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In the Studio
Mike Savlen

EXPOSURE
Pike Fishing the Berkshires

Silver Grey
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Photo by: Mark B. Hatter

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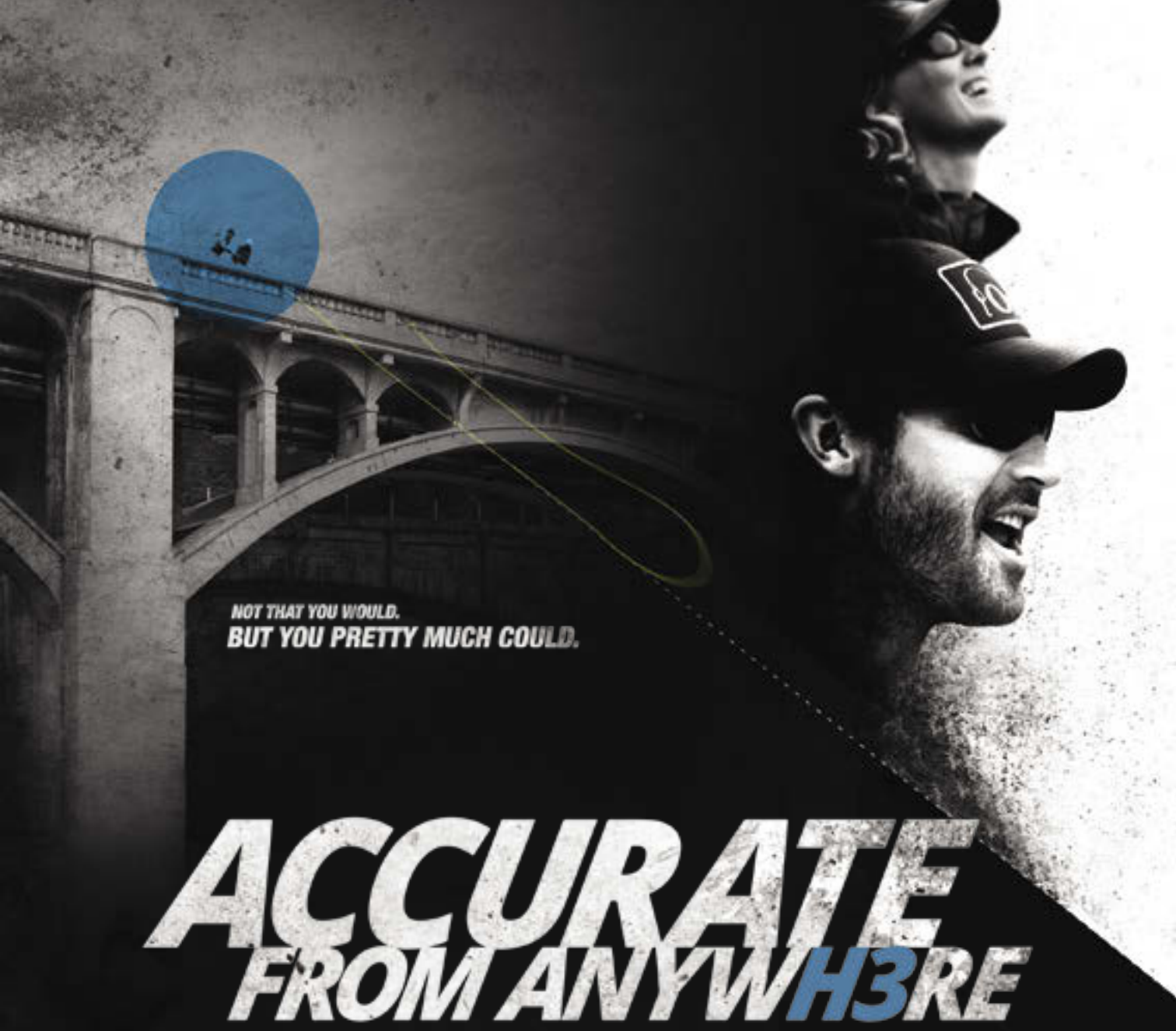

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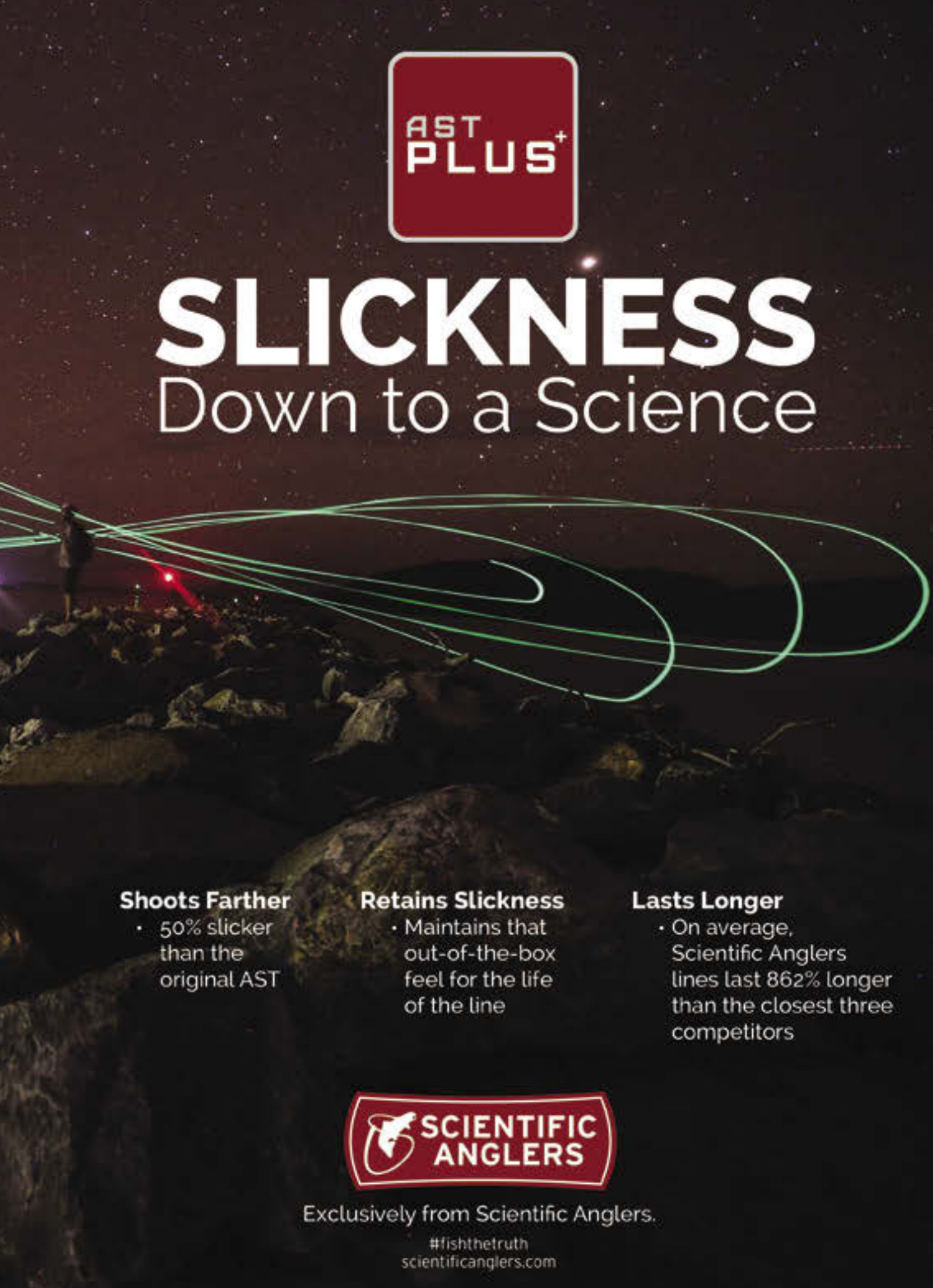
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From the Editor

Preparations

My brother, who lives in the Midwest, called the other day to tell me his big summer adventure with his teenage son had come unraveled; fire danger had shut down the public lands and sunk his planned multiday backpacking expedition in the southern Rockies.

I stewed on that for a while and then sent him a text message: "How about we plan a substitute adventure for the three of us?"

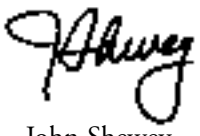
He asked what I had in mind and I shared a couple of options with him, suggesting either a remote mountain range in Nevada or a remote mountain range in Oregon. The former would be new territory for me; the latter was an old stomping ground. We could discover new things together or I could lead them to the discoveries that have long kept me returning to a special location. Both places offer ample fishing options.

Mike told me he'd talk it over with his son, Jack. The next day he informed me they had chosen the Oregon location. All three of us gushed enthusiasm, for this would be the kind of family adventure that is simply too infrequent in my life and theirs. So the planning began in earnest, with Mike filling me in on the kinds of things Jack would enjoy doing and tasking me with creating the agenda.

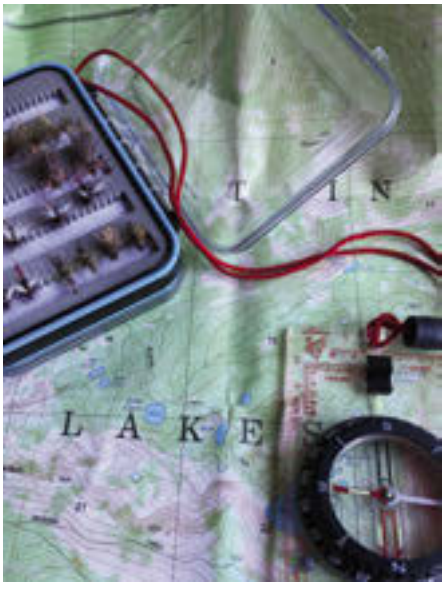
As I dug out my topo maps, I realized how much I enjoy the planning stages of a fishing expedition, because anticipation of the adventure ahead is palpable as I ponder the best routes, pick streams and lakes to sample, choose campsites, plan meals, write up gear lists, and assemble the entire timeline—in this case, from picking them up at the airport to depositing them back there a week later.

I'm sure most of you find the planning equally engaging because of how it fuels avidity. Sometimes the adventure lives up to the hype you build in your mind as you make your plans and preparations, sometimes not, but that hardly tempers the rush of planning the details.

By the time you read this, I'll have returned from that expedition and will likely be planning the next. Sometimes I wonder if I relish the planning more than the executing.



John Shewey
Editor in Chief



Eastern
FLY FISHING
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Eastern Fly Fishing (USPS 023-198) is published bimonthly by Northwest Fly Fishing, L.L.C., P.O. Box 1209, Winthrop, WA 98862; (206) 667-9359. Periodicals Postage Paid at Seattle, WA, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send all address changes to *Eastern Fly Fishing*, P.O. Box 469071, Escondido, CA 92046-9071. Publication Mail Agreement No. 40033564. Canadian mail distributor information: Express Messenger International, P.O. Box 25058, London BRC, ON, Canada N6C 6A8. One-year subscription rates: $29.95 in the U.S., $44.95 in Canada, and $49.95 for foreign (U.S. funds only). Single-copy price: $7.99 in the U.S. and $7.99 in Canada.

Editorial correspondence should be sent to John Shewey, Editor-in-Chief, *Eastern Fly Fishing*, shewey@matchthehatch.com. *Eastern Fly Fishing* does not accept unsolicited manuscripts, photos, or other materials without prior approval by email from the editorial staff. *Eastern Fly Fishing* assumes no responsibility for the return or loss of any unsolicited materials.

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September/October 2018 Contest

CAST a CAPTION WINNER!

July/August 2018 Finalists

1. **"C'mon! Give up the dry fly already. You know you want to try a Woolly Bugger!"**
   James Hofrichter, Campbell, California

2. **"Sometimes a deal with the devil is better than no deal at all!"**
   David Hoekzema, Glenwood, Maryland

3. **"Oh, come on. One little barb won't hurt you."**
   John Surles, DeQuincy, LA

May/June 2018 Winner!

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

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

To cast your caption, go to
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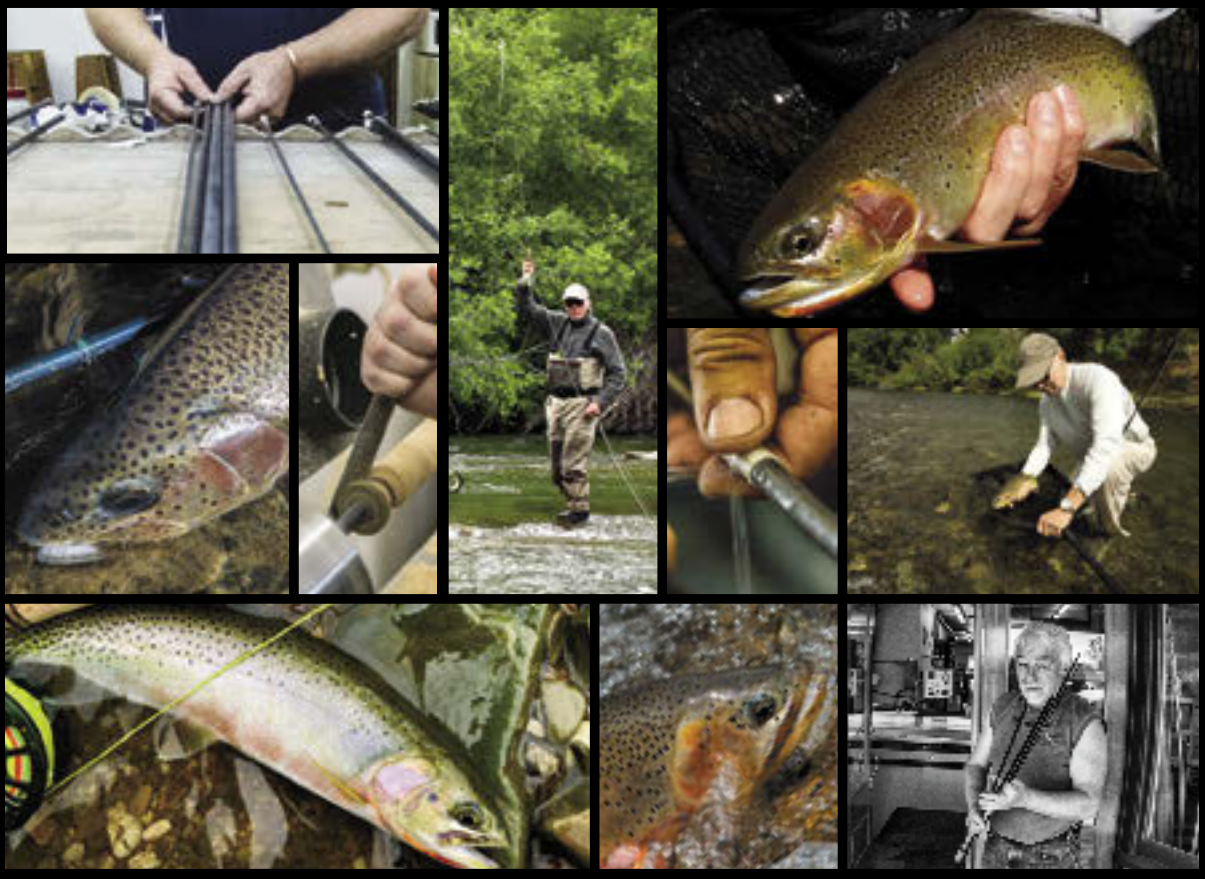

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An Underwater Perspective

Calico Bass

By Jason Arnold/www.jason-arnoldphoto.com

Masters at the Bench

Lance Egan/By Don Roberts

Bionic Ant

Headstand (Chartreuse)

Frenchie

Tungsten Rainbow Warrior (Black)

Tungsten Surveyor

GTi Caddis (Olive)

Corn-Fed Sally

Iron Lotus (Olive)

Tungsten Rainbow Warrior (Red)

Corn-Fed Caddis

Headstand (Natural)

Red Dart

GTi Caddis (Amber)

Tungsten Rainbow Warriors (Pearl)

Tungsten Tailwater Sow Bug

Blue Dart

GTi Caddis (Cream)

Six years ago, on an unbelievably balmy early October day, I drove over to Chimney Rock on Oregon's Crooked River. I went there to provide press coverage for the 2012 U.S. Fly Fishing Championship, held that year in central Oregon. As dumb luck would have it, among the numerous beats on the Crooked and among the dozens of national competitors dispersed on rivers and lakes surrounding Bend, I randomly chose the same section of water that Lance Egan, a young contestant from Utah, had drawn by lottery.

Camera slung over my shoulder and notepad in hand, I followed Egan, from a discreet distance, as he quietly, almost shyly, waded by increments center-left up the river, plucking one fish after another from the gurgling flow, all done as methodically as a farmhand pulling onions. During the specified three-hour time slot, I watched Egan land—plus, with the help of a controller, measure, score, and release—62 fish. In keeping with so many other tournaments before and since, Egan, and, in a way, his flies, won that event, thereby securing a berth in international competitions to come. At the end of the session I asked to examine the two flies dangling from his exceptionally long, ultra-fine leader. They were small, size 16 and 18, and mostly drab, but with puckish flourishes, trifling sparks of color, arguably the trademark of Euro nymphs.

Egan was born in 1978 in Salt Lake City, into a family of non-anglers. Neither his father nor his mother, nor his five

siblings, nor his granddads or uncles could tell a fly rod from a buggy whip or a hackle cape from a whisk broom. It didn't matter. Egan was somehow genetically equipped with the instincts of an angler. Although, as he explains, his parents offered a different theory.

"I have had a strong desire to fish since I was quite young," says Egan. "My parents think it stems from when I was a baby and not able to sleep through the night. When I'd wake in the middle of the night my parents would lay me down facing my father's large aquarium, where I'd ooh and aah until falling back to sleep."

Later in life, when he was a young teen, flies and fly tying caught Egan's eye. Fishing followed a short time later. Egan recalls, "My friend and next-door neighbor, Court Ross, received a fly-tying kit for Christmas. He and I quickly used up all the hooks and many of the materials that came with the kit."

Recognizing piqued interest when she saw it, Egan's mother responded with open purse strings. But instead of the usual Nikes, Levi's, and Hanes, they went shopping for marabou, chenille, and hackle—threads to dress a hook, not himself. "From then on," Egan notes, "I've never stopped tying flies for more than a few days at a time. And as I built a collection of poorly tied flies, my attention moved to fishing the flies. Without a driver's license, and with all the local streams out of bicycle range, I relied on my mother to take me to the river for brief angling sessions." His mother sat in the car and read books, while Egan scrambled down to the river and learned to read water.

Without a mentor to speed the process along, Egan gradually but ever-so-keenly acquired the solitary intensity and focus of a poised predator. He now likes to tease tournament competitors that he has an advantage over many of them in that he "learned which water types did and didn't hold fish via process of elimination"—i.e., stream-hardened calculus versus

PHOTO BY DEVIN OLSEN

Creative fly tier Lance Egan took this fine brown trout during winter on one of his favorite Utah streams (above). Lance Egan hoists both the team and individual bronze medal trophies at the 2016 World Fly Fishing Championship (right).

hand-holding and sideline coaching. For his 14th birthday, Egan requested that celebrating his birthday would entail inviting a few friends for a day on the water, and his father agreed, hauling them all to a local stream in the family Suburban. No sooner had the crew hit the water than, momentarily cursed by the river gods, Egan broke his fly rod. Grasping the utter black despair of the situation, his father immediately drove them into town to purchase a new, though "only slightly higher-quality" rod, and then promptly returned them to the river, thus salvaging the occasion.

Egan's next phase of stream schooling came through the auspices of another neighbor, Tyler Petit, who, in Egan's words, "was kind enough to let me tag along with him on a few fishing outings." Though stingy with tutelage—"we'd arrive at the river and he would give me a handful of his most productive flies and say, 'See you at dark'" —Petit never hesitated to take the eager teen to some of his favorite fishing spots. In retrospect, the thrall of place outweighed volumes of verbal instruction.

Upon graduating high school in 1996, Egan eschewed the conven-

tional college route—no four-year grind, no back-breaking debt, no grim internment in an airless cubicle—and instead declared himself to be "a student of fishing." Between bouts of competition fly fishing both here and abroad (and enough trophies to fill a mantel), Egan went to work cultivating the seemingly contradictory role of professional fly fisherman, an arc that included commercial fly tier and ongoing pro staff–fly designer at numerous manufacturers; a few years at the now-defunct Willow Creek Outfitters in Sandy, Utah; eight years at Fish Tech Outfitters in Salt Lake City—where by simply listening to his customers he "was able to absorb an abnormal amount of fishing information"—and 12 years at the Cabela's in Lehi, a small town at the north end of Utah Lake where he now resides with his wife, Autumn, and their two children.

In early 2017, Egan accepted the position of shop manager at Fly Fish Food, both a physical fly shop, located in Orem, Utah, and an online (www.flyfishfood.com) retailer of, in Egan's words, "fly-fishing goodness … including one of the most complete tying material inventories in the industry." Perhaps not all that unsurprisingly, Fly Fish Food features tutorials in both tying and fishing Euro-style nymphs, and Egan is there to lead the charge. While the shop carries a wide selection of flies, ranging from the straightforward to the razzle-dazzle, when it comes to his own flies Egan insists on patterns that are simple, effective, and easy to tie. Per the "rigors of competition angling," flies must be more or less instantly replaceable, or, to put it another way, flies that won't make you bawl like a baby if you lose one now and then.

PHOTO BY DEVIN OLSEN

To his credit, Egan ties rather unfussy, working-class flies, designed to deceive the quarry, not customers. If one of his patterns happens to turn out pretty—and clearly more than a few do—well, OK. But the benchmark remains: better brutal than beautiful.

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

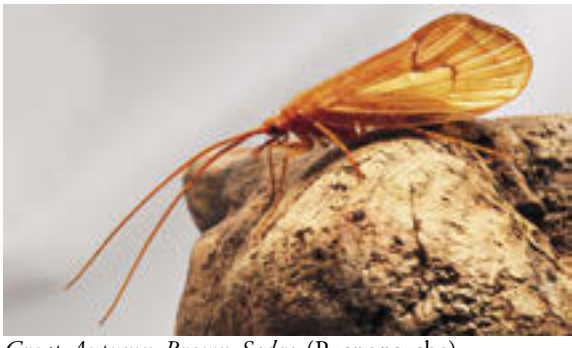
Fish Food

October Caddis: Aw, Shucks/By Don Roberts

October Caddis (Dicosmoecus). *Photo by Arlen Thomason*

When an insect the size of a Cheeto makes an ignominious three-point landing in your bowl of chili, it gets your attention. I was camped under a wind-bent white oak on Oregon's lower Deschutes River, with just a bedroll, a single-burner propane stove, and a hissing Coleman lantern for company (unless you count the black widow spider under my pillow, but that's another story). Where the lantern cast an anemic glow in the canopy overhead I could see clusters of caddisflies—some languidly fluttering, others clinging in disarray amid gnarly limb and leaf. Though this small, quiet interlude occurred at nightfall on a late September day in 1976—because it was my first ever trip to the Deschutes River and because it was my first encounter with October Caddisflies—I remember it like it was yesterday. But it wasn't until some 30 years later that I began to get a real sense of the many, mostly invisible, yet wonderfully peculiar subaqueous attributes of this autumnal creature.

