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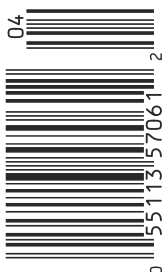
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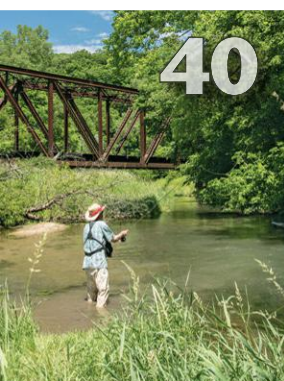


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EXPOSURE

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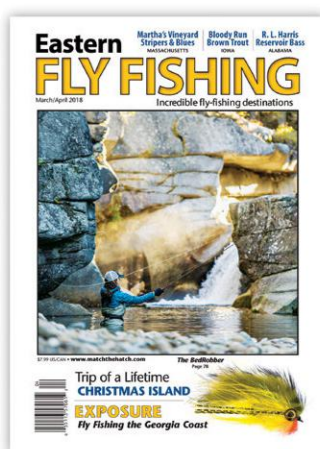
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Cover: Elizabeth Kane enjoys a cold morning on the Ammonoosuc River in Crawford Notch, New Hampshire.

Photo by: Brent Doscher



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From the Editor

Six More Sins to Go

This past year, a buddy and I put in a morning of surf fishing and then capped the outing by harvesting mussels off the rocks, cooking them right there on the beach, and washing them down with a local ale. We didn't find any biters that day, but had we, I'd have added fresh fish to the lunch menu. My fillet knife was sharp and ready.

It reminded me of some of my fondest fishing memories, times when the fishing was an integral part of a broader, more rewarding experience.

One October, Forrest Maxwell and I were camped on Oregon's fabled North Umpqua River, and on the second evening I subdued a spirited 9-pound steelhead. The missing adipose fin revealed its hatchery origins, so I waded ashore with the fish, keen on contributing to our camp larder. Only then did I see the car parked on the highway shoulder above, its driver seemingly eager for me to hurry up through the steep riprap to the roadway.

He greeted me enthusiastically, saying, "Wow! That was so awesome! That's the first steelhead I've ever seen caught!"

In the gloaming, he explained how, having finished graduate school in his home state back East, he had simply loaded fishing and camping gear in his car and driven all the way across the country to fish the North Umpqua. I invited the young man back to camp for dinner—a dinner none of us would ever forget: in preparation for the trip, Forrest had procured a bag of fresh Walla Walla sweet yellow onions and harvested a large paper sack full of chanterelles from the local foothills. I staked the steelhead and Forrest chopped onions and mushrooms. Our guest pinned for a way to help, but, having spent many years fishing and hunting together, Forrest and I had our system pretty well down pat.

Into the massive cast-iron skillet went a brick of butter, piles of onions, salt and pepper, and a dash of garlic, then golden chanterelles and bright-orange steelhead steaks, all inadvertently topped off with a few rotund October Caddisflies, attracted by the lantern light. The resulting feast bordered on gluttony, apparently a deadly sin, but the most pious among us could hardly have resisted the temptation posed by the smell of grilling sweet onions mingling with the gentle, fir-scented breeze.

Where legal and appropriate, more anglers should kill fish and eat them from time to time. Fishing is in fact a blood sport, and to completely remove that aspect of it seems to me to somehow divest the activity of some of its meaning.



John Shewey
Editor in Chief



PHOTO BY JOHN SHEWEY

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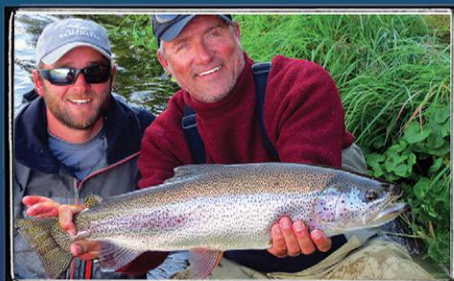
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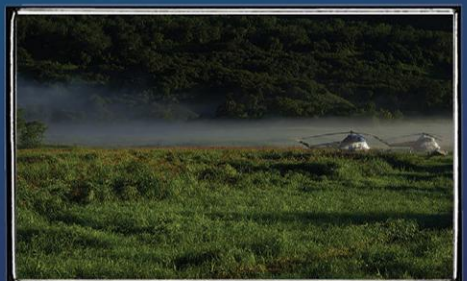
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March/April 2018 Contest



January/February 2018 Finalists

1. "I'm a super aggressive wader!"
Rich Bayers, Buffalo, Wyoming
2. "Make all the jokes you want.
I haven't paid for a nymph in 10 years."
Daniel Peterson, Santa Monica, California
3. "I don't know what the hell I get
snagged on every time I fish this hole!"
Mike Chiodo, Weedville, Pennsylvania



November/December 2017 Winner!

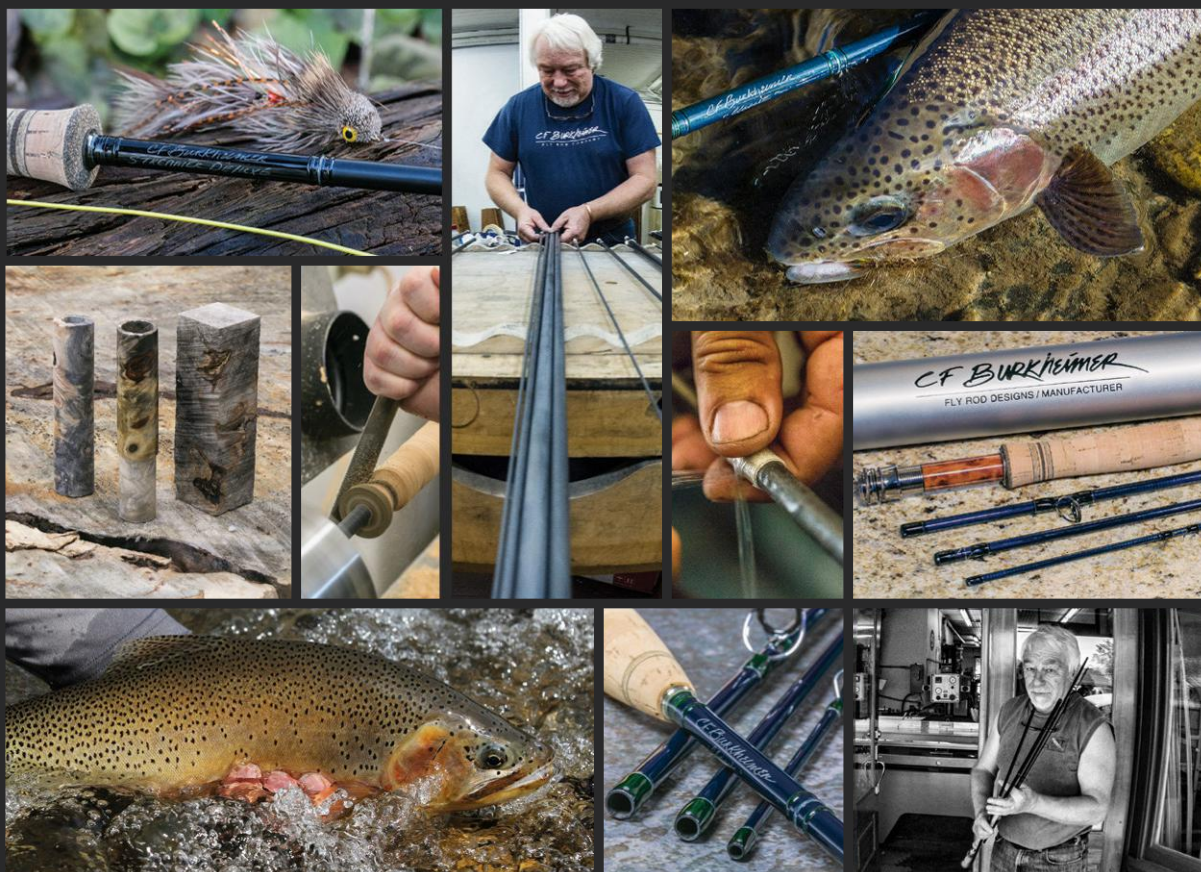


**"We never should have let Congress
sell our public lands."**

Paul Downing, Fountain Hills, Arizona

Each 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 March 6, 2018. Above left are the finalists for the January/February 2018 contest; please go online to vote for your favorite. The winner will be announced in the May/June 2018 issue and will receive a T-shirt displaying the cartoon and the winning caption. The November/December 2017 winner appears above right.

To cast your caption, go to
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An Underwater Perspective

Brook Trout

By Sean Landsman

Engbretson Underwater Photography





Masters at the Bench

Garrett Lesko/By Glenn Zinkus



It's that magic time on the local farm pond. The sun just dropped below the horizon and the sky glows a brilliant salmon-orange in the west. Everything remains visible in the gloaming, well lit by the summer dusk, but it's only a matter of minutes before that changes. All is still until a loud *galooop* interrupts the water's serene surface and ripples radiate away from the rise form. That explosive rise rarefies the air, fills you with anticipation. You make the cast and the fly lands with a gentle plop. Although it should be expected, you are surprised when a V-shaped wake zeroes in on the deer-hair bass bug at the end of your tippet.

Such scenes reverberate in the psyche of West Coast deer-hair bug maestro Garrett Lesko. He designs confidence flies for these situations, and crafts them with remarkable skill and artistry.

Lesko's fly-fishing odyssey began with a school-sponsored trip to Oregon's Odell Lake. One of Lesko's friends had brought along a fly rod and float tube. Lesko caught his first fish on a fly that day. This brief encounter was all it took for the fly-fishing bug to hook him. Later that summer, the fledgling fly tier found his father's old Thompson C-clamp vise in the garage, along with some fly-tying tools and assorted materials. While visiting his local fly shop in Albany, Oregon (Two Rivers Fly Shop), he acquired a more extensive fly-tying kit. He recalls, "I picked up books from library, watched clips on YouTube, and my friend gave some pointers. I took these first steps. Essentially everything else was self-taught."

Lesko tied countless flies that first year, learning a great deal by trial and error. Not all of these first flies were up to snuff; proportions were off, sometimes colors were off, and the flies were not always tied on the correct hook. But he was improving, his flies rapidly becoming more refined, his techniques more precise. Soon he moved on to more advanced, more interesting flies—and became infatuated with spinning deer hair. Lesko has mastered the art of spinning and trimming deer hair to create bedazzling creations for warm-water fish.

This fly-tying niche is practiced by only a few, and fewer still are considered masters of the art; among them is Pat Cohen, who has served as Lesko's primary mentor in the craft of spinning, stacking, and trimming deer hair to create beautiful bass bugs. Garrett says that Larry Dahlberg, who developed the Dahlberg Diver in the 1970s, perhaps can be considered the grandfather of deer-hair stacking, while Cohen is likely the best-known practitioner of the technique. Stacking deer hair differs significantly from spinning deer hair. In stacking, the hair is densely tied and compressed, and the tier can add triple or quadruple the amount of deer hair on a fly that is possible in spinning, resulting in denser flies that stand up to repeated attacks by bass and even toothy critters such as pike and muskies.

Once he'd mastered the primary techniques of fly tying, Lesko dedicated his fly-tying time to constructing stacked-deer-hair flies. He studied instructional DVDs, inspected endless packages of hair, and purchased and practiced with tools specifically designed for working with deer hair. He dedicated a year to tying deer-hair divers.

Meanwhile, Lesko's interest in tying bass bugs spurred his interest in fishing for bass. He soon learned that, compared with other fish—trout and steelhead, for example—there was a dearth of information about specialized strategies and tactics for targeting bass. Fly recommendations

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cold-water-centric Pacific Northwest, he quickly noticed that fly-shop-bin bass flies did not display the same ingenuity and quality as the trout and steelhead flies sharing bin space. The hair quality was variable, the hair was not packed densely enough, and the flies couldn't hope to withstand the rigors of a lot of fishing.

Lesko continued to perfect his hair-pattern techniques, and one of the first things he learned is that not all deer hair is created equal. To reach the level of expertise seen in Lesko's flies today, choosing the best hair for the job is critical (and that applies to any aspect of fly tying, whether you're whipping up an Elk Hair Caddis or crafting a complex bass bug).

For stacking deer hair, Lesko searches for long, thick deer belly hair with a tacky texture. The hair itself is hollow and should feel spongy. With a patch of hide in your hand, push a thumb against the hair, pressing it down against the leather. Is it resilient?

generally included the usual cast of ubiquitous characters: Clouser Minnows, Woolly Buggers, and generic poppers. Right from the start, Lesko endeavored to tie all of his bass flies, and he continues to do so.

He has long supported the local fly shops, but not for the flies. As an

increasingly avid bass angler, Lesko would frequent the fly shops looking for examples of bass patterns, but these flies never satisfied his desire for a certain level of perfectionism. Commercially tied bass patterns, what few he could find in the shops, could never hope to do so. And in the

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Does it bounce back like a sponge? That's the hair that will produce the best results. Lesko advises that fly tiers always select the best hair, rather than just grabbing the first bag of deer hair off the pegs at the local shop. The hair of deer harvested during different seasons has different characteristics; deer harvested during winter provide the best hair.

Lesko is an avid fly fisher, but he considers himself a fly tier first and an angler second. That does not diminish his eagerness to cast a fly rod, and he takes advantage of the myriad angling opportunities throughout his home state of Oregon, targeting not only bass, but also trout and steelhead, as well as rockfish and other saltwater species (he fishes from coastal jetties). He relishes summertime, when waters turn tepid and bass feed frequently and dominate his time. He says his favorite local bass waters can produce 100-fish days.

When not concocting his latest creations at home or testing them on local bass waters, Lesko enjoys demonstrat-

ing his techniques at fly-fishing and fly-tying events. Young, enthusiastic, and gregarious, he always attracts a crowd, and his fly tying is a show in and of itself, with colorful deer hair flying everywhere. To the amazement of onlookers, Lesko cinches down on a thin strand of gossamer thread, densely packing deer hair until he arrives at a complex and beguiling—and highly effective—bass fly.

Lesko (www.thestickfish.com) ties commercially, too, mostly for individual clients rather than shops. Each fly takes about 45 minutes to finish, so selling them at a wholesale price isn't viable. He calls himself a "destination tier," sending his patterns around the world with globe-trotting anglers

targeting not only warm-water species, but also taimen in Mongolia, steelhead in Russia, giant trout in Argentina, and just about everything that swims in Alaska.

But close-to-home bass remain Lesko's obsession, not to mention his proving ground, and to date they have inspired some truly beautiful and effective creations. 🐟

Glenn Zinkus is an Oregon-based freelance writer and photographer.



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Bonefish Beguilers/By John Shewey



PHOTO BY MARK HATTER

Tails, tails everywhere—tails waving like flags over hard white sand. Modest-size bonefish, gathered in pods, were slowly feeding their way across the flat, their tails protruding above the shallow water. They were fun to watch, but I was looking for the solos and the doubles, the bigger bones scattered widely on the same expansive flat in the Joulter Cays, in the Bahamas.

Big bones can be tough to pin down; unlike those enthusiastic, schooling younger fish, the old-timers generally know better than to hold still for very long. They'll feed for a few moments in one location and then, just as you stalk to the outer limits of casting range, they disappear oh so nonchalantly. Then they stop to feed again 50 yards farther away and your stalk begins anew.

But not always.

The incoming late-afternoon tide had enlivened the flat; fish seemed to be everywhere and a whisper of breeze barely rippled the water. I spotted a big tail glistening in the waning sun just 100 feet away. To leave little to chance, I wanted to at least halve the distance before casting, so I edged ever so quietly through water that reached the top of my calf. Top of my calf, I thought—yes, that's a large bonefish indeed.

Seventy feet; tail still flagging. Fifty feet. Forty feet. Time to cast. A funny thing happened then. The fish had shown no concern whatsoever and had not budged an inch. Rather than cast, I decided to see how close I could get. Thirty feet. Twenty. Ten. I reached out and gently touched the fish's tail with my rod tip. Even that had no effect, as this bonefish was aggressively rooting into the sand, obsessed with some buried shrimp or other prey, and was oblivious to all

else. Its diggings left a telltale plume of slightly turbid water extending downtide. Apparently the fish was so ensconced, and so diverted by its feeding opportunity, that it simply never detected me, but watching that bonefish from close quarters gave me a deep appreciation of their ability to root out food.

That experience also convinced me that, while bonefish feed selectively at times, more often than not stealth and presentation count for more than specific fly patterns.

Bonefish eat a wide range of foods and live at a range of depths, but they are best known for their predilection for shallow water. They are well adapted to eating shrimp, crab, and even clams: the bonefish's tongue and upper jaw are covered by granular teeth that form specialized dental plates, and they have similar grinders in their throat. These grinding plates allow them to easily consume crustaceans. Bonefish also possess an acute sense of smell, which allows them to target prey buried in the substrate (and also to sense things like sunscreen and insect repellent). Once

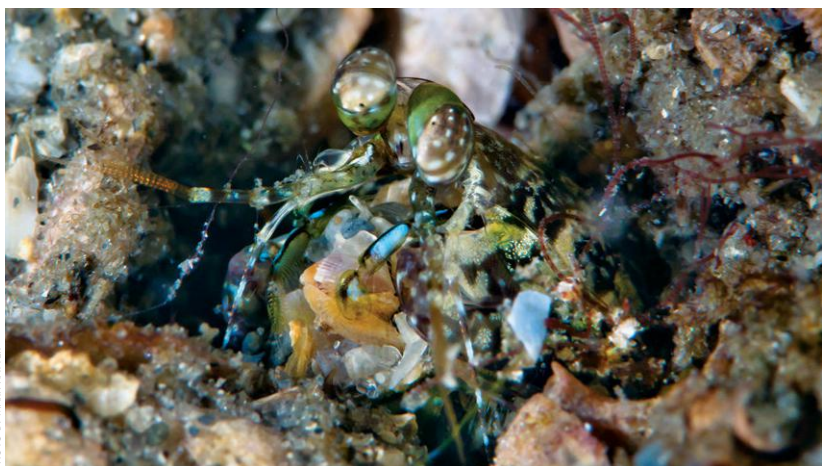


PHOTO BY MARK HATTER

they zero in on their prey, bonefish root into the burrows to dig out whatever they are after. In doing so, they often create clouds of silt in the water (a dead giveaway to feeding fish), and often their tails protrude from the water, waving like crystalline flags. An entire school of tailing bonefish, from a distance, can sparkle distinctively in the sunlight.

The challenge for bonefish anglers and bonefish guides is to decipher what the bonefish want to eat—or more commonly, perhaps, decide what they won't eat. Most of the time, a specific pattern is not nearly as important as pattern characteristics. But a lot depends on what you are targeting: schools of bonefish often charge anything that moves, while singles and doubles feed with extreme caution and sometimes selectively. Combine a breezy day with a riffle on the water and big schools of bonefish feeding their way in as the tide rises, and you've basically found paradise for novice fly anglers. Be quiet, be still, drop a fly well out in front of a slowly moving school, and when the guide says, "Strip," strip in the line with slow pulls. If the fish see the fly, get ready for a rush, both literally and emotionally.

Large bonefish are more challenging, and I'll not soon forget the day that, after a school of six big bones turned away in disgust, my guide looked at the fly I was using and almost laughed. It was innocuous, but it was also too sparkly, too garish, especially for the bright sun of midmorning. I changed to a simple tan Gotcha and that changed everything. In general—and far better bonefishers than I might disagree—subdued colors that generally match the surrounding habitat are the starting point. In this regard, sometimes a particular fly can prove to be the wrong choice: little green shrimp that live in turtle grass are easy enough to imitate, but fish that same green fly out on the white sand flats and you risk arousing suspicion among the bonefish. Conversely,

a light-colored 3-inch-long rubber-legs pattern that works on the hard sand may not impress fish feeding in the grass.

If the fish refuse simple and subtle flies—patterns that match the bottom colors—then it's time to try something a little brighter or, better yet at times, a little bigger or a little smaller. Frequently big bones like big bites. In the Florida Keys, Gulf toadfish, a bottom-hugging mouth with fins, provides a major meal for a bonefish and is a fairly significant part of their diet. Flies used to imitate toadfish are up to 5 inches long, though 3 inches is more typical, like the Woolly Toad from S.S. Flies (www.ssflies.com). Indeed, over the past few decades, researchers have learned that bonefish eat many dozens of different creatures—so many, in fact, that few critters that share the bonefish's habitat are safe, provided they can fit in a bone's mouth.

In most places shrimp and crab patterns are critical in the angler's arsenal. The well-stocked fly box includes various shades and sizes—and various weights. The trick with virtually all bonefish flies is to fish them quietly. Spooky bones generally don't like splash, so flies need to enter the water quietly. Fly construction plays a major role in reducing the splash factor. It's always wise to carry a few flies with no added weight in the form of metal eyes. An assortment of general-use patterns in a variety of shades and sizes, each pattern dressed in three weight classes, will almost always suffice. Carry a few unweighted versions, alongside a few of each pattern tied with bead-chain eyes and a few outfitted with small lead dumbbell eyes. Large flies—3 inches long or more—can be designed as easily as small flies for various splash factors: barely weighted for shallow water or super-spooky fish, all the way up to heavily weighted for deeper water.

Day in and day out, I'd rather hook my carriage to larger patterns when I have a chance to target a bonefish that might weigh in at 5 to 10 pounds.



Ehlers's Grand Slam Shrimp
Fly courtesy of Rainy's



Kure's Olive-Eyed Polar Shrimp
Fly courtesy of Rainy's



Woolly Toad
Fly courtesy of S.S. Flies



Vincent's Flash Kwabbit
Fly courtesy of Orvis



Chicone's Coyote Spawn Shrimp
Fly courtesy of Umpqua



Ritt's Spawning Ghost Shrimp
Fly courtesy of Montana Fly Company



Student's Skinny Mini Shrimp
Fly courtesy of Umpqua



Robragh's Silli-Leggs Gotcha
Fly courtesy of Rainy's



Hot Legs Foxy Gotcha
Fly courtesy of Orvis

But what pattern should fill your box? The answer is largely dependent on destination. Most bonefishers use fishing guides because most of us are traveling to bonefish locations for weeklong adventures. We rely on local guides to steer our fly choice. The guides—hopefully—have the local knowledge to understand when big bones turn selective and what they are then targeting. We can do our part by first inquiring about the best flies and sizes to take on our trip, and then arriving with an ample selection. There's no need to carry every fly in the catalog; just ask what patterns, sizes, and weight classes are critical.



