

Eastern

**West Branch
Delaware River**
New York/Pennsylvania

**James River
Shad**
Virginia

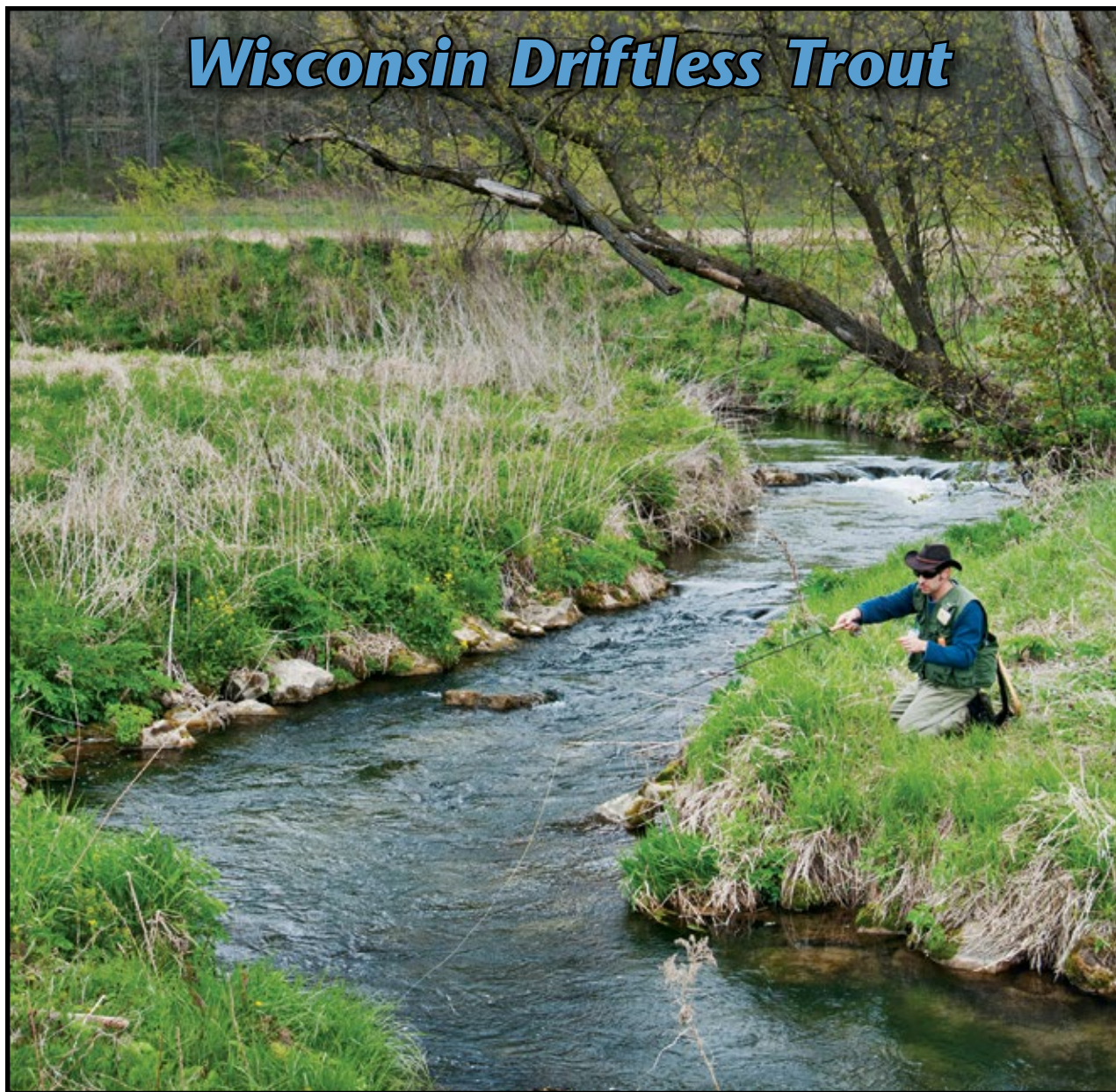
**Ipswich Bay
Stripers**
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May/June 2016

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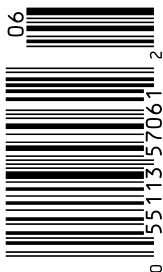
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Floating Dragonfly Nymph

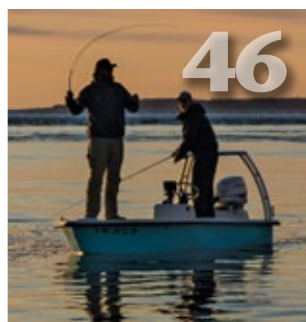
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FISH FOOD
Dragonflies

In the Studio
Craft Beer Labels





Cover: This is called "coulee country," coulee being a French Canadian term meaning "ravine or valley." The Driftless Area is an unglaciated area of southwest Wisconsin that is home to deep, dramatic ravines, valleys, and forested box canyons, with a spring creek—and too many trout to count—in each one.

Photo by: Aaron Peterson

Eastern FLY FISHING

Incredible fly-fishing destinations

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Photo by Tyler Roemer

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Our 2016 waders: Re-engineered from the booties up.



At Patagonia, we think the toughest days on the water teach us the most—they make us focus on the subtle

details, reduce the variables and simplify our approach. Our 2016 wader redesign is based on the same idea: Keep the tested-and-proven core, refine and streamline the rest—right down to every last detail in the production of each wader.

Durable 4-layer fabric and single-seam construction.

Combined with our single-seam construction that routes critical seams away from areas of highest wear, our puncture- and abrasion-resistant 4-layer fabric has endured extremes of use from Tierra del Fuego to the Kamchatka Peninsula and points beyond. It remains the waterproof/breathable engine of every wader in our lineup.

Streamlined fit.

We removed two inches of fabric from the chest, waist and hip for a closer fit. It still allows free movement and is easy to layer under for long sessions in bitter cold. We've also repatterned the legs and crotch for more articulation, which can come in handy during the unplanned gymnastics of chasing a fish downstream or hopping after a drift(ing) boat with one leg over the gunwale.



Improved gravel guard and booties.

Speaking of shaking a leg, the new flat panel on our gravel guards helps water drain out quickly if you are in and out of a boat frequently. They also resist abrasion and wear if you spend a lot of time hiking to your favorite water, which you might just find yourself doing more of when you slip your feet into our new booties. They now have a sculpted, more sock-like fit and are made from a denser foam that resists compaction better over the long haul.



Men's Rio Gallegos Zip-Front Waders

We put a fish on it.

While not a technical detail, all of our waders now sport our iconic Fitz Roy Trout on the outside—just in case you need a reminder of why we build waders in the first place. It also never hurts to have a little good luck charm for those tough, yet instructive days.



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It's the work of Patagonia's Wader Task Force—a group of people, from chemical engineers and textile developers to designers and field testers, all dedicated to one task: building the best waders.

Tracking every detail, every time, is just part of what they do. The Wader Task Force is an ongoing process of inquiry, a feedback loop that takes everything we learn from testing, design and production and applies it to the development of the next generation of waders.

This is the next generation.

Get inside a pair at your favorite local fly shop and see for yourself.



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From the Editor

An Island or a Sea?

Federally administered public lands and public access come in many forms, including America's world-famous national parks. Most of our national parks are in fact enclaves— islands of more or less intact ecosystems surrounded by a sea of change in the form of land that has long since been transformed by human activity. Vast unaltered spaces are no longer ubiquitous, and probably no longer possible in the face of ever-expanding human population fueling what we routinely call "progress."

Those facts alone are reason to celebrate our national parks; in total they preserve a slice of American natural history, and individually they preserve unique landscapes. For May/June, each of our magazines—*Northwest Fly Fishing*, *Southwest Fly Fishing*, and *Eastern Fly Fishing*—features a different national park (Glacier, Rocky Mountain, and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks, respectively), examining them from a fly angler's perspective. Each offers a unique angling experience, yet they all share a common thread of conservation and preservation that has served as a model for the formation of similar park systems in other nations.

Luckily, in addition to our national parks, Americans own many other extensive tracts of land, in the form of public places administered by the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and other agencies. All of it is ours. Yours and mine. It's our shared heritage. Much of it has traditionally been managed for multiple use, including extractive industry, but also including recreation. Unfortunately, the latest version of the anti-public-lands movement seeks to undo our heritage by taking federally managed public lands out of federal hands. It's an insidious and well-funded movement, but if you believe our public forests, deserts, prairies, and mountains—and their streams and lakes—are better off in the hands of the states and private entities, I urge you to dig deeper into the issue while committing to a fundamental understanding of cognitive dissonance and confirmation bias, conjoined hijackers of critical thinking.

I grew up in the West, and my lifestyle—the things I love to do, and the things I value—have always depended upon our expansive federally administered public lands. I don't want to lose that. I see it the same way Montana Governor Steve Bullock sees it. In vetoing a public-land transfer bill last year, he conceded, as most of us would, that "there is little doubt federal management needs to improve," but he declared, "I do not support any effort that jeopardizes or calls into question the future of our public lands heritage."



John Shewey
Editor in Chief



PHOTO BY JOHN SHEWEY

Eastern FLY FISHING

Incredible fly-fishing destinations

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Publisher
Steve Cole

Editor in Chief
John Shewey

Creative Director
Jon Luke

Copy Editors & Proofreaders
Miriam Bulmer
Irene Wanner

Illustration
Peter Chadwell
Gene Trump

Web Developer
Glen Martin

ADVERTISING SALES

Advertising Manager
Steve Maeder
stevem@matchthehatch.com

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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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**SCIENTIFIC
ANGLERS**



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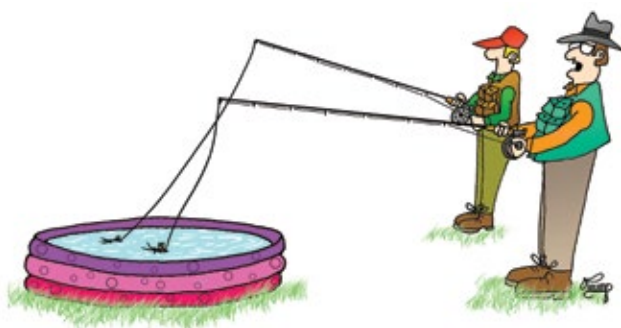
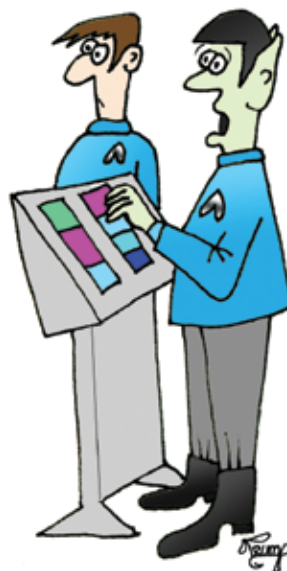
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May/June 2016 Contest



March/April 2016 Finalists:

1. "Hey, Fred, it's been an hour already. Are you sure you stocked this thing?"

George Brakatselos, Bronxville, New York

2. "And this, my friend, is why we don't tell our wives what our trips cost!"

Craig Ritland, Waterloo, Iowa

3. "This pool seemed a lot deeper when I was younger."

Lon Teter, Brooklyn, New York

CAST
a
CAPTION
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January/February 2015 Winner!



"Five times in one day on a Blue Winged Olive?!
The diagnosis is clear: you are a nymphomaniac."

Jeffrey Missimer, Hoboken, New Jersey

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 May 6, 2016. Above left are the finalists for the March/April 2016 contest; please go online to vote for your favorite. The winner will be announced in the July/August 2016 issue and will receive a T-shirt displaying the cartoon and the winning caption. The January/February 2016 winner appears above right.

To cast your caption, go to
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A fly fisherman is standing on a rock in a river, casting a line. The background is a large, layered rock cliff. The water is a warm, golden-brown color.

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An Underwater Perspective
Largemouth Bass and Sneaky Pete

By Jon Luke





Masters at the Bench

Jonny King/By Don Roberts



He looks stern—determined. From his facial expression on the cover of his most recent jazz album, *Above All* (Sunnyside Records), you could infer that Jonny King is not afraid to embrace complexity. Said inference would be further bolstered by knowing that King is also an attorney—an intellectual property trial lawyer, to be more precise—whose avocations happen to be fly fishing and fly tying, preoccupations that revel in their own degrees of difficulty. Lawyer. Musician/composer. Fly tier. You wouldn't be far wrong thinking, "Here's a guy who savors painstaking pursuits," if not exactly the luxury of a lot of spare time. Indeed, King put the words "spare time" in quotation marks when admitting, somewhat ruefully, "I have none, literally."

It all started on the streams and streets of New York when King was just a 9-year-old tyke. He became intrigued with fishing while tagging along with a friend who liked to fish ponds for largemouth bass. "After a couple of years of night crawlers and Rapalas," recalls King, "I saw an article about fly fishing and was transfixed, both by the pictures of the casting and the fact that you could make your own 'lures.' ... There were no videos back then, and I knew no one who fly fished, so I taught myself to cast and tie from books."

It wasn't long before the fledgling fly fisher talked his mother into taking him to Theodore Gordon Flyfishers meetings in New York City, events at which the next-youngest person in attendance "was easily 40 years older!"

Picture a lone preteen acolyte astutely sitting through club meetings and endless orders-of-business, while rubbing shoulders with such venerable founding members as Lee Wulff, Ed Zern, Ernest Schwiebert, and Ted Rogowski.

Young Jonny King's precociousness did not stop at the tying bench. His artistic leanings also found expression at the piano. Having received no formal music training, King learned music in the most old-school fashion: by obsessively listening to records, attending jam sessions, and soaking up as much live and recorded jazz as possible, from the most traditional to the most avant-garde. While King was still in his preteens, his advanced musical skills led to a performance onstage with Dizzy Gillespie and to an appearance on television playing alongside Earl "Fatha" Hines. By the time he was 20, he was sitting in with Art Blakey and landing his first gigs in the city's plethora of jazz clubs. Eventually King began composing and arranging, culminating in the recording of three CDs; reviews branded King as "a thinker's composer" (*The New York Times*) and a "bandleader who kicks ass" (*Downbeat* magazine).

While entrenched in the largely nocturnal professional jazz scene, King attended law school, passed the bar, and ever since has actively maintained a demanding career as a trial lawyer in intellectual property disputes. Fittingly for someone in the arts, King specializes in copyright cases, including "big player clients like Universal Music," but also trademark cases concerning consumer products. At this point, you might ask how the hell he ever found the time to sleep, much less go fishing? Ah, the dividends of youth. While still single and full of vinegar, King managed to slip away long enough to explore the waters of Canada, Central and South America,

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and the Caribbean, chasing every species from bonefish to bonita, from tarpon to trevally, from permit to pompano.

More recently, with the ever-en-croaching responsibilities of life—marriage, music, law—King has found contentment in sticking to his own home waters. “I can’t roam Belize and Mexico like I did when I was single,” he muses, “so having the dream waters of the Catskills for trout and New York Harbor for stripers, blues, and albies in my backyard is a lifesaver. NYC is actually a great launchpad for all kinds of good fishing.”