Their order name, Trichoptera, means "hairy or bristly wings." Upon close examination it's easy to understand why. In contrast to the scaly texture seen on the wings of their closest relatives, butterflies and moths, the caddisfly's pup-tent-shaped wings are completely fuzzed with hair. When discussing the clockwork-like fall hatch of these giant caddisflies, in the western United States we're referring to the genus *Dicosmoecus*, while in the East we're talking about its doppelganger, *Pycnopsyche*, or, in layman's terms, the Great Autumn Brown Sedge. The two of them are so much alike in almost every respect—appearance, behavior, hatch period, and life cycle—that, except for taking pride in regional ownership, one can dispense with making separate allusions to each genera. Besides, October Caddis (or, better still, OC) just happens to be less of a mouthful.



Great Autumn Brown Sedge (Pycnopsyche). *Photo by Henry Ramsay*

Although their conclusion is unsubstantiated by any historical text, early entomologists speculated that the common name, caddis, was probably derived from the insect's larval silk-weaving faculties, relating back to the obscure word *cadyss*, a 15th-century reference to spun silk and elegant textiles. Not only do OCs number among the many caddisfly species whose larvae use the silk extruded from their salivary glands to build cases, they also occupy a special niche in the insect world as gifted stone masons. But first things first: caddisflies undergo a complete metamorphosis—egg, larva, pupa, and adult.

Following egg hatch, caddisfly larvae go through five stages of development, called instars. With each successive instar, as they eat more and grow more, the larvae must shuck and construct increasingly roomy portable housing, aka cases, requiring correspondingly sturdier materials, ranging from minuscule plant fibers and sticks in the early phases to bits of rock in the latter stages. These

granules, often referred to as ballast stones, provide the mass necessary to both stabilize and anchor the larvae in heavy currents, the OC's preferred habitat. Certain enterprising (ruthless?) jewelers have learned to exploit captive caddisfly larvae's innate architectural talents by salting their aquariums with crushed glass, gems, pearls, gold, and shiny what-have-you in order for the insects to fabricate intricate, yet markedly durable, glittery tube-shaped beads.

The subaqueous adhesive silk produced by caddisfly larvae is remarkable stuff—so much so that the bonding properties and biochemical components of the substance have inspired intensive study by both military and medical researchers. Consider the biomimetic possibilities inherent in a resilient, liquid-compatible glue: an array of demanding situational applications ranging from the perilous repair of submersibles to mending damaged internal organs in situ, heretofore an almost impossibly messy and boggy environment to work in.

Incidentally, in addition to facilitating navigation and stability in fast water, the OC's rock-clad case discourages predation. In an experiment conducted at the University of California, Berkeley, researchers performed a lab study in which *Dicosmoecus* larvae were "exposed to large steelhead trout" held in an aquarium. Both cased caddisflies and naked larvae, freshly extracted from their cases, were deposited in the tank. According to the study abstract, "No larva with a case ... was consumed during the experiment, whereas all larvae without a case were consumed."

Though hardly surprising—what predator, after all, can pass up a soft, chewy morsel?—such a blatant outcome raises questions concerning the efficacy of fishing cased caddisfly patterns.

Nothing on earth has ever not been about the passage of time, and that includes the OC's 10-month-long larval drive to pupate and morph into adulthood. After reaching full growth in its final instar, the larva forsakes its cobble condo and transforms into a scrunched-up version of an adult caddisfly sheathed in a spooky prophylactic membrane. Within two weeks the pupa will feel the urge to cut loose—literally. Observing a caddisfly shedding its pupal pod—clawing and ripping out of its pseudo-skin—means being a witness to a particularly graphic scene in miniature, not unlike catching the latest sci-fi flick on an iPhone.

Anderson's Bird of Prey October Caddis
Fly courtesy of MFC

Irresistible Caddis
Fly courtesy of Rainy's

Steve's Masquerade Caddis
Fly courtesy of Rainy's

Morning Wood Special
Fly courtesy of Umpqua

V.O. Caddis
Fly courtesy of Umpqua

Beefcake Stone
Fly courtesy of Umpqua

Yakcaddis
Fly courtesy of Orvis

Having thus gained flexibility and freedom of movement, OC pupae waste no time either swimming to the surface midstream, crawling to the shallows to emerge, or going for a rock or twig foothold at the shoreline. Regardless of the mode of emergence, it's clearly the most vulnerable stage in the OC's life journey. A nice squishy parcel of protein. Maximum exposure. In the eyes of fish and fishers, what's not to like?

The next and final angling opportunity occurs when the adult female returns to the water to lay eggs. While splendid to behold, in terms of angling the adult OC runs a distant second to pupal emergence. Because the female egg-laying imperative is rarely a mass affair and because female caddisfly behavior could be characterized as skittery—i.e., hard to get—trout are not particularly prone to key on them. That's not to say trout won't snarf down the occasional clumsy adult; it's just that it's more snatch and grab than dopey bacchanal. On the other hand, the trout that do respond tend to be the larger upperclassmen of their species.

Gary LaFontaine, author of the 336-page opus *Caddisflies* (1981), observed, "The question for fly fishermen seeking big trout is: 'Which insects provide the best opportunity for catching such fish?' My list would be: Giant Orange Sedge (*Dicosmoecus* sp.), Salmon Fly (*Pteronarcys californica*, a stonefly), and the Michigan Mayfly (*Hexagenia limbata*). *Dicosmoecus* is the most important [of the three]—and the contest is not even close."

On a more personal note, I once heard LaFontaine wryly muse that "October Caddis are so big and so lovable that you could keep them as pets."

Admittedly, hardly a practical proposition. Then again, a frisky OC would probably live about as long as the average misbegotten goldfish.

In the Studio

Mike Savlen/By Gary Weber

Mike Savlen's paintings encourage the viewer to escape reality, and that's exactly why he creates them. Fiercely proud of his nonconformist attitude and unconventional approach, Savlen bases his signature style on the fearless use of conflicting colors, intense contrasts, abstracted and layered forms, and mixed brushwork, all designed to keep viewers' eyes engaged and wandering about the canvas. He is an avid sportsman, and his passion for art is equaled only by his love for the outdoors. For the past 15 years or so, painting has allowed the 51-year-old Savlen to professionally and vividly express his fondness for both.

Even at the age of 2, Savlen realized his destiny involved art and nature. His first work involved his family's brand-new car, which was parked in the driveway as his parents painted the outside of their house and whose appearance he thought he could improve with a coating of the same paint. A native of Plymouth, Massachusetts, where, as Savlen likes to say, "There are more ponds than days of the year," he also began to fish at age 2, and immediately fell in love with the natural world. Soon, he did anything and everything to be near or on the water.

As a teen, Savlen also started dabbling with pen-and-ink drawings, which eventually led to his life-altering discovery of painting. He sold his first painting, a self-portrait, at the age of 16 to Jeanne De Reyna, wife of artist and author Rudy De Reyna, after a flat tire serendipitously stranded her directly in front of the Savlen home. With her support, another artist was born.

Savlen shunned a traditional art school education and enlisted in the military instead, serving in both the Army and Navy, which he credits with helping to form his creative vision. In order to make a living early in his artistic career, he also pursued a wide variety of professions, ranging from ditch digger to art director, Victorian restoration painter to nightclub owner, and sign carver to commercial fisherman, which he maintains has also greatly influenced his art. Savlen studied under accomplished painters, including Dennis Sheehan and Robert Scott Jackson, but left their tutelage when he felt his style was too closely emulating theirs.

Finally, at the age of 37, Savlen decided to take the ultimate leap of faith and began painting professionally full time, opening Savlen Studios (www.savlenstudios.com) in Key West, Florida, where he and his wife, Donna-Lee, sell Savlen's original and digital artwork.

While Savlen jokes that much of his work is the result of "happy accidents," he's constantly on the prowl for challenging subjects and inspirational ideas when he's out in the field, making mental notes and "painting in [his] head."

Savlen, who works with acrylics and oil paints, admits facing a blank canvas can be an intimidating force, which obviously begs the question: where does he begin? "I'll make a few broad brushstrokes until I start to see something, then maybe I'll determine the focal points, but it's all spontaneous. The painting is continually evolving as it's being created," he says.

Considering that some of his paintings require up to 50 layers of acrylic paint and washes to achieve a hologram or 3-D effect, when does he know a piece is completed? "When I'm done correcting all the mistakes," he laughs. Painting is like "building a house of cards," he insists, and just one false move or stroke of the brush can destroy the whole thing. "It really takes two people to make a painting," he explains. "The artist and then another person to pull them away from it before they can screw it up."

When Savlen isn't painting or toiling in his studio, he's out seeking the next revelation for one of his works, fishing on waters up and down the East Coast after stripers and bluefish; or in Washington state, stalking salmon and steelhead; or even in Costa Rica, targeting sailfish and roosterfish. Fishing, like art, commands a certain investment of time, but Savlen says, "We race through life and live too fast. I want people to slow down long enough to truly see something, and ultimately escape reality."

A Place I'd Rather Be (tarpon)

Striper Blitz

Walter's Pool

Trout Dreams

Silver and Sun

Brown Trout (oil)

Face of a Rainbow

Trout Rise

Roosterfish

Steelhead and Sun

Blue Ribbon Trout Fishing
Restaurant & Wine Tasting
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Reinventing Virginia's Smith River/By Bruce Ingram

Virginia's Smith River is similar to many tailrace trout fisheries across the United States. As a young fishery in the 1970s and early 1980s, the Smith experienced its golden age, a time of prolific trout populations as exemplified by the state-record 18-pound, 11-ounce brown trout caught by Martinsville's Bill Nease in 1979. A major reason the river harbored so many double-digit trout, especially browns, was Philpott Dam's turbines, which sent stunned alewives and other baitfish into the Smith, providing an incredible food source for trout.

By the 1990s and the early years of this century, the Smith had moved into middle age, with some important changes. The turbine system was renovated, and the alewife population crashed—not unusual after this baitfish has been in an impoundment for a time. The trout experienced a major diet change: from alewives to midges, crayfish, and the odd sculpin or minnow. Another negative was the scouring effect that many tailrace fisheries experience as they age. Numerous prime spawning areas simply ceased to exist. Fly fishers had to adjust expectations—10-inch browns became the norm instead of 10-pound browns.

Unfortunately, many ideas to improve the fishery proved to be expensive, according to Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) fisheries biologist Scott Smith. He explains that new turbines operating in the 75- to 500-cubic-feet-per-second range, new intakes with discharge temperatures closer to 55 degrees instead of 48, and removal of Martinsville Dam to restore connectivity to the watershed and improve habitat would all help the fishery recover. But in these times of tight budgets, none of these big-ticket acts are likely to happen in Virginia.

So what can anglers and biologists do to revitalize a tailrace fishery when big fixes are not viable? Virginia turned to innovative fisheries management. First, the VDGIF is relocating trout from where numbers are high to where they aren't.

PHOTO BY BRUCE INGRAM

"I would say that the brown trout fishery in the upper section [Philpott Dam to Martinsville Dam] is characterized by high densities of smaller brown trout in the areas near Philpott Dam, but as you move away from the dam, densities decrease and average size increases," says VDGIF fisheries manager George Palmer. "So, by reducing the densities of brown trout in locations that are zero to 10 miles below Philpott Dam, we can increase growth rates and put the removed fish below Martinsville Dam, where trout density is lower and growth is better."

Second, in 2015 and 2016, the VDGIF began stocking triploid fingerling browns below Martinsville Dam. And in May 2017, the VDGIF released 5,500 more triploids. "Prior to us stocking those fish below Martinsville Dam, there were almost no fish below 8 inches in our collections," says Palmer. "The reason we went with triploids is to provide a brown trout that should reach a desirable size faster than stocking a diploid [fertile] brown trout."

The triploid stockings seem successful. Palmer says that of the 256 collected and measured, 3 percent were in the 4- to 6-inch range, most likely from the 2016 stocking; 22 percent were in the 7- to 8-inch range, most likely from the 2015 stocking; 61 percent were in the 9- to 14-inch range; and 14 percent were greater than 15 inches, with some up to 23 inches.

Transporting fish and planting triploid browns followed on the heels of an earlier management decision: implementation of a slot limit in 2011. The entire 31-mile stretch from Philpott Dam to Mitchell Bridge (State Route 636) is under special brown trout regulations. Anglers are allowed to keep only one brown trout longer than 24 inches per day, and none from 10 to 24 inches. "There was no reason to prohibit or reduce the harvest of small trout," says Smith. "There are more than enough of them to allow for harvest, and thinning them should improve the overall fishery.

"We biologists, and others, too, did such a good job over the years of selling catch-and-release that just about everybody thinks that's the best thing. Releasing fish doesn't hurt anything, but it's not always the best strategy. Additionally, even if only 10 percent of anglers will keep small fish, that will help a little."

Tailrace trout fisheries are important resources for American fly fishers. In these shrunken-budget times, it seems the best way for anglers to revitalize older streams is to work with their state fisheries departments to devise management strategies, as is the case on Virginia's Smith River, which serves as a prime example of how modest changes can dramatically improve fisheries.

PHOTO BY JEFF ERICKSON

Gooseberry Falls State Park, MN By Jeff Erickson

Located on Minnesota's rugged North Shore of Lake Superior, Gooseberry Falls State Park was a foundational place for me. I still remember my first, feeble attempts to catch trout at age 12, probing pools below the thundering lower Gooseberry Falls. Through the years, I've returned many times.

Threading through the park, the Gooseberry River holds both brook and rainbow trout. Brookies were originally native below the falls and in Lake Superior, where historically they grew prodigiously and were known as "coasters." While coasters are scarce today, brookies are now abundant above the falls, residing in even the smallest tributaries.

Rainbows were introduced to the Lake Superior watershed in the 1880s and quickly established wild populations. As with many other North Shore streams, the most anticipated angling event on the Gooseberry today is the arrival of spawning steelhead. In *The North Shore: A Four-Season Guide to Minnesota's Favorite Destination*, Shawn Perich declares, "On the North Shore, you just aren't an angler unless you're a steelheader."

The silvery, Olympic-caliber aerialists typically move into the river when it swells after warm spring rains and snowmelt, as water temperatures rise to 40 degrees. Peak action occurs in April and May, although there can be fall hookups too, which might also include wild pink salmon or even a wayward chinook.

PHOTO BY JEFF ERICKSON

One characteristic that makes Gooseberry attractive to steelheaders is that there is nearly a mile of river below the lower falls that the fish can access. This might not sound like much, but many North Shore streams have fierce, impregnable cataracts hugging the Lake Superior shoreline, limiting steelhead spawning territory and angling options.

In deeper holes and faster water, beadheads or split shot get offerings on the bottom, where the steelhead lurk. Glo Bug permutations and 7- to 9-weight rods are standard. Because long casts are usually unnecessary, many experienced North Shore steelheaders remove the fly line from their

reels and employ 6- to 12-pound-test monofilament instead. Unlike large West Coast steelhead rivers, this is not Spey water.

After river levels drop in late May and the steelhead have returned to the big lake, anglers focus on brook trout, armed with 3- to 5-weight wands. While the pools below the falls are exceptionally scenic, the scoured river-bottom rock offers relatively poor habitat for aquatic insects and trout. Consequently, anglers may enjoy better success by taking one of the trails upstream from the State Route 61 bridge. As flows continue to fall and water temperatures rise, brook trout aficionados explore the upper river or tiny tributaries like the Little Gooseberry and Skunk, Mink, and Dago Creeks, which flow through a mix of public and private lands.

The North Shore's bedrock doesn't support abundant aquatic insects, and after becoming a roaring maelstrom at spring runoff it drops precipitously to creeklike levels during dry spells. As a result, the river tends to be attractor water, so try Royal Wulffs and Woolly Worms.

A compelling reason to visit the Gooseberry River is that it flows through one of Minnesota's most beloved state parks (www.dnr.state.mn.us). Besides the iconic series of waterfalls, park visitors find attractive campsites and picnic areas; a dramatic rocky coast, with sheltered Agate Beach; spectacular vistas from the SR 61 bridge, itself a design marvel; historic structures built by Civilian Conservation Corps crews during the Great Depression; a cutting-edge visitor center; and an excellent trail system.

In his instructive book, *The Streams and Rivers of Minnesota*, retired fisheries professor and fly angler Thomas F. Waters described the area's appeal succinctly: "There are many places on earth . . . that have a special meaning to the people of a region. Perhaps none so much, though, as Minnesota's North Shore."

Rock Creek, IN By Nathan Perkinson

J. E. Roush Lake Fish and Wildlife Area (FWA), commonly known as Huntington Lake among locals, is a 15-mile-long property along the Wabash River near Huntington, Indiana. The FWA covers about 7,300 acres of land and 1,200 acres of lakes and ponds. Roush Lake, a long impoundment of the Wabash River, accounts for 900 of those water acres and is busy with anglers and recreational boaters throughout the summer. But tucked in among the backwaters is a special treat for anglers willing to hike the rugged trails of the FWA. Rock Creek is a small tributary of the Wabash River, flowing for about 25 miles through northeastern Indiana. The lower 2 miles of Rock Creek are within Roush FWA, and this stretch is a rarity in Indiana: a catch-and-release-only smallmouth stream.

PHOTO BY KYRA PERKINSON

A 2008 survey by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources recommended the catch-and-release regulations after the stream was determined to hold large numbers of smallmouth bass. According to the report, 75 percent of all game fish in Rock Creek are smallmouth, with an average of more than 750 per mile of river. Fellow smallmouth junkies will be quick to recognize the high odds presented by these numbers, so the state made a wise decision in protecting these fish with C&R regulations.

True to its name, Rock Creek is dominated by rocky structure. Gravelly islands and deep, rocky holes are the primary bass-holding haunts on the stream. You'll also find plenty of cover in the forms of fallen trees and sunken logs, along with overhanging brush and rock ledges. The easiest access to Rock Creek is just off Indiana Route 3 south of Markle. Turn west onto County Road 150 South to head into Roush FWA, where there are several turnouts near the stream. Be prepared to hike. Obvious paths lead down to the stream, but they are rugged and not maintained.

Conventional wisdom would suggest fishing crayfish patterns along the rocky bottom for smallmouth. However, Rock Creek is so shallow and clear that top-water bugs and streamers fished just below the surface are more effective than bottom flies, which just get snagged and break off on the sharp rocks. I have a 7-foot, 4-weight fly rod that is perfect for small streams like this; the short rod makes it easy to keep my backcast out of trouble, while the 4-weight line is still beefy enough to throw streamers and bass bugs. You needn't worry about specialized tackle, however, as there's nothing technical about this kind of fly fishing. Just get your fly over cover and structure and you'll catch bass.

Two- to 2.5-inch bass flies are perfect here. You'll catch a lot of bass on top, so consider using foam surface bugs rather than spun-hair bugs. Foam floats longer and withstands multiple hookups better than hair bugs. Gurgler patterns with rubber legs and flash are good choices. For streamers, bring a selection of Woolly Buggers and bucktails in white, black, olive, yellow, and combinations of those shades. You can fish Clouser Minnows in some of the deeper holes, but unweighted streamers are more appropriate for most of the stream because you just don't need to get that deep to draw strikes.

Rock Creek smallmouth reach about 18 inches, with most in the 10- to 12-inch range—not bad for small-stream bass. You'll have a lot of fun catching these modest-size bass. They rise willingly, hammer flies with enthusiasm, and, best of all, leap acrobatically when hooked. Rock Creek also has bluegills and rock bass, but you'll know when you hook a Rock Creek smallmouth because they jump like rainbow trout.

PHOTO BY KYRA PERKINSON

The fishing season on Rock Creek runs from late May or early June into October (check annual regulations). The stream mouth is located in the backwaters of Roush Lake, and it can take a long time for spring runoff and snowmelt to work through the stream. Once summer rolls around, Rock Creek is pleasant to wade, despite the rugged terrain.

Fly fishing like this isn't for everyone. Don't bother if you're a boat angler, freezer filler, or trophy hunter. But if you want to try your hand on a scenic stream stuffed with gorgeous native smallmouth, you'll love Rock Creek.

PHOTO BY BOB MALLARD

Deboullie Public Reserved Land, ME

By Joseph Albanese

The Deboullie Public Reserved Land, about 30 miles from the Canadian border, comprises approximately 22,000 acres managed by the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands. The name is a bastardization of the French word *débouler*, which means "to tumble down," a testament to the glaciers that carved the area's geological features, such as caves that retain snow and ice throughout the summer and talus slopes; Deboullie also supports novel plants such as arctic sandwort. Deep crater lakes, ranging from 8 to 341 acres, were also cut into the earth's surface some 8,000 years ago, and reach depths of up to 120 feet.

These pristine lakes, clear and cold, support a thriving fishery, including healthy populations of native brook trout. But the stars of the show are the arctic char (spelled "charr" in Maine), called "blueback trout" by the locals. Largely denizens of the far north, these colorful char also inhabit Deboullie, Pushineer, Black, and Gardner Ponds—among the few populations in the Lower 48. Catch rates are relatively low, but the novelty of the pursuit makes it well worthwhile.

Frank Frost of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife says the first half of June and the last half of September are prime times for anglers, with the beginning of June, when the fish will rise during hatches of mayflies and caddisflies, offering the best shot at bluebacks on the surface. In the heat of the summer, the char tend to go deep, seeking their ideal water temperature of 50 to 55 degrees. In some ponds, however, they sometimes remain in the littoral zone for extended periods. Frost says Deboullie Pond is his first choice for arctic char, with Black Pond a close second.

PHOTO BY JOSEPH ALBANESE

Bob Mallard, a registered Maine guide and vice chair of Native Fish Coalition (NFC; www.NativeFishCoalition.org), has fished Deboullie several times, and once caught a 16-inch arctic char on a dry fly, a relatively rare feat. He has been an advocate for protecting Maine's indigenous char since long before NFC was founded in 2017. If you want to tangle with a blueback, Mallard recommends small minnow patterns fished deep and slow. His favorites include traditional Maine staples such as the Gray Ghost, Edson Tiger, Mickey Finn, and Black Nose Dace; nymphs can also produce. Of course, all of these flies also produce quite well for brook trout.