PHOTO BY CARLOS ESTAPE/WWW.CARLOSESTAPE.PHOTOSHELTER.COM

The Gulf toadfish (Opsanus beta) is a favorite food for big bonefish in the Florida Keys.

Even with all the local guides' favorite flies in your arsenal, you can still run up against finicky eaters. However, suspected selective feeding by bonefish must be scrutinized through a lens of logic: provided your fly matches the general shades of the surrounding habitat, the most likely culprits for refusals are poor presentation and spooking the fish by errant or noisy casting, getting too close, moving too much, rod glare, or a fly that seems too out of place. Always pay attention to those factors. In fact, because errant casting is so often the culprit, practice casting before you go. A lot. It will make a big difference.

If you are on your own, either on a DIY bonefish adventure or wandering off while the guide attends to others, pay close attention to detail. Be slow, stay low, watch closely. Just as you might do with trout on a spring creek, you can learn to decipher whether a shy fish has been put off by presentation or by a fly that's not quite right. Often the fly itself is the least of your concerns, provided it's not too outlandish (and sometimes outlandish works, but I wouldn't start at that end of the fly box).

Still, the wrong fly is a recipe for frustration. It's been only 22 years since Dick Brown published his informative *Bonefish Fly Patterns*, and bonefish flies have changed since then. Brown's book is laden with excellent patterns, but at that

time, in the 1990s, natural materials were still commonplace, increasingly mixed with a little synthetic flash, and rubber legs were still in their infancy on flats flies. Those older bonefish flies worked then and they still work, but fly designers now routinely use all manner of rubbery legs—multicolored rubber, glittery rubber—and all kinds of synthetic fibers. And as effective as these newcomers can be—after all, I do love me a little rubber-legged wiggle—a good old-fashioned pale-tan Crazy Charlie can still slay them. Maybe there's a lesson in that: carry a variety of somber-toned flies, in various sizes and splash factors; when the sun rises high, put away those gar-

ish flies that worked earlier in the morning. Then work diligently at stealth and quiet, and make accurate presentations. Study how the fish react to your fly. As in other forms of fly angling, you'll eventually settle on some "confidence" flies and the number of different patterns in your boxes will begin to shrink rather than expand.

Consider the two giants I found one day in the Joulter Cays. I thought I saw a fish—just a hint of a shadow and a glimmer of movement. I waited and watched; I moved slowly down the sandbar. They came into view then, briefly, two huge bonefish, wraithlike, maybe 20 yards out in

the trough—too far to risk a cast because I couldn't tell which way they were headed. Tracking their movements was difficult in the 2-foot-deep water, its surface slightly windblown, and I lost them. They reappeared 30 yards farther along, and now I could see their distinct dark backs.

They were slowly stalking away from my position, so I walked carefully after them, not trying to close the distance so much as hoping they'd stop to feed. But they surprised me by reversing course. Immediately I crouched low and dropped the fly just 30 feet down toward the angle from which they were approaching. When I guessed they were within maybe 6 feet of where my fly was lying on the bottom, I slowly pulled in 8 inches of line. The reaction was instantaneous: both fish rushed forward. And then both stopped. They were either examining the fly or waiting to see more movement. Again I stripped the line, slowly. One fish rushed ahead, then stopped again. I gave the fly the slightest movement and the bonefish plucked it from virtually under his nose. The fight, if you want to call it that, didn't last long. The double-digit-weight fish spooled me. And when I say spooled, I mean 100 feet of fly line and 300 yards of backing disappearing in seconds, right down to bare metal.

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Conservation

Return of Michigan's Arctic Grayling/By Jeff Erickson

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) profiled the previous abundance of the state's native arctic grayling: "In the 19th century, northern Michigan's streams literally teemed with them and lore has it that anglers from that time could sometimes catch three fish with one cast. Early historical accounts tell of grayling that 'lay like cordwood in the Au Sable.' " A town near the Au Sable, Grayling, was even christened after the prolific fish.

This bounty proved illusory. The DNR's web page detailing the sad history of Michigan's grayling cites Civil War-era accounts of settlers "harvesting grayling by the basketful and hauling them home by the wagon load."

Due to overharvest, massive clear-cut logging, and the introduction of nonnative trout, the iridescent, sail-finned Michigan arctic grayling went the way of the passenger pigeon and the California grizzly bear: extinction. Now, thanks to a new multipronged conservation initiative, this attractive salmonid may be returning.

The original, post-ice age distribution of arctic grayling was divided into three separate regions: vast portions of Alaska and northwest Canada; Montana's Missouri River headwaters; and northern Michigan, including part of the Upper Peninsula (UP). Today, grayling are still abundant in the Arctic and survive in reduced numbers in Montana's upper Big Hole watershed and a few other waters, but they declined precipitously in Michigan in the 1880s and were gone from the Lower Peninsula by the early 1900s. Grayling vanished from their last Michigan sanctuary—the UP's Otter Creek—in 1936.

In addition to arctic grayling residing in North America, Russia, and even North Korea, says fisheries biologist Robert Behnke (*Trout and Salmon of North America*), two other grayling species exist in Mongolia and one in northern Europe. Grayling demand pristine, cold water, part of their survival challenge in the 21st century's changing climate, although they have been successfully introduced to new Rocky Mountain locations.

In 2016, the DNR, in cooperation with the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians and 30 other partners, including Trout Unlimited and The Nature Conservancy, began an

ambitious effort to reintroduce grayling to their indigenous Michigan range. Components include outreach and education, research and collecting baseline data, establishing management strategies, building brood stock, and eventually repopulating selected streams. The collaborative Michigan Arctic Grayling Initiative action plan was completed in 2017. "With the

launch of the ... action plan, we're moving an important step closer to making it possible for residents and visitors to once again find this slate-blue beauty with the distinctive dorsal fin in Michigan waters," observes DNR fisheries chief Jim Dexter.



PHOTO BY ANDRIANA PUCHANY/COURTESY OF MICHIGAN DNR

One aspect that's different from some other native salmonid reintroductions (e.g., westslope cutthroats in Montana) is that chemicals won't be used to remove competitive trout species. Instead, the focus is on carefully selecting streams where grayling are expected to thrive; over time, habitat improvement projects may be implemented to help them. This will likely reduce potential controversy and preserve angling opportunities for brook, brown, and rainbow trout.

The fabled upper Manistee watershed, once swarming with grayling, was selected as the first reintroduction site. Success will be carefully monitored, shaping how more reintroductions occur. Because the original Michigan grayling is gone, eggs for the reintroduction will come from Montana grayling. Rather than initially stocking fingerlings or adults, in-stream egg incubators will be employed to help condition grayling to their new environment, an approach Montana has used successfully. A major focus will be on ensuring maximum genetic variability, helping the grayling's long-term survival odds.

The breadth of public-private cooperation bodes well for future successes. Frank Beaver, director of the Little River Band's Natural Resources Department, puts it this way: "Contributions by organizations ... are invaluable as this initiative works toward making a dream a reality. It's so exciting to see so many partners working to try and bring back this significant species."

One goal is to eventually have a self-sustaining grayling fishery for anglers. Arctic grayling are opportunistic feeders and fine game fish. It's uncertain how long it might take before fly anglers can again pursue grayling in Michigan, but just knowing these fish are gracefully finning in their ancestral water will itself be gratifying.

Around the East

News, Views, and Piscatorial Pursuits



PHOTO BY RALPH SCHERDER

Marsh Creek, PA By Ralph Scherder

The main attraction in Adams County, Pennsylvania, is Gettysburg, the site of the battlefield known as the turning point of the American Civil War. Every year, more than a million tourists flock here to learn about an important part of this country's history. Far fewer come here to fish, but if they did, they'd discover Marsh Creek.

Marsh Creek forms near South Mountain and the Michaux State Forest in western Adams County and flows approximately 28 miles before merging with Rock Creek to form the Monocacy River near Harney, Maryland. The first 11 miles of the stream are classified as wild trout waters by the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC), based on stream surveys that found sparse populations of holdover and stream-bred browns throughout its upper reaches.

From the bridge on Cashtown Road in Biglerville to the bridge on US Highway 30, Marsh Creek is stocked by the PFBC with rainbow and brown trout. Access to the stream is not always readily apparent, which adds to its allure and is perhaps the reason it is overlooked by many. Much of the stream flows through private land. However, most landowners allow fishing, and some of those back stretches are float-stocked by the PFBC, which gives fly fishers an excellent opportunity to explore new waters away from angler-pressured access points.

Trout in Marsh Creek can be nomadic, a trait common to fish stocked in streams in southeastern Pennsylvania, which is also why trout season opens two weeks earlier in this region than in the rest of the state. Although they're not

stocked below Highway 30, a scattering of trout can be found all the way down to the Sachs Covered Bridge.

My wife and I have fished Marsh Creek on numerous occasions during visits to the battlefield. Often, we find very little competition and plenty of trout until water temperatures start to rise in mid-June, or later during cool, wet summers. Favorite patterns include an assortment of size 8 and 10 streamers when water levels

are up in early spring, and traditional nymph patterns later in the season.

From its headwaters to its mouth, Marsh Creek flows through a variety of landscapes—farmlands, woodlands, small towns, and industrial centers—and along its course intersects with numerous tributaries, most notably Little Marsh Creek, which is stocked with brook and brown trout. Huge boulders and rock formations afford a unique mix of chutes, pools,

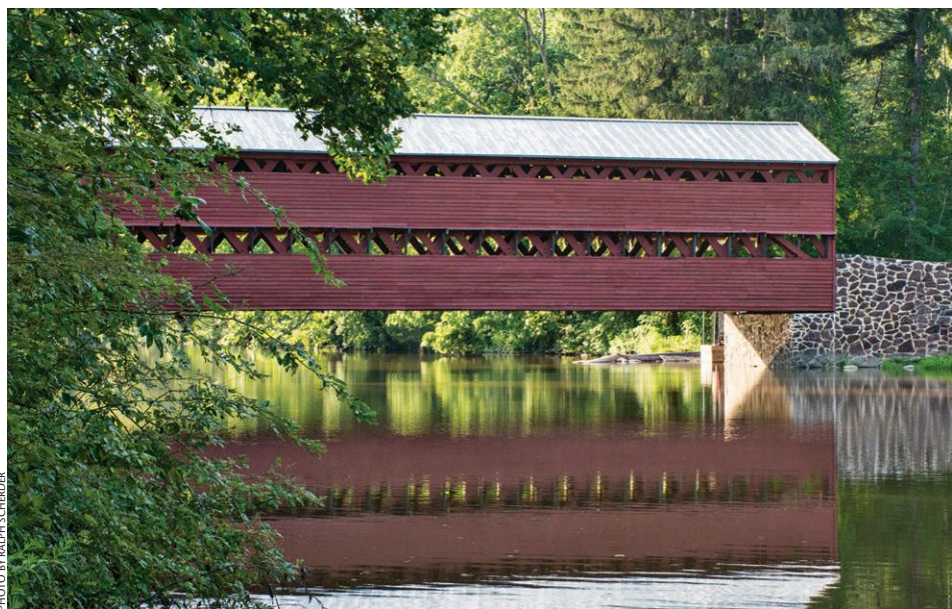


PHOTO BY RALPH SCHERDER



PHOTO BY RALPH SCHERDER

and pocket water on Little Marsh Creek before it empties into Marsh Creek just west of Gettysburg.

Downstream from Highway 30, Marsh Creek winds its way from orchard country to the red shale region surrounding the battlefield and becomes a warm-water fishery, with scattered populations of largemouth bass and panfish, but the fishing gets better the farther you travel downstream. A dam downstream from the Sachs bridge forms a small reservoir, complete with lily pads and teeming with crappies, bullhead catfish, panfish, and largemouth bass up to 4 pounds. Smallmouth bass also inhabit the stream, but recent PFBC surveys found that largemouth outnumber them almost 20 to one in the sections nearest the battlefield.

Like the upper half of the stream, the lower half of Marsh Creek has few access points, but the Sachs bridge is perhaps the most convenient place to start. Owned by the National Park Service as part of the historic Eisenhower Farm, the Sachs Covered Bridge was the escape route used by the Confederate Army to flee Gettysburg the day after the battle. If you notice an increase in spectators on the bridge shortly before and after dark, don't panic—they're not there to criticize your casting technique. The Sachs bridge is a commonly visited location for folks hoping to encounter the supernatural.

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Escatawba Farms, VA By Connor Tapscott

Our wet wading boots squeaked in unison as my client and I walked the riverbank of Escatawba Farms, combing the water for signs of life. We came to one of many beautiful, deep runs and paused to survey our options. Luckily, the crystal-clear water made finding a target rather simple. We did not have to look long before suddenly my client gasped and thrust his finger out toward the middle of the stream.

Fifteen yards from the bank, between two submerged boulders, a huge fish stuck out like a sore thumb, waiting for food to be funneled into his gaping mouth.

We crept down to the edge of the river just downstream of the fish. The position required some awkward backhand casting in order to avoid hanging too many flies in the trees, but luckily my client was used to casting in tight spaces. He dropped a nymph upstream of the fish and drifted it right through the funnel. The fish didn't budge. We tried a smaller fly, but no luck; then we tied on a streamer and my client swung it right past the fish and again it didn't bat an eye. Again and again we tried different flies. Defeat seemed imminent—this cagey fish could probably tie some of the flies we were presenting.

Suddenly we saw him chase a smaller trout out of his territory before returning to his position between the rocks. I riffled through my box of streamers and selected the biggest fly I had. My hands shook as I fumbled with the knot. After kissing the fly for good luck I handed it over to my client, who threw the pile of feathers and hair out into the river. The leviathan turned his head slightly and our hearts skipped a beat. "He turned!" my client yelled. We threw it out again and he turned, followed the fly, and returned to his lie. We put it out again, the fly slowly drifted past his nose, a white mouth opened, and the fly disappeared. The line snapped up off the water, bending my client's rod almost in half. A huge dark head exploded out of the water, splashing and shaking violently. It took the fish about half a second to shake the fly out of his massive jaws. Speechless, we turned and looked at each other in disbelief.

We were disappointed, of course, but still thrilled. By the end of the day, my client had caught the biggest brook trout, most colorful brown trout, feistiest rainbow trout, and first tiger trout of his life. It all happened in Virginia,

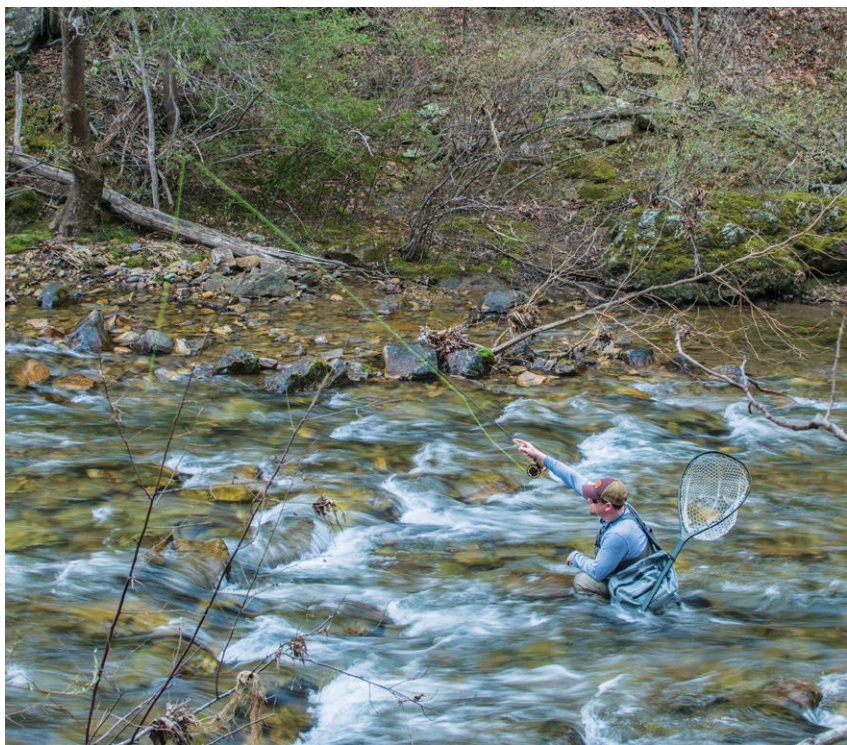


PHOTO BY CONNOR TAPSCOTT

on Dunlap Creek, at a private trout heaven called Escatawba Farms. This private and carefully managed stretch of Dunlap Creek has truly become one of the best trout fisheries in Virginia, full of big, strong, colorful trout—and all for a daily rod fee of just \$125. Guided fishing and casting lessons are available by prior arrangement.

Owner Derrick Barr has engendered a loyal following of anglers who love fishing at Escatawba Farms. One such angler explained that this fishery provides a Western-style trout experience. After fishing all over the world, in some of the most beautiful trout rivers, he continues to come back to this private reach of Dunlap Creek. As he was touting the beauty of this stream, he paused, smiling, and said, "The more I chase trout, the less I care about catching them."

Chasing trout allows anglers to experience beautiful parts of the world, and in western Virginia beautiful scenery comes with a side of big fish. For more information, visit www.escatawba.com.



PHOTO BY CONNOR TAPSCOTT

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PHOTO BY FRANCIS LUNNEY

Connecticut River, MA By Francis Lunney

American shad, sometimes referred to as the poor man's salmon because of their fighting abilities, arrive in the Connecticut River in large numbers on their annual spawning run in late April and remain in the river until early June. The shad reach Holyoke Dam after a long run from the ocean and use the stretch below the dam as a staging area before venturing farther upstream via the Robert E. Barrett Fishway. I was introduced to this exciting fishery by Patrick Barone, owner of Charter the Berkshires, (339) 987-0496, www.chartertheberkshires.com.

I fished the river with Barone on a cool day in late April. We geared up in a likely spot by 8:30 a.m. Within an hour, the sun warmed the river a few degrees, and the fishing was on. With Barone's expert guidance, I hooked nearly 20 2- to 2.5-pound shad by midafternoon. These fish were tough battlers in the fast current, often making two or three strong runs before coming to the net.

Almost all fly fishing for American shad utilizes some variation of the wet fly swing with sinking or intermediate lines, and this is the strategy we utilized. I fished an 8-weight rod with intermediate line that I use for striped bass, and it did the job well. Barone, an excellent casting instructor, also had me try one of his two-handed switch rods. These rods allow anglers to make long casts even when clearance is limited. With a switch rod, Barone uses interchangeable sinking-tips. Shad in the Connecticut River are typically found in 4 to 14 feet of water. On this day, we fished several different colors of small Clouser Minnows (green/white, pink, and orange), as well as Barone's own variations of the Shad Fly tied in a multitude of colors.

Making small adjustments is key when fly fishing for shad. Throughout the day, Barone suggested changes in depth and fly retrieval until we found fish and provoked them to strike. The Connecticut is an expansive river, over

300 yards wide in places, and it can take some exploring to find the most productive water. Heading out with a guide familiar with the water removes much of the guesswork. To eliminate shallow, unproductive water, Barone suggests getting an aerial view of the river using Google Maps. He recommends fishing the cutbank side of the river and focusing on eddies and seams on the edges of the fastest and deepest water. Although we wade-fished on this outing, Barone also targets shad from his 13-foot Stealthcraft Sniper drift boat.

After a productive morning of fishing for shad, we ventured a few miles upstream in search of smallmouth bass. Throwing a white Deceiver into a fishy-looking cove, I caught several 14- to 16-inch bass. My most memorable fish of the day came soon after when I hooked into a substantially larger bass, which upon landing turned out to be more than 18 inches long.

I couldn't verify it without a scale, but this girthy bruiser appeared to be pushing 5 pounds. This side trip added an unexpected thrill to what had already been a fantastic day of fishing. Barone, a former tournament angler, is well dialed in on the bass fishery on this stretch of the river. Don't be surprised if he suggests prospecting for northern pike, walleyes, or striped bass. All of these game fish can be found in the Connecticut.

Places to access the shad fishery include Beachgrounds Park on Main Street in South Hadley Falls, Massachusetts. Anglers can fish the shoreline downstream of the parking area. Another access area with plenty of parking is the South Hadley Dam launch site located at 128 Syrek Street in Chicopee. If you have a competitive spirit, consider entering the Shad Derby sponsored by Holyoke Gas & Electric. The derby is held the first two weekends in May. For more information visit the derby website at www.hged.com/community-environment/recreation/shad-derby.aspx.



PHOTO BY FRANCIS LUNNEY

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Plum Gut, NY By Tom Migdalski

Eastern Long Island Sound holds masses of fish. The primary reason is three large and sometimes frightening tidal passages—the Race, the Sluiceway, and Plum Gut—which morph into mega rips during each tide cycle. The Race boasts the toughest fishing conditions because of its size and depth. Plum Gut, however, can be equally turbulent and treacherous. But it's also shallower, more sheltered, and closer to sanctuary.

"The Gut," as locals call it, runs between Orient Point—the northeast tip of Long Island's north fork—and the west side of Plum Island, New York. Its rip, especially near Plum Island, is choppy on calm days and impassable during a blow. On a full-moon tide, the waters force through like a roaring conveyor belt, creating a churning mix of rip currents, standing whitecaps, and mini whirlpools. Beneath the turbulent waters, a jagged reef creates the surface havoc by rising quickly from depths of about 200 feet to only about 50 feet. But it's this structure, and the current sweeping over it, that attracts and holds bountiful baitfish, and therefore numerous predators like false albacore, bluefish, and striped bass.

West of the main rip, Oyster Pond Reef is a long and dangerous line of structure lurking just subsurface and extending from Orient Point to Orient Point Lighthouse, nicknamed the "Coffee Pot." So unless you're an expert mariner, fish only east of the lighthouse. The Coffee Pot is 64 feet tall, flashes white every 5 seconds, is located at 41° 09'48.40" N, 72° 13'25.00" W, and is not to be confused with the picturesque lighthouse perched on the west end of Plum Island.

There are hundreds of acres to cover in Plum Gut, so the easiest fish-finding technique is to simply follow the fleet by mirroring its drift-and-run patterns. But the majority of these boats dredge the bottom with heavy conventional gear. Fly casters are often more successful exploring alone by scanning for surface action when predators chase bait up from the depths and crash it on top. Bird activity is a sure giveaway of feeding fish, and it's easy to spot from a distance.