Devising fly patterns is as intrinsic to King’s fishing as the delineation of notes is to his music. “I tie flies for three reasons,” he says. “First, it’s just integrally tied to every cast I make. I’m almost superstitious about using only something I tied, not because I think the

flies are any better, but because creating the thing that triggers the strike is as much a part of the process as casting. Second, I’m a hatch matcher. I know



Jonny King, who lives in New York City, is not only a creative and skilled fly tier, but also an accomplished musician and, by day, an intellectual property trial lawyer. Photo courtesy of Jonny King

that sometimes fish would eat a marble or a Barbie if you tossed it out there, but for me, figuring out what they are eating and what will best imitate that food is perhaps the best part of fishing. I love to set up on a picky Delaware

brown and try to figure out what size/color/stage Sulphur he’s eating.”

Part three of King’s MO revolves around the mechanics of fly design—how to construct patterns, particularly streamers, that behave a certain way in the current or in still water.

Stylistically, the letter V plays a key role in many of King’s most distinctive fly designs, including his Splitsville dry flies, Kinky Muddler, and Hoo Fly. About a decade ago, he started adapting the use of a Bob Quigley-style hackle stacker loop to divide the wing and/or thorax materials on his dry flies, thus the name Splitsville. Using this loop technique to bisect the materials roughly into a V causes the hackle fibers (or poly or CDC) to spread and interlace with other wing, thorax, or shuck materials. The resulting “messiness,” according to King, “creates this image

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of a mayfly or caddis bursting from its shuck or struggling on the surface”—a vulnerable life-cycle stage even the most wary trout find hard to resist.

When it comes to the Kinky Muddler and other streamer patterns in his arsenal, King comments, “I’ve never pledged allegiance to synthetic versus natural materials; I’ve always liked to combine the best features of both. The Kinky Muddler exploits the benefits of both synthetic hair and natural materials like bucktail, fox fur, saddle hackles, and the like.”

With all his streamer patterns, King builds quite convincing 3-D profiles—specific to various baitfish species, including squid (and even frogs and mice)—by binding the “synthetic on the top and the bottom of the [hook] shank in a series of V-ties, with the material folded back and straddling both sides of the shank.”

The Hoo Fly, although it is assembled using the V-tie technique, departs from the Kinky mode of streamer in that it utilizes all-synthetic materials, namely craft fur for the tail and Senyo’s Laser Dub for the continuous body/head. But perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the Hoo entails the use of Liquid Fusion urethane glue during the final sculpting phase. King explains, “Because the glue is water-soluble until dry and nontoxic, you can safely moisten your fingers with water and stroke the Laser Dub into your preferred shape.... By varying the amount of material and controlling the shape with your fingers, you can achieve the size, shape, and movement of a variety of different baitfish.”

As a quick scan of his fly patterns graphically attests, King clearly has the touch—at both the tying bench and the piano bench. It’s a matter of hand-eye coordination, spatial perception, and imagination—the ability to conjure color, composition, and movement. Savvy fly tying, after all, is its own breed of visual jazz.

Don Roberts is a freelance writer and fly-fishing historian who lives in Oregon.



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Dragonflies: Ode to Odonata/By Don Roberts



PHOTO BY JON LUKE

Dragonflies predate the dinosaurs by 70 million years. *Meganeura*, the giant dragonfly with a 3-foot wingspan, soared over the steaming swamps of the Carboniferous period over 300 million years ago. Having survived ice ages and other global catastrophes, dragonflies today populate every continent of the world except Antarctica, their density and diversity increasing in direct correlation to tropical latitude. Considerably reduced in size from their prehistoric forbears, yet just as ferocious, dragonflies continue to rule the wetlands. Approximately 500 species of Odonata inhabit North America.

As far as identifying the different species of dragonflies, their common names—largely self-referential and, well, kind of hip, like gangland tags—pretty much say it all. The Emeralds have emerald eyes; the Skimmers skim; the Cruisers cruise; the Darners have tails like darning needles; the Clubtails sport a pronounced club at the tip of their tail, the Spiketails a spike; the Meadowhawks hunt in grassy meadows; and so forth and so on.

Male dragonfly genitalia are so elaborate that entomologists compare said sexual apparatus to a Swiss army knife. Dragonfly couples perform in-flight reproductive

acrobatics that would put Cirque du Soleil to shame. When you see dragonflies flying in tandem, the male flying top-deck while grasping the female's head, that's only the beginning. Consummation occurs when the male bends his abdomen to attach the terminal appendage (at the tip of his tail) to the back of the female's head, then releases his grip, while the female simultaneously curves her tail to link with the male's auricle (abdomen segment two at the base of

the thorax), thus achieving the wheel configuration, sometimes called, without a hint of sentiment, the heart position.

Besides complicated reproductive antics, what really separates the beasts from the boys, entomologically speaking, are the dragonfly's predatory skills, enabled by anatomical equipment geared toward

visual acuity and aerial agility. Not only can dragonflies see in any direction, they can fly in any direction. Their wings are composed of a double layer of membrane supported by a network of veins, tubular air ducts, and nerves. Because each of its four wings can flex and move independently, and can also rotate fore and aft on an axis, the dragonfly can propel itself upward and downward, left and right, forward and backward, and maneuver assertively upside down.



PHOTO BY DENNIS COLLIER

The dragonfly's head is basically a construction of eyes. Two proportionally massive eyes—each consisting of as many as 30,000 ommatidia—flank the dragonfly's chitinous skull, not unlike the gunner's ball turret mounted on a B-17, an arrangement allowing for 360-degree vision. Dragonflies, therefore, can see predators and prey both coming and going. Somewhat strangely, three additional simple eyes (ocelli—light receptors that aid in navigation) are arrayed in front. Diminutive antennae assist in the whole operation as airspeed sensors.

Dragonfly eyes perceive the same color spectrum that humans do, plus ultraviolet light and polarized light. Such visual acumen equips dragonflies to see (and mentally slow-mo) the pattern of beating wings, find water, gauge distance, and calculate trajectory. Visual transduction neurons—80 percent of the Odonate's brain is devoted to processing optical information—permit what scientists call a “selective attention span,” which empowers dragonflies to single out and precisely target a very particular victim. The time it takes for the quarry to become a repast depends upon the fraction of a second required for a dragonfly to close the distance. Researchers using high-speed photography have calculated that dragonflies capture 90 to 95 percent of the prey pursued, trouncing the kill rate of other reputedly ruthless predators. True to their Greek moniker Odonata (“toothed ones”), dragonflies pulverize their prey with powerful serrated jaws.

From birth to death, dragonflies live an entirely feral and ferocious existence. From the moment the naiads leave the egg they're on the hunt, ceaselessly stalking (in most cases, through several years and numerous molts) the silt-murky depths. Built drab, squat, and tank-like (though some species are more svelte), the nymphs are endowed with two formidable features: internal gills located in the abdomen through which water is pumped (yes, they breathe through their butt), the sudden expulsion of which jet-propels the fight-or-flight mode; and a

stoutly constructed, hinged lower jaw, instantly extendable and armed with hooks and spines, thus mimicking some medieval spring-loaded instrument for doling out misery and mortality.

When it comes to angling, few still-water insects can vie with the bread-and-butter ubiquity of dragonflies, particularly and obviously the nymphs. It's a matter of sheer availability. Through every season, nymphs remain a staple of lurking trout and other finned species. If you want to hook a lot of fish, abide by the nymph. If you wish to be stunned, there's no other option than to commit to the austerity of casting a dragonfly dry. The convergence of aggressive trout and floundering dragonflies doesn't happen often, but when it does, the results are explosive. Bass, on the other hand, are keen to capture the occasional unlucky or unwary adult dragonfly.

Over the last century, a boatload of how-to print has been devoted to fishing dragonfly nymphs. Any advice ladled out here would be academic, if not gratuitous. My only admonition is this: don't forget to watch, to closely monitor the air around you. If ever there was an insect that compelled voyeurism, it's the dragonfly. For instance, dragonflies do weird things like flopping: when cooling, cleaning, or quaffing, dragonflies flop onto the water three times in rapid succession. They rarely bop the flop any more or less than the prescribed three times. It pays to keep an eye out for other Odonata oddities.

And speaking of voyeurism, it's mutual. Dragonflies are one of the only winged creatures, warm- or cold-blooded, that engage so fully they seem sentient. They'll fly right up to you, practically eyeball to ocelli, and hover while examining you, taking your measure, and then—presumably, curiosity

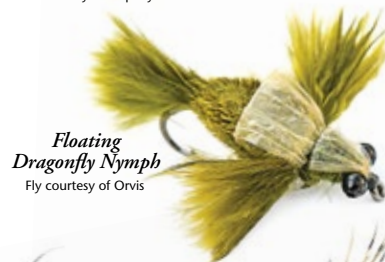
sated—with a rattle of wings, veer back into the marsh haze. It's as if for a moment they had something to say, then shrugged it off.



Darn Near Dragon
Fly courtesy of Spirit River



Otter's Dragon Nymph
Fly courtesy of Montana Fly Company



Floating Dragonfly Nymph
Fly courtesy of Orvis



Gibson's Dragonfly
Fly courtesy of Orvis



Crystal Damsel Dragon
Fly courtesy of Umpqua



Blue Bass Dragonfly
Fly courtesy of Rainy's

In the Studio

Fishing Art on Craft Beer Labels

I climb a ridge overlooking Montana's Missouri River. Time to watch the river flow. From my pack I pull a Kettle House Double Haul IPA—a tasty Missoula craft beer—then crack it open and contemplate the label's sage advice: "When you need to hit that hard-to-reach spot—river left, just up from the seam where you saw a huge splashy rise—you need a Double Haul."

Indeed I do. A beer break provides time to regroup, mellow out from rapid-fire casts, and contemplate the river's subtle signs. As the late Yogi Berra advised, "You can observe a lot just by watching." The foglike swarm of Trico spinners is fading and PMDs haven't yet started, so I can ponder both the sweeping vista and the brew in hand. I consider how microbrews like Double Haul and their colorful, creative labels are quirky and idiosyncratic—like many fly anglers—and reflect their local community and culture in ways that behemoth national beers don't.

According to "The Oral History of Craft Beer Label Design" by Chris Wright (online at www.gearpatrol.com), "At their best [craft beer labels are] thoughtful and thought-provoking, catchy and beautiful—eloquent and imaginative translations of the complex liquids inside ..." And in "How Local Artists Create Craft Beer's Identity One Label at a Time" (online at www.growlermag.com), Louis Garcia puts it this way: "Craft beer is typically lauded mostly for what's inside the can. But for many drinkers ... love at first glance starts with the label. That's where label artists come into play." And successful craft brewers know their market: it's no coincidence that so much label art depicts fish, fly anglers, and watery scenes.

Anglers have been cheerfully quaffing beer since Izaak Walton. Benjamin Franklin reputedly reflected, "Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy," a statement equally applicable to fly fishing. Evidence suggests Franklin was actually effusing about wine, but no matter; he enjoyed beer too during intellectual discussions.

Beginning in Franklin's time, most towns worth their salt had multiple small breweries. By the mid-20th century, however, a tremendous consolidation and homogenization was under way in the brewing industry, increasingly dominated by mass-market American lagers advertised during million-dollar Super Bowl commercials. The process continues today: in October 2015, the world's two largest brewers—Anheuser-Busch InBev and SABMiller—proposed a merger that would enable them to produce nearly a third of the planet's beer.

Microbrews are a counterrevolution. The booms in modern fly fishing and craft beer run somewhat in tandem: when the film *A River Runs Through It* was released in 1992—unleashing a fly-fishing tidal wave—the craft beer business was also beginning its rapid ascent. Samuel Adams introduced its Boston Lager in 1985, and San Francisco's Anchor Steam has even earlier roots. Today, American craft beers rank among the world's best, and include a mind-bending explosion of ales—and artistic fishing-related labels.

While the American market for beer has been relatively flat recently, microbrews are the notable exception. According to the Brewers Association—which represents small, independent craft brewers—there were 3,464 breweries in the U.S. in 2014, up 19 percent from 2013. Of these, a whopping 3,418 were classified as craft breweries (compared with just 1,749 in 2010). While the 46 non-craft breweries in the U.S. still produce most American beer, that edge is slipping. From 2010 to 2014, the volume share for craft brewers increased from 5.0 to 11.0 percent. During the same period, barrels of craft beer produced jumped from 10.1 million to 22.2 million, worth \$19.6 billion in retail value and 19.3 percent of market share. Bart Watson, chief economist for the Brewers Association, put the trends into perspective in a 2015 statement, saying, "By supporting local, small and independent craft breweries, beer lovers are gradually returning the United States to the system of localized beer production that existed for much of our nation's history."

And increasingly, there are ample supplies of craft beer in locales frequented by fly anglers, underscored by the fishy label art, and beer and fly-fishing cultures often converge at friendly brewpubs packed with anglers. Controlled scientific studies in these venues document that, in post-fishing stories, trout grow 1 inch per beer consumed—more after three.

So here's a celebratory toast: to great fishing, cool brews, and excellent label art. Gazing back at the slick Missouri, I notice sizable rainbows beginning to inhale emerging PMDs. Draining my Double Haul, I take a last look at the label: "Just as you'd never leave for a trip up Rock Creek, over to the Mo, or down the Smith without a Woolly Bugger in your fly box, you also don't want to forget your Double Haul ... no promises that the beer will help you with your cast." —Jeff Erickson



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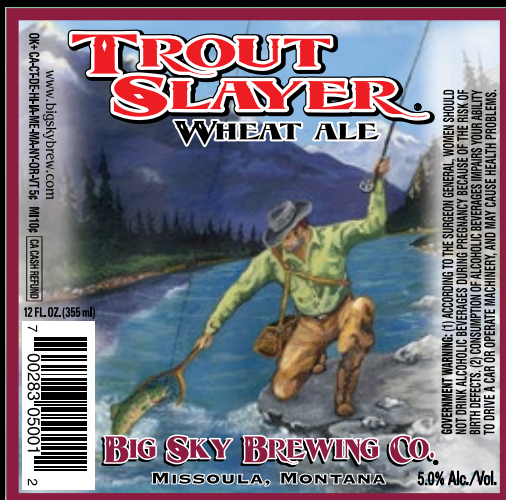
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by Odell Brewing Company,
Fort Collins, Colorado.
Label art by Odell Brewing and TBD Agency



Trout Slayer Wheat Ale
by Big Sky Brewing Company,
Missoula, Montana.
Label art by Mike Morawsky and Jane Lund



Cutthroat Pale Ale
by Uinta Brewing Company,
Salt Lake City, Utah.
Label art by Josh Emrich



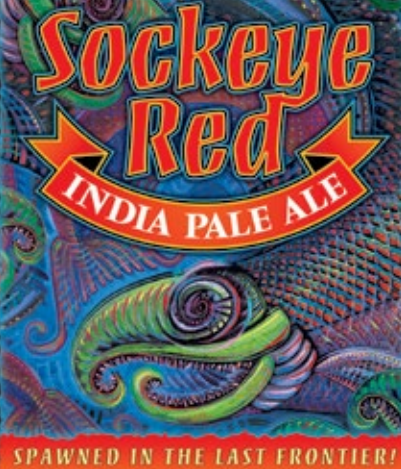
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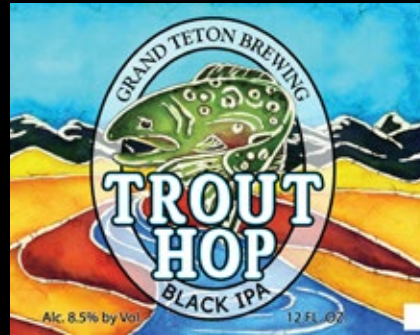
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Sockeye Red IPA

by Midnight Sun Brewing Company,
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Label art by Dan Miller, Dan Miller Graphics

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Trout Hop Black IPA

by Grand Teton Brewing Company,
Victor, Idaho.

