trout Creek Road (Forest Road 250) southwest from Interstate 90 near Superior, Montana. This route corkscrews up to 6,000-foot-high Hoodoo Pass, then drops into the North Fork headwaters. Depending on weather and land-slides, this route can be

navigated by a passenger car. Another option is FR 250 south out of Pierce, Idaho, a decent gravel road that meets the North Fork at the Pot Mountain Trailhead. A more circuitous journey allowing more exploration of the lower river is FR 247, out of tiny Headquarters, north of Pierce. A Clearwater National Forest map will facilitate navigation. Unless you intend to become a mountain man, bring all the supplies you need. Between Dworshak Reservoir and the Clearwater headwaters, seven Forest Service campgrounds and plenty of options for informal camping are available.

Sitting around the campfire on our last moonlit night, Mary and I reflected on how many visitors—immersed in a still-spectacular landscape—are likely unaware of the North Fork's vanished salmon and steelhead. Certainly, we must take joy in the beauty that remains; it's considerable, albeit fragile. Inevitably Dworshak will disappear too, perhaps resurrecting an echo of the once-great migrations.





EXPOSURE

Through the Seasons on Washington's Yakima River By Steve Maeder



Cottonwoods and a long, dry autumn make for brilliant golden hues through the Thorp reach of the Yakima.



Colorful cedar waxwings often feed on hatching insects along the river.



Rugged Mount Stuart overlooks the Kittitas Valley and can be seen from the river in places. Ingalls Peak, in the foreground, is within the Yakima River watershed.



Steve Joyce and Mark Kane survey the water's surface, looking for activity in the stretch near Selah.



Personal watercraft expand opportunities below Roza Dam on a stretch of the Yakima where fine fishing is largely overlooked.



An aquatic worm pattern fooled this heavy rainbow. A nick in its upper lip is likely from a previous encounter with a hook. Old studies indicate that some trout survive being caught more than 20 times.



March Browns draw great wet-fly swing action both before and during the hatch. The trout sometimes feed with abandon during a robust hatch.



Red's Fly Shop guide Max Karns works a run in the so-called farmlands section southeast of Ellensburg on a pleasant March afternoon. Two-handed trout rods are increasingly popular on the Yakima.



The Yakima is open year-round, but anglers often dwindle to a hardy few when temperatures drop into the 30s. The catching gets tough, but large trout are often the rewards for persistence.



Fritz Busch is only 8 years old, but he's all business on the water. His father, Garth Luke, works the sticks on a late-fall canyon float.



A bobcat rests on a log to get off the cold ground while listening for rodents scurrying about beneath the snow.



Yakima rainbows exhibit considerable genetic variation. This fish hammered a Woolly Bugger fished on a sinking-tip line.

Steve Maeder, the advertising manager for Northwest Fly Fishing, has fished the Yakima for many years.

Rogue River, OR

The Wild & Scenic Section

By John Shewey

n ominous throaty growl rumbled from the rugged, shadowy, black-basalt gorge gripping the massive Rogue River ever more tightly in its narrowing maw, the flow squeezing in and folding upon itself, currents piling on currents for want of a path their own. The growl began to roar; loud, tenacious; inimical, baleful, like a bear guarding its den, I thought, recalling tales born of wild places like this otherworldly canyon cleaving the southern Oregon mountains.

We approached the rapids—a violently churning torrent filling the gorge with the inimitable voice of wilderness. Though I'd been regaled with tales of dangerous dunkings and tragic drownings, boats wrecked and boats sunken and never found on the mighty Rogue's wildest section, my pulse remained even, anxiety at bay. I'm hardly immune to the apprehension of sending a drift boat through a Class IV rapids on a river notorious for eating boats, but at the oars was a Helfrich.

If you meet a Helfrich in Oregon, you stand a gambler's chance you just met a river guide. If so, he (or she) will prove to be the progeny of one Prince Helfrich, legendary oarsman of the McKenzie River and grandfather to Jeff Helfrich, under whose care I was entrusted. And that explained my quietude as Jeff's boat dropped into the aqueous melee, bucking, turning, spinning—and missing each jagged reef and canyon wall by mere inches with each deftly applied oar stroke.

"Hold your rod straight up in the air as we go through," Jeff intoned as we dropped into one of dozens of boiling rapids along this multiday float through the Rogue River's federally designated Wild & Scenic section.

His warning briefly jolted me from my awestruck astonishment at the stunning scenery that grew more exotic as the miles passed on our journey deep into the Rogue River's most remote canyon. I heeded his admonition: the walls were literally closing in as we entered a cleft so narrow that in places my 11-foot switch rod could span it.

Late October's ephemeral perfection had painted the riverbanks in vibrant shades of yellow and orange, the riparian hardwoods and wild grapes emblazoned against a stately evergreen backdrop; deeper into the canyon, craggy



A typical half-pounder steelhead ranges from 12 to 16 inches; they tend to run the lower and middle Rogue in pods or schools, so if a pool yields one fish, that same location likely holds more, often lots more. The action can be fast and furious (above). An angler swings a fly across a productive tailout as fall colors reflect off the water. By October, the verdant Rogue River Canyon comes to life in an extravagant display of autumn foliage, with spectacular views at every bend in the river (right).



old oak trees, sentinels standing guard for centuries, marched down precipitous mountainsides to meet massive riverside boulders and towering cliffs. Blacktail deer grazed just above the riverbanks, river otters basked on the rocks, great blue herons and ivory-white great egrets hunted the shallows; Helfrich told me that in his 39 years of floating the Wild & Scenic Rogue that he couldn't recall seeing as many egrets this far upriver-evidence of this river's ability to produce constant surprises and inspire nonstop wonder.

At one point, we stopped along a gorgeous, wadable run, and I climbed high atop a riverside spire. There I closely examined the wild grapes Helfrich had

pointed out to me several times already during the float, their conflagrant orange leaves beaming like neon signs. The grapes were ripe, perfectly so. They were sweet and juicy; the Native Americans who lived along this river for thousands of years must have eagerly anticipated the ripening, and harvested the little purple fruits by the basket load.

Often, when not bracing for the inevitable whitewater cataracts, Helfrich and I emulated the otters, if only

Silver Ant Tied by Bob Roberts



Hook: Alec Jackson, size 5–7

Tail: Red hackle fibers

Butt: Black chenille

Body: Silver oval tinsel

Hackle: Black

Wing: White bucktail or calf tail

Eyes: Jungle cock (optional)

warm southern Oregon sun while eagerly anticipating the emerald pools where we would swing flies for abundant Rogue River steelhead. Sun abounds in southern Oregon, but by autumn it is not as oppressively omnipotent as it is during the summer (at least by the standards of someone more accustomed to the temperate Willamette Valley farther north). The steelhead seem perfectly happy to rise for a fly on sunny days and often positively fervent about chasing feather-clad hooks on cloudy days and during mornings and evenings.

They are still just a short swim from the ocean, these steelhead of the Wild & Scenic stretch of the Rogue. The popular float segment

runs nearly 40 miles, beginning at Grave Creek boat launch and ending at Foster Bar, just 35 miles from the Pacific. They are also unique among Oregon steelhead populations.

Half-Pounders

The Rogue River is famously home to a race of summerrun steelhead colloquially called half-pounders. Unlike their brethren that spend one to three full years in the Pa-





Jeff Helfrich pulls a fly in the traditional Rogue River style. This technique, developed in part because many of the Rogue's pools are too deep to wade, requires the oarsman to swing the boat back and forth across the river while drifting downstream much more slowly than current speed.

cific before returning to their natal streams, half-pounders smolt in late spring (like all other summer steelhead), but spend only a few months in salt water before reversing course and returning to the Rogue. Consequently, they range from 12 to 18 inches. Among them are two other classes of steelhead: half-pounders from the previous year that have gone to the ocean a second time and therein

grown to 16 to 22 inches or so, and typical-life-history steelhead that range from 24 to more than 30 inches.

For fly anglers, half-pounders proffer several advantages. First, they typically come in swarms. Hook a half-pounder and you can bet that pool holds a bunch of them. Second, they are almost always aggressive, and hammer flies resolutely and savagely. Third, for both of those reasons, they are as friendly to beginning fly anglers as they are to veterans. Did I mention their fight? Imagine a 14-inch rainbow trout from your favorite lake or stream. Now imbue that fish with great vigor and athleticism gained from evading predators in salt water, then attach

a battery cable to its tail and flip the "on" button-now you have a positively electrified-and electrifying-version of your favorite trout. Half-pounders flat out crush swinging flies and then they go ballistic. Catch one or two and you'll be convinced; catch a dozen and you'll be addicted.

And then, on the Rogue, your focus distracted by the

impossibly dramatic and splendid scenery, your imagination riveted by tales of the river's incredible history told by Jeff and his guides, the next fish you hook will stretch the tape beyond 20 inches and you'll have your hands full. You'll do this over and over across the three or four days required to make these epic autumn trips down the Wild & Scenic Rogue with Helfrich, and along the way you'll be immersed in the river's legends, not only by tales told by the men at the oars, but by overnighting at historic wilderness river lodges, where Helfrich's clients stay at the end of each day.

We pulled up to the bank below Marial Lodge, a rustic wilderness inn idyllically perched above

Juicy Bug Tied by Al Brunell



2XL bronze wet-fly hook, size 6-8 Hook:

Tail: Red hackle fibers Butt: Black chenille

Body: Red chenille

Rib: Silver embossed or oval tinsel

Hackle: Brown

White bucktail or calf tail Wing:

the river among old-growth maples. The property was homesteaded in 1903 and began life as a commercial lodge in the 1940s. Cabins accommodate guests-anglers in the fall, white-water enthusiasts in the summer and hearty, delicious, homecooked meals are served in a spacious dining room. Early each morning, guests gather for coffee in the hearth room, equally appealing for a glass of wine and conversation after dinner. I was drawn to

the many vintage photos adorning the walls, a museum of Rogue River fishing and boating history.

In the early 20th century, the Rogue was a wellspring of innovative boat-design ideas and from those halcyon days derived the famous Rogue River dory. In 1915, Glen Wooldridge and Cal Allen built a bateaux-style boat—a "river driver," as they were called—and did the impossible:



they ran the Rogue from Grants Pass to Gold Beach, a distance of some 100 river miles. It was probably among the most treacherous, perilous pioneering river runs ever made anywhere, especially considering that a river driver is a long, narrow, wooden craft and not the stable drift-boat-style platform familiar to anglers today. Those early Rogue adventurers used push poles to fend off collisions with rocks; they didn't always

win. Thereafter, local boatmen began modifying and customizing their boats, and soon was born the Rogue River dory, while farther north, the McKenzie-style boat was being perfected.

Those early Rogue River boaters founded other traditions as well. For one, they opted to render certain sections of the river more floatable by judicious (and sometimes



Colorful wild grape leaves light up the banks above a seductive steelhead run deep in the Rogue River Canyon (above). Wildlife abounds along the wilderness section of the Rogue River. Here, a river otter enjoys the late-morning sunshine (top). Jeff Helfrich lines his drift boat down a swift side channel adjacent to boat-eating Rainie Falls, a Class V drop a short distance downstream from the put-in at Grave Creek (right).

perhaps overly enthusiastic) use of dynamite to clear safe (or safer) passages through extremely rocky, rugged rapids.

To Twitch or Not to Twitch

One could be forgiven for developing a nervous tic after a few runs through the most challenging rapids on the Rogue River. However, the term "Rogue River twitch" actually refers to a fishing tactic, not the potential neurosis that might result from imperiling one's life for the sake

of steelhead.

In the 1950s, Rogue River guides-apparently beginning with Willard Lucas—developed a technique that made steelhead fly fishing on the Rogue approachable for even the tyro. Much of the river is too deep to wade, and float trips require covering miles of river during the course of the day, meaning wade-fishing time must be parceled judiciously. So, in the 1950s, guides began "pulling flies" on the Rogue by asking simply that their clients flip 30 or 40 feet of line downstream from their

seats in the drift boat, and then do nothing else. The oarsman would then row slowly back and forth across the pools, taking care to keep the boat's downstream progress in check. The only affectation was the twitch: Willard and other guides asked their clients to rhythmically bounce the rod tip up and down a foot or so, causing the wet fly to alternately ascend and descend in the water column.

The twitch would dominate Rogue River fly fishing for 50 years. It still has its adherents, but has faded in popularity in recent decades. Still, every Rogue veteran debates the efficacy of the twitch. Does it matter to the fish, or is a Rogue River steelhead that is bent on eating your fly going to do so twitch or no twitch? One thing is certain—twitchers and nontwitchers enjoy equal success.