Most of the time, the bait and predators school in front of the rip line, which is helpful because the surface is calm up-tide of the rip. But occasionally, the fish feed beyond the rip and into the rough water down-current—imagine megariffles on steroids times 10; boaters need to be exceptionally wary. Normally, however, continue casting until you approach the rip line, typically in about 60 to 70 feet of water, and then motor back up-current to your original starting place. Note and repeat productive drifts by monitoring surface activity, triangulation, electronics, or the fleet.

Except for false albacore, these fish aren't fussy. Any large baitfish patterns resembling butterfish, squid, or herring work when fished on an intermediate line with a 9-weight rod and a reel with plenty of backing. Also come prepared with floating line and some surface poppers for top-water action. The albies go for small and sparse flies, including Clouser Minnows, as well as bay anchovy and epoxy minnow patterns. And don't forget some tooth-proof tippets for bluefish.

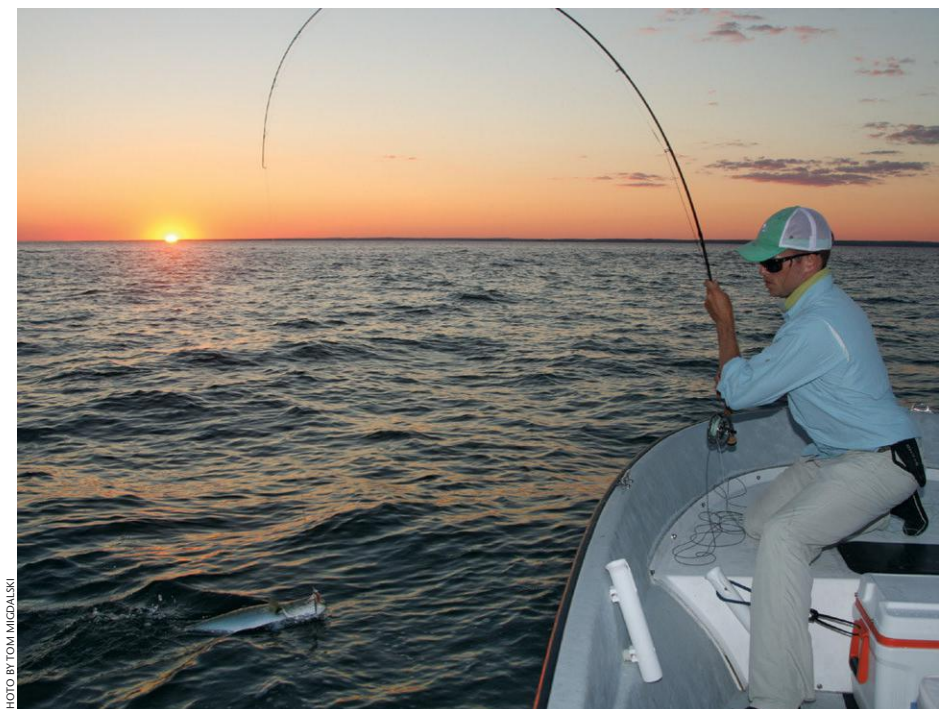


PHOTO BY TOM MIGDALSKI

Plum Gut features plenty of bluefish action throughout the summer. From late August to late September, the Gut and its perimeter waters are hot spots for bonito and false albacore. Starting in June and running through October, schoolie stripers frequent the shallow boulder fields along the entire west end of Plum Island, the Coffee Pot, and Oyster Pond Reef. The action is best on a moving tide during early mornings and late afternoons.

Plum Gut is a fishy place but not for the faint of heart. It is an 8-mile run from the mainland and a thoroughfare for huge and high-speed ferries and cigarette-style racing boats. Come prepared with sturdy tackle, a seaworthy vessel, extra fuel, a GPS (or a chart plotter or depth finder), and good navigational skills. Strictly avoid any days when fog or wind is forecast.

To hire an experienced guide from Connecticut, contact Captain Dan Wood at www.captanwood.com; for a guide at the east end of Long Island, try Captain Jim Levison at www.allmontaukflyfishing.com. For more details about launches, tackle shops, and access, see *Fishing Long Island Sound: A Guide for Beach and Boat Anglers* by Tom Migdalski.

Crow Wing River Watershed, MN

By Jeff Erickson

I was reading in the back of my micro-camper on a placid, pine-fringed bend on north-central Minnesota's beautiful Crow Wing River. My nearest camp neighbors—all two dozen—were having an uproarious time around their bonfire. Many beers were drained and great tales reprised, with gales of laughter floating to the stars.



PHOTO BY JEFF ERICKSON

When they generously invited me over for coffee the next morning, it turned out they weren't partying teenagers, as I had initially suspected, but friendly teachers from local schools. They were convened for their annual Crow Wing float trip, which commenced an hour later when an outfitter rolled in with a trailer loaded with canoes, just as fog was burning off the river. Aside from the Crow Wing's fine warm-water fisheries, there's a good reason the teachers enjoy the river every year. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) stream guide explains it this way: "Because of its many campsites and undeveloped shores, the Crow Wing River is one of the state's best 'wilderness' routes for family canoeists. The Crow Wing's crystal waters cut a gentle path rarely interrupted by rapids.... And although the Crow Wing is easily accessible, much of it is flanked by thick forests with abundant wildlife."

The Crow Wing's attributes are shaped by an unusual hydrology that contributes to high water quality and stable flows. The headwaters are a chain of 11 lakes, remnants of melting glacial ice. Aside from their own intriguing fisheries, the lakes moderate downstream flows, ensuring the river typically doesn't fluctuate more than 3 feet between extremes. Furthermore, the drainage's sandy soil acts like an enormous sponge, releasing water in slow, steady increments. Finally, the Crow Wing is also fed by other high-quality streams, including the Shell, Leaf, Partridge, and Long Prairie Rivers, nearly always ensuring sufficient, clear water for floating and fishing.

The Crow Wing watershed holds pike, largemouth bass, panfish, and walleyes. Some small, cold tributaries, like Farnham Creek, hold native brook trout, while the Straight River is a trophy brown trout stream. Persnickety walleyes can be a challenge for fly anglers, but other warm-water species readily take poppers and streamers. Five- to 7-weight rods suffice unless you pursue the occasional muskie around the Mississippi River terminus, where floaters might also encounter smallmouth bass. Because the Crow Wing mainly has a sandy bottom and is less than 3 feet deep, fly anglers should patiently search for fish in scattered pools and around cover such as logs and aquatic vegetation.

The DNR and the Wadena County Parks Department, especially, have done an excellent job of providing launch and camping sites along the 90-mile run to the Mighty Miss, with Huntersville and Lyons State Forests protecting portions of the upper river. The mouth is encompassed by Crow Wing State Park. Visitors who prefer not to camp might consider one of the region's classic resorts, including the Crow Wing Crest Lodge, (218) 652-3111, www.crow-wing.com, on the headwaters of Eleventh Crow Wing Lake. Either way you go, give credit to the Crow Wing's mellow, wild vibe: ultimately, you have to love dutiful teachers who manage to have at least as much fun as their students.

Book Review Pennsylvania Limestone Trout Creeks

By Patrick C. Wentz

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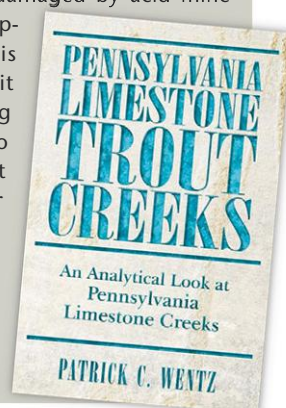
Many well-known Pennsylvania limestone creeks are heavily fished day in and day out by avid trout anglers, but others, far less known, also offer fine fisheries. *Pennsylvania Limestone Trout Creeks* is designed to take a lot of the work out of finding productive new waters.

Without its massive limestone deposits, Pennsylvania would have fewer trout creeks. As limestone dissolves into local creeks, it raises water alkalinity high enough to buffer the effects of acid rain; when combined with the right water temperature, it creates an environment where trout can thrive. Using a rigorous system of geospatial techniques, author Patrick C. Wentz has taken stock of 169 limestone creeks across Pennsylvania. *Pennsylvania Limestone Trout Creeks* provides a brief description of each (including info on public fishing access) as well as vital information such as alkalinity and water temperature, which will help readers choose which creeks to fish.

The book contains a color map for each of the 33 Pennsylvania counties that contain limestone belts, with creek locations pinpointed. Two additional maps show the limestone belts across the state, along with the relative alkalinity levels of the creeks.

For those interested in geospatial techniques, the book provides the necessary steps, information, and tools for anglers to start their own surveys of limestone trout creeks and then be able to find and explore new trout waters.

Concise and informative, *Pennsylvania Limestone Trout Creeks* was a labor of love as well as a methodical examination of limestone's impact on Pennsylvania's aquatic environment. Over the course of his survey, Wentz located creeks too warm or too damaged by acid mine drainage to support trout. His efforts make it easier for fishing enthusiasts to find viable trout creeks and for water conservationists to identify creeks that need some extra attention and care.



EXPOSURE

Fly Fishing the Georgia Coast

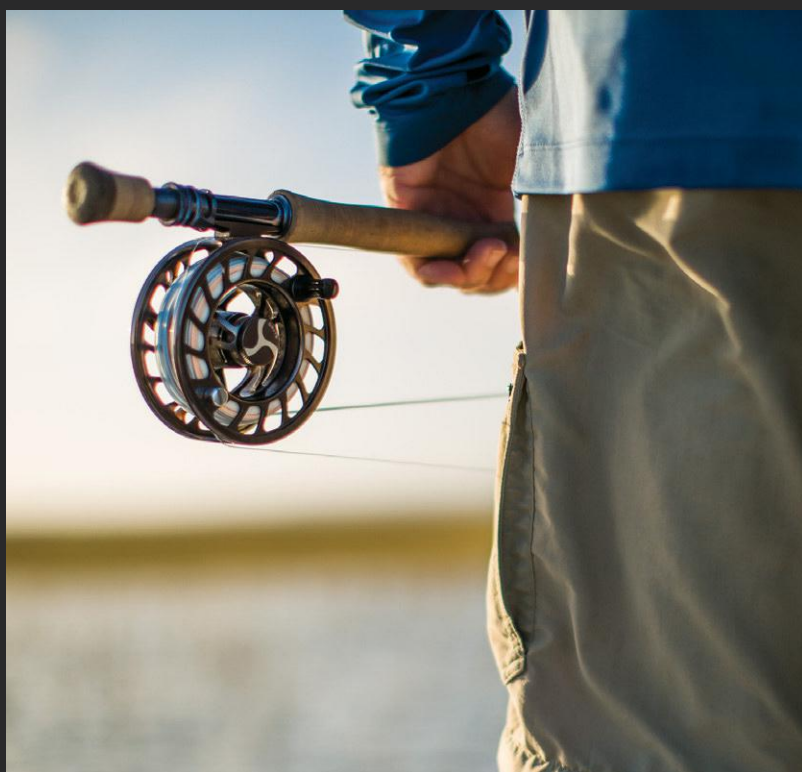
By David Cannon



A tailing redfish—once you've seen this in person, it will revisit you in your dreams.



Having been friends for decades, Kyle Burrell talked Captain David Edens into handing off the push pole for a bit and letting him take to the bow of the boat.



Standing, waiting, watching, wishing



Redfish tend to be docile once landed, but getting these hard-fighting fish to hand is a different matter.



Georgia's coastal marshes provide critical habitat for shorebirds.



Captain David Edens punches a long southpaw cast into the grass.



For a short time during the fall, anglers can cast to tailing redfish on the last flood tide of the year and hunt marsh hens from the bow of the boat, 20-gauge shotgun in hand, between tides.



Captain David Edens's 16-foot flats skiff works the edge of the marsh grass in hopes that a tail will appear.



Theories abound as to why a redfish's tail can sport this iridescent blue—perhaps it's a younger fish, or maybe it's been eating a lot of crabs, or maybe it's actively feeding and excited. Whatever the reason, it's a beautiful sight.



A bright blue sky, full sunlight, and polarized sunglasses are your friends when hunting redfish. The cool tones of the sky also contrast nicely against the copper back of the red drum.



Captain David Edens surveys the grass flats for signs of feeding redfish. Edens is an Orvis-endorsed guide who has been exploring the Marshes of Glynn (in Glynn County) for many years.



The sun rises over the Atlantic from the vantage point of one of the most superlative spots in Georgia, Cumberland Island.

David Cannon is a widely traveling professional photographer who lives in Atlanta, Georgia. See more of his work at www.davidcannonphotography.com.

Martha's Vineyard, MA

Stripers, Bluefish, Albies, and Bonito Galore!

By Abigail Schuster

Martha's Vineyard is a perfect playground for anglers, providing an enthralling environment to catch bluefish, striped bass, false albacore, and bonito. This sandy outlier

Seasons

The fishing season on Martha's Vineyard begins in April and continues deep into October. First come the hungry striped bass—the smaller fish commonly called schoolies—

followed by aggressive bluefish. By late July or early August, bonito start to roll in. Finally, September brings the much-anticipated and golden month for fishing in these waters. The once young and small striped bass return as full-grown hogs, and false albacore ("albies") begin busting the surface, creating quite the buzz on island.

The dream day is to achieve a grand slam, catching a bonito, false albacore, striper, and bluefish. Though thousands of anglers have attempted this feat, only a handful, throughout the decades, have accomplished it—but the lifetime of bragging rights makes the effort worthwhile.

Some of the most thrilling fishing occurs on the flats from early June into July. The gin-clear water

allows easy sight-casting to stripers, and on these flats the fish behave almost like bonefish as they feast on crabs, shrimp, and squid. Stripers in such clear, shallow water are spooky yet curious; at times they will stalk your fly until they attack it, though if they follow it too far they often spook and swim away. They normally cruise the flats in small schools, but



ALL PHOTOS BY JON LUKE

Abigail Schuster proudly poses with Ben Luke after guiding him to his first Martha's Vineyard striper (above). The beautiful port town of Edgartown offers a variety of lodging options and restaurants (below). Large albies often roam into Edgartown Harbor during their autumn migration (right).

just north of the Gulf Stream is easy to reach via a 45-minute ferry. Once on the island, you'll feel as if you've stepped into a different world—a sense of discovery fills the soul.

Every time I go back to "America," which is what we locals call the mainland, I take a few moments to readjust, especially during the fall season, when the Martha's Vineyard Striped Bass & Bluefish Derby begins. From mid-September to mid-October, fishing takes priority over sleep, work, and other moderately important activities. Anglers seemingly emerge from the woods and high-rises, each trying to catch the biggest fish.

I grew up fly fishing these bountiful waters, and I'll never forget fishing from my dad's shoulders when I was too small to wade on my own. We waded into the open water, in the dark, looking and listening for any sign of fish; we did this frequently, but one night in particular, unfortunately, he took one step too many and we both ended up spooking some fish on our swim back to shore. Nonetheless, my upbringing led to a career as a Martha's Vineyard guide, and I enjoy sharing my passion for this amazing place.





it is not uncommon to see larger fish alone. The water is so clear that you can lose sight of the surface as you become engrossed in the prey/predator dance. There is no rush quite like shooting a cast into a school of feeding bass and watching one turn and strike your fly.

Bluefish, sometime called the piranhas of the East Coast because of their sharp teeth and aggressive feeding habits, also check out the flats early in the season (June to early July, when the water is still cool). Many different flies

or after sunset is important. The water is thick with sand eels during this time of summer, and larger patterns work best. At dawn, lighter-colored flies are more productive, while at night, dark flies—black or dark purple—work well because the bass can better see their silhouettes.

Bonito are mostly caught by boat during August, especially at places such as the Hooter buoy, located 3 miles offshore. Bonito move in closer to shore as summer wanes and the autumn chill begins filling the air. They are beautiful fish with flashy colors and patterns; they are also harbingers of the fall fishing season: in September, the island's vibe shifts from summer hot spot to an angler's paradise.

The talk of the town centers around the arrival of the false albacore or the catch of a large bass. The false albacore migration begins many miles offshore, but within days these muscled beauties journey as far in as the harbor. Some of the largest albies I've seen were caught right off the Edgartown lighthouse. Small pink or chartreuse flies, retrieved fast and steady, work well. Be ready, because when an albie grabs your fly, you'll very quickly learn why anglers revere these speedsters; their athleticism and energy as they rip line off the reel are awesome.

Fishing from Shore

Fishing from shore at Martha's Vineyard is not only productive, but majestic. I like to imagine the Wampanoag people, aboriginal inhabitants of the area, fishing these same waters for the same species that we target today. Keep an eye out for arrowheads and painted pots that can still be found in the shifting sand.

Many inlets and saltwater ponds offer great fly fishing for anglers on foot. Even on the windiest days, somewhere on the island there is a spot that is calm and fishable. Chappaquiddick Island, also known as Chappy, is located a mere 527 feet away from Edgartown and is an amazing shore-fishing destination, on the east end of Martha's Vineyard. Although

only a stone's throw away from Edgartown, it is a different world entirely. Chappy is rural and beautiful, with over 1,000 acres of protected land and farms. There is one paved road and great fishing. One of the unusual things about Chappy is that, with a few exceptions, businesses are not allowed here. Those exceptions are The Only Store on Chappy (yes, that's the name), a nine-hole golf course called Royal & Ancient, and a beach club. The owner of the store, Gerry Jeffers, and his family have been on Chappy for generations; he is a member of the Wampanoag Tribe and a key figure in the community. You can find him running the ferry, delivering packages, driving the school bus, or running the store.

The store carries ice cream bars, ice, sodas, sugar—the basics—but the hours are still unclear to me, even



The author shows off a bluefish that hammered a squid pattern. Bluefish have razor-sharp teeth, so a 20-pound wire bite tippet is a good idea.

work for blues; we often quip that you could put a hook in a cigar butt and expect a bluefish to eat it. But these fish are especially stimulated by poppers—flashy, bright-colored poppers will draw the bluefish into hot pursuit.

In June and July, the sheer numbers of squid in the water belong in a *National Geographic* video. Squid frantically hurl themselves out of the water to escape voracious stripers, while birds dive into the water, bombarding the bait. Imitating the squid that create such enthralling scenes is not complicated: use a light pink or white squid pattern on an intermediate line and employ a quick, jerky retrieve.

In early August, the fishing from shore slows down a bit, as most of the fish seek deeper, cooler water farther out. Sinking lines, along with accepting the fact that you will not sleep much, is imperative. Getting out before sunrise

though I have lived here for years. The golf course, beautiful and well maintained, offers a perfectly relaxed experience. Many people take the ferry over from the “other side” to see the famous Dike Bridge on Chappy, infamous for the 1969 Chappaquiddick incident, in which U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy drove his car off the narrow bridge and into the tidal channel below; his

passenger, 28-year-old Mary Jo Kopechne, drowned and Kennedy, who swam free but did not report the incident to authorities for 10 hours, later pleaded guilty to a charge of leaving the scene of an accident causing personal injury.

One of the best spots for wade-fishing on Chappy is The Gut, where Cape Poge Bay flows into Edgartown Harbor. The fertile, oxygen-rich water attracts plenty of stripers, blues, bonito, and albies. A bumpy dirt road leads to a small parking area, and from there, a short walk through the buggy Chappy woods leads to The Gut: follow the sole paved road to North Neck Road, then follow this

dirt road for a little over a mile until you see a sign for the “Edgartown Gut” on the left-hand side. The trail ends at the top of a wooden staircase that overlooks the entire area.

During evening, the fishing can be fantastic, as the fish are usually running. You can fish The Gut anytime, but high tides leave just a narrow beach, so be prepared to wade. Waders are advisable from May through July; in the fall, the water is above 70 degrees, so I prefer to wet wade. Swift currents here move bait—such as squid, sand eels, and peanut bunker—in and out with the tides. The water deepens quickly along a submerged shelf running

near the bank, forming a buffet line for fish as they chase the bait against it and feast. Fall is a wonderful time to fish The Gut. The water tends to be serene—until albies rip through it, forming wakes as they eat.

On the opposite end of Martha's Vineyard, about 20 miles west of Chappaquiddick, is Menemsha, a fishing village that offers excellent prospects for shore-bound anglers. In diminutive Menemsha, home to about 900 residents, the smells of fresh seafood, boats, and beach roses waft through the air. Most local commercial fisherman keep their boats in Menemsha Harbor, and the town has some great fish markets that sell their daily bounty. Larsen's Fish Market is a popular stop for a lobster roll or clams on the half shell.

The mouth of Menemsha Harbor is framed by two jetties, with the north



Middle Ground Squid

Tied by Ben Scott



PHOTO BY EASTERN FLY FISHING

Hook:	Mustad S74SNP-DT or similar (can also be tied on articulated shanks)
Thread:	Shell pink (or to match body color) Danville Flat Waxed Nylon
Interior tentacles:	5-in. brilliant pink EP Ultra Brush
Tentacles:	4 pink-dyed grizzly hackles
Tentacles flash:	4 strands of shrimp pink Krystal Flash per side and a small clump of fluorescent hot pink EP Sparkle.
Outer tentacles:	A few more wraps of the 5-in. brilliant pink EP Ultra Brush
Eyes:	$\frac{3}{8}$ -in. oval pupil 3D eyes
Body:	2-in. shrimp pink EP Shrimp Dub Brush (may require 1.5 or 2)
Head:	Zap-A-Gap, followed by a coating of Loon Outdoors UV Clear Fly Finish Thin glue



The mouth of Menemsha Harbor has two jetties that can be productive for fly anglers during the evening hours (above). Fishing the shoals requires steady balance, especially when you battle a big striper (below)

jetty forming the terminus of Menemsha Beach. It helps block the currents, and baitfish get pushed against the jetty rocks and the feasting begins for game fish. You can fish the channel inside the jetty like a river by casting up-current and letting the fly drift down, finishing the drift by retrieving the fly with quick, erratic strips of line. Evenings can be especially productive, and the good fishing is often punctuated by spectacular sunsets.

Fishing by Boat

Fishing Martha's Vineyard by boat opens up an array of outstanding options. The island is surrounded by shoals, intense currents, expansive flats, rocky-bottom areas, and sand-bottom areas. These myriad structural elements provide outstanding habitat for all the game fish that fly anglers pursue here.

One of my favorite spots is off Wasque Point on Chappaquiddick, which offers great shoal fishing. The best way to describe fishing off Wasque is "controlled chaos." The currents meet from both the west and south side of Chappy, essentially making these waters a feeding pool for stripers, a living hell for baitfish, and paradise for anglers. The shoals create rip currents; smooth water collides with the sand shoals, generating choppy water and often forming breaking waves. Fishing Wasque is weather dependent; with big swells or high winds, the breaking waves and shallow waters create a hazardous environment for boaters. Having someone dedicated to the helm of the boat is wise.