Label art by Kathleen Hanson
based on an original batik by Abby Paffrath



Lost Trout Brown Ale

by Third Street Brewhouse,
Cold Spring, Minnesota.
Label design by Gaslight Creative



Steelhead Extra Pale Ale

by Mad River Brewing Company,
Humboldt County, California.
Label art by Jason Roberson

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Conservation

Transplanting Brook Trout in Great Smoky Mountains National Park/By Beau Beasley

Matt Kulp, a senior biologist for the National Park Service (NPS), stood alongside members of the Little River, Great Smoky Mountain, and Clinch River chapters of Trout Unlimited as they donned wading gear. Surprisingly, they'd left their fishing gear at home. Nevertheless, the anglers hoped to land hundreds, if not thousands, of brook trout by assisting NPS employees in a field test of a stream in Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP).

Kulp briefed the anglers, who were eager to enter the adjacent trout stream. He stressed safety—the safety of the native brookies, of course, but also the safety of NPS employees and of the brook trout restoration project volunteers. He and his assistants were preparing to test the results of an attempt to restore native brook trout to the Lynn Camp Prong, a trout stream in the GSMNP. At some point in the past, a well-meaning but ignorant individual—presumably on horseback, given the terrain and distance from the road—transplanted a number of rainbow trout into the stream. The transplanted trout thrived, and visiting anglers have enjoyed the stream's nonnative rainbow population ever since.

What's great for anglers isn't always great for fish, however: nonnative rainbow trout quickly put a hurtin' on the native brook trout. To make matters worse, rainbows grow much larger and faster than brookies and have no qualms about eating their next of kin. As a result, the remaining brookies were at risk of being completely evicted from their natural home. As early as 2005, park officials began trying to uproot the rainbows. After electroshocking the rainbows proved completely ineffective, NPS employees shocked brookies instead, moved them out of the stream and into adjacent streams within the park, and, along with officials from the Environmental Protection Agency, released the fish-killing chemical antimycin into Lynn Camp Prong. Officials were convinced that such drastic action was the only way they could be certain rainbow trout would not return.

By 2010, all of the rainbows appeared to have been extirpated from the stream. Next came the painstaking process of moving the native brookies—or, more accurately, their descendants, as brook trout live for up to five years—from their temporary homes back to Lynn Camp Prong. In total, nearly 1,000 brookies of various ages were released back into their ancestral home in the hope that



they would adjust and repopulate the stream effectively. And painstaking is indeed the word for this process. Workers captured the fish and walked them back to the stream in buckets, which were outfitted with aeration pumps to ensure brook trout health during transportation.

Lynn Camp Prong is ideal for brookies and a boon for trout anglers. Kulp explains, "Many of our brook trout streams are at high elevations, which are more susceptible to acid deposition, so this lower-elevation segment will provide better buffering capacity against acid rain for years to come. The Lynn Camp project reconnects some tributaries, such as Marks Creek, Indian Flats Prong, and Panther Creek, that now also have brook trout in them."

He adds that Lynn Camp Prong will "supply fish downstream to Thunderhead Prong, which also has brook trout in its headwaters."

NPS employees first sectioned off a portion of Lynn Camp Prong with nets above and below the site they would be testing. The nets are used to ensure that fish that might be stunned from electroshocking and then swept downstream are captured, weighed, measured, and released unharmed. A holding pen was set up midstream, so trout that were captured would be able to recover fully before being released back into the stream. Hundreds of brook trout were recovered by electroshocking. When all was said and done, the brookies proved to be more populous than the rainbows that had once thrived here.

Reopening Lynn Camp Prong was a significant milestone. It marked the first time that every stream in GSMNP was open to fishing and harvest since the park's inception in 1936. "Our mission is not only to protect and preserve these national treasures," says Kulp, "but to also provide opportunities for people to enjoy them."

Around the East

News, Views, and Piscatorial Pursuits



PHOTO BY CARL HAENSEL AND JADE THOMASON

West Fork Kickapoo River, WI By Carl Haensel

The West Fork Kickapoo River draws its cold spring waters from more than a dozen trout-rich coulees east of Viroqua, Wisconsin. Originating in northern Vernon County, the West Fork is a limestone river rich in trout and hatches. Brook and brown trout fin from the upper reaches downstream nearly 20 miles until the river reaches the main Kickapoo River, though the best fishing is around Avalanche and the upstream hamlet of Bloomingdale. Moreover, dozens of other limestone spring creeks are available in the Wisconsin Driftless Area within a half hour's drive of the West Fork.

Brown trout predominate, and brook trout are fairly numerous in the middle and upstream reaches. A catch-and-release, artificial-lures-only stretch occupies the heart of the best water—stories circulate of large brown trout caught both day and night from this reach. Easy access is available along County Road S up and down the valley of the West Fork Kickapoo. Bridges, side roads, and pull-off areas provide excellent access to miles of water.

The West Fork is excellent in spring. It often runs slightly turbid, and the stained water helps anglers get closer to fish and avoid spooking those rising nearby. Nymphs are especially productive in spring, so take a wide assortment of mayfly and caddisfly nymphs. Small beadhead patterns work wonders here, and small is a key—tiny flies are often best. Dry-fly anglers need not fret, as spring hatches bring trout to the surface. The mayfly season starts with Blue-Winged Olives, followed in swift succession by Dark and Light Hendricksons, Sulphurs, and other small (size 14 to 18) mayflies through the end of June. Caddisflies are present from April onward, with late April and May bringing some of the best hatches; larger fish often prefer emerger patterns. Use two-fly rigs with a dry and a dropper to catch the finicky fish that have been feeding on emerging mayflies or caddisflies.

Summer brings terrestrials, with the overhanging trees along the river sending ants galore into the stream. Grasshoppers show up regularly in the meadow reaches and in some of the pastures along the river. Try splatting your grasshopper into the water, as these insects rarely land gently. Tricos hatch in late summer and into fall; the early-morning hatch and spinner fall can last for over a month.

For bigger fish later in the season, fish a large articulated streamer through some of the big, ugly holes on the lower river. You may need to cover a lot of water to catch the big trout, but the takes are explosive and exciting. Fishing mouse patterns throughout the river at night can



PHOTO BY CARL HAENSEL AND JADE THOMASON

bring similar results in the summer.

A newly enacted catch-and-release season offers expanded angling opportunities for area trout streams beginning in January, with the trout season officially closing at the end of September.

Viroqua offers top-notch lodging, as well as an excellent fly shop: the Driftless Angler, (608) 637-8779, www.driftlessangler.com. The West Fork Sportsmans Club, (608) 632-0885, www.westforksportsmansclub.org, has a well-maintained campground right on the river, just downstream of Avalanche. It features clean restrooms with pay showers, as well as a couple of cabins for rent, along with fishing opportunities. Mowed trails run along the river, and at night you'll be able to fade off to sleep listening to the river's ripples and runs—unless you're plying the pools with mouse patterns for big browns. Viroqua has excellent local fare if your hunger can distract you from the trout long enough for a short drive into town.

Eastatoe River, SC By Nick Carter

For fly anglers dropping down a trail into a river valley, walking into a face full of spiderweb is usually a good sign. It means that, other than the otters, you'll have first crack at the trout.

Karl Ekberg, owner of the Chattooga River Fly Shop (www.chattoogariverflyshop.com), chuckled as I did the spider dance. Then he took the lead, with his rod held out in front to avoid a similar fate. We were hiking the steep Hemlock Hollow Access to Eastatoe Creek. It was my first sampling of one of South Carolina's newest delayed-harvest (DH) streams.

Since DH programs begin popping up across the Southeast in the early 2000s, they have become a staple for fly anglers who don't at all mind the catch-and-release, single-hook, artificials-only regulations. South Carolina's DH program runs November 1 through May 14 each year, which provides some good winter fishing for folks with cabin fever. On the Eastatoe, DH regulations have been an enormous boon for fly fishers. What was once a put-and-take hot spot for bait fishers is now a very good place to fly fish for more than six months out of the year.

With only about 200 miles of trout water and a local population hungry for trout, upstate South Carolina was a little slower to come on board with



PHOTO BY NICK CARTER



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DH regulations than Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. The Eastatoe, from Lake Keowee upstream to the Dug Mountain Angler Access Area, wasn't added to the program until 2012. Since then, anglers from around the region have taken notice. It is one of multiple good trout fisheries in the area that can all be fished in a long weekend.

Ekberg and I had only a day, which turned out to be plenty of time to put our hands on numerous trout in the heavily stocked stream. Each fall, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources front-loads its DH waters with brown, rainbow, and brook trout of all sizes, including some big fish. The nearby Walhalla Fish Hatchery produces some of the prettiest hatchery trout anywhere, and by early spring they become educated and look and act more like wild fish.

On the lower end, the Eastatoe is a decent-size flow, shallow and broken by shoals, which makes for easy wading. There is also ample, relatively easy access to the river. The upper end of the river is a different story. Moving upstream from the DH section, the river flows through private property, where it changes. Water conditions are more suitable for trout, and wild rainbow trout begin showing up, as well as the occasional very nice brown.

Up above this private stretch is the Eastatoe Creek Heritage Preserve, where the public again has access to what is now aptly named a creek rather than a river. In this 374-acre preserve in the Jocassee Gorges just south of the North Carolina border, anglers find classic Southeastern small-stream fishing. The creek tumbles through a gorge, pouring over boulders and rock shelves to create fast pocket water and deep plunge pools. Small, wild rainbow trout, seldom growing longer than 10 inches, happily hop on any high-floating dry fly. And there are rumored to be some native brook trout in the creek itself as well as in some of its high tributaries. Access requires a steep and strenuous hike of some 2 miles. This, as well as artificial-only regulations, keeps fishing pressure to a minimum.

Regardless of where you are on the river, nothing is keeping the pressure from otters at a minimum. We ran into a group of them in a large pool on the lower end. And when it comes to otters and stocked trout, human anglers might as well burn a little boot felt. The little critters will clean out a stretch of river in a hurry.

PHOTO BY NICK CARTER

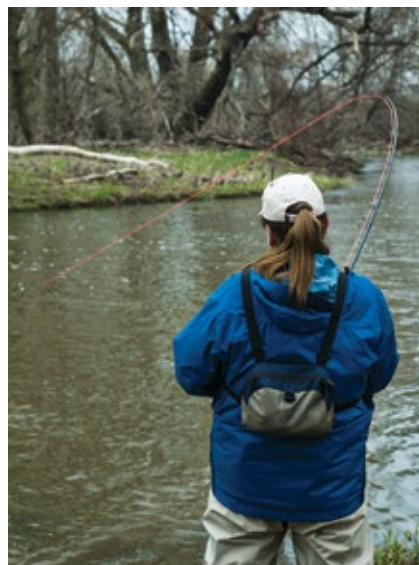


PHOTO BY NICK PIONESSA

Cattaraugus Creek Smallmouth Bass, NY

By Vince Tobia

Cattaraugus Creek in western New York and the other Lake Erie tributaries from Ohio to New York that make up the aptly named Steelhead Alley are most famous for the great runs of steelhead they receive every spring and fall. Fly anglers flock to these waters when the lake-run salmonids arrive.

However, few anglers know about the excellent smallmouth bass runs that occur every spring in these same tributaries. Cattaraugus Creek is the largest tributary and gets the most smallmouth bass. As the waters warm in springtime and the steelhead start migrating back to the depths of Lake Erie, smallmouth from the lake migrate upstream to where they will spawn when the water temperature is just right. Thousands of smallmouth run up the creek during this migration, and many run 15 miles upriver, all the way to the village of Gowanda. Bear in mind, however, that all of the Lake Erie tribs host runs of bass, so action is hardly limited to Cattaraugus Creek. Go exploring and walk the streams, which will help you to learn them for the steelhead runs in the coming fall.

The first bass usually appear in late April, and by mid-May their numbers have increased significantly. The fishing remains excellent all through June, with

some fish sticking around until mid-July. Mid-May through June is prime time.

Most of the smallmouth water on Cattaraugus Creek runs through the Seneca Nation of Indians Cattaraugus Reservation, so you will need a Seneca Nation fishing license, available at locations listed at www.senecaconservation.com/senecaconservation.com/Fishing_License_Agents.html. A few productive stretches of the creek—especially around Gowanda and Versailles—are not on the reservation.

These lake-run bass offer excellent sport and typically range from 2 to 3 pounds, with larger fish caught regularly. They love to chase swung and strip-retrieved streamers, and a Gurgler fished on top often drives them nuts—in fact, don't be surprised to see bass chasing down frantic baitfish at the surface the way striped bass do in the ocean. Single-handed rods are the norm, but this fishery is great for Spey and switch rod enthusiasts. The broad lower "Catt" is perfectly suited to Spey casting. A bonus is that oftentimes you can sight-fish for smallmouth in the clear water of late spring. Because these bass are in the creek to spawn, you should refrain from targeting them when they are on their beds protecting eggs or fry. The pools and runs hold plenty of pre- and postspawn bass.



PHOTO BY NICK PIONESSA

During spring, Cattaraugus Creek also offers bonus species. There's always the chance you could hook a steelhead, especially in May, and even into June. In addition, anglers often hook carp, quillbacks, and even big channel catfish. The occasional gar and walleye are also in the mix.

Editor's note: Vince Tobia owns Cattaraugus Creek Outfitters, (716) 479-2327, www.ccoflyfishing.com, which provides guide service on Cattaraugus Creek and nearby lodging for visiting anglers.



Shermans Creek, PA By Tom Gilmore

South-central Pennsylvania is blessed with a plethora of world-renowned trout streams: Penns Creek, Fishing Creek, Spring Creek, the Letort, and Big Spring, to name a few. But until recently I had never really learned much about Shermons Creek in Perry County. So with fieldwork to do for a guidebook about Pennsylvania trout streams, I reached out to Eric Richards of Coveted Waters guiding service, (717) 275-5910, www.covetedwaters.net. He guides on most of south-central Pennsylvania's better-known trout streams. I didn't know if he fished Shermons Creek, but gave him a call to see if he could point me in the right direction.

After introducing myself, I asked Richards if he had ever fished Shermons. He got so excited I thought he was going to jump through the phone. "Been fishing it all my life," he said. "I love the stream. Did you know that, in addition to stocked trout, it has over 3 miles of Class A native brook trout water—and

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some of the prettiest wild fish you'll ever see!"