Access to this region is relatively easy. Deboullie is tucked inside the North Maine Woods (www.northmainewoods.org), 3.4 million acres of land owned by a combination of paper companies, the state, and local townships. Because the area is actively logged, entrance is through one of 14 checkpoints. Closest to the Public Reserved Land is the Fish River Checkpoint, about 26 miles from Portage, a town of about 250 year-round residents that hosts an annual dogsled race, one of the qualifiers for the Iditarod. At the gate, you pay a fee to enter ($10 for the day plus $12 to camp for Maine residents, or $15/$15 for nonresidents) and the attendants record your license plate info and your itinerary, so they have an idea where to look in case you don't return on time.

Beware the log trucks on the roads: stay alert and be ready to pull to the side to give them room. Good tires and a full-size spare are a must; the gravel can chew up tires. Getting from pond to pond is easy utilizing the 12-mile-long network of well-maintained trails, though you can drive right up to many. Togue, Perch, Pushineer, and Deboullie Ponds feature gravel ramps suitable for launching trailered boats up to 16 feet long or so, with the shallow angle making tilt trailers ideal. But these lakes are tailor-made for human-powered vessels, such as canoes and inflatable craft.

PHOTO BY BOB MALLARD

The state maintains 29 campsites in Deboullie, on a first-come, first-served basis. I stayed right on the shores of Pushineer, enjoying excellent brook trout fishing, a lack of cell service, and serenading loons as I watched the fire dance. If you want to experience the Maine sporting camp tradition, Red River Camps, (207) 435-6000, www.redrivercamps.com, is within walking distance of many of the ponds.

Paulins Kill, NJ By Thomas McDonough

An Irish proverb states that "if you listen to the sound of the river, you will get a trout."

This morning I'm all ears as the Paulins Kill, a 41-mile tributary of the Delaware River in western New Jersey's Sussex and Warren Counties, sings seductively. Its water is gin clear and liltingly splashes around boulders and over underwater shale ledges, as I cast an olive-green beadhead Woolly Bugger. The water gurgles over and through a logjam, creating a deep pool that looks like a shimmering mirror that reflects the surrounding green forest. It's as pretty a setting as any I've seen on a trout river, and if a fat rainbow or brown trout smacks my fly, I'll join its chorus.

Despite offering excellent fly-fishing opportunities for some very large trout, the Paulins Kill flies under the radar in the Garden State. Most talk of trout streams here involves the big four: Flat Brook and the Musconetcong, South Branch Raritan, and Pequest Rivers.

But the Paulins Kill has a lot going for it. Water quality is excellent, says Chris Kuhn, owner of the Lazy K Ranch, a 25-acre ranch that works to protect upland game habitats and the cold headwaters of the Paulins Kill. Kuhn also is head guide for Knot Just Flies, the local fly-fishing shop, and The Last Frontier Angler, a guide service.

The Paulins Kill is fed by numerous springs and mountain brooks and creeks, including Moores, Culver, and Trout Brooks and Jacksonburg Creek. The brooks and creeks, in turn, receive water from several large lakes in the area: Culvers Lake, Lake Owassa, Bear Swamp, and Swartswood Lake.

"The natural springs and feeder creeks are Class-One trout streams, with lots of cold water that keeps the river cool even in the summer," Kuhn says. "They play an important role in keeping the trout population healthy and growing."

Some feeder creeks have wild trout to go along with the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's liberal stocking program in spring and fall.

The Paulins Kill, a large trout river by New Jersey standards that reaches 60-plus-feet wide in some spots, also is fortunate to flow through a number of state parks and forests, such as Swartswood State Park, Worthington State Forest, and Stokes State Forest. In addition, townships all along the river, working with New Jersey's Green Acres program, have set aside more than 6,000 acres in wildlife management areas that minimize environmental damage.

The state's third-largest contributor to the Delaware River, the Paulins Kill is characterized by deep, slow pools, tumbling pocket water, waterfalls, cascades, and dams. The river, especially its northernmost regions, has more posted areas than other New Jersey steams, providing safe havens for fish to hold over. Kuhn points out, however, that most landown-

ers are generous in granting access to the river on their property. "They just want you to ask permission," he says.

The Paulins Kill produces dense mayfly and caddisfly hatches, which allow trout to feed voraciously and grow large. In early April, when waters can be high and discolored, nymphs, San Juan worms, and streamers are effective. The first hatches occur in late April when Sulphur duns make their appearance. Sulphurs hatch profusely through August, as do Slate Drakes, which appear continuously through October. In late April and throughout June, major hatches include Quill Gordons, Blue-Winged Olives, Hendricksons, March Browns, and Light Cahills. Small caddisfly and terrestrial patterns are important during the summer. As an added bonus, the Paulins Kill boasts a thriving population of smallmouth bass that are great fun to catch during summer.

PHOTO BY THOMAS MCDONOUGH

The Paulins Kill is easy to reach along State Route 94, which follows the river from Newton south to Columbia. The most popular area to fish is around Blairstown, which can get crowded in the early season. North and south of Blairstown, you may have the river all to yourself, wading large pools that offer great dry-fly action. There are excellent trails all along the river, such as the Paulinskill Valley Trail, a 27-mile network of paths created from long-abandoned railroad track beds.

Kuhn enjoys the lack of fishing pressure and the Paulins Kill's rural surroundings. "The farms, fields, the hills in the distance, the morning mist over the river create a unique New Jersey setting you don't see anywhere else in the state," he says. "You can be out fishing, and there will be a cow or a horse in the river next to you. The Paulins Kill can transport you into another time period—what New Jersey must have look like in the 1860s."

New Orvis Rod-Repair System Makes Repairs Painless

Rod repairs are no fun for anyone, but modern technology can expedite the process, and Orvis has just introduced a new rod-repair procedure that makes it seamless and quick for customers to return their rods for repair and track their progress.

The process starts with rod registration: customers register Orvis rods when purchased, and then, if a rod needs to be repaired, the customer simply signs into their account and all Orvis rods they have purchased will appear. It's then a simple matter of picking which rod needs repair and filling out a simple online form. The entire process takes less than two minutes, including paying the $60 handling fee, and a shipping label can be automatically printed. The online repair center also includes detailed instructions for packaging a rod for shipping, and then it is a simple matter of dropping the rod off at a FedEx shipping center or bringing the rod to a local Orvis company-owned store. An order confirmation is then emailed to the customer, with a repair number that allows them to track the progress of their rod. Of course, customers can always call the Orvis technical line to talk to an Orvis expert about the repair, but only if they desire. The online process is quick and seamless, and the repair is immediately entered into Orvis's system.

PHOTO BY JOHN SHEWEY

One of the most exciting aspects of this new system is that, for the new Helios 3 rods, a customer can order a new section without the need to return the entire rod. The consistency of these blanks and a new ferrule design mean that a new section can be sent to a customer with complete confidence that it will fit perfectly (if the butt section is damaged, though, that piece must be returned). Rod repair does take up to six weeks, depending on the availability of repair parts. But this new system will greatly decrease the time and effort a customer requires to begin the process.

East Hawksbill Creek, VA By Connor Tapscott

A shroud of fog settled along the valley floor and lightly clawed at the base of the mountains. The first rays of light brushed a brilliant display of soft colors above the hills and had my eyes constantly leaving the road. I followed Skyline Drive, in Shenandoah National Park, up into the mountains, with views stretching out below on both sides. The going was slow, as most turns hid unconcerned deer around the corner. After finding the Lower Hawksbill Trail parking area near Hawksbill Mountain, I stepped out of my truck into the cool mountain air and found my good buddy, Patrick Weddel, waiting for me.

Weddel has fished just about every thin blue line in Shenandoah National Park in western Virginia. So when he presented this opportunity to fish a stream he had never seen, with limited access and no trails, I jumped at the chance. Chasing native brook trout in small, clear, secluded mountain streams is Weddel's passion, and he's good at it.

We strapped our gear to our packs for the lengthy descent down an unmarked mountainside (the parking area is 15.5 miles south of the Thornton Gap Entrance Station to Shenandoah). A huge smile divided Weddel's thick beard as we stepped into the cover of the trees and entered his natural habitat. We slid and stumbled down the blanket of wet leaves and rocks, crossing over the Appalachian Trail, until finally finding Hawksbill Spring, a trickle of water dripping out of the side of the mountain, indicating that we were headed in the correct direction. This trickle—East Hawksbill Creek—became bigger, louder, and wider as we continued down the slippery slope.


PHOTO BY CONNOR TAPSCOTT

A thousand vertical feet later, we reached a point where we could resist the river no further. We donned waders and took a couple of celebratory swigs from a bottle of bourbon. I splashed into the cold, clear water, hesitant to make my first cast. I did not want our hike to be in vain. But then I gently dropped a size

PHOTO BY CONNOR TAPSCOTT

16 Royal Wulff near a small waterfall. It drifted back toward me for about a second before getting demolished by a flash of bright orange. The next three casts all produced beautiful native fish.

The fish were everywhere, but they made us work, often taking the fly only if it was presented in very tight spots. We worked our way up through the pools, and as we regained altitude, the scenery of the river began to shift. Canyon-like ramparts rose above both banks. At first the walls were low enough to climb over, but eventually they towered above us and climbing them was impossible. Almost unnaturally green moss decorated these walls, which led to high, plunging waterfalls.

One such fall cascaded into a long, narrow, deep run. "I guarantee there's a nice fish in there," I murmured to myself as I stripped some line off my reel. Weddel and I stood atop a bolder overlooking the run as I drifted a fly through the pool. Just as my confidence in the run was fading, a big dark shape shot out from the churning water below and rose to my fly. Unfortunately, when I see a fish moving toward my line I have a tendency to get excited and set the hook into the air before the fish has a chance to take a look at it. Needless to say, the brookie was unable to follow my fly up into the tree I tangled it in. Weddel gasped quietly and squeezed my shoulder.

"That was a big fish," he whispered under his breath, as if worried about offending it. "Give him a second and then try again."

So I waited an agonizing minute or two before casting again. The fish rose again. I held steady and waited for the fly to disappear. The rod bent and the fish thrashed. This time I got to see the brookie jump a few times before it swam free. Normally, this is when the water receives an abrupt, aggressive slap from my rod, but knowing how many of these fish lay in each pool ahead allowed me to shrug it off.

We lost count of the number of brook trout we caught, and after a long hike back up, we were both happy to be sitting in our trucks. We congratulated ourselves on a day well spent as we rubbed our tired legs and watched the sun sink out of sight behind the mountains we love so much.

PHOTO BY CONNOR TAPSCOTT

EXPOSURE

Pike Fishing in the Berkshires

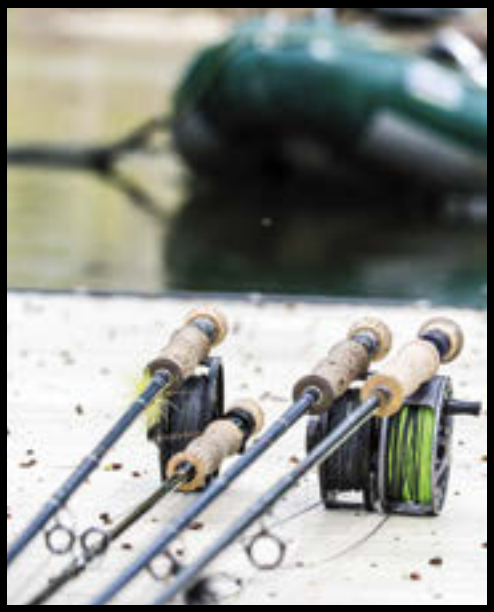
By Joe Klementovich

Harry Desmond, owner and head guide at Berkshire Rivers Fly Fishing, launches his inflatable raft to start the day on the Housatonic River near Great Barrington, Massachusetts.

Harry Desmond and Erik Eisele head downstream on the Housy in hopes of finding willing pike.

Big or bigger is the name of the game when it comes to pike flies.

Erik Eisele learns the finer points of fly fishing for pike on the Housatonic River.



A quiver of rods on the dock, ready for action

Harry Desmond shows off Erik Eisele's first pike, landed just minutes into a float on the Housatonic.

Pike flies drying out after faithful service on the Housatonic River

Erik Eisele makes a few last casts just upstream from the take-out, ending a day of fishing.

Harry Desmond works the oars to keep Erik Eisele in the sweet spot to tempt a pike to chase a fly.

Teamwork: Erik Eisele handles the rod while Harry Desmond mans the net to land a Housatonic River pike.

A Housatonic pike with a face full of big, blue fly

Raising a glass to big, toothy pike at Moe's Tavern, a block away from the Housatonic River in Lee, Massachusetts.

Joe Klementovich is a New Hampshire–based photographer specializing in fly fishing and other outdoor sports. See more of his work at www.klementovichphoto.com.

Gaspé Peninsula, Quebec

Saint-Jean, York, and Dartmouth Rivers: Atlantic Salmon Holy Trinity

By Mark B. Hatter

Calf-deep in cool, powder-blue water, I continued my mechanical cast-across-the-stream-twice, step-downstream-once rhythm, completely lost in thought. My fishing partner, Bob Ferguson, was a few casts above me, working the edge of a trough at the top of the Wild Rose Pool on the Saint-Jean River in Gaspé, Quebec, Canada. I couldn't see any salmon, and I had already worked the pool twice, but Ferguson assured me, "The fish *are* here."

The day before I had been one of five lottery winners to draw a pair of permits to fish all 15 pools of the Saint-Jean River, Sector 1, and had selected Ferguson, my Atlantic salmon mentor, as my fishing partner over the other guys in our group. Ferguson is a Canadian with a lifelong Atlantic salmon addiction. I am a rookie from the Deep South of the United States, but at last I felt like I knew what I was doing after four days of Ferguson's helpful instruction and coaching.

"Remember: you just need to piss one off," he reminded me. That and "keep your fly in the water" are what you have to do, according to Ferguson, and I am a true believer.

Three days earlier, Ferguson was one of the lottery winners for Zone 6 on the York River, *the* most historically productive stretch of pools for big Atlantic salmon of the three major rivers on the entire Gaspé Peninsula. He selected me as his fishing partner over his lifelong buddies, Murray Purcell and Randy Banting, "because he has the camera," he told them.

ALL PHOTOS BY MARK B. HATTER

Bob Ferguson took this beautiful salmon on a wet fly in the Wild Rose Pool on the super-clear Saint-Jean River (above and right).

Arriving at Cuve Pool on the York, we could see big salmon holding in a shallow run below the pool and many more very big salmon milling around deep in the pool itself. At the top of Cuve, a narrow and steep plunge prevents salmon from easily working their way farther upriver, so they use the deep pool at Cuve to rest before expending precious energy to vault up the plunge. This is why Cuve is one of the most reliable pools for big fish on these three rivers on the Gaspé Peninsula.

Throughout a very long day, we traded turns trying to piss one off. It was an education in persistence, endurance, patience, and acceptance, all virtuous qualities possessed by the diehards who pursue Atlantic salmon fishing. We changed flies, going from wet to dry and back again; we rested the pool frequently; we took naps; I explored the lower pools where other diehards plied their flies with equal but unproductive persistence.

Late in the afternoon, after resting the pool for 15 minutes, it was again my turn. Ferguson suggested switching back to a fat, green Bomber, even though the same pod of fish we'd been targeting most of the day had already resolutely rejected that fly. On my fifth skate, something happened: a long chrome fish actually followed the fly. Cool, calm, circumspect Ferguson suddenly became animated.

"Wait!" he barked. "Don't cast yet! You have the attention of that fish and it will attack the fly on the next drift. Let's give it a rest for a few minutes, then try him again."

The wait was painful, allowing buck fever to set in with all its debilitating symptoms: weak knees, rapid heartbeat, slurring of fine motor controls. But after a pregnant pause, Ferguson signaled me to try the fish again and I made a good cast, skating the fly back over the run once more. *Wham!* A salmon launched up and slammed the dry fly, which resulted in Ferguson's next lesson in the vagaries of Atlantic salmon fishing and a deepening of my fever: do not set the hook as soon as a salmon takes a dead-drifted dry fly.

Because salmon do not eat once they enter sweet water, their attack on a fly is done simply to move an object of threat from its path, or so the theory (one of many) goes. When a salmon will become upset enough to attack is anybody's guess, but getting that response is what salmon anglers hope to do. "Salmon won't spit the fly until they have moved it far away from the spot where they are resting," Ferguson told me. "You have time for them to roll back down before lifting to set the hook. Give 'em a rest. He didn't feel the hook, so I'm sure he will go after the fly again."

Indeed, I apparently did a really good job of annoying that salmon, because it hit the Bomber four times over the next 15 minutes before skulking forward into the deeper pool. So there I sat, a hot mess, with Ferguson chuckling, "Welcome to the lessons of Atlantic salmon fishing!"

A Lesson in Geography and History

The Gaspé Peninsula, part of Quebec, lies between New Brunswick and Newfoundland on Canada's east coast. The first Europeans in the area, who settled on the peninsula nearly 500 years ago, found a mild climate for its relative

latitude (both hot and cold extremes are mitigated by its geographic location on Gaspé Bay and the Atlantic Ocean) and an abundance of cod, tuna, mackerel, herring, and even whales in the offshore waters. The long summers were good for agriculture, the flowing rivers provided power to grind grain, and abundant timber provided necessary fuel. The settlers prospered, and for several hundred years the peninsula was self-sufficient.

But in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the plentiful natural resources that created opportunities and supported early settlements became the objects of exploitation that negatively affected the offshore fisheries, the forests, and the salmon rivers themselves. By the end of the 19th century, industrial-grade timber logging had become the peninsula's economic engine. Commercial sawmills sprang up on the shores of Gaspé Bay. The York, Saint-Jean, and Dartmouth Rivers played vital roles in ferrying lumber from the inland camps to the bay's sawmills.

The 1973 recollections of Tom Mullin and George McAfee, respectively 89 and 86 when interviewed, provide a glimpse into how the industry operated during its heyday. Excerpts from these interviews are displayed at the Saumon Gaspé office, the official salmon headquarters for anglers in Gaspe. One from Tom Mullins reads, "In 1907, the Calhoun Lumber Company was almost a village in itself. There were sleeping barracks and lunchrooms, a huge stable for the hundred-odd draft horses that worked in the lumber camps and out in the woods, … the long sawmills where steam engines fueled by slab-burning fires boiled water to provide the steam needed to run the huge saw blades, the tall stack [that] never stopped smoking."

Another interviewee, Donate Samuel, worked for Canadian International Paper (CIP) in the 1930s. He recalled, "All winter long, pulpwood (four-foot logs) was piled along the banks of frozen streams, often using horse-drawn sleighs. Beginning in October, men would clear the brush from along the streams and river banks to make the spring log drive easier. They would build dams, particularly downstream, to raise the water level so the logs could float more freely on the water. In late April when the York was ice-free and its water level the highest, the woodcutters would dump the logs into the streams draining into the York River. When logjams occurred, the men would break them up using dynamite."

Ironically, while the timber industry competed for river access, beginning in the 1870s, wealthy landowners began fishing the rivers for salmon and strictly restricted fishing rights to just friends and family. At the time, access to the Saint-Jean, the richest in salmon of the three Gaspé rivers, was owned by Fred Curtis of Boston and the river was completely private. However, in 1874, the Canadian government (perhaps miffed over an American restricting fishing by affluent Canadians) withdrew Curtis's private access rights and granted them to Frederick Temple Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood, Lord Dufferin, Canada's governor general at the time.

During the same period, the York and Dartmouth Rivers were leased to wealthy Americans and English-speaking

Murdoch Pool on the York River is just below Cuve Pool. This lucky lottery winner had the premier pool to himself and earned two strikes early in the day, but lost both fish (above).

A Bomber pattern bobs along on the Saint-Jean under a bright autumn sun. Gaspé anglers fish both dry and wet flies for Atlantic salmon. Colorful salmon flies arguably are tied for the delight of the salmon angler, but many aficionados swear by certain patterns and certain colors, and make sure their box is loaded with what they truly believe gives them an edge (above). Ground zero for licensing and lottery registration, Saumon Gaspé's headquarters are located in Gaspé (right).

Canadians. Members of exclusive fishing clubs, "sportsmen" as they came to be known, for nearly a century ruled as masters over the rivers for their exclusive angling pleasure.

Between 1899 and 1909, all the Saint-Jean, York, and Dartmouth Rivers became private properties of both American and Canadian fishing clubs. The private-access fishing pressure, coupled with commercial netting of salmon in Gaspé Bay, put tremendous pressure on the salmon stocks, so much so that the Canadian government began commercial stocking as early as 1874, when five hatcheries were opened on major rivers in the eastern part of Quebec, including one in Gaspé.

By the early 1950s, CIP had ceased operations in Gaspé, and other companies ended river log drives by 1960. Between 1976 and 1983, the provincial government began to end private fishing club leases on the three rivers, incrementally returning them to the public. Today, public access is the refreshing provincial policy of Gaspé's salmon rivers. The upper sector of the Saint-Jean remains the only stretch of river authorized for private lease by a fishing club.

As my group walked the three rivers over the course of a week, we saw no evidence of the destructive practices that beleaguered the rivers during the height of logging. Indeed, the Saint-Jean, York, and Dartmouth have almost regained their virgin appearance. The only apparent legacy left from the era of private fishing clubs are the names of pools along the rivers, such as La Chute and Montagnard on the York, and Petite Fourche on the Dartmouth, to name a few.

Quebec administers fair public access via the use of a daily lottery system; drawings are held for the best pools in the best zones or sectors of the three rivers during the fishing season. Gaining access to fish a top-producing pool that might otherwise command thousands of dollars on an exclusively private river requires a bit of luck and the perseverance to return to the ranger station each day to register for the next day's drawings. Should you win, fishing is subject to a small fee; the price is pool dependent.

But you don't need to win to fish. The York and Dartmouth Rivers have plenty of non-lottery zones, also fee dependent, with plenty of pools that hold fish, if you are an unlucky lottery player. In two of the four days I fished with Ferguson, Purcell, and Banting, we failed to draw top pool choices but were able to freely fish the many non-lottery zones.

While the numbers of natal fish returning today to Gaspé rivers are nowhere near the numbers two centuries ago, it is no small wonder that 200 years of commercial pressure, private fishing clubs, and habitat destruction haven't extinguished them all. Fortunately, the peninsula's rivers appear to be at equilibrium. Consistent fisheries management and catch studies dating back to 1986 demonstrate that the numbers of grilse and mature salmon released have been largely consistent, year after year. This is good news for Atlantic salmon anglers looking for public access and a chance to catch and release a trophy fish.