I have spent many mornings on Wasque watching stripers feast in both the breaking waves and the smooth, shallow water. The fish off Wasque are aggressive and hungry, so fast retrieves (with intermediate lines) are best. Morning and evening are usually productive, but fish can be found all day except during slack tide. Luckily, slack tides

do not last long and are obvious because everything calms down; during a slack tide, take a drink of water and have a snack, because once the current comes back the fish will be aggressive and ready to feast.

There are plenty of other boat-fishing options in the waters off Martha's Vineyard. Naturally, anglers who don't have a boat can take advantage of guided fishing options. Martha's Vineyard is well versed in serving anglers who travel from afar to get in on the great fly-fishing action, and hiring a guide for a day

or for several days is the best way to get the most out of a trip here (see Notebook).

The Derby

The Martha's Vineyard Striped Bass & Bluefish Derby, held from mid-September through mid-October, ushers in a special time on Martha's Vineyard. Tourist activity begins to wane during autumn, but the energy level remains high, with anglers buzzing about trying to catch the winning fish. One day as I was getting my morning



coffee from Dock Street Coffee Shop in Edgartown, I glanced out the window and noticed a throng of anglers stampeding toward the town dock, rods in hand, bait and flies looking like confetti being thrown through the air as they prepared for the quick but mighty albie appearance. I sprinted out to the beach and heard from all directions, “Albies are in the harbor! They have arrived!”

Such sudden appearances of these pugnacious game fish are the reason my albie rod remains rigged and ready, fly securely fastened to the tippet, until the end of October, when life calms down again. Throughout the derby, anglers fish from the beaches at all hours of the day. For 72 years, the derby was a catch-and-kill tournament and the fish would go to local homes for the elderly. But in 2016, the derby introduced a catch-and-release category. In addition to shore fishing, derby anglers fish by boat, with every cast offering the hope of a prize-winning fish. The winning shore angler gets a shiny new boat, the winning boat angler receives a brand-new car, and both winners earn a lifetime of bragging rights.

The derby brings the entire community together in a wonderful display of congeniality. My guide business, Kismet Outfitters, hosts a women’s derby kickoff event the night before the start of the derby. Women of all levels gather from near and far to learn about the sport and simply to be together and fish. Each night of the derby, the weigh-in station (located in downtown Edgartown, by the finger piers and Edgartown Yacht Club) buzzes with activity as all the anglers report in with their day’s catch, hoping to see their name on the board.

Naturally, such a competitive event assures plenty of high jinks as many anglers try to keep their secrets, particularly about prime locations. I’ve often overheard blatant lies about where the best fishing is supposedly happening, but, in the end, it’s all in good fun and all about the fish. Martha’s Vineyard shows her true colors during this tournament, which highlights the strong community spirit of the island. The derby has raised more than \$64,000 for scholarships given to local high school graduates.

Martha’s Vineyard and the waters that surround it hold a very special place in my heart, and nothing is better than introducing clients not only to the outstanding fishing in these bountiful waters, but also to the wonderful community cohesion and the island lifestyle. Take the ferry over and let me show you what our little island has to offer. 🐟

Abigail Schuster runs Kismet Outfitters, www.kismetoutfitters.com, specializing in guided fly fishing at Martha’s Vineyard as well as various waters in Maine.

Martha’s Vineyard NOTEBOOK



Where: Off the MA coast, just south of Cape Cod. **Ferry service:** The Steamship Authority (year-round from Woods Hole, MA), www.steamshipauthority.com; Falmouth Ferry (seasonal from Falmouth, MA), www.falmouthedgartownferry.com; Fast Ferry (seasonal from Quonset Point and Kingston, RI), www.vineyardfastferry.com; Seastreak Ferries (seasonal from NYC, NJ, and Boston and New Bedford, MA), www.seastreak.com.

Headquarters: Martha’s Vineyard and Chappaquiddick. **Lodging:** Edgartown Inn, (508) 627-4794, www.edgartowninn.com; VRBO #1025785, www.vrbo.com/1025785.

Appropriate gear: 7- to 10-wt. rods; floating, intermediate, and sinking lines; 6-ft., 25-lb. mono or fluorocarbon leaders; 6-in. wire bite tippet for bluefish.

Useful fly patterns: Middle Ground Squid, peanut bunker and sand eel patterns, Epoxy Minnows, Deceivers, Clouser Deep Minnows, Surf Candy.

Necessary accessories: Stripping basket, net, pliers, headlamp, VHF marine radio, GPS chart plotter, depth finder, personal flotation device, charts, polarized sunglasses, hat, clothing layers, waterproof shell, sunscreen, water, snacks.



Fly shops/guides: Larry’s Tackle Shop, (508) 627-5088; www.larrystackle.com. Kismet Outfitters, (860) 944-5225, www.kismetoutfitters.com.

Books/maps/charts: *Fly Fishing for Striped Bass* by Rich Murphy; *The Big One* by David Kinney; *Stripers on the Fly* by Lou Tabory. NOAA Chart 13233, www.charts.noaa.gov/PDFs/13233.pdf; www.windalert.com.



Bloody Run, IA

Railroad Trout, Cold Springs, and Driftless Caves

By Jeff Erickson

Browns and rainbows held just where they should, in a thigh-deep, cobble run below a rusting old railroad bridge, a short hike upstream from my camp at Bloody Run County Park.

Every fly angler knows that runs and pools below bridges, while sometimes not secrets, often provide excellent trout habitat.

Few things in life are better than having a prime streamside campsite with a few days to explore public water on my own. No need to drive anywhere; no need to cough up 400 bucks for a guide; no need to talk, text, or email. Just little old me—leisurely walking, wading, and casting—immersed in my own drifting, half-assed existentialist-Zen Buddhist thoughts, surrounded by dense hardwood forest, bird calls, and rising trout. A place of peace.

After hookups on beetles and scuds, I sat on a gravel bar, opened a local microbrew, and realized how happy and fortunate I was to be back on Iowa's lovely Bloody Run, which exemplifies everything I desire in a stream. That evening, I caught several more trout right in front of my picnic table; later, bullfrogs commenced croaking, owls hooted from giant cottonwoods, and constellations of magical fireflies flickered along the stream edges. Around the campfire that night, I hummed "Fishing with Bill," a song by peerless Iowa troubadour and fly angler Greg Brown:

*Man what a winter,
Sorrow wide and deep.
Is it just the media industry or the whole country
That is turning into sheep?
I wanna go to a good place ...
Cast our souls out in the river
And watch the whole deal shine ...
Somewhere on a river somewhere far away
From stupid people in positions of power*

Lost Americana

To many fly anglers, "Iowa" and "trout" might sound oxymoronic. Farm pond bullheads, billiard-table-flat cornfields, and prize-winning hogs raised by diligent 4-H

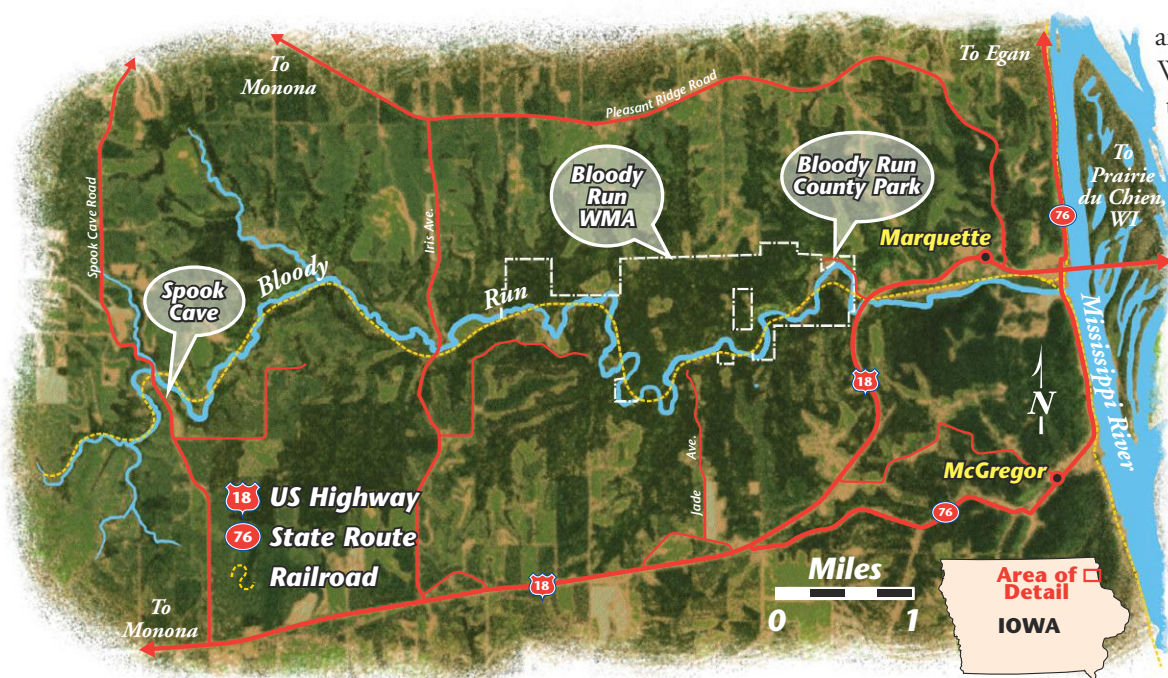


Bloody Run holds a healthy population of wild browns, include some large specimens (above). Punctuated by historic iron truss bridges, a rail line following Bloody Run offers access to excellent water. Just hike as far as you wish and drop down to an enticing run (left).

kids might more immediately jump to mind. As with most stereotypes, there is a kernel of truth here, but it's also incomplete. Astute anglers might also mention twitching poppers over jumbo bluegills and bass, or luring sauger, walleyes, and whiskered channel catfish out of the Mississippi River and its tributaries. But trout?

If an unconvinced fly angler embarked on a roller-coaster road trip through Iowa's bluff country to Bloody Run, they would slip into a wonderland of spring-fed trout streams far different than they likely imagined. And in contrast to other spring creek destinations, like Montana's Paradise Valley, portions of Pennsylvania, or England's chalk streams, public access is often surprisingly good. Scenic drives, excellent parks, friendly people, and charming historic towns add luster.

Iowa's trout fishing is concentrated in just 10 of its 99 counties, all located in the northeastern portion of the state, clustering around cities like Decorah and Dubuque. Along with southwestern Wisconsin, southeastern Minnesota, and a sliver of northwestern Illinois, this corner of Iowa is part of the Driftless Region. This unique area wasn't scraped by glaciers during the last ice age; consequently, there is no glacially deposited "drift" littering the landscape.



and rainbow trout. While many Iowa trout streams still rely heavily on stocked browns and 'bows, the former have increasingly established naturally reproducing populations in the best creeks, including Bloody Run. Furthermore, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has selectively reintroduced

brook trout from wild stock taken from a tiny stream where biologists believe a relict population from the last ice age may have survived settlement impacts.

As the glaciers along the region's periphery waned 10,000 years ago, massive flows of meltwater scoured deep coulees into sedimentary bedrock left by ancient tropical seas, rushing toward the Mississippi River valley. The erosion cut through sandstone, shale, dolomite, and limestone, leaving craggy bluffs, rolling hills, and streambeds littered with rocky rubble. Millennia of infiltration through readily dissolved limestone sculpted a quirky maze of caves, sinkholes, and one of the world's greatest concentrations of spring creeks. Abundant, watercress-fringed springs percolating from porous, calcium-carbonate-rich limestone moderate stream flows, temperatures, and pH levels, producing exceptional conditions for aquatic insects and trout, like those inhabiting Bloody Run.

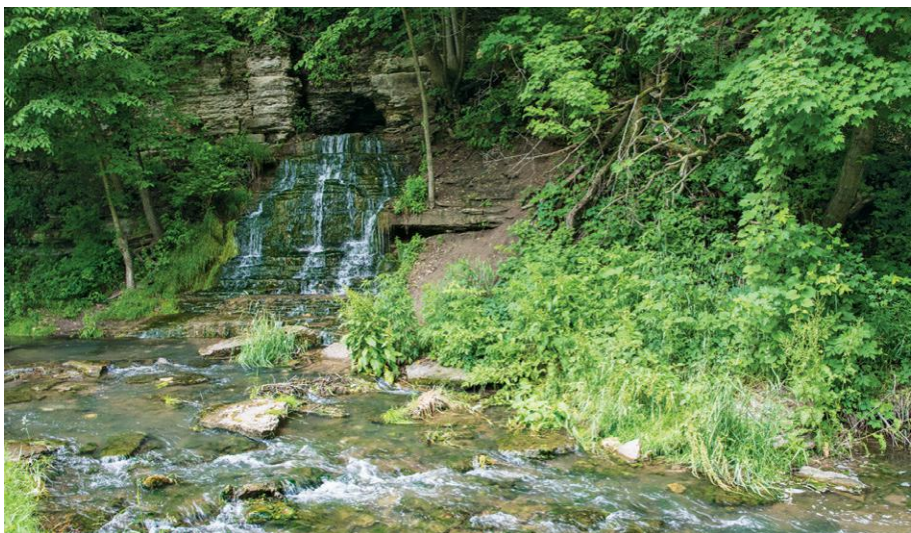
So, despite various downward spirals, things have improved for Iowa trout and fly anglers during the past century. There are still threats, of course: climate change, shifts from pasture and conservation reserve land to more row crops, and the infiltration of fertilizer and pesticides into vulnerable aquifers.

Environmental Devastation, Gradual Redemption

When nineteenth-century settlers homesteaded north-eastern Iowa, they encountered a complex environmental mosaic: fertile, loess-enhanced soil on prairie uplands; dense hardwood forests in valleys; ice age relict white pines on cooler, north-facing slopes; and prolific native brook trout pulsing in icy creeks. As prairies and forests were cleared on the slopes—planted with wheat and corn—massive amounts of erosion occurred, propelled by devastating floods. Once-clear, pristine streams became silt-clogged messes: Iowa's sensitive brook trout were nearly driven to extinction.

Especially during the 1930s, reforestation was ramped up, public land was purchased, and agricultural practices were improved, leading to enhanced water quality and opportunities for hardier, introduced brown

Today, there are more than 70 Iowa trout streams, comprising hundreds of miles of water; all eventually drain into the Mississippi River. In addition to Bloody Run, my favorites include French, Paint, Coldwater, Waterloo, and North and South Bear Creeks. All of them have abundant public access. Midwestern Driftless states like Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin enjoy a long tradition of public access—perhaps partly derived from all the community-spirited Scandinavian and German settlers.



That said, most streamside land remains private, so show courtesy to landowners.

Bloody Run's best reaches support more than 485 wild browns per mile, according to the most recent survey. In addition, the DNR stocks catchable rainbows and brookies. A prime public stretch upstream from Bloody Run County Park is under special regulations: artificial lures only, and all brown trout under 14 inches must be released. Most Bloody Run and Iowa trout are pan-size, but trophies lurk in the sweetest spots. Catch them if you can.

Historic Railroad Jazz: Exploring Bloody Run

How can such a wonderful stream sound like a carnage-strewn Civil War battlefield? One explanation lies in an 1866 monograph on Clayton County stream names, penned by Eliphalet Price and published by the State Historical Society of Iowa. The curious name goes back to Lieutenant Martin Scott, stationed nearby at Fort Crawford, Wisconsin, from 1821 to 1826. Scott was "regarded as the best hunting shot in the country, by both the white and the Indian hunter," and he often pursued his quarry in a favored Iowa valley just across the Mississippi from his post. Price explained: "Before leaving the fort to cross the river, he would often observe in a jocular manner, 'I am going to make the blood run today over on my hunting ground.' From this circumstance, the officers and soldiers at the fort bestowed upon the stream the name of 'Bloody Run.' "

All told, this productive creek offers 6.5 miles of public trout water, the best of it centered around Bloody Run County Park and the state's adjacent Bloody Run Wildlife Management Area. The easiest access is 2 miles west of Marquette, off US Highway 18 and then a local road. The park and the wildlife area offer a perfect starting point to begin exploring the creek: for campers, there are primitive streamside sites under towering cottonwoods, including picnic tables, fire pits, drinking water, and convenient outhouses.

In addition to fishing in the campground or along a creek-side trail, anglers can hike up a rail line winding through the forested wildlife area to find solitude, less-fished water, and the special regulations reach. Anglers with sharp eyes might spot Iowa's largest woodpecker, the pileated. (There are seasonal opportunities to combine

fishing and the excellent hunting Scott enjoyed: white-tailed deer, turkeys, ruffed grouse, and squirrels.) With a bit of scrambling, stream access is easy via a sequence of vintage iron bridges spanning the stream. This remains an active rail line—dating back to 1864—so caution is advised, especially when crossing bridges.

During its long operation, Bloody Run's rail infrastructure has come and gone due to flash floods that plague the Driftless Region. According to Dean Klinkenberg's *Mis-*



The screech and moan of trains laboriously twisting through the valley are part of the experience of fishing Bloody Run. You'll hear them coming a mile away (above). Springs around Spook Cave provide much of the water for Bloody Run's headwaters. There is a popular, well-developed commercial campground here, and boat tours of the cave (left).

issippi Valley Traveler blog (www.mississippivalleytraveler.com/marquette), "On May 24 1896, five inches of rain in one hour ... sent a wall of water 20 feet high racing down Bloody Run valley, washing out bridges and railroad tracks, tossing box cars around like rubber duckies, and killing more than 20 people."

Lest you think you'll be lulled only by trilling crickets around your Bloody Run campfire, trains produce spookier night sounds. While not natural music, it's an interesting and impressionistic part of the historical and economic context here. You can hear trains laboring and winding through the steep, dark, foggy valley miles away, screeching and moaning around the tight curves and sounding like deranged ghouls—or the wild, honking saxophones of jazz greats John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, or Ornette Colman.

In daylight, the trains' impressive graffiti art from all over the country is visible, compelling me to stop casting and watch the moving art exhibit. I imagine late-night scenes in LA, New York, or Denver, graffiti artists sneaking into rail yards with beer, joints, and spray paint. Then

weeks, months, or years later, their work is rolling through rural Iowa. Now, I'm certainly not advocating vandalism, but a surprising amount of train car graffiti is at a high level, way above the "Butch loves Kristi" heart-and-arrow "art" etched on a campsite picnic table.

Upstream from the park, Bloody Run can also be accessed via a bridge on Iris Avenue and other local roads. The late Jene Hughes—who wrote the excellent *Iowa Trout Streams* guidebook and was also a crack assistant editor at *Eastern Fly Fishing*—described this reach: "There are places along Bloody Run that remind me of stretches of Yellowstone Park's Gallatin and Gibbon Rivers. If you walk into the middle section of Bloody Run from Jade Avenue, the steep hike would make a good 'rehearsal' for a Western trip. If you do hike in this way, the area is remote enough that a sprained ankle would make getting back to your car a serious ordeal."

Farther upstream still—at the beginning of the designated trout water—there is fly fishing around Spook Cave, a private, streamside campground with picnic grounds, showers, laundry facilities, and even a camp store. Most notably, the large limestone spring flowing out of Spook Cave affords the unusual opportunity to take a guided subterranean boat tour. Additionally, there are other cascading, cliff-side springs enhancing Bloody Run's flow.

Spook Cave is a classic Catskills- or Black Hills-style tourist attraction. The creek is smaller here, with less room to roam than in the downstream forests. Just don't expect to do much serious angling here on a busy weekend, with all the hyperactive kids wading, taking streamside selfies, and playing fetch with their water-loving pups. But if you are camping with an antsy family that wants to do more than delicately delivering size 22 Trico spinners on 7X, this is the place.

Aquatic Buffet

When I started roaming northeastern Iowa trout streams more than 25 years ago, one idiosyncrasy was the widespread practice of locals calling regional hatcheries to get the latest stocking schedule. They showed up immediately after hapless, disoriented trout had been dumped into the most accessible pools. Today, people still call for stocking intelligence, but creeks with naturally reproducing fish have greatly increased. On Iowa's better streams—now equal to Minnesota's and Wisconsin's finest Driftless waters—management has steadily shifted to maintaining wild popula-

tions. For fly anglers, this means more astute trout reared on aquatic insects rather than fish pellets, with a concomitant demand for more precise imitations. Marshmallow and cheese curd flies just don't cut it like they used to.

Hatches on Iowa streams generally mirror those found elsewhere in the Driftless Region. Seasonal flotillas of mayflies include Dark Hendrickson, Blue-Winged Olive, Blue Dun, Light Hendrickson, Sulphur, March Brown–Gray Fox, Light Cahill, and Trico. Additionally, there is an abundance of midges, caddisflies, crane flies, and some stoneflies, including Little Black and Yellow Stoneflies. Ants, beetles, crickets, and

hoppers infest the thick vegetation along Bloody Run, and their imitations are indispensable during low to medium flows.

Bloody Run is among the area's largest trout streams, with insect-rich riffles, perfect runs, deep pools, and enormous logjams that you just know shelter hook-jawed, 4-pound browns, most likely to be captured with subsurface enticements. Bloody Run can flow slightly off-color—more so after rain—and doesn't demand quite the spring creek finesse of some other nearby streams, like crystalline French Creek. A Woolly Bugger plunked next to a root wad or undercut bank might lure one of the stream's larger browns.

A Pheasant Tail, Hare's Ear, or Prince Nymph bounced along the limestone rubble will deceive many trout on a good day. Scuds are prolific and almost always a good choice.

Iowa trout streams are open year-round, providing good action even on warm winter days due to the moderating influences of springs. For visitors, the most appealing times are April through June for hatch and wildflower explosions, and again from mid-September into October for spectacular fall colors and *Baetis*, terrestrial, and streamer action.

Speaking of B-52-size enticements, one bug that might inhabit Bloody Run—but which I have not personally encountered there—is the Giant Michigan Mayfly (*Hexagenia limbata*). Under the right early-summer conditions, these creatures are capable of sparking night feeding frenzies by rabid, jumbo trout. Bloody Run's slower, siltier lower reaches may provide habitat for this impressive insect, which hatches by the millions a few miles away on the Mississippi. In fact, this eruption is so profuse that snowplows are sometimes required to remove the hazardous, slippery mess from bridges. The mighty Hex nearly disappeared from the upper Mississippi due to pollution, but the 1972 federal Clean Water Act sparked a major comeback, a boon to all the different fish feeding on them.