Then he added, "Do you like to fish for smallmouth?"

Before I could answer, he blurted out, "You've got to come out and sample our awesome fall smallmouth bite."

Shermans Creek flows some 49 miles through Perry County, from its headwaters in Big Spring State Park to its confluence with the Susquehanna River just south of Duncannon. The creek can be viewed as three distinct fisheries.

The Class A native brook trout water in the state park and forest begins at the confluence of Big Spring Run and Hemlock Run in Big Spring State Park and continues downstream 3.3 miles to the lower boundary of Tuscarora State Forest. This area is well shaded and stays cool throughout the summer. The wild trout section in the state forest is easily accessed off side roads from State Route 274. The stocked section runs from the lower boundary of the state forest downstream for about 15 miles to the Couchtown Road (County Road 3008) bridge in the town of Cisna. As Shermons Creek flows downstream from the state forest it runs through more open areas and warms quickly. The state stocks rainbow and brown trout preseason and once in-season. This section can also be easily reached off SR 274.

From June through November, the smallmouth fishery in the lower sections—from Shermons Dale downstream to the confluence with the Susquehanna River—can be exceptional. In fact, this section produced a onetime state-record smallmouth, an 8-pound fish. While it was caught in Shermons Creek, Richards believes it was a river fish that moved up into Shermons to spawn. Nevertheless, he and I believe it to be the largest smallmouth ever landed in moving water in the Commonwealth.

Richards has seen just about every major Eastern mayfly hatch on Shermons Creek except Green Drakes. Most years the season starts in late March or early April, with warm afternoons bringing Early Black and Early Brown Stonefly hatches. These are followed by Quill Gordons, Blue Quills, and Hendricksons. From May through early June, anglers can count on March Browns, Light Cahills, and Sulphurs, as well as numerous caddisfly species. When there is no surface activity, a Golden Stonefly nymph pattern often produces well.

Shermons Creek has a lot to offer: quality native brook trout fishing in a beautiful state forest replete with a stand of large, old-growth hemlocks, and a stocked section that flows through a county that is checkered with historic covered bridges, eight of which span Shermons Creek. You can experience quality hatches from opening day into June. The fall smallmouth fishery is exceptional, and so is the foliage. For too long, Shermons Creek was not on my radar. It should be on yours.

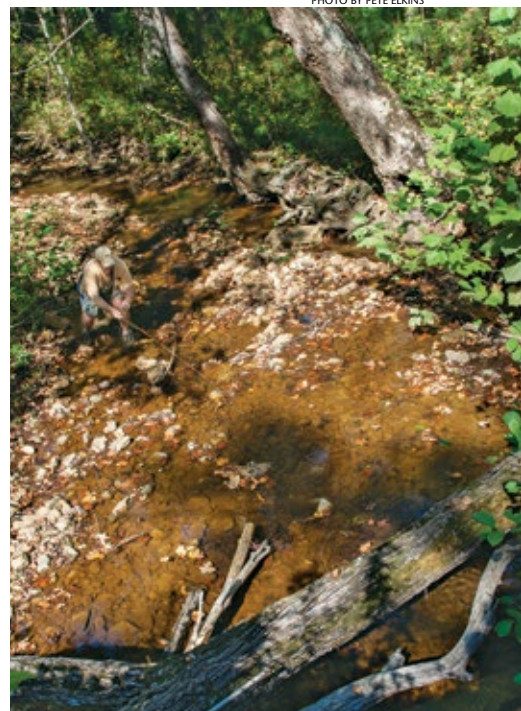
Talladega National Forest, AL

By Pete Elkins

For many years, my favorite angling destinations were tiny blue lines on maps of Virginia and North Carolina mountain streams—mist-laden creeks where brook trout, painted wonders, doted on dry flies. When my profession took me to Alabama, those experiences seemed a thing of the past. Then I discovered the hardwood hills of Talladega National Forest and its many creeks rich with *Micropterus coosae*, redeye bass, the "brook trout of the South."

President Franklin D. Roosevelt created Talladega National Forest by proclamation in 1936. The forest is now divided, north to south, into three ranger districts: Shoal Creek, Talladega, and Oakmulgee. Of the three, Shoal Creek and Talladega contain the best redeye fishery. Unlike the lower and flatter topography of the Oakmulgee, the combined 217,000 acres of the Talladega and Shoal Creek districts are part of the southern Appalachian ecosystem. Translated into fly-fishing lingo, that means upland hills, low mountains, and steep slopes harboring many clear, cool streams. Equally important, most of the streams are tributary-

PHOTO BY PETE ELKINS



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Book Review

Selectivity

By Matt Supinski

Stackpole Books, 2014

Fly fishing is probably among the most heavily published subjects within the larger outdoors genre. This is interesting in that there are fewer fly anglers, or trout and salmon anglers, than, say, duck or deer hunters, suggesting that publishers believe fly anglers buy and read more. I think this is a correct assumption. The game of matching real prey somewhat precisely with an artificial fly to fool a finicky but oh-so-lovely fish can be all-consuming, and many folks dig deep into all available information sources to advance their success.

In the early 1970s, *Selective Trout* by Doug Swisher and Carl Richards, and *Hatches* by Al Caucci and Bob Nastasi, provided vital keys to help anglers understand not just the how but also the why of it all. Matt Supinski's new book, *Selectivity*, offers an outstanding, fresh look at the core elements of how and why. Supinski also adds honest wild enthusiasm to the wow factor of stunning photography.

Supinski defines three critical phases of selectivity in order to deceive fussy fish under various conditions. The aggressive/active (A/A) phase, the selective/reflective (S/R) phase, and the passive/dormant (P/D) phase are carefully presented with practical examples, including the impacts of weather, light, season, and ecosystem, so that readers better understand fish behavior and can modify their tactics to increase success. High-resolution color fly plates, along with recipes for innovative patterns, are a valuable bonus.

It all sounds a bit complicated, but it is not. Supinski's passionate, happy writing style and his use of captivating anecdotal examples

easily turn theory into practical application. This book is not only a valuable tool that will make anyone a better angler, it is fun to read.

—Bob Linsenman



PHOTO BY PETE ELKINS

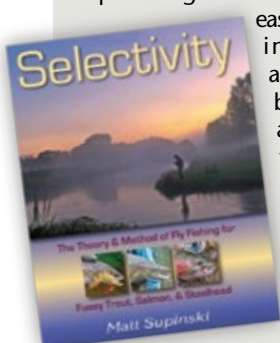
ies of the Coosa or Tallapoosa Rivers, epicenters of Alabama's redeye bass.

Redeye bass don't always display red eyes, but they always share the size characteristics of eastern brook trout in their native habitat. Simply stated, as with brookies, a 10-inch fish is a "good 'un." Also like brook trout, redeyes are limited to streams with canopy cover, cool water, undercut banks, rocky ledges, and boulders. Anglers seeking both species fare best by hiking upriver. Spotted bass and an occasional largemouth lurk in the lower stretches of most redeye streams. Both grow much larger than redeyes, making tackle selection problematic. My preferred redeye rod is a beautifully crafted bamboo 4-weight. Redeyes love surface flies. Remind you of brook trout? I like size 10 or 12 popping bugs. Chartreuse or yellow is easy to see in shaded waters.

It's equally easy to see the distinctive field marks of a redeye bass. No need to count dorsal fins or scales along the lateral line. While coloration and markings do vary from waterway to waterway, I've never caught a redeye without a turquoise-blue stripe bordering the upper part of the eye. Revlon or Max Factor couldn't produce a more appealing eyeliner. The dorsal and caudal fins usually show a brick-red blush, distinct from the overall olive or brassy brown body mottling. And finally, like a half salute to a brook trout's white-bordered fins, the upper and lower margins of the caudal fin glow with a white edge.

The edges of upper Talladega National Forest near Heflin, for the Shoal Creek Ranger District, and the town of Talladega, for the Talladega District, almost touch the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers. A fertile flow of tributary creeks—some large, some very small—wander through hardwood drainages in the shadow of Alabama's highest peaks and offer secluded fly fishing for adventuresome anglers. The ticket for admission to the redeye theater is a DeLorme *Alabama Atlas & Gazetteer* or U.S. Forest Service map and a good pair of hiking boots that you don't mind getting wet. Shoal, Little Shoal, Chulafinnee, Cheaha, Choccolocco, Scarbrough, Hillabee, and Little Hillabee Creeks provide a limited starting point for angling exploration in Talladega National Forest. Like most small waters, redeyes streams are fragile things. Catch-and-release goes without saying. Carry any trash out with you.

When you hold a 6- to 10-inch redeye in your palm, glowing with color, with light filtering through a canopy of oaks and maples with mountain laurel along the ridges, you will appreciate the brook trout of the South.



Little Muskegon River, MI By Kevin Feenstra

Some streams will fool you unless you get to know them. The first time I tried my luck on western Michigan's Little Muskegon, I could have sworn it was devoid of fish. After the second visit, I was almost sure of it. Finally, though, after several trips getting to know the stream, things started to make sense to me, and now I love visiting this beautiful and challenging river.

The Little Muskegon does not host runs of lake-run salmon and steelhead as does the better-known Muskegon; below the confluence, Croton Dam on the Muskegon blocks further upstream progress. Above this dam, the Muskegon splits into the lengthy "Big" Muskegon, which arrives from the northeast, and the 44-mile-long Little Muskegon, which flows westerly.

Though the river tends to warm quite a bit in the summer, its speed, along with ample shade from overhanging trees, mitigates the effects of elevated water temperatures, while also creating excellent habitat. The Little Muskegon even provides cool-water refuge for warm-water fish that move up out of Croton Dam Pond (at its mouth) in the summer months. The relatively swift water provides a lot of oxygen, and this oxygenated water holds a lot of aquatic insect life.

Another unique aspect of the Little Muskegon is that it is bounded by high, steep banks, largely sand and clay, which means the river muddies quickly after rainstorms and during heavy spring runoff. The turbidity is obvious in the spring, when the water from the Little Muskegon contributes a muddy plume to the south side of the main stem of the Muskegon. Access is available to both wading and paddling anglers (canoe or kayak). Expect a good workout if you row this stream—its course twists and turns relentlessly. Fallen trees are common, and portages are to be expected.

The Little Muskegon flows through large tracts of public lands as well as a lot of private property, and a map book will help you find access, especially at road crossings. Many stretches of the river are wadable, and in Michigan you can fish any navigable water that flows through private property provided your feet are in the water. The best wade-fishing occurs when the river runs clear, especially on the upper river, near Mecosta and Altona, where brown trout and brookies provide most of the action. For trout, in the absence of hatches and dry-fly action, try foam stonefly patterns and Stimulators in the swift water.

As you head downstream from US Highway 131, the river gains volume and wading becomes increasingly difficult, so a kayak or canoe is the way to go, and you can launch and take out at road crossings, such as Dagget Road and Newcosta Avenue—County Line Road. For both trout and warm-water fish, try the float from Newcosta Avenue to Croton Dam Pond. You must row across Croton Dam Pond at the end of the float, so give yourself a full day to enjoy this trip. The lowest reach of the river as it forms a delta into the pond is a no-wake zone, so access for motored boats is quite restricted. Though the river's float sections may appear short on a map, don't underestimate the time they take—the river is highly serpentine, twisting and turning continually.

The river holds large smallmouth bass (a few up to 6 pounds), especially in summer when they move up from Croton Dam Pond. Weighted streamers imitating crayfish, sculpins, and shiners work well. If you plan on fishing the Little Muskegon

for smallmouth, avoid fishing after a heavy rain. The clay content of the river makes visibility extremely limited in these conditions, and sight-feeding fish won't be able to see your fly. Largemouth bass, northern pike, and walleyes are always present in fishable numbers, adding even more appeal to this river.

Western Michigan abounds in great fisheries—the Pere Marquette, Manistee, and Muskegon Rivers, along with countless productive lakes—and while the Little Muskegon ranks among these excellent waters, it remains under the radar. This quiet, special stream holds plenty of fish, and while challenging, it's a great experience for adventurous fly anglers. Newaygo makes a good base, with a variety of lodging options.



PHOTO BY KEVIN FEENSTRA



PHOTO BY KEVIN FEENSTRA

EXPOSURE

A Wisconsin Driftless Spring/By Aaron Peterson



There's so much water in the Driftless Area that sometimes we plan our day just because we love the names of the streams. Here, Brian Kudej, proud of his Czech heritage, gets skunked on Bohemian Valley Creek, a tributary to well-known Timber Coulee Creek.



Spring Coulee, Timber Coulee, and the West Fork Kickapoo are among the better-known streams in the region, thanks to extensive improvement work that has led to excellent fishing. But the entire region offers fine fishing, and getting away from the primary streams, especially on weekends, is recommended.



A fertile creek carves away a limestone cliff near Viroqua, offering fantastic pocket water, riffles, and, eventually, deep holding pools.



The fertile valley floors of the Driftless Area are home to small farms and spring creeks. In the past, erosive farming practices led to degradation of watersheds, but after decades of conservation work the streams are again world class, as is the local and organic foods movement (the region is home to Organic Valley foods). According to some studies, some of the rivers are home to nearly 4,000 trout per mile.



Summer days mean hoppers galore. While scuds are the staple of the Driftless systems, sometimes it doesn't hurt to serve dessert first. A messy splashdown of a floundering terrestrial can bring even secretive big fish to the surface. Landing the big ones in the region's small streams is another feat entirely.



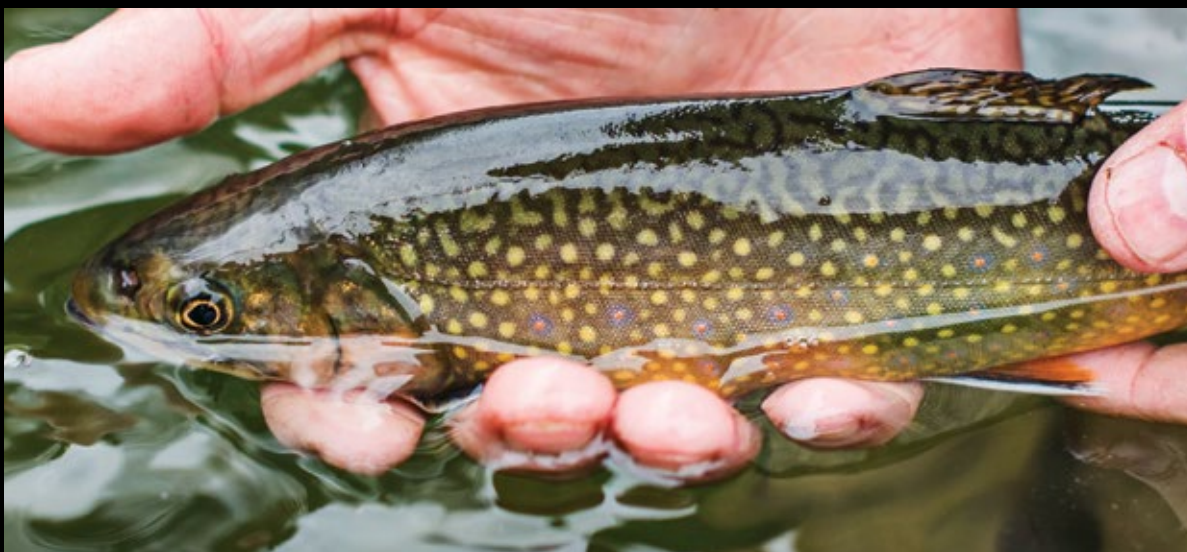
Releasing a fine brown trout in early spring along the unassuming Big Green River



Scandinavian heritage is strong in the tiny towns of the Driftless valleys. A Viking statue and a Norwegian flag welcome anglers to Westby, Wisconsin.