Green Bomber

Tied by Murry Purcell

Hook:	Long-shank bronze streamer/wet fly, sizes 2–4
Tail:	White calf tail
Wing:	White calf tail
Body:	Green-dyed deer hair, spun, densely packed, and trimmed
Hackle:	Orange saddle hackle

And Now, the Rest of the Story

By the time I'd come down off my adrenaline-induced emotional roller coaster, the sun had left us behind the canyon walls at Cuve, leaving the pool in deep shadows. Purcell and Banting would be expecting us at the trailhead soon, so I

figured it was a good time to pack up my load of camera gear and haul it up the 67 steps to the top of the canyon while Ferguson made a few more casts. I met the boys on top after my second haul of gear, then the three of us descended the stairs about halfway to watch Ferguson float a Bomber in nearly slack current over the deep pool. It seemed to be an exercise in futility.

But as we watched, incredibly, the largest salmon in the pool ascended and angrily smashed Ferguson's nearly motionless green Bomber. Ferguson waited for the fish to turn down, fly in mouth, before setting the hook. And then all hell broke loose. The massive fish leaped and went airborne, like a tarpon, and the other guys screamed in unison, "Grab the camera!"

Crap! I climbed, or rather ran, up 36 steps, got the camera, then raced back down, making adjustments for the low light as I ran. Meantime, Ferguson was into a salmon of a lifetime, one that weighed 30 pounds.

Good juju was in abundance. My camera adjustments were correct for the conditions and the salmon made a bad decision to slug it out in the deep pool rather than running downstream, where it surely would have gained its freedom. All the while, Purcell and Banting whooped and hollered in the makeshift grandstand of the stairs. Ferguson eventually conquered his trophy, then rested it gently, with reverence and respect, before releasing it back into the pool while I clicked away.

Three days and a thousand casts later, on Sector 1 at the Wild Rose Pool, my salmon trials and lessons left me feeling, at last, like a true Atlantic salmon fisherman. So I not only believed, but *felt* the salmon in the pool when Ferguson reminded me, "The fish *are* here."

A jarring throb at the end of the rod, which was swinging a wet fly, broke my thoughts. The hook did not find purchase, but it was surely a salmon. Give it a rest, I remembered reflexively while changing my fly to a green Bomber. After several minutes, I launched a cast across the pool, took up the slack, and dead-drifted the Bomber down the length of the run. A shiny scissors-beak broke the surface at the bottom of the pool and struck my fly. I waited until I felt the weight, then set the hook. A bright chrome fish, tight to the end of my line, leapt from the pool and Ferguson whooped encouragement.

My lessons were complete, as I had matriculated through Atlantic salmon academy and passed the final exam when Ferguson required me to land and then safely release my fish without assistance.

I finally understood what it means to be an Atlantic salmon fisherman.

Mark B. Hatter is a widely traveled writer and photographer who lives in Florida.

Gaspé Peninsula NOTEBOOK

When: May 25–Sept. 30 on the York, Saint-Jean, and Dartmouth Rivers

Where: Gaspé Peninsula, Quebec.

Headquarters: The city of Gaspé is ground zero for all three rivers, none of which is more than 20 minutes from city center. *Information*: Saumon Gaspé, (866) 332-2324, www.saumongaspe.com. Saumon Gaspé provides a free comprehensive pamphlet that explains the fishing regulations, the lottery system, and how it works, and has maps for each of the three rivers, showing pool names and locations, and historical catch data, available http://saumongaspe.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/saumongaspe-cartes-2.jpg.

Appropriate gear: 9-wt. single- and two-handed rods, floating and sinking-tip lines.

Useful fly patterns: Bombers (green, white), Green Highlander, Jock Scott, Pompier, Black Bear Green Butt.

Necessary accessories: Waders or wading boots, polarized sunglasses, layered clothing.

Fly shops/guides: A wide array of flies is for sale at Saumon Gaspe headquarters, 25 Blvd. York East, Gaspé, (866) 332-2324, www.saumongaspe.com. David Bishop, (418) 392-3620, www.atlanticsalmonguides.com; Jean-Phillip Tessier, (819) 695-3827, www.jptessier.com; Don Muelrath, (888) 347-4896, www.flyfishingadventures.org/fish-gaspe.

Nonresident license: For license prices and types, see www.saumongaspe.com/salmon-fishing/rates-daily-passes-and-membership-cards/.

Books: *Salmon Fishing* by Hugh Falkus; *Leaper: The Wonderful World of Atlantic Salmon Fishing* by Charles Gaines and Monte Burke (editors); *Atlantic Salmon: A Fly Fishing Reference* and *Modern Atlantic Salmon Flies* by Paul C. Marriner.

Long Island Sound, NY

The Three Great Eastern Rips and Islands

By Tom Migdalski

As I stood at the console and watched buddy Sean Callinan unfurl his line from the bow platform, I heard a noise behind me, like a small wave crashing on a beach. I spun around to witness the residual white water of an aggressive predator—one of many such breaks dimpling the ocean that calm autumn afternoon.

I peered into the steely-blue depths at the remnants of a fleeing baitfish. Dozens of iridescent scales sparkled beneath the surface, like stars on a clear Montana night.

My daydream snapped when Sean shouted, "I'm on!" from his perch atop the bow. Line melted off his reel, which was spinning like a tire in a snowstorm. "It feels like a good one," he said. "You'd better start the motor before we get into the rip."

Along with several other boats, we were drifting at 4 knots on a vast conveyor belt of water named The Race. The Race is an often-treacherous, 3-mile-wide tidal rip at the eastern entrance of Long Island Sound. On windless days—the only sensible and safe time to venture to The Race in a moderate-size craft—you'll find 2- to 3-foot standing waves along the rip line, even though the water ahead of it is as flat as a farm pond.

The Race is by far the largest of the three major tidal passages at the Sound's east end, all in New York waters. They rapidly flush trillions of gallons of salt water in and out of the 1,300-square-mile estuary every six hours. The Race is bordered by 9-mile-long Fishers Island to the east and by tiny Little Gull and Great Gull Islands to the west. Continuing west, the next large rip is The Sluiceway, which is flanked to its west by 3-mile-long Plum Island. Coursing past Plum Island's west side is the third large rip, Plum Gut, which is bookended by Orient Point, aka the North Fork of Long Island.

Why They're So Fishy

The reason these rips attract fish is simple: the ferocious currents are caused by the bottlenecking landmasses and a steep bottom, which surges from over 300 feet deep to less than 30 feet deep in spots. As the water upwells and rushes over the boulder-strewn bottom, it creates a vacuum-like effect—similar to how an airplane wing gets its lift—on the up-tide side of the reef. These comparatively gentler and nutrient-rich sweet spots attract schools of bait, such as herring, butterfish, squid, tinker mackerel, peanut bunker, silversides, and bay anchovies.

Southern New England's annual autumn slam—false albacore, bluefish, and striped bass—stage near the rocks in the sheltered water ahead of the reefs, where their energy expenditure is less and food is abundant. These predators frequently drive escaping forage up from the depths and trap it against the surface, creating blitzes and ideal top-water casting opportunities, allowing anglers to cast to breaking fish in front of rip lines. In addition, the adjoining islands and rock piles, potentially dangerous at times, offer miles of shallow-water casting opportunities for experienced navigators.

ALL PHOTOS BY TOM MIGDALSKI

Sean Callinan preps a fly for a shot at late-October false albacore in eastern Long Island Sound. After the first frost, which usually occurs around mid-October, every day without a strong wind from the northwest is a bonus before winter chill sets in and the fish disappear in early November (above). Sean Callinan practices with his new GoPro camera by capturing the up-close release of a prize striped bass taken near Race Rock Lighthouse during a period of slow tidal movement. The Race is safe for a seaworthy 18-foot craft on a calm day, but during a blow even a 30-footer will be tossed about like a piece of driftwood (below). Sean Callinan fights a bluefish off the northwest side of Plum Gut. Although the bite was still on, this was the last fish of the day. Quitting allowed enough ambient light at dusk to make the run back across Long Island Sound to the launch in the Niantic River in southeast Connecticut (left).

"The current moves very quickly over long stretches of rocky shores," explains Captain Dixon Merkt of Old Lyme, Connecticut, a recently retired fly-fishing charter captain with 50 years of experience. "It's not as though you're just rounding a point and there's the spot. To find the best fishing, you might be drifting among boulders for a long time. But it's exactly these difficult conditions that create such wonderful and challenging habitat."

The border islands are also inviting because they're much less crowded than the waters of the Connecticut mainland. "Not everybody's tin boat can get there," says Merkt, "and not everybody has the electronic gear or seamanship to get themselves out and back in limited visibility or wind. This makes it a great spot for the more dedicated and knowledgeable fishermen with the proper gear."

Running Across

Callinan and I motored 9 miles from Niantic, Connecticut, to cross Long Island Sound and reach The Race—and, later that day, Plum Gut—in my beamy 19-foot center-console, about the minimum size needed to safely make this run in these waters.

The ride across the Sound to these rips and adjoining islands isn't always a pleasure trip like ours was. Fog or stiff winds can quickly sweep in off the cooler Atlantic Ocean. When opposing the formidable currents, even a moderate breeze creates short, steep whitecaps in the passages.

If you're running from the mainland, as many anglers do, you'll encounter the ferries running between New London and Orient Point. One of these is a high-speed catamaran-style vessel that moves at about 40 knots and throws a large wake. Tugboats towing massive barges, oil tankers, 100-foot-long party-fishing boats, merchant ships, yachts, and even nuclear submarines complete the host of moving obstacles. They're fun to watch, but also important to avoid.

Stationary obstructions are in store once you arrive near any of the islands. Hundreds of hungry boulders litter the shoal waters waiting to bite into your prop or hull. A few are a couple hundred yards offshore, which is farther out than you would expect to find such menacing monsters.

Plying the Rips

Safely fishing The Race, Sluiceway, or Gut requires a seaworthy boat at least 18 feet long, although you'll sometimes spot foolhardy souls in 16-foot craft. But if you have the right boat and are familiar with tidal flows, navigation, and basic casting strategies, fishing the rips is relatively simple and safe on a windless day.

The best surface action occurs during the four hours of peak current flow on either side of slack tide. Check a tide table for each destination, which can be an hour different from the mainland. If you're new to these areas, simply look for the small fleet as you approach any of the major rips. Also watch for working birds feeding directly above escaping or mauled baitfish. Although the action lasts all day, you'll increase your odds of surface action by targeting early mornings or late afternoons. This is when the fish really turn on.

The system for fishing a major rip involves motoring about 200 to 300 yards up-current from the rip line, preferably ahead of an area of diving birds, and then cutting the motor to drift back through the action. Here, randomly breaking bluefish and false albacore can stay up for greater lengths of time.

For ornery bluefish—a save-the-day species when albies are scarce—any number of large surface or subsurface flies produce blistering strikes when properly placed. Use a wire bite tippet to prevent cut-offs from these toothy critters. Albies—and occasionally bonito—are usually distinguishable from blues because they maraud in small,

undulating packs that pop up in a cluster, show slashing breaks, work the top for a few minutes, and then vanish. Timing, jockeying for position, and luck all play a role in hooking a tunoid, as do matching their tiny forage and using fluorocarbon leaders. They usually avoid wire and thick mono leaders, thanks to their large, keen eyes.

As your drift approaches the rip line, start the motor to run back up-tide, to either your original starting spot or a new one. Use the track feature on your chart-plotter to repeat successful drifts or just dash to where the action shows. If you don't fancy this much big water, work, and fuel burn, or if you arrive at the rip to find it devoid of surface action, you still have hundreds of yards of nearby shallow perimeter waters to explore, and this is where you get shots at schoolie striped bass.

Fly casters work a patch of subsiding rip as the tide lets go off the northwest corner of Plum Island, on the edge of Plum Gut. Glassy spots down-current of a rip line, like the one on the right, are caused by massive up-current boulders, which rest deep beneath the surface and are safe to motor across (above). An ebb tide veers off the northwest corner of Plum Island and creates the turbulent waters of Plum Gut. Terns frequent the rip here, feeding on small baitfish pushed to the surface by predators below. The southeast Connecticut coast is visible in the background, as the ferry that runs between New London and Orient Point comes into view (left).

Small Craft for Skinny Water

Unlike almost every other big-water boating situation, having a smaller craft is advantageous—and almost required—to fish among the flanking islands. A "small" boat of, say, 18 to 23 feet is seaworthy enough to cross the Sound, yet it maneuvers better, draws less water, and isn't as likely to run aground in these skinny, rock-filled waters as larger craft.

"Often," says Merkt, "some of the better spots are the more treacherous spots because the fish get into the rocks in fairly shallow water. The boulders—some of them hundreds of yards from the islands—produce some great fishing, but they can also produce some tough conditions. Even at high tide there are rocks just below the surface. And when the wind kicks up it can become tumultuous."

Boulders in a tidal current are to bluefish and striped bass what rocks in a river are to brook and brown trout. These random obstacles disturb water flow and create resting and feeding stations for predators and prey. Captain Chris Elser, a shallow-water expert from southwest Connecticut with over 35 years of experience fishing coastal islands, explains, "Big rocks provide optimal structure and divert currents. The water around boulder fields becomes oxygenated from wave action and currents coursing between and over large rocks, which attracts crustaceans, eels, and other baitfish."

Rocks also draw baits because they host seaweed, which provides forage and sanctuary for prey species. "Stripers and blues stalk these baits by holding near boulders," says Elser. "They lurk there in ambush mode. The sheltered areas also allow large fish to expend minimal energy in a highly productive feeding environment, and they feel protected in the extensive structure."

Finding Fish Along the Islands

"In shallow, still water, it's best to cut the engine," advises Merkt. "By having the engine off, you're not going to disturb the fish or put them down, unless, of course, you're drifting into an area where the engine should be left on for safety reasons. But if that's the condition, then you're venturing into a dangerous situation to begin with. Always have an anchor handy, because if your engine quits, it may be the only thing keeping you from drifting into the rocks. The best approach is to have one experienced person at the helm while the other person fishes."

If no birds or breaking fish are apparent close to the islands, blind-cast along stretches of riffled water where the current passes over boulder fields. Start fishing ahead of the nervous water and work down through it. Almost all the rocky shores can produce fish, but some locations are more dependable than others. It's simply a matter of investing time to learn the most productive areas, which tend to produce fish year after year. From east to west, here are some proven hot spots.

Race Point is off the westernmost tip of Fishers Island. Here you can cast to a small rip line and a string of shallow rocks that runs several hundred feet into the sea. The water shoals on the east side, and the rocks on both sides of the point offer plenty of structure in up to 12 feet of water.

In the middle of The Race, Race Rock is a great place to

find fish. A strong current runs around this tiny island and lighthouse with back eddies forming on the down-tide side. Fish hold along the eddies and sometimes up against the rock itself. Despite the deep water surrounding Race Rock, you'll find birds and fish gathered along the rip, where they feast on baitfish.

Another picturesque lighthouse marks Little Gull Island, on the west end of The Race. Try working its north side on an ebb tide. The small, rocky rip between the can and the northeast shore is another popular place to cast a fly. Small-craft anglers slide in among the rocks on the island's south side and fish close to land. However, the passage between Little and Great Gull Islands—although often loaded with bird and surface activity—is a treacherous place. Numerous subsurface boulders lurk here, and it's reserved for those with experience, skill, and confidence.

The south side of Great Gull Island can be productive from the east tip to the west tower, with the flood tide probably producing more fish. Plenty of rocks are workable along the north side, where you'll often find flocks of wheeling terns.

The Sluiceway flows between Great Gull Island and Plum Island. Beware of Old Silas Rock, which rests dead center in the tidal passage. The stretch from Old Silas to the east end of Plum Island is a false albacore hot spot, and one of your best bets for finding breaking fish in early autumn every year.

The west end of Plum Island is good anywhere near the lighthouse but can be treacherous due to the rocks and the Plum Gut rip. Much of the south side of the island is sandy, with no predator ambush areas; however, as you motor east or west you'll find the terrain becomes rougher and improves. The entire north side of Plum Island is rock-studded and has long stretches of very fishable water. Just off the northwest corner is a traditional albie staging area each fall.

The water shoals quickly in Plum Gut, and dangerous rip currents form near the island. The area around the "Coffee Pot," a lighthouse in the middle of Plum Gut, often has breaking bluefish and albies. But be wary of the waters directly west of the Coffee Pot. Oyster Pond Reef, a dangerous obstacle just beneath the surface, extends from the Coffee Pot to Orient Point, making the west side of the passage dangerous and not for the inexperienced or faint of heart.

False albacore and small bluefish can pop up anywhere within a quarter mile of shore along the main landmass of Orient Point. From east to west, good spots include the tip of Orient Point, Rocky Point, Mulford Point, Terry Point, and Pettys Bight. One annual albie hot spot is the small reef directly off Mulford Point, which features a small rip on a moving tide with ideal, sheltered casting conditions on a prevailing southwest breeze.

Because of the turbulent currents along the islands, bluefish and stripers seem less picky here than elsewhere. Use large, light-colored patterns. Most 4- to 6-inch flies will produce strikes, especially when you're approximating the predominant baitfish. For albies and bonito, however, you'll need to significantly downsize your offering.

Vince's Variant Gurgler

By Vince Battista

Hook:	Gamakatsu B10S stinger hook, size 2/0
Thread:	Red Danville, 210-denier
Tail:	UV hackle, Hareline Dubbin Ice Fur, Krystal Flash; veiled with reverse-tied chartreuse bucktail
Body:	Closed-cell foam
Belly:	Cactus chenille
Gill flash:	Ginger grizzly
Glue:	Solarez Fly Tie UV Resin (thin), Loctite Go2 glue

Kickoff Time

Casting along the rocky shores offers good action in depths ranging from 3 to 20 feet, which is your target depth range. These hot spots offer one or more species all season, with false albacore the highlight of the year.

The bite kicks off in May with schoolie striped bass, which are numerous through late June, when the bluefish push in. A few prized Atlantic bonito show up in mid-August, followed shortly by the much more numerous false albacore and, occasionally, even a few Spanish mackerel.

"The Sound's perimeter waters hold a strong tuna fishery," says Merkt, "and it gets more exciting as the season goes on. In September and October, we've usually got lots of false albacore along Orient Point and the islands, which join our normal high numbers of bluefish and striped bass. It's a great mix. The fish usually stay until late October, when cold northwest winds chase them out."

Callinan and I hunted speedy and elusive schools of false albacore all afternoon, along with bunches of small bluefish mixed in. But just before sunset, with fish still breaking nearby, we quit to safely make the run across the pond back to Connecticut. That night, our tally in Sean's logbook read: "3 albies released, 2 albies lost, 7 bluefish, 1 school striper." A great mixed bag in anybody's autumn journal.

Captain Tom Migdalski is a freelance outdoor writer and photographer who specializes in southern New England saltwater fishing and lives in East Lyme, Connecticut.

Long Island Sound NOTEBOOK

When: Mid May–late October.

Where: The land masses and adjoining rips separating Long Island Sound from Block Island Sound and Gardiners Bay, northeast of and including the North Fork of Long Island, NY.

Headquarters: Old Saybrook, Old Lyme, East Lyme, Waterford, and New London, CT, and Orient, NY, offer all amenities expected of coastal towns. *Information*: www.visitconnecticut.com/state; www.ctrivervalley.com; www.longislandferry.com. *Launch ramp*: Niantic River Launch, 374 Mago Point Way, Waterford.

Appropriate gear: 8- to 10-wt. rods; intermediate, floating, and 300- and 350-grain sinking lines. *Stripers in the rocks*: 8-ft., 20-lb. leader with 25-lb. fluorocarbon tippet. *Bluefish in the rips*: 6-ft., 25-lb. mono leader with 8-in. wire bite tippet. *False albacore/bonito*: Floating and intermediate shooting-heads; 8-ft., 15- to 20-lb. fluorocarbon leader; 200 yds. of 20- to 25-lb. braided backing.

Useful fly patterns: *Stripers/bluefish*: Size 2/0–6/0 squid, herring, mackerel, and bunker patterns; Gurglers, Clouser Minnows, and Deceivers. *False albacore/Atlantic bonito*: Size 1 and 1/0 Bonito Bunnies, Epoxy Sand Eels, sparse Deceivers and Clousers; bay anchovy, sand eel, silverside, and peanut bunker patterns.

Necessary accessories: VHF radio for marine weather forecasts and distress calls, charged cellphone in zip-top bag, GPS–chart plotter–depth finder, 33 percent more fuel than needed, waterproof paper chart, polarized sunglasses, hat, weather-appropriate clothing, waterproof shell, personal floatation devices, sunscreen, drinking water, BogaGrip, landing net, first-aid kit, anchor with 300 ft. of rope, 8- to 10-ft. push pole (to fend off rocks), sound-making device and navigation lights.

Nonresident licenses: The island chain and passages are in NY waters; therefore, NY fishing regulations apply regardless of your home port or launch site. CT and NY honor reciprocal licenses. *Connecticut*: $63/annual. *New York*: No license required for salt water, but anglers without a CT license must enroll in the no-fee Recreation Marine Fishing Registry, www.dec.ny.gov/permits/54950.html.

Fly shops/guides: *Old Saybrook, CT*: Rivers End Tackle, (860) 388-2283, www.facebook.com/riversendtackle. *Baldwin, NY:* River Bay Outfitters, (516) 415-7748, www.riverbayoutfitters.com. Capt. Dan Wood, (860) 442-6343, www.captdanwood.com; Capt. Peter Corrao, (415) 595-7383, www.flylightcharters.com; Capt. Chris Elser, (203) 216-7907, www.ct-fishing.com.

Charts: NOAA charts 12372 *(Watch Hill to New Haven Harbor)* and 12354 *(Long Island Sound—Eastern Part)*.

Elliott Taylor grabs a submarine sandwich before an afternoon trip onto eastern Long Island Sound. Breakfasts and lunches to go from favored local eatery Coffee's Country Market in Old Lyme, Connecticut, can't be beat (above). After a quick photo, this albie was turned head-into-the-current and released back into Plum Gut. This fish was the last false albacore of the 2017 season for Sean Callinan in eastern Long Island Sound (above top).

AEP ReCreation Land, OH

Into "The Wilds"

By Nathan Perkinson

John Prine wrote a classic song titled "He Was in Heaven Before He Died."

Counting a stopover for lunch, it took about three hours for us to get there from Cincinnati. It was a warm October morning with a light cover of clouds and not a breath of breeze when my wife and I crested a hill and saw dozens of small ponds tucked among the rolling hills of southeastern Ohio. Heaven for any fly angler, but the same question crossed both our lips at the same time: Where do we start?