Hi-Viz Foam Beetle



PHOTO BY EASTERN FLY FISHING

Hook:	Standard dry fly, sizes 14–20
Thread:	Black, size 6/0 or 8/0
Body:	Peacock herl wrapped around hook; circular black foam tied down at rear and pulled over top, tied down again at thorax to form head
Legs:	Black deer hair
Thorax:	Orange foam on top, for better visibility
Head:	Black foam, trimmed to size as desired

Going Driftless, Iowa-Style

A thorough exploration of Iowa trout streams like Bloody Run requires a map illustrating the dense network of local roads that don't necessarily appear on the state highway map. The DNR's free *Iowa's Trout Country* map does an admirable job of showing these routes, so get that before you go.

Bloody Run adds its flow to the Mississippi near the adjacent, historic hamlets of Marquette and McGregor. The 19th-century river towns are worth a stroll and flash card space; if you're not camping at Bloody Run County Park or Spook Cave, they also offer lodging and dining. And just across the Mississippi in Wisconsin is Prairie du Chien, a larger, equally venerable river town with more services.

Another option is camping at Pikes Peak State Park, a few miles south of McGregor, offering bluff-top campsites, trails, and expansive vistas 500 vertical feet above Old Man River. Over in Green Bay Packer territory—perched high above the jungle-like junction of the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers—is wonderful Wyalusing State Park, still an easy drive to Bloody Run. And much of the floodplain below is protected as the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, a paradise for warm-water anglers and bird-watchers.

Four miles north of Marquette is Effigy Mounds National Monument, with ancient, animal-shaped figures etched on crags overlooking the Mississippi, testament to the Native American heritage of the area. Farther north still is the expansive Yellow River State Forest, with camping and trout fishing in the Paint Creek drainage. Like other larger streams in northeast Iowa, the Yellow River affords excellent canoeing and smallmouth bass fishing.

Resembling a scaled-down version of the Ozarks or Appalachia, the area has many twisting, gorgeous drives, none more iconic than the Great River Road—one of the nation's first scenic byways—hugging the Miss from its source in northern Minnesota's Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico. And northeast Iowa has some of the best of it. For such a road trip, there's no better soundtrack than Greg Brown, who wrote the song "Driftless":

*Let's cry all our tears
Cry them all out now.
Let them flow down
And clean all the rivers.
And the evening sky
I'm going driftless.*

Jeff Erickson is a Montana-based freelance writer and photographer and a frequent contributor to Northwest Fly Fishing magazine.

Bloody Run Creek NOTEBOOK



When: Year-round; April–June and September–October are prime.

Where: Northeast IA, several miles from McGregor and Marquette, IA, via US Hwy. 18.

Headquarters: McGregor and Marquette; larger cities in the region with more services include Dubuque and Decorah, IA; and Prairie du Chien and La Crosse, WI.

Access: Streamside camping at Bloody Run County Park and Spook Cave, with other local roads and a rail line also providing access. Nearby Pikes Peak State Park, Yellow River State Forest, and Wyalusing State Park (WI) also offer camping a short drive from Bloody Run.

Useful fly patterns: Dark and Light Hendricksons, Light Cahill, Sulphurs, Blue Dun, Blue-Winged Olive, Adams, Rusty Spinner, Kelly Galloup's Spinners and Cripples, Elk Hair Caddis, X-Caddis, Iris Caddis, E.C. Caddis, CDC Caddis Emerger, LaFontaine Deep and Emergent Sparkle Pupa, Peeking Caddis, Griffith's Gnat, Brassie, Serendipity, Pheasant Tail Nymph, Hare's Ear Nymph, Prince Nymph, terrestrials, soft-hackles, scuds and cress bugs, crane fly larvae and dries, Woolly Buggers, articulated streamers. Bass poppers/streamers for nearby larger rivers.

Fly shops/guides: *Viroqua:* Driftless Angler, (608) 637-8779, www.driftlessangler.com. Driftless on the Fly, (641) 330-9694, (641) 257-9025, www.driftlesson-the-fly.com; Bear Creek Anglers, (563) 419-4433, www.bearcreekanglers.com; Tight Lines Trout Guide Services, (563) 419-7878, tghtlnstrt@gmail.com; NEI Fly Fishing, www.neiflyfishing.com; Up North Adventures, (563) 794-0526, (593) 535-7296, snowdog@acegroup.cc.

Books/maps: *Iowa Trout Streams* by Jene Hughes; *Fly-fisher's Guide to Wisconsin & Iowa* by John Motoviloff; *Fly Fishing Midwestern Spring Creeks* and *Upper Midwest Flies That Catch Trout* by Ross A. Mueller. *Iowa Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme; *Iowa's Trout Country* map/guide by Iowa DNR, www.iowadnr.com/fish/fishing/trout/troutstr.html.



ALL PHOTOS BY PAUL C. MARRINER

Northumberland Strait Rivers, Nova Scotia

A Primer on Variety

By Paul C. Marriner

Separating Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, Northumberland Strait is unique: this shallow strait has the warmest summer seawater temperatures north of Virginia and several highly sought-after fish species. Between the New Brunswick border to the west and Cape George to the east, 17 Nova Scotia rivers flow to the strait. Another nine end in Saint George's Bay. Excluding Cape George, with its imposing bluffs, a coastal plain extends inland, creating tidal estuaries, some measured in miles.

Atlantic salmon are the glamour species in Northumberland Strait waters. Fall runners are the native strain, and the season, September and October, reflects

this. Native brook trout inhabit most of the rivers. Widely dispersed in spring, they move up- or downriver as water temperatures rise. Headwater residents are typically small. Those with a stay in the salt water grow somewhat larger, averaging 12 inches. Sea-run brook trout (sea-runs) cycle in and out of estuaries, depending on water temperature and river levels; their main upriver journey occurs in June. Collegial by nature, sea-runs move relatively quickly. It's

not uncommon to have outstanding fishing in an area for perhaps two days, but on day three to go begging. Brown trout also occur as resident or sea-run populations, the latter called sea trout. Headwater browns are small, but sea trout are larger—I've never caught one smaller than 14 inches and specimens in excess of 5 pounds roam these waters. My catches have come from freshwater pools,

but friends do well in the estuaries. Unlike sea-runs, sea trout are generally loners and can be found traveling throughout the season, given acceptable water conditions.

Striped bass populations are naturally cyclical and are also very responsive to excessive exploitation. Most landings are schoolies, 18- to

24-inch bass. Nevertheless, the odds of hooking a striper in the 20-pound range are good. The approach for stripers is typical: look for riptides (aka "rips") generated by a falling tide or work eelgrass shoals when flooded.

The Rivers

The rivers run from west to east and are sometimes grouped by the eventual destination; the amount of detail available

Nova Scotia is friendly to anglers: all waters are public, access is virtually universal, there are no guide requirements, and there's an extended season.

for each river generally depends on its popularity and, concomitantly, accessibility, and the lesser waters are excluded here. All are spate rivers and, with the exception of the larger rivers, have headwaters too overgrown for comfortable fly fishing. For estuary fishing, Google Earth is indispensable for locating channels, shoals, and potential rips.

Shinimicas River: While only an occasional visitor appears, any Atlantic salmon here is likely to be large. For resident brook trout the best fishing is upstream of the Shinimicas provincial park located just east of the Highway 6 bridge. Sea-runs, sea trout, and striped bass may be accessed from the Green Road bridge and from the area around the Route 366 bridge, near the river's mouth.

River Philip: River Philip is the largest and most productive of the strait rivers. Above the official head of tide, tributaries include West Branch River Philip at Collingwood Corner and the Black and Little Rivers at the popular and productive Town Pool in the town of Oxford. River Philip offers angling for all the major species and reigns supreme for Atlantic salmon catch statistics. Nova Scotia is friendly to anglers: all waters are public, access is virtually universal, there are no guide requirements, and there's an extended season. Being the closest major river to the border means Philip receives considerable salmon-fishing attention.

Route 301 (Kolbec Road) follows the river on the west side from Oxford to the mouth at Port Howe; similarly, Highway 321 follows the east side. The intersection of Dickson and Kolbec Roads is considered the tidal boundary. Big browns and stripers are caught in the lower river, particularly in May and June. Bank anglers are successful, but boats are more effective. Much of the easy-access upstream section offers primarily resident brown trout, with the peak being mid-April to early June. Concentrating on sections above and below the Mountain Road bridge is a sound choice. Resident brook trout prefer the cold-water brooks, but there are two distinct waves of sea-runs: the first, from mid-May to mid-June, and the second, often called "the strawberry run," from late June to early July.

Wallace River: "About a foot farther," said a disembodied voice. Startled, I looked in vain for the source. I was just beginning my rotation on the Wallace River pool, so it clearly wasn't directed at me, but instead at one of the several anglers downstream. When it came again, I stopped casting and focused on the far bank. It took a few minutes, but then a body, well up a tree, appeared.

Shaking my head, I resumed fishing. It takes a certain combination of youth, fitness, and desire to shinny up a tree and go out on a limb to spot for a friend.

The Wallace has become one of my favorite streams. Typically easy to wade and productive—ranked number four on the average annual catch (salmon) list—it has the added advantage of being the closest major strait salmon river to my home. Moreover, with a little effort, solitude is available. Roads on both sides of the river offer access. Pools at the head of tide, even if shared,



In October, salmon are inevitably dark, but the sea lice clinging to the jaw of this Waughts River beauty testify to its very recent arrival from the saltwater (above). Anadromous species frequently pause where spawning brooks join the main flow. Here, Paul MacDonald plays a brook trout in Drennan Brook Pool on the Wallace River (left).

are magnetic. The river also produces sea-run browns. A few yards below Kerrs Mill Road bridge, a large pool marks the end of tidal influence.

Tatamagouche Bay tributaries: Rather well known for its oysters, Tatamagouche Bay gathers four rivers, three of them noteworthy. The French River is the water supply for the town of Tatamagouche. Most of the fishing—salmon in late October, sea-runs in late May, sea trout in late April and May—is in the lower end between the Cooper Road bridge and the tidal pool. Upriver pools are widely separated and difficult to access. The Waughts River, having delivered some big salmon to my hand, is a personal favorite. Several bridges cross the lower river and offer access to both up- and downstream pools. A falls near the junction of Routes 311 and 256 restricted migration until the addition of a fish ladder in 2009. Sea trout took almost immediate advantage, and the population above the falls has blossomed. Salmon followed, and the number of redds increased in each of the following years. One of the pleasures when salmon fishing in rivers like the Waughts is the expectation that a feisty sea-run is also likely to grab a fly.

River John: The Tidal Pool is a mandatory visit whenever I'm roaming the region. Although almost certainly it will have been fished before my arrival, it offers the hope of a few fresh fish moving up with the tide. Besides, the cold-water brook entering at the head makes the pool a comfortable holding area. While I've seen salmon holding in several upriver pools, they have invariably ignored my offerings. With an excellent reputation for sea trout, the John is one of the three rivers where night fishing for browns is permitted.

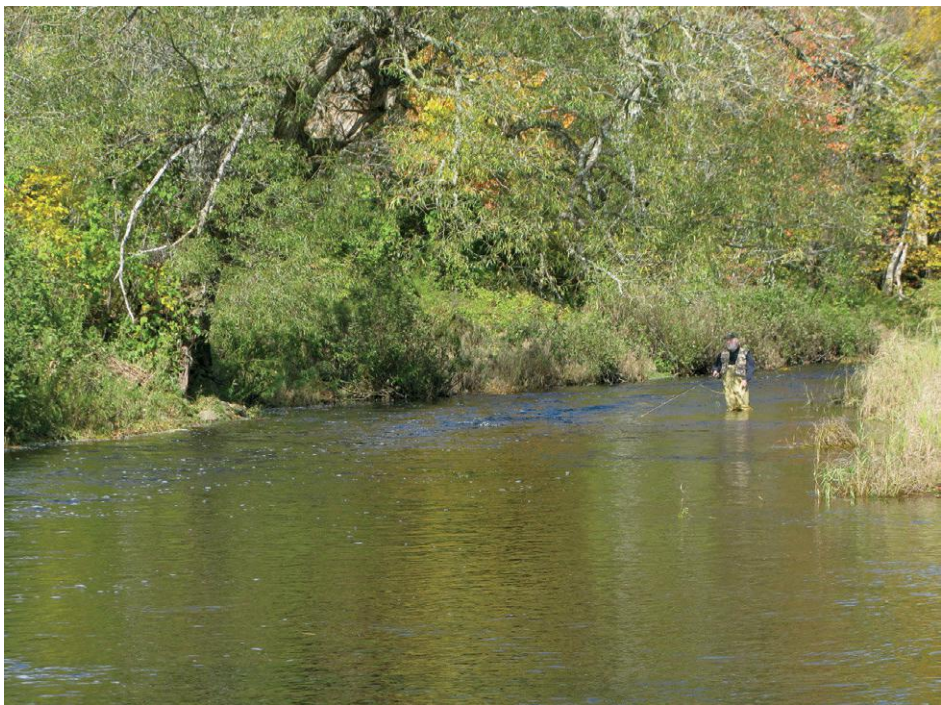
Pictou Harbour tributaries: Pictou Harbour's three major feeders are aptly named the West, Middle, and East Rivers. The West River is an Atlantic salmon stream that also supports resident and anadromous trout. Heavily dependent on rain for reasonable fishing, it's usually been too low whenever I've visited. Regardless, some years it's more productive than the nearby, and larger, East River and on average yields only 10 percent fewer salmon per rod-day. The Middle River, once a productive salmon river, fell on hard times several decades ago. The strait's bronze-medal salmon river, the East has teased me several times without delivering a hero shot. A drive along the river in October offers stunning fall color as well as easy access to some enticing salmon pools (see the Notebook for sources of pool maps of the West and East Rivers). The Middle River, no longer a productive salmon river, today has a flourishing smallmouth bass fishery, the only one in the region.

Merigomish Harbour tributaries: A trio of intriguing rivers drain into Merigomish Harbour. The Sutherlands River produces some healthy sea trout below the head of tide and the occasional salmon, given sufficient flows. A useful access trail heads north from Thorburn Road about 800 feet south of Highway 4. Upstream access is limited, and Parks Falls spells the end of migratory journeys. Above the falls is native brook trout country, with all the overgrown conditions that implies.

The French River, with an extensive drainage area, might be considered a significant opportunity. Unfortunately, it offers few pools and those are difficult to reach. The upper reaches are well populated with small browns and brookies, but densely enclosed by bank-side vegetation. Access to the estuary from the lower section of Forbes Mill Road, about 0.36 mile from its intersection with Highway 245 (Shore Road), is straightforward. One of the best pools is at the junction of the East and West Branches, just a few hundred yards upstream of this access.

Barneys River is an unusual stream in that, while the reported annual salmon catch is modest, at rare times it produces as if it were a salmon river in Iceland. Of course, such incredible fishing presupposes intimate knowledge, ideal conditions, and persistence. Access to the river west of Highway 104 is via Barneys River Road. Anadromous species often pause in a pool at the junction of the East and West Branches, and the majority choose the East Branch to continue their journey. Here too, despite the multipronged headwaters, the angling quickly becomes more bushwhacking than comfortable wading. Regardless, these cold-water refuges hold abundant juvenile salmon, brook trout, and brown trout. The estuary yields cruising stripers, sea-runs, and sea trout—all available to both waders and boaters. Search for potential hot spots using Google Earth.

Saint Georges Bay tributaries: About 16 miles wide at its mouth, Saint Georges Bay gathers a host of rivers, many of which offer opportunities for fly anglers. The northernmost river on the bay's west side, the North River, is misnamed—it's no more than a small marshy brook, and not fished. To the south, the Rights River has a small catchment and a broad estuary. The river flows through the town of Antigonish and enters Antigonish Harbour near the West River. It offers some fall salmon fishing, along with sea-runs and sea trout upriver from mid-May



Salmon ascend to the headwaters of the region's rivers and are often taken from small pools such as this one on the East Branch River John.

to the end of June, and sea trout throughout the season in the tidal waters. Unfortunately, it narrows quickly and becomes overgrown.

Flowing through Antigonish, the West River is a popular and productive salmon river with an annual catch

(10-year average) only 15 percent below the River Philip's. The West flows through the town of Antigonish. The Saint Mary's River Association website (see Notebook) has pool maps for both the West and South Rivers. More than a decade ago, I took two European visitors to the West River before traveling on to Cape Breton. While none of us landed a salmon, we moved a number of fish and saw a couple of luckier anglers releasing salmon. Two major tributaries, the James and Ohio Rivers, are home to brook and brown trout as well as salmon. Note, however, that the farther upstream you go, the less attractive the fly fishing. The South River, while it doesn't produce the salmon numbers of the neighboring West, offers a respectable return on time invested. Rainbows have been stocked in the river on a put-and-take basis for some years. They are introduced at several easily accessible locations downstream of the Fraser's Mill Fish Hatchery in Saint Andrews.

A bit of a sleeper, the Pomquet River is home to a salmon population that has been attracting attention. Unfortunately, it rises and falls quickly, so timing is everything. The river supports healthy populations of brook and brown trout, and both branches are accessible from the road through Meadow Green. An extensive saltwater estuary offers striper and sea trout opportunities. The Tracadie River, which feeds the south shore of Saint George's Bay, produces sea-runs in the river proper, but its estuary attracts the most attention. Both sides of Tracadie Big Island yield 2- to 5-pound sea trout, as well as striped bass.

Autumn Bounty

It's a happy coincidence that the Northumberland Strait's salmon season is also Nova Scotia's most comfortable and inviting time: crisp mornings, warm days, vibrant colors, and entrancing light.

As I followed a well-trod path through a once-tended hayfield, the sun was just beginning to melt the frost on the sunlit stalks. The lack of disturbance signaled a first arrival. While salmon may take a fly at any time of the day and regardless of previous human traffic, I'm always happiest when mine is the first fly seen that day. And so it was on this mid-October morning. Fewer than a half-dozen times I swam a Blae and Black Maratube across the Waughs River pool before the fly was intercepted. Fortunately the salmon fought it out without running downstream and possibly disturbing the downstream pools.

As the morning waned, this river delivered several more times, emblematic of the rivers that feed Northumberland Strait. If you're looking for the best of mainland Nova Scotia's fly fishing in terms of accessibility and variety, these waters are excellent choices. 🐟

Paul C. Marriner is a widely published writer and photographer, and author of several books, including Modern Atlantic Salmon Flies.

Northumberland Strait River NOTEBOOK



When: April 1–Sept. 30 for trout; Sept. 1–Oct. 31 for salmon. Regulations at <https://novascotia.ca/fish/sportfishing> (for tidal boundaries, click on "Frequently Asked Questions").

Appropriate gear: Depending on species and conditions, 4- to 8-wt. rods, 4- to 10-lb. tippets; floating and sinking-tip lines; two-handed rods for windy conditions.

Useful fly patterns: *Fall salmon:* Lester the Lobster, shrimp patterns, Popsicle-style marabou flies. *Estuaries:* Popovics patterns, Schoolie. *Trout:* Standard attractor patterns and flies to match various hatches. Bob MacDonald is a professional tier with substantial knowledge of working flies for the area; see, www.facebook.com/pg/BobMacDonaldFreeFallenFlies.

Guides: Andrew Lowles, andrew.lowles@gmail.com (New Glasgow area).

Nonresident license: *General fishing license:* \$34.80/7 days, \$63.65/annual. *Atlantic salmon license:* \$63.65/7 days, \$157.40/annual. *Note:* Presently, no license is necessary to angle in salt water (but one is under consideration, so check the latest requirements), so know the tidal water boundary—where the salt water is legally considered to begin. The DFO sets these limits with a view to easy recognition.

Maps: Toporama, www.atlas.gc.ca/toporama/en/index.html; pool maps for the West and East Rivers, New Glasgow, and West and South Rivers, Antigonish, are online at www.antigonishriversassociation.ca/maps.htm.



R. L. Harris Reservoir, AL

Warm-Water Fly Fishing Perfection

By Pete Elkins

What makes a 10,600-acre northeast Alabama impoundment a perfect fly-rod fishery? One compelling answer: you will rarely see another fly angler.

Sure, you'll see bass boats, especially on weekends, manned by bass anglers casting hard or soft plastic lures—lures that the lake's bass see a lot of. A fly is something new that triggers a strike response likely dampened by overexposure to popular bass lures.

R. L. Harris Reservoir, also known as Lake Wedowee, is a prolific breeding ground for threadfin shad. Threadfins typically range from an inch to 3 or 4 inches long, perfect models for fly imitations. Many large Alabama impoundments host a higher percentage of

gizzard shad, the threadfin's bigger cousin, which often measure 8 or more inches. That's a big fly to throw on a fly rod matched to 1- to 3-pound largemouth or spotted bass. Also, unlike most Alabama reservoirs, Harris Reservoir is deep and clear, another plus for fly anglers who generally find more success in clear rather than stained water.

But there's always an exception to general statements, and early spring can present a significant exception. As the lake's water temps rise in March and April, bass, particularly largemouth, move from winter depths toward nearby shallow pockets and creeks. This movement can be fitful, given the vagaries of spring cold fronts. However, experienced bass anglers know that when the fishy planets align in the form of spring rains staining warm shoreline pockets, you need to be there. And you need to be casting something visible. Conventional bass anglers like a shallow-running crankbait called a "squarebill," for its short, rectangular diving lip. The squarebill makes the lure surprisingly immune to hanging up when retrieved slowly through and around stumps, fallen trees, and other shoreline magnets for big largemouth bass in early spring.

The lure's effectiveness derives from not only its rela-

tive weedlessness, but also its action when it bumps into wood or other cover. It deflects sideways upon contact, a reaction that triggers strikes. It also helps if the lure is red. Don't ask me why. I've caught too many 3- to 6-pound early-spring largemouth to even debate the color issue. So, to butcher Shakespeare, is a fly to be or not to be

a squarebill? Despite being a pretty clumsy fly tier, I assembled something that had potential. Color was easy. To create bulk that would push water, I used a combination of synthetic and bucktail for the body and wing. Since the fly needed to sink very slowly—almost suspend if possible—I added bead-chain eyes instead of heavier lead dumbbells. Hoping to achieve both snag resistance and the ability to deflect



ALL PHOTOS BY PETE ELKINS

March and April rains can stain upper lake shorelines. Fishing size 1/0 through 4/0 streamers tied with bright (especially red) materials that push water produce some trophy largemouth from shallow water. Use at least 20-pound fluorocarbon tippet (above). John Cable sets the hook on an aggressive spotted bass. Typically, clear water and bright conditions call for 8- to 10-pound fluorocarbon tippets for streamers. Monofilament is better for surface flies (left).

sideways upon contact with cover, I matched a 60-degree jig hook with a 50-pound-test fluorocarbon weed guard tied in off-center to cause a sideward rather than vertical reaction upon impact.