Reaching for the far bank on Bohemian Valley Creek



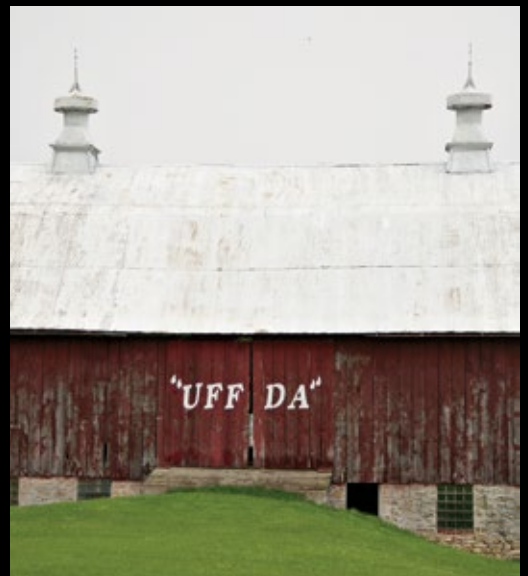
A plump brook trout fell for a hopper pattern in early spring, months before terrestrials typically line the grassy banks of the small Driftless streams.



A seasoned angler stays low and keeps close to the bank beneath a riffle on Tainter Creek. Spring fishing helps anglers avoid the thick, high grasses of summer.



Dredging scuds over a riffle into a deep hole in the side of a limestone cliff along the Big Green River



Scandinavian culture and some Midwest humor adorn barn doors on a working farm somewhere along the tangle of valley roads twisting through the Driftless Area.

Aaron Peterson, <http://archive.aaronpeterson.net>, is a travel and outdoor-lifestyle photographer who lives in Michigan.



ALL PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHE PEREZ

West Branch Delaware River, NY/PA

A Tailwater Gone Wild

By Christophe Perez

Until the spring of 2015, I only knew the West Branch Delaware by its sterling reputation.

This branch of the upper Delaware is often said to be a notch or two above all other Eastern trout streams. Paul Weamer, author of the indispensable *Fly-Fishing Guide to the Upper Delaware River*, suggests that it is “perhaps the best wild trout fishery east of the Rocky Mountains.”

Although fly anglers often use superlatives liberally, such may not be the case here. The West Branch Delaware is also renowned for testing the skills of even the most seasoned trout fly anglers. Those I knew who fished it would come back with unsettling reports about the selectiveness of its wild trout. “If you can catch trout in the upper Delaware,” I was once told, “you can catch trout anywhere.”

Last year I finally had a chance to find out: I headed to the West Branch at the invitation of Dream Catcher Lodge in Deposit, New York. Established by Len and Florence Solomon, Dream Catcher Lodge is the most recent of the fly-fishing resorts that border the West Branch Delaware. It owns almost a mile of land along a prime stretch of the river, allowing anglers to fish just a few steps away from the lodge and nine riverside cabins, or to venture on wading trips going upstream or downstream. Dream Catcher Lodge also features a boat ramp that can be used as the starting or ending point of float trips when conditions allow.



The year 2007, when Dream Catcher Lodge opened, marked a new beginning for the river itself. It came after many Catskill streams experienced devastating floods in late June 2006. The West Branch wasn't spared; its water engulfed the streets of Deposit and Hancock, New York, destroyed many riverside roads and properties, and left the riverbanks buried in debris. Local anglers and guides feared for the future of the fishery, but the river's ecosystem proved resilient and rebounded rather quickly; within a year, bugs were hatching and wild trout were rising again. The West Branch Delaware is now considered as good a trout fishery as before the flood.

A Newer Catskill Stream

Formed by two branches that meet just south of Hancock to become the Delaware River's main stem, the upper Delaware flows through the western end of New York's Catskill Mountains. Yet, unlike other Catskill streams of legendary status dating back to the late 1800s, both the East Branch and West Branch Delaware came to prominence in the second half of the 20th century, after they were dammed to create two large reservoirs supplying water to New York City: first, Pepacton Reservoir on the East Branch, completed in 1955, then Cannonsville Reservoir on the West Branch, completed in 1964.

Fed by cold water from the bottom of the reservoirs, the resulting tailwaters began sustaining excellent trout fisheries and

On a July evening, a short float trip in front of Dream Catcher Lodge proved productive for Jeremy Horn, the lodge's general manager (sitting), and Frank Trojanowicz, seen here battling a feisty rainbow. Dream Catcher Lodge features a boat ramp that can be used as the starting or ending point of float trips when conditions allow (spread). Wild browns are the West Branch Delaware's dominant trout species. The state stopped stocking this tailwater in 1994, and except for occasional stocked fish migrating from tributaries, most of the browns inhabiting the West Branch Delaware are river-born (below).



gained the favor of Catskill fly anglers. Of the two branches, the 17-mile-long West Branch tailwater stands out as the more popular and better section. The East Branch suffers from elevated water temperatures throughout the dog days of summer, particularly below its junction with the Beaver Kill. But the shorter West Branch is less influenced by warmer tributaries and receives the majority of cold-water releases, allowing it to remain cooler in summer, particularly in its upper reaches. Resident trout density is higher in the West Branch year-round, but even more so in summer, when trout migrate from the East Branch, the main stem, and feeder streams to find refuge in its cooler waters.

Wild browns and rainbows predominate. The state still stocks some of the West Branch Delaware's tributaries and the section of the river above the reservoir, but it stopped stocking the tailwater in 1994. This fact alone places the West Branch tailwater in a class of its own in the Northeast, where so many trout fisheries rely on annual stockings of hatchery fish. Browns spawn primarily in the upper section of this tailwater, but rainbows spawn in tributaries and migrate to the West Branch. Both browns and rainbows average 15 inches long in this branch, which contains large numbers of yearlings. Mature rainbows can grow to 19 inches and browns to over 20 inches, with the occasional specimen reaching 2 feet. But even average West Branch Delaware trout display exceptional strength. Born and

bred in fast current, they grow muscular bodies, with tails and fins larger than those found on hatchery-born trout of the same size, giving them fighting abilities virtually unmatched by other Northeastern trout.

The West Branch Delaware also produces some of the most prolific hatches in the East. Variations in water releases from the dam, and water temperatures, can trigger some hatches earlier or later than expected, but their progression usually follows a calendar familiar to Catskill anglers.

March and April bring hatches of Little Black and Little Brown Stoneflies, followed by Little Black Caddisflies, Blue-Winged Olives, Mahogany Duns, and Giant Stoneflies into May. The most anticipated spring hatches happen from mid-April to June, starting with Quill Gordon, Hendrickson, and March Brown mayflies, and Grannom and Apple Caddisflies, soon followed by additional caddisfly species, including Dark Blue Sedges, and Golden Stoneflies, Large Sulphur Duns (*Ephemerella invaria*) and Large Blue-Winged Olives (*Drunella cornuta*), and the even bigger Green Drakes and Brown Drakes. As the season progresses into summer, mayfly hatches are dominated by Little Sulphurs (*Ephemerella dorothea*) on the upper and colder stretches of the West Branch and *Isonychia* on the lower stretches, but Little and Large Blue-Winged Olives, Light Cahills, Tan Caddisflies, and Green Sedges also continue to hatch through

August. September and October bring emergencies of more *Isonychia* and Blue-Winged Olives, as well as October Caddis.

Wading and Floating

Much of the land surrounding the West Branch tailwater is private, but anglers are allowed to wade the entire river as long as they stay within high-water marks. A dozen state-managed public areas and boat ramps provide access to the river between Stilesville and Hancock. Among the most popular stretches, the upper Delaware's only no-kill section starts at the State Route 17 bridge in Deposit and ends 2 miles downstream, halfway through the land owned by Dream Catcher Lodge. The upper end of this section is accessible from both sides of the river.



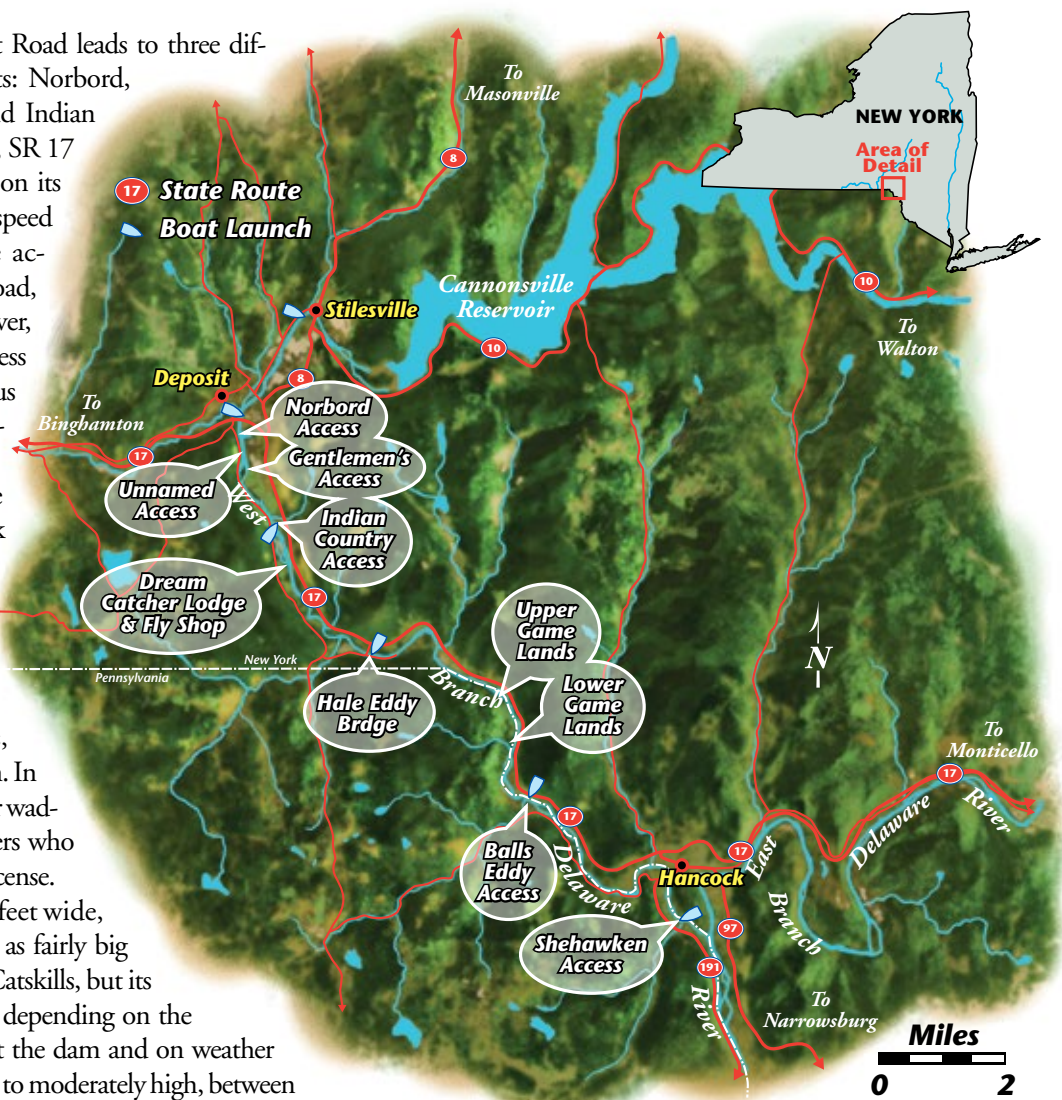
Jeremy Horn, general manager of Dream Catcher Lodge, hikes through Pennsylvania's Upper Game Lands, a popular section of the river that is easily wadable during low flows.

On the east bank, Airport Road leads to three different public access points: Norbord, the Gentlemen's Club, and Indian Country. Below this point, SR 17 parallels the West Branch on its east bank, but this high-speed highway doesn't provide access to the river. River Road, on the west side of the river, leads to a few public access points, including the famous Hale Eddy bridge. Downstream from Hale Eddy, the West Branch becomes the border between New York and Pennsylvania, below which Penn-York Road and Winterdale Road lead to more public access points, such as the Upper and Lower Game Lands, Balls Eddy, and Shehawken. In Pennsylvania, these popular wading areas are open to anglers who have a New York fishing license.

Averaging about 200 feet wide, the West Branch qualifies as fairly big water, particularly for the Catskills, but its flows can fluctuate widely depending on the volume of water releases at the dam and on weather events. When flows are low to moderately high, between 150 and 850 cubic feet per second (cfs), most public access points provide access to long wadable stretches with successions of pools and riffles. Some fly anglers also use inflatable pontoon boats, canoes, or kayaks to cover greater distances and gain access to more remote wading spots.

Wading becomes more limited and difficult when flows exceed 1,000 cfs and inadvisable or simply too dangerous above 1,500 cfs. Between 850 and 3,000 cfs, drift boats offer another common way to fish miles of the river in a few hours. Many of the 90 or so fly-fishing guides who work on the West Branch offer float trips, many starting in Stilesville or Deposit and stopping at Balls Eddy or Shehawken, which is the last public boat ramp before the junction with the East Branch, 0.75 mile downriver.

The West Branch Delaware is also subject to rapidly changing weather conditions. In a matter of minutes, heavy winds, clouds, rain, or fog might come and go. Frequently changing flows and weather influence hatches and trout behavior. Even for the most seasoned fly anglers, every day on the West Branch can bring new challenges; flies that work one day might be refused the very next, leaving you scrambling for solutions. But this is what keeps so many fly anglers captivated by this river.



Memorable Fish

I was mentored in my quest for wild trout by three fly anglers already hardened by the ups and downs of the West Branch: Jeremy Horn, Dream Catcher Lodge's general manager, as well as Ron Chiavacci and Frank Trojanowicz, two accomplished fly anglers whose passion for the upper Delaware and its wild trout is rivaled only by their addiction to the steelhead runs of upstate New York.

I got my first look into the moments that fuel their passion on a May evening. Hendricksons had hatched, and large browns and rainbows were sipping spinners drifting in great numbers. Flows were low; much of the stretch of water in front of Dream Catcher Lodge was knee-high, making trout wary of any angler in their neighborhood. Some feeding lanes would suddenly become alive with rises and, just as quickly, go quiet before rises appeared again in different spots. I quickly learned that chasing rises is an exercise in futility. By the time you wade to reach a rise spotted in the distance, the fish might have moved to another spot and you'll likely spook even more trout on your path.