With his characteristic measured reticence, Helfrich admits he's never really formed an opinion on the matter, even though he and his clients routinely practice the twitch. Sometimes he thinks it matters, he told me, but he also suggests that maybe the twitch just "gives the angler something to do beyond just holding onto the rod."

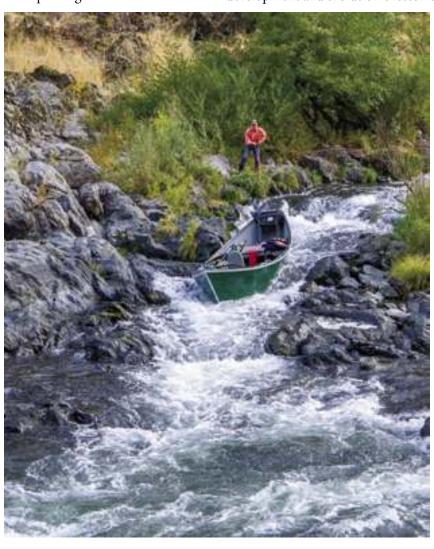
Those twitchable flies come in myriad forms. If Northern California's Eel River was ground zero for the development and evolution of steelhead-specific patterns,

the Rogue (and the Klamath) were right on its heels. By the opening decade of the 20th century, the Rogue and its steelhead were gaining nationwide prominence, so much so that Joe Wharton opened a tackle shop in Grants Pass in 1906. He specialized in fly tackle, including locally designed fly patterns. Wharton's shop was already an institution when novelist Zane Grey—writer of purple prose, author of Riders of the Purple Sage first visited Oregon to fish the Rogue River in 1919.

Grey, says author Trey Combs, urged Wharton to

begin stocking fine tackle made in Great Britain, and also introduced him to at least one favorite fly, the Gold(en) Demon. The original was dressed with a wing of mallard, but at Grey's request, Wharton began having his commercial fly tiers—including Ardeth and Irene Bunnell of Portland—dress the fly with a more durable wing of deer hair. The Golden Demon, along with flies of Wharton's own design, such as the Turkey & Red, preceded a host of Rogue River-specific flies that soon followed: Rogue River Special, Rogue Red Ant, Juicy Bug, Silver Ant, Witherwox Special.

For a few decades, Rogue River steelhead flies were routinely tied on bronze double hooks, typically sizes 8 and 10. Those doubles balanced perfectly in the water





Only the most experienced white-water rowers dare to navigate the Wild & Scenic Rogue, where boulder-cluttered rapids, such as Blossom Bar, have eaten many boats over the years. Trusting your safety to Jeff Helfrich and his deeply experienced guides is a major perk of booking a multiday fishing expedition (above). The Rogue River draws a sizable run of summer steelhead, the bulk of which are half-pounders—fish that spend only a few months in salt water and then return to the river at 12 to 18 inches. But second-year half-pounders, along with one- and two-salt steelhead are also common and range from 18 to more than 30 inches (below).

and held fish securely. They are still legal, but no longer fashionable and in a large measure, the flies traditionally tied on them aren't in favor now. Luckily, the old Rogue standards still have their adherents, but they have been supplanted in general popularity by the modern stable, and staple, of beadhead nymphs. On the upper and middle Rogue, fishing weighted nymphs under an indicator is the normal method, but on the Wild & Scenic section, pulling and swinging flies remains very popular. Traditional wet flies are probably more popular on the Wild & Scenic section, but the nymphs common on the upper and middle Rogue are equally effective when pulled or swung.

On the Wild & Scenic section, particularly when Helfrich and his deeply experienced guides handle all the logistics, leaving clients free to focus on the fishing, Rogue half-pounders often come fast and furious. Don't expect to find a wet-behind-the-ears 20-year old rowing your boat. Helfrich and his guides have been doing this for a long time; they are amazingly adept at all aspects of the craft, including expertly controlling the boat as clients pull, and perhaps, twitch flies.

For me, fishing with Helfrich harkened to days long ago spent fishing with another veteran guide, Ray Slusser, who provided my initial firsthand introduction to the Rogue River technique. Like Slusser, Helfrich deftly maneuvers the boat bank to bank across the pools, expertly controlling the downstream progress, always drifting downstream—when he wants to—much more slowly than current speed. It's a fine art, a great deal of practice belied by the seeming effortlessness.

Pulling flies is a boon to novice anglers. They can enjoy consistent and frequently remarkable success on steelhead alongside veteran fly casters. As such, Helfrich's multiday Rogue trips are ideal for families, couples, and business groups, but equally appealing to pairs or groups of diehard steelhead fly anglers. To be sure, wading opportunities abound; just tell your guides you want to do some wade fishing and they'll plant you in some of the



most alluring runs and tailouts ever graced by a swinging fly.

Trip of a Lifetime

For nearly 40 years I had fished Oregon waters, from desert trickles in remote canyons to alpine tarns amid snowcapped peaks, from crashing surf to mesmerizing rivers, from border to border east and west, south and north. I had fished the Rogue headwaters, the upper Rogue, and the middle Rogue. But I'd never fished nor floated the Wild & Scenic Rogue until those days spent last autumn with Jeff Helfrich, swinging and pulling flies for steelhead, marveling at this dramatically untamed landscape, dropping through myriad punishing rapids tamed by expert boat handling.

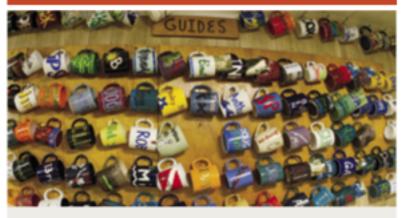
The fishing itself is relaxing, intense, and sometimes insane-intense when Rogue steelhead unabashedly chase flies with invigorating enthusiasm; insane when they come to a fly in such numbers that telling the story later fosters disbelief. When the morning sessions of battling steelhead and progressing ever deeper into the canyon end, guests are treated to the time-honored tradition of the shore lunch, executed to such culinary perfection that Prince Helfrich himself would be more than duly impressed.

Fishing and floating continue after lunch, with each bend in the river revealing new churning rapids and emerald steelhead pools. Over dinners and drinks at historic lodges, guests recount their adventures, anticipate the morn, coax more Rogue River tales from their guides. This is how the mighty Rogue is best honored-by anglers cognizant that a multiday run through the Wild & Scenic reach is a descent ever deeper into wilderness and an ascent into the foundations of our sport.

This beguiling river demands immersion, full participation, complete acquiescence to its mystery and mystique, its profound history and pervasive wildness. The Rogue is a geological and hydrological syzygy, and a confluence of steelhead angling legend and palpable fly-fishing spirit rivaled perhaps nowhere else. If indeed fly fishing borders on religion, I can think of few rivers where the gods have so much to tell to those who will listen. -

John Shewey is the editor-in-chief of Northwest Fly Fishing magazine, and the author of Classic Steelhead Flies and numerous other books.

Rogue River NOTEBOOK



Where: Wild & Scenic section of the Rogue River in southern OR; launch site at Grave Creek is appr. 30 mi. northwest of Grants Pass.

When: Sept.-early Nov.

Headquarters: All supplies and services available in Grants Pass. Information: Experience Grants Pass, (541) 476-7574, www.travelgrantspass.com; Grants Pass & Josephine County Chamber of Commerce, (541) 476-7717, www.grantspasschamber.org.

Appropriate gear: 6- to 7-wt. rods, floating and sinking-tip lines, 6- to 9-ft. leaders, 1X-2X tippets.

Useful fly patterns: Golden Demon, Silver Ant, Roque Red Ant, Juicy Bug, Weitzel's Wine, Silver Demon, Brindle Bug, Royal Coachman, Witherwox Special, Carpetbagger, Prince Nymph variations.

Necessary accessories: Polarized sunglasses, wading gear (no metal cleats/studs in boats), wide-brimmed hat, weather-appropriate clothing, rain gear, waterproof boat bag.

Nonresident license: \$54.50/3 days, \$84.50/7 days, \$103.50/

Fly shops: Grants Pass: The Rogue Fly Shop, (541) 476-0552, www. rogueflyshop.com. Ashland: The Ashland Fly Shop, (541) 488-6454, www.ashlandflyshop.com. Medford: Rogue Valley Anglers, (541) 973-2988, www.roguevalleyanglers.com.

Guided expeditions: TightLines, Inc. (Jeff Helfrich), (877) 855-6270, www.tightlinesfishing.com.

Trip details: Three- and four-day guided expeditions (\$1,695/ person and \$1,995/person, respectively) are ideal for groups of 10-12 people, but smaller groups are easily added to other small groups; trips include all meals (including incredible shore lunches), accommodations in historic wilderness lodges, and expert guides. Make reservations immediately for the 2019 season.

Books: Classic Steelhead Flies by John Shewey; Roque River Fly Fishing Guide by Scott Richmond; Drift Boats & River Dories by Roger Fletcher; The Rogue: A River to Run by Florence Arman with Glen Wooldridge; Rogue River Feud by Zane Grey; Rogue River Reprieve by Paul Hoobyar.

Lemhi River, ID

Solitude between Mountain Peaks

By Toby L. Walrath

estled between the Beaverhead Mountains and the Lemhi Range, Idaho's scenic Lemhi River flows northwest from where it forms near the tiny town of Leadore—winding from one side of the valley to the other and dropping about 2,000 feet in elevation—to the Salmon River in the town of Salmon. Throughout the river's course, the ranch lands of the valley floor give way to rugged mountains above the 60-mile-mile long river.

Anglers who enjoy wade-fishing on small waters can find solitude and scenery appealing enough that it's easy to forget that a road, Idaho State Route 28, runs nearby. But even those who prefer getting a little farther from the pavement can find accessible pristine stretches on this modest-size river. The Lemhi offers something for everyone—it's approachable and kind to newcomers, yet it's pristine and complex enough to satisfy even the most discerning anglers.

The Lemhi runs through private ranch lands for most of its journey, but SR 28 provides easy river access at various highway bridges and at five Idaho Fish & Game (IDFG) sites. Further access is available where secondary roads cross the Lemhi just off the highway. Most locations are visible from SR 28 between the towns of Salmon and Leadore. Idaho's laws concerning streams provide for access at such public-road crossings, but require that an-

glers enter the river on public property and then stay below the high-water mark. At the bridge crossings, whether along the highway or on side roads, safe and legal parking is critical, and usually available at obvious turnouts. When in doubt, however, avoid potential conflict

with landowners and don't try to get to the river at places where parking sites are not obvious or where getting to a bridge or to the river requires crossing private property.

In addition, be aware that reaching the river from bridge crossings can change based on water levels. At higher flows, it may not be possible to stay on public property while trying to get into the river corridor (more on that later). Use discretion and bear in mind that the well-established access points provide the opportunity to fish miles of excellent water.

From north (downstream) to south (upstream), the primary locations to get on the water begin in Salmon and are scattered along the river for about 33 miles. In Salmon, the 3.5-acre Lemhi Power Site is located behind the Sungate Apartments off Margaret Street, next to the ACE Hardware store. Park at the end of Margaret Street and walk to the river bank behind the dike. Within the site, you can go along above the river up- or downstream, and extend the opportunities by wading/walking within the high-water marks.

About 3.7 miles upstream from Salmon, the Lower Lemhi access site is a 2-acre roadside location surrounded by private property, so anglers must reach the river within the designated IDFG area. This site is on the north bank along Old Lemhi Road (aka Lemhi Backroad), which turns north of Main Street at the east end of Salmon, crosses the Lemhi, then swings southeast. From Main Street, follow this road a total of 3.6 miles to the site, which is signed, located where the road finally runs alongside the river.

Heading upstream, the next IDFG locations— Lemhi River North and Lemhi River South—are 21 miles east of Salmon along the east side of SR 28. The

North Access does not directly reach the water, but it does offer a picnic table, parking, and limited camping with enough room to turn an RV around. The South Access is a short walk south to a small parcel of land directly to the river. There are no signs marking this



access site, so keep an eye peeled.

