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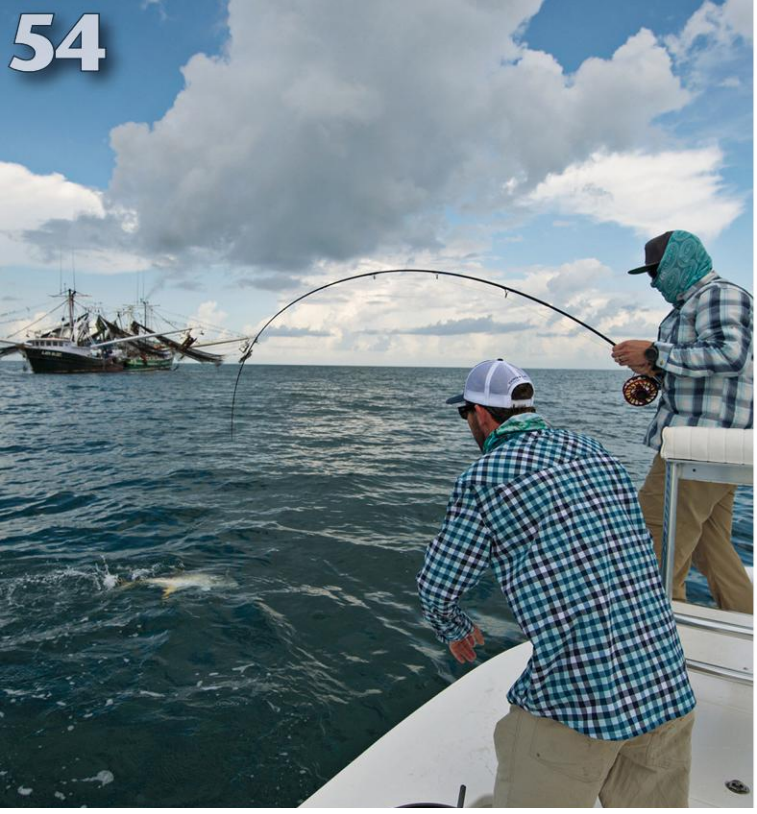

Eastern
FLY FISHING
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Volume 14, Number 4 • July/August 2018

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Cover: Harrison Beckwith searches for wild brook trout on a small stream in western North Carolina.

Photo by: Josh England

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

This spring, Western Rivers Conservancy created the **San Luis Hills State Wildlife Area** (above) in Colorado's scenic San Luis Valley. We permanently protected 4.5 miles of the upper Rio Grande and over 17,000 acres of outstanding fish and wildlife habitat. These lands are now open to all to explore and enjoy.

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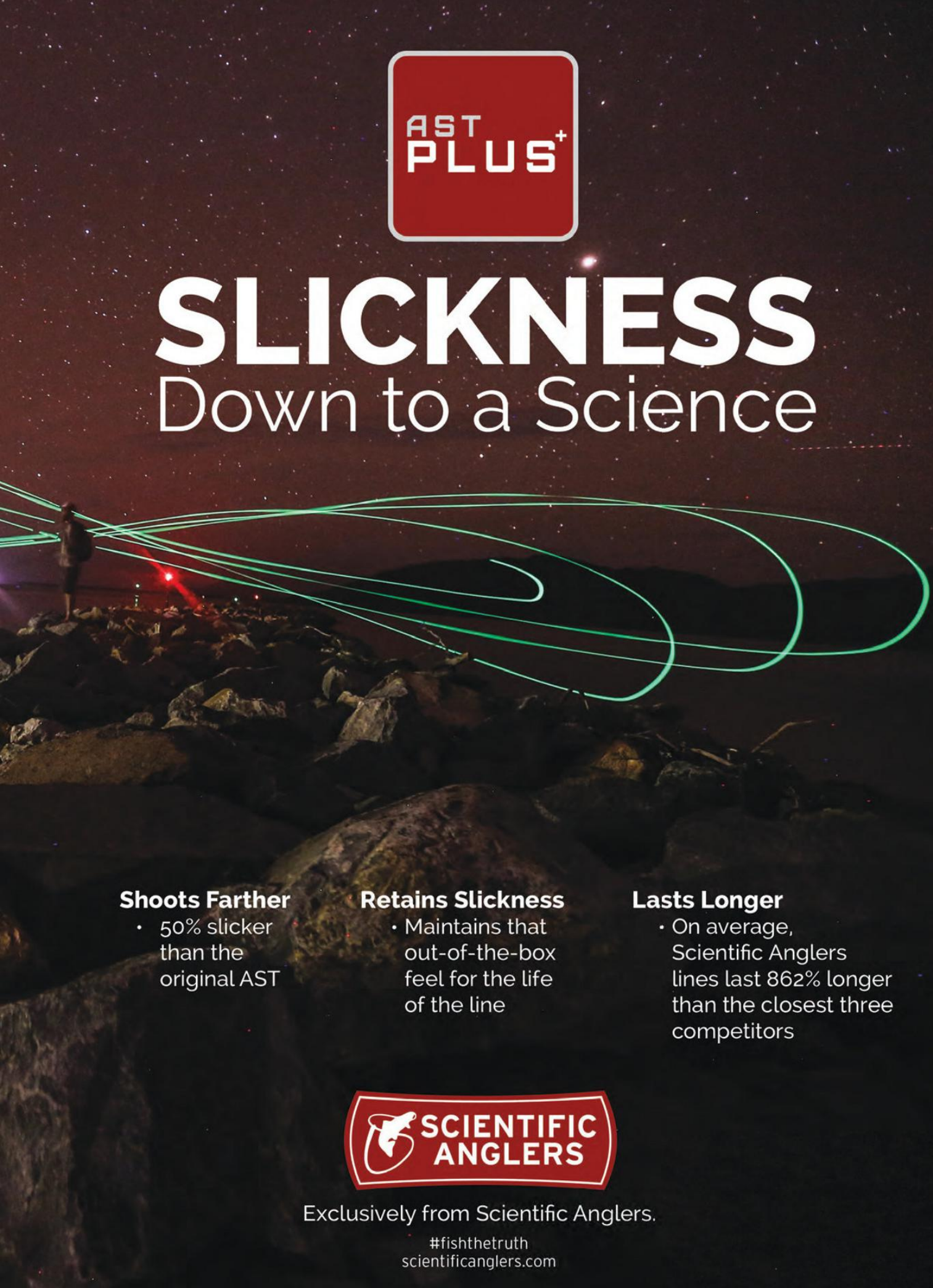
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From the Editor

A Cool New Tool

I like fine tackle, but I don't hoard it. Give me the basics to enjoy my fly-fishing forays—a rod well designed for the task at hand; a reel to match; lines that cast well and perform as I need them to; waders that don't leak, at least not too soon out of the box; wading boots that give me secure footing; plus nippers, forceps, and small pliers to flatten barbs—and I'm good to go.

On the other hand, some of my friends are unapologetic gear junkies. They collect new rods and reels and lines and garments and tools faster than they can possibly put them to thorough use. I know anglers who divorce their latest rod before the honeymoon's over because something new and shiny catches their eye.

Not me. I don't need every new rod, reel, line, and tool that comes down the pike, or the inevitable logo-bearing trucker cap, shirt, and window decal that goes with them. Admittedly, I need some of them, or at least I perceive that I do, so occasionally I buy in to product hype and sometimes the product lives up to the hype. But mostly I'm a pragmatist, and I just need the right tools for the job.

Recently, however, I discovered the most remarkable new item, a nonchalant little tool that has revolutionized my entire fly-fishing world, from the pile of feathers and hooks at my tying desk to the waist-deep flows of my favorite steelhead pools. I'm so reliant on this new gadget that by now I've acquired a dozen of them and stow them in strategic locations—in my truck, in my waders, next to my vise, in my waist pack, in my camera bag, and more.

Truth be told, however, I'm upset about it, even angry. I suppose I'll get over it, or at least begrudgingly accept that, in this one area, I'm a gear junkie. I discovered that I needed this tool one evening not all that long ago while trying to thread 6X tippet through the eye of a size 18 dry fly. Eventually I succeeded, but only by rote.

Anyway, I need to tie a couple of flies tonight. Now where the hell did I put my reading glasses?

John Shewey
Editor in Chief

Eastern
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Incredible fly-fishing destinations
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July/August 2018 Contest

May/June 2018 Finalists

1. **"I like my martini dry, just like my flies."**
   Terry Sullivan, Texas

2. **"It's even garnished with the right size and color olive!"**
   David Thatcher, Pennsylvania

3. **"Bartender, make the next one a double, and I'll take a wading stick to go."**
   Jeff Trant, Oregon

4. **"I've always been a sucker for a green olive hatch!"**
   James Mathis, Texas

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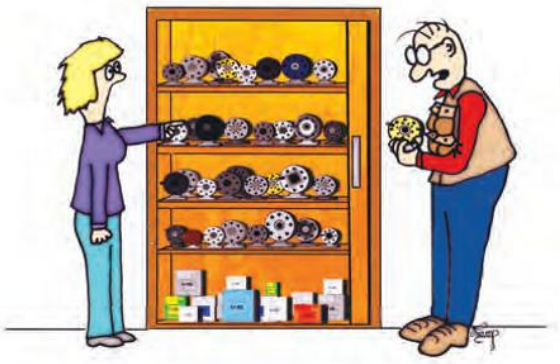

"I know, I know, just make sure when I die that you don't sell them for what I told you I paid for them."
Carlos Fushimi, Idaho Falls, Idaho

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 July 6, 2018. Above left are the finalists for the May/June 2018 contest; please go online to vote for your favorite. The winner will be announced in the September/October 2018 issue and will receive a a one-year subscription or extension to the magazine of their choice.. The March/April 2018 winner appears above right.

To cast your caption, go to
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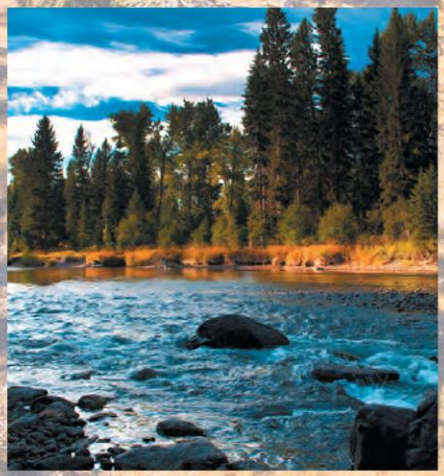

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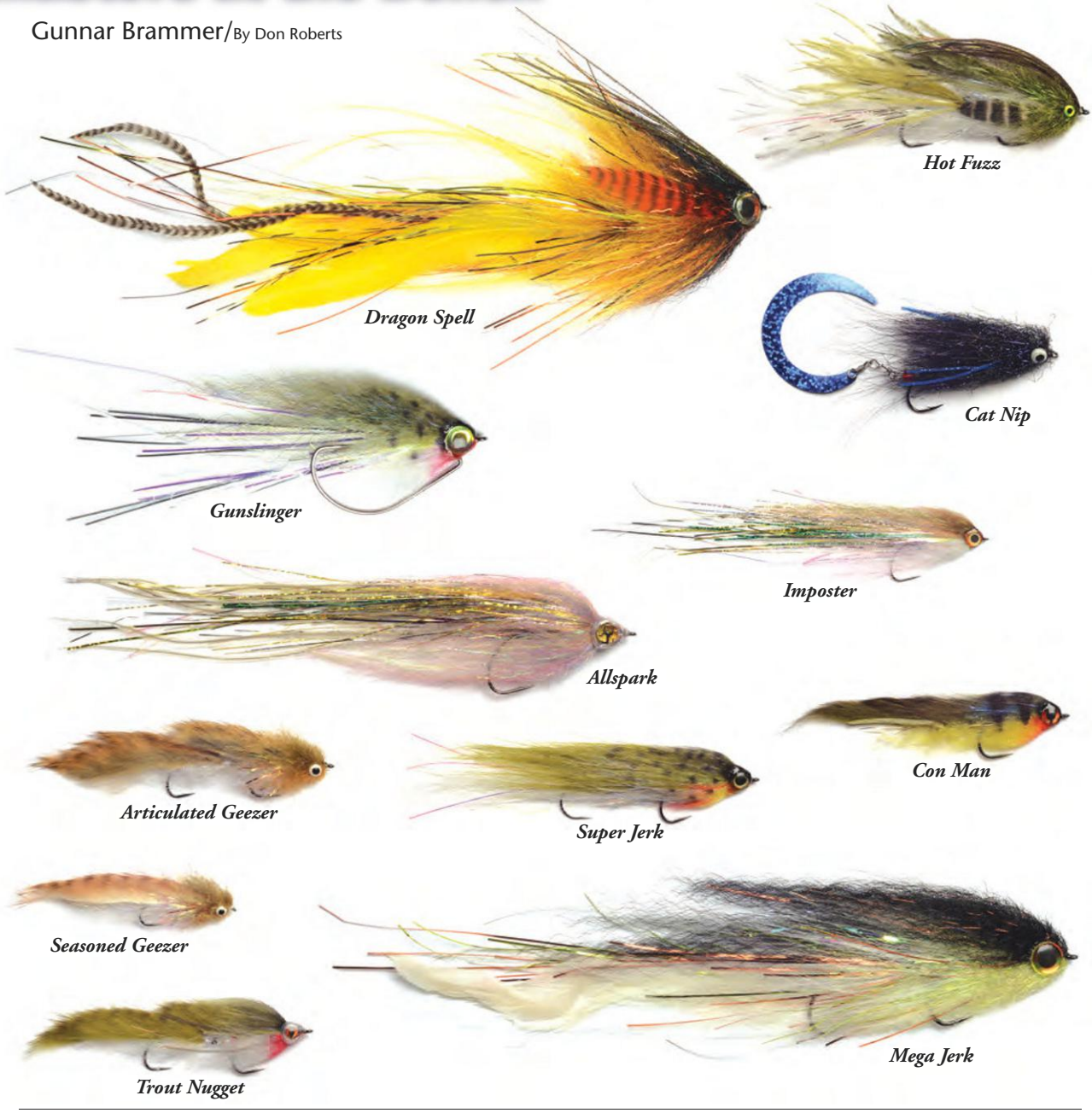
An Underwater Perspective

Bluegill

By Eric Engbretson/Engbretson Underwater Photography

Masters at the Bench

Gunnar Brammer/By Don Roberts



Once you view his flies, there can be little argument that Gunnar Brammer stands behind the "go big or go home" school of thought. It started with a compulsion to catch northern pike—a fever kindled during late-night euchre games, when Brammer's father and his fishing buddy, Herm, regaled the 15-year-old boy with stories of "giant pike rolling over lily pads desperately trying to chase down deer-hair frog imitations."

But prior to his teen years, Brammer had little inkling of the fly-fishing obsession he was destined to fall prey to. "I grew up golfing," he says. Which was no surprise, since that was the sport his dad loved most. However, that all began to change when his father, Bob, took Gunnar along on a business-related fishing trip to northern Ontario to catch walleyes and talk shop. The venture proved so rewarding that it turned into an annual family-and-friends getaway-style holiday.

In due course young Brammer decoded walleye fishing, though pike, especially big pike, remained ever elusive. The more he fretted about it, the more a new game plan took shape in his mind. "In order to catch pike," recalls Brammer, "I needed to learn the art of fly fishing."

Brammer's father, being a realist and pragmatist, started the kid on a manageable 9-foot, 5-weight fly rod, with which he learned the basics by hooking rock bass and sunfish on Copper Johns. Things took a sharp turn toward a

big-game mentality when, during a long road trip, Bob picked up a copy of *Modern Streamers for Trophy Trout* by Bob Linsenman and Kelly Galloup. The impressionable youngster stuck his nose in the book and didn't come up for air until he'd absorbed every word. "I immediately adopted all of Kelly's ideologies regarding predator fly fishing and fly design," he says.

That winter, Brammer received his first vise and enough materials to tie two of the greatest trout catchers of all time: the Woolly Bugger and Galloup's Zoo Cougar. "Long story short," Brammer confesses, "I was horrible at tying flies."

Salvation came in his senior year of high school, when he took a fly-tying class held at The Northern Angler in his hometown of Traverse City, Michigan. The tying class not only enlightened him concerning the prerequisite foundational skill set and those subtle techniques that cannot be easily gleaned from books, but also reinvigorated his motivation to formulate truly pike-worthy fly patterns.

Although fly fishing itself took a back seat during Brammer's college years, his knowledge of fly tying steadily grew. Then, in the spring of 2014, near the end of his fourth year at Michigan Technological University, he happened upon a job announcement for an opening at Galloup's Slide Inn on the Madison River in Montana. "My eyes literally lit up with little heart-shaped emoji smiley faces," he says. First Galloup's fly-tying book, then Galloup's actual fly-fishing operation: perhaps, as some philosophers maintain, there really are no coincidences in life. In terms of fish and fishing and getting to know the bugs required, virtually overnight Brammer went from a middling education to full-bore, on-the-river postgraduate studies.

After total immersion in the Montana outback, Brammer returned to Michigan Tech to finish up his degree work, but not without first switching majors from mechanical engineering

PHOTO BY JUSTIN BOWMAN

to wildlife ecology. Again beckoned by the Big Sky, Brammer had to "take a few deep breaths and swallow the bitter pill of reality." Translation: get a real job, or, in the parlance of human resources, choose a career path. He ended up accepting the position of field technician for a research scientist based in northern Wisconsin. Coming full circle—back to the beginning, so to speak—during after-work hours, he rekindled his teen fantasies of chasing northern pike and devising the fly patterns to accomplish that feat.

"In the fall of 2015, I relocated to Duluth, Minnesota, with my beautiful wife," says Brammer, "who had landed her dream job there as a civil engineer." His internship as a research tech, in the meantime, had become intermittent and appeared to be winding down. One night his wife, Natalie, came home from the office and forthrightly entreated, "So, have you started selling flies yet?" A wise woman indeed. Cushioned, at least in the interim, by his wife's steady paycheck, he did just that—promptly diving into the rigors of establishing his own startup: Brammer's Custom Flies, www.streamersbygunnar.com.

Brammer's mission statement is straight-ahead and unpretentious: "I design streamers. I fish for anything that wants to eat them. I want to share everything I know with anyone who wants to listen."

Those who choose to buy, rather than tie, any of Brammer's patterns can rest assured that they're built to both attract and withstand attack by the most ugly-tempered aquatic

predators, whether barracuda or bluefish, alligator gar or lingcod, muskie or, you guessed it, northern pike, or any other toothy critter that lurks in fresh or salt water. (Of course, there's a caveat: no matter how shrewdly reinforced with wire and epoxy, no fly ever devised can be expected to survive intact oft-repeated savaging by any of the above species.)

Brammer believes that many of the streamers on the market today fall short in the category of "transparency and dimensionality." He contends that—given the right blends and proportions of materials, and the correct method of stacking—you can mimic the translucency exhibited by most species of baitfish. Three-dimensional brushes, a trade secret, comprise the core (in every sense of the word) of many, if not most, of Brammer's flies. If you think these brushes are just a fringy wad of synthetics twisted into a strand of froufrou, think again. They are way more cunning than that, in effect providing a way for the tier to achieve breadth and bulk without weight, and therefore produce eminently castable, big-game-size flies. That does not mean that these twist-dubbed brushes, some of them devilishly layered and tapered, are easy to make. *Au contraire, mon frère*.

However, for those undeterred by newfangled methods and materials, Brammer's YouTube presentations come to the rescue. Among his wide array of online titles, three of the most edifying are *Dynamic Dubbing Brushes*, *Brammer's Big Fly Fiber Dubbing Brush*, and *Brammer's Flash Hackle Dubbing Brush*. Totally relaxed and articulate—he's a natural in front of the camera—Brammer has produced tying tutorials that divulge a trove of how-to instruction, and back up every how with the why. Even if no other attribute can be agreed upon, there's really no disputing that fly fishers are, perhaps without exception, irrepressibly curious. In that light, you could say Brammer's videos offer fly-fishing/fly-tying proof of a much-abused tabloid slogan: "Enquiring minds want to know."

PHOTO BY NATALIE BRAMMER

Don Roberts is an Oregon-based freelance writer and frequent contributor to Northwest Fly Fishing, Southwest Fly Fishing, *and* Eastern Fly Fishing *magazines.*

Fish Food

Yellow Sallies: The Tinker Bell Fly/By Don Roberts

PHOTO BY HENRY RAMSAY

They're dainty by stonefly standards. They're sprightly. They're glittery—indeed, almost luminous. And they're decidedly fairy-like. For all those reasons, it's hard not to sentimentalize Yellow Sallies, to innocently and not a little fawningly regard them as the Tinker Bells of the Plecoptera clan.

Even though it's entirely defensible, perhaps there's reason to apologize for dragging a dignified aquatic life form into the Disneyverse. On the other hand, you've got to admit that even their genus name, *Isoperla*, sounds more than vaguely enchanting. In fact, Yellow Sallies are known to flutter as fantastically in the eyes of foraging trout as they do in the intense gaze of squinting anglers. Not only are Sallies just plain fun to see—micro-coptering from sunlight to shadow and vice versa—but their mere presence, that flaxen flittering in the willows, as often as not heralds rising trout.

Isoperla have been around for the last 40 million years and have been ubiquitous colonizers, occupying most temperate regions of the planet—more specifically, wherever cold, clean, cobble-bottom streams gambol down the flanks of wooded uplands—and serving as a pretty presence in North American fisheries from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Taking into account the uniformity of the genus, scientifically accurate species identification hardly matters—a Yellow Sally is, well, a Yellow Sally. That said, *I. grammatica* probably counts as the dominant *Isoperla* species in the West and most of elsewhere, including Europe and Scandinavia, with *I. fulva* making a strong showing in the eastern U.S. Because of their widespread dispersal, it's safe to say that *Isoperla* ranks among the precious few genera of aquatic insects known to inspire equal ardor in anglers on both sides of the continent.

Depending upon latitude, Yellow Sallies emerge anywhere from early April until mid-July. Generally speaking, their appearance is a springtime phenomenon, with the hatch usually reaching its peak in May or early June. On other streams, especially oxygen-rich limestone waters, the *Isoperla* hatch may never really peak at all, but instead stretch out into an intermittent occurrence throughout spring and summer. Though sporadic, the hatches are often sustained, lasting, however capriciously (on-again, off-again), for hours. Consequently, fishing Yellow Sallies tends to be a by-gosh-and-by-golly proposition. Still, what's not to love about an insect whose hatch period unfolds over months rather than just days or weeks?

PHOTO BY ARLEN THOMASON

As with other members of the Plecoptera order, *Isoperla* have an incomplete life cycle composed of egg, nymph, and adult, skipping the pupal stage of development. The entire

life cycle from egg to adult fits fairly neatly into one calendar year, most of which is spent in the nymph phase. While adult Sallies come in many shades of yellow, from canary to citron, the nymphs are predominantly a drab, mottled brown. Because of their preferred mode of existence—reclusively clinging to the underside of rocks and crevices, with the exception of emergence, when they creep toward the nearest stream bank—fishing a size 14 or 16 slavishly detailed imitation of a Sally nymph is really more of a dalliance than an efficacious strategy. On the other hand, trout are almost always on the lookout for LBJs (little brown jobs), regardless of their genus or species. So nymph away; just don't fool yourself into believing that what you're presenting is necessarily a nice, juicy, shrewdly tied *Isoperla*.

Once *Isoperla* nymphs reach maturity—and as solar cycles and water temperature dictate—they migrate from the fast sections of the river and somehow manage to crawl ashore, clinging to rocks and vegetation where they eventually split and shed (molt) their nymphal husk. The freshly emerged adults take refuge in shoreline grasses and bushes, and do their best to find partners and mate; finally, compelled by procreation, the females selflessly sacrifice themselves. Gravid Sallies lay their eggs by skimming the surface of the stream, where, as if performing needlepoint, they gently and repeatedly pierce the water with the tip of their abdomen, thereby releasing their precious cargo. Here's the good part (for anglers, not sadists): unable to muster the energy for takeoff, the spent females, wings askew, are borne away on the current like so much delicate wreckage, or, more germane to an angler's point of view, like so much fish fodder.

As far as tying convincing adult *Isoperla* patterns goes, you can discount, if not virtually ignore, male Sallies for two reasons: they are smaller by at least 2 millimeters than their female counterparts, which typically measure 12 to 14 millimeters and are therefore less conspicuous; and, unlike the females, they're not preordained to inexorably terminate smack-dab in a trout feeding lane.