Successful West Branch anglers are, in fact, especially

patient and observant. They are attuned to the pulse of the river; they study the hatches and the rhythm of rises in a particular feeding lane; they stealthily move toward a rising trout while keeping their distance. Then, when the time comes to cast, they make every cast count. Long casts are often necessary, and mastering the double-haul will come in handy. Presentation is also of the utmost importance. The reach cast, which allows one to place the line upstream from the fly, is often the best way to present a dry fly without showing the line to the fish or causing the fly to drag.

On that particular May evening, our efforts to fool trout continued well into the twilight, until a shout echoed from a thousand feet away. It was Ron, letting us know that a big brown had taken his fly. The epic battle between Ron and the trout ended some 20 minutes later, in the dark of the night, and the feisty 20-inch wild brown was released. Success on the West Branch Delaware isn't measured by the number of fish but by the appreciation of these moments and the sometimes arduous journey to get there.

Later that summer, repairs at Cannonsville Dam prompted a drainage of the reservoir to 75 percent of its capacity, for three weeks releasing flows of 1,500 cfs, which is unusually high for summer. Such flows were, however, ideal for drift boats, and I ventured with the same crew on a few float trips between Stilesville, Deposit, and Balls Eddy. Each trip provided memorable fish. A 15-inch rainbow unleashed raw power, pulling out all 100 feet of my line in one mad run, and did it again just when I thought it would finally come to the net. A few big browns also left my hands sore from my tight grip on the rod's cork handle and my arm hurting from fights that felt like an eternity. Even more memorable: all of the fish that we caught and released during these trips were hooked on dry flies.

Olive Suspended Emerger

By Mike Bachkosky



PHOTO BY EASTERN FLY FISHING

Hook: TMC 2302, sizes 16–20

Thread: Olive, size 8/0

Wing: Natural or bleached snowshoe rabbit tied in by the tips, extending over the eye

Tail/body: Pheasant tail fibers, using the tips for the tail and winding the rest for the body; 2 wraps of olive dubbing against the base of the wing

Rib: Fine copper wire

particularly downriver from Hale Eddy, where the large *Isonychia*, Green Drakes, and Browns Drakes hatch.

Legendary dry-fly patterns were born on this river, the most renowned being the Comparadun, invented in the early 1970s by revered local fly tier and guide Al Caucci. Comparaduns remain among the most used patterns on the upper Delaware. They can be tied in a variety of sizes and colors to match different species of mayflies, from the large Green Drakes and *Isonychia*

Recipes for Success

This tailwater also offers many occasions to fish nymphs and streamers, but most regular West Branch Delaware anglers are inveterate dry-fly enthusiasts who fish nothing but dries during the river's storied spring and summer hatches. The West Branch's prolific insect life means that simultaneous hatches are common, and the densest hatches aren't necessarily the ones that the trout key on. Success often comes after trying different flies imitating different stages of each hatch, and sometimes after downsizing your fly when the bigger patterns are refused. The biggest patterns are mostly used on the lower West Branch,

to tiny Sulphurs and BWOs. The same tying style can also be used to match different stages of each hatch; they are called Compara-Emergers, Compara-Cripples, and Compara-Spinners, and are composed of only a slim dubbed body, a tail, and a deer-hair or CDC wing. Many other local-favorite mayfly patterns rely on economy of materials, whether they are Variants, Rusty Spinners, cripple patterns, or emergers, such as the Olive Suspended Emerger, created by local tier Mike Bachkosky. Although it was originally designed as a BWO emerger, this fly is effective for matching other mayfly emergers, such as Hendricksons, in the same color. Its size and profile, says

Bachkosky, are more important than the color.

West Branch anglers often use standard deer-hair patterns to match stoneflies and caddisflies, but other locally popular flies come with a CDC underwing that adds

KG's Secret Weapon

By Karl Gebhart



PHOTO BY EASTERN FLY FISHING

Hook: Curved dry-fly hook, size 12 or 14

Thread: Brown, size 8/0

Tail: Copper or amber Antron yarn

Body: Red-brown superfine dubbing

Under-wing: 2 or 3 dun CDC tufts, shorter than the wing

Wing: Dark deer hair

movement and dual tones to the wing. Among them is KG's Secret Weapon, a caddisfly pattern invented by local tier Karl Gebhart. KG's Secret Weapon features a bright orange tail that works as an attractor element and has proven very effective on the upper Delaware.

Streamers are also popular and effective on the West Branch Delaware, especially when alewives, which are plentiful in Cannonsville Reservoir, are flushed through water release pipes or over the dam. In such events, many of these 5-inch-long baitfish reach the river wounded and become easy prey for big browns. Flies imitating them include white and bluish Zonkers, Clouser Minnows, Deceivers, and Paul Weamer's Alewife, which is a cross between a Zonker and a Woolly Bugger.

Nymphing may not be the most popular way to fish the West Branch, but it can be productive. Commonly used nymph and wet patterns include small beadhead mayfly imitators, such as the Pheasant Tail Nymph, Hare's Ear Nymph, and Copper Johns, as well as stonefly nymph and caddisfly pupae patterns, like LaFontaine's Emergent Sparkle Pupa.

Soft hackles are also good imitations of emerging caddisflies. A Partridge and Green allowed me to net a 15-inch brown trout during a May caddisfly hatch and actually saved my day.

Having contended with its highly selective browns and rainbows, I can attest that the West Branch Delaware lives up to its reputation as one of the most challenging wild trout fisheries in the Northeast. But I was nonetheless able to net fish on most days I spent on the river.

Whether I can catch trout "anywhere" remains to be confirmed, but the trout I netted and the lessons I learned on this river will likely be remembered for a lifetime, leaving me, in the end, a better angler. 🐟

Christophe Perez, www.christopheperez.com, is a freelance writer and editorial photographer who lives near Boston, Massachusetts.

West Branch Delaware NOTEBOOK



When: April 1–Oct. 15 from Cannonsville Dam to NY–PA border; year-round from NY–PA border to junction with East Branch. *Special regulations:* Catch-and-release from SR 17 bridge to 2 mi. downstream; Oct. 16–first Saturday after April 11, catch-and-release from NY–PA border to junction with East Branch.

Where: Western Catskill Mountains, south-central NY and northwest PA.

Headquarters: Deposit and Hancock, NY. *Information:* Deposit Chamber of Commerce, www.depositchamber.com; Hancock Area Chamber of Commerce, www.hancockareachamber.com; Delaware County Chamber of Commerce, (866) 775-4425, www.greatwesterncatskills.com. *Lodging:* Dream Catcher Lodge, (877) 275-1165, (607) 467-4900, www.dreamcatcherlodgeny.com.

Access: Primarily a wade fishery, and also popular as a float fishery; wading is allowed along private properties within high-water marks.

Appropriate gear: 9- to 10-ft. rod, 5- to 6-wt. floating and sinking-tip lines (6- to 8-wt. for streamers), 4X–7X tippets.

Useful fly patterns: Comparaduns, Parachute patterns, Variants, spinner patterns, emerger and cripple patterns to match Quill Gordon, Dark and Light Hendricksons, March Brown, BWOs, Sulphurs, Green Drake, Brown Drake, *Isonychia* patterns, Light Cahill, Olive Suspended Emerger; stonefly patterns to match both tan and dark-colored stoneflies, Elk Hair Caddis, Deer Hair Caddis, LaFontaine's Emergent Sparkle Pupa, KG's Secret Weapon, soft hackles, BH Pheasant Tail Nymph, BH Hare's Ear Nymph, Copper Johns, stonefly nymphs, Paul Weamer's Alewife, white/blue Zonker, Clouser Minnow, Deceiver.

Necessary accessories: Polarized glasses, chest waders, felt-sole or studded wading boots, wading staff, landing net.

Fly shops/guides: Dream Catcher Lodge, (877) 275-1165, (607) 467-4900, www.dreamcatcherlodgeny.com.

Nonresident license: \$10/1 day, \$28/7 days, \$50/annual (not required for nonresidents 15 or younger); available online at www.dec.ny.gov.

Books/maps: *Fly-Fishing Guide to the Upper Delaware River* by Paul Weamer. Stream Map USA, (215) 491-4223, www.streammapusa.com; *Delaware River, East & West Branches* (fishing map) by Wilderness Adventures Press.



ALL PHOTOS BY BILL CHILES

Great Smoky Mountains National Park, NC/TN

Fantastic, Family-Friendly, Fly-Fishing Wilderness

By Bill Chiles

Wild southern Appalachian brook trout, rugged survivors that have clung to a meager existence in the most remote mountain headwaters, are not known for being picky.

Indeed, their very existence in these bug-sparse trickles has been predicated on grabbing a bite whenever it happens to come along. For anglers, this means fly selection is rarely important. This is the first rule of fly fishing for wild southern Appalachian trout. But—and this is a really big *but*—these same fish have become masters of detecting danger. Sometimes it seems they spook at the sound of a cracking stick a mile away. Which means anglers must elevate stealth tactics to the extreme. This is the second rule of fly fishing for wild southern Appalachian trout.

So when my wife, Alison, spotted a brookie feeding in a Bunches Creek eddy, she crouched low, eased very carefully into position, and placed her Parachute Adams delicately on the water. The small trout ignored it. A few dozen additional casts produced the same result.

“Dang,” Alison spewed. “I can’t get him to do anything.”

“He probably saw you before you saw him,” I opined. After all, I had been in her shoes more times than I can recall: a fire-bellied brook trout gently finning in impossibly clear Carolina water, baby steps over river stones, low profile in subdued clothing, and the perfect cast, only to watch my prize turn its head and glide to the safety of an undercut rock. That’s when our hopelessly optimistic 11-year-old daughter, Drew, stepped into the clearing.



What southern Appalachian brook trout lack in size, they more than atone for in a beauty that words seem inadequate to describe (above). Great Smoky Mountains National Park has restored and preserved a significant piece of southern Appalachian Mountain wilderness; there has never been a better time to pack up the fly rods and explore its streams (top). Simons Welter lands another beautiful brook trout on Bunches Creek (right).



“Can I try?” she gently inquired.

The years with Drew have taught me that she must experience failures for herself. It would be futile for me to attempt to explain how she was wasting time better spent stalking fresh, undisturbed trout. I simply smiled and said, “Sure, baby.”

So with a confidence that borders on naive, Drew stepped into position and made a very nice cast. The brook trout, of course, ignored her fly. I turned to search for the next pool. No sooner was my back turned to Drew than I heard the most humbling of words: “I got him!”

Shocked, I scrambled over mossy boulders to see for myself. There in the shallow water, tethered to her 2-weight by 6X tippet, was a beautiful brook trout. We celebrated Drew’s success and laughed at my ignorance. By the way, this is the third rule of fly fishing for wild southern Appalachian trout: just when you think you have them figured out, they will make a fool of you.

The moment was one of many joyous celebrations in a week of family fly-fishing adventure. The Smokies have been called the Gentle Mountains. The nickname refers to the eons of weathering that have worn some smoothness into these ancient peaks. A generous annual rainfall fuels about 2,000 miles of flowing water that is home to three species of trout. Consistent with the aforementioned description, many of these flows are ideal for a kid dapping a bushy dry fly. And while there are more risks here than an 8-year-old wielding an eye-gouging stick with a flaming wad of marshmallow goo on the end, it is a decidedly family-friendly wilderness.

A Brook Trout Tale

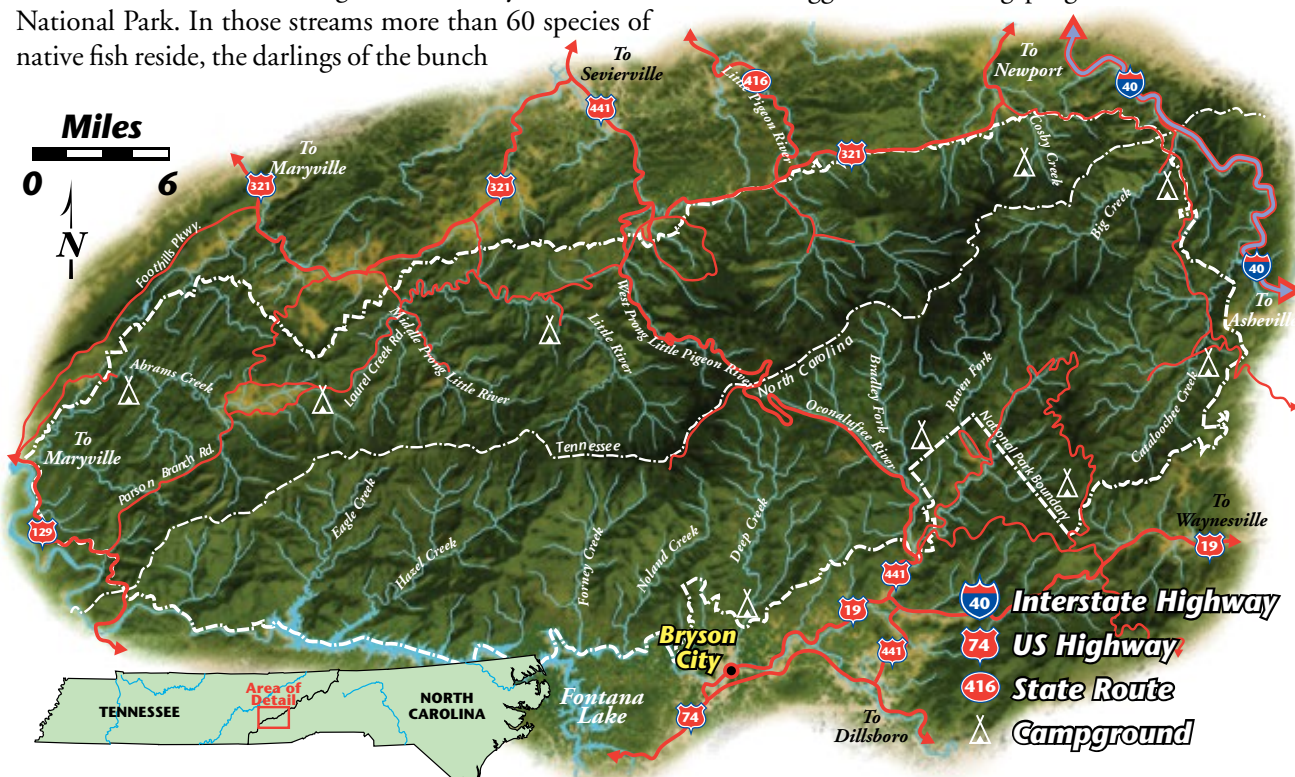
Ranging from raging rivers to tiny creeks, some 2,000 fishable stream miles flow through Great Smoky Mountains National Park. In those streams more than 60 species of native fish reside, the darlings of the bunch

being brook trout. Actually a char, brook trout are the only salmonid native to the streams of the southern Appalachian Mountains. There is a theory that European immigrants, fond of fishing for brown trout across the Atlantic, coined the name brook trout.