Five miles farther upstream (26 miles southeast of Salmon), Hayden Creek is the next IDFG site. It covers 5.6 acres along SR 28, offers shaded camping sites, and has a primitive latrine. The IDFG Access Guide lists this site as being able to accommodate six to eight camping units, but in reality, it's bigger than that and can handle



The upper (south) end of the Lemhi River flows through verdant agricultural lands. Anglers need only gain egress to the river at public access points and then wade and fish their way up or downstream between the lushly vegetated banks (above). This gorgeous Lemhi River rainbow trout ate a dead-drifted nymph pattern. Nymphing is frequently productive, but the Lemhi is also a fine dry-fly river, especially during hatches of Blue-Winged Olives, Pale Morning Duns, Little Yellow Stoneflies, and grasshoppers (left).

quite a few more. Yet even in midsummer, the area is not crowded. Look for the "Sportsmans Access" sign; if you are coming from the south on SR 28, the Hayden Creek site is 1 mile north of the Lemhi Mercantile/Post Office.

Lastly, 5.5 miles south of Hayden Creek and 13 miles north of Leadore, the Bureau of Land Management's Mc-Farland Recreation Area provides an easement to the river where the Lemhi meanders through verdant farmlands. A stile crosses a wooden fence, and from there anglers must remain within the river easement as posted. This site also has a well-maintained campground with picnic tables and a standard pit toilet.

Ample dining and lodging are available in Salmon, a town of about 3,000 people, but I enjoy camping along the banks of the Lemhi at Hayden Creek. A hand pump offers fresh drinking water and the site has a clean, primitive outhouse along with designated fire rings. Nearby mountain peaks, such as 8,171-foot Ramsey Mountain to the east and 10,800-foot Gunsight Peak, tower over the valley, punctuating stunning scenery rivaling any place in the western mountains.

On my most recent trip, camping at Hayden Creek put my friend John MacGillivray and me in a prime location to explore the river's two main sections, what we might call the north half and the south half (or upper river and lower river). Each half provides a distinct experience and excellent fishing. Along the way, be sure to take time to visit the Sacajawea Interpretive, Cultural, & Educational Center, a 71-acre park just south of Salmon created to honor Sacajawea, who was born in the Salmon Valley and later famously helped the Lewis and Clark expedition. The Lemhi-Shoshone tribal history is captured here, and much can be learned about the Lemhi River and its history.

The Local Rivers

At the point where Hayden Creek enters the Lemhi, there is a noticeable change in the river's characteristics. Northwest—downstream—of Hayden Creek, the river is wider, providing fly casters reprieve from the upper river's gnarled willows that form a virtual wall along the banks. Downstream from Hayden Creek, the Lemhi continues to slowly widen and becomes rockier as its canyon steepens. Stately cottonwoods decorate the lower river's section of the valley, rather than tangles of alder and willow found on the upper half. The mountains climb precipitously from the river, forming a scenic backdrop above the narrowing valley all the way to the Salmon River confluence. Beyond the formal access sites, intrepid anglers can get to water at a few places along the highway (the aforementioned parking warnings being taken into consideration).

At the Lemhi headwaters in Leadore, the slow meandering

waters emerge from dense meadow grass, humble beginnings amidst stunning ranch lands framed by beautiful mountains. This vast landscape is home to diverse wildlife, including pronghorns, mule deer, sandhill cranes, and various birds of prey. Cattle graze amid man-made water wheels that help grow lush fields of hay in stark contrast

Hook: Dry fly, sizes 12–16

Tail: Moose hair

Body: Red Super Fine or other dry-fly dubbing,

Beetle Bug Palmer

By Jell Witner

or floss

Hackle: Furnace or dark brown

Wing: Calf tail or calf body hair

mountain hillsides that turn golden brown during summer.

The Lemhi River holds rainbows, along with westslope cutthroat, bull trout, and a few brook trout. The Lemhi and tributaries are also designated as critical spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead trout and spring/summer chinook salmon that arrive from the faraway Pacific via the Columbia, Snake, and Salmon Rivers.

State and federal agencies, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, special interest groups, and private citizens first met in 1994 to develop a cooperative approach to address riparian

stream habitat across all land ownership boundaries in Lemhi County. Sedimentation concerns from various uses along the Lemhi River and its tributaries was reducing the quality of spawning and rearing habitat for salmonids, including increasingly imperiled native chinook salmon and steelhead.

A 2012 report showed that a variety of targeted projects had made a marked improvement in fish habitat. Among the projects were gravel surfacing of roads and installation of fish-passable culverts. While the changes originally focused on anadromous fish, the benefits went much further.

> "The changes also included stream reconnects that made the water cooler and that's good for all fish," says Steve Stringham, guide and owner of the Salmon River Fly Box, a full-service fly shop in Salmon. "Years ago, parts of the

> > Lemhi would go dry in the late summer, but that really doesn't happen anymore."

Recommendations to improve shading along the banks of the Lemhi and its tributaries aimed at reducing the average annual temperature and mitigating sedimentation concerns were a success, especially considering that local ranchers and farmers pull a lot of water for irrigation throughout the summer months. Involving those landowners in the decision-making and the habitat-improvement processes proved to be a winning strategy, improving fish habitat and ultimately providing more water for agriculture as well.

A 2012 report ects had made a Among the project installation of fish originally focus went muc "The that made all fish," of the S sho

The changes have been good for all fish in the Lemhi River, including hard-fighting rainbows that can top the 24-inch mark. (Steelhead and salmon may be targeted in portions of the Salmon River during regulated seasons, but the Lemhi River, a tributary of the Salmon, does not have any open season for either species.)

During our late-July trip to the Lemhi, the river's cold waters and the fresh air of this narrow, campestral valley provided welcome relief from forest fire smoke and hot weather back home in Montana. On the upper river, I enjoyed working my way from one clear pool to the next, though the encroaching willows required some adjustments in casting. The dense shrubbery was keen to snatch an errant backcast, so anglers need to remain vigilant on that account.

In places, the brush reaches out over the water from both banks, creating a corridor just wide enough to allow a fly angler to wade up- or downstream. Because the banks are mostly private property (above the high-water mark), typically the only option is to stay in the river, and that reduces the seasonal window of prime access. When the water is high in early summer, wading the channel is simply not possible in many places; the riparian brush prevents walking the banks below the high-water marks, and private property blocks any possibility of navigating around the brush to hop from pool to pool.

"The best time to fish the Lemhi is July, August, and September," says Stringham, who explains that water withdrawals for farming and ranching reduce flows at that time of year. The water withdrawals "don't necessarily help the fish, but do help the fishermen," he says. At low flows, anglers can wade most of the river unimpeded.

Stringham says nymphs are generally most productive on the Lemhi, but the river does produce a few notable hatches. Although Mothers Day Caddis hatches can be heavy, they occur early in the season when access is inhibited by the high water/private land conundrum. But midsummer to autumn hatches of Blue-Winged Olives and Pale Morning Duns occur at more angler-friendly times. The river also produces sporadic Little Yellow Stonefly activity from mid- to late summer, and in some years, grasshoppers abound. Hopper patterns can be very effective, and hopper/dropper combos are excellent.

As autumn arrives with low flows that make fishing easy, the willows and nearby cottonwoods begin turning to vibrant shades of yellow; nights are crisp, and mornings slow to warm, and each day on the Lemhi reminds me of why I like these small Rocky Mountain rivers: you can enjoy leisurely fishing over miles of water without the parade of drift boats seen on the famous large rivers. On the Lemhi, your attention is easily diverted by the bucolic ranch lands, soaring mountain peaks, and you may be left wondering why you have the river all to yourself. -

Toby Walrath is a Montana-based freelance writer and photographer, and the author of Wild Pride Montana: A Trapper's Journey.

Lemhi River OTEBOOK



When: Late April-October; best July-September.

Where: Central ID, south of Salmon along SR 28.

Access: Walk-and-wade fishing, usually from within the river; bank access is very limited by private property.

Headquarters: Salmon. Information: Visit Salmon Valley, www.visitsalmonvalley.com; Idaho Fish & Game Salmon Regional Office, (208) 756-2271, www.idfg.idaho.gov/region/salmon and www. idfg.idaho.gov/ifwis/fishingplanner. Lodging: Bear Country Inn, (208) 756-1499, www.bearcountryinnsalmon.com; Greyhouse Inn (B&B and cabins), (208) 756-3968, www.greyhouseinn. com; The Stage Coach Inn, (208) 756-2919, www.stagecoachinnmotel.com; Super 8 Salmon, (208) 756-8880.

Useful fly patterns: Renegade, Beetle Bug Palmer, Parachute Adams, Stimulator, Sparkle Dun, Elk Hair Caddis, Little Yellow Stone, hoppers, BH Pheasant Tail Nymph, Teeny Sparkle Nymph, San Juan Worm, Woolly Bugger, Zonker.

Appropriate gear: 4- to 6-wt. rods, floating and sinking-tip lines.

Fly shops/guides: Salmon: Salmon River Fly Box, (208) 756-1939, www.salmonriverflybox.com.

Maps: Idaho Atlas & Gazetteer by Delorme Mapping; Stream Map USA, (215) 491-4223, www. StreamMapUSA.com.

Deer Creek, CA

My Grandfather's Creek

By Lance Gray

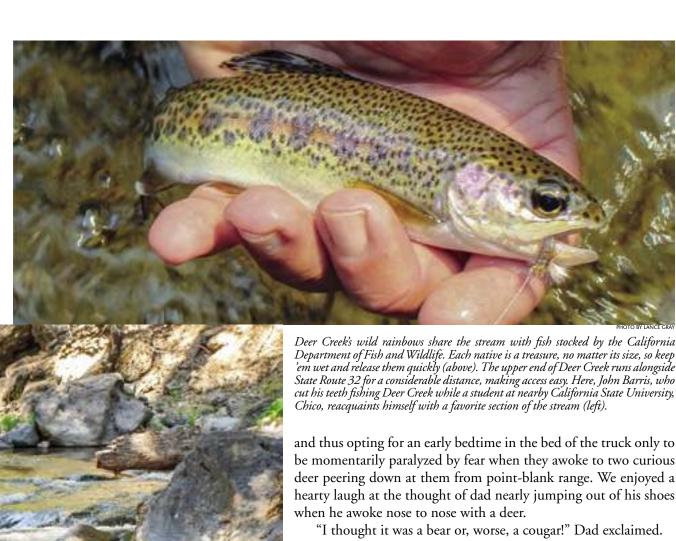
s the crow flies, we weren't that far from the old Suburban, but on foot it would be at least an 8-mile walk back to where we had parked. My dad, my brother, Lincoln Gray, and I had worked our way down the Deer Creek trail from the bridge crossing on the old Transfer Road (aka Dumb Deer Road).

We had spent the last few days casting dry flies to eagerly rising trout, eating well, and enjoying one another's company around the campfire. The expedition was drawing to a close, so when the time came to begin that

another's company around the campfire. The expedition was drawing to a close, so when the time came to begin that long hike back to camp, we lingered for a time, enjoying the scenery, hesitant not so much from trepidation over an 8-mile trek, but because we simply didn't want this family adventure to end.

During those few days, our campfire time was spent with dad telling tales about him and his father fishing this area. He regaled us with stories us of big brown trout up in the meadow taking Royal Coachmen as though they were candy. He recalled the day he and grandpa had nearly worn themselves out catching creels full of trout in Deer Creek,





and thus opting for an early bedtime in the bed of the truck only to be momentarily paralyzed by fear when they awoke to two curious deer peering down at them from point-blank range. We enjoyed a hearty laugh at the thought of dad nearly jumping out of his shoes

He continued recounting the saga, explaining that the deer had placed their front hooves on the back bumper of grandpa's Studebaker truck just to gaze into the back of the rusting old pickup bed. The story made him laugh. It made Lincoln and me look over our shoulders for cougars and bears and ominous shadows back beyond the light of the fire.

He went on and on, story after story, filling our ears and fueling our imaginations with his memories. Nights stretched into mornings, his recollections leaving us wondering on many occasions what was fact, what was embellished, and what might simply have been pure fiction.

After that long hike back from the remote reaches of Deer Creek on our last day, the weather turned cold. It was our third night at camp, and I awoke early to morning dew frosted heavily on my sleeping bag. I rushed to find some twigs, pine needles, or any other fuels to breathe life back into the smoldering ashes from the previous night's fire. As the flames perked up, and the fire gained a warming, constant glow, dad and Lincoln finally began to stir.

As the fire warmed me, I started the Primus single-burner Grasshopper propane stove, a two-legged contraption whose third leg is the propane bottle itself. It had served us well, and I was happy for its efficiency on such a chilly morning when hot coffee and sizzling bacon seemed the perfect antidote for fending off the cold. I started cooking the last six pieces of bacon in our camp larder, assuming the smell of cooking bacon wafting through the air would surely



roust the fellows from their sleeping bags. It didn't. I ate a couple of pieces of bacon, left the remainder for dad and my brother to fight over, and decided not to waste the morning. I scooped up my Powell fiberglass rod and wicker creel, and headed to the creek.