Yellow Sally
Fly courtesy of Orvis

Ride Sally Ride
Fly courtesy of Umpqua

Tim's Levitator Yellow Sally
Fly courtesy of Rainy's

J's DOA Little Yellow Stone
Fly courtesy of Rainy's

Maldonado's Yellow Sally
Fly courtesy of Rainy's

JuJu Sally
Fly courtesy of Umpqua

Kyle's Yellow Sally
Fly courtesy of Montana Fly Company

Yellow Sallies are equipped with three sets of discernible appendages—two lateral overlapping wings, two tails, and two antennae—and, of course, per insect classification, six legs, which are short and underslung. With the exception of the wings, perhaps the single most crucial element in an effective *Isoperla* pattern, fly tiers can get away with regarding the other extremities as merely decorative, unnecessary window dressing (though some fussy tiers may beg to disagree). When tying or buying Yellow Sallies, strive for patterns with low buoyancy—spare enough to ride low in the surface film—that are bright enough to track in shadowy, riffled, or sparkly water.

A number of serious field entomologists, aka fly anglers, particularly those in the Atlantic states, argue that *Isoperla* are primarily nocturnal. The preponderance of scientific references, however, seems to suggest that most Yellow Sally species follow a crepuscular schedule, with the nymphs emerging at dawn, sometimes dusk, and then transforming into adults bent on flirting and flying in the gathering light. There appears to be a correlation between the gradual rise in air temperature and the triggering of flight: a cheerful convergence of wings and sun.

Personally, I like to fish a slightly oversize, neon-chartreuse Sally on a slack line in riffle breaks, during which a not unwelcome earworm of the refrain from Lou Reed's classic "Ride Sally Ride" loops in my brain. The takes, when they occur, are usually more along the lines of a polite sip than a chucked cinderblock. Because of the purposely meager buoyancy of Sally imitations, it's advisable to take a break about every dozen or so casts. Stop and smell the honeysuckle, while giving your Sally a good dousing in a fly-drying powder. Think of it as a refuel of pixie dust.

Parmacheene Belle

By John Shewey

This chrome-bright summer-run steelhead took a Parmacheene Belle tied on a size 1.5 Daiichi Alec Jackson hook. Though invented for native brook trout in the Northeast, the Parmacheene Belle was a popular standard pattern for steelhead from the 1890s into the 1930s (above). This classic steelhead version of the Parmacheene Belle is tied on a size 6 wet-fly hook and uses dyed goose primary feather sections for the wings. By the 1890s, the Parmacheene Belle was among the most popular flies on California's Eel River, where steelhead fly fishing has its roots (left). Photos and fly by John Shewey

Like many anglers, I was quite young when I was first captivated by the beautiful Parmacheene Belle wet fly; it's an iconic pattern whose beauty is simply inescapable. And while I tied a few for fun over the years, I can't recall whether I ever fished this 140-year-old pattern for trout. I suppose my angling brethren who grew up in New England might tell different tales, with memories of landing native brook trout on this gorgeous fly. But I've lived out West all my life, and my infatuation with the Belle as a functional fly began just a few years ago during my research for a book titled *Classic Steelhead Flies* (2015).

On October 1, 1921, the *Blue Lake Advocate* of Arcata, California, reported that a few days earlier, "A steelhead trout, measuring 34 inches in length and 18 inches in girth and weighing 14-1/4 pounds, was hooked and landed after a fight of 20 minutes by Joseph Gephart of Eureka at Fernbridge Sunday. The fish, which is the largest caught on a fly in Eel River for the past five years, has been entered in the 'biggest fish' contest being conducted by *Field and Stream* sporting magazine."

Significantly, at least in retrospect, Gephart's trophy steelhead was caught on a Parmacheene Belle (spelled "Parmachene" by the newspaper report and commonly spelled that way today).

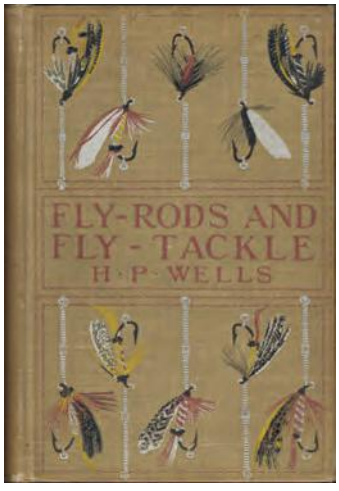
It was hardly the first giant Eel River steelhead to fall to this radiant pattern, but the 1920s saw the twilight of the classic old Eastern and British feather-wing wet flies that had opened the doors to fly angling for the great seagoing rainbows of the Pacific Coast. By 1930, many steelhead anglers were relying primarily on indigenous flies, and while the Belle, along with the Red Ibis and Royal Coachman and other fancies, still had its adherents, the Pacific Coast originals were more popular. To be sure, many of the early steelhead flies designed by local anglers were minor variations on the Eastern trout flies, but the shift to river-specific and steelhead-specific West Coast flies was well under way, and the reign of the bucktail flies was soon to come.

Today—unless my own efforts at repopularizing it have succeeded—the Parmacheene Belle is never found on a steelhead river, and for that matter not often on a New England brook trout lake or stream closer to its birthplace. Its diminution is unfortunate, because the fly is among the most fetching of American classics. It was the brainchild of Henry Parkhurst Wells (1842–1904), a Rhode Island patent attorney by trade and an ardent angler, and first appeared in print in *Fishing with the Fly* (1883) by Charles F. Orvis and Albert Nelson Cheney, in which Wells contributed a chapter titled "Fishing in the Rangeley Region." Wells had invented the Belle around 1875 and named it after Maine's Parmachenee Lake, itself named for Parmaginnie, son of the Indian chief Metalluk (why Wells used the incorrect spelling is unclear).

The Belle was meant to mimic the colorful fin of a brook trout, apparently a popular bait of the era, and Wells explained, "Unless I am deceived, these large trout take the fly not as an insect, but as some form of live bait. If this is true, an imitation of some favorite form of food is in itself sufficient under all circumstances, provided it is so conspicuous as readily to be seen. To test this theory the fly in question was made, imitating in color the belly-fin of the trout itself."

The Parmacheene Belle's popularity in New England quickly spread, and it soon appeared in San Francisco, which by the 1880s had myriad tackle shops and one well-known professional tier and steelhead angling pioneer named John S. Benn. The Belle became one of the very first steelhead flies. California tiers soon made their own variations, which were often minor: black ostrich in place of peacock for the butt, yellow floss instead of mohair for the body, and eventually bucktail for the wing (Ray Bergman included a hair-wing version in his 1938 book, *Trout*, after fishing Oregon's North Umpqua). When slightly more significant renovations were made, the Belle (as well as such flies as the Royal Coachman) quickly garnered new names—fly-pattern evolution at work—and a steelhead fly was born.

Meanwhile, back in the brook trout world of New England, the Belle reigned among the most popular wet flies for several decades after its inception. In 1885, Wells delivered *Fly-Rods and Fly-Tackle*, and therein largely repeated what he had written in the earlier Orvis/Cheney book, but added that rather than stringently wrapping the red hackle in front of the white, "I have sometimes wound both hackles on at the same time."



Otherwise, Wells usually conformed to his red-in-front-of-white hackle, and the wings were made from duck wing quill segments. Don Bastian, an authority on classic wet flies, notes that, traditionally, what we call the reverse-wing method was common practice with wet flies: tie the wings in upside down and facing forward, then, upon completion of the hackle, fold the wings back and bind them down.

"This method," says Bastian, "also gave the flies of the day their characteristic high wing angle."

He also points out that while goose shoulder feathers are popular with modern tiers, they were seldom, if ever, used on the original quill-wing wet flies, and opines, "Flies made like this today are perfectly acceptable in that they look fine … but with the inherent low, sleek-looking wing that goose shoulder renders, they are not historically accurate.… I believe the accurate reproduction of these historic flies is important, and is something that should not be forgotten."

This portrait of Henry P. Wells, inventor of the Parmacheene Belle, appeared as the frontispiece for the 1901 edition of Fly-Rods and Fly-Tackle *(above). The 1901 edition was emblazoned with a beautiful cover design (below). Photo by Paul Morgan/Coch-Y-Bonddu Books.*

I agree with Bastian, but with a caveat: provided that the fly tier understands and acknowledges the historically correct dressings and tying techniques, he or she should not be disparaged for ingenuity. To wit, when I dress feather-wing Parmacheene Belles for steelhead, I use white and red turkey tail for the wing because duck or goose wing quills lack sufficient fiber length, I often top the wing with one or more golden pheasant crest plumes, and I always add jungle cock at the shoulders.

This American classic deserves a resurgence, as both a trout fly and a steelhead fly. The problem in the latter category, however, is that by around 1950, steelhead seem to have decided that enough of their number had been fooled by the Parmacheene Belle; the fly simply no longer worked, the fish apparently being so capricious in nature that they had collectively decided to wash their fins of any desire to inspect a passing Belle in their watery midst.

Or maybe something else happened to explain the dearth of steelhead being hooked by the Belle: the fly fell out of fashion. Nobody caught a steelhead on the Belle for decades, simply because nobody fished the fly for steelhead for decades. However, after being smitten by the Belle during my research a few years ago, I decided to dedicate the entire 2014 summer-run season to this one pattern, fishing it to the exclusion of all others from June through October. And I'm happy to report that the Parmacheene Belle works as well as ever when given the opportunity.

John Shewey is the editor in chief of Northwest Fly Fishing, Southwest Fly Fishing, *and* Eastern Fly Fishing *magazines.*

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Fox and East Branch Fox Rivers, MI By Tim Barner

In August1919, Ernest Hemingway visited the Seney area in Michigan's Upper Peninsula (UP) with a few youthful friends, to fish for brook trout. He later wrote about the experience in the short story "Big Two-Hearted River," preferring the more poetic name of a neighboring stream that would keep followers away from his prized finds, the main-stem Fox River and its East Branch.

PHOTO BY AARON PETERSON

The village of Seney, once a bustling lumber center, is at the crossroads of State Routes 28 and 71 in the north-central UP. The main Fox flows through Seney, continuing some 15 miles southeastof town. The East Branch (aka Little Fox) parallels the main river a few miles to the east. Smaller, and more difficult to fish, the East Branch harbors wild trout. Both streams are included in Michigan's Natural Rivers program. These spring-fed streams rarely rise above 58 degrees in midsummer, and provide abundant insect life as they course through dense pine and cedar forests. The main Fox and the East Branch merge near the village of Germfask, helping to form the Manistique River, which flows south into Lake Michigan.

The Seney Township Campground and two rustic state forest campgrounds provide excellent walk-in access sites. Fly fishing is available throughout the calendar year under special regulations, with the Fox River open year-round. Browns, rainbows, and brook trout are all found on the main branch. Sizable native brookies and browns predominate on the East Branch, which is closed to all fishing after September 30.

The upper sections of the main Fox River are best for walk-and-wade fishing. Anglers using kayaks or pontoons can launch at the railroad bridge just south of SR 28 at Seney, floating some 10 miles through pristine backcountry to the village of Germfask. The main Fox, which features some of Michigan's best natural trout habitat, is operated under state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) gear-restricted regulations and seasons. The main Fox and the East Branch are both challenging because dense streamside vegetation inhibits casting, making roll casting and dapping essential skills. The streams feature small submerged sandbars, gravel-bottom runs, and deeper pools along the banks, all of which provide trout with prime feeding lanes and cover. Mature streamside alders shade the streams, helping to keep the water temperature at trout-friendly levels.

PHOTO BY AARON PETERSON

On both the main Fox and the East Branch, a 20-minute walk up- or downstream from any of the campgrounds leads to undisturbed fishing for anglers willing to fight through the riparian shrubbery. Exploration-minded anglers will discover stretches where both streams flow through hidden meadows. The main Fox offers unimpeded fly casting in hidden meadow areas some 6 miles north of Seney, accessed via Fox River Road (County Road 450). Cross the Wagner Taylor Dam bridge to reach an unmarked forestry road

that winds back to open meadow areas. Similar open-field casting on the East Branch is available along SR 77, 4 miles north of SR 28. In both locations, meandering streams wind across grassy fields that feed abundant insect life into these rust-colored waters.

Hare's Ear Nymphs are productive in the early season, and then patterns that imitate common mayflies—Brown Drakes, especially emergers, and Green Drake duns—become more and more useful, especially in slower currents. Dark Hendrickson emergers are also important in these insect-laden streams. Grasshopper imitations work well from mid- to late summer in grassy meadow areas. Both streams have a wide variety of insects, and matching naturals at streamside works best. Typical brook trout range from 10 to 12 inches, with a few reaching 16 inches. Pockets of sizable browns can be found on the East Branch, especially north of the campground (access is via a small forest road access lane).

On my first visit to the area, in September 2016, I caught dozens of brookies, including three in the 14- to 16-inch range—all from a stream you can easily step across in places. These were the kind of fish that enthralled Hemingway. I visited again in June and September of 2017, and my fishing partner and I enjoyed similar success, finding that the big brookies were still there, thanks in large measure to Michigan's management and conservation strategies, as well as the general remoteness of the area, which assures unusually light fishing pressure.

For more information about visiting this area and fishing the Fox River and its East Branch, contact both the DNR in Newberry, (906) 293-5131, www.michigan.gov/fishing, and the Seney National Wildlife Refuge, (906) 586-9851, www.fws.gov/refuge/seney. The Exploring the North website, www.exploringthenorth.com/seneymi, also offers lots of information about the area.

French Broad River, NC By John E. Wood

PHOTO BY JOHN E. WOOD

Flowing from its headwaters near Rosman, North Carolina, and eventually into Tennessee through Cherokee National Forest, the French Broad River takes on nearly as many faces and temperaments as an accomplished character actor. Starting out as a series of trickles issuing from the southern Appalachian Mountains, where diminutive brook trout live in tiny pools and riffles, the branches gather, eventually running through the western edge of Asheville, North Carolina, before heading northward to the Volunteer State. Along the way, the number and type of fish species change and multiply throughout as habitat and prevailing water temperatures evolve, creating a diverse and unique fishery.

My first exposure to the French Broad was on an unnamed tributary narrow enough to jump across. It was a far cry from what I saw as Ken Hardwick of Headwaters Outfitters, (828) 877-3106, launched a drift boat at Walnut Island River Park. Instead of enjoying serene views of horse pastures and picturesque abandoned barns, we had driven through the heart of Asheville, past numerous industrial buildings, before parking just a few miles from the intersection of two interstate highways. Though we were still quite near the heart of Asheville, the river had a feel of seclusion. With low water due to one of the driest summers on record, the rugged, almost foreboding streambed of boulders and bedrock had me feeling as though the city was nonexistent, even with the gentle hum of traffic in the background—a hum that completely disappeared once we stepped into the river, then into the boat for our short float to Ivy River Campsite.

The few quick views of the French Broad afforded from the interstates belie the beauty and productivity of the river. Not only is it visually stunning from its banks, but this section is well known for healthy, abundant smallmouth bass. With endless pools, creases, and ledges created by the bedrock and boulder streambed, there is more than ample habitat for bountiful crawfish and baitfish populations for the smallmouth to feed on.

Spring through summer is the ideal time to fish this section of river for smallmouth, but even the winter months can provide action for those willing to work for it while others are chasing trout in the smaller headwater branches. Hardwick advises bringing a selection of flies that imitate crawfish and baitfish, as well plenty of surface poppers for when the fish are looking up. The timing for our day out was a bit off, being at the extreme tail end of the season. That, coupled with the low flows of an unusually dry year, had the fish low in the water column tucked along current seams. Hardwick's usual plan is to start out with poppers to bring them to the top and gradually work downward into the depths until fish are located. We ended up using heavy flies and finding the fish near the bottom. Admittedly, it's not as exciting as watching a feisty bass explode on the surface, but the strength with which these fish pull makes any hookup a thrill.

In cool weather, look for shallow areas, especially on sunny days, where light warms the water faster. Conversely, on hot sunny days, concentrate your efforts on slightly deeper runs, pools, and slots where fish can find relief from the heat.

PHOTO BY JOHN E. WOOD

No matter what time of year or the ambient temperature, Hardwick suggests focusing on current seams and flow changes that the smallmouth rely on to bring them food. If you happen to be on the river when a *Hexagenia* or Drake hatch occurs, the fish will let you know where they are.

To get there, take the Old Elk Mountain Road exit (24) from Interstate 26, go west to the dead end, and turn right onto Riverside Drive (State Route 251). Access is available at multiple parks located along the road adjacent to the river.

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Nickerson State Park, Cape Cod, MA By Jeff Erickson

More than any other public lands, state parks often offer the greatest variety of outdoor recreational opportunities to complement fly fishing. To the chagrin of park rangers everywhere, this sometimes includes middle-aged adults trying to recapture the campfire glory of their youth.

On a pine-clad hillside overlooking trout-filled Little Cliff Pond in Cape Cod's Nickerson State Park, my wife, Mary, and I watched with both concern and amusement as a compound of whale-like RVs and trailers haphazardly assembled in campsites across from ours. It was a prime fall Friday, and the campground was rapidly filling.

Given the mountain of beer cans already covering their picnic tables, we feared this wouldn't end well. Our compadres comprised a large group of friends and family, late arrivals attempting to shoehorn into narrow, tree-fringed sites in the dark, headlights blazing and trailer hitches groaning in distress. Eager companions waved flashlights and barked out sometimes contradictory instructions in thick Bostonian diction. It all had the cartoonish effect of a 1960s Roy Lichtenstein pop art painting.

Once fully convened and situated, the boisterous entourage partied well past midnight around an enormous bonfire. Fortunately, the shenanigans were so intense and exhausting that the crew was spent and subdued and befuddled on Saturday, nursing severe hangovers and slowly shuffling around picking up stray beer cans; by Sunday evening they were gone, and we had the beautiful,

PHOTO BY JEFF ERICKSON

now quiet park nearly to ourselves.

Periodic rowdy visitors notwithstanding, Nickerson is a refuge on often crowded and bustling Cape Cod. For fly anglers, the park's centerpieces are eight freshwater kettle ponds, remnants from glaciers that scoured the area more than 10,000 years ago. The clear ponds are fed by springs and precipitation rather than streams, and are sufficiently deep and cold to support brook, brown, and rainbow trout; Atlantic salmon; and smallmouth bass. They have a North Woods feel that disguises the fact that they are only a couple of miles from the sand, surf, and shorebirds of Cape Cod Bay.

In his fine guide *Trout Streams of Southern New England*, Tom Fuller says the park "contains four of the most attractive trout-pond kettle holes you'd ever like to find." He is referring to Cliff, Little Cliff, Flax, and Higgins Ponds. The fish may be reached by wading (best during spring and fall—watch for midges), float tubes, or boats, and the use of both floating and sinking lines (during summer, trout may submerge to 30 to 40 feet). Fuller further elaborates, "All four of these ponds are attractive because of the way they grow trout. An abundance of insects, crustaceans, and feed-fish bases allow stocked trout to put on inches quickly, and the water quality and depth keep the fish feeding and growing all year."

PHOTO BY JEFF ERICKSON

He recommends standard mayfly dry and nymph imitations, along with patterns to imitate grass shrimp, "and plenty of streamers to imitate the dace, perch, and herring that constitute the bulk of the diets of the biggest fish."

And there are some bruisers here: a 32-inch, 19.5-pound brown once turned up in Cliff Pond. Of less interest to fly anglers, the pond also surrendered the world-record American eel, a 46-inch-long slithery beast that weighed 8 pounds, 9 ounces.

Biking anglers can use the Cape Cod Rail Trail to access other nearby trout water, including Crystal Lake and Gull and Great Ponds. Abundant saltwater opportunities for striped bass and bluefish beckon in the Atlantic Ocean, Cape Cod Bay, Nantucket Sound, and associated coves and estuaries. Lucky visitors may even be treated to an unforgettable saltwater sighting: great white sharks—cohabiting Cape coastal water with humpback whales—have been increasing, due to rebounding populations of gray seals, their primary prey.

Rivanna River, VA

By Matthew Reilly

PHOTO BY MATTHEW REILLY

Virginia is blessed with a multitude of rich, warm-water river systems illuminated by world-class fishing for smallmouth bass. But much of the angling community's attention is focused on the bigger rivers—the James, Shenandoah, New, and Potomac—leaving the smaller, more intimate rivers relatively underutilized. Central Virginia's Rivanna River is one such.

Born from the confluence of several headwater streams just north of Charlottesville, the Rivanna River courses 42 miles southeast to its confluence with the James River at Columbia, making it the largest tributary of "America's Founding River." The Rivanna's name is an abbreviation of its original designation, the River Anne, after Queen Anne of England, who reigned in the early 1700s. Throughout the 18th century, the river provided energy, resources, and a mode of transportation for the farms and plantations in Albemarle and Fluvanna Counties, and it was essential in the establishment of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. Today, old canals, locks, and aqueducts can be seen throughout the river and serve as allusions to the river's Colonial working days.

PHOTO BY MATTHEW REILLY

Historians and anglers alike admire the Rivanna: historians for the aforementioned reasons; anglers for the diversity of its fishing opportunities. Spotswood Payne, a guide for The Albemarle Angler in Charlottesville who fishes the river extensively, notes that smallmouth bass abound in the river, including some fish over 20 inches. The river fishes best from March to October. However, the window between prespawn and postspawn represents the angler's best shot at such a trophy, as they will readily take baitfish and crayfish imitations fished near the river's many ledges, boulders, and logjams. Rods in the 6- to 8-weight range are ideal for trophy hunting, and floating lines are perfectly suited.

The Rivanna is full of smaller smallmouth, too—8- to 12-inch lightning bolts—as well as largemouth bass, redbreast sunfish, bluegills, rock bass, pickerels, black crappies, carp, channel catfish, and longnose gar. The generalist angler can do well with a 5- or 6-weight rod and a variety of streamers and top-water bugs throughout the summer.

If you've tired of the traditional warm-water pursuit, pick up an 8-weight and some big, white streamers. Longnose gar are ancient beasts and a top predator, with long, pointy jaws lined with razor-sharp teeth designed to trap and devour small baitfish. When the streamflow drops in mid- to late summer, sight-casting to these bullies is a great challenge with an awesome reward. The folks at The Albemarle Angler have this unique fishery dialed in. If you want in, give them a call.

Public access is generally good on the Rivanna. The upper river near Charlottesville (including the South Fork Rivanna River, which runs through town) can be accessed via a small parking lot at the base of the South Fork Rivanna River Reservoir, the Rivanna Trail at Free Bridge Lane and Riverview Park, and at Darden Towe Park. Farther downstream, public boat launches are located at Milton Landing on North Milton Road, Crofton, Palmyra, and Columbia, where the Rivanna enters the James River. Wade-fishing is great at all of these access points, and canoes and kayaks can be launched easily at each, with the exception of the Milton launch, which requires boats to be carried down a steep bank to the river.

PHOTO BY MATTHEW REILLY

The quaint Rivanna River is often overshadowed by the renowned James River downstream, but is itself worthy of attention from Virginian fly rodders. The informed angler can spend hours fishing its quiet waters in the low flows of summer, kept company by its diversity and the abundance of Southern river favorites.