Brook trout were an important food source for the Cherokee, who harvested them in a variety of ways, such as traps, nets, spearing, hooks crafted from deer bone, and stream poisoning with concoctions derived from native plants. European settlers cherished brook trout as a sport fish as well as food. Even the smallest brookies were eaten—eaten whole after being fried to a golden crisp or pickled with a variety of spices.

By most accounts, brook trout flourished in Smoky Mountain streams down to an elevation of about 1,500 feet. Logging changed everything. The practice of clear-cutting forests to a stream’s edge devastated southern Appalachian brook trout populations. The loss of a protective forest canopy caused water temperatures to soar to levels that were inconsistent with trout survival. Erosion and subsequent siltation obliterated spawning grounds. Attempts to restore brookies failed miserably. Nonnative rainbows and browns were stocked instead. These nonnatives, their descendants accounting for the excellent modern-day rainbow and brown trout fishery, outcompeted the native brook trout for spawning grounds. Consequently, brook trout have been relegated to headwater streams that have natural barriers to nonnative trout and are too rugged for logging operations.

During the park’s first four decades, well-intended efforts by the National Park Service to bolster fishing there included aggressive stocking programs. All three trout





Drew Chiles keeps a low profile while drifting her dry fly through a Straight Fork pool. Stealth pays dividends on these clear waters (above). Great Smoky Mountains National Park remains a significant refuge for wild southern Appalachian brook trout (below).

species were stocked. Included in the program were a million or so nonnative brook trout fingerlings from northern strains. Despite these efforts, brook trout fishing in the park declined. By the 1970s, displacement by rainbow trout was recognized as the major factor in the loss of brook trout habitat. Finally, in 1975, stocking was stopped. In 1980, a park survey found only 123 miles of stream still held brook trout; panic ensued, and most brook trout streams were closed to angling. Some predicted their doom within a decade.

Steve Moore could not bear the thought. Moore, a fisheries biologist working for the NPS, was charged with brook trout restoration. His passion for the little native char seems to be more of an obsession than a mere job. He has tirelessly worked to understand, protect, and restore the park's southern Appalachian brook trout. Among his accomplishments are the removal of nonnative trout and the restoration of native brookies in about 40 miles of stream. Moore has also studied extensively the effects of angling on brook trout populations and size. His findings? Natural conditions, such as drought, have the most significant impact on trout populations. Anglers, it seems, have minimal effect. So for the first time in more than three decades, all waters within the park have been opened to fishing. Truly, this is the best time in a century to pack up some fly rods and head to the Smokies.

range, there is still a great deal of water to explore. Many of these fisheries are backcountry affairs. The headwaters of Hazel Creek and many of its tributaries, like Bone Valley Creek and Proctor Creek, are simply amazing, although reaching these stunning pools requires good hiking shoes. Another incredible backcountry brook trout fishery is Raven Fork, which was too rugged for logging operations and remains as pristine today as it was when the Cherokee



ruled. Roadside brook trout are also available on streams such as Road Prong, Walker Camp Prong, Kanati Fork, and Straight Fork.

All those spunky little trout have created the impression that the Smokies are not a big-fish destination. Brown trout in the park, however, can achieve very large dimen-

The Options

The trout streams of the Smokies are rich with lovely pockets and pools filled with browns, rainbows, and brookies. Conditions here lend themselves to searching holding water with attractors. Indeed, many of the region's local flies, such as the Thunderhead, Yallerhammer, and Tellico Nymph, reflect both the passion and the success of this brand of fishing. Virtually any stream in the park can offer fast action for lovely palm-size trout.

As you might gather, brook trout are the stars of the park's fisheries. And while they occupy only a fragment of their original

sions. If the chance to stick a big fish is important to you, focus on watersheds with healthy populations of brown trout. Some fisheries, like Deep Creek, the Oconaluftee, and Hazel Creek, are famous for growing hogs, but any water that holds browns can produce a pleasant surprise.

Big-brown enthusiast Mac Brown spends more time searching than casting. He likens blind-casting in hopes of hooking a big brown to shooting blindly into a forest in hopes of shooting a deer. He likes to study a pool and decide where the largest inhabitant is likely to be holding. He then targets the big-fish position. Brown has many browns over 20 inches to his credit, and his approach seems wise.

There are other important points to consider when targeting large Smoky Mountain browns. Large browns become nocturnal feeders, and they are rarely caught in bright midday sunlight. Most truly large specimens are taken at that magic hour when the sun sets behind the mountains and darkness begins to invade the river valleys. Also, cloudy, rainy days often tempt big browns out of hiding to feed, especially if there is enough rain to stain the river a bit. During a clear, dry October week in 1998, Ronnie Hodge and I spent several days fishing upper Deep Creek. It was painfully slow, with only a handful of small rainbows and browns to our credit. The fourth day of fishing, however, was preceded by a nasty thunderstorm, leaving Deep Creek full and its water stained. Fat browns came to life the following day, gobbling our dry flies with abandon.

The Smokies have an abundance of roadside streams, but for the best angling the Smokies have to offer, take a hike. A well-developed trail system provides access to beautiful backcountry campsites and unpressured trout. Even a 10-minute walk will leave most crowds behind. In the backcountry, you can pitch a tent near a stream, catch an early supper, and be casting a fly during those last rays of light in hopes of tempting one of those trophy browns.

Although the park is open to angling year-round, the

most consistent fishing is mid-March through early June and late September through early November. Southern summers can get hot, and the fishing can slow down. In general, summer fishing is best at high elevations where conditions are more springlike. Summer is a great time to chase backcountry brook trout. If you are planning to fish lower-elevation streams during the summer months, consider hitting the water at the extremes of the day, particularly

morning. Afternoon thunderstorms are very common in the southern Appalachians. A good, cool summer shower can make trout lose all caution and feed ravenously. However, avoid exposing yourself to lightning during an electrical storm. Lightning kills.

The fishing can also slow down during winter cold spells. Fortunately, streams remain ice-free and frozen precipitation is rare and short-lived. Winter warm spells are common, with highs commonly hitting the 50s and sometimes the 60s. Hit a low-elevation stream on one of these days and the fishing can be excellent. Best of all, the park is virtually deserted during the colder months.

Smoky Mountain trout streams, like most southern Appalachian trout streams, don't host dramatic or predictable hatches. These trout survive by grabbing a meal whenever they can. Presentation is almost always more important than precise imitation.

Perhaps no fly better embodies the Smokies than the Yallerhammer. The origins of the Yallerhammer likely precede European settlement, when Cherokee anglers took a feather from a yellow-shafted flicker (commonly called the yellowhammer or yallerhammer) and palmered it around a crude hook. The creation was adapted by European fly fishers, and untold variations followed. Like all woodpeckers, the flicker is fully protected, and possession of its feathers is illegal. A variety of other feathers (dove or starling)—dyed yellow, of course—are now used in its place. The fly is as effective on Smoky Mountain brook trout today as it was in its ancient form. Perhaps there are more effective flies, but the sentimental connection is undeniable.



Brown trout in Great Smoky Mountains National Park waters can reach impressive sizes; catching one, however, can be very tricky.

Another quintessential Smoky Mountain fly is the Adams-like Thunderhead, widely credited to the late Fred Hall of Bryson City, North Carolina. It is an ideal attractor pattern that floats like a cork in the turbulent currents and is arguably a plausible imitation of a variety of mayflies. Some accomplished Smoky Mountain fly fishers believe that the Thunderhead, in sizes 10 through 18, is the only dry-fly pattern needed in the park.

One More Lesson

The Roaring Fork, with easy road access and gentle plunge pools loaded with trout, is ideal for kids. Drew certainly approved. Virtually each pool had a chunky rainbow eager to grab her fly. We alternated pools, playing a game of Five-or-Fish, where the fly fisher fishes until a fish is caught or five minutes elapse. Five minutes rarely passed without a trout. And then we came to the perfect pool. It was deep blue, flowing between undercut rocks. The flow was perfect for delivering food to waiting trout. Best of all, it was my turn.

"Oh yeah, there's got to be a good one in here," I boasted with the confidence that demands one succeed or wallow in embarrassment. I made a couple of false casts and then placed my Parachute Adams gently in the perfect position. It rode the current, free of drag, directly into the target zone—untouched.

"What happened?" Drew smirked, a big grin on her face.

"Wait for it," I returned, still exuding confidence. Then the second cast went unrewarded. And the third. And about a dozen more. "Durn," I vented, my ego suffering a little.

Then Drew blurted, "My turn; I'll get 'em." My five minutes expired, I yielded the stream to my increasingly confident 11-year-old. Recalling the second rule of southern Appalachian trout fishing, she stealthily positioned herself behind a boulder for concealment and proceeded to cast her fly to the very seam I had probed. The father and experienced fly fisher in me felt compelled to intervene.

So I bestowed my wisdom: "Honey, you're wasting your time here.... I just ... ah—"

"Got him!" Drew chirped. My jaw hung for a second, and then I smiled the proud smile of a father watching his baby girl celebrate her success in this wonderful place and being reminded, again, of the third rule of southern Appalachian trout fishing. 🐟

Bill Chiles is a freelance writer and photographer who lives in Walhalla, South Carolina.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park **NOTEBOOK**

When: Year-round; best in spring and fall.

Where: Eastern TN/western NC.

Headquarters: Bryson City and Cherokee, NC; Gatlinburg and Townsend, TN. *Information:* Great Smoky Mountains National Park, (865) 436-1200, www.nps.gov/grsm/index.htm; Cherokee North Carolina, (800) 438-1601, www.visitchokeenc.com.



Appropriate gear: 2- to 5-wt. rods, floating lines.

Useful fly patterns: Adams, Parachute Adams, Thunderhead, Elk Hair Caddis, Stimulator, Palmer, Haystack, Tennessee Wulff, Blue-Winged Olive, March Brown, Quill Gordon, Light Cahill, Hendrickson, Yellow Sally, Parachute Sulfur, October Caddis, ants, beetles, soft hackles, Yallerhammer, Pheasant Tail Nymph, Hare's Ear, Pat's Rubber Legs, Bitch Creek Nymph, Tellico Nymph, Prince Nymph, Woolly Buggler, Muddler Minnow, Sheep Fly, egg patterns.

Nonresident license: Tennessee or North Carolina license valid throughout the park, but not available in the park. *Tennessee:* \$40.50/3 days, \$61.50/10 days. *North Carolina:* \$18/10 days, plus \$13 trout stamp.

Fly shops: *Bryson City, NC:* Tuckaseegee Fly Shop, (828) 488-3333, www.tuckflyshop.com. *Cherokee, NC:* Rivers Edge Outfitters, (828) 497-9300, www.wncfishing.com. *Gatlinburg, TN:* The Smoky Mountain Angler, (865) 436-8746, www.smokymountainangler.com. *Townsend, TN:* Little River Outfitters, (865) 448-9459, www.littleriveroutfitters.com; R&R Fly Fishing, (865) 448-0467, www.randrflyfishing.com.



Books/maps: *Great Smoky Mountains National Park Angler's Companion* by Ian Rutter. Stream Map USA, Southeast, (215) 491-4223, www.streammapusa.com; *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* map by National Geographic Trails Illustrated, www.natgeo-maps.com/trail-maps/trails-illustrated-maps.



ALL PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHE PEREZ

Ipswich Bay, MA

Catching the Striper Bug

By Francis Lunney

I was recently diagnosed with a bad case of striper fever. There are late nights when I can't sleep, and I head out into the street, fly rod in hand, and start casting right there on the blacktop. I know that getting an extra 20 feet on my cast will let me better drop a fly into a blitz of stripers off Crane Beach or some other worthwhile Ipswich Bay location.

The fishing opportunities are vast, seemingly endless in these beautiful surroundings. Driving along Massachusetts Route 133 through the historic towns of Essex, Ipswich, and Rowley, one immediately feels more connected to the ocean. The salty air and tidal rivers that permeate these towns have a calming presence. It's easy to understand the appeal of this area for hikers, bird-watchers, boaters, and, of course, fly anglers in pursuit of striped bass. This past summer, I was lucky enough to have several weeks to explore this scenic fishery while honing my fly-fishing skills for stripers.

I was first introduced to many locations in this fishery, not as an angler, but as a kayaker, in the spring of 2013. That May and June, I took a 40-hour kayaking class offered by Essex River Basin Adventures that put me on the water several times a week. During my class, I paddled a significant expanse of Ipswich Bay. While I was working on my paddling and navigational skills, my thoughts often wandered to the striper-fishing possibilities.

In the summer of 2015, I enjoyed the opportunity to become acquainted with those waters once again—this time with a fly rod in hand.

Learning from the Experts

With the help and direction of two local expert striper guides, I began navigating my way through this exciting fishery. In late June and mid-July, I fished with Eliot Jenkins on three separate occasions. Jenkins, the owner of Greasy Beaks Flyfishing, is an Orvis-endorsed fly-fishing guide who fishes for striped bass with contagious enthusiasm.

When Jenkins talks about being on the water “nearly every minute” during striper season, he’s not exaggerating all that much. Even after putting in a long day on the water, he will often head out on a scouting trip on his own or plan an evening trip with friends visiting from out of town. Jenkins even teaches a fly-fishing class (Striped Bass 301) through the local Orvis store.

My first outing with Jenkins was an early-morning trip in late June, fishing the waters off Steep Hill Beach and Crane Beach on an outgoing tide. That morning we had the pleasure of fishing alongside a boat captained by Dave Anderson, Jenkins’ father-in-law and frequent fly-fishing companion.

Anderson fished with Pete Kutzer, an impressive angler and top-notch fly-fishing instructor for Orvis who also happens to be a good friend of Jenkins. Jackie Jordan, also an Orvis employee and an excellent fly angler, fished in the boat with Jenkins and me. This particular morning, very few fish were working the surface, but Jenkins eventually marked a number of stripers cruising



Captain Mike Hart releases a sizable striper caught by Francis Lunney near Crane Beach. With conservation always in mind, the vast majority of local fly anglers release all of the stripers they catch (above). At first light on a late-June morning, Pete Kutzer and Dave Williams cast for stripers at the mouth of the Ipswich River. Stripers feed more actively throughout the night, and dawn and dusk are often the most productive times of the day for fly anglers targeting them (left).

deeper, near the mouth of the Ipswich River.

Soon enough, Jordan was fighting a striper from the stern of the boat. Over the next hour and a half, she landed three feisty 22- to 24-inch stripers, and I still hadn’t broken the ice, even though I had been given the premier casting position in the bow. Rather than pout, I cheered on Jordan and worked on putting some of Jenkins’ casting tips into action. Before the morning trip was over, I was making better casts and working my sand eel pattern with a faster retrieve that seemed to be working for Jordan. The fish took notice, and I hooked a couple of stripers before the morning was over, with the biggest fish giving me an exciting fight and pushing 26 inches.

The lesson was clear to me. Making better casts with a sinking line and adjusting my presentation were going to be pivotal factors if I wanted to catch more stripers. I was game to work on my striper-fishing skill set.

Our next two outings took place in mid-July and were great fun. Both of these trips were in late afternoon. We followed birds and blitzing stripers feeding on herring in Plum Island Sound on incoming tides. Being later in the season, the fish were a bit picky. On the first outing, I landed eight fine fish. The next trip with Jenkins offered similar conditions, blitzing stripers, with a



good number of fish up to 25 inches in length. Thankfully, the stripers lost their pickiness on this trip. One of the fish I landed coughed up a handful of juvenile herring, providing a great opportunity to “match the hatch.”