Deer Creek abounds in perfect trout habitat. In the still-chilly morning air, I watched my Rio Grande King Trude—an old western classic—alight gently behind a midstream rock in a run not far from camp. Within seconds, it disappeared in a violent swirl ted, colorful rainbow. I hesitated for a moment, thinking that the fish would make a great breakfast—this was 35 years ago, after all, and catch-and-release wasn't prevalent. Resolutely, I cleaned the fish and headed back up the bank and through the willows to our camp. My father was up with his back to the fire, warming his rear and smoking one of his Salem menthol cigarettes, with a piece of bacon in his other hand.



He looked at me, spied the trout in my hand, anticipated my intentions, and said, "That's a good idea."

At first, I thought he meant that trout for breakfast was a good idea, but when he reached for the Powell rod I was carrying, I realized he meant that the idea of him catching a trout for his own breakfast was what he had in mind. Dad walked to the creek and in short order was back with his own breakfast trout.

"Got him on the first cast," he said with a smile.

Meanwhile, the smell of the hot bacon grease cooking that little rainbow was like an alarm clock for my brother. He was begging to get a small piece of my crispy, browned

trout. I swatted at his reaching hand, and told him he needed to go catch his own breakfast. I took my trout out of the frying pan, and dad dropped his into the grease. I devoured my trout and as I enjoyed the last bite, Lincoln was walking up the trail from the creek holding a fish.

"My turn," he said.

The smell of dad's trout cooking in that bacon grease seemed to renew my hunger, even though I'd just polished off one little fried fish. I grabbed the rod back from my brother. They watched as I disappeared into the willows again.

The Creek

The headwaters for Deer Creek begin in the Lassen National Forest just north of the small mountain community of Chester. Small brooks and tiny springs converge to shape a beautiful mountain stream. As it flows down through Deer Creek Meadows, the creek gathers the flows from Lost Creek, Carter

Creek, and then the North Fork of Deer Creek. From there, Deer Creek meanders through a large meadow. The bottom turns from mud to rock, and fallen logs crisscross the winding course as the creek curls around boulders to form a truly scenic trout stream.

Once the creek flows underneath Deer Creek Highway (State Route 32), it plunges into a deepening canyon, rushing and crashing over boulders, some the size of John Deere harvesters.

The creek runs along SR 32, gaining volume from myriad feeder streams. This is Deer Creek's middle stretch, where access is easy, and where large pools tail into runs, with each such arrangement linked to the next by pocket water that stretches for hundreds of yards. This part of the creek includes 18-foot-high Upper Deer Creek Falls (1.6 miles upstream from Potato Patch Campground), created by a vast ancient lava flow, frozen in time by the creek's

cold water. The vista from the top of the overseeing lava cap is breathtaking (but be careful). The creek continues southwest as it falls through scattered boulders, deep pools, and pocket water. All told, SR 32 flows along nearly a dozen miles of the upper creek.

At the Red Steel Bridge, a well-known landmark on SR 32, the creek flows away from the road, rushing off to the west. A trailhead at the bridge leads to a creekside path that extends for some 30 miles, providing excellent access for anglers all the way down to the southwest corner of Deer Creek Flats, just west of the community of Cambellville. The trail is a highway for fly-fishing enthusiasts, who enjoy excellent fishing along with scenic terrace waterfalls, unbelievable vistas, abundant wildflowers, and many other notable sights. About 7 miles of the trail and the creek wind through the 41,000acre Ishi Wilderness, and



Near its headwaters, Deer Creek flows down from Butt Mountain and meanders through a beautiful meadow. A modicum of stealth while fishing this stretch pays dividends (above). Upstream from Elam Campground, wading anglers can find some excellent runs and pools in a very scenic stretch of Deer Creek. Elam Campground sits streamside 7 miles upstream (northeast) of Potato Patch Campground along State Route 32, and offers 15 first-come, first-served sites (left).

side trails lead off to various locations in the wilderness.

Inside the Ishi Wilderness, the creek carves its way through ancient granite with thick layers of lava spewed from Lassen Peak. In the wilderness, Deer Creek Canyon, referred to as the Devil's Parade Ground, is named for massive basalt pinnacles that form an awe-inspiring landscape. The ancient spires, hundreds of feet tall, stand guard over the chasm through which Deer Creek flows, part of the ancestral home of the Yahi people, of the Yana Tribe. If you know where to look, you can find ancient grinding mortars in the bedrock along the canyon. The wilderness itself was named for Ishi (circa 1861-1916), the last surviving member of the Yahi. His melancholic story is summarized by Wikipedia:

The rest of the Yahi (as well as many members of their parent tribe, the Yana) were killed in the California genocide in the 19th century. Ishi, who was widely acclaimed as the "last wild Indian" in America, lived most of his life isolated from modern American culture. In 1911, aged 50, he emerged near the foothills of Lassen Peak in Northern California.

Ishi, which means "man" in the Yana language, is an adopted name. The anthropologist Alfred Kroeber gave him this name because in the Yahi culture, tradition demanded that he not speak his own name until formally introduced by another Yahi. When asked his name, he said: "I have none, because there were no people to name me," meaning that there was no other Yahi to speak his name on his behalf.

Ishi was taken in by anthropologists at the University

of California, Berkeley, who both studied him and hired him as a research assistant. He lived most of his remaining five years in a university building in San Francisco. His life was depicted and discussed in multiple films and books, notably the biographical account Ishi in Two Worlds published by Theodora Kroeber in 1961.

Below Lower Deer Creek Falls, two bridge crossings provide additional drive-in access for walk-andwade anglers. Oddly named Dumb Deer Road crosses the creek a mile below the falls after departing SR 32 about 6 miles to the south. About a dozen stream miles below the falls, Ponderosa Way winds down to cross the creek. This bridge crossing is about 30 miles (and more than an hour) from Chico to the south, and is also accessible via forest roads branching off SR 32 south of Soda Springs Campground. Be sure to consult the Lassen National Forest map (see Notebook).

Historic Trout Country

The region is rich in history—and mystery. In the late 1840s, pioneer, prospector, and rancher Peter Lassen (for whom Lassen Peak is named), established the Lassen Cutoff of the Oregon Trail using the creek as a guideline for the final leg of the route. Lassen's Cutoff, however, was largely the work of a con man.

Carl Nolte explained in the San Francisco Chronicle (August 25, 1998), "...that in 1849, Lassen had convinced at least half the Forty Niners traveling overland that he knew a shortcut to the gold fields [of California]. He called it 'The Lassen Cutoff.' They wound up calling it 'The Death Route.' His shortcut turned into a nightmare journey, leading from the end of the dusty little Humboldt River in northern Nevada across a waterless desert and pitiless dry mountains. The travelers ended up exhausted and desperate, far from the gold fields.... What Lassen had done was to take a cutoff, pioneered by two brothers named Applegate, that led from Nevada to Oregon and combine it with another trail that led past his ranch and

> trading post near Chico. He hoped to profit from the travelers. In reality, it was a long detour north instead of west."

> Lassen's trading post was at the confluence of Deer Creek and the Sacramento River near what is today the small town of Vina. Lassen was murdered—a crime that has never been solved-during a trip to prospect for silver in Nevada. After his death, rumors began circulating that he had buried thousands of dollars in gold in big cooking pots all over the property in an attempt to hide his fortune while he traveled. The alleged fortune in gold has never been discovered.

> Deer Creek holds a robust population of rainbow and brown trout, and brook trout inhabit some of the tributaries. The creek's productivity has improved since the adoption of restrictive





Hook: TMC 5262, sizes 8-10

Thread: UTC 140

Tails/legs: Hareline Grizzly Flutter Legs

Body: Nature's Spirit Snowshoe Rabbit Foot Dubbing

Rib: Brown Spanflex

Body foam: Tan 3 mm fly-tying foam Wing: Nature's Spirit select cow elk Head: Tan 2 mm fly-tying foam

Indicator: Yellow 2 mm fly-tying foam

Adhesive: Wapsi Z-Ment

Foam body River Road Creations Hopper/Caddis/Ant,

Indicator River Road Creations Hopper/Caddis/Ant, cutter:

Note: For tying instructions, see page 76 of the May/ June 2019 issue of Northwest Fly Fishing.

cutter:

regulations on 31 miles of the creek in the 1990s. From Upper Deer Creek Falls to the United States Geological Survey gauging station at the mouth of Deer Creek Canyon, all fish must be released and anglers are restricted to artificial lures with single barbless hooks. The daily limit on hatchery trout or hatchery steelhead is two fish. On the lowermost stretch of Deer Creek, from the gauging station to the Sacramento River, anglers may harvest two hatchery fish (trout and steelhead) per day, but this section is open under general regulations.

The upper end of Deer Creek, upstream from Upper Deer Creek Falls, is managed under general regulations and is open to all types of sport fishing, with a five-fish daily limit. The California Department of Fish &Wildlife stocks this stretch with trout. Tributaries to the upper end of the creek are also governed by general regulations.

Thanks to catch-and-release rules for wild trout governing a significant reach of the stream, the Deer Creek fishery has regenerated during the past two decades. Trout measuring up to 18 inches are now common.

Fly anglers enjoy success with a wide range of tactics, but Deer Creek is tailor-made for dry flies. Watching a large trout materialize from the depths to rise for a floating fly is mesmerizing, and many classic patterns are effective. Dry/dropper combinations, with a small nymph as the dropper, are deadly, and for targeting the largest trout, especially browns, try swinging large streamers.

Chinook salmon and steelhead ascend the lower twothirds of Deer Creek after navigating their way up the Sacramento River. Last year, a new fish-passage facility at Lower Deer Creek Falls (river mile 42.5) was completed, opening more than 5 additional miles of spawning and rearing habitat for anadromous fish, up to Upper Deer Creek Falls.

Making Memories

State Route 32, from Chico to the junction of SR 36, is a busy road these days, burgeoning with commuters and big rigs. Many people complain about the route being too curvy, dangerous, and time consuming.

But when I drive this road, I recall fond memories of the pocket water I fished with friends and family, I remember special days on idyllic stretches of the creek, including the places where my children landed their first trout. Deer Creek is my family's creek, my Grandfather's creek, where he helped instill a love of fly fishing and the outdoors that has permeated four generations of my family. On this route, I see more than just a road running along a creek; I see the perfect place for fly fishers to make memories, a place where wild trout eagerly take dry flies. -

Lance Gray, www.lancegraycompany.com, is a professional flyfishing guide and instructor who lives in Willows, California.

Deer Creek OTEBOOK



When: Last Saturday in April-November 15.

Where: Northeast CA, via SR 32 and SR 36, with access to the stretch below Lower Deer Creek Falls from secondary roads (Ponderosa Way and Dumb Deer Road).

Access: Walk-and-wade fishing from turnouts along SR 32, Potato Patch Campground Trail, and Deer Creek Trail.

Headquarters: Lassen National Forest, Almanor Ranger Station, (530) 258-2141.

Appropriate gear: 3- to 5-wt. rods, floating and sinking lines, 5- and 10-ft. sinking leaders, 4X-6X tippets.