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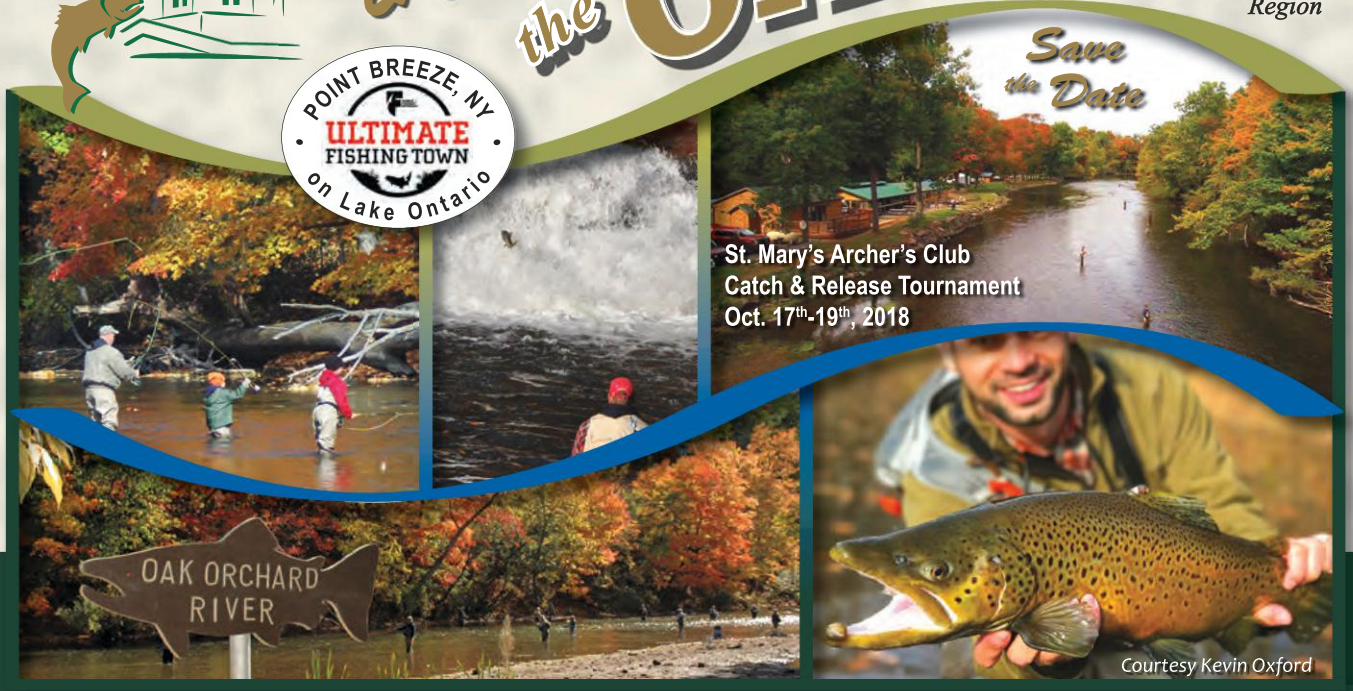

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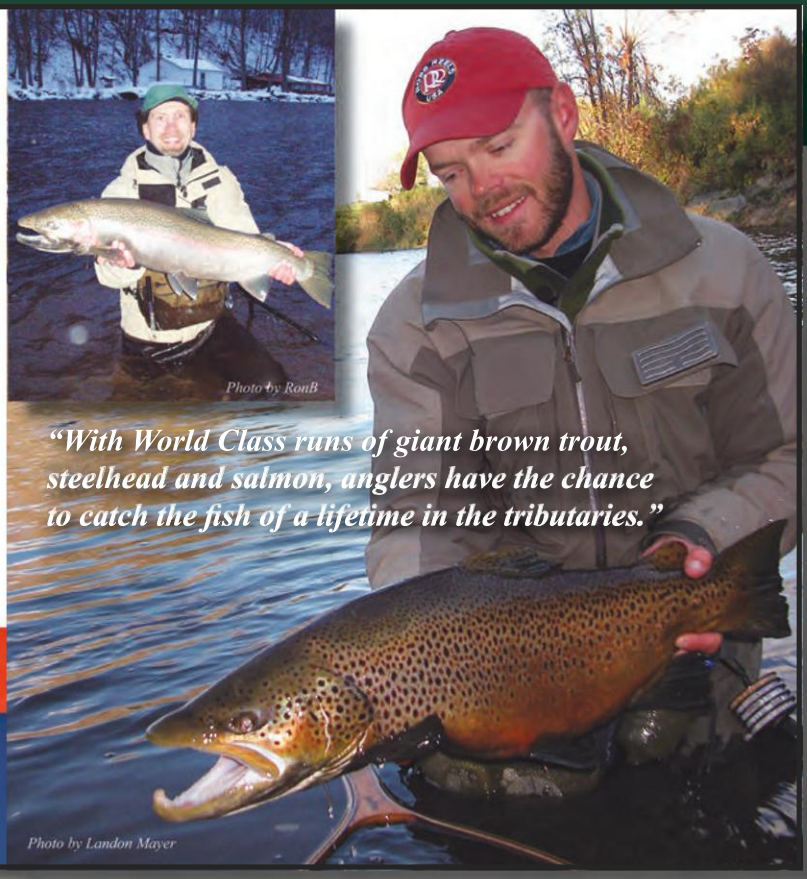
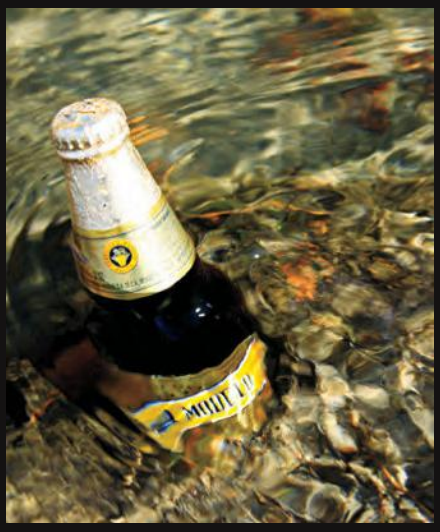


EXPOSURE

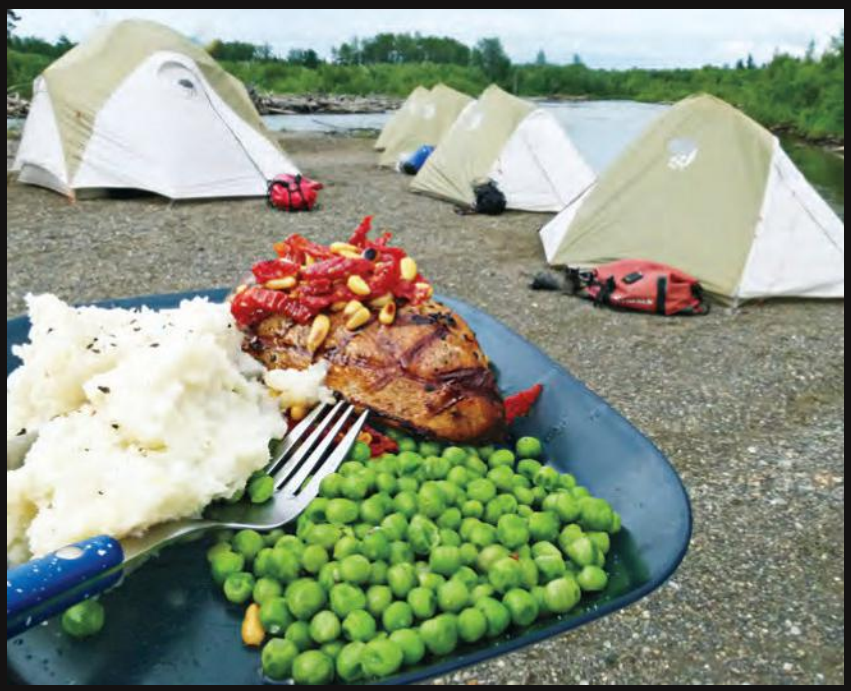
Shore Lunch

By R. Chad Chorney, Mark Lance, and Brian O'Keefe

High water on the North Platte River. Some days you take your shore lunch wherever you can get it. Photo by Mark Lance



Nature's refrigerator: the clear, cold waters of a mountain stream. Photo by R. Chad Chorney



Hearty, hot meals are prepared every evening by the guides at Aniak River Lodge in Alaska. Photo by Brian O'Keefe

Nim Blauch, of Moose Tracks Adventures in Minnesota, prepares a dinner of northern pike in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Canoeing for a week and eating the favorite meals of local guides is a world-class experience. Photo by Brian O'Keefe

These arctic char sushi rolls were made on the riverbank by guide Jonathon Streeter, while photographer Brian O'Keefe was casting to rising trout on a wilderness river in Alaska. Photo by Brian O'Keefe

Sometimes a fine shore lunch does not require going ashore at all. Guide Brian Shipley prepares his delicious chutney pork chops right on board. Photo by Mark Lance

A high-protein shore lunch slowly cooks along the Rio Blanco in Chilean Patagonia. Photo by R. Chad Chorney

Outfitter Jeff Helfrich grills steaks during one of his renowned weeklong, 100-mile float trips on the Middle Fork Salmon River in Idaho. Photo by Brian O'Keefe

Coming to a fish taco near you! Photo by R. Chad Chorney

Conch ceviche is a much-anticipated appetizer in Belize and other flats-fishing destinations. A Belikin beer rounds out a perfect snack before a dinner of grilled snapper or lobster. Photo by Brian O'Keefe

On the banks of the Limay River in Argentina, the guides are up early, making coffee and cooking breakfast. The rafts are launched at first light for an overnight float, so anglers can throw streamers and also do some match-the-hatch dry-fly fishing for brown trout. Photo by Brian O'Keefe

If you find yourself in Sheridan, Wyoming, after a hot day of fishing, you owe yourself a visit to the Mint Bar for libations and a taste of the Old West. Photo by Mark Lance

R. Chad Chorney, Mark Lance, and Brian O'Keefe are among the most accomplished photographers in fly fishing. Chorney lives in Idaho, O'Keefe hails from Oregon, and Lance is based in Colorado. All three travel widely in pursuit of fish and photos.


patagonia

PHOTOS BY R. CHAD CHORNEY

Oak Orchard River, NY

Trophy Trout Close to Home

By R. Chad Chorney

When I say "big brown trout," what fishery comes to mind? Before you answer, let me add a few more descriptors. Really big brown trout. Double-digit-weight fish up to 20 pounds. Hooking 10 or more of these brutes on a good day. Any guesses? New Zealand? Chile? Argentina? The answer, surprisingly, is western New York. Namely, the Oak Orchard River (aka Oak Orchard Creek), a tributary of Lake Ontario located near the small community of Albion.

The Oak Orchard River is the most consistent fishery along Lake Ontario for producing trophy brown trout, and perhaps throughout all of the Great Lakes. Each autumn, thousands of big browns make their way up Oak Orchard intent on two things: gobbling up loose chinook salmon eggs drifting in the river's tannic-stained flows, and spawning in the stream's graveled tailouts and runs. Oak Orchard also receives excellent runs of steelhead and chinook salmon; it's not uncommon to catch all three species during a single outing. From September through April, anglers find incredible fishing opportunities along Oak Orchard.

The Oak Orchard River (known locally as "the Oak") begins its course just south of Oak Orchard Swamp, near the border of Orleans and Genesee Counties. The swamp itself is a key migratory bird refuge and encompasses the Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area and the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. After leaving the swamp, Oak Orchard flows northeast before widening at an impoundment near Waterport called Waterport Pond and/or Lake Alice.

A man-made dam at the northeast end of the impoundment controls water flow in the resultant tailwater of Oak Orchard and blocks the upstream migration of salmonids from Lake Ontario. Below the dam, Oak Orchard runs for about 6 miles before entering Lake Ontario at Point Breeze. Approximately 2 miles of water below the dam is ideal for wading and fly fishing. Here, the river is a mix of pools, riffles, and runs. The majority of the water on the lowest section of Oak Orchard is unsuitable for wading anglers, and is primarily fished from boats.

Two separate stream channels parallel each other for roughly the first half mile below the dam. The west channel is an overflow for the Waterport impoundment, while the east channel is the main channel of Oak Orchard and spills from the dam turbines. During times of high flow, the overflow channel has sufficient water to hold fish in defined holding areas; during base flows, it is relatively unproductive.

Few fisheries rival Oak Orchard's propensity for consistently producing trophy brown trout. While the river may lack the exotic feel of Patagonia or the jaw-dropping backdrop of New Zealand, its lake-run brown trout are no less stunning (above). Bob Chorney gives some pointers to Christian Aurand as he plays an Oak Orchard brown trout (left).

PHOTO BY R. CHAD CHORNEY

Few freshwater fish are as magnificently colored as a large male brown trout in spawning dress. This fish, caught on Halloween, was in full costume (above).

A large, deep pool at the base of the dam turbines usually holds a good number of fish, but is not well suited to fly fishing. Below this pool, the main channel of the Oak flows through densely wooded stream banks and seems to lack well-defined features. However, anglers who pay close attention to this water soon discover a variety of holding areas, such as current seams, troughs, bottom depressions, small pockets, and undercut banks. I've found this water to be especially productive during higher flows.

At the point where the two channels meet, Oak Orchard widens, with more defined pools and holding areas. Several named pools in this stretch consistently hold fish, in particular the Sycamore Hole and the Archery Pool. The Sycamore Hole, typically 2 to 4 feet deep, forms just downstream from where the two upper channels meet. It is most effectively fished with nymphing techniques. Farther downstream, the Archery Pool gets its name from the private Saint Mary's Archery Club, located on the west bank of the stream. Not truly a pool, the Archery Pool is a more of a long glide that extends for several hundred yards. This is classic swinging water; two-handed rods are commonplace in the Archery Pool. Downstream from the Archery Pool, Oak Orchard gradually widens and deepens, and wade-fishing becomes impossible.

Access on Oak Orchard is limited, but the two existing access points do allow anglers to reach all wadable water on the river. Both points are located on Park Avenue in Waterport. The first is near the dam on Waterport Pond. From here, anglers walk downhill on a path leading to the large pool formed from the turbine outflow. This path continues downstream and allows anglers to fish the entirety of Oak Orchard. Most of the east bank is private land, but accessible to anglers; pay attention to signage along the river.

The second access point is farther north along Park Avenue, on a spur road designated as Park Avenue Extension. A small parking area sits near the end of the extension; access here is provided by a cooperative effort between Orleans County and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). From this point, anglers can access the lower water of Oak Orchard. In particular, this access point is useful to reach the Archery Pool water and the soft water found immediately downstream. The west bank of the stream at the Archery Pool is private, but accessible to anglers; again, just be mindful of all signage.

Run Timing

Chinook salmon are the first fish to ascend Oak Orchard each fall. The salmon begin to show up in earnest in early September, with runs peaking toward the end of the month. When they first enter the river, chinook are still fairly bright and aggressive, and will take swung flies regularly. As these fish become more focused on spawning, they become less aggressive.

On the heels of the salmon run comes Oak Orchard's

big draw: trophy brown trout. Fish begin to show up in the Oak as early as late September, with the big push during October. Depending on water and weather conditions, the peak of the brown trout run typically spans mid-October through mid-November. Like the chinook, the browns are fall spawners, and soon after their arrival in the Oak they seek out gravel tailouts and runs where they deposit their eggs. Unlike salmon, brown trout survive the rigors of spawning, and after their reproduction is complete they feed aggressively. Postspawn fish can remain in the river for several months if water conditions are optimal, and they provide some of the best fishing on Oak Orchard. In fact, Ron Bierstine, who owns the local Oak Orchard Tackle & Lodge, says anglers can use streamers to target postspawn brown trout during winter in what he calls the "froggy water" at the lower end of the wadable section.

The last fish to run Oak Orchard are steelhead, with fish showing up toward the end of October. Steelhead runs peak in November, and many fish will overwinter in Oak Orchard prior to spawning in March and April, if conditions allow.

At certain times of the year, it's possible to catch all species of salmonids that ascend Oak Orchard. This is particularly true in late October, as runs of brown trout and steelhead overlap the tail end of the chinook salmon migration. Without a doubt, the best months to fish the Oak are November and March. November sees excellent runs of both browns and steelhead, with both species readily taking a variety of flies. Postspawn brown trout are eager to feed, and fresh-run steelhead are bright and aggressive. March is the peak of the steelhead run. Both winter holdovers and fresh steelhead from Lake Ontario abound in March. In addition, in spring Oak Orchard draws lake-run brown trout that are intent on feeding.

While winters are often harsh, the months of December, January, and February offer good fishing on Oak Orchard if conditions permit. Anglers should pay attention to local weather patterns and look for windows that are optimal; warm rains, a bit of snowmelt, and a rise in temperatures can all signal fresh runs of fish and subsequent good fishing.

What to Fish

If I were limited to one rod/reel setup on Oak Orchard, or any Great Lakes tributary stream, I'd choose a single-hand 10-foot, 7-weight rod, along with a large-arbor reel featuring a solid, smooth drag. This rig is ideal for brown trout and steelhead. The length and backbone are perfect for mending line and fighting large fish, and this setup is effective for both nymphing and swinging techniques. Rod action is more of a personal choice, but I favor medium to medium-fast actions. For fly lines, choose a quality floating line with a heavy head; this is useful in turning over large flies and strike indicator setups.

Anglers focusing on chinook salmon should consider heavier gear; 8- and 9-weight rods are ideal for fish that routinely weigh as much as 25 pounds.

The most productive method of fishing the Oak is nymphing with egg patterns. All fish migrations on Oak Orchard revolve around eggs. Between September and April, an abundance of trout and salmon eggs are available as food in the Oak, and salmon, brown trout, and steelhead readily key in on egg imitations. Most anglers in the Great Lakes region have their favorite egg patterns, and it's a safe bet that they are

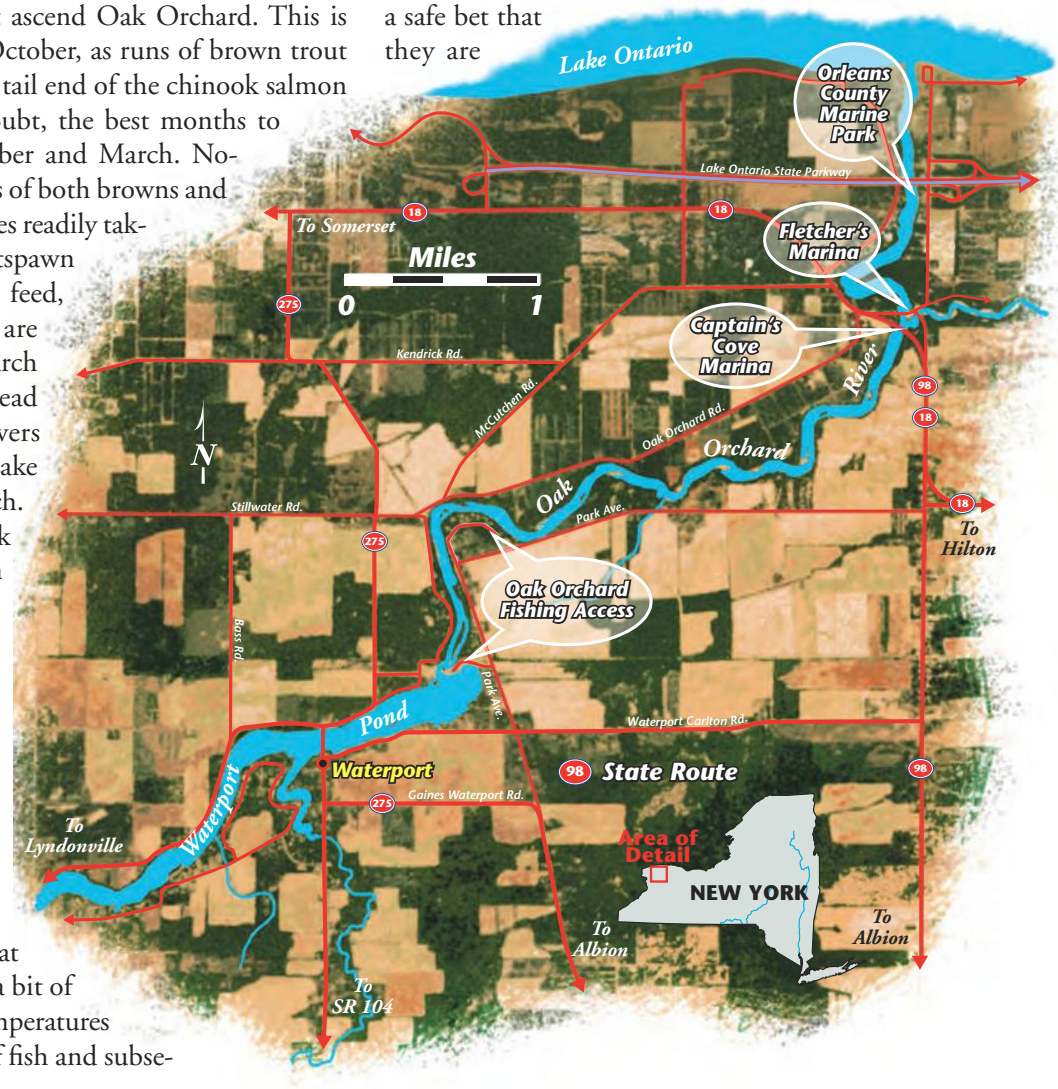


PHOTO BY R. CHAD CHORNEY

Bob Chorney plays a steelhead during late fall on Oak Orchard (above). Migratory waterfowl are common along the river, not surprising with both the Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area and the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge nearby (right).

all productive on Oak Orchard. More important than a specific fly, anglers should focus on egg pattern size and color. Chinook eggs are much larger than brown trout and steelhead eggs, and natural eggs change in color, depending upon how long they've been in the stream. Fresh eggs are bright and vivid, and can range in color from deep orange to red. Eggs that have dislodged from a redd or have been drifting in the current often become washed out and milky. Accordingly, anglers fishing the Oak should carry egg patterns in a wide range of sizes and colors.

One of the more effective egg patterns on the Oak was devised by a local angler. Mark Stothard was a gifted fly tier, angler, rod builder, and artist who lived on the banks of Oak Orchard for many years. In 2004, he died from a heart attack after a longtime battle with cancer, but his Mark's Carpet Fly is a legacy that lives on today among die-hard Great Lakes tributary anglers. To tie his fly, Stothard used simple craft yarn that can be found at any craft store. The fly is tied Glo Bug style, but by using a variety of yarn colors it can mimic a cluster of washed-out eggs. This pattern is still highly effective, and is found in most fly shops in western New York.

Spey casting has become increasingly popular on Oak Orchard and other Great Lakes tributaries. Indeed, the Archery Pool is ideal for swinging flies. Bunny Speys, Marabou Speys, Intruder-style patterns, and sculpin imitations are all highly effective on the Oak. Flies that incorporate the colors and profile of local baitfish are particularly effective; white over purple, white/blue, purple, black, and olive are all excellent choices.

Mark's Carpet Fly

PHOTO BY R. CHAD CHORNEY

Hook: Glo Bug hook or heavy nymph hook, sizes 6–12

Thread: Orange or red GSP

Body: Craft store yarn in red, pink, yellow, orange, white (2 strands each), tied Glo Bug style

Stream Etiquette

Given the large numbers of trophy chinook salmon, brown trout, and steelhead that cram into Oak Orchard each season, as well as the stream's proximity to urban centers throughout the Northeast, it's no wonder that the Oak sees a fair amount of angler traffic. In addition, since the fishable water of Oak Orchard is relatively small, anglers are typically not as spread out as they would be on larger rivers. Common sense, courtesy, and sportsmanship go a long way to ensure a good day on the Oak. Here are a few suggestions on good stream etiquette.

Give fellow anglers some space. Named pools such as the Archery Pool and Sycamore Hole will most certainly be occupied by other anglers when runs are strong, particularly during the peak of the chinook salmon and brown trout migrations. At these times, I find it much more productive to fish other water, even if it's not so-called prime water. Look for less obvious holding areas; small depressions in the streambed, the slack current behind a downed log, or an undercut bank are good examples. These lies typically hold fish and go unnoticed by many anglers.

After hooking a fish, play it quickly and aggressively. A brief fight is not only better for the fish, it also minimizes the disturbance of the surrounding water. If possible, avoid letting fish take long runs downstream. If a fish does so, and will imminently cross the path of fellow anglers, let them know.

Foul-hooking a fish is not uncommon, particularly when large numbers of chinook salmon and brown trout are present. Foul-hooked fish, especially those hooked in the tail or rear part of the body, are very difficult to play and land. I've seen anglers fight foul-hooked salmon for better than half an hour. Not only does this drive the fish to exhaustion, it spooks nearby fish and is a sure way to disturb fellow anglers. In my opinion, it's better to immediately break off a foul-hooked fish, even if it means sacrificing a fly or two. When fish are actively spawning and set up on redds, avoid them. Spawning fish less likely to actively take a fly, and are far more susceptible to being foul-hooked. Concentrate your fishing on likely holding areas that are well downstream of spawning fish. In particular, brown trout will congregate below spawning salmon and greedily eat loose eggs. In this scenario, a well-presented egg pattern will take plenty of fish.

Other Options

Oak Orchard flows remain somewhat stable during the peak salmonid migrations. The utility company that operates the dam attempts to regulate flows conducive to fishing, but drought, heavy rains, snowmelt, and releases from the dam turbines can all drastically affect stream flow. During drought periods, Oak Orchard can run low and clear, and fish will be concentrated in obvious deep pools and runs. Conversely, in high flows, fish seek soft current breaks and seams, and often hold tight to the stream banks.