We had a map, but it didn't come close to showing all of the tiny ponds. We decided to drive around, looking for a pond that had obvious cover for fish. Settling on a larger pond with dozens of tree trunks rising from the depths, I cast a small white gurgler in amongst the woody cover and immediately came up with a juvenile largemouth bass. I tossed the bass back and went to work around the tree trunks again, and a big sunfish took my fly and dove in a circling retreat, trying desperately to shake the hook. I landed the fish—a redear about the size of a saucer. I tossed it back—and caught its twin on the next cast.

Heaven indeed.

A Re-created Landscape

That pond, and about 350 more like it, is located on a 60,000-acre expanse of public land near Zanesville, Ohio, called AEP ReCreation Land. The AEP stands for American Electric Power, the company that has mined coal from the area since the 1940s. The federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 requires all such lands to be left as close to their original states as possible once mining operations are complete. To fulfill this obligation, AEP has graded and fertilized the soil, sowed grasslands to halt erosion, and planted nearly 60 million trees in the decades since major mining operations ceased. The 60,000 acres of AEP ReCreation Land are open to the public for fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding.

In addition to ReCreation Land, AEP also donated an adjacent 10,000-acre tract of reclaimed land to The Wilds. You may hear locals refer to the entire area as "The Wilds" because the two areas run together. The Wilds itself is actually associated with the Columbus Zoo, set up to house animals from around the world in an open setting. The

Wilds is privately owned by a nonprofit organization, but allows visitors to view exotic animals.

The AEP property is located about 22 miles southeast of Zanesville. McConnelsville is located at the southwest corner along Ohio State Route 78, while Cumberland occupies the northeast corner, at the junction of State Routes 83 and 146. These small towns have basic amenities and services.

Roughly speaking, AEP ReCreation Land is bordered by State Routes 78 to the south, 146 to the north, and 376 to the west. Route 83 goes runs north/south through the middle of the property. From these state roads you can access many county roads and smaller gravel access roads that lead deep into the property to where the ponds are located. A detailed map, such as the DeLorme *Ohio Atlas & Gazetteer*, is handy, but be sure visit AEP's website (www.aep.com/environment/conservation/recland) and print out a color map of the area before you visit. The map shows the general location of many ponds. The AEP map will also help you stay on public land.

The property has several campgrounds, with Sand Hollow among the best, offering campsites adjacent to a large pond. Hook Lake Campground is ideal if you have kids along, with its open, roomy campsites and two ponds that limit fishing to children age 15 and under. Another good option is Sawmill Road Campground, which has a lot of campsites, ranging from rustic sites to gravel pull-through sites for small RVs. Many of the access roads are named for these campgrounds, which are also designated with letters on the AEP map. For example, A to C Access Road leads from campground A (Hook Lake) to campground C (Sand Hollow).

The AEP ReCreation Land is governed by several rules of note. There is no entry fee, but you must download and fill out a free recreational users permit from the AEP website. This form records your name, address, and the dates that you will be on the property. This form also lists all property rules and regulations. You also need an Ohio fishing license.

Fish harvest on the ReCreation Land ponds is allowed, but is more limited than on other Ohio waters. I encourage catch-and-release on public waters, but anglers who wish to keep a few fish for dinner must bear these limits in mind. The limit on panfish is 20 per angler per day. A combination of panfish species like bluegills, redears, pumpkinseeds, and crappies will fill this limit, not 20 of each species. In addition, there is a split limit for largemouth, smallmouth, and Kentucky spotted bass on ReCreation Land waters: two bass less than 14 inches and one bass over 20 inches. This limits the number of bass that anglers can harvest and also prohibits the harvest of black bass between 14 and 20 inches long.

ALL PHOTOS BY KYRA PERKINSON

With so many ponds to choose from, it's easy to fish a host of them in a few hours. The small ponds are easy to fish from the banks (above). This bluegill took a white popper off the surface, then dove for cover. Panfish love to hang out in the weeds, and you can catch plenty of them if you're willing to risk a few flies along the structure-rich pond shorelines (left).

Fishing Tactics

The ponds sustain healthy populations of bass and panfish. Most of the ponds are only a few acres, and none of them require anything more than an electric boat motor to get around. Many of the smaller ponds can be covered thoroughly on foot by simply walking around the banks and casting at any cover that looks like it may hold fish. Walking quietly and hiding behind bankside cover will increase your odds. This is an ideal tactic for fly fishing small ponds because you'll save the time of loading and unloading a boat or float tube, plus the element of surprise will be in your favor when, from the bank, you drop your fly over unsuspecting fish.

Bass and panfish hold around fallen trees and rocky outcroppings, and such areas are low-hanging fruit for fly fishers. You will certainly catch fish in these places, but

you'll increase your catch substantially by fishing the more obscure spots, including places with subtle variations in depth or shoreline structure.

Understanding water temperature and light penetration is the key to mastering this type of fly-rod work. Largemouth bass and bluegills actively seek water above 70 degrees, but they will avoid direct sunlight that exposes them to predators. The lives of warm-water fish in ponds largely consists of searching out a happy medium, somewhere between ideal (warmer) water temperatures and ideal (darker) light penetration.

So, for example, how would you locate panfish along a drop-off? Say you're fishing on an 80-degree midsummer day with full sun on the water. Even without a thermometer, it's reasonable to assume that the water temperature is above 70 at a depth of a few feet. There are probably fish holding at some level along this drop-off, but you just don't know where. Two tactics pay dividends in such situations. First, try casting a lightly weighted fly and counting it down. By this I mean throw the fly, count one … two … three, and retrieve. Cast to the same spot again, but this time let the fly sink for a count of five. Continue adding time for the fly to sink until you start catching fish or you hit the bottom. Cast farther from shore and keep counting down until you start catching fish or have covered all reasonable depths along the drop-off.

The second technique for this situation is to set the depth of your fly with a strike indicator. To do this, attach a buoyant indicator that allows your fly to sink to, say, 2 feet. If that fails to produce, try setting the depth at 3 feet, and so on. This tactic works well for unweighted wet flies and nymphs that sink slowly to the predetermined depth, tempting panfish all the way down. It's a game of trial and error, to be sure, but you'll catch fish by the dozen once you dial in the proper depth and pattern.

For successfully fishing surface patterns, identify the most likely holding areas for fish and cast your fly as close as possible to cover. Cast close and let your bug sit still until the rings have dissipated. There's no current to drag your fly away, so time is on your side. Retrieve the fly with slow line strips, allowing the rings to settle after each strip. If a fish rises for the fly and misses, leave it on the water. Though many bass and panfish bugs are called poppers, that designation can be misleading in the sense that if you try to tempt a fish by "popping" the bug with a sudden

Hum Bug

Hook:	Wet fly, sizes 6–12
Thread:	Color to match head, 70-denier
Body:	Chenille
Legs:	Rubber legs
Back:	Contrasting chenille, tied at tail and pulled forward
Head:	Contrasting chenille
Note:	The Hum Bug fishes best when allowed to slowly sink to the fish. Tie it in any color scheme that suits your fancy.

line strip, you risk spooking your quarry. Let your gentle retrieve call the fish in and let the fly itself draw the strike.

Finally, you can also enjoy consistent success by target-shooting streamers to likely fish lairs, especially when clouds obscure the sun and the water is above 70 degrees, typically in summer and early fall. Use a streamer with lots of inherent action, like a Zonker or Clouser Minnow, and fish thoroughly, targeting all the available cover; make a few casts and then move on.

Panfish abound in the ponds at ReCreation Land. They can be selective at times, but frequently feed with reckless abandon. Be sure to bring a wide variety of subsurface flies, from realistic trout-style nymphs for moody panfish to flashy, rubber-legged creations. Panfish can quickly mouth a fly and then spit it out. A strike indicator helps tremendously in this regard. I prefer the hard-foam indicators that you peg to the leader with a toothpick because these allow you to set the depth at which your fly will be presented—a deadly technique when fish are holding in and around submerged weedbeds.

Long-handled hemostats are a must on warm-water ponds. Wrenching a hook from a panfish's jaw is a good way to kill the fish, and it's all but impossible to remove a deeply hooked fly from a panfish's tiny mouth with your fingers.

The Spirit of Conservation

Along SR 78, Miners' Memorial Park is dedicated to the men and women who mined coal from the lands that now constitute AEP ReCreation Land. Here you'll find the bucket of "Big Muskie," the largest dragline ever built. Essentially a giant excavator, Big Muskie measured 487 feet long and 222 feet tall, weighed 27 million pounds, and walked on hydraulically powered feet. Between 1969 and 1991, Big Muskie moved 483 million tons of topsoil, exposing rich coal veins that powered countless homes and businesses throughout the Midwest. This single dragline cleared away soil at a rate of 325 tons per lift and forever changed the landscape of southeast Ohio.

ReCreation Land isn't a natural formation, but that doesn't mean it's not a good thing. I had always assumed that coal companies simply exploit the resources in an area, then move on to the next likely spot. I had no idea that there are concerted efforts to restore land that has been strip-mined, and I certainly didn't realize the amount of work that is required to restore a former mine. AEP ReCreation Land in southeastern Ohio proved educational for me, and at the same time lived up to its billing as a first-rate warm-water fishing destination and an example of the good that comes from people working together for a common goal.

Freelance writer Nathan Perkinson and photographer Kyra Perkinson are frequent contributors to Eastern Fly Fishing *magazine. This husband-and-wife team lives in Indiana.*

AEP ReCreation Land NOTEBOOK

When: Late March–early November.

Where: Southeast OH, between Zanesville and Marietta; see the AEP website (www.aep.com/environment/conservation/recland) for detailed information and maps.

Access: Approximately 350 publicly accessible ponds on 60,000 acres; excellent shoreline access on many ponds; small boats and float tubes are allowed; gasoline boat motors must be less than 10 hp.

Headquarters: Camping is free at designated campsites; visit Zanesville (www.visitzanesville.info) or Marietta (www.mariettachamber.com) for lodging and dining options.

Appropriate gear: 9-ft., 5-wt. rod, floating line; knotless tapered leaders, 3X–5X tippets, strike indicators, split shot.

Useful fly patterns: *Panfish*: Poppers, sliders, divers, foam spiders, and gurglers in sizes 6–10; nymphs, wet flies, and rubber-legged Bream Killers in sizes 6–14. *Bass*: Tap's Bug, Dahlberg Diver, Hum Bug, gurglers, hard-bodied poppers and sliders, Clouser Minnow, Woolly Bugger, Flashtail Whistler, Zonker, Murdich Minnow.

Necessary accessories: Sunscreen, insect repellent, polarized sunglasses, extra clothes and shoes; bring food and water, because the closest amenities are several miles from most ponds.

Nonresident license: $11/1 day, $19/3 days, $40/annual.

Books/maps: *The American Angler Guide to Warmwater Fly Fishing* by Nathan Perkinson; *Bluegill Fly Fishing & Flies* by Terry Wilson and Roxanne Wilson; *The Complete Freshwater Fisherman* by North American Fishing Club. *Ohio Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme.

West Fork Stones River, TN

Hidden Between City Streets

By John Hoffman

It was a chilly 47 degrees early one October morning as we slid kayaks into the water at Cason Trail Greenway Park and Trailhead. The weatherman had said we would probably get wet at some point that day, and the ominous clouds lingering overhead verified that he may actually have been right this time. Decked out with rain gear and dry bags for the essentials, we were ready for whatever Mother Nature decided to deal.

The West Fork Stones River is chock-full of bass, including smallmouth, largemouth, spotted, rock, and white bass, as well as bluegills and other sunfish, catfish, carp, and various species of chubs and darters. An old high school buddy and fellow kayak-fishing aficionado, Whit Gallimore, had recently relocated to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, about 30 minutes west of Nashville. He was immediately interested in exploring the West Fork Stones River, which runs right through the heart of town.

A stretch of the river runs directly behind Gallimore's office, and after spending a few lunch breaks casting flies along the bank with much success, he became determined to learn more about the fishing opportunities in the river.

An extensive paved trail system through the Stones River Greenway parallels much of the river in the Murfreesboro area. The greenway currently has 11 trailheads, with several more planned. These trailheads offer great access to the river.

Gallimore fished and explored several of the trailheads along the river to plan for a productive five- to six-hour float route in the kayaks. After several scouting trips and some Google Earth reconnaissance, we came up with the plan to launch at Cason Trailhead and float about 4 river miles to the Manson Pike Trailhead, which has a convenient parking area and a launch site for small watercraft.

Beautiful Scenery in an Urban Setting

The first stretch of river is fairly easy to float, with two strainer areas that anglers need to be aware of. The first potential portage is approximately 1.5 miles downstream from the launch, where a large rock shelf stretches for about 200 yards in a big sweeping right-hand curve. You can float through any of several cuts in the ledges, but we felt it was safer to get out of the boats and walk them through the ankle-deep water on river left.

The swift water above and below this shelf produced the first of several fish of the day. Gallimore, slowly drifting a hellgrammite pattern along the bank and enlivening the fly with short line strips, hooked a plump rock bass that hammered the fly and headed for the deeper channel. We especially wanted to target these rock bass, along with spotted bass. The swift water below the jagged rock shelf also produced a largemouth bass and a spotted bass, locally referred to as a Kentucky redeye bass.

This first portion of the float is beautiful, seemingly a world away from the nearby major metropolitan area. Cottonwoods and huge, old beech trees line the banks, and mature oaks drape the river corridor; wildlife abounds. Below that first rock shelf, the river widens and slows considerably. After you pass under Interstate 24, the West Fork splits around a 300-yard-long island. The main channel is on river left, but this island has several riffles, downed trees, and underwater shelves ideal for fish. Here we took the first smallmouth bass of our trip.

We beached the boats and spent a good hour exploring and fishing around the island before moving on downstream. The rain held off, but seemed ready to envelop us at any moment. Many anglers believe fishing is excellent just before a rain—old fisherman's tale or not, it was proving to be true for us.

A crayfish pattern tempted this rock bass near a large rock outcropping at the mouth of Lytle Creek. Rock bass are the chameleons of Tennessee rivers. When residing in sun-drenched shallow pools, they often sport bright green and yellow hues with distinct black dots; however, when lurking in deep pools or under rock shelves, they can be almost black or deep, dark green (above). The author casts a Filthy Beggar pattern in the frothing current below Ransom's Mill. Strong currents here dictate cautious wading, but the numerous jetties and shelves provide great places for bass to hide and ambush unsuspecting prey (left).

Approach the Golf Course Cautiously

Below the island, the river narrows, and you begin to catch glimpses of buildings and other urban development as you pass under Bridge Avenue. After several hundred yards, you then pass under the double bridges of Old Fort Parkway and begin floating through Old Fort Golf Course.

Here you must pay close attention to your surroundings. Once you pass under the Old Fort Parkway bridges, look for a small golf-cart bridge spanning the river. The riverbed just upstream from the golf-cart bridge consists of several large boulders and small islands, with numerous small trees and strainers across the width of the stream. You may be tempted to paddle through any of several channels and small chutes, but most lead to dead ends and skinny water.

Toward the bottom, several large boulders form a ledge and then a large drop pool under the bridge. You can easily bypass this 100-yard stretch of difficult water by walking your boats along the river left through a 2-foot-deep channel. The current is fairly swift, so be careful.

This stretch of the West Fork is potentially dangerous, especially at high flows. For our float, the West Fork Stones River gauge, tracked at www.usgs.gov, read 2.8 feet. Be sure to check the river level before floating this section—if the water level is over 4 feet, you will need to portage around this stretch of river at the golf course.

Already out of our boats, we decided to fish the deep drop pool under the golf course bridge. I struck out, but Gallimore landed two beautiful spotted bass close to the undercut ledge. Back in our boats and floating through the golf course, we encountered a large flock of turkeys standing on the fairway, feeding and preening. A little farther downstream, an 8-point buck white-tailed deer seemed curious about us and followed along the bank as we floated the next 75 yards.

boat. Few rivers offer such a diversity of bass species; we caught nearly two dozen fish, mostly bass along with a few sunfish.

Ransom's Mill Take-out

The last quarter mile of water on the float we undertook moves at a leisurely pace, but still warrants caution because of the 6-foot-tall dam at the old Ransoms Mill site. The dam spans all but a short width of the river and floaters must portage around it on river left, at a safe and easily accessible take-out point on a large rock shelf. Begin looking for this spot as soon as you approach the Stones River Greenway system metal bridge, located just upriver from the large Medical Center Parkway bridge—the dam is about 400 feet downstream from the greenway bridge and about 200 feet upstream from the Medical Center Parkway bridge. This dam presents extreme danger at high water because the entire river squeezes through the narrow opening between the broken end of the dam and the adjacent shoreside rock shelf. Below the dam, however, fishing can be excellent in the swift currents and the riffles downstream from Medical Center Parkway, just above the boat ramp on river left at the Manson Pike Trailhead park. The main channel here is much too deep to wade, but boulders and rock shelves jut out from the banks, providing perches for anglers to find casting lanes into the river.

We disembarked at the Manson Pike Trailhead park, secured our kayaks on the shore, and then spent an hour fishing the fast water below the dam, catching smallmouth, a largemouth bass, and a rock bass. Then, as we were dragging the kayaks up the boat ramp to our vehicle, the skies unleashed on us. The rain had held off for six hours, enough time to fish and float this beguiling stretch of urban river hidden from the city by its well-preserved greenway.

Our efforts had yielded

The remaining half mile of the float through the golf course produced several more bass that gulped down black/olive beadhead Woolly Buggers cast amongst the ancient tangled root systems and rock outcrops that have ebbed the river's flow for centuries. After making a broad right-hand curve around the golf course, the river again widens and slows substantially. The deep, slow-moving water is ideal for trolling a streamer behind your kayak with a sinking or sinking-tip line while you cast into the banks with a second rod. Many large trees have toppled into the river, creating myriad hiding places for big fish to hide and ambush an easy meal. While working the two-rod strategy, Gallimore landed both a largemouth and a smallmouth on a leech-style streamer drifting behind his

Filthy Beggar
By Chad Bryson

Rear hook:	TMC 300, size 8
Front hook:	TMC 300, size 6
Collar:	Small Fish-Skull sculpin helmet
Tail:	Marabou
Body:	Pearl chenille or Woolly Bugger chenille
Hackle:	Whiting Farms Bugger Pack hackle
Articulation wire:	Senyo's Intruder Wire

two dozen fish representing five species, including four species of bass. We explored only 4 miles of the West Fork, but there are several more miles that offer comparable experiences. And for anglers without kayaks or canoes, access from shore is excellent along the Stones River Greenway Trail. By foot or by bicycle, anglers can access stretches of the river well removed from the trailhead parks, which absorb the most fishing pressure.

Lytle Creek

Gallimore and I turned in early, tuckered out from a full day on the water plus visiting a few local historic sites after the rain started, but decided we'd spend some time in the morning fishing below the dam. Sunday morning dawned bright and sunny, and we hit the water at 6:30 at the Manson Pike Trailhead. Using sinking lines, we fished large crayfish patterns, bouncing them off the wall of the dam and into the frothing water to catch several rock bass along the undercut structure.

Around 8 a.m., we walked upstream on the Stones River Greenway Trail, crossed over the river on the footbridge, and made our way down the bank to fish the mouth of Lytle Creek. We had noticed this fishy-looking location during our float the previous day, but, with darkening skies and imminent rain, had opted to pass it by.

The area around the creek mouth was as productive as we had thought it might be, yielding several nice smallmouth bass, the largest weighing about 3 pounds—the largest fish of our trip. Wading along the banks, Gallimore and I fished the area meticulously, working our way back down to the metal footbridge that spans the river and landing several more fish.

We fished until 11 a.m. before I decide to call it quits and begin the three-and-a-half-hour drive back to Memphis. Walking back across the bridge, we discussed the plethora of possibilities for future float trips and reviewed the number and quality of fish we had caught. Overall, this urban stretch of river seems healthy. The species diversity is impressive, and litter is minimal along the banks. The relaxing, slow-paced current and the beautiful riparian scenery make you forget all about the surrounding urban landscape.

And there was more: the East Fork Stones River, just north of Murfreesboro proper near the town of Walterhill, looks just as appealing as the West Fork, and flows through a more rural setting. We didn't have time to explore the East Fork, but doing so is on our agenda: we can't wait to explore more of this productive warmwater wonderland.

John Hoffman is a freelance writer and photographer who lives near Memphis, Tennessee.

West Fork Stones River NOTEBOOK

When: Year-round.

Where: Murfreesboro, TN.

Access: Walk-and-wade fishing, as well as float-fishing by kayak, with a variety of access points within the town of Murfreesboro.

Headquarters: Murfreesboro. *Information*: Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce, (615) 893-6565, www.rutherfordchamber.org.

Appropriate gear: 5- to 7-wt. rods, sinking or sinking-tip lines, 2X tippet.

Useful fly patterns: Clouser Minnows, Woolly Buggers, sculpin patterns, crawfish imitations, hellgrammite patterns, baby trout patterns.

Necessary accessories: Polarized glasses, large landing net, waders in the winter months, wide-brimmed hat, wading shoes or boots with good traction (studded soles are best because of the slick rock bottom in some areas), kayak or bike for reaching less-pressured areas of the river.

Nonresident license: $20.50/3 days, $30.50/10 days, $50/annual (licenses that include trout fishing privileges cost more).

Fly shops/guides: *Murfreesboro*: Murfreesboro Outdoors, (615) 896-4745, www.mborooutdoors.com. *Nashville*: Fly South, (615) 341-0420, www.flysouth.net; Orvis Nashville, (615) 383-5553, www.orvis.com/s/nashville-tennessee-orvis-retail-store/13378. Chris Nischan, (615) 385-1116, www.rodandgunguideservice.com.

Maps/information: Murfreesboro Greenway System map, www.murfreesborotn.gov/DocumentCenter/View/264; West Fork Stones River USGS water gauge, waterdata.usgs.gov/usa/nwis/uv?site_no=03428200.

ALL PHOTOS BY NICK CARTER

South Fork Mills River, NC

Take a Hike

By Nick Carter

The farther you walk, the better the fishing. The theory holds true for some streams more than others. Yet it's a mind-set that's tough to shake for anglers who have trouble sharing water.

The logic seems sound. Each mile you hike up the trail eliminates fishing pressure. Each fishy run you reluctantly march past must have sucked in one more angler. Whether they were on the water this morning, yesterday, or last week, chances are that person wasn't able to pass up the sparkling water in the deep gully down that hillside. A well-worn side trail to the river confirms it. Less than a mile in, this is the hole that ends most people's walk and begins their fishing day. It looks too perfect, which means fish that have seen fewer flies live farther upstream.

But what if those people know something you don't?

There's got to be a big brown trout lurking in that deep undercut on the far bank. The water swinging off the end of that logjam is the perfect lie. Was that the telltale white flash of a feeding fish in the heart of the run?