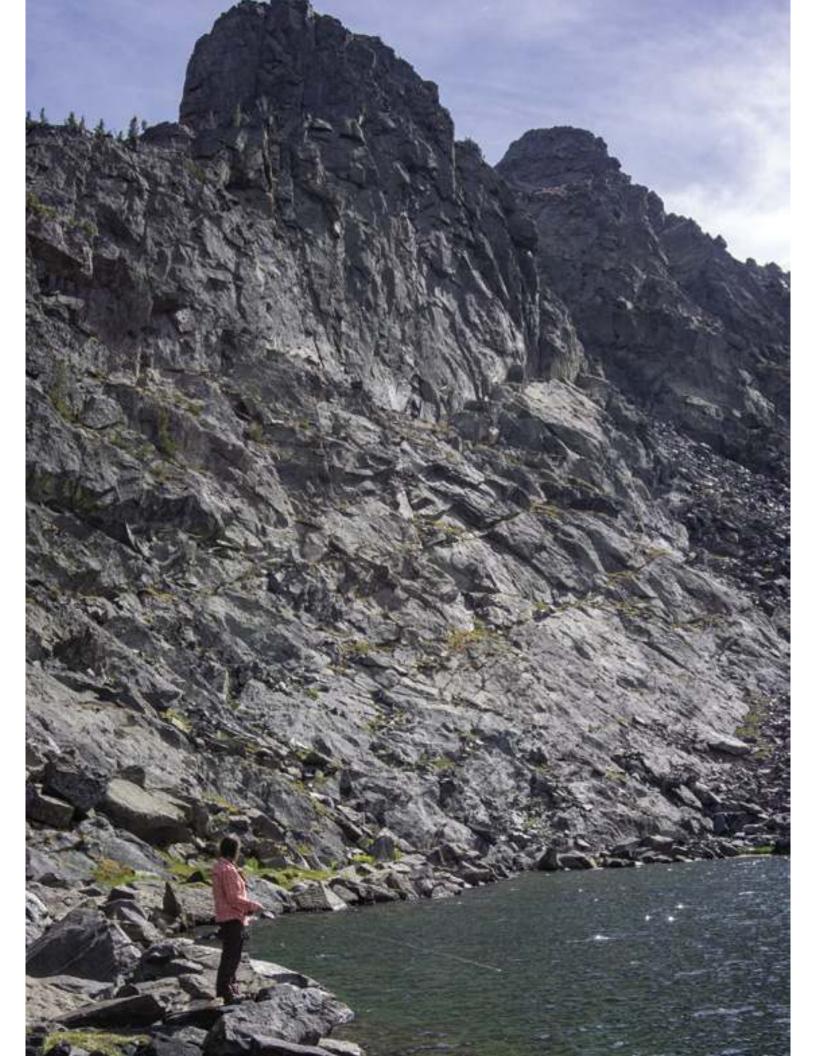
Useful fly patterns: Parachute Adams, Royal Coachman Trude, Yellow Calf Tail Palmer, Rio Grande King Trude, Stoneflopper, Parachute Ant, Royal Humpy, yellow Stimulator, orange Stimulator, Royal Wulff, Hare's Ear Nymph, Prince Nymph, Bird's Nest, Lance's X-May, Hogan's Red-Headed Stepchild, Mickey Finn, Barr's Slumpbuster.

Necessary accessories: Polarized sunglasses, fly floatant, wading staff, wading boots, drinking water, day-hiking gear.

Nonresident license: \$24.33/2 days, \$48.34/10 days, \$130.42/annual.

Fly shops/quides: Chico: Fish First, (530) 343-8300, www.fishfirst.com; Sierra Stream & Mountain, (530) 345-4261, www.sierrastreamflyshop.com. Hogan Brown, (530) 514-2453, www.hgbflyfishing.com, Mac Noble, (530) 343-8300, www.fishfirst.com; Lance Gray & Company, (530) 517-2204, www.lancegrayandcompany.com.

Maps: Lassen National Forest map, www.nationalforestmapstore.com/product-p/ca-52.htm; Ishi, Thousand Lakes, and Caribou Wildernesses map, www. nationalforestmapstore.com/product-p/ca-33.htm.





Tobacco Root Mountains, MT

Accessible and Exquisite

By Joshua Bergan

he Tobacco Root Mountain Range grows tobacco like Wyoming's Firehole River is made of fire—you must dig a little deeper to understand how such names came about. But the "Roots" by any other name give up as many gorgeous trout and provide as many vistas as that famous river. The Tobacco Roots, a circular range due south of Whitehall, Montana, comprise more than 30 peaks above 10,000 feet and just as many lakes that host trout. The range is thought to have been named after a velvety plant known as mullein that early prospectors smoked in lieu of tobacco.

These crags conceal more drive-to and short-hike lakes than in many nearby ranges, and there are no grizzly bears (yet, officially). But other wildlife such as black bears, mountain goats, and moose abound. Many of the access roads are only passable if you have a high-clearance, four-wheel-drive vehicle that you're not too worried about. Most are old mining and logging roads turned jeep trails and are quite rugged.

Many of the lakes are actually reservoirs, built during mining operations as far back as the 1860s, and some are still used for irrigation. As such, this range almost has an industrial feel to it. Don't be put off by the sight of campertrailers, as well as ATVs and other off-road-style vehicles.

After exploring the many waters in the Tobacco Roots, I've compiled descriptions of several of my favorites.

Cliff, Mine, and McKelvey Lakes

These three stunningly beautiful natural lakes hold eager cutthroat trout for anglers willing to make the steep hike on a rugged old decommissioned jeep trail. You gain about 3,500 feet total, and lose about 1,500, but average about 450 vertical feet per mile on the ascent.

Both Yellowstone and westslope cutts have been stocked throughout the Tobacco Roots over time, but only native westslopes like this one are stocked today. Wild populations of Yellowstone cutthroats are still available if you know where to look (above). Gneiss Lake is the highest lake with trout in the Tobacco Roots at about 9,500 feet, and is accessible by hiking from the road-accessible Branham Lakes. Gneiss holds wild Yellowstone cutthroat trout that are into dry flies. Bring your camera (left).

Gorgeous McKelvey Lake comes first on the trail and offers easy-to-catch stocked westslope cutthroats up to about 12 inches. I landed two small cutts on my very first cast here: one fish took a flying ant pattern while the other grabbed the dropper fly, an orange scud. The lake is stocked every fourth year.

Mine Lake, about 0.5 mile beyond McKelvey, offers a seemingly endless supply of pure-strain cutts. On my visit, they were willing to eat anything I tried: orange scud, Mormon cricket patterns, Dave's Hopper, PMX. Rumors suggest that Mine Lake yields a few huge cutts—fish of more than 6 pounds—that generally stay deep, so breaking out a sinking line might be worth the effort.

McKelvey and Mine provide plenty of action, but Cliff Lake is the belle of this ball. Among the prettiest places I've ever fished, this scenic lake—named for the massive rock walls that rise precipitously from the water—holds colorful cutthroat trout that can approach 20 inches. When a friend and I were there on a bluebird Saturday in July, we found lots of 12- to 18-inch cutts cruising the shallows in the bay where the trail meets the lake. They were willing to eat, but wised up quickly. We surmised that Cliff Lake's cutts are self-sustaining. Many of those we caught were full of eggs, and some trout occupied the outlet stream. Cliff is about a third of a mile from Mine.

To get there, take North Meadow Creek Road west from McAllister on US Route 287. About 1.5 miles after entering the national forest, stay left at the fork onto Forest Road 965 and you'll arrive at the trailhead (45.517436, -111.893141) in about 2.5 miles.

South Meadow Creek Lake

When I finally arrived at South Meadow Creek Lake, it was teeming with small rainbows and cuttbows. But I'll get back to the fishing after I explain about getting there. I had heard that it's a drive-to lake. A friend told me he had seen travel trailers make the drive, and I found an online forum thread from 2013 that suggested access was via an "easy jeep trail." That is not (or is no longer) the case.



Cliff Lake is a gorgeous mountain tarn that holds beautiful wild cutthroat trout. The fish can be pickier here than in nearby Mine and Mckelvey Lakes, but they are also bigger.

Callibaetis Sparkle Dun



Hook: TMC 100, sizes 14-16

Thread: Tan 6/0

Tail: Olive or mayfly brown Z-lon

Rib: Silver Midge-Bodi Body: Gray Antron

Wing: Black-tipped deer hair

Let me be clear: this is a narrow, ATV-only path that you should not drive unless you have a high-clearance, four-wheel-drive vehicle built for off-road conditions, and have the experience and confidence to drive the most rugged so-called roads.

However, I negotiated it in my Ford F350. It was a tense, sketchy, hard-on-my-truck mistake. I thought I had high-centered the truck at one point going across a scree field, and we left plenty of paint on those rocks. The road is very narrow, overgrown with tree branches, and in many stretches is paralleled by a steep drop down the mountainside. We were well past the point of no return by the time it was apparent that this was not a great idea. Slow-going ATVs should be fine and are certainly the wise choice.

I recommend that anglers park and either hike or take an ATV for the 3.2 miles from the fork with the final sign to South Meadow Creek Lake, where Washington Creek Road goes to the right. To get there, take South Meadow Creek Road from McAllister for about 8 miles to the fork where you should park (45.460192, -111.869698).

Branham, Gneiss, and Thompson Lakes

The two scenic Branham Lakes are accessible by car and offer fishing,

camping, and canoeing. They are good options for anglers who want drive-in access, rather than hiking. The fishing is for small brook trout. Mill Creek Road, which leads to the Branham Lakes from Sheridan, slowly degrades to a rocky gravel route by the end. The U.S. Forest Service does not recommend camper trailers because of the road, but I think most could make it. There is a no-fee Forest Service campground at the upper lake with six campsites and vault toilets.

Though they are in close proximity, Gneiss Lake and Thompson Reservoir have little in common. At times, apparently, Thompson offers good fishing. A friend of mine reported ample action in 2014, but more recently, my wife, Liz, and I found this lake to be little more than a mud puddle with a few inch-long fish swimming about. I think it's possible that some of the wild Yellowstone cutts in Gneiss Lake could make their way down to Thompson Reservoir via the South Fork of Indian Creek during springtime's high water; if so, early season would be the best time to fish Thompson.

At above 9,500 feet, Gneiss Lake is one of the highest lakes in the Tobacco Roots. It was last stocked with Yellowstone cutthroat trout in 1988-more than 30 years ago. I knew it could be fishless and especially after seeing what little remained of Thompson's fishery, my hopes dwindled.

But mountain lakes can be enigmatic, and Liz and I arrived to find rising trout and another angler, and even a couple of gutted cutthroats hung from a stringer in the shallows. The pretty, 12- to 14-inch cutts preferred dries, but small scuds fished on sinking lines also worked. Because the cutts are apparently selfsustaining, generations removed from earlier stockings, I imagine Gneiss Lake holds specimens even larger than those we caught.

To get to Thompson and Gneiss, follow the trail that starts at upper Branham's dam up to the ridgeline to the north. From there, the trail dissipates, and you have to navigate on your own. It's about 5.9 miles total to hike from upper Branham to Thompson to Gneiss and back. If you skip Thompson Reservoir, the round-trip hike is about 4.6 miles.

Jackson, Sunrise, and Twin Lakes

This set of pretty lakes offers middling fishing without a strenuous hike. Access is by taking Wisconsin Creek Road from Sheridan. The road eventually becomes a rugged jeep trail that leads to a meadow on Wisconsin Creek, if you dare drive that far. Wisconsin Creek holds brook trout and brown trout.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) reports cutts up to about 15 inches in Jackson Lake, but on my trip, we caught 4- to 8-inchers, perhaps because they had been relatively recently stocked (it is stocked every four years) and had not yet had time to grow. The lake was low, which generally equates to elevated water temperatures, and that, too, may have affected the fishing. In any case, certainly Jackson can be good at times, or so say the rumors.

Deep and intensely blue, Sunrise Lake, sitting at 9,350 feet beneath gorgeous Sunrise Peak, is one of the most scenic lakes in the Tobacco Roots. The flipside is that the fishing is often limited to small, easily-fooled cutts. To catch them at their largest, consider venturing to Sunrise Lake at the end of the four-year stocking cycle, when the remaining fish can reach 19 inches or so. Sunrise had been stocked with Yellowstone cutthroat trout until 2002, when stocking of westslopes, native to this part of Montana, resumed.





Big westslope cutthroat trout are the exception at most Tobacco Roots lakes. They are more common in lakes between 7,000 and 8,000 feet in elevation because the growing season is longer, and the lakes are more fertile compared to higher lakes (above). Louise Lake is probably the best trophy-trout lake in the Tobacco Roots. Expect company and savvy fish (below).

This set of Twin Lakes is found beyond Jackson and Sunrise Lakes at the end of the trail at about 9,200 feet. It is another very scenic spot, and you are likely to have these waters to yourself. Only big Twin Lake has fish; the lower lake is more of a marsh. We caught 6- to 12-inch cutts, but saw others up to 16 inches. The upper lake had been stocked with cutthroats every two years from 1984 until 2014, when it reverted to being stocked every four years.

Boulder Lakes

These two reservoirs below 10,390-foot APA Mountain near Twin Bridges offer jeep-trail access, gorgeous views, and small trout. Lower Boulder Lake has brook trout and was last stocked with McBride-strain Yellowstone cutthroat trout in 1989. However, I don't rate Lower Boulder Lake

very high for fishing. There are many inlets around the lake, some of them springs, some snowmelt. We found most of the fish hanging out around the braided inlet that cascades down from the upper lake.