Unlike many other Great Lakes tributaries, Oak Orchard can fish quite well during high, off-color flows. Anglers who arrive at Oak Orchard and find flows high and dirty should not be alarmed. Rather, they should seek softer water and any break from the main current. Also, during very high flows, the overflow channel can be particularly productive.

Within a short drive of Oak Orchard, several other Lake Ontario tributaries receive good runs of browns, steelhead, and salmon. East of Oak Orchard are Johnson Creek, Sandy Creek, and the Genesee River. Johnson and Sandy are small streams, meandering through farmland along the shore of Lake Ontario. Both streams draw good numbers of brown trout and steelhead during November and December. The Genesee is a big, brawling river, well suited to two-handed rods and big flies, and is an excellent steelhead fishery in an urban setting.

To the west, anglers seeking good fishing for lake-run browns should consider Eighteenmile Creek (also known as Burt Dam Creek) near Olcott. In almost all aspects, this fishery is very similar to Oak Orchard. If the Oak is fishing well, you can say the same of Eighteenmile Creek. Farther west is the Niagara River, with some of the biggest tributary water in New York. The Niagara has good runs of salmon, brown trout, steelhead, and even lake trout.

The Oak Orchard River provides anglers across the Northeast an opportunity to catch trophy brown trout, steelhead, and salmon without flying halfway around the world to do so. While the setting may not be as exotic as New Zealand or as grand as Alaska, the fish are equally spectacular.

A native of New York, R. Chad Chorney is a widely traveled freelance writer, photographer, and fly-fishing guide who now makes his home in central Idaho.

Oak Orchard River NOTEBOOK

PHOTO BY JOHN SHEWEY

When: Late September–late April; October and November are prime for brown trout; November and March are prime for steelhead.

Where: NW corner of NY, along Lake Ontario shoreline.

Access: Walk-and-wade fishing, with two access points in Waterport, at Park Avenue (dam) and Park Avenue Extension (Archery Pool area); both access points are on the east bank of the river.

Headquarters: Albion (Orleans County). *Information*: Orleans County Tourism, (800) 724-0314, www.orleanscountytourism.com.

Appropriate gear: 6- to 8-wt. single-hand, switch, and Spey rods; floating lines; fly reels with smooth, enclosed drag systems.

Useful fly patterns: Mark's Carpet Fly, Glo Bug, Nuke Egg, Estaz Egg, Clown Egg, Sucker Spawn, Bunny Smelt, Woolly Bugger, Egg-Sucking Leech, Steely Stone, Egg-Sucking Stone, Teeny Nymph, Psycho Prince, Pheasant Tail Nymph, Hare's Ear Nymph.

Necessary accessories: Polarized sunglasses, wading gear, warm clothing in layers, large fish-friendly net (aids in landing fish quickly).

Nonresident license: $10/1 day, $28/10 days, $50/annual.

Fly shops/guides: Oak Orchard Tackle & Lodge, (585) 682-4546, www.fishoakorchard.com; Carl Coleman's Fly Shop, (585) 738-3285, www.colemansflyshop.com; Ontario Fly Outfitters, (585) 694-9328, www.ontariofly.com; Reel Action Fly Fishing, (585) 568-7335, www.reelactionfly.com; Orvis Buffalo, (716) 276-7200, www.orvis.com/buffalo; Orvis Rochester, (585) 586-3956, www.orvis.com/rochester.

Books/maps: *Fly Fishing for Great Lakes Steelhead* by Rick Kustich and Jerry Kustich; *Advanced Fly Fishing for Great Lakes Steelhead* by Rick Kustich; *Steelhead Dreams* by Matt Supinski. *New York Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme; NYSDEC map, www.dec.ny.gov/docs/fish_marine_pdf/pfroakorchrv.pdf; Stream Map USA, (215) 491-4223, www.StreamMapUSA.com.

PHOTO BY KEVIN FEENSTRA

Covered Bridge Country, IN

Halcyon Days

By Nathan Perkinson

Remember those golden days when you picked up a fly rod, caught that first fish on a fly, and decided from that point on to be a fly angler for life? Maybe you're there right now, or maybe it's been 50 years.

For me those days were spent in west-central Indiana's Covered Bridge Country, where I practiced my skills on smallmouth bass, rock bass, and panfish. We've moved all over the Midwest in the years since, but I have a real soft spot in my heart for those youthful days spent tossing crudely tied flies to warm-water fish with a fiberglass fly rod.

My wife, Kyra, and I recently had the opportunity to revisit Covered Bridge Country, now a couple of decades down the road. I was somewhat apprehensive, not wanting to ruin those great memories with a lackluster experience. However, I'm pleased to report that the streams are still where we left them and the fishing is just as good as ever.

In case you were wondering, covered bridges are built with roofs to protect the wooden floors from foul weather. It must work, because many of the area's active covered bridges were built in the mid- to late 19th century, though a couple were built as recently as 1920. Today the covered bridges are considered historic landmarks. Visitors flock to the area every fall for Parke County's Covered Bridge Festival, and it's not uncommon to see photographers or bridge hunters parked in the gravel turnouts near the bridges.

A Wealth of Warm-Water Fishing

Sugar Creek and Big Walnut Creek offer the typical Midwest mixture of smallmouth and largemouth bass, rock bass, and a variety of panfish. Smallmouth are the dominant species of black bass, though I've caught a fair number of largemouth bass over the years, especially from Big Walnut.

Sugar Creek is one of Indiana's premier smallmouth streams, with special regulations in place that limit anglers to keeping one smallmouth per day, and each keeper must be at least 20 inches long. While this regulation does, unfortunately, allow for the harvest of the largest bass in the river, it does essentially make Sugar Creek a catch-and-release smallmouth fishery for most anglers, producing good odds for hooking a better-than-average bronzeback.

Rock bass, closely related to sunfish, abound in Big Walnut and Sugar Creeks. They eagerly take flies and it's quite

possible that rock bass are prowling every square inch of both rivers at any given time, looking to snatch a popper or streamer intended for smallmouth. It's easy to dismiss them as a nuisance or bycatch, but they're fun to catch. Bluegills, redears, pumpkinseeds, longear sunfish, and green sunfish are all common catches in slow pools and along weedy banks. Fly fishing for river-dwelling sunfish is a fun way to spend warm summer evenings because they become insanely reckless as the sun drops, attacking everything from tiny dry flies to poppers nearly as big as the fish themselves.

The Rivers

Covered Bridge Country has three major watersheds: Sugar Creek, Big Walnut Creek, and Big Raccoon Creek. Big Raccoon is impounded near Rockville and is controlled by the dam at Cecil M. Harden Lake, so it functions a little differently than its free-flowing neighbors. For fly-angling purposes, we'll focus on Sugar Creek and Big Walnut Creek, which complement each other as perfectly as any two rivers you'll ever encounter.

Sugar Creek rises in Tipton County, north of Indianapolis. Along its 90-mile course Sugar Creek passes through Crawfordsville as well as Shades and Turkey Run State Parks. Sugar Creek, the larger of the two streams, feeds directly into the Wabash River near the small town of Montezuma.

Big Walnut Creek is located in the upper reaches of a much larger river system. It rises in Boone County, northwest of Indianapolis, and flows for about 50 miles to its mouth on the Eel River. The Eel is a tributary of the White River, which eventually feeds into the Wabash more than 100 miles below Sugar Creek's mouth. Big Walnut tends to rise and fall more quickly than big, powerful Sugar Creek, which absorbs moderate rainfall but becomes very dangerous when running high.

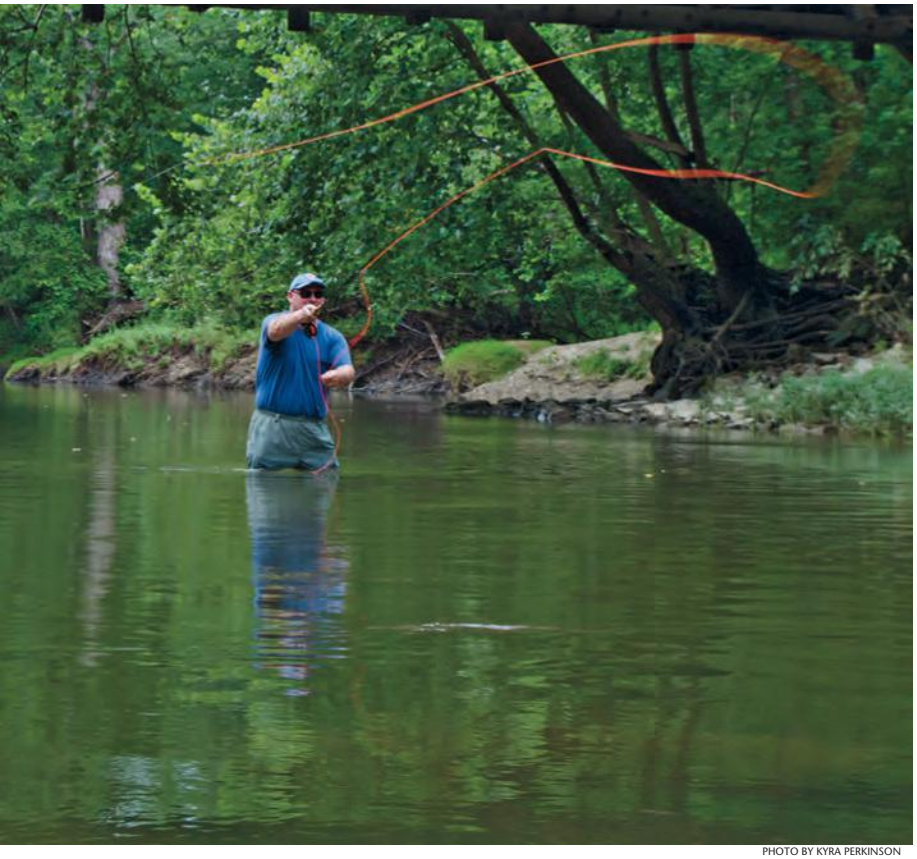


PHOTO BY KYRA PERKINSON

Look for deep, slow-moving water beneath covered bridges. This hole at Dunbar Covered Bridge in Greencastle yielded several bright sunfish on top-water bugs (above). Scrappy smallmouth bass are prized throughout Covered Bridge Country. Handle with care, and remember: let them go and let them grow (left).

An hour's drive from any spot on either river will put you in a separate watershed with different conditions. It's possible to have one river blown out while the other is ideal, and that's the real beauty of fly fishing in Covered Bridge Country. We last visited in June 2017, during a brief respite from a very rainy spring. Sugar Creek was on the verge of being too high, with murky water and powerful currents leading to uncomfortable wading and difficult fishing. A quick drive to Greencastle revealed postcard-perfect conditions on Big Walnut.

Many covered bridges in the area have gravel turnouts or parking lots that provide river access. Keep in mind that most of the bridges are near private property. Indiana's wading laws are fairly liberal, but be sure to respect NO TRESPASSING signs and stay below the high-water marks when wading. Private landowners can limit access to streams that flow through their property, but I've never had a bad run-in with a property owner in the hundreds of times I've fished the area.

The uppermost covered bridge on Sugar

PHOTO BY KYRA PERKINSON

Approach covered bridges with caution, as they have only one lane. Most of the covered bridges in west-central Indiana have adjacent turnouts or parking lots for access (above).

Creek is Darlington Bridge, northeast of Crawfordsville. A gravel parking lot at Darlington serves as a popular launch site for canoe and float tube trips in the summer. You can also access Sugar Creek at the city park on the south bank at Lafayette Avenue in Crawfordsville. There is a dam above the park, so be careful if you're floating down from Darlington. Below Crawfordsville are Shades and Turkey Run State Parks. Deer's Mill Covered Bridge is just off State Route 234 near Shades State Park. The bridge is bypassed now and the site is home to Clements Canoe and Outdoor Center, where you can rent a canoe to float down through the parks. Deer's Mill isn't the best place to fly fish on foot because the canoe traffic can be heavy, especially in the summer.

Shades State Park is a great place to fish on foot, but you must hike down any of several trails leading to Sugar Creek, where high bluffs overlook long gravel bars and rocky runs that are begging for a fly angler's attentions. Turkey Run State Park is located just a few miles below Shades on Sugar Creek. The Narrows Covered Bridge marks Sugar Creek's entrance to Turkey Run. A public canoe launch is located on Henley Road just above the bridge. Don't try to wade in this area—The Narrows are so called because the river runs through a tight canyon here, creating very deep holes and powerful currents.

You can access Sugar Creek within Turkey Run by following the trails, though the river is generally too deep to wade throughout the park. That said, I've caught some nice smallmouth by simply standing on the extensive gravel bars and swinging streamers through deep runs.

Three more covered bridges are located below Turkey Run. Cox Ford Covered Bridge and Jackson Bridge are both accessible, but the water is usually too deep to wade except in low-water conditions. West Union Bridge is the last bridge on Sugar Creek, located on Tow Path Road about 5 miles north of Montezuma. A large gravel parking lot is located at West Union Bridge, and you can access the river by following a well-worn trail. Sugar Creek is broad and sandy by this point. Wading at West Union is easy under normal conditions, and you'll find a variety of fish holding along the huge sandbars and rocky banks.

To access Big Walnut Creek, park in the gravel path near the US Highway 36 bridge just east of Bainbridge. There are three covered bridges on Big Walnut Creek in this area. Pine Bluff, Rolling Stone, and Bakers Camp bridges have limited parking and are close to Big Walnut and Hall Woods Nature Preserves. The nature preserves are nice for hiking, especially Big Walnut Nature Preserve, but fishing is off-limits. Nevertheless, you can still hit some nice, rocky sections of the river by accessing it from Highway 36.

Around Greencastle, several covered bridges provide good river access. Dunbar and Oakalla Covered Bridges have gravel turnouts and easy access to productive water. Houck Covered Bridge has been bypassed by County Road 500 West; a large paved parking lot at the covered bridge allows access to the river. Huffman Covered Bridge is the last covered bridge on Big Walnut before the Eel River. There is a gravel turnout and limited access at Huffman Bridge, with private property adjacent to the bridge.

Tackle and Tactics

A 4- or 5-weight fly rod with a weight-forward floating fly line is all you need to fish Big Walnut and Sugar Creeks.

Bass Allure

PHOTO BY KYRA PERKINSON

Hook:	Streamer hook, sizes 2–8
Thread:	Red, 210-denier
Weight:	Non-lead wire, 15 to 20 wraps
Tail:	Red Krystal Flash
Body:	Yellow or white chenille
Wing:	Marabou and rubber legs
Head:	Red

A sinking or sinking-tip line is handy for the deeper sections of Sugar Creek. I usually just add some weight to the leader and sink my floating line when I find deep, swift water, but either way you should be ready to fish all levels of the water column, as conditions can vary greatly depending on which river you're fishing and how much rain has fallen recently.

Hard-body bass bugs, foam gurglers, and deer-hair bugs all work well for smallmouth bass—assuming you cast close to cover, retrieve patiently, and above all keep your fly on the water. Both white and yellow streamers are great, along with the old standby Woolly Buggers in black, brown, or olive. Be sure to include a selection of heavily weighted bottom-dredging streamers that more or less imitate crayfish and sculpins.

Primary locations for smallmouth bass are deep runs, rocky drop-offs, and woody cover. Both rivers are rife with bass-holding structure and cover. Try to picture where you would hide if you were a bass, and concentrate on these spots. Make two or three presentations to likely lies and then move on to the next.

Panfish in rivers tend to hang out in calm pools, along weedy banks, and around fallen trees. For calm water, think obvious spots like pools, sloughs, and side channels, as well as not so obvious features like current seams, inside river bends, and pocket water below rocks, bridge pilings, and other obstructions.

Bring the Family

There's plenty to do in Covered Bridge Country that doesn't involve fishing. Of course, fans of covered bridges will be in seventh heaven. The bridges are popular among painters, photographers, history buffs, and sightseers.

Turkey Run State Park is one of the most popular parks in Indiana, with miles of trails snaking through rough sandstone cliffs and hemlock forests. Turkey Run has a modern campground if you like camping, as well as an inn and restaurant if you don't. Shades State Park isn't as popular as Turkey Run, but is just as much fun. Geology is the main attraction at Shades, with enough rocky formations and rugged trails to wear out the hardiest hikers. There is no inn or restaurant at Shades Park, but there are campsites for tent campers and small RVs.

Covered bridges famously warn travelers to "cross this bridge at a walk" (speeding through a bridge may damage the structure or cause a crash). That's good advice for all who visit Covered Bridge Country. Wading the cool water, surrounded by the summer smells of fields and farms, while car wheels crunch along a gravel road, is enough to call anyone back to simpler times. Slow down and enjoy your time in Indiana's Covered Bridge Country.

Author of The American Angler Guide to Warmwater Fly Fishing, *Nathan Perkinson is a regular contributor to* Eastern Fly Fishing *magazine.*

Covered Bridge Country NOTEBOOK

When: Mid-April–early November

Where: West-central IN.

Access: Both wade-fishing and float-fishing opportunities are available, with access to the creeks at covered bridges throughout the area and at Shades and Turkey Run State Parks.

Headquarters: Greencastle, IN. *Information:* www.goputnam.com; Turkey Run State Park and Shades State Park, www.in.gov/dnr.

Appropriate gear: 4- to 5-wt. rods, floating and sinking-tip/sinking lines, 9- to 12-ft. leaders, fluorocarbon tippets.

Useful flies: *Bass:* Poppers, sliders, diving bugs, gurglers, Krystal Buggers, Bass Allure, Zonkers, Shenk's Streamer, Woolly Buggers, Clouser Minnows, Near 'Nuff Crayfish, Holschlag Hackle Flies, Murray's Hellgrammite, Incredible Sculp. *Panfish:* Assorted dry flies, nymphs, and wet flies in sizes 10 through 14; cork poppers and small gurglers; rubber-legged Bream Killers, Smashed Damsel.

Necessary accessories: Polarized sunglasses, sunscreen, insect repellent, drinking water; shorts or wading pants and wading boots are fine for summer; waders in early spring and late fall.

Nonresident license: $9/1 day, $20/7 days, $35/annual. *Nonresident Indiana State Park access fee:* $9/1 day (at a single park), $70/annual (good for all parks).

Fly shops/guides/canoe rental: Wildcat Creek Outfitters, (317) 733-3014, www.wcofishing.com; FlyMasters of Indianapolis, (317) 570-9811, www.flymasters.com; Clements Canoes, (765) 435-2070, www.clementscanoes.com.

Books/maps: *The American Angler Guide to Warmwater Fly Fishing* by Nathan Perkinson; *Smallmouth Fly Fishing* by Tim Holschlag. *Indiana Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme.

West Fork Kickapoo River, WI

The Heart of the Driftless Area

By Matthew Reilly

The tip of my 4-weight flexed like a wavering shoot of tall grass against the light air of an expiring Wisconsin summer evening, and a dense foam hopper landed with a splat a few inches from the bank of a meadow creek. The sound of the faux insect in peril caught the attention of a red-winged blackbird, perched high amid a sea of grass and wildflowers, and the two of us tracked its progress as it bobbed down a shallow riffle, tantalizingly close to the long, green blades of prairie grass and the shadows and undercut banks they guarded.

When the hopper bobbed too close to the shadows, a pocket opened in the surface of the river, and, with a flick of water, the fly disappeared. I raised my rod tip and pulled a spunky brown trout from his lair in the pristine spring waters in the heart of Wisconsin's Driftless Area.

This scene, as it transpired on the West Fork Kickapoo River, is a common one throughout the Driftless Area, and one of dozens I was blessed to be a part of that blissful evening. The river itself is just one of a dizzying array of healthy wild-trout streams that lace the region. Nevertheless, centrally located in the ancient, agricultural landscape of southwestern Wisconsin, the West Fork Kickapoo River is widely regarded as one of the greatest trout streams in the Midwest—a natural starting point for anglers traveling to the region—and a shining example of watershed-level conservation success amid the depressing sea of declining-stream-quality stories that have taken root across the country.

ALL PHOTOS BY MATT REILLY

Native brook trout have been steadily returning to the West Fork as a direct result of stream restoration efforts that began in the 1990s. Today, the ratio of brown trout to brook trout is rapidly equalizing (above). Springs keep the West Fork Kickapoo River cool throughout the summer months, when trout are eager to rise for grasshoppers and beetles along the banks. With plenty of public access and over 250 river miles, even if the West Fork is crowded, it's easy to find solitude (right).

Making a Trout Eden

The Driftless Area is a 24,000-square-mile region situated in the upper Mississippi River valley that sprawls across the borders of four states, touching large chunks of southwestern Wisconsin and southeastern Minnesota, and small slivers of northeastern Iowa and northwestern Illinois. It is so dubbed because of the relative lack of glacial striation and "drift"—silt and stone transported by moving glaciers—deposited during the last ice age, called the late Wisconsinan. Though the ice sheet encroached on the region, and surrounded it to the north, east, and west at the last glacial maximum, the Driftless Area escaped the glacial scouring that flattened and carved the surrounding country.

The Driftless Area instead exhibits a more time-worn topography, featuring rolling hills and impressive coulees that seem to rise from nowhere. During the Paleozoic era, a shallow seabed built up the original terrain as sediment deposits. Once the region lifted out of the sea hundreds of millions of years ago, streams began down-cutting, eroding the land into a rugged network of ridges and valleys. When the glaciers began retreating from the surrounding area about 18,000 years ago, a large glacial lake formed just northeast of the Driftless Area, and when it surmounted its constraints, massive floods carved out major river valleys and further eroded the Driftless Area into what it is today.

Peculiar and captivating to visitors, the coulees that are particularly prominent in the west-central Wisconsin counties of La Crosse, Vernon, and Monroe—often referred to as the "Coulee Region"—are children of these erosion events. Separated by steep-sided valleys, the narrow ridgetops of the coulees are capped with erosion-resistant dolomite, which protects the easily eroded sandstone and limestone beneath. Long ago, flowing water cut down through the soft sandstone and limestone, creating fertile meadows that are ideal for farming and leaving the dolomite-crowned ridges towering over the rest.

Valleys of sandstone and limestone are the hallmark of the greater Driftless Area, and are responsible for its fantastic and plentiful fishing opportunities. Precipitation that meets the ground quickly percolates into the groundwater through the karst geology, and then reemerges at the base of bluffs and coulees as springs—the water cooled to about 45 degrees, roughly the temperature of the ground they flow out of.

This translates into a wealth of fertile spring creeks ideal for supporting native and wild trout, insects, and crustaceans. More than 80 trout streams offer public access in Wisconsin's share of the Driftless Area. Vernon County alone holds 65 streams totaling over 250 miles. Here, in the heart of coulee country, is where the West Fork Kickapoo runs.

The Nation's First Watershed Project

To the ecologically minded, the West Fork, often hidden by the towering stalks of warm-season grasses as it wanders through farmland, is a striking example of responsible watershed management. Native wildflowers, grasses, and forbs form a thick riparian buffer between working land and running water. No cattle wallow in the cool water, and trout abound. But it wasn't always this way.

After settling the area in the mid-1800s, European colonists took just 70 years to farm the fertile valleys of southwestern Wisconsin into ecological sterility. They clear-cut the coulees and ridges in order to graze cattle and cultivate straight-rowed crops. Without riparian buffers and stable soils to support a healthy relationship between creek and land, erosion was harsh, and floods were common. The creeks became channelized, cut deep gullies, and warmed to a point unsuitable for the native trout.

In the 1920s, as the Dust Bowl ravaged the prairie states, the soil became thin and nutrient deficient. In a timely essay about soil health, the great American conservationist Aldo Leopold called the Coon Valley, just west

of the West Fork Kickapoo, "one of the thousand farm communities which, through the abuse of its originally rich soil, has not only filled the national dinner pail, but has created the Mississippi flood problem, the navigation problem, the overproduction problem, and the problem of its own future continuity."

Farmers began to give up and leave.

In 1933, following Franklin Roosevelt's election, Hugh Hammond Bennett, a strong advocate for soil conservation in Wisconsin's Driftless Area throughout the 1920s, was made chief of the New Deal–sponsored Soil Conservation Service (SCS). Later that year, the 92,000-acre Coon Valley became the site of a bold new conservation project—the first watershed-scale restoration project ever attempted in the New World. In 1934, the newly created Civilian Conservation Corps brought hundreds of young men to Driftless farms to assist SCS technicians in implementing restoration efforts.