"Keep walking!" my brother barked as curiosity pulled my feet, without consent, onto the side trail for a closer look. "I'm telling you, there's better water up around this next ridge."

I'd like to think he had a specific place in mind. I was, after all, a guest on his home water. But I suspect he was just doing his best to keep me moving. We kept walking, skirting the next ridge, churning through a swampy bottom, crossing the river and climbing the opposite hillside before dropping back to the water again. The whole way, I watched with a wistful eye as we left behind so much good water.

With a milder gradient than most area streams, the lower end of the South Mills offers lots of flat water. Some of the best holding water for trout is in long river-bend runs (above). Fishing can be technical on the South Mills, but the river is known for producing trout that are larger, on average, than those found in most of the region's wild trout waters (left).

Finally, he plopped down on a log and pulled a fly box out of his vest, indicating it was time to string up. I don't know how far we hiked in waders and felt-soled boots, but my legs were tired. We looked out over a pretty little run. Upstream, clear water with the slightest tannic stain slowed into a beautiful river-bend hole identical to a dozen we had already passed.

There are things in life that seriously test a person's willpower. Walking any distance on the streamside trail along North Carolina's South Fork Mills River, aka the South Mills, is one of them.

The Cradle of Forestry

The South Mills forms in a mountain valley deep in Pisgah National Forest at a place called The Pink Beds. Less than an hour's drive from Asheville, Waynesville, or Brevard, North Carolina, it is a popular day-hike destination, named for the pink blooms of dense mountain laurel and rhododendron thickets.

At The Pink Beds, a web of headwater trickles falls from Pisgah Ridge to converge in the valley at about 3,200 feet of elevation. Backed up by flat terrain and the busy work of beavers, shallow pools and slow-moving rivulets form a rare ecosystem of upland bogs. It gives the river downstream its barely brown stain, like weak tea.

The valley is part of a 6,500-acre historic site known as "the Cradle of Forestry in America." It is where science-based forest management in the United States originated in the late 1800s on the vast estates of George W. Vanderbilt. Vanderbilt was heir to an enormous fortune built on his grandfather's business interests in New York. He used this fortune to construct the famous Biltmore Estate outside Asheville and to purchase about 125,000 acres in the mountains south of town. About 80,000 acres of this property later became the heart of 479,000-acre Pisgah National Forest.

To manage all that land, Vanderbilt employed a German forester named Dr. Carl A. Schenck. Teaching the fundamentals of sustainable forestry, Schenck opened the first forestry school in the United States. The Biltmore Forest School's field facilities—now reconstructed—are adjacent to the picnic area and trailhead for The Pink Beds. In a roundabout way, Southeastern trout anglers owe gratitude to both Vanderbilt and Schenck. Some of the best streams in the region are on lands once owned and managed by the family and its foresters.

The Pink Beds is a beautiful place for a walk in the woods. From the picnic area, which is about 4 miles south of the Blue Ridge Parkway on US Highway 276, a 5-mile loop trail runs through wildflowers, mountain meadows, and open, fern-carpeted forests. Some small wild brown trout inhabit this mountain wetland, but the river doesn't become what most would consider fishable until its branches coalesce and fall out of the valley.

The Top and the Bottom

The South Mills's best fishing begins about 5 miles east of The Pink Beds, just upstream of the access point at Wolf Ford. It continues for more than 12 miles through a winding river valley before it crosses out of Pisgah National Forest northeast of Brevard near Turkey Pen Gap.

Turkey Pen and Wolf Ford are the only two feasible access points to the South Mills River, which makes it one of the best backcountry streams in the region. For more than 12 miles, the river is accessible only on foot, or horseback, or mountain bike. Despite a heavy load of recreational users, there's a whole lot of river that rarely gets fished.

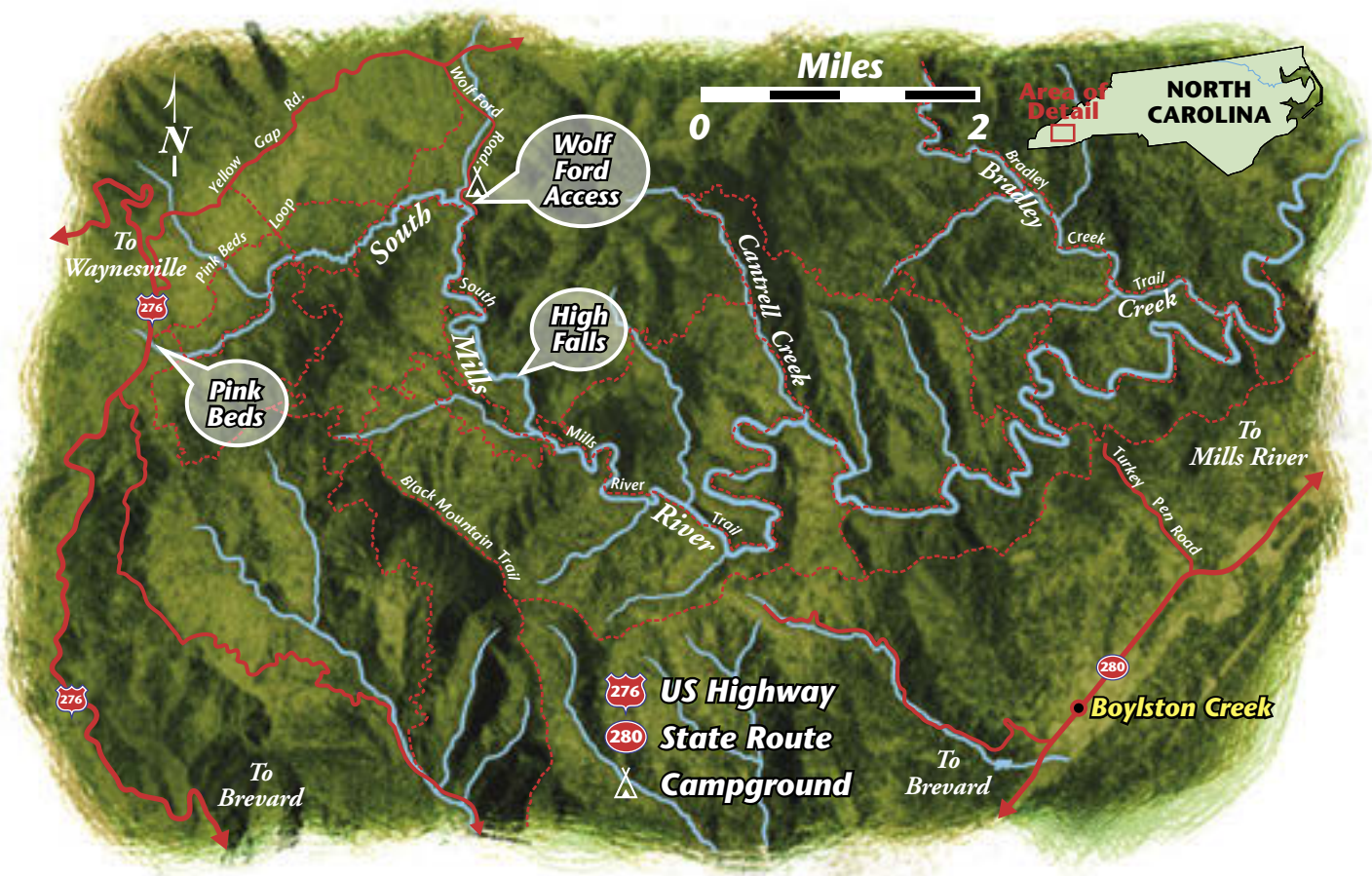
On the top end, Wolf Ford Road (Forest Service Road 476) dead-ends with a small turnaround by the river. The western trailhead for the South Mills River Trail is at the end of this gravel road. There are multiple drive-up camping spots in the area, as well as a horse-camping facility. Getting there is not difficult, but it requires the driver and navigator to pay attention in an area where cellphone mapping often fails. Less than a mile north of The Pink Beds on US Highway 276, Yellow Gap Road (FS 1206) branches off to the northeast. Take this gravel road a little more than 3 miles to a right turn onto Wolf Ford Road.

Wolf Ford is a great place to launch a day trip or to base a car-camping adventure. The South Mills River Trail roughly parallels the river all the way down to Turkey Pen. Walking off a day's worth of fishing downstream allows you to fish back to the vehicle or campsite. Hiking in your waders is recommended, unless you're wet-wading. It's not the most comfortable way to walk, but the trail is pretty easy, with a low gradient, and it crosses the river without a bridge multiple times.

Be warned: park-and-camp spots stay quite full from spring through fall, so it might be tough to secure one near the river. There are additional campsites along Wolf Ford

Just in Case

Hook:	Standard dry fly, size 12
Thread:	Tan, size 6/0
Tail:	Pheasant
Extended body:	White fly foam
Parachute post:	White poly yarn
Hackle:	Large grizzly
Dubbing:	White superfine dry fly



Road, as well as a bunch of them along Yellow Gap Road. Except during high-use times, like holiday weekends, something should be available a short drive from the water.

Decades ago, we were high schoolers and fledgling fly fishers with a lust for adventure and new driver's licenses. After spending a day on the nearby Davidson River, we broke camp in the morning and went looking for different water. We found the South Mills at Wolf Ford. I remember the joy of discovering such beautiful water and the frustration of flogging away at it for several hours with nothing to show but a couple of hornyhead chubs. Arrogant in our ignorance, we decided trout did not live in the South Mills. We packed up and drove home.

Although our presumption was downright silly, our no-fish experience was an accurate snapshot of what the South Mills can be. The river is full of gorgeous browns and rainbows that are as wild as they are wary. But the fishing is technical. It can be a humbling place for both novice and seasoned anglers.

The upper end of the river has less flow than it does downstream. Nearly two dozen little branches and larger tributaries feed the river between Wolf Ford and Turkey Pen. What it lacks in flow at the top, it makes up for with a steeper streambed and plenty of pretty holding water created by shoals, bends, cascades, and plunge pools.

On the lower end, the river is larger with a milder gradient. Between long, shallow stretches of flat water with scarce obvious holding water, there are shoals and big bend runs that would seemingly concentrate the fish. This is not always true. Sometimes the little boulder pockets in the long straight sections produce good fish for meticulous anglers.

Entering from Turkey Pen puts you on bigger water where the fish seem to be a little larger, if not as numerous. Most wild streams in western North Carolina produce a lot of 6- to 10-inch fish, with a few larger trout showing up in the mix. On the lower end of the South Mills, catching 10- to 12-inch browns and rainbows is the norm. Larger brown trout are definitely the gems of this river, and they show up on occasion.

Turkey Pen Gap is north of Brevard off Asheville Highway (North Carolina Route 280). Head north, and turn left onto a poorly marked gravel road a little more than 5 miles past the intersection of US Highways 64 and 276, where Davidson River Outfitters sits at the main entrance to Pisgah on this end of the national forest. Turkey Pen Road is a rutted-out and narrow gravel track that passes a small house at its entrance. You'll think you're at the wrong place when you first turn in.

Try not to get too impatient when you get stuck behind a slow-moving horse trailer or a Prius with a bike rack struggling with low ground clearance. The road is short to the parking area, where scads of bikers, hikers, and equestrians set out from three different trailheads. This is a popular area, but you won't see too many rod racks or fish stickers.

To get to the river, set out down the hill on the South Mills River Trail, just to the west of the kiosk at the north end of the parking area. The other two trails don't go anywhere near the river. After a hike of maybe a half mile down into the valley, the trail crosses the river over

Super-clear water and spooky fish on the South Mills make stealthy wading and careful fly presentation as important as fly selection, maybe more so (above). Beautiful wild brown trout are the main draw for anglers on the South Mills (right).

a wooden bridge. From there, miles of water stretch out upstream and down. Go far enough and chances are you won't encounter anyone else with a fishing rod.

The Fishing

From what I've seen, there are two types of wild trout streams in the Blue Ridge region. Some are home to small fish that must be opportunistic to survive and grow in nutrient-poor waters. These are usually high-elevation streams, where it's possible—on a good day—to move up the creek quickly with a dry fly, snatching little rainbows or brook trout from every pocket. The South Mills falls into the other category. It can be maddeningly technical, and the fish have been known to develop lockjaw for no discernible reason at all.

I've been skunked more than I'd like to admit on the South Mills. The water is clear, the fish spook easily, and generally they won't eat a fly that doesn't drift naturally through complicated crosscurrents. Sometimes they won't eat anything at all.

At a riverside campsite somewhere between Turkey Pen and Wolf Ford, I became a believer in the solunar theory. The idea that fish feed in time windows based on the phase and location of the moon always seemed a little farfetched. Of all the variables that influence the feeding behaviors of trout, the position of the moon has to be way down at the bottom of the list. On that trip, a guy named Curtis and his fancy gear gave us all something to think about.

Curtis was an experienced backpacker. He carried a kit that included anything you could possibly need, all neatly compressed into a lightweight, high-tech bundle on his back. He also wore a watch equipped with a gimmicky solunar display. This watch lit up little fish silhouettes indicating when fish were supposed to be biting according to the moon. Four fish meant the bite was on. No fish meant you might as well take a nap.

Curtis received some good-natured ribbing for wearing that watch—until the darn thing worked. Throughout a long weekend, the watch's predictions proved accurate again and again. By midday on Saturday, we began planning fishing time versus camp duties based on how many fish were lit up on Curtis's watch. It was ridiculous. It was also correct beyond coincidence.

But not everyone has a magic watch. At a place like the South Mills, where fish are so fickle, the best bet is to fish long, hard, and smart. Something good is bound to happen if you stay focused and on the water long enough. A pack-in camping trip puts you streamside, where you'll be aware of your surroundings and ready when opportunity presents itself. It's easy to forget the long hours spent working water and switching flies to no avail. It's not so easy to forget that one evening when coffin flies fell like snow.

We were relaxing around a crackling fire, sipping whiskey, listening to the river, and thinking about dinner after a long, slow day on the water. It was of passing interest when a large white mayfly bounced in the air through the campsite. At the time we didn't know we were looking at the spinner stage of the Eastern Green Drake; we'd always called them coffin flies. When that fly was joined by another, and another, and another, there was nothing left to do but dive into the fly boxes in search of something big and white.

One doesn't encounter this often in the mountains of western North Carolina. A lot of times you'll notice a predominant species of bug on a given day, but generally the insect life is a mixed bag. This was a full-on spinner fall, like the ones we'd read about in magazines.

Wadered-up and back on the river, we saw rise rings everywhere. We couldn't believe so many trout had ignored our offerings all day. Over the next half hour or so, armed with a few oversize White Wulffs someone had scrounged from the seldom-used corner of a box, we caught more and better fish on dry flies than we had through two full days of nymphing. If those flies weren't a perfect match for what was on the water, they were close enough.

I now keep a corner of my dry-fly box stocked with coffin fly patterns. Those flies might not get wet for years at a time, but they are there if I need them. As with many western North Carolina streams, hatches on the South Mills are sporadic and usually consist of many different types of bugs at once. A good attractor pattern is tough to beat—both on the surface and below it. There are some who sling streamers exclusively in hopes of fooling a big brown, but wading carefully to avoid spooking fish and paying attention to presentation are more important than fly selection. And being on the water when fish decide to eat is more important than anything else.

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

South Mills River NOTEBOOK

When: Year-round.

Where: Pisgah National Forest, Transylvania and Henderson Counties, NC.

Headquarters: Brevard, NC. *Information*: www.brevardnc.com.

Useful flies: Elk Hair Caddis, Stimulator, Just in Case, Parachute Sulphur, Coffin Fly, Yellow Humpy, Light Cahill, Quill Gordon, Parachute Adams, Prince Nymph, Hare's Ear, Pheasant Tail, Copper John, Tellico Nymph, Woolly Buggers.

Appropriate gear: 4- to 5-wt. rods, floating lines.

Necessary accessories: Polarized sunglasses, hat, drinking water, camping/backpacking gear.

Nonresident license: $18/10 days, plus $13 trout privileges; $36/annual, plus $13 trout privileges.

Fly shops/guides: Davidson River Outfitters, (828) 877-4181, (888) 861-0111, www.davidsonflyfishing.com; Brookings Anglers, (828) 743-3768, www.brookingsonline.com.

Books/maps: *Flyfisher's Guide to North Carolina & Georgia* by Nick Carter. *North Carolina Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme.

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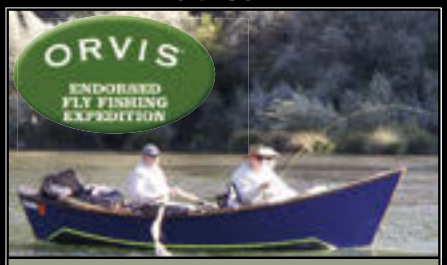

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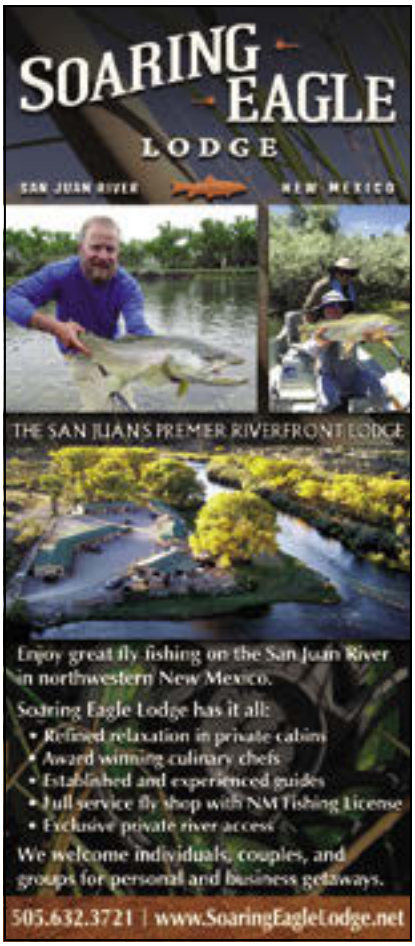

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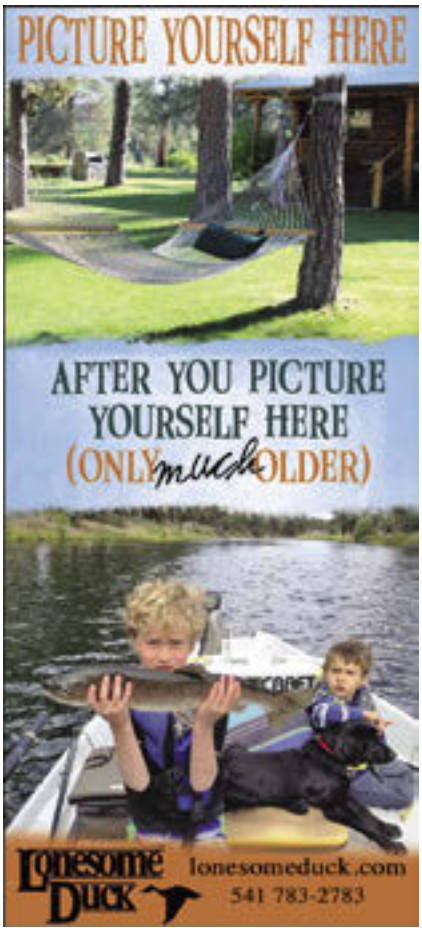

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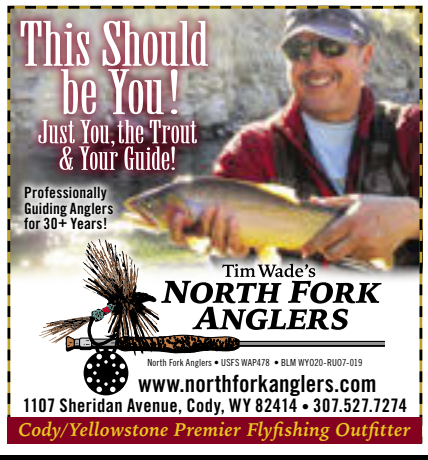

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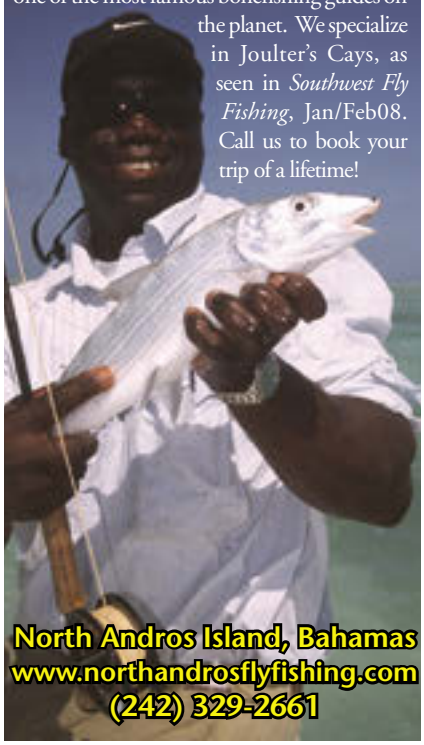

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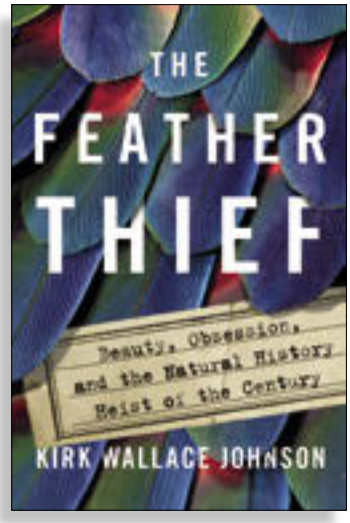
On the Bookshelf

The Feather Thief: Beauty, Obsession, and the Natural History Heist of the Century

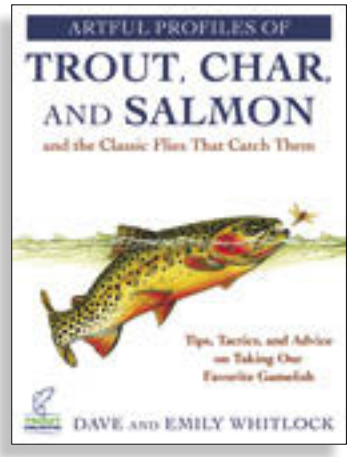
By Kirk Wallace Johnson



In 2009, perhaps one of the most bizarre and shocking crimes of the 21st century was committed by a 20-year-old American flautist and world-class salmon fly tier named Edwin Rist. In an event with global, historical, and scientific ramifications, Rist, then a student at London's Royal Academy of Music, stole hundreds of invaluable exotic bird skins from England's Natural History Museum at Tring, home of one of the largest ornithological collections in the world. Of the specimens taken, many were collected by the 19th-century naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, whose study of these birds led him to conceive of the theory of evolution through natural selection—independently of, and contemporaneously with, Charles Darwin. In this rollicking true-crime adventure that spans centuries and crisscrosses the globe, Kirk Wallace Johnson draws on exhaustive research and hundreds of interviews to chronicle this stranger-than-fiction tale of obsession, greed, and the insatiable drive to possess natural beauty. A masterful work of narrative nonfiction in the tradition of *The Lost City of Z* and *The Orchid Thief*, *The Feather Thief* is the gripping story, global and historical in scope, of a museum heist and of one man's relentless pursuit of justice.