I had read that the jeep trail to the lower lake is "a cake walk" and found that to be mostly accurate. While it is definitely a jeep trail (I did knock my undercarriage a time or two), I think it's one of the easier jeep trails in the Tobacco Roots.

Upper Boulder Lake holds small, pure-strain cutts. The

largest we caught was about 11 inches, but we saw one larger, probably around 14 inches. They are pretty fish that will eat dries. The mile from Lower Boulder to Upper Boulder is best suited for hiking, not driving.

Louise Lake and Her Neighbors

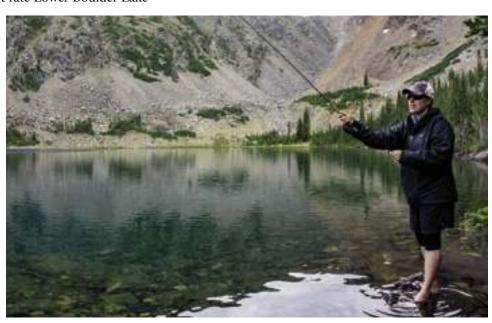
Rumors of cutthroats upward of 24 inches make Louise Lake an attractive destination, but good fishing is far from a guarantee. A 1988 survey revealed 15 fish that averaged about 16 inches. While today Louise Lake holds cutthroats, decades ago it produced some huge golden trout after being first stocked with these exotics in 1956. In more recent decades, Louise has been stocked with Yellowstone and westslope cutts and is currently on the every-four-year stocking plan.

Fertile enough to offer trout lots of food options, Louise Lake abounds in caddisflies, scuds, Chironomids, and *Callibaetis* mayflies, along with a variety of terrestrial insects that routinely end up on the water. When trout feed selectively during the *Callibaetis* hatch, try retrieving a *Callibaetis* nymph pattern if dry flies don't produce. Wet flies ranging from midge pupae up to Woolly Buggers are effective, and sometimes even a skated dry fly will do the trick.

The scenic hike to Louise Lake—the Louise Lake National Recreation Trail—begins at a trailhead about 21 miles south of I-90 at Cardwell and covers 3.3 miles, and gains 1,300 feet, with many switchbacks. It's a popular lake and can get crowded, so if possible, visit in late June or late September.

South Boulder Road leads to the Louise Lake trailhead, and if you drive past the turnoff for that, the road continues about 2.5 rugged miles up to the trailhead for the scenic Sailor, Globe, and Brannan Lakes, which offer small trout.

Sailor Lake, historically stocked with cutts, rainbows, and even lake trout, is overrun by stunted brook trout these days. According to FWP fisheries biologist Ron Spoon,



anglers still report catching the occasional lake trout. "We experimented with adding lake trout to reduce a stunted brook trout population at Sailor about 30 years ago," he explains. He adds, "Anglers still catch brookies, along with an occasional moderate-size [14- to 16-inch] lake trout."

Globe Lake sits about a quarter mile northeast and slightly downhill of Sailor Lake. It has never been stocked, according to FWP records, but fishing logs from 1980 and 1999 indicate brook trout. Indeed, I caught several 6- to 8-inch brookies along the downed timber on the west side. There is a faint, short, steep trail to Globe from Sailor Lake.

Upper Brannan is a narrow, shallow tarn at about 9,200 feet under a gorgeous ridgeline. On my visit to these lakes, I saw a pair of mountain goats galloping up a steep talus slope at Upper Brannan, and spooked a dusky grouse along the shore of Lower Brannan. The gin-clear water in the upper lake allows for endless sight-fishing to brook trout, rainbows, and cutts that average larger than fish in the neighboring lakes. Interestingly, the brookies, up to perhaps 14 inches, are often larger than the cutts and 'bows—and spookier. The Brannan Lakes reportedly produced brook trout up to 10 pounds in years past, according to Dick Konizeski's out-of-print guidebook, The Montanan's Fishing Guide (East of the Divide). But I haven't seen one that would push the 2-pound mark. Lower Brannan is shallower than Upper Brannan and its trout reach about 12 inches.

Big Sky Alternatives

Montana's famous rivers claim the glory among anglers nationwide, but the Big Sky state offers tremendous and oft-unheralded opportunities for fly fishers who revel in mountain lakes. After all, Montana boasts more than 3.4 million acres of designated wilderness alongside many thousands of acres of roadless backcountry, such as in the Tobacco Root Mountains. The many fishable lakes in this off-the-radar mountain range not only provide an alternative to the well-known rivers-particularly when stream temperatures elevate during summer-but as a whole they also serve as alluring destinations in their own right 🖛

Joshua Bergan is the Associate Publisher at Wilderness Adventures Press, where he wrote the Flyfisher's Guide to Southwest Montana's Mountain Lakes.

Tobacco Root Mountains NOTEBOOK



When: June-November. The highest lakes are generally ice-free from July to October.

Where: Southwest MT.

Access: A mix of hike-in and drive-to lakes.

Headquarters: Sheridan and Ennis offer all services and amenities. Whitehall, Silver Star, Twin Bridges, Alder, Virginia City, McAllister, Norris, Harrison, Pony, and Cardwell offer limited amenities and services, and lots of interesting history. For more information, check out Visit Southwest Montana at www.southwestmt.com.

Appropriate gear: 4- to 5-wt. rods (switch rods are handy where there is a lack of room to backcast); floating, sinking-tip, and sinking lines; 4X-5X tippets.

Useful fly patterns: Rollover Scud (pink, orange), Woolly Bugger, Balanced Leech, Simi Seal Leech, Pigpen Leech, Bloom's Parachute Flying Ant, PMX, Stimulator, Humpy, hoppers, beetles, Callibaetis Sparkle Dun, Renegade, Griffith's Gnat, Rojo Midge, beadhead Midge Pupa, Pheasant Tail Nymph, The Blob.

Necessary accessories: Polarized sunglasses, comfortable hiking boots and socks, sunscreen, bug spray, bear spray, camera, landing net, 4x4 vehicle if planning to drive jeep trails.

Nonresident license: \$50/2 consecutive days, \$81/10 consecutive days, \$111/annual.

Fly shops: Ennis: The Tackle Shop, (406) 682-4263, www.thetackleshop.com; Madison River Fishing Company, (800) 227-7127, www.mrfc.com; Trout Stalkers Fly Shop, (406) 682-5150, www.montanatrout.com. Twin Bridges: Four Rivers Fly Shop, (406) 684-5651, www.4riversmontana.com.

Books/maps: Flyfisher's Guide to Southwest Montana's Mountain Lakes by Joshua Bergan; Tobacco Root Trail Guide by Teresa Hammel. Tobacco Root Mountains Outdoor Recreation Map by Beartooth Publishing; Lake and Fishing Directory, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest by USDA.



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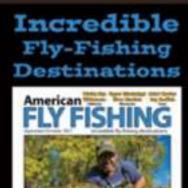
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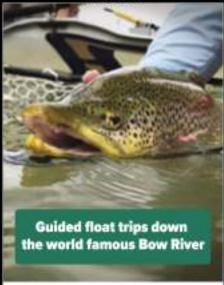
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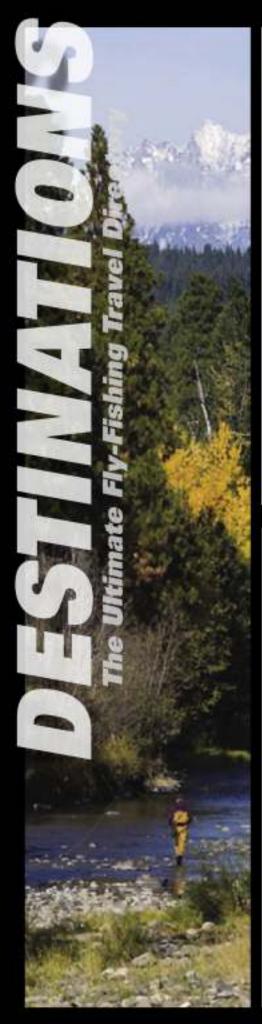




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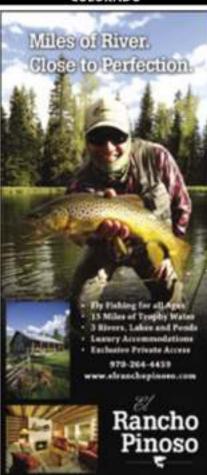
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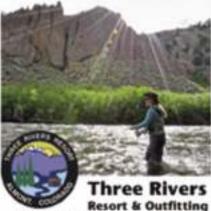


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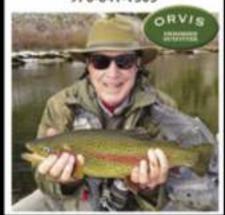
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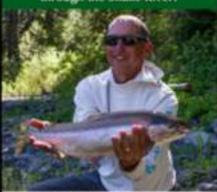




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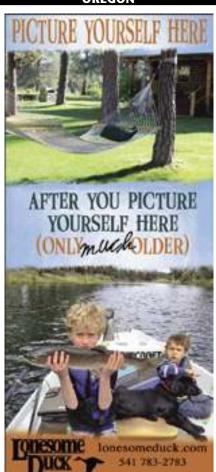
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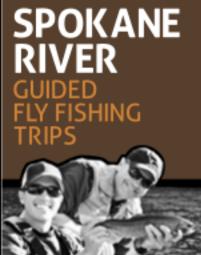


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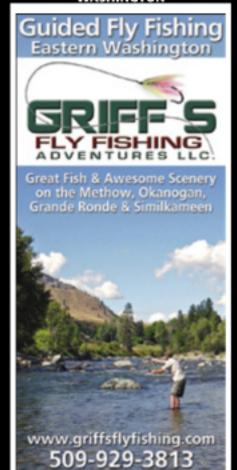


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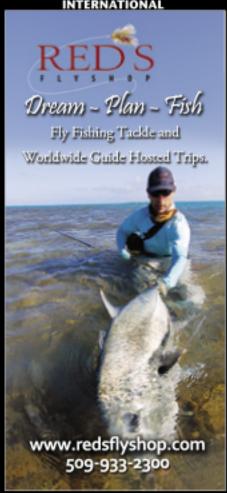
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New Products

Echo Shadow X Rods

Echo's new high-performance Shadow X rods are perfect for elite-level, competitive Euro-nymph anglers, and every bit as functional for everyday anglers who use modern nymphing techniques to conquer the most sophisticated trout in the most challenging waters. In engineering the Shadow X, Echo consulted Euro-nymphing experts Mariusz Wroblewski and Pete Erickson, and 2018 fly-fishing world champion Norm Maktima, to create a rod that is dialed in to perform



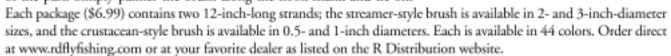
at the sport's highest levels. These rods are 20 percent lighter than Echo's popular Shadow II series rods, thanks to the most advanced high-modulus graphite available. When you need to feel every nuance happening under the water, the lightest, most sensitive rod can be the difference between first and 10th place—or the difference between a massive trout in the net on a difficult river and a day of frustration. What's more, Shadow X rods deliver elite performance at midrange prices: the four different models retail for \$459.99. The series includes 10-foot 2- and 3-weights, a 10.5-foot 3-weight, and an 11-foot 3-weight; all are four-piece rods. For more information, go to www.echoflyfishing.com/project/shadow-x.

Just Add H20 Polar Dub

Polar Dub, made from Just Add H2O's popular Polar Fiber, features a subtle UV flash. Similar to Senyo's Laser Dub, this new material can be used for wings, collars, dubbed bodies, and many other fly parts. Highly versatile, Polar Dub (\$2.99 per pack) is widely applicable for trout patterns, but also ideal for a variety of panfish, carp, and bass patterns, and even for bonefish flies. Choose out of 27 colors at www.rdflyfishing.com.

Lively Leg Brushes

An ingenious compilation of Just Add H2O original synthetic fibers, micro rubber legs, and ultrathin steel wire, Lively Leg Brushes facilitate a whole range of possibilities in creating innovative and effective patterns with wiggly, buggy bodies. Baitfish streamers, crab and shrimp patterns, Woolly Buggers and leeches, creative bass bugs, and a variety of other flies get a major facelift from these easy-to-use brushes, and the time required to tie on individual rubber legs is a thing of the past. Simply palmer the brush along the hook shank and tie off.