With the reclamation of the land, a contour farming technique developed by the SCS's erosion-prevention plan took over the Driftless landscape, and corn, hay, and dairy came to dominate the agricultural scene, but the native fisheries were far from restored.

"A lot of the streams back then were not self-sustaining trout fisheries," explains Jeff Hastings, project manager for Trout Unlimited's Driftless Area Restoration Effort (DARE). "The '85 farm bill did a lot for our streams. Things really got much better."

When Ronald Reagan signed the 1985 farm bill, it pulled the primitive Conservation Reserve Program into modernity. The revamped policy paid farmers to take environmentally sensitive land out of production and stabilize it with resource-preserving native vegetation and offered a 50 percent cost-share incentive to fund the conversion. Quickly, thousands of acres of coulees planted in corn were replaced with perennial crops, and vegetation on the stripped ridgetops was allowed to grow back.

In the 1990s, positive change was evident, prompting a surge in stream-specific conservation projects. The West Fork Sportsmans Club, a conservation club based in the town of Avalanche along the West Fork's middle reaches, began conducting some stream revitalization projects, but it had limited resources. The farm bill provided funding for larger projects, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) began conducting its own work.

Still, the groups restoring streams in the Driftless Area lacked resources. Trout Unlimited picked up the slack by establishing DARE in 2006. "There was so much work to be done, and we would try to support DNR habitat efforts, but we needed to pick up the pace," says Hastings. "There are over 5,000 miles of stream in the Driftless Area, and we had the idea that we could bring in our chapters and raise more money for stream restoration. The idea was to build the capacity of both our chapters and the other groups that were doing work on the streams."

Today, the partnership represented by DARE, the DNR, and other conservation groups works with private landowners to restore and protect up to 20 miles of river per year throughout the four-state region—more than any one entity could have achieved alone.

The West Fork, specifically, has improved greatly and served as a catalyst for other area projects. "The main thing lacking in that stream was overhead cover. There wasn't much place for fish to hide," says Hastings. "By creating deep holes and increasing bank height, you increase the carrying capacity. It's not uncommon to see almost a tenfold increase in trout populations in a stream after a project is completed. This makes it very easy for an angler to come to the area and catch fish. There's so much water here that anglers can disperse and find their own spot to fish."

Healthier fisheries translate into better fishing, which

The Driftless Area is defined by karst geology; its unique topography was left unscoured by the retreat of the glaciers following the last glacial maximum. Precipitation quickly soaks into underground aquifers, is cooled to the temperature of the earth, and reemerges as springs that fill hundreds of trout streams.

translates into increased tourism dollars and a sustainable source of income for the local economy. An economic-impact study conducted in the 1990s revealed that cold-water fisheries brought $1.3 million annually to Vernon County. The same study, reevaluated in 2016, showed a total Driftless Area economic value of $1.6 billion, and Vernon County's yield increased to $1.6 million. The quaint town of Viroqua, the seat of Vernon County, is also benefiting from the wealth provided by an outstanding natural resource, which supports the excellent shopping and dining attractions—like the Driftless Café downtown—that make the town a Midwestern destination, even among nonanglers.

In other words, the restoration of the Driftless Area streams has proven to be a good move for both Mother Nature and local economies.

Stomper

Hook:	TMC 3761, sizes 6–18
Thread:	Black UTC, 70-denier
Tail:	Moose body hair
Overbody:	2 layers of foam
Underbody:	Holographic Flashabou
Wing:	Dun or white McFlylon
Hackle:	Grizzly
Legs:	Fine, barred round rubber legs

A DIY Fishery

Regarded as one of the best trout streams in the Midwest, the West Fork Kickapoo has excellent access and sports a robust population of trout, making it a prime destination for the do-it-yourself traveling angler.

Mat Wagner, co-owner of the Driftless Angler in downtown Viroqua and a native of Michigan, fell in love with the area for those exact reasons. "The area reminded me of fishing creeks as a kid, and some of the high-elevation cutthroat creeks in New Mexico," he recalls. "The fishery here is readily accessible, with plenty of public land and more water than you can fish in a lifetime."

All trout anglers purchasing a fishing license in Wisconsin are required to tack on a $10 trout stamp, which goes directly to a fund earmarked for restoring habitat and providing public access to anglers via conservation easements that cover both banks. The West Fork abounds with roadside access points, found at bridges or in places where the creek meanders close to the road. Get in at one of these public access points, and as long as you keep your feet wet, you're on public property.

Included in *Trout Unlimited's America's 100 Best Trout Streams* by John Ross, the West Fork is considered a Class 1 trout stream by the DNR. Springs maintain a relatively consistent water temperature and level year-round, and support sufficient natural reproduction to sustain strong populations of wild brown trout and native brook trout that are eager to take a fly. The majority of these fish are 8 to 12 inches long—"hot dog sized," as Wagner says. "There are some really big fish out here, too," he points out. However, these fish are rare, and mostly eat at night.

Anglers can take on just about any Driftless Area creek with a 4-weight rod. "The best-selling rod in the shop is an 8-foot 4-weight," confirms Wagner. "It tends to do everything well in the Driftless Area."

Lighter rods, when the circumstances allow, and if you are looking for an added challenge, can be fun tools. A floating line will cover just about every fishing scenario encountered on these small waters, when paired with a fly to match the food source for the given season.

Pink Squirrel

Hook:	Scud hook, sizes 12–18
Thread:	Gray UNI-Thread
Bead:	1/8-in. fluorescent pink tungsten bead at midshank
Body:	Gray dubbing
Tail:	Tan hackle fibers
Back:	1/8-in. clear scud back
Rib:	Black wire

The season starts promptly on the second Saturday in January. The weather in Vernon County on that date is often more conducive to sipping whiskey, tying bugs, and dreaming of spring, but good fishing can be found. Springs keep the water temperature relatively warm, but it still pays dividends to seek the warmest water. "Fish midday, when water temperatures are the warmest, and hope for some hatches when the sun is high in the sky," advises Wagner. "From January to mid-March, this typically means all midges and winter stones."

Choosing to fish after a few days of warming weather

can help put the odds further in your favor. As things warm up in spring and water temperatures achieve a stable victory over the 50-degree mark, the West Fork begins to see some of its first major hatches of the year. "Caddis, olives, and craneflies are the foods of choice on the surface," says Wagner. "We also start to fish small terrestrials in the late spring."

This period, from mid-April to mid-June, is what Wagner calls "peak season" in the Driftless Area. "You can fish from 9 to 5 and have great fishing all day," he says.

Dry-dropper rigs can be very productive on all streams in the Driftless Area, using imitations of the ever-present scud and traditional beadhead nymph patterns, like the locally famous Pink Squirrel.

Summer fishing on the West Fork perhaps best matches the images conjured up in the minds of most anglers when they think of spring creek fishing, but a slight change in approach can make the difference between marginal fishing and great fishing. Grasses begin to overgrow the banks and dangle in the water. The terrestrials that inhabit the surrounding meadows are hatching and growing into maturity at the peak of this season, and the trout feed heavily on them. "We don't have many hatches after about June 15," says Wagner. "We have a ton of terrestrials."

Trico hatches can happen in the morning hours, and evenings sometimes see hatches of pale Sulphur mayflies. The often-clear water in the West Fork, combined with the high sun and the crepuscular nature of the summertime hatches, makes dawn and dusk the best times to fish. "When we fish and guide in the summertime, we fish the peak hours of 5 to 9," says Wagner.

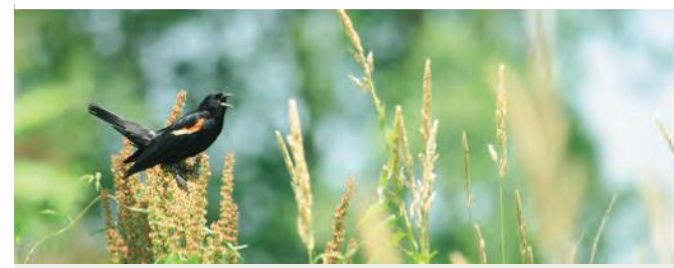
In the fall, before the close of the season on October 15, Wagner reverts to the spring pattern of fishing from 9 to 5. Some terrestrial fishing is still viable, and Blue-Winged Olives are still around.

Streamer fishing can be productive in the fall, as both of the trout species that fin the West Fork are fall spawners and will be prespawn. Leeches are plentiful in the river, so patterns like Woolly Buggers and hair leeches are must-haves.

There is arguably no better introduction to southwestern Wisconsin's Driftless Area than the West Fork Kickapoo River, with its wily trout, beautifully unique and ecologically significant scenery, and quaint community. But don't stop there. The West Fork is only one name on a list of dozens of fertile spring creeks in the heart of the trout angler's paradise that is the Driftless Area.

Matt Reilly, www.mattreillyflyfishing.com, is an award-winning freelance writer, outdoor columnist, and fly-fishing guide based in southwest Virginia.

West Fork Kickapoo River NOTEBOOK



When: First Saturday in January–Oct. 15.

Where: Southwest WI, near Viroqua.

Access: Several public access points at official DNR lots, road turnouts, and bridges. If you'd like to fish a stretch of water with questionable access, request permission from a landowner. Most are very friendly and accommodating.

Headquarters: Viroqua and Westby. Lodging: Coulee Cabins, (608) 452-3042, www.couleecabins.com; Nature Nooks Retreat, (608) 637-3928, www.naturenooksretreat.com. *Information:* Viroqua Tourism, (608) 637-2575, www.viroqua-wisconsin.com/viroqua-tourism; Westby Area Chamber of Commerce, (608) 634-4011, www.westbywi.com; Driftless Wisconsin, (608) 326-6658, www.driftlesswisconsin.com.

Appropriate gear: 8- to 9-ft., 3- to 4-wt. rods; floating line.

Useful fly patterns: Moorish Hopper, Hi-Vis Foam Beetle, Stomper, mouse flies, Elk Hair Caddis, Coulee Caddis, Pink Squirrel, Coulee Crane Fly, Coulee Scud, Hare's Ear Nymph, Pheasant Tail Nymph, olive soft hackle, Root River Special, Woolly Buggers.

Necessary accessories: Hip or chest waders, polarized sunglasses, area map, headlamp.

Nonresident license: $10/1 day (can be used to upgrade to annual license), $24/4 days, $28/15 days, $50/annual; $10 inland trout stamp required.

Fly shops/guides: *Viroqua*: The Driftless Angler, (608) 637-8779, www.driftlessangler.com. Silver Doctor Fly Fishing, (608) 295-3474, www.silverdoctor.net.

Books/maps: *Exploring Wisconsin Trout Streams* by Steve Born, Jeff Mayers, Andy Morton, and Bill Sonzogni; *Flyfisher's Guide to Wisconsin & Iowa* by John Motoviloff; *Wisconsin and Minnesota Trout Streams—A Fly-Angler's Guide* by Jim Humphrey and Bill Shogren; *Trout Unlimited's Guide to America's 100 Best Trout Streams* by John Ross; *Fly Fishing Midwestern Spring Creeks* by Ross A. Mueller. *Wisconsin Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme; Stream Map USA, (215) 491-4223, www.StreamMapUSA.com.

Pine Creek Watershed, PA

Top to Bottom

By Tom Gilmore

I don't know how many of Pennsylvania's trout streams I have fished during my lifetime, but having recently published *Flyfisher's Guide to Pennsylvania*, in which I cover some 160 waters, the number has to be north of that. With so many options, choosing a favorite stream is almost impossible for me. In an effort to make the task easier, I like to categorize the state's rivers and creeks into five specific types. It's easier to choose my favorites that way: I have a favorite limestone spring creek, a favorite tailwater trout stream, a favorite native brook trout stream, and a favorite wild brown trout stream, but to pry those answers out of me, you'll have to buy me a couple of beers.

The fifth category, however, is large freestone streams. My favorite in this genre is no secret: it is Pine Creek, also known as Big Pine Creek. From humble beginnings near the village of Brookland, Pine Creek flows 87 miles to the West Branch Susquehanna River in the town of Jersey Shore, carving its way through the rugged mountains of Potter, Tioga, and Lycoming Counties. The creek's 1,000-acre watershed is largely forested, and over half of the watershed is in public ownership, which includes seven state game lands, six state parks, and four state forests. Few places in the state can match the Pine Creek watershed's scenic beauty, diverse wildlife, and wilderness character, not to mention the profuse hatches and abundant trout, including native fish, wild trout, holdovers, and freshly stocked trout. Pine Creek is a great stream in its own right, and its watershed has 34 tributaries, which the state has categorized as Class A, Pennsylvania's highest wild trout stream classification.

My love affair with Pine Creek started in the late 1970s when my local fishing club, the Main Line Fly-Tyers, launched its annual "Drake Week" outing to Pine Creek in late May. During late-May evenings you are likely to run into blizzard hatches of Green, Brown, and Slate Drakes, as well as Sulphurs and various caddisflies. After a few years of fishing Pine with the club, I added my own trip to Pine in late April, which I dubbed the "Early Gray" weekend, during which we would fish over Quill Gordon, Blue Quill, and Hendrickson hatches.

For me, the beauty of fishing the Pine Creek watershed is the diversity of opportunities, which enables you to enjoy good fishing somewhere in the drainage in almost any water conditions. You can fish Pine's headwaters, which offer 8.5 miles of Class A native brook and wild brown trout water, the scenic and rugged Pine Creek Gorge, or the normally easy-to-wade dry-fly pools between Cedar Run and Waterville. You can also explore one of Pine Creek's many tributaries, which provide more than 150 miles of Class A wild trout water; my favorites are Lyman Run, West Branch Pine, Cedar Run, Slate Run, and Little Pine Creek.

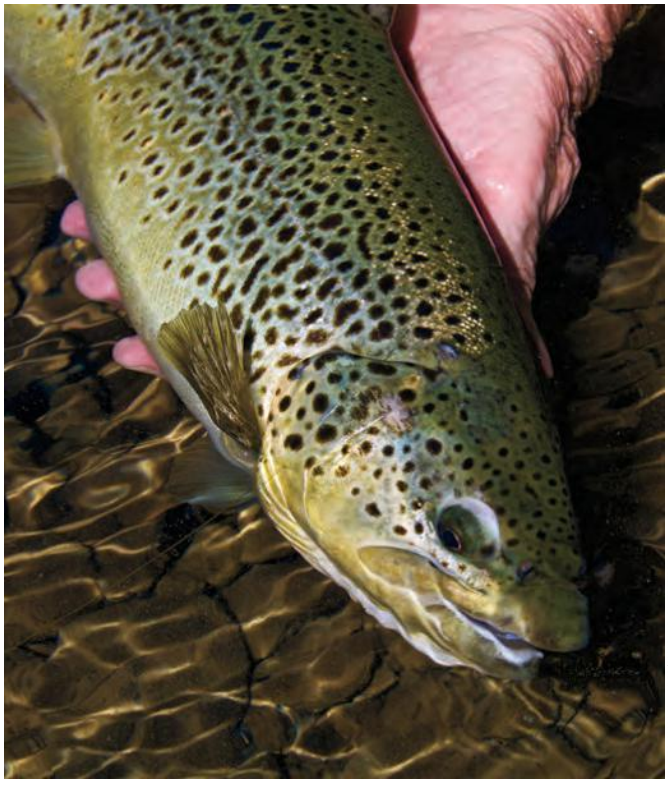


PHOTO BY RICK NYLES/SKY BLUE OUTFITTERS

Top to Bottom

Those 8.5 miles of Class A trout water start at Pine Creek's modest beginnings near Brookland, just north of scenic US Highway 6, where the stream is barely more than a trickle. As it flows toward West Pike, the creek is fueled by numerous cold-water tributaries, many of them first-rate trout streams. By the time Pine Creek reaches West Pike, it has grown to a medium-size trout stream, still the domain of wild trout, with browns becoming more prolific than brookies.

The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) adds stocked trout to the mix near West Pike, but wild browns remain common downstream to Galeton. In Galeton, Pine Creek gets significant infusions of cold water from two of my favorite Pine Creek tributaries, Lyman Run and the West Branch Pine Creek. Both streams are Class A wild trout streams. The PFBC stocks fish into about 55 miles of Pine Creek, with only a few gaps between West Pike and Waterville.

Good fishing lasts all summer on upper Pine Creek between Galeton and Ansonia, and while the PFBC

PHOTO BY TOM GILMORE

Anglers fish the head of one of Pine Creek's beautiful pools, which can be accessed in the Clark Farm Access Area off SR 414. This section can be quite busy during spring weekends, but a short walk in either direction gives you more solitude (above). This colorful 20-inch brown trout was most likely raised in a local cold-water pond, then purchased and stocked by the Slate Run Tackle Shop's Brown Trout Club (right).

stocks virtually all of Pine Creek, the Upper Pine Creek Sportsmen's Association (UPCSA) is really responsible for the productive summer fishery in this section. The association's stocked trout supplement the state's earlier spring plantings. Fred Hollar, president of the UPCSA, says that in recent years the association has been stocking more than 3,000 trout annually, including more than 100 18- to 26-inch fish each year.

Pine Creek Gorge

Downstream from Galeton, at the town of Ansonia, Pine Creek makes an abrupt 90-degree turn and heads south through the beautiful wilderness of the Pine Creek Gorge, more famously known as the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Office of Travel and Tourism boasts, "The other Grand Canyon may be deeper, but come autumn, it can't match the spectacular explosion of color that lines the walls of Pine Creek Gorge."

Some 47 miles long and up to 1,450 feet deep, the gorge was recognized for its unique character in 1968, when 12 miles of the canyon were designated a National Natural Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior, and in 1993 the canyon became a State Park Natural Area, which will protect it in a natural state for future generations. The gorge is one of the last and most extensive wilderness regions between the cities of Chicago and New York.

While the gorge harbors trout and smallmouth bass, it is too physically challenging for this senior citizen. I prefer to leave the gorge to hikers, campers, bikers, and white-water rafters, while I enjoy the panoramic views available in Leonard Harrison State Park on the east rim or Colton Point State Park on the west rim. Both parks offer breathtaking views.

Pine Creek exits the gorge in the village of Blackwell, about 5 miles north of the village of Cedar Run, and from here south to the village of Waterville, the creek is easily accessible from State Route 414, which closely follows the creek and the Pine Creek Trail.

In Blackwell, Pine Creek is joined by Babb Creek, which was once so heavily polluted with acid mine drainage that it was pretty much devoid of life, and the pollution negatively affected aquatic life downstream through Pine Creek. But thanks to the cooperative efforts of concerned citizens, nonprofit groups, and state and federal agencies, the Babb Creek watershed has been improved to the point that the aquatic life is rebounding, and today Babb Creek has native brook trout and wild brown trout. The revitalized stream has benefited Pine Creek from Blackwell downstream to Waterville, where the stream's insect hatches are now more diverse and prolific than at any time in recent memory.

Heart and Soul

For me, the heart and soul of the Pine Creek watershed is the section of Pine Creek from Cedar Run downstream past Slate Run to the end of the catch-and-release/all-tackle (CRAT) section at the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Clark Farm Access Area. This stretch has many outstanding qualities: it is characterized by long, easy-to-wade dry-fly pools, where tremendous hatches occur from late March into late June, and access is excellent via SR 414 and the Pine Creek Trail.

Most of the trout in this reach are stocked fish from PFBC, but wild trout also persist here, often residing near the mouths of feeder streams. Because the former 1.1 miles of delayed-harvest/artificial-lure-only water proved so popular with anglers, the PFBC recently increased this

management zone to nearly 3 miles in length and changed the designation to catch-and-release/all-tackle. This stretch now runs from the confluence of Slate Run downstream to the confluence of Bonnell Run at the DCNR Clark Farm Access Area. Under CRAT regulations, anglers can use artificial lures, flies, or bait, but all trout must be released.

The CRAT section gets a bonus stocking from the Slate Run Brown Trout Club. The club is supported by donations and is run out of the Slate Run Tackle Shop. Annually, the club stocks about $18,000 worth of trout. Most fish run 14 to 15 inches long, but among them are quite a few 20- to 30-inch fish. The club purchases the trout from two suppliers that raise them in cold-water earthen ponds. According to club members, these trout are of exceptional quality. "These fish look absolutely like wild trout you might find in a spring creek or a western river," says Tom Finkbiner, owner of Slate Run Tackle Shop. Having caught a few of them, I can attest to the accuracy of that assessment. Finkbiner says further that, with the addition of these stocked fish, the stream offers a "world-class fishing experience, giving anglers the opportunity to catch large trout on public water in a gorgeous setting."

For me, the great thing about the Slate Run and Cedar Run sections of Pine Creek is that if the water level in Pine is not conducive to fishing, or if you want to fish for wild trout in solitude, you can explore these outstanding tributaries. I like to fish the more remote sections of Slate Run or Cedar Run from midday into early evening, and then, as the sun begins to set and the light begins to fade in the small gorges where these streams flow, I go down to Pine Creek and catch the tail end of one of its great hatches or spinner falls.

Amenities and services are nearby for anglers fishing Pine Creek's CRAT section, including two general stores, a tackle shop, a bed-and-breakfast, hotel, bar, campground, and gas station. If there is a downside to fishing the CRAT section, it comes in the form of crowds that sometimes descend on these waters. But that's hardly surprising considering the easy access, ample parking, great hatches, magnificent scenery, and the opportunity to fish for big trout. I find that if you walk for a few minutes either up- or downstream from a parking area on Pine, the fishing pressure thins substantially. One evening last June, during the Green Drake hatch, my angling partner, Joe Darcy, and I pulled into the uppermost access point in the special-regulation section, and about a dozen anglers were in the adjacent pool. Walking downstream we encountered two anglers in the next large dry-fly pool, but we had the third pool to ourselves except for a few dozen rising trout.

During the heat of summer, the water in this section of Pine Creek can warm into the 70s. During these periods, with the water too warm to be comfortable for trout, you still have more than 150 miles of cold-water Class A tributaries and the waters above Pine Creek Gorge to explore.

Green Drake

PHOTO BY NORTHWEST FLY FISHING

Hook:	Standard dry fly, size 10
Thread:	Olive, size 8/0
Body:	Tan dubbed fur
Rib:	Thin brown floss
Wing:	Wood duck
Hackle:	One each tan, grizzly, light green hackle
Tail:	Bleached tan elk body hair

Aquatic Buffet

The section of Pine Creek from Blackwell to Waterville is big water, flowing through the floor of a wide valley, so it warms before the smaller sheltered streams in the watershed. Hatches on this reach of the creek begin earlier than on most streams in the region, often before the traditional mid-April opening day. Because of that, the PFBC has opened the Keystone Select section on upper Pine and Pine itself from Blackwell to Waterville to year-round fishing.

Pine Creek is a veritable insect factory, with its parade of hatches beginning as early as late February and early March, when you can expect to see Early Black Stoneflies and Blue-Winged Olives. Early April brings Quill Gordons and Blue Quills, followed by Hendricksons and caddisflies. These are followed by March Brown–Gray Fox mayflies; though entomologists classify them as the same species, the mayfly traditionally called Gray Fox by anglers is slightly smaller and paler than the so-called March Brown, so I still carry the traditional Gray Fox dry-fly pattern. During mid-May, look for Sulphurs in the evenings, while caddisflies continue to hatch daily. Later in May, Brown and Slate Drakes hatch in the afternoons and evenings, while BWOs hatch in the mornings.

Around Memorial Day you can expect Green Drakes, followed by Light Cahills in mid-June. These hatches wane during summer, but after the first cold front in the fall, Pine Creek comes alive with hatches of the second generation of Slate Drakes, small BWOs, and large October Caddis.

Recounting these hatches brings to mind countless fond recollections from nearly 50 years of exploring and fishing the Pine Creek watershed. This stream and its tributaries have rewarded me time and again, not only with beautiful trout taking dry flies during epic hatches, but with many wonderful days shared with friends old and new. Spend some time exploring Pine Creek and you're likely to understand my infatuation with one of Pennsylvania's best trout streams.

Tom Gilmore is a Pennsylvania-based freelance writer and photographer, and frequent contributor to Eastern Fly Fishing. *He is the author of* Flyfisher's Guide to Pennsylvania *and* Flyfisher's Guide to Eastern Trophy Tailwaters

Pine Creek Watershed NOTEBOOK

PHOTO BY TOM GILMORE

When: Spring–fall, with mid-April–June being prime for match-the-hatch fishing.

Where: North-central PA, from headwaters near Brookland in Potter County to the junction with Little Pine Creek at Waterville.