When I tried the fly a few days later under ideal conditions, it worked beyond my expectations. I swung my favorite 8-weight with a floating line to make things easier with the bulky fly. As advertised, the fly sank slowly, barely out of sight, in the rain-clouded water. I retrieved with slow, foot-long strips. When the fly bumped submerged wood, I gave it a short, sharp strip to induce a deflection to the side. After a dozen or so fruitless casts, something happened just as I paused after the fly deflected off a hidden limb. That something morphed into an impressive whirlpool-like surface swirl as the fly line twitched toward it, and I came tight into a beast of a largemouth weighing almost 6 pounds. I promptly named the fly Crimson Flide after a good Alabama college football team. Since that day, the Crimson Flide is always my first choice any time bass are in shallow, stained water, especially when fishing the Little Tallapoosa River or the main Tallapoosa above Foster Bridge—Harris Reservoir's two primary inlets.

A Little History

The word “Tallapoosa” is an Indian word meaning “golden water.” Its origin implies a truth about Alabama’s history: early settlers clashed with Native American tribes until the bloody and tragic cession of native lands in the 19th century. Of course, Alabama shares that mixed history with every state in America. The names that bless our waterways, cities, and states, despite their beauty and magic, are a reminder of this past. Lake Harris is a prime beneficiary of that legacy, with tributary names like Little

Chattahoochee, Tombigbee, Alabama, and Tallapoosa Rivers. The lake winds about 24 miles through or bordering Randolph, Clay, and Cleburne Counties.

Upriver and Down

From a fly-fishing perspective, Harris Reservoir is three places: upriver, downriver, and the Little Tallapoosa, or simply Little River. The Alabama State Route 48 bridge between Wedowee and Lineville serves as a demarcation line for upriver and downriver. Even the confluence of the Tallapoosa and the Little Tallapoosa is within sight of the bridge. Above the bridge, Harris Reservoir transitions from a typical lake with numerous coves and points to a narrowing river fishery with fewer points or coves.

During spring rains, upriver Harris Reservoir is generally less clear, even muddy. With the exception of the Crimson Flide scenario in early spring, I look for water with at least 1 foot of visibility, especially when I use poppers or other surface flies. Lots of standing or barely submerged trees mark shorelines and channel edges both upriver and downriver. Boat anglers need to pay attention. These trees are both hazards and fish attractors, especially in summer and winter. Crappies like to suspend and spawn in and on them during March, April, and sometimes even early May. Standing timber along the right side of Mad Indian Creek, the largest upriver creek, is a crappie hot spot when redbuds start to bloom in March, and it continues to produce through the dogwood blossoms of April.

Farther upriver from Mad Indian, Fuller, Gobbler, Little Ketchepedrakee, and Ketchepedrakee Creeks attract spring-time bass and crappies. Some white bass move into the backs of these creeks looking for sandy spawning areas. Fly anglers operating boats need to remember that the farther upstream you go, the shallower and rockier the Tallapoosa becomes. Fishing can be excel-

lent, but anglers fishing from the Lee Bridge north toward US Highway 431 place their outboard motors in harm’s way.

Navigation is much simpler downriver, from below the SR 48 bridge to the Harris dam. Steep bluff walls abound, falling into 40- to 100-foot-deep clear water, where spotted bass (*Micropterus henshalli*) far outnumber their largemouth cousins. This section of the lake features numerous points, coves, and large creeks. Even when the upper lake is discolored from heavy rainfall, most of the lower lake remains clear. I’ve fished the lake for more



During spring, after bass drift away from the shallows toward deeper water, dawn and dusk are the witching hours for surface flies. Lake Harris offers miles of prime top-water targets, including docks, deep rocky bluffs, and fallen trees.

Ketchepedrakee Creek and the locally preferred lake name, Wedowee, also the name of the closest town, built on the site of a Muscogee Creek Indian village. The village chief’s name was, according to Wikipedia, “Wah-wah-nee” or “Wah-dow-wee.” Indeed, the area surrounding the lake was at the heart of the great Creek Confederacy of what is now the southeast United States.

Many decades later, Harris Reservoir, completed in 1983, became what is now the youngest of Alabama’s large impoundments on the Tennessee, Coosa, Warrior,

than three decades and have rarely seen muddy water throughout the lake to the dam. That's another reason Harris Reservoir is a perfect fly-fishing spot.

Lots of smaller creeks supplement the fly-fishing potential of Triplett, Hunter, and Fox Creeks, the three major downriver tributaries. For example, Hunter Creek is adjacent to two other creeks almost as large. While largemouth bass are plentiful downriver, particularly in the backs of creeks and around numerous boat docks, the ratio of spotted bass to largemouth is higher in the lower lake. Except for springtime, my catches below the SR 48 bridge reflect at least a 10-to-1 spot-to-largemouth ratio. This ratio tilts even more to spots during late fall and winter, when large schools of spots frequently surface feed or suspend. These suspended schools may be 50 or more feet deep, but they will be feeding on shad schools 15 to 25 feet below the surface. Integrated shooting-heads with fast-sinking tips will reach these aggressive bass.

Fly anglers looking for fewer but bigger fish head back upriver to find more largemouth. Alternatively, anglers explore the Little Tallapoosa arm of the lake for a more favorable largemouth-to-spotted bass ratio. The Little Tallapoosa has it all: large creeks, standing timber, shallow pockets, lots of docks, and loads of fish: largemouth, spots, crappies, and white bass. From the Highway 431 bridge down to the confluence with the big river, fly anglers can explore, in downstream order, Pineywood and Wedowee Creeks, as well as the Andanley and Allen Branches. The back of a smaller creek, on the east side of the main Tallapoosa channel just south of where it meets the Little Tallapoosa arm, is punctuated with a postcard-perfect waterfall.

Heavy rains, normally spring events, make the waterfall even more perfect, but the Little River can color quickly as a result, even to the point of blowing out with too much turbidity for effective fly fishing. On the positive side, it clears quickly from the top down. The transition period from slightly stained back to clear can produce lots of strikes in early summer.

Seasons, Fish, and Flies

Harris Reservoir produces fly-fishing results throughout the year. However, spring (March through mid-May), early summer (late May through June), and late fall (mid-October through De-

cember) offer shallower fish, always a good fly-fishing thing.

Spring usually comes early to Alabama. Sometimes the last week or so of February finds both largemouth and spotted bass in prespawn mode, moving toward warming shallows. Northwest shorelines and pockets, protected from prevailing winter winds, tend to warm earlier than more exposed areas. Several consecutive sunny days hasten the migration. Add some warm spring rain to the equation and it's time to search these shallow areas with a bright, water-pushing fly.

Some of my favorite areas in April are gravelly, wood-filled pockets on the western side of the Little Tallapoosa below Wedowee Creek. In clear water, top-water patterns such as Crease Flies or Boogle Bugs draw enthusiastic strikes from largemouth in the backs of creeks and channel-edge pockets. Spotted bass like slightly deeper water around the mouth of similar areas. Don't be surprised, however, to find some nice spotted bass just as shallow as largemouth.

Bass movement into final spawning areas is complicated somewhat by winter water level drawdowns. Alabama Power usually initiates the lake level reduction in October. Lake levels sometimes drop by 10 feet or so, until a gradual return in April to a full pool at 793 feet in elevation. Fluctuating shoreline levels affect bass and crappie spawning stages. Check water levels and generation



schedules before launching. Alabama Power makes doing so easy at www.apcshorelines.com.

As water levels rise into late April and May, spawning largemouth love to hold under the back corners of shallow docks. Almost any fly cast to a spawning bed will draw strikes from 1- to 2-pound males, and sometimes electrifying strikes from 4- to 10-pound females. Make no mistake: Harris harbors some truly big largemouth, including fish exceeding 14 pounds. Chances of catching a monster are highest during late winter and early spring, but the best time to see one is when they are actively spawning. Docks present a challenging obstacle to fly anglers targeting back-corner bass: dock-securing metal cables. Bass seem to know that these large cables effectively isolate them from all but the most stubborn bass anglers who are unconcerned about scratching up boats and wrapping lures around the suspended cables. Still, the casting challenge adds intrigue to the game.

During the postspawn period of late May through June, docks continue to be bass magnets. As the water warms, the action shifts from back corners to fronts and sides. Early and late in the day, or during overcast conditions, top-water flies shine. Choose poppers that “spit” water on a fast retrieve. A Pole Dancer fly is a great choice to mimic conventional “walking” surface lures. In the typically crystalline water of downriver dock-lined places like the Hunter Creek area, don’t be reluctant to use 10-foot leaders.

A long leader is also useful with a fly that has become my go-to bass pattern from June to December when bass are not willing to come up. My Ned Fly is derived from the Ned Rig, a 3-inch stubby plastic worm on a specialized jig head with a wire weed guard.

Crimson Flide

By Pete Elkins



PHOTO BY EASTERN FLY FISHING

- Hook:** Gamakatsu 60RB jig hook, sizes 2/0–3/0
- Thread:** Fire orange UTC Ultra Thread
- Weight:** Large stainless steel bead-chain eyes
- Rattle:** Large glass
- Weed guard:** Single-post 50-lb. fluorocarbon
- Tail:** Red Flashabou over chartreuse UV Enhancer Flash
- Belly:** Neon chartreuse DNA Holo-Fashion
- Wing:** Hot orange Steve Farrar’s Flash Blend
- Over wing:** Red bucktail topped with black DNA Holo-Fashion
- Eyes:** Chartreuse/black/red ³/₈-in. oval pupil molded eyes

to match fish-holding water depths.

Except for early and late in the day, fish-holding depth can make for demanding fly fishing from July through late October, as well as January through late February. Things change in October, when schooling breaks out throughout the lake. Huge masses of newly hatched threadfin shad roam creek mouths and main-lake channel edges throughout the day. Not surprisingly, results intensify

Popular with Midwest bass anglers, the Ned Rig is a finesse lure fished on light spinning gear for clear-water smallmouth and largemouth bass. It’s deadly on Harris for both spots and largemouth holding on or close to the bottom. The fly version is, like the Ned Rig, deceptively simple. When bass are in water less than 10 feet deep, a floating line with a 9- to 10-foot leader is perfect. As summer evolves to winter, switch to sinking-tip or even sinking integrated lines on your favorite 7-to 9-weight rod. Nothing fancy about the retrieve; use short strips to maintain contact with the bottom, keep the rod tip low, and strip-strike if anything feels weird. Popular Ned Rigs weigh ¹/₅ to ¹/₁₀ ounce; thus, tie the Ned Fly with varying dumbbell eye sizes

under low light conditions. Spotted bass dominate the predator side of the ensuing drama. White bass often join the buffet. But largemouth bass also show up for the party when the shad schools move over long points and submerged humps. The key to success is classic “match the hatch” stuff. Fly size is critical, given that most of the threadfins are less than 2 inches long. Henry Cowen’s Somethin Else is a perfect fly. Long casts help. Integrated shooting-taper lines with intermediate clear-tip heads usually seal the deal.

Ned Fly

By Pete Elkins



PHOTO BY EASTERN FLY FISHING

- Hook:** Gamakatsu B10S Stinger, size 1
- Thread:** Black Danville flat waxed nylon
- Weight:** Medium or large black dumbbell eyes
- Weed guard:** Single-post 50-lb. fluorocarbon
- Tail:** Olive or black marabou blood plume or micro rabbit strip
- Body:** Olive Bernat blanket yarn

Surface schooling tapers off by the end of November. Then it's time to focus on points, deep docks, and bluff banks. Again, the Ned Fly is a good choice.

Crappies and White Bass

Crappies usually move into spawning mode well before bass. White bass spawn even earlier. Spawning and pre-spawn crappies and white bass are easy fly-fishing targets. Find suitable spawning areas and you will find the fish. Look for crappies in areas with shallow stumps or timber, shallow docks, and fallen trees. Generally, the upriver and Little Tallapoosa areas of the lake yield more early crappies. If crappies aren't in skinny water, they may still be suspended in deeper water adjacent to spawning areas. Bigger females tend to stay deeper longer than the smaller, darker males. Harris Reservoir crappies are almost all black crappies (rather than white crappies). I like to cast simple size 6 or 8 Clouser-style flies with mini-dumbbell or bead-chain eyes, chenille bodies, and marabou tails. Resign yourself to losing flies in typical crappie confines, so a simple, quick tie trades time at the vise for time on the water.

Old-timers like to use what they call a "jig and bobber" when passionate crappies move into skinny water seeking the love of their lives. Astute fly anglers unabashedly copy the traditional cork bobber and jig with an indicator positioned a foot or so above a small Clouser-type fly. A slow, steady retrieve with long pauses does the trick. While not a purist-approved tactic, it is fun. It takes me back many years to the Carolinas, when my father would take my brother and me crappie fishing with minnows fished below red/white plastic bobbers. Tired and sunburned, I would sleep that night with visions of red and white slipping out of sight into green waters.

Crappies also love docks. They spawn around shallow docks during March and April, and suspend under deep-anchored docks after completing their reproductive cycle. In fact, some of Harris's best crappie fishing occurs around deep docks in May and June. The deep dock pattern repeats in November and December. Shade is the secret for success. Test your casting skills by side-arming crappie flies as far back under docks as possible. Let the fly fall, counting as it does so you can determine how deep the crappies are holding. Generally 4 to 15 feet covers the waterfront. Strikes can be subtle, so stay tuned while the fly sinks. As the sun moves overhead, docks cast large shadows, or shade patches. Find the right one and you will catch lots of crappies from a relatively small area.

Finding the right area is equally critical for early-spring white bass. These junior members of the *Morone* clan move upstream in the spring, seeking sandy or gravel-strewn shorelines for spawning. The sloping banks and small sandy flats above the Highway 431 bridge in the Little Tallapoosa are reliable starting spots. A 6- or 7-weight outfit with a Cowen's Somethin Else or Cowen's Coyote

R.L. Harris Reservoir NOTEBOOK



When: Year-round; prime times are April–June and October–December.

Where: East-central AL, near AL–GA border.

Access: Primarily a watercraft fishery; Alabama Power maintains excellent boat ramps throughout the lake.

Headquarters: Anniston, AL, offers all services. *Information:* Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce, (256) 237-3536, www.calhouncchamber.com.

Appropriate gear: 7- to 9-wt. rods for bass, 4- to 6-wt. rods for crappies and white bass, floating and sinking-tip lines, integrated shooting-heads with fast-sinking heads.

Useful fly patterns: *Bass:* Crease Flies, Pole Dancers, Bush Pigs, Cowen's Somethin Else, Cowen's Coyote, Crimson Flide, Ned Fly. *Crappies:* Size 6 and 8 Clouser-style patterns with a chenille body, marabou tail, and micro dumbbell or bead-chain eyes. *White bass:* Small Bush Pigs, Cowen's Somethin Else, Cowen's Coyote.

Fly shops/guides: *Birmingham:* Deep South Outfitter, (205) 969-3868, wp.fishdso.com.

Maps: *Alabama Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme.

fly usually works. Some big whites pushing 3 pounds show up in a day's catch. Except for the spring spawn, I seldom target white bass. They are simply a welcome bonus while chasing bass throughout the year.

Harris Reservoir is my favorite Alabama fly-rod lake. It lacks only striped bass to rank as absolute fly-fishing nirvana. Otherwise, it has it all: perfect habitat and water color variety; bass quantity and quality; clean water that's home to some delicious crappies; and a backdrop filled with deer, turkeys, osprey, and eagles. ➡

Alabama-based Pete Elkins is a veteran freelance writer and a regular contributor to Eastern Fly Fishing magazine.



ALL PHOTOS BY CARL HAENSEL AND JADE THOMASON

Root River, WI Steelhead in the City

By Carl Haensel and Jade Thomason

Cold and consistent, the Root River's springtime current ran strong along an old stone wall. Standing on the opposite bank, if we looked carefully, we could see the glint of afternoon sunlight beaming off the silvery flanks of a steelhead as it turned in the depths. That day the fish seemed disinclined to swim very far to intercept a fly, but if you located a fish rather than just fishing blind, and made a precise drift to get a fly as close as possible, you stood a good chance of hooking up.

A first cast over to the far side, then a mend along the wall, would keep the flies ticking along the rocks and rubble of the firm river bottom. These weren't single-drift fish. They seemed to want to take a look at the fly on successive presentations before committing. More than once, the strike indicator stopped and there was a steelhead smolt or young brown trout on the end of the line. It was easy to get complacent after a few dozen casts, but the potential for the sudden and unexpected take of a big fish was enough to keep us going on a cold early-spring morning.



As the Root River nears Lake Michigan, it flows through the heart of Racine, a storied industrial town. Man-made obstacles, such as these concrete walls and industrial remnants, often provide great holding spots for migratory fish. While environmentally challenged in the past, the river has become significantly cleaner in recent years and continues to show water-quality improvements.

Spring steelhead fishing is what makes the Root River shine. One of the southernmost consistently productive steelhead fisheries in Wisconsin, the Root offers steelhead action earlier in the year than many other area rivers. As soon as the ice melts sufficiently, anglers begin tromping up and down the banks, searching for active fish. Small nymphs and egg patterns rule the early days on the river, along with slow drifts and strike indicators. Clear water offers a chance to see the fish, and pods of steelhead can form in some pools. As the spring progresses, the river floods. A suburban watershed originating in the Milwaukee area guarantees this, but with each high-water event, fresh waves of bright steelhead enter the river. Check the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) river gauge online (see Notebook) to get an idea of how the river is fairing; the river is fishable at flows less than 400 cubic feet per second (cfs) and ideal at 100 to 200 cfs. When the river's

base flow drops below 30 cfs, fishing can be challenging and fish are less likely to enter the river from Lake Michigan.

From small jacks that nudge the 20-inch mark to fat fish stretching over 30 inches, the Root River system draws lots of steelhead. The state of Wisconsin operates a weir at the steelhead facility; fish that have been processed are passed upstream. This can lead to a stack-up of fish in the Lincoln Park section of the river, and a concentration of anglers as well. Don't be surprised to find crowds there, but you can easily find quieter water if you walk 10 minutes. Gaining some distance from the facility means fewer fish in the river, but also fewer anglers.

Moreover, keep an eye on the weather during springtime. The Root attracts plenty of fair-weather anglers, but if a cold front or rain arrives, the crowds tend to thin, leaving open water for anglers well dressed for the conditions.



Access to the Root River is easy through the many city parks in Racine. The opportunity to fight large migratory fish is often just steps away from a path or road. If you don't find fish in one section of the river, move upstream or downstream to search other locations of publically accessible parkland (above). Anglers frequently find bright steelhead in the Root River. These hard-fighting fish, just up from Lake Michigan, provide the best reason to visit the river in early spring. Often they hold in fast, shallow runs and riffles, as well as more typical deeper runs and pools. At times steelhead can occupy almost all types of water throughout the river (below).

Summer until Snow

During late summer and fall, the Root hosts runs of brown trout, coho salmon, and chinook salmon. Runs are dependent on river flows, and if water levels are near summer lows there will be few migratory fish around. Wait until a large late-summer rain event raises the water.

Large brown trout, stocked as fingerlings, can begin to return in July if flows allow. The run peaks later, depending on temperature and flow conditions. At least a few brown trout inhabit the river just about all of the time, and large non-spawning browns apparently follow the steelhead into the river to eat their eggs. If the browns are not targeting small egg patterns, try nymphs. While the fish grow fat on alewives out in Lake Michigan, they pay attention to the smaller meals in the river once they're back in the Root.

Some of these lake-run brown trout are huge—fat behemoths up to 30 inches long. Lake Michigan, in fact, produced the Wisconsin state-record brown trout, which weighed more than 41 pounds and was over 40 inches in length. The next record fish could easily decide to swim up the Root River.



Coho and chinook salmon can be worth targeting in the river when they begin to show up in September, though warm water and degrading fish can make this a less appealing experience, as can the occasional angler who is tempted to snag fish when they're not in a biting mood.

Coho can be particularly attracted to large flashy streamers, so keep a few handy in case the opportunity presents itself. The coho salmon linger until November, getting darker before expiring.

Fall on the Root is truly at its best when the leaves change and steelhead begin returning to the river in earnest. When the fall rains finally come, Skamania-strain steelhead that have been waiting to enter the river begin to pour in. Look for these fighters among the salmon and you can have excellent fishing. The Chambers Creek-strain fish begin entering the river later, and late fall offers a significant mixed bag of steelhead, big browns, and salmon. Fishing later in the fall means more steelhead, fewer salmon, and fewer anglers. Try size 8 egg patterns; often, fish that have been cast to repeatedly are more likely to take these smaller flies. Fast-water

stretches are often the best places to find active fish, so don't overlook the river's few boulder pockets.

The Root River is open for fishing the entire year. In January and February, the river is generally frozen and you're better off drilling a hole through the ice in the harbor to get to the fish. On the other hand, if there's been a warming trend with air temperatures above freezing, head to southeast Wisconsin and hit the water. The steelhead will be there.

Before the end of the calendar year, the river still holds plenty of brown trout as well, though they drop back to the lake after spawning. Drift nymphs deep and slow to interest them. Wintertime snowmelts and runoff events can bring in fresh fish, though they can also blow out the river at times from December through March. Call ahead and check on conditions before heading out to make sure the river's not iced over or blown out.

Excellent Access for All

Excellent and ready fishing access is available at a variety of locations along the Root River. Below the steelhead facility, over a mile of river flows through a number of parks in the Racine park system, including both Lincoln and Island (aka Horlick) Parks. Parking is free, and trails along the river lead from riffle to run to pool through mowed areas.

In the past, the river has suffered from its share of urban blight, but a strong renewal program was started nearly 10 years ago. It's now rare to hook a hubcap instead of a steelhead, and the park system is in good shape. Note that a short, well-marked fish sanctuary around the steelhead facility is closed seasonally to fishing, tempting though it may be.

Upriver of the steelhead facility, the river flows through Colonial Park. Trails run through the parkland, here managed as wild riparian forest, providing more quality access for anglers. Runs and pools contain good woody debris in some sections, and it's easy to forget you're fishing only 50 miles north of Chicago. Upstream, near Horlick Dam, anglers can find more park access points. The dam and its swift waters mark the end of the migration for steelhead and other fish from Lake Michigan in the Root River. While the overall run is only a bit over 6 miles, the plentiful access provides anglers with ample water to explore. Visiting anglers generally need a few days to familiarize themselves with all of the access points on the river, and there's plenty of water to come back for on future visits.