Primavera Fly-Fishing Lanyards

Artistic beauty meets functionality with custom-made fly-fishing lanyards by Primavera Leathers, based in North Carolina. These distinctive lanyards, made by leather artist Evenlight Eagles, are designed to move with your body and stay out of the way, even when you net fish. Each lanyard is cut by hand, then oiled, infused with wax, and corded using an ancient spiral braiding technique known for its strength, beauty, and durability. The lanyards are accented with waxed linen in your choice of color and fringe. Beaded fringes feature glass and bone beads that are hand-dyed with black walnut hull, coffee, and teas. Made from elk and deer leather, Primavera lanyards are fully adjustable for a custom fit and feature an elk-skin neck pad, a tippet bar made of bone, a wool fly pad, snaps and split-rings for tools, and clips for attaching the lanyard to clothing or gear. Depending on the model, the lanyards have either a bone stabilizer bar or a hidden internal wire. For more details, including color options-and to order your unique lanyard-visit www.primaveraleathers.com or call (828) 773-6256.

Patagonia Women's Sunshade Hoody

Summer is upon us, and whether you're looking to escape to the bonefish flats or seeking the perfect sunny-day garment, Patagonia's technical Sunshade Hoody will help you stay cool and covered in hot-weather conditions. If you need protection from the sun but don't like wearing a hat, mask, and gloves, this stylish and flattering hooded sun shirt fits beautifully and works hard to keep you comfortable through the hottest days on the tropical flats. Made from ultralight, quick-drying, super-breathable 100 percent polyester with 50+ UPF sun protection, the Sunshade provides full upper-body coverage, with a cool, airy feel and a looser cut for ease of movement. The hood shields the head and neck and easily fits over a baseball cap; the wrap-over design at the neck provides better airflow while shading the throat. A hidden zippered pocket on the lower-left hem holds small essentials, and thumb holes on the cuffs keep the sleeves over your hands for additional protection. Available in four color/pattern choices, the Sunshade Hoody retails for \$69 at Patagonia retailers and at www.patagonia.com.



Orvis PRO Vest

There's a time and place for a minimalist vest that feels like you're wearing next to nothing—but not when you're carrying a boatload of gear. That's when you need the new Orvis PRO Vest, ergonomically designed so you can effortlessly haul everything you need for an epic adventure. Boasting 18 ingeniously designed pockets, the PRO Vest (\$198 at www.orvis.com) features a fitted design so it conforms to your body, with lofted spacer mesh at the shoulders to cushion the load, a padded collar, and an adjustable front closure that slides vertically for a custom fit. The interior features comfortable stretch mesh. Beyond the comfort construction, the PRO Vest is loaded with the kind of perfectly engineered convenience features you expect in Orvis gear:

rigid compression-molded main lower pockets with front panels that conform to the load, a large pass-through gamestyle pocket under a full-zip rear pocket with a mesh panel divider, two fly-drying patches, multiple daisy-chain gear loops, elastic loops to attach tippet bars, an internal webbing hanging loop, and a net holder centered on the rear yoke.

CGear Sand-Free Ventolation Sandals and Flip-flops

come in a full range of men's and women's sizes at www.ventolation.com.

CGear Ventolation sandals and flip-flops eat sand for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, thanks to an innovative removable insole system that vents sand, water, and air through channels in the sole so your feet stay clean, cool, and dry. Slip-resistant and quick-drying, they are ideal for anglers fishing on beaches and shallow flats or casting from a boat deck, and so comfortable they make great everyday footwear. Underneath the removable insole, anatomical columns and an elevated center force sand, dirt particles, and water to travel to the sides of the shoe, where such debris is forced out through ventilating slots. The perforated sole expels water and sand with every step, and is easy to remove for cleaning or to swap out colors. In addition to keeping sand and water buildup out of the shoes, the perforations also deliver cooling airflow to the feet. The sandals (\$39.99) and flip-flops (\$34.99)

Petzl Duo S Headlamp

Lighting tech has made huge strides in recent years. Lithium-ion batteries and LED bulbs have revolutionized the industry—and nowhere is this fact more illuminated, so to speak, than with the Petzl Duo S headlamp. Sure, these are pricey lamps at \$450, but you can absolutely exult in how you deal with dark. No more stumbling home in a weak cone of illumination. No more clueless peering past the fringe of a shallow beam. No more sudden power outages that leave you in the dark. This baby will not only turn night into day but will outlast a

basket of lesser lamps, and it's rechargeable, waterproof, and shockproof, and has Face2Face anti-glare technology. The Duo S makes travel to and from streamsides a walk in the park with a whopping 1,100-lumen boost function, along with five other modes. For more details, visit www.petzl.com/US/en/Professional/High-performance-headlamps/ DUO-S. -Rob Lyon

In the Vise

DC's Down Under Thunder/By Dennis Collier

s we climbed into the truck and exchanged the usual morning greetings, our guide for the day made a prophetic announcement: "You probably won't catch more than a few fish where we are headed

today; you'll be working the banks with streamers, and those you do catch will be big!"

We were launching on a long and remote tailwater float below one of the impoundments on Wyoming's North Platte River. After logging numerous floats on the highly popular Grey Reef section below Alcova Dam, we were more than ready to leave the crowds behind and explore new water several miles southeast of Casper.

Our guide was right. The fish were few but big, the canyon scenery was awesome, and we had the entire river to ourselves.

The Platte River Special streamer pattern is a Wyoming favorite; it originally consisted of only brown and yellow hackle feather wings and a brown and yellow hackle collar—no tail or body material added. Beautiful in its simplicity and renowned in that neck of the woods for its better-than-average fish-catching prowess, the Platte River Special demonstrates that there's something about that color combination that the river's meat-eating salmonids find hard to resist.

The Down Under Thunder streamer pattern utilizes that same color palette, but features a lot of lively and lithe movement, thanks to the leg-infused dubbing and tail made from silky arctic fox fur. I've always liked scruffy streamers, and this one meets that criterion. I also

Materials

Hook: Owner Cutting Point, size 4

Shank: Copper-orange 25 mm Senyo's articulated

Link: 40-pound Power Pro braided monofilament

Thread: Cream or brown Veevus, size 8/0

Eyes: Yellow/black painted lead dumbbell

Tag: Root beer flat Diamond Braid

Tail: Fiery brown and yellow arctic fox fur Flash: Orange Crush New Age Holo Flash

Body/collar: MS Bugger Dub Big Horn dubbing

like painted lead eyes, which add a visual marker for the pursuing fish to lock in on.

I'm a Colorado resident and do most of my fishing locally and in neighboring Wyoming, but the Down Under Thunder is equally at home in distant waters. I've seen too many photos of huge brown trout caught and released in little Pennsylvania streams and upper Midwest rivers of renown not to validate its worth to anglers in similar environs. It also effectively imitates the round goby that inhabit the Great Lakes, making this fly valuable in the hands of anglers pursing huge carp and smallmouth bass in those waters.

I tie most of my streamer patterns on Senyo's articulated shanks with trailing stinger hooks, or as tube flies, which allow a wide variety of hook styles to be added and subtracted at my discretion. You can extend the pattern profile by tying some arctic fox fur on the trailing stinger hook. The jointed effect adds a lot of enticing movement during the retrieve.

Leg-infused dubbing is available from a few sources; I'm partial to the products available at the Fly Tyers Dungeon, (406) 396-3949, www.flytyersdungeon.com, a small operation located in a tiny western Montana town. They offer a great selection of dubbings, as well as other items, and their prices would bring a smile to the face of Scrooge himself. Fly Tyers Dungeon's MS Bugger Dub Big Horn yellow/brown dubbing, with all its legs, is an integral part of this fly, though this pattern lends itself to a host of other fish-catching color combinations, so think outside the box.

Dennis Collier, www.dennis-collier.com, is a creative fly tier and ardent fly angler who lives in Colorado.



Step 1: Secure the articulated shank in the vise and tie in a set of painted lead eyes directly behind the hook eye. Next, attach the braided mono link material to the shank, extending a loop to where you anticipate the tail will end. You can attach the stinger hook at this point or do so later.



Step 4: Wrap the dubbing noodle forward in touching wraps to just behind the eyes. Make sure the body/collar is big and bulky. Rough up the material with a dubbing brush to make it scraggly.



Step 2: Tie in a short section of flat Diamond Braid for a tag. Next, tie in clumps of fiery brown, then yellow, then fiery brown arctic fox. Comb out all the soft underfur from the hair to better compress the material. Tie in several strands of New Age Holo Flash on top of the hair stack.



Step 5: Carefully slide the tip of a sharp scissors blade through the dubbing to cut and release any doubled-over legs. Again, brush out the collar.



Step 3: Create a dubbing loop and wax the thread. Insert a generous amount of dubbing material in the loop and spin just enough to trap the material, but not so tight as to compress the scruffiness of the noodle.



Step 6: Optional: Place a small amount of dubbing material onto the thread and figure-eight around the eyes, ending up right behind the eyes. Whip-finish and cement the head.

In the Vise

May Break/By John E. Wood

■he first time I encountered a hatch of big drake mayflies, in this case Green Drakes, was in the Sierra Nevada in central California, many years ago. I stumbled upon a hatch in a creek where it seemed every trout was involved in the feeding frenzy. The closest match I had was a big Parachute Adams. I fooled a few of the feeding trout, but the big brown trout at the head of the run wouldn't even give the fly a look. That evening I tied a dozen big Catskill-style dry imitations.

I carried those flies for nearly 10 years before I had another Green Drake encounter. By that time, the hooks had rusted and the wings were crushed. Surprisingly, those crushed flies performed extremely well, taking one hungry Wyoming cutthroat after another. The only catch, so to speak, was that the rusting hooks didn't hold the bigger trout, snapping off under the weight. Frantically I tied another batch of flies that evening for use the next day.

When the hatch started the following afternoon, I was there armed with fresh flies and ready for action. The trout were feeding just as heavily and eagerly as the day before, but my catch rate was a small fraction of what it had been the day before. That evening I called a friend to give a report and express my frustration. He suggested that the beat-up flies may have more closely resembled the emerging adults and that's what the trout were keying on. That got me thinking and tinkering.

At the time, I was able to tie at night, then get out and try the flies the next afternoon for 10 days straight. Not realizing it at the time, what I came up with was a pattern much like the Quigley Cripple, but with additional triggers not found on the original: a longer marabou tail, with flash added; the mottled shades of the tail and abdomen; and the halo effect produced by an abdomen shroud made from Antron fibers. I added these features while reading The Dry Fly: New Angles by Gary LaFontaine. By the time I got the pattern where I thought it should be, the hatch had ended and all I could do was

Materials

TMC 5212 (2XL dry fly), sizes 10-14 Hook:

Thread: Light olive, size 6/0

Tail: 2 strands of olive Pearl Krystal Flash,

and light olive and gray marabou barb

Abdomen: Long, slender light olive and gray

marabou barbs from mature blood

quills

Thorax: Peacock herl

Thorax shroud: Dun Antron fibers

Wing: Natural southern deer hair

Hackle: Dun dry-fly hackle, one size smaller

than standard for hook size

NOTE: Other productive color combinations

are dark olive/light olive, dark olive/

gray, and olive dun/gray.

wait until my next Green Drake encounter. Luckily, it wasn't 10 more years.

A few months later, on the Gallatin River in Yellowstone National Park, Montana, my son and I encountered a diminishing hatch of Gray Drakes (Siphlonurus) and we enjoyed productive fishing. Later that week, the Gardiner River in Yellowstone also acted as a productive proving ground where we took Yellowstone cutthroat amid heavy fishing pressure.

The real test, however, came three years later, on the Taylor River in Colorado, during a hatch of Green Drakes. Picking my way through a horde of other anglers, I took so many trout that by the end of the day all but one of my

> May Break supply was chewed beyond recognition. While others were taking an occasional trout, I spent so much time with my rod bent that my forearms ached the next day. Though I can hardly take credit for the design or even the triggers used to

make this pattern so effective, I do enjoy tying and fishing it, and the trout overwhelmingly seem to approve.

John E. Wood, www.jwoodflyfish.com, is a freelance writer, photographer, and commercial fly tier/designer whose travels take him around the country.

Step 1: Start the tying thread one-third of the way back on the hook shank and wind it to the hook bend, leaving a 3-inch thread tag. Tie in the Krystal Flash and trim to the length of the hook shank. Tie in eight to 10 marabou tips of each color as the tail. Bind the material butts up to the thread starting point, trim and cover, then return the thread to the hook bend.

Step 2: Select eight to 10 slender, tapered marabou barbs from marabou blood quills of each color. Stack them, aligning the tips. Secure the barbs by their tips using as little length as possible, binding them down securely with minimal thread wraps. Bring the thread forward, leaving the front third of the hook shank exposed.