Headquarters: Wellsboro, Galeton, Cedar Run, Slate Run, Waterville. *Lodging/camping:* Cedar Run Inn & General Store, (570) 353-6241, www.pavisnet.com/cedarruninn; Pettecote Junction Campground, (570) 353-7183, www.pettecotejunction.com; Hotel Manor, (570) 753-8414, www.hotel-manor.com; Waterville Tavern and Guest House, (570) 753-5970, www.watervilletavern.com.

Access: Walk-and-wade from numerous access points, as well as hike-in fishing from Pine Creek Trail, which is served by numerous parking areas and access sites.

Appropriate gear: 3- to 6 wt. rods, floating lines, 9- to 12-ft. leaders, 3X–5X tippets.

Useful fly patterns: Green Drake, Brown Drake, Slate Drake, Light Cahill, Sulphur patterns, Rusty Spinner, Len Wright Jr. Fluttering Caddis, Hare's Ear Nymph, Prince Nymph, stonefly nymph patterns, Woolly Buggers

Necessary accessories: Polarized sunglasses, waders or wading boots, wading staff, landing net, hat, water bottle, sunscreen, insect repellent, rain gear.

Nonresident license: $26.90/3 days, $34.90/7 days, $52.90/annual, plus $9.90/trout permit.

Fly shops/guides: *Slate Run:* Slate Run Tackle Shop and Wolfe's General Store, (570) 753-8551, www.slaterun.com. *Johnstown:* Wet Fly Waterguides, (814) 322-4755, www.wetflywaterguides.com. *Wellsboro:* Tackle Shack, (570) 724-5138, www.wellsborotackleshack.com; Big Meadows Fly Shop, (570) 724-5261, www.facebook.com/BigMeadowsFlyShop; Pine Creek Outfitters, (570) 724-3003, www.pinecrk.com. *Waterville:* McConnell's Country Store & Fly Shop, (570) 753-8241, www.mcconnellscountrystore.com.

Books/maps: *Flyfisher's Guide to Pennsylvania* by Tom Gilmore; *Keystone Fly Fishing* by Mike Heck, Gary Kell, Len Lichvar, Jay Nichols, Henry Ramsay, Dave Rothrock, Brian Shumaker, Ben Turpin, and Karl Weixlmann. *Pennsylvania Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme; Stream Map USA, (215) 491-4223, www.StreamMapUSA.com.

PHOTO BY MARK HATTER

Forgotten Coast, FL

Summertime Tarpon and Much More

By Nick Carter

We hustled by headlamp through a cloud of mosquitoes down to the shell beach where we'd parked kayaks the night before. A warm breeze greeted us as we stepped from the trees. The buzzing ceased abruptly. It was replaced by the wind and the sound of the black bay slapping against plastic hulls.

The water had risen right up to the boats overnight. With a peak high tide scheduled just after sunrise, the plan was to be in the mouth of a tidal creek to fish the falling tide as it carried the bounty of the marsh into Apalachicola Bay. Anticipation overrode the grumblings of an uneasy stomach. Cold beer had gone down way too easily while shucking oysters the night before, so I rechecked the tackle bag to make sure there was toilet paper.

We loaded rods and gear, pushed off, and paddled out of the sheltered cove. As we rounded the point, headed west along the grass line, the vastness of the 200-square-mile bay opened before us. A stiff wind smacked us right in the face, low chop sloshed over the bow, and we struggled against it for a few minutes before realizing our intended destination was way out of reach.

"Whaddaya want to do?" my brother shouted over the wind.

"Fish!" was my response.

With anchors dragging through the sand to slow our progress, we drifted with the wind as the sun rose, blind-casting toward marsh reeds and hitting creek mouths and docks as we floated past them. It was rough out there, but fun—a new adventure.

The first take was like nothing I'd experienced before. In tea-stained water, you can watch a light-colored Deceiver swim through shallow seagrass for the length of a cast. A silvery-orange flash accompanies the wrist-jarring thump of the hit. Then the briefest of pauses precedes the hook-set, when a redfish streaks off like it was shot from a cannon. Line rips off your lap faster than you can clear it, slicing through the water and kicking up wake.

PHOTO BY NICK CARTER

Sliders, like this (FC)2 Milkshake, are productive wherever there are redfish (above). During summer, tarpon arrive in the waters of the Forgotten Coast, adding to the already robust assortment of game fish available to fly anglers (below). Anglers battle a crevalle jack offshore along the Forgotten Coast. These aggressive predators are among the hardest fighters in Florida waters (left).

In those early days of family vacations to Saint George Island, we likened these redfish to the river-run striped bass back home. The techniques were similar. The fight was more violent. We had no idea what we were doing, yet we caught fish.

In the years since, we've learned a little more about catching fish on this bay, which is separated from the Gulf of Mexico by a string of barrier islands on a sparsely populated stretch of the Florida Panhandle. But the revelations of those early trips bring us back year after year to the Forgotten Coast.

An Embarrassment of Riches

South of Tallahassee, the Forgotten Coast is frequently described as "old Florida." About 130 miles of sparsely developed coastline from Mexico Beach east to Saint Marks offer reprieve from the hubbub of the Panhandle's more established tourist destinations. If your ideal fishing vacation is offshore and includes fine dining, T-shirt shops, bars, go-carts, and bikini girls, Panama City Beach and Destin are calling. If you'd rather stop at a bayside shack, purchase an iced-down box of oysters still dripping bay water, and shuck them yourself, that's what the Forgotten Coast is all about.

PHOTO BY MARK HATTER

Burgess to tarpon years ago, was standing on the casting deck. He wasn't casting. With line stripped out into the decal-littered stripping bucket in front of him, he held his fly—a locally tied Forgotten Coast Fly Company, aka (FC)2, Renegade—in his left hand and his rod in his right. He just watched. We all watched, eyes focused on a large patch of sand off the bow that stood out from the grassy bottom around it.

The inshore fishing is about as good as you'll find anywhere on the continent. Between the beachfronts and the three major bays on the Forgotten Coast, there are miles of marshes and tidal creeks. Vast flats of sand, mud, and grass are a sight-fisher's dream when conditions allow, and since most of it is undeveloped, the fishing pressure is low.

Captain Scott Burgess, of Skinny Situation Charters, fishes it all from his 18-foot skiff, which he can dry-launch anywhere. Burgess is based out of Saint Marks, home of the sprawling rocky-bottomed waters of the Saint Marks Wildlife Refuge on Apalachee Bay, but he trailers his boat wherever the bite is best, whether it's to the oyster bars of vast Apalachicola Bay or the skinny sand and grass flats of Saint Joseph Bay to the west.

Year-round, the primary species he targets are redfish, trout, sheepshead, and flounder. Generally, an 8-weight is enough to handle these fish. A floating line is in order when fishing water that's rarely deeper than your shoulders. Most of the time it is much shallower.

Fall and winter require fly fishers to beef up their tackle and spool on plenty of backing. Burgess recommends a 10-weight when big bull redfish from 35 to 50 inches run the beaches and push in through the cuts and passes to the bays. Summer is when the tripletail and tarpon show up. A 10-weight is the bare minimum for tarpon that average 120 pounds. A 12-weight is probably better suited to the job.

(FC)2 Renegade

PHOTO BY NORTHWEST FLY FISHING

Hook:	Varivas 2600 ST-V, size 2/0
Thread:	Chartreuse Veevus, 140-denier
Gills:	Fire orange craft fur
Anti-fouling loop:	20-lb. Mason Hard Monofilament
Tail:	Chartreuse Pro Sportfisher American opossum cut into 8 mm strips and tied fur-side down
Head:	Purple/chartreuse 3-in. EP craft fur brush
Eyes:	7.5 mm yellow EP plastic eyes

Tarpon

Just after daybreak, we were bobbing in an anchored skiff, looking out over a wide, shallow bay. Burgess sat on the poling platform, smoking a cigar and drinking coffee. Jesse Trevathan, who introduced

We were looking for tarpon cruising the shallows on their annual westward migration along the Gulf Coast. Their massive silver bodies would show clearly, contrasted against the sandy bottom. To a longtime deer hunter, it seemed a lot like sitting in a tree stand and waiting on a big buck.

"They follow paths—the same paths, year after year," said Burgess. "It's based on the topography of the bottom as they move in with the tide."

He had positioned the boat with the bow facing a ridge that rose from 7 feet deep up to 3 feet deep. When tarpon move in, the tops of such ridges and shoals are too shallow for them to cross. The big fish are channeled along the sides of these ridges in search of a path into the shallows where there are pogies, crabs, and other delicacies to feed on.

With the trap set, there was nothing to do but wait and talk. Trevathan said that on the Forgotten Coast the tarpon season begins after the full moon in June and ends by August most years; the fish spawn on the new and full moons of summer, when they evacuate the flats and head offshore. "I've been out here right before the full moon, and I literally saw hundreds of tarpon. They were doing nothing but chasing tail. They were daisy-chaining all over the place," Trevathan said. "I went back on the moon, and they were gone."

The daisy-chaining Trevathan mentioned, in which fish group up and swim in circles nose to tail, is thought by some to be prespawn behavior, a sort of courtship dance. But no spawning takes place during these events. For the most part, scientists don't know why tarpon do what they do. There has been a lot

of speculation on the spawning habits and migrations of these giant fish, but much of it remains a mystery. Bonefish & Tarpon Trust (BTT) is preeminent among the organizations seeking a better understanding of the species. Their goal is to conserve tarpon fisheries for anglers.

There is no definitive data to pattern the movements of tarpon. Scientists don't even know exactly where they spawn. BTT suggests spawning takes place more than 100 miles offshore in depths of 400 feet.

PHOTO BY NICK CARTER

A full-time guide, Scott Burgess jumped at the rare opportunity to put down the push pole and pick up a fly rod.

Trevathan and Burgess both have theories about the movements of these giants in their waters. What they know for sure is tarpon show up each summer on the flats and in the passes of the Forgotten Coast. Clean water is necessary to see them. For fly fishers, seeing them is necessary for presenting the fly. The cast must lead them, but not too much, and the retrieve must intercept the fish at the right angle to incite a strike.

If the fish eats, it takes a hard strip-set to drive the hook into a tarpon's bony mouth. How hard? "As hard as you can," says Burgess. Even if all of that goes according to plan, Burgess admits there's a less than 50 percent chance of actually bringing a large tarpon boat-side. The power and the aerial display of a hooked tarpon are legendary. Sadly, we did not witness them that day.

As the tide turned, the murky water became more dingy. Late in the morning, the call was made to move in search of redfish and clean water deep in the channels of the Saint Marks estuary.

A week later, Burgess sent a text message with an attached photo. It showed a big tarpon, which he estimated to be 135 to 140 pounds, tail-thrashing the water just off the tip of his 12-weight rod, which was broken in half.

"40 min fight with a broken rod… she pulled me 2 miles from my anchor," the text read.

Redfish

While the summertime window for tarpon is a short couple of months, other species are available year-round. Burgess says some of the best fishing of the year is when tourist traffic drops off and redfish traffic ramps up in fall and winter.

It's worth noting that off-season vacation rentals along the Forgotten Coast can be inexpensive. Get a group of fishing buddies together and you'll feel like you've stolen something while relaxing on the porch of a posh beach house in the evenings. Or, if you like to rough it, camping is available for next to nothing at the state parks. Mosquitoes are less of an issue when the weather is cooler, and several state parks, as well as numerous private campgrounds and RV parks, are right on the water or very near boat ramps and public access to the bays.

"Fishing's best in fall and winter, and it doesn't matter how cold it gets," Burgess explains. "Cold water groups them up and pushes them into the creeks and rivers where the water is warm."

Burgess was mainly talking about redfish. In late fall, big bull reds 35 to 50 inches long and heavier than 20 pounds come in from offshore. They run the beaches, school up, and push through the passes into the bays, following pogy schools and seeking out warmer water in the shallows, where they can be effectively targeted with a 10-weight rod.

During the warmer months, scads of younger, smaller redfish roam the bays and backwaters. These are the "slot" reds, which fall within the 18- to 27-inch slot limit for harvest. They are a ton of fun on an 8-weight.

Tripletail

Tripletail are odd-looking fish. Large, rounded anal and dorsal fins positioned far back on their bodies make it look like they have three tails. Their behavior is odd as well, which makes them a fun species to target with a fly.

Looking like brown paper bags set adrift, tripletail are visible resting near the surface with one flank turned to

the sky. They like cover and hang out around crab trap buoys, channel markers, drifting weed mats, or, really, anything floating in the water.

The bays of the Forgotten Coast have seen a surge in tripletail numbers over the last few seasons. Beginning in spring, tripletail congregate around the mouths of the rivers. The bite lasts through the summer and tapers off in early fall.

Burgess calls it "the ultimate sight-fishing game." He runs the crab trap lines, with eyes open for any floating debris along the way. Shrimp and baitfish are attracted to cover, and tripletail post up like another piece of rubbish to let food come to them. They can be spotted free-swimming, too, which is why it's smart to take a closer look at anything floating in the bays.

Burgess says they range in size from 2 pounds all the way up to nearly 30 pounds on the Forgotten Coast. The trick to catching them is to shut down the big motor and ease up to within casting range of the structure or the spotted fish. There are different theories for the cast. Sometimes you can hit a tripletail in the head and it will eat. Other times, allowing the fly to drift with the current into striking range is a better tactic. And sometimes they just won't bite. Tripletail have a frustrating tendency to follow flies without any intention of actually eating them.

When a tripletail does pick up the fly, anglers are in for a treat. In the course of a powerful but short-lived fight, tripletail are likely to go airborne, and there is the ever-present danger of tangling with the structure you so accurately cast close to.

"Tripletail are a lot of fun," Burgess says. "They're awesome."

The Flies

Whether it's tripletail or redfish, dredging out the holes for sea trout or dissecting structure for sheepshead, you need only a few basic fly variations to catch fish on the Forgotten Coast. Tarpon flies fall into their own separate category, but in general all of the game fish eat baitfish, shrimp, and crabs, so carry a broad selection of imitations, along with poppers, gurglers, and spoon flies.

Good weed guards are important in the thick vegetation of the bays, and Kevin Burdette, owner of the Forgotten Coast Fly Company in Apalachicola, warns against blind-casting sinking flies. With all the abrasive oyster beds the region is famous for, casting subsurface flies where you can't see the bottom gets expensive.

On the Forgotten Coast, anglers armed with a well-stocked fly box and a sense of adventure—and with a local guide at the helm to cut down the learning curve—can enjoy saltwater fishing the way it used to be throughout Florida.

Forgotten Coast NOTEBOOK

PHOTO BY NICK CARTER

When: Year-round for redfish, sea trout, and sheepshead; June–July for tarpon; April–September for tripletail.

Where: FL Panhandle, from Mexico Beach east to Saint Marks.

Headquarters: Port Saint Joe, Apalachicola, Carrabelle, Saint Marks. *Information:* Florida's Forgotten Coast, (850) 670-3474, www.floridasforgottencoast.com.

Useful fly patterns: Looper Flies Double Barrel Popper, (FC)2 13-Mile Gurgler, Borski Slider, (FC)2 Milkshake, Dupre Spoon Fly, Rich Waldner Epoxy Spoon Fly, Kwan Shrimp, Chicone Coyote Ugly Shrimp, Tarpon Mouse, (FC)2 Renegade or Renegade DT, Tarpon Bunny, Cockroach, Raghead Crab, (FC)2 Carolinus Killer, Sandbar Flies Sand Flea.

Appropriate gear: 8- to 12-wt. rods, weight-forward floating lines.

Necessary accessories: Polarized sunglasses, sun-protective clothing, sunscreen.

Nonresident license: $17/3 days; $30/7 days; $47/annual.

Fly shops/guides: Forgotten Coast Fly Company, (850) 653-1024, www.forgottencoastflycompany.com; Apalach Outfitters, (850) 653-3474, www.apalachoutfitters.com. Skinny Situation Charters, (850) 544-0712, www.skinnysituationcharters.com; Robinson Brothers Guide Service, (850) 653-8896, www.floridaredfish.com.

Maps: *Florida Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme.

Nick Carter, author of Flyfisher's Guide to North Carolina & Georgia, *is a frequent contributor to* Eastern Fly Fishing *magazine.*

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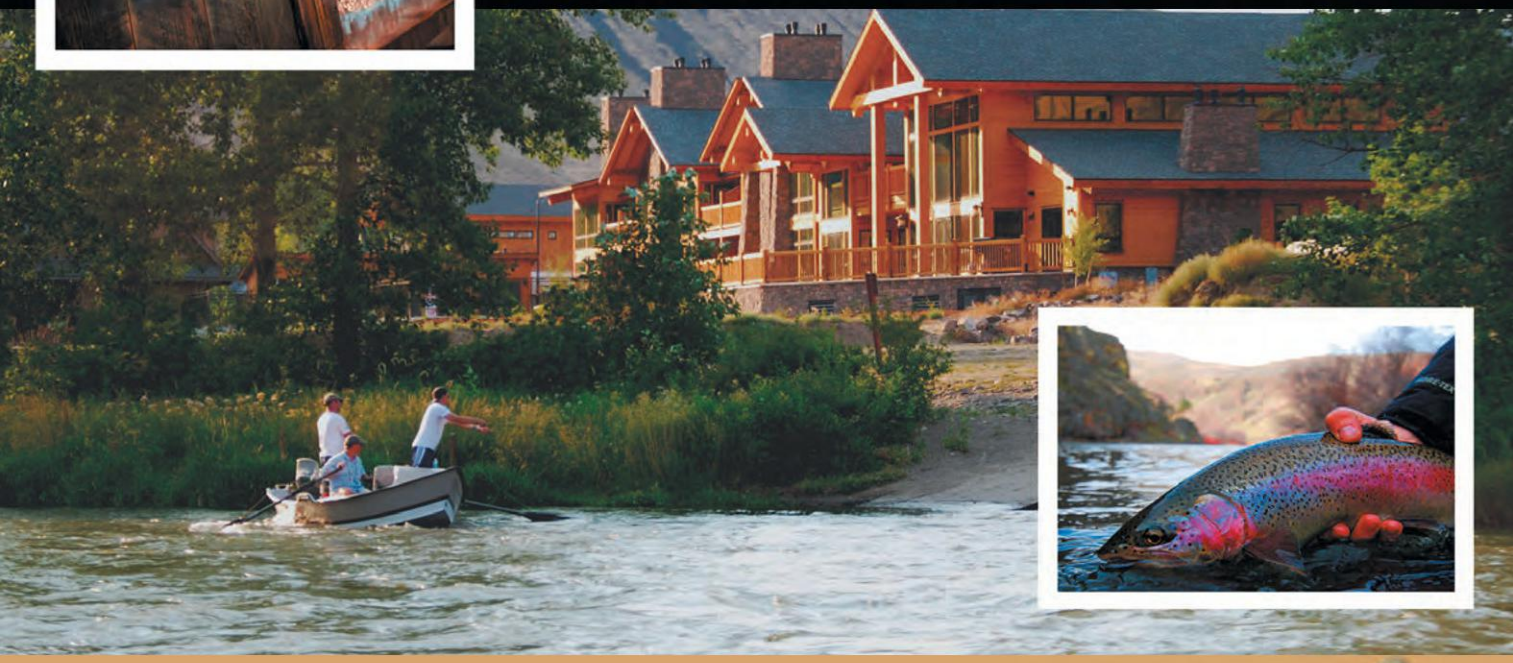

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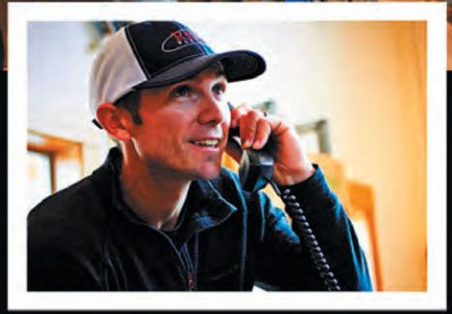

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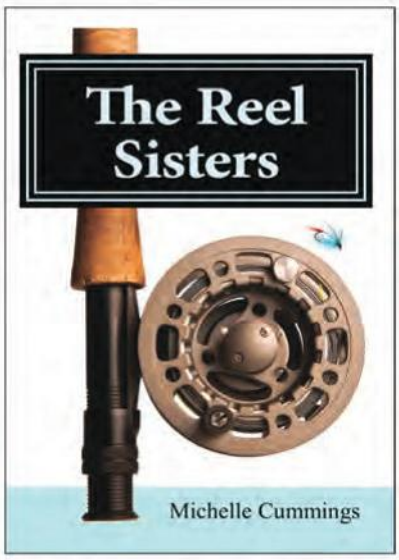

Tails of adventure, as well as stories of renewal, discovery, and tragedy follow five women as they find each other through the sport of fly fishing. The Reel Sisters tells a wonderful story about women on their personal journeys to fly fishing, but in some ways it is a subtle fly fishing instruction manual. By the end of the book, you'll want to start planning your own adventures!

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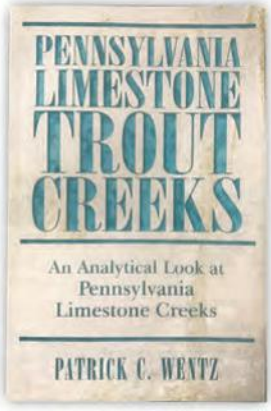

Pennsylvania Limestone Trout Creeks describes and analyzes 169 limestone creeks in 33 counties across Pennsylvania, determining each creek's potential to hold trout. With 34 maps detailing the location of each creek, this new book is an invaluable resource for fly anglers.