Artful Profiles of Trout, Char, and Salmon and the Classic Flies That Catch Them

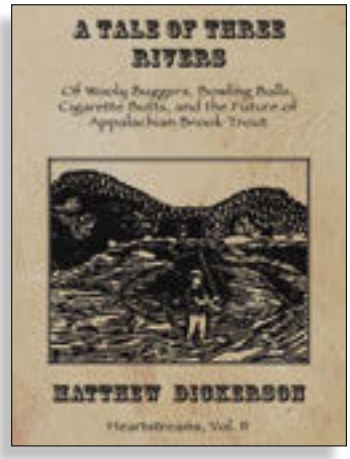
By Dave and Emily Whitlock



With passion and clarity, Dave Whitlock describes trout, salmon, and char, and how to fish for them, in this beautifully illustrated new anthology of articles spanning his long career in fly angling. Whitlock deftly, accessibly, and thoroughly covers a vast range of topics, including casting techniques, targeting the most difficult fish, accurately imitating various fish foods, and more; he also provides intriguing insights into the many subspecies of trout, char, and salmon. Best of all, perhaps, the book is lavishly illustrated with Whitlock's excellent detailed, color illustrations. Much of the material included in this new book was edited by Dave's wife, Emily, herself an accomplished fly angler. Together they have assembled what might be Dave's finest book to date.

A Tale of Three Rivers: Of Wooly Buggers, Bowling Balls, Cigarette Butts, and the Future of Appalachian Brook Trout

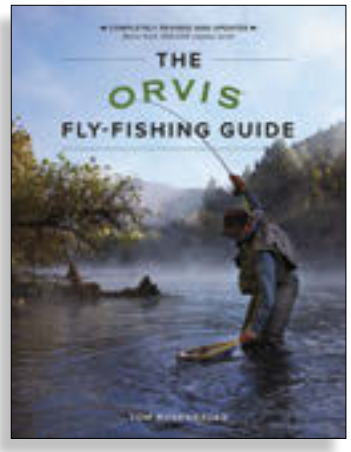
By Matthew Dickerson



In *A Tale of Three Rivers*, Matthew Dickerson takes his readers from a polluted Appalachian trout stream in western North Carolina up through his home state of Vermont, where development and the ski industry threaten the state's iconic pastoral riversides. Finally, he heads into western Maine to a once-dead river that has returned to life. Along the way, the author shares stories of both loss and hope through the eyes of a fisherman chasing wild trout. This lovingly described journey illuminates Dickerson's own life of discovery and his love of fly fishing, trout, and trout streams. Though the text is neither historical nor scientific, the writing is informed by both fields. Readers will gain an understanding of both stream ecology and the toll humans have taken—along with getting a grand fishing tale.

The Orvis Fly-Fishing Guide

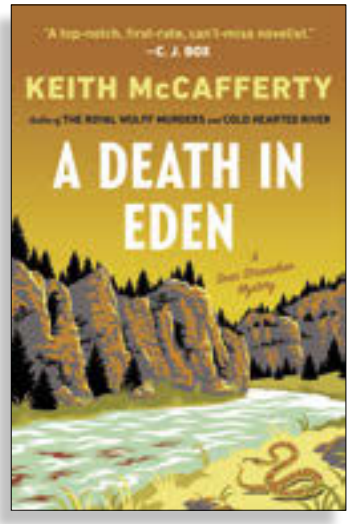
By Tom Rosenbauer



Whether you're a soon-to-be fly fisher looking for the right book to get you started or reasonably proficient at the sport and need a refresher course on tying knots for salt water or the latest info on how to care for your waders or how to fish a dry fly in tricky currents, this invaluable, best-selling guide is for you. This new, updated edition includes a trove of information on a variety of subjects: tackle selection and care; casting (with instructive line drawings); hundreds of flies, including 50 new patterns (with full-color illustrations); presentation skills; striking, playing, and landing fish; tactics for streams, still waters, and salt water; new techniques, including tenkara and Czech nymphing; how to target all the major game fish, fresh- and saltwater, including salmon and steelhead; and a new chapter on conservation, stream etiquette, and giving back to the sport we love so much. This 408-page tome includes 200 illustrations and 225 photos. Tom Rosenbauer has authored numerous books and magazine articles, and is the marketing manager for the Orvis Company.

A Death in Eden

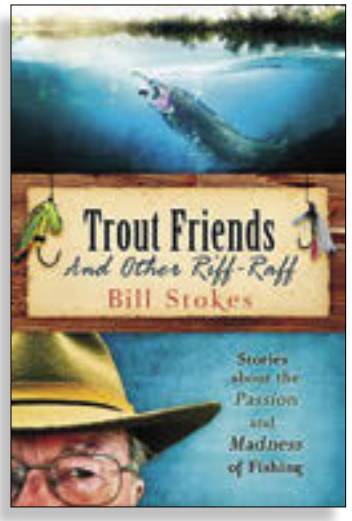
By Keith McCafferty



In his seventh Sean Stranahan mystery, Keith McCafferty once again displays his signature blend of vivid natural imagery, grisly violence, gripping plotting, and wry humor that has earned him the praise of critics and a devoted fan base. In this new novel, scarecrows are appearing on the cliffs above Montana's Smith River, and state investigator Harold Little Feather is enlisted to find the culprit behind the menacing effigies. On the surface, the incidents appear related to a copper mining project that threatens the purity of the river, but Little Feather's investigation takes an ominous turn when a decapitated body is found in the park. At the same time, Stranahan and "Rainbow" Sam Meslik guide a party down the Smith River that includes Clint McCaine, a lawyer and spokesman for the mine project; Bart Trueblood, the president of Save the Smith, a grassroots organization devoted to stopping the project; and the documentarian filming their arguments. McCaine and Trueblood grew up on the river on neighboring ranches, and as they travel downstream, it's revealed that the two share a past that runs much deeper and darker than their opposing viewpoints.

Trout Friends and Other Riff-Raff

By Bill Stokes



Trout Friends and Other Riff-Raff is a compelling memoir of short essays on fishing and the outdoors penned by popular longtime *Chicago Tribune* outdoors columnist Bill Stokes. The book, available from Amazon, features both published and unpublished essays written by Stokes over the years. In these stories, Stokes gives himself over to his true passion: trout fishing. It is an activity, possibly a madness, that moves him, time and again, to stand knee-deep in cold and murky waters, offer himself up to clouds of hungry mosquitoes, attempt to keep from snagging his line in overhanging limbs while trying to outwit a wily rainbow or brook trout—and then remember where his car is parked. This new compilation is the work of both Stokes and his grandson, Paul Stokes (www.audiobookreviewer.com), who recognized the importance of sharing his grandfather's work with a new generation of readers and listeners. Together they have collected 20 of his best writings. During his long journalism career, Bill Stokes won many conservation awards, including the Ernie Pyle Memorial Award from Scripps-Howard News Service in 1972. He has compiled three anthologies of his newspaper writing and authored two children's books.

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The HMH Universal Tube Fly Kit ($60) includes everything you need to set up an easy-to-use, universal system of interchangeable tubes, tools, and techniques, allowing you to tie any style of floating or sinking tube fly for any freshwater or saltwater game fish. The kit includes the *HMH Universal Tube Fly Method* DVD, which offers clear and concise instructions to get you tying tube flies right away, along with the HMH starter tube fly tool, stainless starter pins for the tube tool, poly tubes, rigid plastic tubes, micro tubing, hook holder tubing, aluminum and copper tubes, and custom and standard coneheads. It's no secret that tube flies are deadly effective in virtually any fly-fishing scenario, and HMH has led the way in tube fly innovation for 25 years. The Universal Tube Fly Kit is available through dealers and direct from HMH at www.hmhvises.com.

DRYFT Primo Long Waterproof Jacket

Rain, sleet, snow: say hello to our little friend. Stepping up from the original DRYFT Primo wading jacket, the new Primo Long Jacket excels at keeping you dry on those hard-core bad-weather days. If Chuck Norris were a fishing jacket, this would be it. Now with a full-length design, this version of the popular Primo jacket takes its job up a notch, protecting you from wet and wild whether you wear waders, wading pants, or dry-land clothes. The Primo Long Jacket ($299 at www.dryftfishing.com) has bigger pockets than the original, and new armpit zips for venting excess heat. Waterproof and breathable protection from the elements comes from a three-layer 20k DWR (durable water repellent) treated polyester outer, fully taped seams, and water-resistant YKK zippers. The snagless cuffs adjust on the inside of the sleeve, leaving the outside of your sleeve clean from snagging anything. You can't buy happiness, but you can buy this jacket. Which is pretty much the same thing when you face off against Mother Nature.

Fly Skinz Vert Tailz

The new Fly Skinz Vert Tailz predatory fish tails are just plain wicked, providing streamer patterns with lifelike action that game fish can't resist. The action is unique: the rear section wags its featherlike tail and the midsection undulates like an eel. Extremely versatile, Vert Tailz can be patterned and colored with permanent markers, allowing you to customize them for a wide range of applications. They are made from a tough, durable fabric that stands up to sharp teeth, and they are easy to cast because they don't absorb enough water to become waterlogged; they dry quickly, so you won't muck up your fly box when you stow a freshly fished pattern tied with them. You can attach Vert Tailz to shanks and swivels, or directly to a hook; the large tie-in tab helps with length adjustment and keeps the tail safely positioned so it won't foul on the hook. Ask for Fly Skinz Vert Tailz at shops that carry Hareline Dubbin products and visit www.flyskinz.com for tying and product demos.

Orvis Adds the Perfect Nymph Rod to the Helios 3 Lineup

Orvis continues to add new models to the Helios 3 (H3) family of amazingly accurate rods, and among the latest is the Helios 3F 1063-4—a 10.5-foot 3-weight. This new 10.5-footer provides enhanced accuracy and feel, and is especially adept at midrange distances, making it the ultimate nymphing rod, with the length you need to control your line during longer drifts. The H3F's feel and responsiveness allow you to detect subtle takes. It is extraordinary for tight-line nymphing with multiple flies; it's also an outstanding float tube/pontoon rod, because its extra length helps keep the backcast off the water and its accuracy allows you to drop a dry fly in front of a feeding cruiser with complete confidence. Like all H3 rods, the new 1063-4 ($849 at www.orvis.com) is distinctive in color and features top-of-the-line components from butt to tip.

For anglers not yet familiar with the Orvis H3 series, simply put, these rods redefine accurate casting. No two casts are identical because of the variables of caster, rod, and conditions. Helios 3F (the F demarks the H3 freshwater models) was designed to significantly reduce the variables at the point of release, focusing the energy of the cast to the intended target. No matter what happens behind you, the energy of the forward cast is crisply released through a tight window created by the most significant reduction in horizontal and vertical tip frequency ever conceived. It is a rifle in a world of muskets, and it autocorrects the variables of the cast to the target with incomparable precision.

Patagonia Stormfront Great Divider 29L Boat Bag

The ultimate modular storage bag for anglers, photographers, and travelers, this padded, water-resistant bag has sturdy sides, reinforced grab handles, a comfortable and fully adjustable (and removable) shoulder strap, and adjustable internal dividers. Water resistance is assured by the durable nylon core with a TPU (thermoplastic polyurethane) coating of this rugged and roomy bag. A large main compartment is protected by an oversize storm flap over the zipper, and it has foam dividers with hook-and-loop attachments that can be arranged in any configuration. The transparent floating interior panel on the inside lid has zippered pockets on both sides, and an exterior stash pocket is ideal for everything from plane tickets to leaders and tippet spools. Weighing less than 6 pounds and offering 1,770 cubic inches of storage space, the Stormfront Great Divider ($249) is available through Patagonia dealers and direct from www.patagonia.com.

Loon Camo Drops and Black Drops

Tin weights aren't a new concept, but Loon's new Camo Drops and Black Drops are nontoxic, easy to use and adjust, textured to prevent slipping, and double cut for easy reuse. Available in either camo or black, these split-shot-style weights are coated with a durable matte finish that adds to longevity and keeps the weight from sliding on the line. The natural colors and subtle mottled texture won't scare spooky fish the way that glossy weights can. They are available in nine sizes in easy-dispense twist pots ($8.95) and three different multipacks ($12.50, $17.50, and $25.50); refill tubs are $6.50. For more information and to purchase, go to www.loonoutdoors.com or visit your favorite Loon dealer.

Scientific Anglers Amplitude Smooth Infinity

Continuing its legacy of setting the bar for fly-line innovation, Scientific Anglers (SA) recently announced the release of its new Amplitude Smooth Infinity lines, the new go-to taper for most freshwater applications, from grayling in the arctic to carp on the flats. Whether you pursue trout, salmon, steelhead, bass, pike, or anything else swimming in fresh water, the Amplitude Smooth Infinity ($99.95) gives you an edge with its flawless performance. These brand-new tapers are built a half size heavy, ideal for fast-action rods, but also fully functional with a variety of rod actions. They have moderately long heads (49 feet long in the 5-weight, for example), and extended rear tapers that facilitate long-distance casting and enhance mending capabilities. The mass up front helps turn over nymphs and streamers, yet the front taper is also designed for delicacy and accuracy, even with small dry flies and fine tippets. The Infinity is available in either standard or camo colors, with the camo featuring a mottled tip that makes it nearly invisible to fish. The Infinity has a braided monofilament core and SA's revolutionary AST Plus slickness additive for superior shooting ability and increased durability, and the lines also bear the SA-ID line-marking system, Improved Dry Tip, and welded loops. They come in 3- through 9-weight configurations at your favorite SA dealer.

Silver Grey: Return to the Roots/By Tony Smith

Fly tied by Matt Bagshaw

Materials

Hook:	Size 2/0 or similar salmon/steelhead hook (in this case, a blind-eye hook is used for historical accuracy)
Thread:	White Pearsall's Gossamer or YLI silk thread
Eye:	Twisted silkworm gut or alternative, such as monofilament
Tag:	Black Antron or Z-Lon
Tail:	White floatable polypropylene yarn
Butt:	Short-fibered black ostrich herl
Body:	Flat silver tinsel
Rib:	Medium oval silver tinsel
Hackle:	Natural badger neck or saddle
Throat:	Teal
Underwing:	Golden pheasant tippet strands and center tail feather fibers
Overwing:	Married strands of white, yellow, and light blue goose shoulder; barred wood duck flank along the outside upper edges
Roof:	Bronze mallard
Topping:	Golden pheasant crest
Cheeks:	Asian kingfisher or similar small blue feathers, such as dyed hen neck or dyed ring-necked pheasant neck
Horns:	Blue and gold macaw tail, or dyed-blue turkey or goose
Head:	Tying thread, varnished or shellacked

I'd like to bring back the classics. Unfortunately, however, the term "classic salmon flies" conjures images of 8/0 hooks whimsically draped in exotic plumage and mile-high, bedazzling wings with exaggerated humps.

In recent decades, tying traditional 19th-century Atlantic salmon flies has become far more of an artistic endeavor than a practical matter of tying functional flies. While not inherently bad, the sole focus on the art of tying these complex flies led to a perversion of what "classic salmon fly" means. But a study of actual antique salmon flies makes it clear that modern interpretations meant for framing bear little in common—save the complexity—with the originals meant for fishing.

Most notable is that most originals were smaller, sizes 2/0 through 4 being common. Tags were short, toppings didn't neatly meet tip to tip with the tail, and wing materials were tied in tips down, meaning, for a right-handed tier, that right-side feather fibers were used on the near wing. Exotic feathers like those from the Indian fruit crow and blue chatterer weren't used as liberally as the uninitiated may believe when looking at modern artistic salmon flies; they are showy feathers, and thus captured the imagination of display tiers (those who dress these flies for frames, not salmon). Most vintage patterns consisted of materials that were, and still are, easily accessible.

I began tying Atlantic salmon flies in 1993 and leaned toward artistic classics. At the time, George Kelson's seminal book *The Salmon Fly* (1895) was the most popular reference for fly patterns; few tiers discussed his tying instructions. Author J. H. Hale's book *How to Tie Salmon Flies* (1892), perhaps the most digestible of the Victorian books regarding salmon-fly-tying instruction, was rarely mentioned, likely because, to modern tiers, it lacked Kelson's flamboyance. Books offering modern salmon-fly-tying approaches appeared in the 1990s, and expert display-fly tiers increasingly taught at shops and shows, encouraging methods little connected to tying actual classics.

Instead, tiers churned out oversize, rather sterile flies using Super Glue to make up for lack of skill in working with various materials. Modern micro-threads led to caricature-like, disproportionately tiny heads. Modern flies lacked what T. E. Pryce-Tannatt termed "soul" in his 1914 book, *How to Dress Salmon Flies*. The genre had gone from functional art to feather art, and the essence—the idea that these flies were elegant lures designed for fishing—was lost. In fact, feather-art salmon flies, materials daintily secured, cannot possibly be fished—they are

torn apart by the rigors of casting, let alone the teeth of a salmon or steelhead.

Another two decades passed, and social media arrived. On forums dedicated to Atlantic salmon fly tying, a few people began posting photos of vintage salmon flies. Initially I laughed at how "poorly tied" they were, with their bigger heads and toppings that weren't perfectly preened. As I saw more examples of antiques, however, I realized the flies I called classic salmon flies were not perpetuating the tradition of beautiful old-world craftsmanship implied by the label "classic," and it felt fraudulent. At the same time, a few European tiers, including Dave Carne, Mike Townend, and Robert Verkerk, had similar epiphanies, and niche forums dedicated to true classics arose. We began discussing antique flies and literature, hoping to buoy what seemed a rapidly disappearing history. Verkerk's forum, www.classicflytying.net, became a clearinghouse for the most esoteric of classic salmon-fly-tying topics. Salmon fly historian Colin Innes created the website www.feathersfliesandphantoms.co.uk, a veritable time machine that features hundreds of antique flies and Victorian salmon fly ephemera.

I began to realize that salmon flies were fishing lures, not centerpieces, and the challenge of creating something both pretty and practical became more appealing. The flies of 19th-century Irish fly tier Michael Rogan captivated me. Upon first seeing his salmon flies with askew, loosely mingling wing fibers, I wondered why he was held in such high regard; I came from a school that dictated perfectly married fibers, so at first I considered Rogan a sloppy amateur. But eventually his style became my focal point, for in my opinion his flies embodied the idea of functional art.

Rogan knew the loose bundles of fibers of golden pheasant tippet (neck feathers), guinea fowl, and various parrots would play well underwater, and he placed platforms of other feathers, such as golden pheasant rump, under each little bundle, giving them lift and assisting with underwater action. Changing my outlook, I soon learned that tying functional salmon flies was more difficult than tying merely pretty ones.

Thus inspired, I began to readjust my tying. The first step was tying each fly to meet fishing demands. I followed Hale's instructions and started using smaller hooks and securing the silkworm-gut eyes all along the shank rather than taking the display tier's shortcut of securing the gut only at the front of the hook since the fly won't be fished. Fully gutting also renders a uniform underbody, eliminating the need to create an underbody with layered floss—a definite timesaver.

Tying on smaller hooks also meant I didn't have to purchase the expensive, extra-long-fibered feathers required by display tiers for their huge hooks. Using silk thread with cobbler's wax allowed materials to lock in place without needing messy Super Glue. Silk thread, larger in diameter than the ultrafine threads so popular today, taught me thread control. Best of all, I began to feel connected to the roots of the craft.

It was fun discovering techniques described in classic salmon-fly-tying books that modern display tiers had simply missed or glossed over. For example, Hale's method of tying in the rib under the tag and body tinsel under the butt helps the tier avoid creating bumps at the tie-in points, leading to more durable and attractive bodies. The old masters knew what they were doing; they were salmon fishermen, and they knew how to tie durable, attractive flies.

The 1990s ushered in an era in which classic Atlantic salmon flies captured the fancy of fly dressers, but they strayed a long way from the days when they were used for fishing. Ironically, all the newfound shortcuts for creating feather art rather than real flies complicated the art form.

Happily, there has been a resurgence of interest in classics capable of withstanding the rigors of fishing. Despite

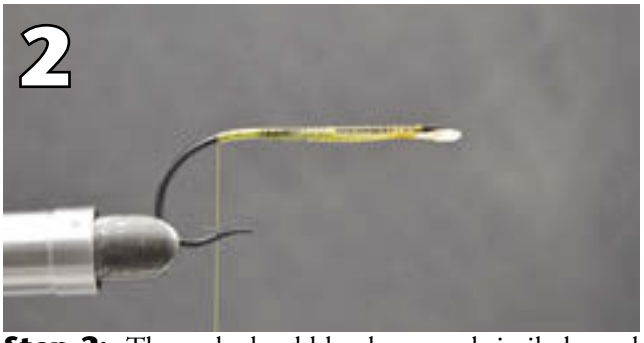
PHOTOS BY TONY SMITH

this movement, some contemporary tiers continue arguing that modern adhesives and threads should be used because "don't you think if the old masters had them, they'd have used them?" But the mission in revisiting the Victorian era isn't to tie flies following such speculation; instead, it's to preserve history and hone skills instead of cheating with Super Glue.

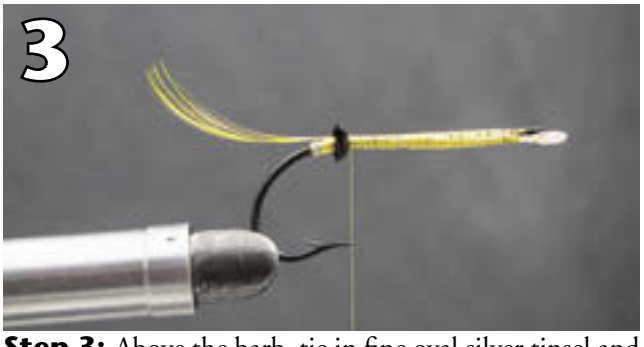
If you want to cast the classics, bear in mind that huge, fanciful modern flies are historically inaccurate. Try tying, and fishing, a real classic, such as the Silver Grey, demonstrated herein. They still work, more than a century after their inception, for both Atlantic salmon and steelhead, and there is something incredibly satisfying in seeing such a fly pinned in the jaw of a sea-bright fish. It's a connection to our past, our heritage.