High and Low

While access to migratory fish ends at the dam, much of the remainder of the river's 38 upstream miles comprises a popular paddling route, and the river offers summertime fishing for bass, pike, and panfish. A boat access just above the dam is a great place to launch for a fishing exploration of the upper river. Canoe and kayak rentals are available at the River Bend Nature Center, located on the east bank of the river less than a mile upstream from the dam. Casting poppers and streamers at downed logs and other woody cover in the upper river can produce good results.

Changes are coming for the upper river, however. Horlick Dam, built in 1835, does not meet current state safety standards. The DNR has given Racine County until 2024 to either repair the dam or remove it, and it remains a locally contested issue. The river could see migratory runs of fish extend for many miles upriver if the dam is removed or altered, adding to potential fishing opportunities.

Another upcoming change is the addition of flows of treated water from nearby Waukesha. After a lengthy battle involving all of the Great Lakes states, the city of Waukesha will be withdrawing water from Lake Michigan and discharging the treated water back into the basin via the Root River, beginning in 2023. This additional water will raise the base flow of the river, potentially improving the late summer and

fall fishery. This, along with other challenges the river faces as an urban and suburban stream, will continue to keep life on the river interesting for anglers, so check in with local shops to get the latest word before you visit.

The river's mouth on Lake Michigan also offers intriguing possibilities for fly anglers. Shoreline access abounds at Len Ziolkowski Harbor Park and Reefpoint Marina. If the Root River is running low and clear, don't despair: just head to the lake. Scramble down the riprap and find a spot from which to cast streamers. The basin near the river mouth is best, and can be accessed from both the north and south sides. In the late summer, brown trout roam the harbor area, along with increasing numbers of salmon as the fall runs draw near.

Expect to see more fish than you hook, but seeing instills confidence, and an evening of fishing along the harbor can be a great way to wrap up a day in Racine. We've even seen big browns working around the jetties and sipping flies, so be prepared. And don't miss out on the downtown restaurants—the Root is one of the few trout streams where you can enjoy excellent Thai food or other fare just a few blocks from where you've been casting.

River Etiquette

While you can expect good fishing on the Root River, never expect to be alone. Ease of access and abundant fish bring anglers from far and wide, all hoping for a big steelhead and leviathan brown trout, as well as salmon. A few basic rules of behavior help make a day on the Root enjoyable for all. We've seen fly anglers ranging from the most experienced and dedicated to the most casual, some of whom fly fish from a lawn chair. And expect to share the water with gear fishers; you will see plenty of fly fishers on the Root, but there are few limitations on tackle.

If another angler is negatively affecting your fishing, talk to them. Be nice. The odds are that they could be new to the area—just like you might be. Often, spin-fishing anglers may not understand how their methods are affecting you, and a pleasant conversation can go a long way toward having a good day on the river. Do your part as well, and try to stay out of the way of others. If you snag a big fish, break it off instead of trying to land it. Don't run downstream through multiple anglers just to try to save a single fly; bring plenty, and support your local fly shop.

The Root can offer a rather social angling atmosphere, attracting lots of attention for its prodigious runs. If you live in the area, check it out and discover what you've been missing. If you hail from elsewhere, call the local fly shop (in this case The Fly Fishers Fly Shop in Milwaukee) and start planning a trip to one of the Midwest's best urban rivers. 🐟

The writing-and-photography team of Carl Haensel and Jade Thomason operates the Minnesota-based guide business Namebini, www.namebini.com, which specializes in many different regional fisheries.

Root River NOTEBOOK



When: All year, weather permitting.

Where: Southeast WI.

Headquarters: Racine, WI.

Access: Lincoln Park, Island Park, Colonial Park, and other points in the Root River park system provide ready walk-and-wade access to the river.

Appropriate gear: 9-ft., 7- to 9-wt. rods, floating lines, reel with good drag, 0X–3X tippets.

Useful fly patterns: Stonefly nymphs, Egg Sucking Leech (orange/black, pink/black), Gorman Beadhead Egg and other egg patterns, bright streamers, BH Prince Nymph, Copper John.

Necessary accessories: Large landing net, polarized sunglasses, chest waders, wading boots with studs.

Nonresident license: \$10/1 day, \$24/4 days, \$28/15 days, \$50/annual, plus \$10/Great Lakes Salmon/Trout Stamp.

Fly shops/guides: *Milwaukee:* The Fly Fishers Fly Shop, (414) 259-8100, www.theflyfishers.com. *WiFinlander Guide Service*, (414) 704-5437, www.wifinlander.com.

Books / maps / information: *Fly-fisher's Guide to Wisconsin & Iowa* by John Motoviloff. *Wisconsin Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme; Stream Map USA, (215) 491-4223, www.StreamMapUSA.com. USGS river gauge, <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/wi/nwis/rt>.



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Trip of a Lifetime

CHRISTMAS ISLAND

By Joe Rotter

I'm struggling to contain a dreamy smile while relaxing in an economy-class seat on a Hawaiian Airlines flight heading home to Seattle. I'm wedged tightly between two sunburned tourists with sharp elbows, and I wonder if the people around me are wondering what about the irrepressible grin on my face. He should be miserable, they're probably thinking; he probably just polished off a double Scotch.

That part about the Scotch is true, but my perma-smile derives from the incredible memories made during my trip of a lifetime to Christmas Island. To say it's a special place would be a substantial understatement. Christmas Island abounds in fly-friendly fish species, gleaming flats, fertile reefs, steamy lagoons, friendly people, and extraordinary fly fishing. Its remote location helps preserve the integrity of the fishery, and getting there requires commitment. Once there, however, anglers immediately recognize what makes this place so special.

There is no bad time to fish Christmas Island—aka Kiritimati—because this

150-square-mile atoll sits just 140 miles north of the equator, meaning the weather is sunny year-round. Weather forecasts are almost pointless in this solar paradise where the high sun lights up the flats in a way possible only at these latitudes. That was one of the first things that impressed me here. The direct light illuminating the flats is practically supernatural, like some power that simply doesn't exist anywhere else. Or maybe it does: I did fly out of soggy Se-



PHOTO BY JOE ROTTER

attle, so perhaps the solar bar has been set low for me—just above ground level. Either way, the deep water along the ledges looks artificially emerald, bedazzling in its brilliance. Postcard-pretty scenes surround you, everywhere you look.

The flats fishing is all done on foot, and you use either boats or custom fishing trucks to access various parts of the island, the northern half of which is essentially one giant lagoon (Saint Stanislas Bay). The flats are seemingly endless, and anglers on my trips have recorded their daily walks at about 6 miles per day as they slowly prowl the flats. It's a liberating sense of freedom to have more water, more opportunity, and more fish than any angler can possibly handle. Long days and hardworking guides will fatigue even the most enthusiastic anglers, but it's a wonderful kind of exhaustion.

The two big dogs of the Christmas Island fishery are bonefish and giant trevally (GT). While these sterling game fish rightfully enjoy the spotlight, I've come to realize there are lots of wonderful lesser-known species that are awesome fly-rod targets: bluefin trevally, golden trevally, triggerfish, queen fish, sweet lips, milk fish, and more. While bones and GTs are indeed special, I am convinced that without all these other species of fish, Christmas Island would just be the answer to some random trivia or quiz question. Combine the tropical beauty with a diverse population of aggressive fish and you have a bucket-list trip for sure.

Bonefish are the primary quarry, and Christmas Island is the best bonefish destination in the Pacific Ocean, earning accolades from famous anglers, writers, and celebrities who fish the same flats you are wading. It's worth every penny, yet the price tag for fishing this destination is surprisingly reasonable. Prowling the hard-bottom flats like a hunter stalking prey, you'll see bonefish in endless abundance. It's an incredible experience, and frequently the only sound is your own footsteps sloshing through the shallow water. No cars, no planes, no white noise, no cellphones, no distractions. A week of fishing at Christmas Island is a wonderful reset for your soul.

I'm still in awe of how fast a bonefish can swim, tearing line off the reel as the line kicks up a rooster tail. Five-pound bones are common, and these waters hold plenty of much larger specimens, including trophies up to 12



I'm still in awe of how fast a bonefish can swim, tearing line off the reel as the line kicks up a rooster tail. Five-pound bones are common, and these waters hold plenty of much larger specimens, including trophies up to 12 pounds.

pounds. Two- to 4-pound bonefish are everywhere; no wonder the world's finest anglers love this place. If you fish by truck, you might visit the exposed coastal side of the island near the shipwrecks, or you might venture into the backcountry, which is a beautiful labyrinth of flats and lagoons. I personally enjoy truck fishing as much as the using the boats, because of the rugged beauty offered by the exposed coastline.

Getting to Christmas Island is easy, with no long drives and no bumpy or bouncy boat rides—just comfortable flights with island-style hospitality. An overnight in Honolulu is required on the front end, but most anglers fly straight through on the return, so you can leave Christmas Island in the morning and be home that night.

I've enjoyed some pleasant surprises on Christmas Island, such as discovering firsthand that bluefin trevally might just be the most beautiful fish on earth; their electric blue coloration is more vibrant than you can imagine.



PHOTO BY STEVE JOYCE

Big giant trevally are no easy marks despite their rapacious appetites. Catching one requires extreme patience, stealth, and accurate casting.

They might also be the fastest, and I'm convinced you can't retrieve a fly too fast. Bluefin trevally are vicious and will crush a fast-moving fly with lightning speed. I've learned that triggerfish will tempt, taunt, and torment you, practically pleading with you to target them with a fly; sometimes they'll even take one. These exotic beauties are easy to see, so you can find and approach them without the aid of a guide, which makes the experience quite rewarding.

Another thing I've learned is that not all giant trevally are giants. The more modest-size specimens might just be the real prizes of a fly-fishing expedition to Christmas Island. They are aggressive, fun, fairly abundant, and exceptional fighters. They swarm and attack flies like a pack of starving wolves, an exciting spectacle. These fish offer plenty of action, and I spent a lot of time pursuing them.

On the other hand, massive mature giant trevally are

ahead. The challenge is what makes them so alluring as fly-rod targets.

Unlike mature giant trevally, the aforementioned bluefin trevally are common. They behave differently from giant trevally, preferring smaller flies. They seem to have better vision than their brutish cousins and sometimes circle anglers as if curious what manner of creature has invaded their flats. Wading the flats of Christmas Island,



PHOTO BY JOE ROTTER

probably with bonefish on your mind, or maybe scanning the water for giant trevally, you're likely to be startled by the sudden appearance of bluefin or giant trevally. You simply have to cast at them. They will eat a bonefish fly, but it is much better to have a smaller baitfish pattern ready on a 9- or 10-weight rod.

Because of the chance for a massive giant trevally, a 12-weight rod is hardly overkill on these flats. Keep one at the ready with a big fly and stout tippet. The best tippet for bluefin trevally and smaller giant trevally is 40-pound fluorocarbon. I've experimented with much heavier tippet, and it seems to make these bluefins suspicious: the local guides tell me bluefin trevally have much better close vision than giant trevally, and I've seen these fish act leader-shy.

Of course, fly anglers visit Christmas Island for its spectacular flats fishery, but if you want a break, try blue-water fishing, primarily trolling with teasers to bring fish into fly-casting range. The action is fabulous, with a variety of available species: wahoo, tuna, bonita, giant trevally, sailfish, marlins, and more. Some of these fish make outstanding sashimi back at camp each night. Half a day of resting your feet and sipping beers with a fun group a little way offshore is a wonderful break. There are fish in the deep water that have grown old and don't want to be caught. You should meet these fish.

Each angler seems to enjoy different aspects of the Christmas Island experience. Many, like me, especially revel in stalking fish on foot on the extensive flats. Each step you make carries a potential consequence. It's like hunting deer, in the sense that a step too loud or too soon will spook your prey. Fishing the flats exposes a primal instinct that is buried within all of us. Knowing when to move slowly, move quickly, or simply wait for fish to expose themselves is the allure for me. My instincts are sometimes wrong and I'll blow fish off the flats, resulting in me cursing myself for a few minutes. But when it all comes together and I get the shot I have been waiting for, the adrenaline surges and unforgettable moments are forever etched into my soul.



Christmas Island FAQ

Where is Christmas Island? About 3 hours south of Honolulu by jet plane.

Do the guides speak English? While the official language is English and the guides communicate fishing commands quite well, most of the locals speak Gilbertese, a Micronesian language unique to Christmas Island.

What's the weather like? It's the equator, so plan for mid-80s every day, year-round.

What form of currency do they use? The preferred currency is Australian dollars, but U.S. dollars are welcome, too.

How do you get there? Assuming you are coming from the United States, fly into Honolulu on a Monday for an overnight and then fly to Christmas Island on Tuesday. There is only one flight per week in and out of Christmas Island.

What is the food like? Most of the lodges offer an American-style breakfast of bacon and eggs, sausages, and toast, along with some cereals. For lunch, it's sandwiches and snacks, and fruit when available. Dinners are great, with fresh tuna, snapper, lobster, rice, and other local favorites.

What does a trip cost?

Lodge prices orbit around \$2,800 to \$3,000 per week, plus tips for the staff (\$300 to \$500), airfare, and typically a few add-on expenses for alcoholic beverages, laundry service, and/or any additional activities you might partake in.



I love stalking fish on Christmas Island. It's the perfect pedestrian fishery. The endless flats are firm, easy to walk, and harbor incredibly diverse opportunities. This isn't to say that simply covering water and walking a long way is the best strategy. To the contrary. Your guide will know when to move fast through dead water, slow down when the tides are right, and surge ahead when opportunity is spotted in the distance. The game constantly changes during tidal shifts, and being in the right spot at the right time is both critical and fascinating.

I'm convinced there isn't a richer saltwater flats experience than Christmas Island.

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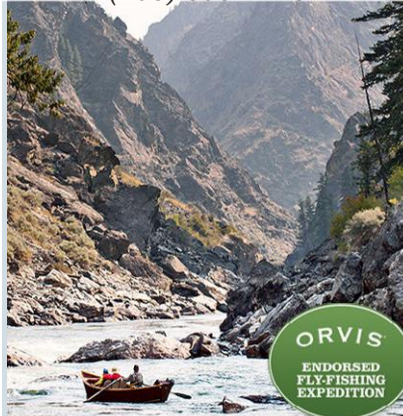
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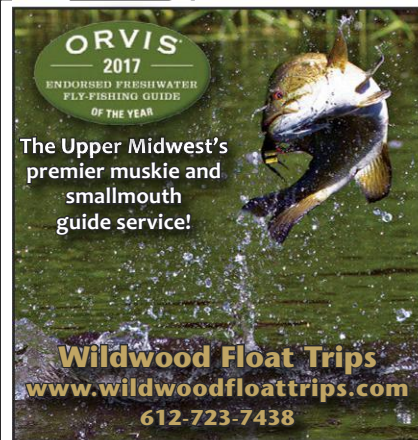
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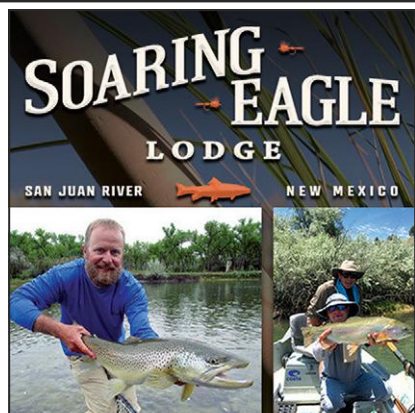
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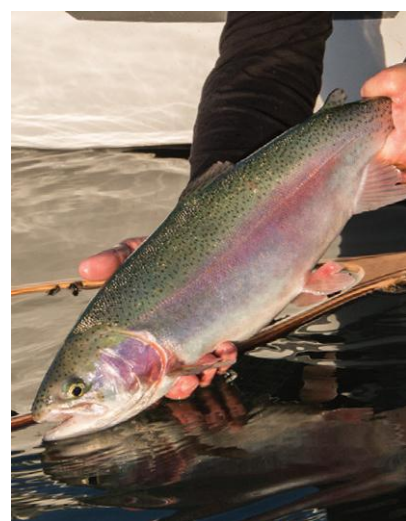


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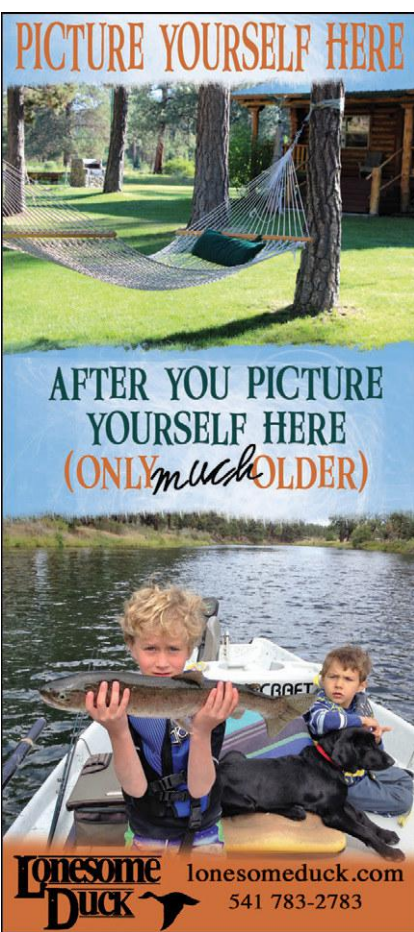
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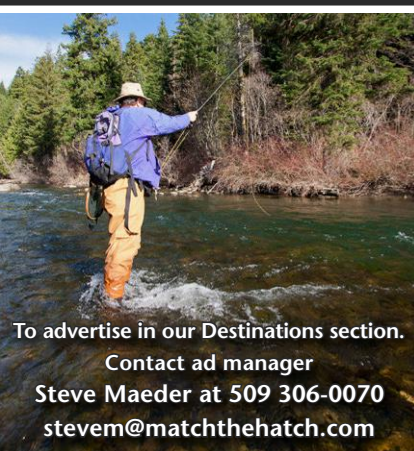


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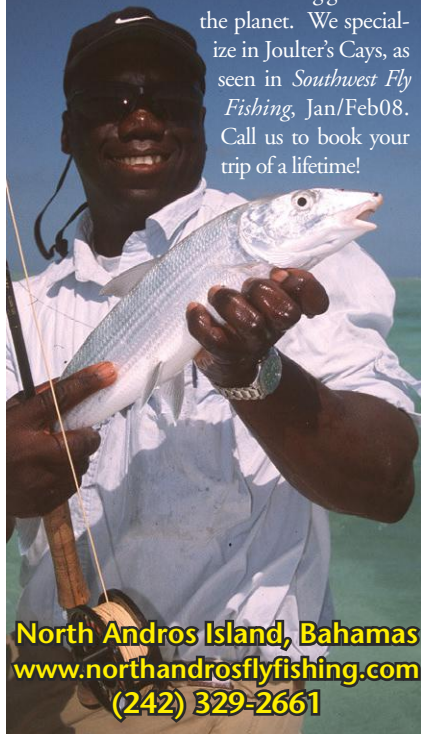
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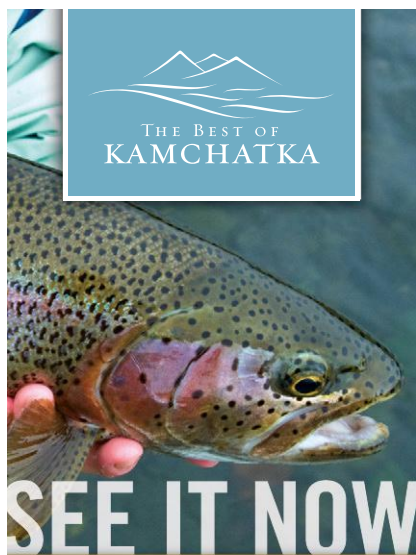
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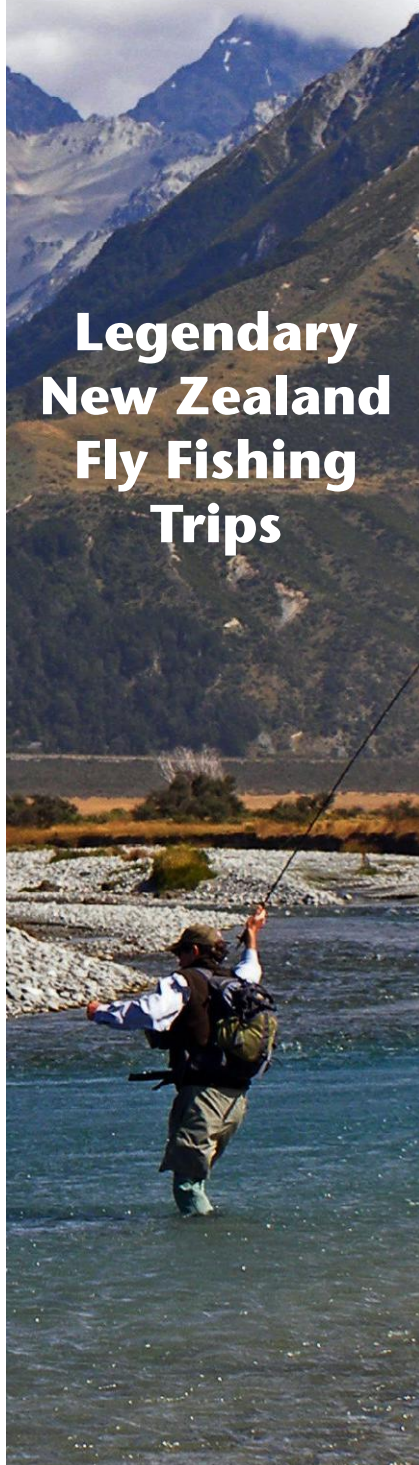
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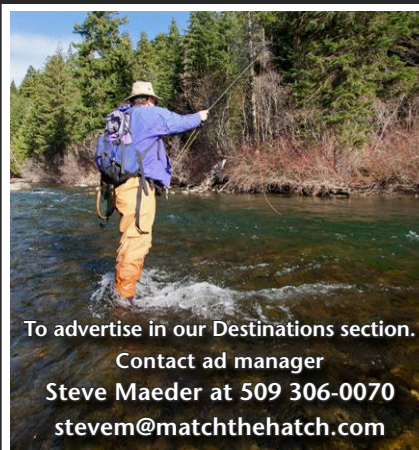
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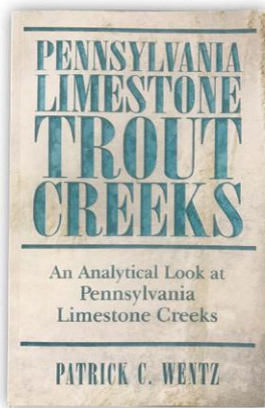
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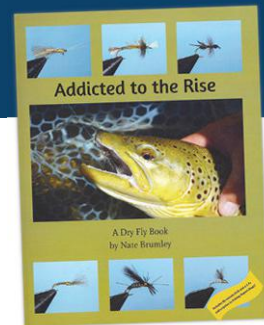
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Fly Fishing Camp is the kind of experience The Broadmoor does better than anyone. A perennial Forbes Travel Guide Five Star and AAA Five Diamond award-winner, The Broadmoor brings a level of service to an already one-of-a-kind (and perhaps once-in-a-lifetime) fishing experience.