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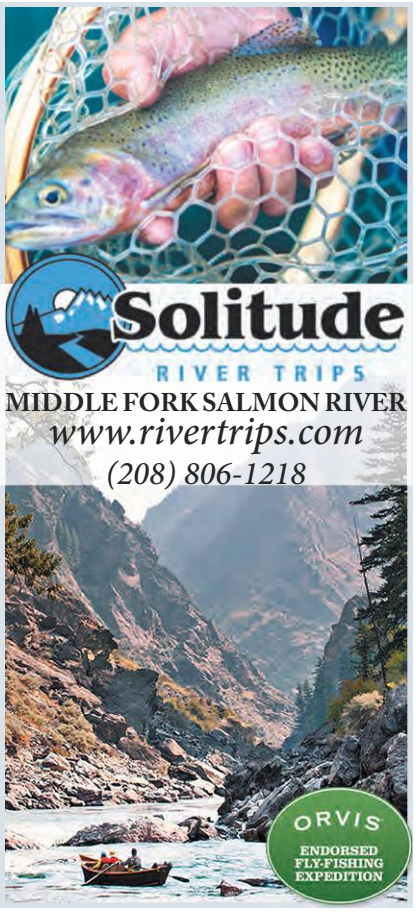

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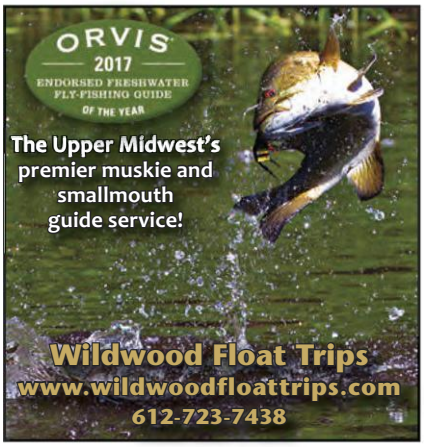

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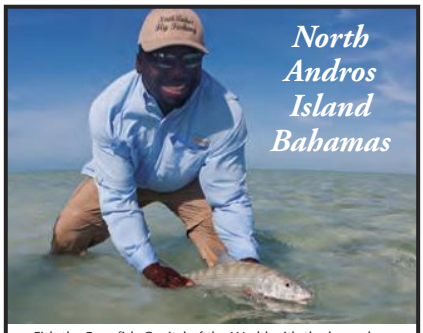

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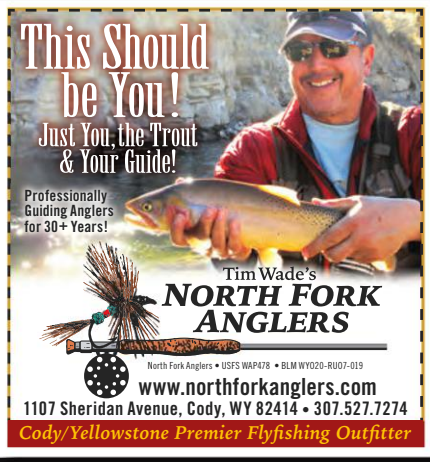

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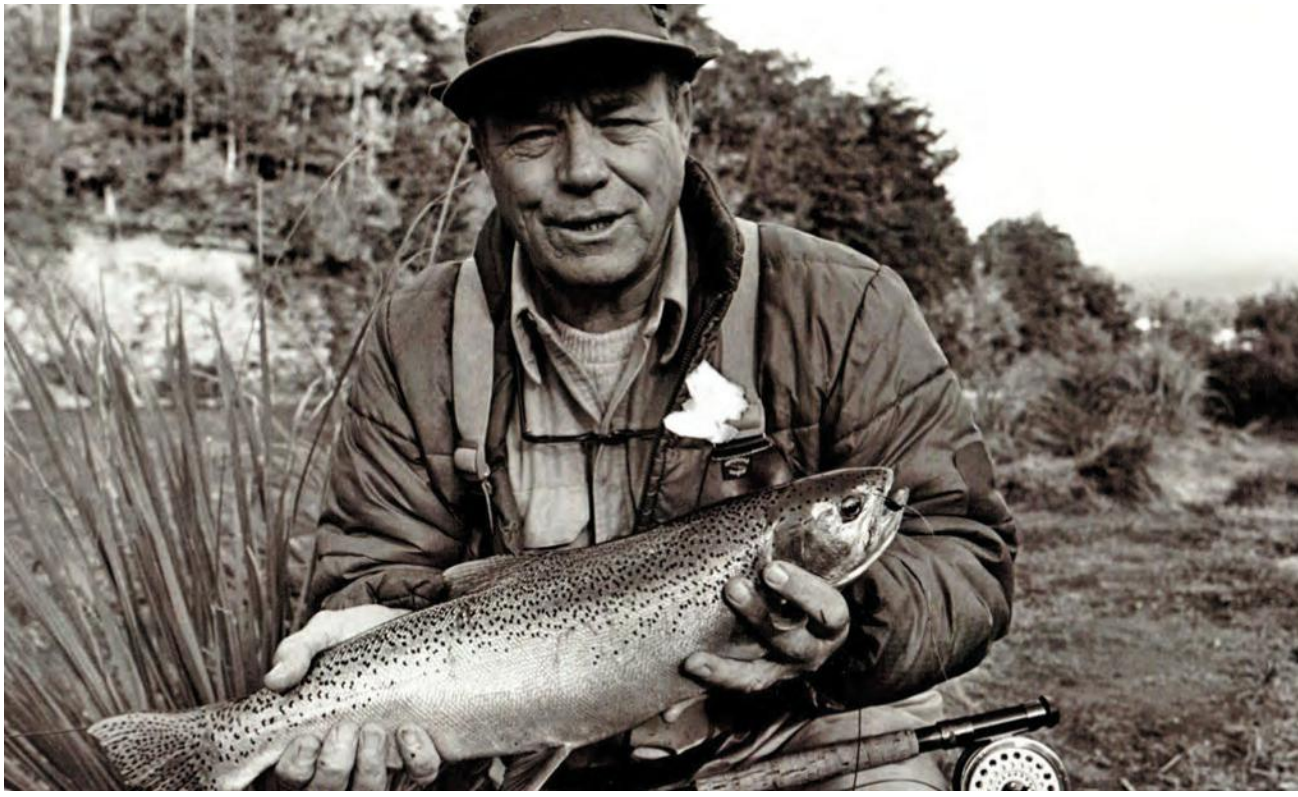
Bernard Victor "Lefty" Kreh, 1925–2018
How Did a Poor Kid from the Piedmont Become the Very Face of Fly Fishing in America?

By Don Roberts



Lefty Kreh traveled far and wide in search of intriguing fly-fishing opportunities. Here he displays a hefty trout caught on a river in Norway in the 1970s. Photo courtesy of Sammantha Aus

Author's Note: Over the course of three separate sessions in January 2018, I conducted what very well may have been the last interview ever granted by Lefty Kreh. Due to congestive heart failure and difficulty breathing, those sessions had to be kept short. At the beginning of our last phone conversation, Kreh, interrupted by coughing, grumbled that he had just returned home from two miserable days at the hospital. "I can tell you this," he said. "There's no damn way I'm going to spend any more time in a hospital. Ever." Quintessential Kreh. Regrettably, he never got to read—and good-naturedly scoff at, as was his way—any of what's printed here.

It's hard to write anything about Lefty Kreh without it becoming something of a flattery fest, which, unless tempered with some starch, can be like going down in Karo syrup for the third time. The many laurels, after all, are fairly won and rightly deserved—especially within the narrow confines of a sport as insular and self-conscious as fly fishing—and everyone from newscaster Tom Brokaw to baseball great Ted Williams has sung Lefty's praises.

But it's Kreh himself, with his self-effacing, regular Joe disposition, who helps one steer clear of bogging down in accolades and adjectives. He has often protested, "Me? A legend? Hell, no. I'm just a guy from Frederick, Maryland, with no more than a high school education."

Of course, as the arc of his life attests, education, at least of the book-learning variety, has always been beside the point.

Bernard Victor Kreh was born in Frederick, Maryland, on February 26, 1925, decades before high-rises, turnpikes, and bay bridges would both signal progress and blight much of the landscape. Kreh was still in knee pants when his father, a vigorous young man, died after getting kicked in the chest during a basketball game. Becoming a young widow with four young kids is bad at any time, but to suffer that fate during the depths of the Great Depression redefines hardship.

"In the 1930s, nobody had any money, and here was my mother, all alone with four children," Kreh recalled. "But she was very prideful, tougher than an automobile tire, so she wasn't going to give us up."

Orphanages and foster care remained out of the question. Fortunately, as if projecting a beam of light into a very

dark era, President Franklin Roosevelt ushered in the New Deal, and the Kreh family, in the vernacular of the day, "went on relief," accepting a cramped allotment house on North Bentz Street in the midst of a poor black community.

Everyone was in the same boat—dirt poor and struggling—which tended to blur racial barriers, especially among the youths who played and scrapped hard at everything from street baseball to back-alley basketball, regardless of differing skin color. Possessing almost equally adept fine motor skills with both hands, and more than willing to flummox opponents with his left, it wasn't long before everybody in the neighborhood was calling him Lefty. After considering his appearance and demeanor—short and stout but with the fluid motion of an apex predator—it's no surprise that the handle endured. Think about the alternatives: Bernard or, worse yet, Bernie? Nah. Victor or, criminy, Vic? Fuggedaboutit. So, Lefty then? Youse better believe it, hon.

While the economy didn't have much going for it, the environment did. The fields and the oak- and hickory-studded hills surrounding Frederick were filled with game and the rivers were flush with fish. "In those days, the rivers were teemin' with life," mused Kreh. "There were fish, and freshwater mussels, and crawfish, and all kinds of bait."

All this proved fortuitous for a 12-year-old boy faced with only two options: go to school or go to work, probably at a grueling factory job. The problem was that going to school entailed at least some basic expenses. As Kreh noted, "We didn't have no money, but my mother said if I could make enough to get myself clothes and lunch, I could go to high school."

Possessing the instincts of a natural-born woodsman, Kreh set about pursuing whatever furtive currency could be found in the wild. During the winter he trapped muskrat and mink to sell to local hide dealers, and hunted game to put meat on the table. In the summer he spent daylight hours harvesting mussels along the riverbank to be used for bait, "huskin' 'em out like oysters," then set trotlines dangled from branches overhanging the river (a trick the locals called "bush-bobbing"), which he tended to throughout the night. "The catfish would swim the banks at night and the limbs would act like fishin' poles," said Kreh. Early the next morning he'd haul his gunny sack of fish to Miller's Cash Market, where he sold his catch for, on average, 10 cents a pound—real money in those days. That said, routinely converting fish and fur to cold, hard cash ain't easy. But for a boondocks stripling like Lefty, it beat the hell out of mowing lawns, delivering newspapers, or bagging groceries.

Kreh graduated from Frederick High School in 1944 and immediately heard the call of the hounds of war. No sooner had the ink dried on his diploma than he went from carrying an armload of books to packing an M1.

A Bridge Too Far

Kreh enlisted in the U.S. Army and was assigned to the 69th Infantry Division, nicknamed the Fighting 69th. One month after basic training, Kreh found himself on a Liberty ship (a bare-bones, mass-produced cargo vessel) bound for Europe. "I had the misfortune of bunking down in the hold right next to the anchor chain," laughed Kreh. "It was October, and the ocean was really rough, and that huge anchor and chain [upwards of 60,000 pounds] slammed against the hull the entire voyage."

The 69th landed in Belgium and advanced east to the densely forested Ardennes region, where they were met with not only a major German offensive but also one of the coldest winters on record. Caught off guard by the surprise blitzkrieg, American units fought a series of desperate battles to stem the relentless German assault in what came to be known as the Battle of the Bulge. Kreh, who served as an artillery forward observer, commented that the "Germans were within mortar range, so we were right nose to nose … but the fog was so dense nobody could see anything. It didn't matter. The enemy would fire at us and we would fire back."

Bernard "Lefty" Kreh, the tallest in this photo, was the oldest of four children. Shown here at age 12, he is flanked by his sister, Eileen (left), and his brothers, Dick and Ted. Photo courtesy of Sammantha Aus

The most demoralizing part of the entire two-month engagement, according to Kreh, wasn't the random artillery barrages or the creaking rattle of Panzer tanks, but the unceasing, bone-splitting cold. "There was over a foot of snow, and the ground underneath was frozen solid, so we dug shallow slot trenches and hoped for the best,"

he recalled. "Our C rations were froze hard as bricks, and because of inadequate clothing most of the guys were suffering from frostbite. Because of the frostbite and trench foot, all of us soldiers kept spare socks stuffed in our armpits."

Eventually the fog lifted, the battle wound down, and Kreh's unit mobilized toward the Rhine River to join up with the 9th Armored Division at Remagen.

Although thousands of Allied troops and armor had already crossed the railroad bridge at Remagen, just two days before the Fighting 69th arrived, the old, war-torn bridge finally collapsed. The Army Corps of Engineers wasted no time erecting—"slapped together," in Kreh's words—a temporary structure consisting of barges straddled over pontoons. Floating bridges function by means of Archimedes' principle: each pontoon is capable of supporting a load equal to the mass of the water displaced. In other words, as weight is applied to the structure the damned thing sinks until reaching neutral buoyancy. Of course, heavy armament on the move causes pontoon bridges to buck, plunge, and sway, while rushing water laps greedily at its sides.

Over the course of his long career in the angling world, Lefty Kreh was a star participant in countless fly-fishing shows and similar events. He was always congenial, helpful, and fun to be around. Here he lends a hand at a show in Pennsylvania in 1962, one of the first fly-fishing exhibitions he attended. Photo courtesy of Sammantha Aus

Never mind the bullets, bombs, and bayonets. Kreh's greatest battlefield trepidation was in confronting a life-threatening bath in the Rhine. You could hear the dread in Kreh's voice when he recounted, "We drove across that wobbly makeshift bridge in trucks and tanks. It's a helluva river, a mile wide in places.… Imagine yourself driving a large vehicle across the top of a row of empty boats lashed together; that's what it was like.… Of all the things I did in combat—and I had a lot of close calls during the war—the scariest thing for me was crossing that river."

At Ease, Disease

With Germany on the verge of surrender, Kreh was furloughed back to the States, fully expecting, after 30 days of R&R, to get shipped out to the Pacific theater. Two atom bombs, the prelude to Japan's surrender, intervened. Next came what Kreh described as "another lucky break." He had heard that the Army was recruiting people for a research project at Fort Detrick, official site of the U.S. biological weapons program (later famous, or, more accurately, infamous, for its LSD experiments), which was conveniently located on the north side of his hometown of Frederick.

Because he was young, healthy, and upstanding—having returned from war with five combat medals and sergeant's stripes—Kreh was the perfect candidate. "Because I didn't smoke and didn't drink, I was assigned to one of the most dangerous buildings, where they worked on concentrating doses of anthrax," said Kreh. Over the next several years he worked his way up to plant operator, in charge of growing anthrax cultures for Army scientists. Then one day the unforeseen happened: while working with a viscous batch of hot anthrax (called "mud"), he got a rip in the right arm of his plastic hazmat suit. "The whole thing [arm] turned black and I was in the hospital for a month," Kreh rather nonchalantly recalled.

Army medics managed to get the deadly bacteria in his bloodstream isolated and stored in cryogenic ampoules. Kreh exclaimed, in about as close to a brag as he ever gets, "Now if the Army ever needs it, for research or some top-secret request, all they have to do is locate the vial marked BVK-1."

Yup, that's Bernard Victor Kreh dash one—his very own namesake pathogen.

The Hot Dog and Regal Joe

Perhaps partly as a reward for his hands-on participation in an experiment, Kreh was given a staggered shift—one around-the-clock day on, then two days off—a regime that made hunting and fishing not just an option but a lifestyle choice. Word of his exploits spread; he was the guy who "threw plugs a country mile," tweaked rigging, and developed newfangled techniques. It wasn't long before Kreh became known as "the hot-dog bass fisherman of central Maryland."

In 1947, outdoor writer Joe Brooks, who, like any good newspaper reporter, kept his ear to the ground, called up Kreh and arranged a day of angling on the Potomac. Windy conditions that morning dictated pitching plugs; however, during their lunch break, Brooks assembled a cane fly rod and with delicate casts proceeded to hook one fish after another. For an impressionable young man like Kreh, it was an episode akin to a religious conversion.

Brooks, a man with considerable bearing and confidence—whom Kreh described as a "regal type of person, not stuffy, but regal"—became a mentor, if not a belated father figure. The very next day, Kreh jumped in his Model-A Ford and drove over to Tochterman's Fishing Tackle (which is still there) to buy a South Bend fiberglass fly rod and a Pflueger Medalist reel, then met Brooks at Herring Run Park for his first fly-casting lesson.

Brooks patiently provided the pro forma instruction handed down to every neophyte for centuries: the old forearm-only, 10 o'clock to 2 o'clock drill. Though Kreh diligently practiced, and practiced, and practiced, he found the march-step training not exactly wrong per se, but needlessly restrictive. You can, after all, cast with your wrist—if you're content to cast 30 feet. "It just didn't make sense to me," Kreh said. "Fly fishermen were immobile, just using their wrist and arm. They'd been doin' what the English taught them hundreds of years before and hadn't changed a thing." Kreh perceived that something was missing. That something, it turned out, being hips (especially hips), legs, and torso, all crucial to proficient casting.

Surrounded by fishing tackle and paraphernalia of every description in the 1950s, Kreh works at his first fly-tying bench at his home in Frederick, Maryland. Photo courtesy of Sammantha Aus

Never was that hoary adage "Looks can be deceiving" more true than when initially appraising Lefty Kreh. At 5-foot-6, with a fire-hydrant build, round weathered face, mischievous blue eyes, and a wide, gap-toothed grin—not to mention his almost perpetual flats hat, the flaps akimbo like oversize ears—Kreh looked more like a backwoods Yoda than a mighty Thor with Mjölnir in one hand and a fly rod in the other. The truth is, Kreh's athleticism remains unquantifiable—the preternatural embodiment of mind and body symbiosis, uncorrupted by convention—resulting in a casting stroke so smooth it looked as if it were being performed underwater. As his longtime friend King Montgomery affirmed, "At 93, Lefty could still cast almost the whole fly line, while sitting down."

Mosquito Underwear

Post–World War II prosperity—an economy guaranteeing every man a wife and two kids, a house, a car, and a dog, and quite possibly a boat—ushered in a period of disposable income heretofore unimagined. Leisure activities and advice on how to pursue them found space in burgeoning newspapers and magazines across the country.

There was an insatiable demand for easy-to-digest information, and Kreh, brimming with energy and ideas, was just the guy to deliver the goods. Brooks, along with Tom McNally, outdoors editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, encouraged Kreh to enter the publishing fray, while also furnishing contacts and introductions.

Kreh's writing career began in 1951 with a how-to column for *The Frederick News-Post* called "Maryland Afield." His down-to-earth column soon gained popularity and snowballed into work for numerous other township newspapers.

Despite his regional success, the writing game remained a struggle. "At the time, my wife and I didn't have enough money to buy mosquito underwear," Kreh quipped. "So I was looking for other sources of income." Those other income streams came in the form of more and larger newspaper gigs, culminating in an 18-year stint for *The Baltimore Sun*, as well as feature articles for glossy outdoors magazines. A turn in his financial tide had a direct link to Kreh's embrace of 35 mm photography. He realized that by bundling graphics and story together, thus saving beleaguered editors the time and expense of hiring illustrators, his work would prove all the

more enticing and readily marketable.

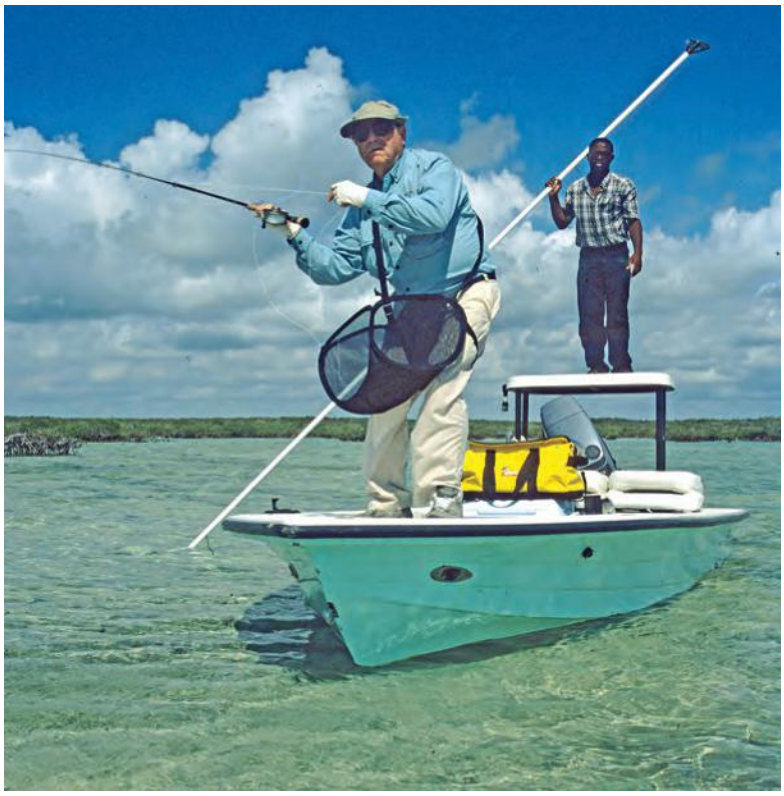
The big breakthrough came in 1965, with an article published in *Outdoor Life* titled, "New Way to Fly Cast." All hell broke loose. "People got all upset, wrote hundreds of letters, and said this is heresy," Kreh mused. True, it was heresy, but heresy of the best kind, heresy that moves a sport in a new direction. The resulting eruption of vitriol put Kreh on the map.

Kreh's writing ambitions expanded into the broad form: books. From 1972 to 2012 he wrote (actually, two-finger typed) 32 volumes. Some of the books were slight and, well, repetitive. But a good many others—such as *Advanced Fly Casting* (1995), *Fly Fishing for Bonefish, Permit, and Tarpon* (1996), and *Presenting the Fly* (1999)—made real inroads into the dynamics of fly fishing and provided readers with practical, plainspoken morsels of information. Many angling scholars argue that his groundbreaking 250-page tome on ocean angling, *Fly Fishing in Salt Water* (1974), should be regarded as Kreh's seminal work. Kreh, however, in his usual jovial-grouch manner, dismissed the hoopla by remarking, "I wrote the first book on saltwater fly fishing as a way to answer all the damned questions I kept getting."

As happens with fame and recognition, Kreh's enterprises swelled into other realms, including casting clinics, speaking engagements, travels to exotic destinations, TV and video appearances, and shoulder-rubbing with celebrities (*The American Sportsman* and, more recently, *Buccaneers & Bones*), and, more lucratively, consulting and endorsements with tackle and clothing manufacturers. "I had so many irons in the fire," Kreh jibed, "I was busier than a Baltimore homicide detective."

Somehow, in the midst of the frenzy—in Kreh's words, he felt like "a bumblebee in a bell jar"—he managed to conceive his Lefty's Deceiver, perhaps the single most iconic open-ocean fly pattern ever devised. The Deceiver endures primarily because of its malleability: in its original all-white composition—basically a blank silhouette—it's a pattern that any reasonably adept tier can make his own, convert to whatever local species of baitfish is desired, by simply adding color. In 1971 the United States Postal Service decided to commemorate Lefty's Deceiver by putting it on a standard-rate postage stamp. Kreh later groused that the feds didn't even bother to send him one. He had to fork over 29 cents, like everyone else standing in line.

While many, if not most, tenured casting instructors develop a charming and agreeable dose of jadedness, sometimes attended with eye-rolling and mumbling (for god's sake, stop flopping your wrist), Kreh's teaching style never wavered from cheerfully messianic. At 93 and often bedridden—"I have my good days and my bad"—Kreh was largely unable to do what he loved most: stand by and be a friend, while also assuming the role of walking, talking fly-casting diagnostician. Not one to surrender to infirmity, he spoke to me for almost two hours about the physics of fly casting and ended the conversation by



Kreh, who authored several books about saltwater fly fishing, was an astute flats fisherman and was enamored with bonefish. His advice to fellow bonefish anglers was classic Kreh: "Cast to the eating end of the fish!" Photo by King Montgomery

promising to send his DVD, *The Complete Cast*, an in-depth instructional video done in collaboration with renowned caster Ed Jaworowski.

The DVD arrived promptly three days later. It was, as Kreh promised, comprehensive, easy to follow, and downright therapeutic—goodbye cursed tailing loop, at least for the present. But learning from a DVD felt impersonal and kind of hollow. In truth, nothing could ever take the place of having Kreh square up alongside you at the casting pool and level his gaze, just as I had seen him do at so many outdoor sports shows over the years. And then, after a backcast or two, admonish, not without one of his patented grins, "Boy, just what the hell do you think you're doing?"

Editor's note: We are grateful to Sammantha Aus, Lefty Kreh's granddaughter, and the Kreh family, as well as Lefty's friend and fishing buddy King Montgomery, for providing photographs to illustrate this story.

Don Roberts is an Oregon-based freelance writer and fly-angling historian.

New Products

Just Add H20 Crystal Flesh

New from Just Add H20, Crystal Flesh is the perfect material for creating baitfish patterns. Packaged in 9-inch hanks, Crystal Flesh fibers provide just the right amount of flash to effectively resemble fish scales and colors, and the ideal rigidity to make fishlike silhouettes in patterns for both fresh and salt water. Available in 37 colors, Crystal Flesh ($6.55) is perfect for stacked bodies or for adding accent colors and filler structure for a variety of flies. To purchase, visit your local fly shop or go to www.rdflyfishing.com.

Orvis Ultralight Fishing Vest

The new Orvis Ultralight Fishing Vest ($139 at www.orvis.com) could easily be renamed the ultimate fishing vest.

This sleek, stylish vest minimalizes bulk while providing all the storage space you need. Eleven perfectly engineered, integrated pockets seamlessly meld into the vest with vertical zippered closures rather than more traditional flaps, meaning far fewer places to snag line and leaders. The vest's soft poly/spandex-blend-lined foam collar maximizes comfort around the neck, and the low-profile design keeps the load closer to your body. The lightweight material, treated with a durable water-repellent finish, dries fast and breathes easily, and strategically integrated mesh offers ventilation and form-fitting comfort. Two multifunction Velcro fly patches include a hidden port for a zinger, so nippers can be nested for quick but out-of-the-way access. Two elastic cords on the exterior of the chest pockets allow you to add accessories and a tippet bar. Part of the Orvis Ultralight Wading System that includes boots, waders, and wading jackets, this smartly engineered vest is likely to render your other vests obsolete.

Patagonia Stealth Chest Pack 4L

This highly versatile chest pack from Patagonia is ideal for those times when you want to pack light and keep everything you need secure and close at hand. The Stealth Chest Pack 4L ($79 at www.patagonia.com) has a zippered main pocket with enough room for two large fly boxes; interior hook-and-loop closure storage pockets; and a top-access, mesh-lined drop-in security pocket that provides additional storage. The molded, drop-down front panel easily deploys to create a flat workspace and provide access to a built-in, ripple-foam fly keeper, while the stretch woven nylon back panel and fully adjustable neck and waist straps allow layering and provide comfort during long days on the water. Patagonia's Fitz Roy Trout logo is molded into the back panel. Made from tough, polyurethane-coated Cordura® ripstop fabric with a durable water-repellent finish, the Stealth Chest Pack weighs a mere 12.7 ounces.