Tony Smith is a Massachusetts-based outdoor enthusiast who, when not studying salmon flies, enjoys backpacking and fly fishing in New England and the western United States.

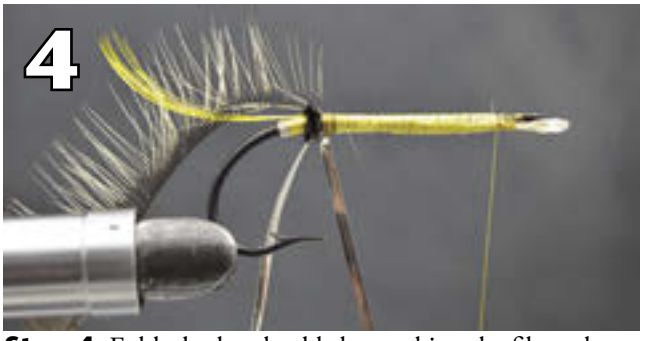
Step 1: Prepare a section of gut (or substitute) for the eye that is double the length of the area from the hook point to the end of the shank. Fold approximately in half, one side being a tad longer. Soften by dampening the fold in your mouth for a few minutes. Insert a small nail and pinch hard with fingernails on each side, creating the loop for the eye.



Step 2: The ends should be dampened similarly, and as they soften, chew the rear third of the strands to flatten and fray them. Trim the tag ends to differing lengths, making the inside strands shorter than the outer strands. Place under the shank, and using thread well laden with cobbler's wax, start from the front and wrap neatly and tightly rearward, pinching strands compactly together underneath



Step 3: Above the barb, tie in fine oval silver tinsel and make five turns headward. Bind the excess underneath the shank, working forward to just before the hook point. Secure the yellow silk and wrap it back to the tinsel, then back to the tie-in spot. Wax the thread and secure a tail that is 1.5 times the length of the hook gap span. Secure the ostrich herl by its tip and make four turns headward; tie off and stroke the fibers rearward.



Step 4: Fold a badger hackle by stroking the fibers down from both sides. Tie in at 4 o'clock (when the hook is viewed in the round from the front). Next, expose the core of a length of oval tinsel and secure it by wrapping thread over the core at the hook's 5 o'clock position. Cut a taper into the end of a length of flat tinsel and secure it just ahead of the oval tinsel at the 6 o'clock position.

Step 5: This bottom view shows the positions of the materials secured around the hook shank. In the next step, all materials, once wrapped forward, are to be tied off compactly underneath the shank.

Step 6: Bring thread forward to a point 3/16 inch from the front end of the shank. Wind the flat tinsel forward with edge-to-edge wraps. Make five turns of oval tinsel for the rib, then spiral the hackle forward with each turn abutting the rear edge of the rib; make an extra turn in front of the tinsel tie-off points. Secure a doubled teal flank and make two turns for the collar.

Step 7: Select a golden pheasant tippet feather with even fibers on each side (aka a "center"). Measure a section about 0.25 inch wide on each side, as shown, and "twitch off" by grasping the fiber roots and quickly stripping downward. Some rachis will peel off with the fibers, keeping them together. Given the natural curve of the fibers, right-side fibers are for the near wing, and left-side fibers for the far wing.

Step 8: Cut matching sections of golden pheasant center tail feather that are just narrower than the tippet strand sections. Use right-side fibers for the near wing and left-side fibers for the far wing. Lay them over the tippet sections as shown. Before securing the underwing to the hook, build up a slight ramp of thread at the collar tie-off point so the underwing doesn't protrude upward at a steep angle when tied in.

Step 9: Place the prepared underwing sections back to back. Grasp the butt ends and measure so the underwing extends to half the length of the tail. Using well-waxed thread, pinch the bundle firmly to the tie-in point and make two thread wraps, pulling the thread upward to secure. Lightly dampening the butt ends with saliva will help compress them to tie in more easily. Leave the butt ends, as they help create a platform for the wing.

Step 10: Use right-side feather fibers for the near side of the fly, and left-side fibers for the far side. Cut four fibers each of white, light blue, and yellow goose shoulder, and about six fibers of barred wood duck. Marry the goose sections together by laying them edge to edge so each is slightly longer than the one below and stroking until they adhere. Lay the wood duck along the center so it is about three-quarters the length of the goose fibers.

Step 11: Place one section on each side of the underwing, so the end result is as illustrated, with the underwing peeking out and the wing tips just inside the tail. Tie in as you did the underwing, dampening the roots and pinching firmly. Cut right and left sections of bronze mallard for the roof. Use the right-hand section for the near side. Lay one section against the top of each side of the wing, as shown, and secure with two turns.

Step 12: Trim all the butt ends into a precise taper. Wax the thread. Select a golden pheasant crest feather with a curve similar to the wing and secure it with one turn of thread. Add one blue feather on each side, securing with one turn of thread. Add a right- and left-side fiber of macaw tail atop the wing. Trim the remaining tag ends and pinch the butt ends firmly while winding a thread layer over them. Whip-finish and varnish.

In the Vise

JJ's Crab Cake/By John E. Wood

Of the myriad flies designed to catch redfish on the salt flats, crab patterns are among the most popular. This undoubtedly stems from the fact that crabs make up the bulk of the redfish's diet across most of their habitat range.

Despite the effectiveness of crab patterns, I've always shied away from them, opting for easier-to-tie flies for my saltwater angling adventures. Tying on individual clumps of fur or fiber along the hook shank takes precious time and a well-honed attention span, both of which can be in short supply some days. Then along came the Crab Cake.

My introduction to JJ's Crab Cake came during a meeting with Captain Jeff Johnson of Fly Fish Rockport, in Texas. He showed me the fly as we sat drinking coffee at the Daily Grind coffee shop, waiting for the spring weather to stabilize. He had brought along a sampling of the plethora of patterns he has honed for use on the local saltwater bay system. Examining the group of patterns, I was most attentive when he said, "You won't believe how fast that one is to tie," as I handled the Crab Cake.

A few days later, during a tying session while waiting out another spring storm system, he demonstrated just how easy and fast it is to complete a Crab Cake. I timed the second one he whipped up at just under four and a half minutes from thread start to final trim. Johnson doesn't take credit for the idea of using brushes for tying crab bodies, but he eagerly takes advantage of it.

During our tying time we discussed the effectiveness of crab patterns, including the Crab Cake, that omit embellishments such as perfectly formed claws, precisely spaced legs, and colored mono eyes. Based on his extensive experience on the Texas flats, Johnson says, "The fish don't care, so I don't either. After a long day on the water the last thing I want is to spend extra time tying tedious flies—what I need is sleep."

Tying the Crab Cake is straightforward once you have the sequence down. The one thing of note is to be sure the EP brush is wrapped as tightly as possible against the hook shank, ensuring that the body holds its trimmed shape after spending time in the jaws of a few angry redfish.

Small, sharp wire cutters and a razor blade are handy when you tie the Crab Cake. The wire cutter is essential for cutting the wire at the center of the dubbing brush if you wish to preserve your expensive tying scissors. The razor blade is helpful for making the first trims on the top and bottom of the fly body. As with shaping deer hair and other bulky fly bodies, the fly requires some precision scissor work to get the shape just right. Since picking up this pattern, I have started using a paper template to get the bodies to a more precise shape. Because tying and trimming are different operations, I usually tie, then trim, the Crab Cakes in groups.

In addition to color and size variations, the Crab Cake can be tied with lighter bead-chain eyes, making it suitable for fishing over grass beds.

Materials

Hook:	Gamakatsu SL11-3H, size 6
Thread:	Tan UNI-Thread, size 6/0
Eyes:	Black nickel 5/32-inch Spirit River DAZL-Eyes
Tail:	Tan select craft fur
Tail flash:	Root beer Krystal Flash
Body:	Enrico Puglisi Back Country Crustaceous Brush
Legs:	Two each, red/blue flake and clear/salt-and-pepper flake Sili Legs

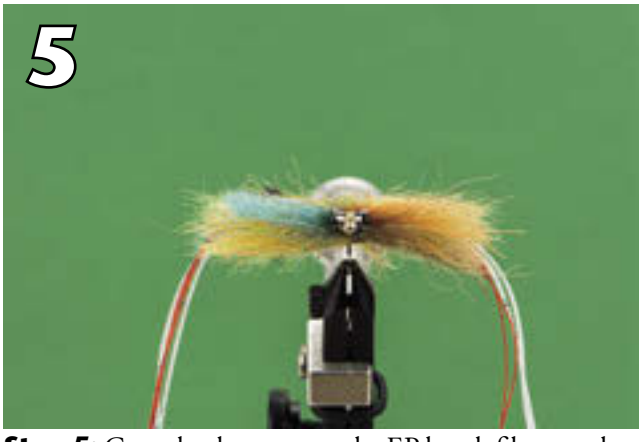
John E. Wood is a freelance writer, photographer, and commercial fly designer whose travels take him around the country in search of excellent fly-fishing locations.

Step 1: Start the thread and attach the eyes, leaving room for the final whip-finish. Apply a thread base back to the hook bend. Tie in the craft fur tail, followed by six to eight strands of Krystal Flash so they straddle the hook shank to either side of the tail. Secure them firmly and trim the ends to length.

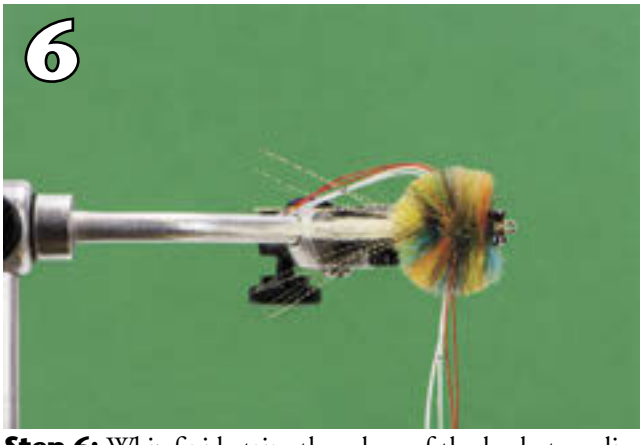
Step 2: Tie in the EP Crustaceous Brush, securing it firmly at the hook bend to prevent it from twisting on the hook when you wrap it forward in the next step. Move the thread forward to the midpoint of the fly.

Step 3: Make four wraps with the EP brush while stroking the fibers back. Secure the brush with three or four very tight thread wraps. Do not cut the brush. Tie in the Sili Legs at their midpoint, just in front of the secured brush.

Step 4: Rotate the vise upside down or flip the hook. Pull the Sili Legs back and make four and a half tight wraps with the EP brush. Secure the brush with minimal thread wraps. Cut the brush wire, then fold the tag end of the wire forward and cover it with diagonal thread wraps, avoiding wraps behind the eyes.



Step 5: Completely tease out the EP brush fibers so they radiate perpendicular to the hook shank before you trim the body to shape. Trim the top and bottom surfaces of the body.



Step 6: Whip finish, trim the edges of the body to a disc shape, cut the legs to length, and apply head cement.

In the Vise

Mercer's Tungsten October Caddis Pupa /By Dennis Collier

My goose down jacket made a good traveling companion on a chilly fall morning a few years ago. Breezes arriving fresh from the surrounding snow-dusted peaks carried news that winter was close behind. Walking the cobblestone streambed of Colorado's Roaring Fork River, I watched American dippers bobbing to the surface of shallow, crystal-clear late-season flows with what appeared to be chubby little sticks clutched in their bills. These were encased October Caddisflies, which blanketed the submerged stones and detritus—brunch for the birds, and protein for the abundant trout and whitefish that forage below the meniscus of this renowned freestone river.

October Caddis belong to the order Trichoptera, and their presence in watersheds from the Pacific Northwest to the Rocky Mountains—not to mention the similar Great Autumn Brown Sedge of the East—provide fish with an opportunity to add a few more life-sustaining ounces of bulk before the rivers are once again choked with ice. For anglers, the hatch of these big, orangish caddisflies is ample reason to shake the coils out of a fly line and shelve the chore list for a bit more quality time on favored streams.

That day in Colorado, the hatch was near at hand, but until then, nymph fishing with weighted pupa imitations kept us entertained. Caddisfly pupa patterns abound, but when the cream rises to the top, Mercer's Tungsten October Caddis Pupa ranks among the best. Mike Mercer, a well-known tier from California and longtime fixture at The Fly Shop in Redding, offers this insight regarding the pattern: "I wanted a fly heavy enough to fish without adding split shot to the leader, and the tungsten bead gets the fly deep quickly without dramatically altering or retarding the drift of the fly. When these bugs pupate there is a lot going on; consequently, I used the Flashabou rib to emulate both ribbing and the trapped air from the pupal shuck. It was easy to get the dark dorsal–light underbelly effect I desired with dubbing and natural materials, and the rib also perfectly emulated the distinctive dark/light banding of the dorsal surface of the natural."

He continues, "The natural [insect] has a lot of messy legs that I imitate with sparse soft fibers, and for the pronounced antennae I use pheasant tail fibers—durable and good motion in the water. I noticed on the naturals during pupation that they have very pronounced and dark wing pads. I like the dark iridescence of a synthetic material, plus I could cut it to whatever shape I desired, and it didn't affect the fly's effectiveness if it frayed a bit. I decided on the ostrich herl head as it is long-fibered and has great motion in the water. It just looks alive. I've always enjoyed mixing naturals and synthetics in my patterns, and this is a classic example."

By now it should be obvious that Mercer is not your everyday fly tier, but a fly design engineer when it comes to building his many effective patterns. This fly and 38 other Mercer patterns are currently produced by Umpqua Feather Merchants. This one in particular is my go-to pattern for subsurface action prior to the hatch of the robust October Caddis.

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

Step 1: Place a tungsten bead onto the hook and secure the hook in the vise. Add eight to 10 wraps of 0.010 or 0.015 lead or lead-free wire on the shank and push the wire up into the bead cavity. Attach the tying thread, secure the lead wire, then wrap back to the hook bend. Secure the rib material and a few strands of marabou by its tips right above the hook barb.

Step 2: Form a fairly dense dubbing noodle on your thread, then wrap forward to create the abdomen. Moisten and twist the marabou while pulling it forward over the back to create the carapace. Hold in place with a couple of thread wraps in front of the abdomen, then palmer the rib material forward and tie off.

Step 3: Tie in a short section of Swiss straw (or similar material) on each side of the hook, directly in front of the abdomen. Angle the wing pads slightly downward and trim them to a wedge shape.

Step 4: Tie in a set of two backward-facing antennae over the abdomen, extending beyond the body and hook bend. Tie in a hen back hackle by its tip and wrap it around the hook several times to create the legs. Trim the hackle stem and add a small drop of head cement to lock everything in place.

Step 5: Dub a short but substantial thorax section directly in front of the hackle. Tie in an ostrich herl by its butt end, making sure the stem is facing forward, which will prevent it from wrapping down the herl in the final step.

Step 6: Make several adjoining wraps of the ostrich herl and tie off right behind the bead. Apply a small amount of head cement to the thread, then make a three-turn whip-finish and trim. Do not try to place a drop of head cement on the final whip-finish, as the cement will wick into the ostrich herl and ruin the material.

Materials

Hook:	TMC or TFS 2302, sizes 8–12
Bead:	Black tungsten
Thread:	Black Veevus, size 14/0
Body weight:	0.010 or 0.015 lead wire
Abdomen/ collar:	October Caddis Mercer's Select Buggy Nymph Dubbing
Rib:	Pearl Flashabou
Carapace:	Dyed brown marabou
Wing pads:	Dark brown or gray Swiss straw or similar
Antennae:	Two ring-necked pheasant tail fibers
Hackle:	Golden-brown mottled hen back
Head:	Dyed dark brown or black ostrich herl

The Things We Eat/By Nick Carter

"I couldn't wait to get some of those tacos de perro.

That's when the conversation took an abrupt turn. During long days on the water, talk often turns to food. Fueled by early-morning shopping sprees at the gas station, an angler's brain makes a direct connection with his or her stomach late in the day. A Styrofoam cup of coffee, a greasy—yet somehow dried out—biscuit, a bag of jerky, the crushed pack of Stimulator-orange peanut butter crackers left in the pack from last trip, or last year—this is the diet of those with an inability to plan ahead. It never sustains them through the evening hatch.

It's hard enough to remember the five crucial elements of a fishing trip during a predawn departure. That's why my friends and I turned it into a chant—"Rod, reel, vest, boots, waders"—to remind our sleep-addled and often whiskey-bent brains of the essentials. Packing a sandwich is just too much to ask before the coffee kicks in.

So there we were. As the sun set, we took turns drifting nymphs through a hole at the bend in the creek. Rainbows were podded up and feeding. Diligently picking apart the run produced a good fish every few minutes, so we weren't going anywhere. But we were hungry.

While another guy fished, I sat down next to Phil, a wild- and hairy-looking dude I had just met that morning. Phil seemed thoughtful and intelligent, and happened to be a very fine guide and fisherman. To strike up conversation, I must have said something like, "Man, a juicy burger would be good right now."

Well, Phil started talking about the things he likes to eat. It started with the dog tacos, about which he reminisced fondly from his time in Southern California. "Fair enough," I thought. I shuddered at the thought of someone serving up my faithful companion Otis, but cultural norms vary, and I try not to judge.

Things went quickly downhill from there.

"Ever eat a groundhog?" Phil asked. "They're delicious. You gut 'em, skin 'em, bone 'em, and then just roll up what's left around some vegetables and throw them on the grill."

At this point I chuckled a little, thinking I was falling victim to the ridiculous guide humor professionals often use to entertain clients when the fishing is slow. I played along.

"Whistle-pigs?" I asked. "We call them whistle-pigs. And no, I've never eaten one. Had a family of them ravage my garden once. I was tempted to shoot them, but I was never tempted to eat them."

"They're good," Phil said. "Taste kind of like raccoon or possum."

I guess he thought the comparison would clarify things.

Thankfully, the term whistle-pig steered the conversation back to more conventional waters—briefly. We talked of what Homer Simpson once called a "wonderful, magical animal," the pig. Bacon, ham, pork chops, a whole pig cooked in a pit: we covered all our favorite preparations for pig. My stomach was really rumbling.

Then Phil rolled out this gem: "You like guinea pig?"

He asked it as if guinea pig was some sort of mildly exotic food item like sushi, Hawaiian pizza, or kung pao shrimp.

"Yeah, man. They eat 'em in Peru. Slow-cook 'em in this clay pot thing," he said. "They're hard to get here, though. We used to go to the pet store. It was like picking your own lobster from the tank at Red Lobster."

Turned out the lady who ran the pet shop was fit to be tied when she caught on. She called the cops. Phil said that attitude was pretty hypocritical coming from a woman who probably ate trout.

Nick Carter is a Georgia-based freelance writer and photographer.

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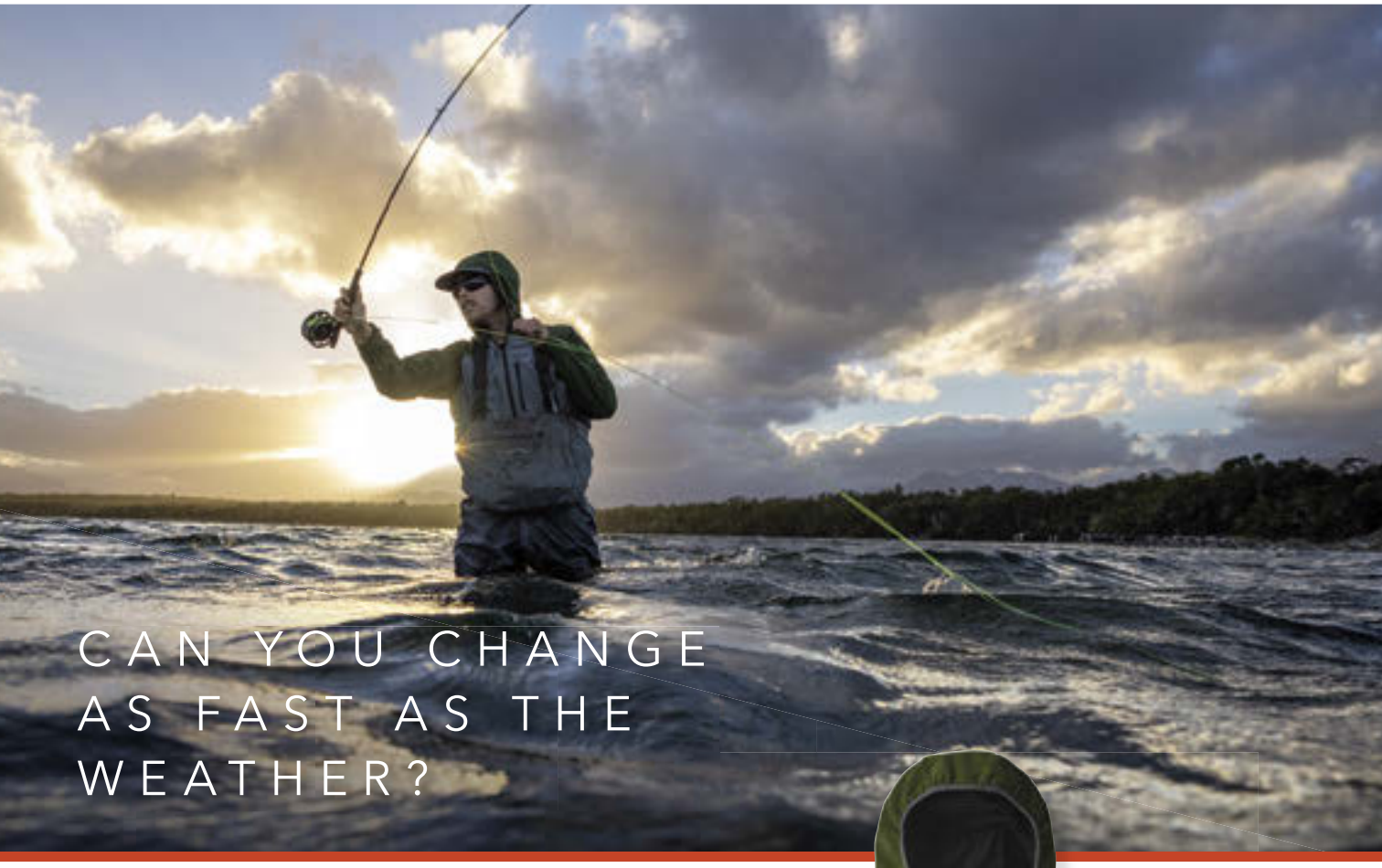

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In Patagonia, the wind doesn't blow, it sucks. On the leading edge of a three-day gale, Jack Porter goes left shoulder to prevent an ear piercing. Rio Pico, Argentina. **JEREMY KORESKI**

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