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The Broadmoor Fly Fishing Camp offers a genuine feeling of escape. A chance to take temporary refuge from the overscheduled, over-stimulated world in which we live.

After a few hours, you won't even miss the fact that there's no cellphone reception. It's the perfect getaway for families looking to strengthen bonds, couples looking for an exhilarating new experience, or even groups in search of a productive company retreat far off the beaten path. Wi-Fi is available, and you'll find no shortage of ways to keep everyone engaged.





True to the name, this is fly fishing at its finest, with enough eddies, pools, and white water to appeal to any skill level. Led by our experienced and passionate camp manager, Scott Tarrant, your fishing expedition will clear the mind and re-energize the spirit. But there's more to your getaway than landing a prize trout.

The Lost Creek Wilderness is a 120,000-acre, outdoor lover's paradise, offering plenty of other fresh-air adventures. Guests can venture out into nature on foot, exploring underground streams, awe-inspiring rock formations, marshy meadows — maybe even an eagle's nest. And you don't need cellphone reception to use your phone's camera. In other words, natural photo ops abound out here.

WHERE RUSTIC MEETS REFINED

You might not expect an authentic wilderness experience to offer much in the way of creature comforts or culinary surprises. But that's where The Broadmoor Fly Fishing Camp truly sets itself apart. While that classic, old-time fishing lodge feel is certainly very much in evidence, a host of upgrades have brought appealing modern touches to your otherwise rugged getaway.

The Main Lodge has been thoughtfully restored and rebuilt, with more space, more windows, new lighting and a host of authentic 20th century Western memorabilia to heighten the charm and make everyone feel right at home.

And speaking of home, The Fly Fishing Camp's seven different log cabins, dating back to the 1920s, have been reimagined in Broadmoor style. Designed to sleep from two to four guests, each cabin has been updated, adding more room, comfy sofas and chairs, and other wonderful touches.

A FRESH TAKE ON DINING

At The Broadmoor Fly Fishing Camp, dining is an interactive experience, shared with others who love the mountains, the river and the thrill of casting a line. The menus have been developed by The Broadmoor's executive



chef, but Camp Manager Scott Tarrant and his staff prepare each wholesome, hearty meal on site—always with the emphasis on “fresh.” It’s why everything is grown, caught or raised locally.

As you might expect, breakfasts are prepared ranch-style, to fuel guests up for a day of adventure. Lunch fare changes with the season, and for those with special dietary requests, the culinary team will gladly accommodate. After dinner, round up your group, find the campfire and relax under the stars.

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Fly Fishing Camp is one of three exclusive wilderness experiences offered by the iconic, Forbes Travel Guide Five Star and AAA Five Diamond Broadmoor Resort. Our seasoned and friendly guides are committed to upholding The Broadmoor’s legendary high standards, ensuring a wonderful and unforgettable guest experience.



FLY FISHING CAMP FAQ

WHEN DOES THE CAMP OPEN?

Fly Fishing Camp will be open for the 2018 season April 27 to November 4.

HOW DO I GET THERE?

Guests will be responsible for their transportation to The Broadmoor Fly Fishing Camp. If you would like to set up transportation from our main campus, round-trip cost is \$275.00 per person for shuttle service. Check-in is at 3:00 pm and check-out is at 10:00 am.

IS THERE A SPACE FOR MEETINGS OR OTHER EVENTS?

The Fish House provides an inspiring setting for executive retreats and special events. Your group will enjoy the beauty of Colorado along with beautifully appointed lodging and Broadmoor-caliber dining.

ANYTHING ESSENTIAL I SHOULD BRING?

Please remember we are at nearly 9,000 feet elevation and can enjoy all four seasons in a single day. Packing correctly will enhance your enjoyment. You can find a handy packing list on our website.

HOW DO I MAKE A RESERVATION?

Just visit us online at broadmoor.com/the-wilderness-experiences/fly-fishing-camp.

New Products

Patagonia Tough Puff Shirt

Durable and versatile, Patagonia's Tough Puff line of clothing has taken the fly fishing world by storm. Joining the popular Tough Puff hoodie, the new Tough Puff insulated shirt (\$199) is ideal as a stand-alone cool-weather top or as part of a layering system to keep biting cold at bay. Built for comfort, the Tough Puff shirt moves with you while standing up to the elements, whether a bitter wind or heavy streamside brush. The abrasion-resistant polyester outer shell has a durable water-repellent finish; all-day comfort is delivered by warm, stretchy, and highly breathable FullRange® polyester insulation, which retains warmth even when wet and won't hold water. Features include a snap-closure placket, a large vertical zip-closure pocket on the left chest, adjustable snap-closure cuffs, and a 100 percent recycled-polyester Capilene® lining in the body for increased comfort and efficient moisture management. For more details and to purchase, visit www.patagonia.com.



Scientific Anglers Freightliner Skagit Kits

Scientific Anglers (SA) takes all the mystery out of line selection for two-handed rods, offering several integrated systems to fit every aspect of Spey casting. The SA Freightliner Skagit Kit (\$145) comes in two versions—floating and intermediate—for both two-handed rods and switch rods. These line systems include a complement of four SA tips. The intermediate Freightliner and its selection of sinking-tips is ideal for salmon and steelhead holding in deeper water or for those times during winter when the fish won't move far from the bottom to chase a fly. The floating Freightliner allows you to fish the entire water column, providing maximum versatility for all times of year. With short heads that load the rod quickly for powerful, efficient casts, the lines are designed to effortlessly turn over even the highest-density tips. A color change at the rear of the heads allows anglers to easily see the junction between the head and the running line, even in low light. SA's Advanced Shooting Technology provides continual line slickness, allowing the line to shoot farther as it moves through the guides, and each line has SA's super-strong welded loops for easy connections. For more information or to order, visit www.scientificanglers.com.



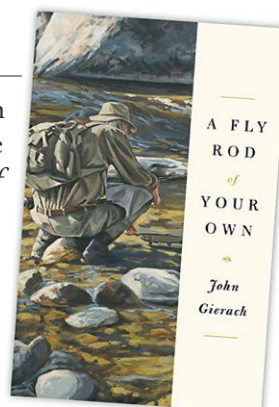
A Fly Rod of Your Own By John Gierach

John Gierach, a member of the Fly Fishing Hall of Fame and the author of numerous books on fly fishing, has been called "America's best fishing writer" (*Houston Chronicle*) and "the voice of the common angler" (*The Wall Street Journal*). In his latest essay collection, *A Fly Rod of Your Own*, Gierach delivers 21 narrative essays on the art of fly fishing and the pleasures of outdoor life, all served up with his trademark humor and clear-sighted wisdom about the lessons that can be learned while standing in a river with a fishing rod.

Publishers Weekly raves, "Gierach's deceptively laconic prose masks an accomplished storyteller.... His alert and slightly off-kilter observations place him in the general neighborhood of Mark Twain and James Thurber."

Gierach's essays follow him as he travels to remote fishing locations across the continent—from Alaska and Colorado to Maine and Canada, traveling by boat, floatplane, and, more often than not, on foot in waders—all in search of the best catch. But even when some of the fish get away (or when he doesn't have a camera to take a photo of his catch), when bad weather strikes, or even when there are no fish to be hooked at all, Gierach never loses his passion for the sport, his sense of humor, or his appreciation for his incredible luck that he gets to go fishing (and write about it) for a living.

Gierach's essays expertly blend the technical side of flyfishing with contemplative meditations that are brimming with wit and penetrating insights into nature, travel, and enjoying the outdoor life. Readers who fish and anglers who read will find *A Fly Rod of Your Own* as edifying as it is entertaining, and the next best thing to fishing itself.



CF Burkheimer Deep Action Load Trout Rod

Deep Action Load (DAL) fly rods have rapidly become CF Burkheimer's

top-selling rods. Fish with one and you'll know why. These rods work flawlessly in all facets of trout fishing and they do it with the "Burkie feel," that powerful, ultra-smooth performance that has been described as a "deeply intuitive, innate mojo" that sets Burkheimer rods apart. They deliver a classic feeling while meeting modern performance standards; the deep-flex action, quick recovery, and firm tip create power to spare for casting and for fighting tough fish. The DAL series features rods for every style of fishing, whether you need to delicately present tiny dries, pound the banks with wind-resistant terrestrials, swing big streamers, or accurately drift nymph rigs. Available in 13 different 2- through 6-weight models, these beautiful rods range from \$795 to \$845, depending on which premium hardware and cosmetic package you choose. They are available through Burkheimer dealers and at www.cbflyrods.com.



Monic All Weather Covert Clear Floating Line

Whether due to angling pressure or gin-clear water, sometimes fish are highly suspicious and difficult to target, and that's when stealth matters most. Monic has been producing a clear fly line—the ultimate in stealthy presentation options—for just such situations since 1994. Since then, the All Weather Covert Clear floating fly line (\$79.95) has



undergone continuous development. This hollow-core line is the highest-floating, lowest-memory clear fly line available. Available in 3- through 12-weight, this line performs equally well in warm salt water and cold winter steelhead streams: such versatility is a hallmark of Monic lines. The polyethylene-blend coating on the All Weather Covert Clear fly line provides far more durability than PVC-based lines, which deteriorate over time, causing cracks and decreased performance, and leaching PVC into the environment. All Monic lines are made in Colorado (and even the spools, boxes, labels, and ink are American made) and available at www.monick.com.

Orvis Ultralight Convertible Wader

Whether your next fishing trip involves stepping on a plane or jumping in the SUV, the Orvis Ultralight system of wading gear is designed for you. The latest addition to this premium line of highly versatile gear is the new Orvis Ultralight Convertible Wader (\$298; www.orvis.com), which joins Orvis's Ultralight Wading Boots, Ultralight Wading Jacket, and Ultralight Vest, all available in a full range of men's and women's sizes. Don't let the Ultralight label fool you: these waders (like the boots, jacket, and vest) are built for everyday use anywhere you fish. Constructed from the same fabric as Orvis Silver Sonic waders, they are rugged, durable, supremely comfortable—and built to last through years of use. A new system allows you to convert them from chest to waist waders in seconds: Fidlock magnetic clips hold the waders firmly in place when you wade deep, but a one-handed flick lets you lower the waders to the waist-high position. No more struggling with plastic clips. They also feature a tool dock, a water-resistant exterior pocket, and a power-mesh inner pocket that expands to hold more gear. Did I mention they are comfortable? Don't forget to take them off before you hit the pub after a day on the water.—*John Shewey*



Partridge Bad Boy Predator Hooks

No matter what fish you target, Partridge of Redditch has the perfect hook for your favorite flies. One of the latest is the Bad Boy Predator big-game hook, ideal for large-profile patterns tied for everything from pike and muskies in fresh water to tarpon and billfish in salt water. Like all Partridge hooks, the Bad Boy Predator is made from the best high-carbon steel and features a forged O'Shaughnessy bend for extra strength, a black nickel finish, and a straight eye for solid hook sets on the toughest fish.

These versatile, needle-sharp hooks are available in sizes 8/0 through 4/0 to accommodate a wide variety of patterns. They are packaged six hooks to a pack in sizes 6/0 through 4/0, and five hooks per pack in sizes 8/0 and 7/0. For more information, contact your local Partridge hook dealer or visit www.partridge-of-redditch.co.uk.



In the Vise

The BedRobber/By Dave Parsons



It's a busy day on the lake as I toss the loop of rope across the gunnel. I pull the 18-foot Bass Tracker up to the dock and tie it off. A couple of other fisherman glance my way as they walk past me down to the dock. Then another passes by in the other direction, headed back to the parking lot. He also briefly appraises me. I get "the look" all the time, sometimes accompanied by finger pointing and an occasional chuckle. These looks are from bass anglers, and I've come to the conclusion they're staring at the odd pile of brightly colored, saltwater-size fly reels attached to absurdly long and flimsy rods stacked on my front deck.

This is bass country—tournament bass country at that—and it's springtime.

While most fly anglers are up north chasing the annual runoff, spring is my favorite time to be in the boat on my favorite bass lakes. Not so much because the bass are on the beds, but because there are bass everywhere. Some are spawning, some are postspawn, and others are prespawn, but all are aggressive. You can catch bass in 2 feet of water or 20 feet of water without even moving the boat. That's where the BedRobber comes in.

The BedRobber is so-named because it imitates the size of the sunfish and other small fish that constantly prowl around largemouth bass nests, stealing eggs while the bass are spawning. Bass, male or female, key in on the sunfish even well after their bedding chores are done. The best bass for anglers to target are the fish cruising just off the beds in slightly deeper water, not the fish sitting on beds. These fish are swimming through the spawning areas and make prime targets for patterns that appear to be unwary egg-robbing sunfish. I do a lot of sight-fishing during this time of year, and when I spot a bass moving around in shallow water, I've found my mark.

The BedRobber is simple to tie. It rides hook down and can be modified to use smaller lead eyes for some weight if needed. The magnum Zonker strip and marabou add some hydrodynamics that make the fly sink slowly so it suspends in the water column during the retrieve. Bass often follow the fly, inspecting it before they grab it, and the palmered marabou is a selling point for such fish, making the fly look robust, like a real sunfish.

Although I advertise this as a springtime fly, the BedRobber does well all year. My local lakes sprout profuse beds of aquatic vegetation, and during summer, when water temperatures are elevated, bass often bury themselves in the weeds. Fished around these weedbeds, and in the backs of coves all summer, the BedRobber has earned the role of go-to pattern. You can spin a variety of different color combinations and your imagination is the limit, but the two best producers for me so far are the olive/green sunfish color and the all-brown version to imitate a juvenile smallmouth bass.

Materials

Hook:	Umpqua U502, size 1
Tail:	Root beer/pearl Krystal Flash
Wing:	Olive-barred magnum Zonker strip
Underbody:	Medium olive palmer chenille
Body:	Pale yellow marabou
Throat:	Yellow Senyo's Laser Dub
Sides:	Yellow/black-barred rubber Sili-Legs
Eyes:	7.0 mm Wind Fish Skull Living Eyes

Dave Parsons is a creative fly tier, writer, and engineer who lives in Arizona.



Step 1: Tie in the Krystal Flash at the hook bend, forming the tail, then secure the Zonker strip over the top of the Krystal Flash.



Step 4: Tie in two rubber Sili-Legs on each side of the fly and trim them so they reach back to the end of the tail.



Step 2: Tie in the palmer chenille and wind it forward about one-third of the way up the hook shank.



Step 5: Secure a length of Laser Dub to the underside of the hook eye. Brush the dubbing rearward to create the throat. Move the thread to just behind the hook eye.



Step 3: Tie in a marabou plume by its tip and make three wraps forward with the feather, then tie off and trim away the excess.



Step 6: Separate the marabou fibers on top and pull the Zonker strip forward, tie off at the eye, and trim closely. Glue on the eyes and use permanent markers (colors of your choice) to add patterning to the throat.

Fish Tales

Jimmy Junebug/By Alan Liere

He calls himself Jimmy Junebug, and, according to him, you are not a complete fly fisherman until you catch a coho on a fly. This is the same Jimmy who mostly fishes for salmon with bait and who once convinced me my college experience would not be complete until I had hosted a keg party in my dormitory room during finals week. The party resulted in my having to find an alternate institution of higher learning for my junior and senior years.

After college, Jim and I lost track of one another, but we reconnected in our 60s and did some trout fishing together. During one of these trips, Jim said he knew of a great lodge on Barkley Sound, British Columbia, about 35 water miles out of Port Alberni. We could trailer his 22-foot Crestliner; take the ferry to Nanaimo, British Columbia, drive to

Port Alberni, and launch; and be at the lodge for dinner the same day. Jim had been there before and said the accommodations and the salmon fishing were excellent.

Jim is one of those guys who is always flying by the seat of his pants. He's disorganized to the point of being sloppy, optimistic to the point of being ridiculous. He's habitually late and never quits talking. He is prone to offering shards of advice he calls "Jimmy Junebug's tip of the day." I don't know why I love the guy. Or maybe those are the reasons I do. Forgetting the ill-advised college keg party, I signed on for Barkley Sound.

We left Jim's driveway at 3:30 a.m. on a September morning. Ten minutes later, all the lights on his truck dashboard went out. "Is that bad?" he asked.

"Probably," I said.

"Let's say it's a fuse," he said. "We'll just keep up with traffic on the freeway until it gets light out and then I'll take a look."

Forty miles out of town, the truck died.

Jim called a tow truck that arrived two hours later and towed us 20 miles to a garage in the small town of Ritzville, where a \$437 alternator and a six-hour wait put us back on the road. The wait would have been shorter, but Jim discovered he had left his fishing rods in the garage and had to call his wife to drive them the 60 miles to Ritzville.

On the way over Stevens Pass, the "CHECK ENGINE" light came on—we were low on oil.

"Didn't you do anything to prepare for this long drive?" I asked.

"Waxed the boat," Jim said.

Eventually we got to Nanaimo, missing the ferry by 10 minutes. We waited almost two hours to board the next one. During the 90-minute crossing, Jim lost the keys to the truck, which resulted in some tense moments before they turned up at the purser's office.

It was midnight when we got to Port Alberni. Instead of putting the boat in the water for the two-hour run to the lodge and a good meal, we slept in the truck in a Walmart parking lot and ate convenience store corn dogs.

We figured that with such a bad start, the gods would provide phenomenal fishing, I'd catch a coho on a home-tied bucktail, and the weather would be beautiful. We figured wrong. "The worst fishing in 15 years," people said. "We've never seen so much rain in September." We were skunked all four days, and I learned that fishing for coho in the ocean with fly gear is a lot of work.

Nevertheless, we've decided to try it again next year. I guess that's the way it is with fishing. I guess that's the way it is with friends too.



Alan Liere is a humor writer who lives in eastern Washington state.

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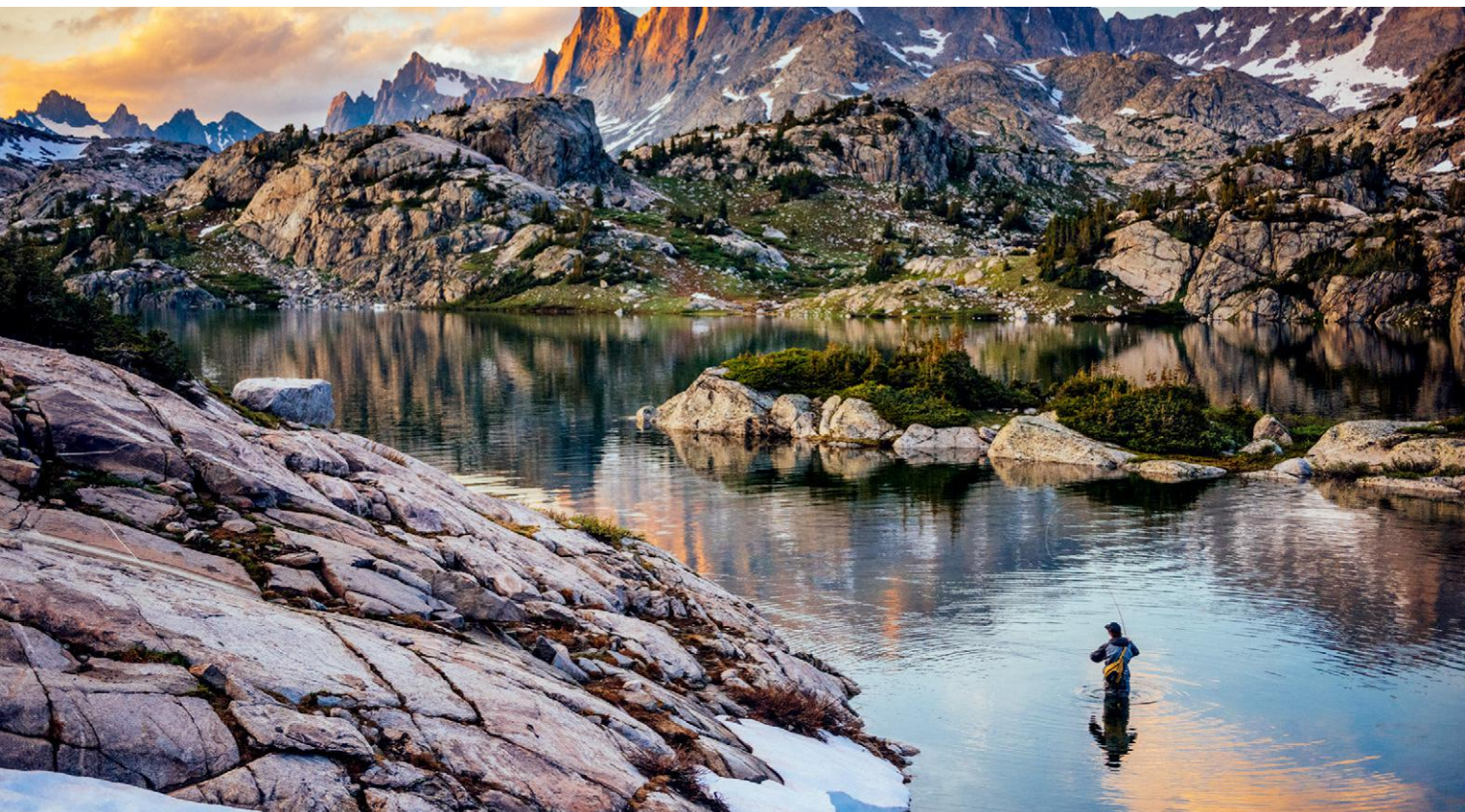
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Shane Grimes soothes tired legs with some ice-water immersion therapy 12 miles into the Wind River Range, Wyoming. JEREMIAH WATT © 2018 Patagonia, Inc.

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