Snowbee XS-Plus Thistledown² Fly Lines

Can one high-performance fly line be optimized to several different rod-weight designations? Yes, and that's one of the secrets of Snowbee's new XS-Plus Thistledown² fly lines ($79.99), and it means anglers need not carry a different floating line for each rod that's a different weight. The other secret is the new nano-coating technology used to create Snowbee's

softest, most supple, best-casting, and longest-lasting fly lines. The nano particles result in a silky-smooth surface finish and a denser material. So the XS-Plus fly lines now have a finer, more durable profile and exceed even the high-level performance of the original XS lines. These innovative braided-core lines achieve minimal drag during casting, which means load weight becomes less important in achieving accurate, delicate casts. The XS-Plus Thistledown² WF2-5 casts effortlessly on 2- through 5-weight rods, and the WF5-7 is ideal for 5- through 7-weight rods. They weigh very little but deliver optimum stealth and accuracy. Thanks to the exceptionally smooth finish and the thin diameter, line speed can be easily maintained throughout the cast. The minimalist drag coefficient allows these lines to cut through almost any breeze. For more information and to purchase, visit www.snowbee-usa.com.

Plan D Pocket Series Boxes for Articulated Flies

Plan D fly boxes were born out of frustration: company owner Dylan Stanley couldn't find the ideal storage system for carrying his favorite flies, including articulated patterns. He tackled the problem head-on, designing rugged, durable, weather-resistant fly boxes. For articulated-fly enthusiasts, Plan D offers an ingenious, patent-pending storage system in its Pocket series of boxes: simply slide the eye of the fly onto the stainless steel hook and insert the fly's hook into the slotted foam. The boxes differ in the number of slots available for flies. Pocket series boxes are perfect for what their name implies—grabbing a few flies and securing them in a compact box that you can slip into a pocket. The single-sided, clear-lid Pocket Articulated ($34.99) and Pocket Articulated Plus ($39.99) boxes hold 10 and 20 flies, respectively, while the double-sided Pocket Max Articulated Plus box ($54.99) has slots for 40 flies. A water-resistant seal in the hinged lids keeps flies safe and dry. For more information and to find your nearest Plan D dealer, visit www.plandfishing.com.

Echo EPR Fast-Action Fly Rods

Designed by Pat Ehlers, the well-traveled, fishing-addicted owner of The Fly Fishers Fly Shop in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, this new rod has a super-fast tip to load easily at short distances and the most powerful bottom half of any Echo rod to ensure you will never run out of gas when casting into the wind. The EPR is a big-game specialist, engineered to excel in the most demanding conditions, accurately punch flies out at long range, and handle the most powerful fish. This powerful rod loads quickly and tames the wind, but doesn't feel like a broomstick, unlike some super-fast rods. The EPR's super-smooth action allows you to launch big-time casts at far-off targets, yet because it loads quickly, with a short stroke, it can deftly drop a fly on a bonefish's nose at 25 feet. These attractive and competitively priced 9-foot, four-piece rods ($449.99) are available in 8-, 9-, 10-, and 12-weight models; they feature large stainless steel guides with an SIC stripper. Two grip styles are available, and both feature a maintenance-free aluminum reel seat. For more information and to locate Echo dealers, visit www.echoflyfishing.com/project/echoepr-2.

Water Master Bruin Two-Person Raft

Engineered for optimum stability and maneuverability, the Water Master Bruin two-person raft offers the ultimate in float-fishing versatility. This rugged, exceptionally durable self-bailing raft is built to take on whatever you can throw at it and still keep you safe and sound and into the fish. When equipped with the optional NRS rowing frame, the Bruin (weight capacity 1,500 pounds) instantly converts from leisure craft to serious fishing vessel for big water, and is rated for Class IV white water. The Bruin is available in four packages ranging from $2,995 to $4,095, with a variety of custom options available. The packages include Standard, Basic Frame, Rowers, and Fishing. Laden with features, the Fishing package provides a comfortable seat for both the rower and the angler, with the fishing seat elevated to give the angler a high vantage point without the need to stand up. For more information about the Bruin packages and the myriad custom options, visit www.bigskyinflatables.com or call (406) 777-5970.

Dr. Slick XBC Series of Tools

The new Extremely Bright Colors, or XBC, series of fly-fishing and fly-tying tools from Dr. Slick allows anglers to express themselves and personalize their fly-tying bench, vest, pack, or bag. The colorful tools also help eliminate the problem of losing them after, say, sitting on a fallen tree to change a fly or eat lunch. Dr. Slick XBC tools are available in eight electric powder-coated colors: blue, red, green, yellow, pink, orange, black, and white. All XBC scissors and clamps are made from high-quality 410 Japanese stainless steel. Tools available in XBC colors include the 5-inch Standard Clamp hemostats ($19); All-Purpose Scissors, with a 4-inch straight serrated blade ($19); Scissor Clamps, with a 5-inch straight jaw and a half-smooth and half-crosshatch jaw structure with serrated scissors for cutting tippet and leader or trimming flies, plus a straight-edge screwdriver for streamside reel repairs and a hook-eye cleaning pin in the shank ($24); Mitten Scissor Clamps, with a 5-inch straight jaw, serrated scissors mounted behind the jaw, a full-swivel spiral lanyard, and no finger loops—you simply squeeze the clamp all the way through to the ratchets—($25); and 2-inch Nippers, with colorful textured rubber grips and a hook-eye cleaning pin ($6.50). Find these and other Dr. Slick tools at your local fly shop, and visit www.drslick.com for more details.

Miyawaki Beach Popper/By Phil Rowley

Many anglers consider Leland Miyawaki's Beach Popper a mandatory fly in the Northwest for sea-run cutthroat or Pacific salmon, especially waters in Washington state's Puget Sound. Don't, however, stereotype the Beach Popper by geography or species. The surface disturbance it creates makes it ideal for any fish, either fresh- or saltwater, with a propensity for smashing waking flies. As Miyawaki says, "With a popper, you'll always have something to do as you work it across the water, and, best of all, you get to see the grabs!"

The business end of the Beach Popper consists of a size 6 or size 2 up-eye octopus hook connected to a 1.5- to 2-inch loop of stiff 25-pound monofilament to ensure the trailing hook doesn't tangle with the wing. Stiff mono often retains spool memory, making it finicky to work with. Eliminating mono memory is easy, however: stuff a plastic drinking straw with as many individual lengths of mono as possible, drop the stuffed straw into a pot of boiling water for a few minutes, then allow it to cool. The boiling water reshapes the strands into cooperative lengths.

To build the trailing hook assembly, double a 6-inch length of mono. Push the doubled ends through the eye of an octopus hook from the rear. Pull the hook up through the mono loop. Pull tight, locking it in place. Using a strong thread, such as GXP, tie in the trailing hook assembly at the midpoint of a straight-eye saltwater hook so it rides hook point up. With the hook assembly tied in, fold the tag ends of the mono back along the shank. Secure the tag ends back to the initial tie-in point and trim. Super Glue the thread wraps for added security.

The Beach Popper wing consists of two neck hackles (dull sides together so they don't splay), holographic silver Flashabou, mixed colors of Krystal Flash, two layers of white Icelandic sheep wing (a darker color over white), and a topping of a few strands of peacock herl. Other materials, such as bucktail, craft fur, or polar bear hair, can be substituted for the Icelandic sheep. You can use any color of neck hackle, depending on the baitfish you are trying to match. Grizzly is a personal favorite, as it does an excellent job of suggesting the barred markings common to many baitfish.

To get the most out of a section of Icelandic sheep, lay two clumps of hair, butt to tip, on top of each other. Stroke and twist the tips and butt ends, blending the hair into a neat taper. Secure the blended, tapered clump at the midpoint of the shank. Repeat the blending and taper process for the sparse upper wing. Confine the wing materials to the front half of the hook, as the rear section of the shank and bend will be removed from the completed fly.

Depending on fly size, the signature head of the Beach Popper consists of a Rainy's Pee Wee Pop or Mini-Me Pop foam head. The foam heads are designed to slide over a bare shank, so the popper hole may have to be reamed from the concave side using scissor points or a heated bodkin. Be careful not to over-ream the hole. Test fits are recommended.

Coat the front portion of the hook with brushable Super Glue. Push the popper head onto the shank, concave end first, over the wing butts. Head position is important so the Beach Popper behaves properly. The rear angle of the concave end must slope down and away from the hook eye so the long side of the popper head runs along the underside of the hook.

Philip Rowley, author of Fly Patterns for Stillwaters*, is a well-known lake-fishing expert who lives in British Columbia.*

Step 1: Double a 6-inch section of stiff 25-pound monofilament. Insert the tag ends of the mono through the back of the front hook's eye. Drop the loop down over the hook bend. Pull the mono loop forward until it snugs tight behind the eye.

Step 2: Place the hook in the vise and cover the front half of the shank with thread. Tie in the trailing stinger hook assembly, hook point up, at the midpoint of the shank. Secure the mono forward to the hook eye. Bend the two tag ends back over themselves and tie down. Brush the thread wraps with Super Glue. The stinger hook assembly should trail back 1.5 to 2 inches past the initial tie-in point, depending on fly size.

Step 3: Select two narrow neck hackles. Align the feathers by their tips, dull side to dull side. Stroke them together. Tie in the prepared neck hackles near the hook eye so the tips extend about 0.25 inch past the stinger hook.

Step 4: Tie in four strands of silver holographic Flashabou, followed by four to six strands of mixed-colors Krystal Flash. The finished Flashabou and Krystal Flash should extend just past the tips of the hackle-feather wings.

Step 5: Tie in the Icelandic sheep or polar bear hair just in front of the hackle-tip wings. The finished hair wing should be the same length as the hackle-tip wings. Tie a sparse upper wing of olive Icelandic sheep. Top the wing with a few peacock herls. Whip-finish, and remove the tying thread.

Step 6: Brush the front portion of the shank with Super Glue. Push the concave end of the popper head over the material so the hook eye peeks through. The rear hole in the popper may need to be reamed out with a scissor blade so it fits over the wing materials. Test-fit the head prior to applying the Super Glue. The angled edge of the concave end of the popper head must run down and away from the hook eye so the popper head is longest along the underside of the hook. Remove the fly from the vise. Using a pair of side cutters, cut the hook off just forward of the bend.

Materials

Front hook:	Daiichi 2546, size 6
Stinger hook:	Up-eye octopus, size 2 or 6
Thread:	White 3/0, 140-denier, or GSP 100
Connector:	25-pound monofilament
Wing 1:	2 grizzly neck hackles
Wing 2:	White Icelandic sheep, bucktail craft fur, or polar bear hair
Top wing:	Olive Icelandic sheep, bucktail craft fur, or polar bear hair
Wing flash:	Silver holographic Flashabou, and mixed-colors Krystal Flash
Topping:	Peacock herl
Head:	Rainy's Pee-Wee Pop or Mini-Me Pop

In the Vise

Project Cicada/By Curtis Fry

Even at 7,600 feet in elevation, the summer heat was taking its toll as we hiked slowly down the steep bank leading to Strawberry Reservoir in Utah. Late June and into July is prime time for cicadas to emerge from their underground burrows as they mature and start their mating rituals in the trees. Their clicking and chirping increased as the afternoon wore on.

As we hiked, we scanned the water's edge for any sign of cruising cutthroat trout. True to form, within a couple of minutes, I saw the torpedo-shaped silhouette of a large cutthroat leaving the deeper water and heading for the shallows. I stripped off enough line to cover the needed distance and let my cicada fly zing through the air, landing with a big plop 2 feet in front of the fish. As leisurely as if it were rising for some small helpless mayfly, the big cutt slowly closed the distance to the bug, gently ascended, and very politely gulped my cicada. The scene would repeat itself many times that day.

Living in Utah, I've experienced a good number of these cicada hatches on many waters over the years and look forward each summer to fooling trout into gulping down what for them is like a prime rib dinner. And, always one to try to better match the hatch, I've designed a lot of variations on my cicada pattern to imitate these bulky and noisy insects. As it turns out, this iteration of the pattern has taken a long time to develop, and to tweak, so I named it Project Cicada.

I think a few physical features of the insect are important to account for in a cicada imitation. First, cicadas unlucky enough to take a swim tend to float low on the water, in the film, rather than daintily atop like a mayfly dun. So a fly that rides relatively flush to the surface of the water is advantageous. Because of this, I tend to shy away from hackle and puffy lightweight foam.

Also, cicadas often land on the water with an audible plop—they are big, meaty bugs, after all—and I believe that landing is key in gaining the attention of fish that might be inclined to feed on these hefty insects. The use of high-density cross-link foam in this pattern facilitates those audible landings, imitating the real insect. However, this foam works best with a heavier wire hook with a wide gape to offset the pattern's top-heavy design. A standard dry-fly hook may cause the fly to land upside down.

And while this isn't the most realistic cicada pattern out there, I've tried to accentuate the on-the-water open-wing orientation as well as the overall body shape and color. The result is a pattern that is easy to tie and approximates the silhouette, size, and color of cicadas the fish are accustomed to seeing.

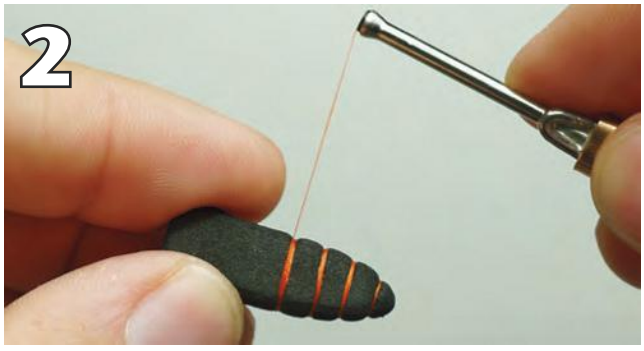
Materials

Hook:	Hanak 900, size 8
Thread:	Rusty brown UNI-Thread, size 6/0
Body:	Black 6 mm cross-link foam
Wng:	Light dun Thin Wing
Overwing:	Dark gray and fluorescent orange Para Post wing material
Wing case:	Black 1 mm cross-link foam
Legs:	Speckled orange Centipede Legs
Eyes:	Mono, melted and colored, coated with Loon UV Clear Fly Finish Flow

Note: For cutting and shaping the body and wing components, use River Road Creations Beavertail and Hopper/Caddis/Ant foam body cutters.

Creative fly tier Curtis Fry, along with Clark Pierce, runs Fly Fish Food, www.flyfishfood.com, a fly shop in Orem, Utah.

Step 1: Cut and shape the foam body with a large River Road Creations Beavertail cutter, then cut the wings with the second-largest River Roads Creations Hopper/Caddis/Ant cutter and color the edges with a marker (the wing case can also be cut using this same cutter). Finally, cut and melt the eyes and darken them with a marker. Coat the eyes with Loon UV Clear Fly Finish Flow resin.



Step 2: Use sharp scissors to trim the foam body and remove edges. Lightly singe the body with a lighter and roll it between your index finger and thumb to achieve a round natural shape. Then, holding the foam body in one hand, use your other hand to wrap the thread from the tip of the tail to the thorax, forming four segments. Apply a drop of Super Glue to the final segment of thread and cut the tag end.

Step 3: Using a razor blade, cut a slit on the bottom side of the foam body, extending from the head down to the first thread segment. The top side will show the thread crossing from one segment to the next, while the bottom side will not. Attach the thread to the hook and dress the shank. Apply a thin layer of Super Glue to the hook and seat the foam body down over the shank, pinching the foam and then applying three to four firm thread wraps.

Step 4: Once the glue is set and the foam body is tied securely to the hook, fold and spread the wings and tie them into place. Next, double a piece of gray Para Post material, comb it out, and tie in directly on top of the wings. Repeat using the orange Para Post, but leave this section a bit shorter than the gray.

Step 5: Before proceeding, ensure the body is still firmly seated and attached to the hook. If it's not, apply a little more Super Glue and tighten things up with a few tight thread wraps. Next, attach the wing case and rubber legs, and finish with a few tight thread wraps. Whip-finish to complete the tying portion and apply a drop of Super Glue on the final thread wrap underneath the body.

Step 6: Using a sharp bodkin, poke two eye sockets into the upper corners of the foam body. Using the monofilament eyes created previously, dab the end of the monofilament with Super Glue and insert an eye into a newly formed eye socket. Repeat this step for the other eye.

After Dinner Mint/By Dennis Collier

Materials

Hook:	TMC 5262, size 2
Thread:	Black UTC 70 Gel Spun
Eyes:	Olive flat diamond braid
Rib:	Small gold UTC wire
Flash:	UV pearl Krystal Flash
Wing:	Dyed black marabou blood quill
Head:	Dyed black deer hair

Note: Noble also tied this fly in a variety of other shades, including purple, orange, and natural brownish-tan.

"Feed them anything you want, but always serve an After Dinner Mint," chuckled pattern creator Mark Noble, who passed away recently after a 40-year run operating his Greased Line Fly Shoppe—a Pacific Northwest fly-fishing institution that was located in Vancouver, Washington. Our brief but enlightening conversation regarding his signature fly pattern validated my introduction to this gentleman by this magazine's editor in chief, John Shewey. Noble was a passionate wellspring of knowledge on anadromous steelhead and what it takes to catch them; he was universally well liked, and deeply respected not only for his fly-angling acumen, but also for his desire to help others learn to enjoy the sport as much as he did.

The After Dinner Mint is, first and foremost, a skater, a teaser, designed to be swung in a down-and-across presentation along current seams, gently gliding runs, choppy riffles, and glassy holding pools, in search of migrating steelhead on the myriad Northwest rivers where the fly was perfected. Tied with a riffle-hitch to stout tippet, and allowed to skitter and wake across the anticipated lies of chrome-plated slabs of pure muscle, it excites and pulls them from the depths like a rare-earth magnet attracts iron filings. At the same time, the sculpted deer-hair head, beveled on top and cut flat on the bottom, allows the fly to be pulled just under the water's surface and fished wet if you choose to do so.

Upon further inquiry, Noble told me that the pattern, tied with a black marabou wing, black Muddler-shaped head, and mint-green body, had become his favored rendition of the fly. A little online research, paired with samples supplied by Noble, demonstrated that it is equally attractive when tied in a variety of color combinations. The After Dinner Mint is obviously a variation of the ubiquitous Muddler Minnow, but Noble crafted his version with a specific species and a specific method of fishing in mind; consequently, it has become synonymous with the exciting visual aspect of this piscatorial pursuit.

Looking at the masterfully tied samples, I was struck by a vision of the After Dinner Mint being manipulated tight against undercut banks and the downstream arc of bend holes in order to entice the monster brown trout lurking in many of my favorite Colorado meadow streams. It's a wonderfully versatile fly with countless potential applications boldly embossed on its calling card.

In addition to the After Dinner Mint, Noble created numerous other noteworthy fly patterns, including the Fall Skater, October Bee, Hit Man, and The Greased Line Hopper. The Greased Line Hopper just happened to account for the largest North Umpqua steelhead Noble ever caught. His vast knowledge of the nuances of steelhead fly fishing, garnered from decades of angling pursuit for the species, and his visionary craftsmanship at the vise served a man who wrapped his life around a slice of the sport that most fly fishers probe only fleetingly.

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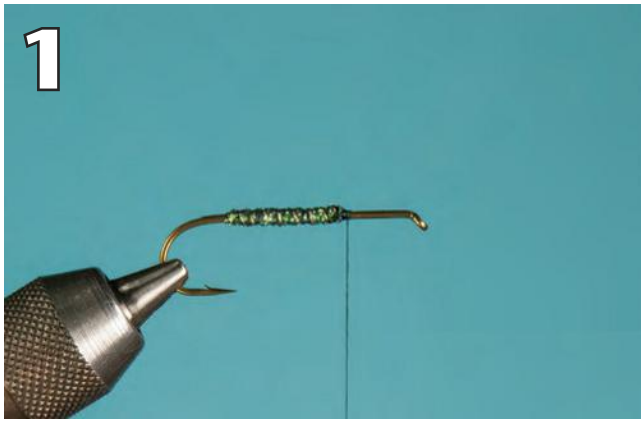

Step 1: Secure a strand of wire ribbing in line with the hook barb, then advance the thread to one-third of the shank length behind the hook eye. Tie in a length of flat diamond braid and wrap to the rear, then back to the tie-in location. Counter-wrap the rib forward to reinforce the body.

Step 2: Tie in several strands of UV pearl Krystal Flash and trim about 0.25 inch longer than the hook bend.

Step 3: Measure a full marabou plume so it is roughly 0.5 inch longer than the Krystal Flash. Moisten the plume and trim the butts, leaving just enough to secure the butts to the hook shank. Wrap a smooth thread base over the marabou butts in preparation for tying the deer-hair collar.

Step 4: Trim a generous clump of deer hair from the hide and clean out all the under fur. Stack the tips, then measure the hair against the hook to establish the desired collar length. Trim the hair butts slightly longer than the measured length to leave a very short base for securing to the hook.

Step 5: Clean and stack a second clump of deer hair and spin onto the hook shank. Compress the hair toward the collar. Repeat this process until you have compacted the head. Using a double-edge razor blade, sculpt the head as shown in this plate.

Step 6: Another version of the After Dinner Mint, furnished by Noble for this article, has a more Muddler-like turkey quill wing.

Conversation on the Shimmykin/By Alan Liere

The young boy came out of the bushes and stopped on the west bank of the creek just as I approached from the other side. He wore jeans, a T-shirt, a baseball cap, and a pair of black Converse tennis shoes so tattered they barely kept his toes inside.

"Oh, hi," he called. "Didn't know anyone else fished Shimmykin."

I smiled. "Shimmykin" was what I had called this little creek, too—55 years ago, before I learned I had been pronouncing it wrong all along. The creek's name was Chamokane. It held a modest population of rainbows and browns. The rainbows were decent; the browns were huge.

For me, this was more a sentimental journey than anything else. In my early teens, I had spent many unsuccessful hours trying to catch one of the browns I had seen finning in the same pool behind the same submerged midstream log now in front of me. A lot of water under my bridge.

"I haven't fished here for ages," I said, sitting down on a large boulder. "Well, you can have this hole now if you want," he said. "No—you go ahead," I told him. "I'll just watch."

The boy smiled, shrugged, and waded into the shallow water. He dropped a ragged green streamer weighted with split shot behind the log, and I was struck with the difference in our gear. He was using a stout fiberglass rod and an old level-wind reel with monofilament. A purple Crown Royal bag and a sheath knife were attached to his belt. As far as I could tell, the green streamer was the only fly he had. I felt he should have been carrying a bait can.

My gear was new: a 4-weight rod and an expensive reel. My chest waders were ridiculously tall for such skinny water, and in my fly vest were a hemostat, nail clippers, a box of lead shot, strike indicators, polarized sunglasses, a thermometer, a stomach pump, bug screen, scissors, insect repellent, sunscreen, a magnifying glass, about five dozen assorted wet and dry flies, and every type of leader imaginable.

The boy never put out more than 10 feet of line. He would tease it over the log, watch it drift its full length, then swing it back toward him before repositioning it in another current seam. "There's some big browns in here," he told me without taking his eyes off the water, "but I've only caught one. It had a baby mink in its stomach." "You don't say?" Part question, part exclamation. "Get her on that streamer?" "Yeah, I did," he said, still eyeing the water. "I used to use worms, but I found this fly on a snag over to Waitts Lake last Fourth of July, and I've been using it ever since. I'll probably lose it one of these days, but maybe I'll find another. There's something about foolin' these fish with a hook and feathers." "Ain't that the truth," I said. I shifted on my boulder and opened my fly box, but I didn't select one. I watched for several more minutes, but there was no action and the boy sloshed to shore, all smiles. "Someday I'm going to have me an outfit like that," he said, indicating my rod and reel. "Cost a bunch, I bet." "Son," I replied, "I think what you have is just fine, but you could use another fly." I offered him my box. "Pick one."

His face lit up and he thanked me profusely, then chose another green streamer. "My lucky color," he said. He stepped back into the creek. "Well," he said, "I guess I'll try another hole." He waded away whistling, and I wished for all the world I was him.

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

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