Step 3: Pull the marabou barbs gently upward, then bring the tag end of thread up alongside the marabou. Spin the marabou and thread into a snug "rope," then wind it forward in touching wraps to the thread starting point. Secure the rope and trim the butts. Cover half the exposed hook shank with thread.

Step 4: Tie in three strands of peacock herl, twist them into a rope, and make three full wraps in front of the abdomen. With the hook upside down, tie in a small bunch of Antron fibers on the near side of the hook, folding them to the far side, then secure the fold with tight thread wraps. Trim the Antron to length.

Step 5: Build a thread base between the hook eye and the peacock herl. Move the thread to one hook-eye length back from the eye. Cut and stack a small bunch of deer hair, tie the bundle of hair in with the tips pointing forward, then wrap the thread back to the thorax, creating a base for the hackle. Trim the deer hair butts to length so they reach the back of the thorax.

Step 6: Tie in a stiff dry-fly hackle at the back of the thread base over the deer hair. Make four full wraps of hackle progressing forward. Tie off and trim the hackle. Lift the deer hair and make several thread wraps to prop the hair up slightly. Whip-finish the fly and apply cement to the whip-finish and the hackle stem.













In the Vise

Bluegill Slider/By Curtis Fry

any trout anglers got their start casting for bluegills, the venerable panfish that have launched so many youngsters into fly fishing. When I was kid growing up in eastern Oregon, I had access to a pair of ponds near my home that contained copious numbers of bluegills, and I spent as much time as I could trying to catch as many as possible. Those were wonderful times, and I still appreciate bluegills, not only for their availability, but for their tenacity. They're often easy to catch, and you can find them by the hundreds in some places, making them a great target for kids or anyone

who wants to catch a lot of fish. Those bygone days of catching bluegills fueled my passion for pursuing trout and other fish. Even though, as I grew older and moved around the

Even though, as I grew older and moved around the West, I chased mostly trout, I still found myself seeking out a good bluegill bash every now and then. Along the way I learned a lot more about these colorful sunfish, including how fussy and challenging they can sometimes be—especially the bigger specimens that broke from the typical "they'll eat anything" mold.

One time I was fishing Utah's Pelican Lake, known to hold some huge bluegills. I was fairly confident in the fly patterns in my box, but at the same time I found many of them lacking; some sank too quickly, some didn't sink quickly enough, and big bluegills holding near the bottom were evading my efforts. I needed a dual-purpose fly, a pattern that would sink relatively slowly so as to tempt bluegills into hammering it during the descent, as they are often prone to do, but that would also settle gently on the bottom, encouraging the most persnickety fish to take a chance on it.

Materials

Hook: Hanak 400, size 10

Thread: Black Veevus, 100-denier GSP

Body: Brassie-size black and hot yellow UTC

Ultra Wire

Legs: Montana Fly Company red/black/yellow

Speckled Céntipede Légs

Head/wing: Black and yellow deer belly hair

Dubbing: Midnight Fire Arizona Diamond Dubbing

Eyes: Hareline 4 mm red Pseudo Eyes

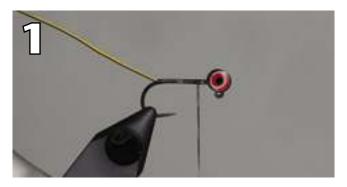


Hackled Woolly Bugger-style flies and other ubiquitous bluegill patterns first came to mind, but I wanted something not only new, different, and more effective, but also less mundane and therefore fun to tie. Based on some work my buddy Clark "Cheech" Pierce and I had been doing with trout and saltwater slider patterns, I adapted the same concept to a bluegill fly.

This pattern doesn't necessarily represent an actual food source. Rather, it's intended to imitate the colors and attributes I've found to be attractive to feisty bluegills. So while the body is made of three strands of wire topped off with a heavy barbell eye, the addition of a deer-hair head provides some resistance as it sinks. That allows you to animate the fly more easily than standard heavily weighted patterns; you can jig with the Bluegill Slider, but also—significantly—this fly settles on the bottom hook point up, with the wiggly fish-attracting fly moving freely. Plus, the deer-hair tips protruding back toward and covering the hook eye help make the Bluegill Slider weed-resistant.

The fly has been a big hit with bluegills, and I've discovered that carp also love it. For discerning carp, tie the legs a little longer and perhaps add a tail. Either way, it's a fun little pattern to tie and even more fun to fish.

Curtis Fry is cofounder of the popular Fly Fish Food website, www.flyfishfood.com, and recently opened the Fly Fish Food Fly Shop in Orem, Utah.



Step 1: After applying a layer of tying thread to the hook shank, secure the barbell eyes using figure-eight wraps. Moving the thread back to a short distance behind the jig eye bend, tie in three strands of wire (one black strand and two hot yellow strands). Cover the wire strands with thread down to the hook bend and then back up to the tie-in point.



Step 2: Firmly wrap all three strands of wire up the hook shank, stopping at the original tie-in point. Make sure to leave ample space behind the barbell eyes. To complete the body, tie in two sections of rubber legs and double them over to make a total of four legs.



Step 4: Cut a smaller portion of yellow deer belly hair and repeat the procedure from step 3, but this time, plant the yellow clump directly in the middle of the black clump and ensure that it is centered before you apply the downward thread pressure on the final wrap. Turn the fly again so the hook point is down.



Step 5: Without adding any additional wraps to the hair clumps, tie in the dubbing directly behind the barbell eyes by wrapping it around the eyes horizontally, making sure to keep the thread above the hook shank and hair clumps. For the final step, again invert the fly.



Step 3: Invert the fly, then cut a clump of black deer belly about the diameter of a pencil, brush out the underfur, and stack the hairs to even the tips. Align the hair so the tips extend over the hook point to about the bend of the hook at the angle shown; to secure the hair directly behind the barbell eyes and in front of the wire tie-off point, first apply two loose wraps of thread, then pull firmly downward with the next wrap. You needn't apply any additional wraps at this point.



Step 6: Whip-finish around the barbell eyes, again being careful to not wrap around the hook shank or deer hair. Make one or two strokes with a sharp (new) double-edge disposable razor blade to cut the deer-hair head to shape, following the barbell eyes as a guide and stopping once the blade cuts through the remaining black butt ends. Trim so that you leave a yellow hot spot and preserve the black deer-hair tips. Apply a bit of head cement to the thread beneath the barbell eyes.

Fish Tales

Bone-Head Fishing/By Chris Roslan

had already given up hope when the skiff's motor exploded in a dramatic spray of parts. The outer casing was in pieces, bobbing in the Bahamas flat where I was on my first guided bonefishing trip.

When Hank, a respected native guide, raised the motor, the prop was gone.

Hank muttered, "Never in 22 years, mon."

The day had started perfectly: clear skies, no wind. I packed my lunch and my gear, and off I went.

I was excited to fish for the "gray ghost" of the sea for the first time, and had spent the winter preparing: reading the romantic stories of pioneers like Zane Grey and Ernest Hemingway, tying odd-looking flies, and practicing my casting outside when the weather permitted.

As we launched, I remembered Grey's words: "I

am prepared to state that I feel almost certain, if I spent another month bonefishing, I would become obsessed and perhaps lose my enthusiasm for other kinds of fish.

That is some statement coming from a man who held over a dozen world records.

We soon reached an island where Hank poled us into position and immediately spotted a bonefish.

"Two o'clock, 55 feet. Cast now, mon!"

The cast was perfect, and the fish turned toward my fly. Suddenly, a powerful gust of wind came

out of nowhere and pushed us straight toward the fish. The bonefish spooked when it saw the skiff bearing down.

"Where did that wind come from?" Hank wondered. "But, mon, you spotted the fish and made a great cast, so I'm sure today will be a good one."

However, as Hank resumed poling, I noticed the wind was now consistent and, to a novice bonefisher, seemed like a gale. Then the sun went away. I could no longer make out anything in the water.

"Twelve o'clock! An 8-pounder! Do you see him, mon?" "I don't," I whispered.

"Just cast! Wait, he's spooked. Dammit!"

This scenario repeated itself at least a dozen times over the next two hours. Perhaps to make me feel better, Hank said, "If the weather were clear, a fly caster of your skill would catch 30 fish today."

So far I had caught none, and by the looks of things, I was not going to.

Then I did something I have never done: I hooked the guide. And not the guide on my rod; I planted a Crazy Charlie right in Hank's thigh. He said, "Not a good day,

I agreed, wondering what I had done to deserve this luck. I even said, "What else could go wrong?"

That's when Hank cranked up the motor, and as we were racing to a new spot, there was a tremendous jolt and the motor exploded.

"We hit a sandbar. The sun was behind a cloud and I didn't see it," Hank said. He suggested I eat lunch while he gathered the pieces. He reached in the cooler and grabbed my lunch, in its ziplock bag. As he lifted the bag,

he suddenly froze and said,

"Please tell me you did not bring a banana on my boat, mon! I did not see you put it in the cooler this morning. Don't you know you are never to bring a banana on a

I had never heard this before, but unknowingly I had broken the cardinal rule of all guide boats.

"That explains everything," he said with the satisfaction of a man totally vindicated for the day's awful luck. "I knew today was not my fault."

He made me eat the banana, even though I had lost my appetite, and then he personally heaved

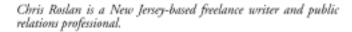
the peel into the sea. As if on cue, the wind stopped. The sun returned. Hank rigged the propeller and the engine started. I caught my first bonefish.

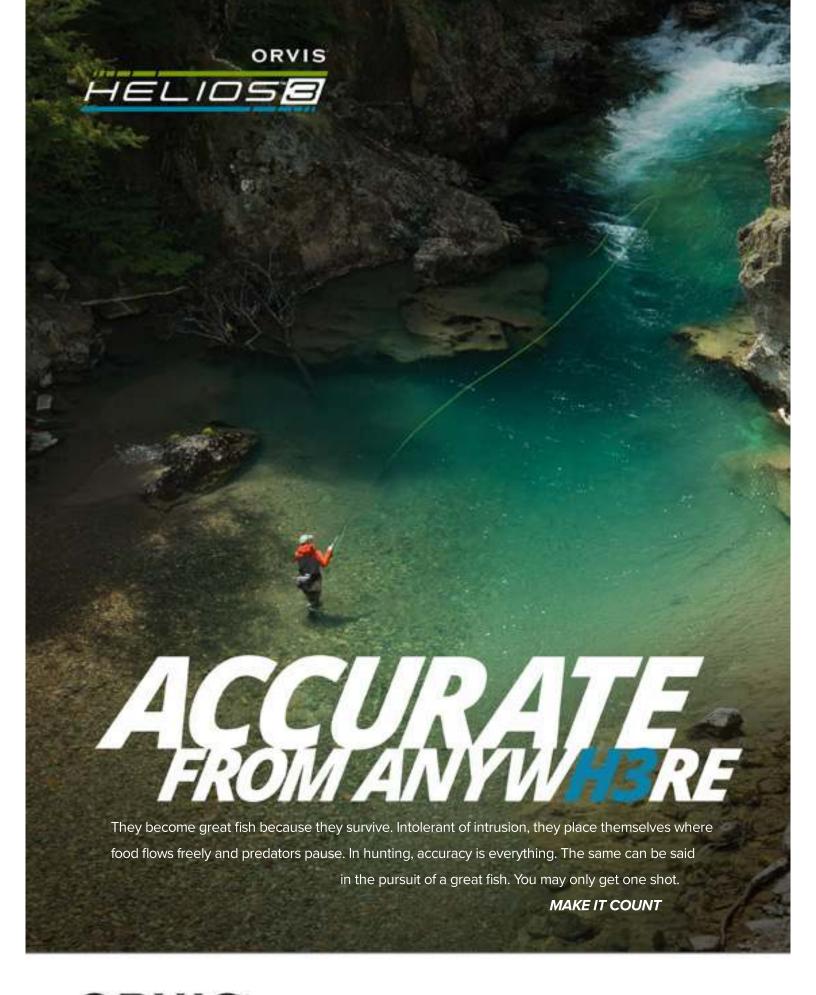
When I returned to the rental, my wife actually asked, "You didn't bring a banana on the boat, did you?"

How did she know this rule?

"I was watching a fishing show while you were out, and they stressed you must never bring a banana on a boat. They showed a graphic of a banana on the screen with a big X through it. I remembered you took one and couldn't wait to hear what happened."

Embarrassed, I said, "Zane Grey would not be impressed."







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