Another memorable day last summer was with Mike Hart, also an outstanding guide, who owns and operates Ipswich Bay Angling. Hart resides in Rowley, and his love of his home waters is obvious. Hart loves to fish and is excited to turn new anglers on to the sport. He’s an easy-going guy and a patient teacher. On each trip I’ve taken with him, I learned new techniques and gained a greater appreciation for striped fishing in this scenic area.

Along with being an avid angler, Hart is an environmentalist who has been a longtime member of Strippers Forever (www.stripersforever.org), a conservation group that encourages anglers to release large, breeding-size stripers and has sponsored pending legislation that would designate stripers as a game fish.

On my first outing with Hart, we left Perley’s Marina on the Rowley River in early light, just after low tide. After 20 minutes of maneuvering his boat through the Rowley River and Plum Island Sound to the Sandy Point area just south of Plum Island, Hart followed working birds to a school of blitzing bass. When one blitz ended, the stripers immediately turned on a few hundred yards away. It was one of those mornings you dream about.

Over the next hour and a half, I landed about 10 hard-fighting stripers on an Ozzie’s Sand Eel, one of Hart’s favorite patterns for this fishery. Most fish were in the 20- to 22-inch range, but I also landed two fish pushing 25 inches. We dubbed these bigger stripers “super schoolies” after some nice battles on the 8-weight rod I was casting that morning.

On another outing with Hart, only a few stripers were working on the surface, but he worked hard to put me on some nice fish. Just before the day ended, while fishing a sandbar off Crane Beach, I hooked a beautiful 28-inch striper that took me well in the backing. I was thrilled to land my first keeper-size fish of the year on a fly. With conservation of these beautiful fish always in mind, however, we took a quick picture and released it.

Further Explorations

Fishing from a boat with a knowledgeable local guide such as Jenkins or Hart enables fly anglers to quickly learn many of the hot spots in Ipswich Bay, while providing prime opportunity to work on casting and presentation skills.

Anglers venturing out on their own have several shore-access options worth exploring. Crane Beach, accessible via Argilla Road in Ipswich, is the crown jewel of the fishery. This beautiful 4-mile stretch of beach and the surrounding land were donated by the Crane family and are now managed by the Trustees of Reservations, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving natural and historic sites across Massachusetts. Ipswich residents can park at Crane Beach free, but others must pay a parking fee

(\$20 on weekdays and \$25 on weekends and holidays). Anglers who plan on fishing here regularly should join the Trustees of Reservations (\$47 annually) and purchase a seasonal parking permit (\$75). The Crane Beach parking area is open from 8 a.m. until dusk. In order to park before and after regular parking lot hours, buy a \$15 fishing parking permit at Ipswich Town Hall; the permit provides access to a small parking area in front of the main gate.

Anglers can fish stretches of beach on both sides of the Crane Beach swimming area. To the west, the Steep

Hill Beach area can fish well on all tides. Jenkins recommends trying purple or black flies, which stand out among the rocks. Moving farther to the west, anglers can access the banks of the Ipswich River. Also worth exploring is the long stretch of beach that runs the length of Castle Neck off to the east. Yet, with so much area to cover, fishing Crane Beach can be a daunting affair.

Hart recommends that anglers walk the beach at low tide and pay particular attention to holes, drop-offs, and sandbars, and construct markers on the beach that provide visual reference points in order to find these spots at higher tides.

Another excellent spot worth exploring is Pavilion Beach, off Little Neck Road in Ipswich, where parking is free. Anglers can wade on both sides of the swimming area. Many fly anglers favor the rocky shoreline to the east of the beach or walk past the rocks to reach the mouth of the Ipswich River. For this particular spot, Hart suggests working baitfish and sand eel patterns on a downstream swing and trying various retrieves.

Juvenile Delinquent

Originated and tied by Eliot Jenkins



PHOTO BY EASTERN FLY FISHING

Hook: Gamakatsu SL 12S, size 2/0

Thread: Clear mono

Tail: White Super Hair or Unique Hair

Body: Camo, blue, and herring mixture Steve Farrar’s Flash Blend

Belly: White Steve Farrar’s Flash Blend and yak hair

Head: Clear Cure Goo UV Epoxy

Eyes: Holographic stick-on eyes

Pavilion Beach is also a great place to launch a kayak. Be sure to launch on the west side of the beach between the two “NO PARKING” signs (or risk receiving a fine). From there, kayakers can access Plum Island Sound and tidal rivers such as the Parker and the Rowley. Smaller tidal creeks also drain into these rivers. Casting along the banks and into such creeks’ mouths can be very productive, especially earlier in the season. Another location known to fish well is Coffins Beach in Gloucester. Look for access points along Wingaersheek Road, which runs parallel to the beach.

Changing Tactics with the Season

Fly anglers targeting Ipswich Bay stripers should vary their approach and fly selection depending on the season. In mid-May, adult herring spawn in the fresh water of the tidal rivers and the stripers are right on their heels. Jenkins notes that the fish aren’t overly picky this time of year. He suggests typical baitfish patterns, such as Clousers and Deceivers, in white, off-white, and cream in bright light, and darker flies of similar shape and profile in low light. Fishing the Middle Ground area of Plum Island Sound can be very productive during this time.

Later in June, stripers begin to hang around the mouths of tidal rivers, with outgoing tides seeming to offer the best fishing prospects. Both Jenkins and Hart begin to spend more time fishing beachfronts this time of year. Jenkins reports that “sand eels become more prevalent” and notes, “Fish will sit in deep depressions and right on the bottom.”

Jenkins encourages anglers to search for currents where fish have “food being pushed right to them.” Later in the summer, when fishing can slow down a bit, fly anglers should do much of their fishing in low-light conditions, including after dark.

Looking Forward

Even after summer came to a close, I continued to explore the Ipswich Bay striper fishery. I had the good fortune of fishing with two dedicated guides who have spent many days on the water perfecting their craft, and I feel as if I’ve started to develop the skill set I need to approach the fishing with greater confidence. I’ve fished the rocks at Pavilion Beach at low tide. I’ve spent a number of days paddling Plum Island Sound and fishing from my sit-on-top fishing kayak.

While I won’t yet be mistaken for Lefty Kreh, I will say that my presentation and casting have improved. On my best days, I’m casting 50 to 60 feet of line with accuracy. I’m not sure if my neighbors think I’m strange, but I’ll certainly keep fighting insomnia by casting in the street in the darkest hours of night. I’m already looking forward to next spring and the arrival of the stripers. I want to be ready. 🐟

Francis Lunney is a freelance writer, poet, and elementary school reading specialist who lives in Salem, Massachusetts.

Ipswich Bay NOTEBOOK



When: Mid-May–early October

Where: Boston’s North Shore.

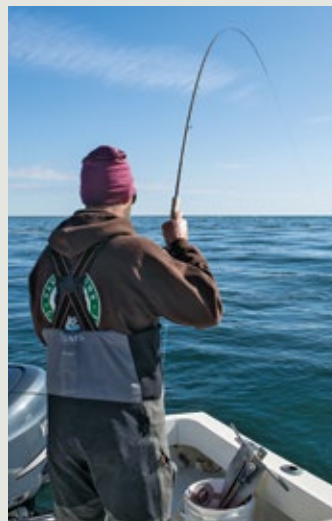
Headquarters: Essex, Ipswich, and Rowley, MA.

Appropriate gear: 8- to 10-wt. rods; floating, intermediate, and sinking lines; 16- to 20-lb., 8- to 10-ft. leaders.

Useful fly patterns: Clouser Minnows, Deceivers, Ozzie’s Sand Eel, Cichetti’s Sand Eel, Mega Mushmouth, Monomoy Flatwing, Mud Dog Dazzle Bait, Juvenile Delinquent, Angel Hair Baitfish, Cowen’s Magnum Baitfish (herring, bunker), Puglisi Bronzino (olive, purple/black), Puglisi Peanut Butter, Gartside Gurgler, Snake Fly.

Fly shops/guides: *Essex:* The Fin and Feather Shop, (978) 768-3245, www.thefinandfeathershop.com. *Hamilton:* Capefish Clothing Co., (978) 468-4359, www.capefishclothing.com. *Peabody:* Orvis, (978) 531-0185, www.orvis.com. *Guides:* Ipswich Bay Angling (Capt. Mike Hart), (978) 518-7190, www.ipswichbayangling.com; Greasy Beaks Flyfishing (Capt. Eliot Jenkins), (541) 868-6356, www.greasybeaksflyfishing.com, www.bostonflyfishing.com.

Books/maps: *Essex Coastal Byway Guide* by Joel Brown; *Flyfisher’s Guide to the New England Coast*



by Tom Keer; *On the Run: An Angler’s Journey Down the Striper Coast* by Dave DiBenedetto; *Stripers on the Fly* by Lou Tabory; *Fly Fishing for Striped Bass (Masters on the Fly series)* by Rich Murphy. Stream Map USA, (215) 491-4223, www.StreamMapUSA.com; *Massachusetts Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme Mapping.

Ignace Outposts Lakes, Ontario

Lakes to the Edges of Unlimited Imagination

By Pete Elkins

Somewhere past the shoreline aspens and birches, a ruffed grouse drummed to the bright glory of an Ontario afternoon. The drumming echoed above a foam-surfaced pool in the headwaters of one of Irene Lake's portage lakes. Larry Kinder and I had wedged our boat into a thick mat of aquatic vegetation within an easy cast of the pool. After an hour of casting surface flies and streamers, we had yet to take a mental breath because cast after cast drew thumping strikes from smallmouth bass or northern pike.

When we finally put down our rods, exhausted and exhilarated, we had no words for the experience. My overwhelming emotion was regret—regret that I had waited so long for this first Canadian fly-in paradise.

For years, fly-fishing friends and I had talked about flying into one of those outdoor-magazine-cover Canadian lakes where the fish reputedly jumped into your canoe. We fished almost everywhere else—throughout the Southeast, East, and Midwest. Larry had even joined me for a primitive trip to Honduras, where we caught snook and tarpon. There, we survived malaria-infested Miskito Indian villages and a terrifying flight from hell in a Russian turboprop transport with pilots who had never heard the term “maintenance.”

During those years of relative youth, we caught our first bonefish from Yucatán flats and Bahamian marls. We chased smallmouth bass from Maine to South Carolina, but never Canada. “Too expensive,” we said. “Too many blackflies and mosquitoes. Too many logistical problems with meal planning and all that other do-it-yourself stuff.”

And we were becoming not so relatively young.

Ultimately, that last excuse for not going to Canada became the prime motivator to go. I shared Andrew Marvell's concern expressed in his ageless poem *To his Coy Mistress*:

*But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near*

So, after intensive research into fly-in remote cabin outfitters, we made our first trip in 2009. Later this summer, we will make our sixth return to Ignace Outposts to hitch a ride on one of outfitter Brad and Karen Greaves's fleet of meticulously maintained, bright-yellow de Havillands. And when we take the yellow magic carpet ride to our own fishing paradise, I will kick myself every single mile for waiting so long.

The first flight from Ignace to Irene Lake is forever fixed in my memories. After securing our gear in the de Havilland Otter's cargo compartment, Brad directed my angling companions to nylon bench seats. They tightened their seat belts and pressed their noses against the windows to watch the pending show. I had the shotgun seat beside Brad in the cockpit. While I studiously avoided touching any knob or lever that might be life

altering, Brad ran through his takeoff checklist. Then the yellow Otter was off the water and into the most enchanted dimension of my life. Water was everywhere: hundreds of lakes, big and small, stretching into the edges of a limitless imagination. The flight to our destination was short, barely 15 minutes. On later trips, flight time was an hour or so to some faraway pike and walleye nirvana. Then, the sensation was even more intense: lakes filling the horizon. So many lakes that I ached to fish them all, knowing that doing so would, sadly, take many more lifetimes.



ALL PHOTOS BY PETE ELKINS

Anglers prepare for a flight at Ignace Outposts' floatplane anchorage dock. In addition to this de Havilland Otter, the fleet includes a de Havilland Beaver (the eighth wonder of the world) and a Cessna 206 (above).



Don't Worry, Be Happy

Trying to fish all of northwest Ontario's myriad lakes would be impossible, but it's easy to fish a lot of them. All of our concerns about the logistics of a fly-in trip to a do-it-yourself Canadian lake vanished within an hour of our first experience. In fact, the trip preparation and planning were almost as much fun as the fishing. "Almost" is the operative term, because the fishing is so good.

Our primary concerns were twofold: how to get there and what to take. For anglers living in the Northeast or Midwest, getting there is a road trip through Minnesota to the International Falls or Pigeon River border crossing checkpoints into Canada. On our first trip to Ignace, three angling friends and I had a slightly longer drive. Two of us lived near the Alabama–Georgia border and two lived in Saint Louis, Missouri. So, Larry and I drove to Saint Louis, met Dan Limbaugh and Frank Doerr for an overnight in their city, and headed north early the next morning. While long, it was a fun road trip with good companions through the heart of America to a place we had never been. Can't ask for much better than that.

When we reached Minneapolis–Saint Paul, Ignace was a mere 500 miles away. For anglers not inclined

to drive, scheduled air flights go to both Thunder Bay, Ontario, and International Falls, Minnesota, where rental cars are available for the drive into Canada.

Clearing customs at International Falls involved nothing more than a polite chat with American and Canadian officials, assuring them that we were not druggies, terrorists, or, *gasp*, in possession of live minnows or undulating leeches. After crossing into Canada and the town of Fort Frances, we followed Ontario Highway 11 (the Trans Canada Highway) east about 12 miles to Ontario Highway 502, where we turned north and drove 80 miles to Dryden, a modern town with plenty of motels and grocery outlets. During the first few trips to Ignace, we purchased our week's worth of food supplies before crossing into Canada, then drove directly to Ignace to overnight (at one of several motels) before flying out early the next morning. Now we simplify things by picking up groceries and staples in a big chain store in Dryden, spend the night in Dryden, then drive the remaining 65 miles to Ignace early the following morning to meet Brad and Karen for an early flight out.

Our initial flight from Ignace to Irene Lake revealed that most rare occurrence: a plan perfectly coming together. All

four of us are primarily warm-water anglers, with emphasis upon the bass, panfish, and freshwater stripers abundant in many Eastern reservoirs and rivers. Dan is the only one with much cold-water trout experience. We all like smallmouth bass, especially when they are in shallow water eager to take surface patterns. Thus, timing was critical.

We wanted to be at a prime smallmouth lake when the fish were shallow and active. Early June seemed to be the perfect time, but it all depended upon Canadian weather patterns, hard things to predict a year in advance.

As the Otter swung in a slow turn above beautiful Irene's crystalline surface, four sets of fingers and toes crossed in a plea for luck that the smallies would be shallow. The plane settled to the surface and taxied toward a small cove with a wooden dock in front of a surprisingly large cabin. As we stepped down the short boarding ladder to the dock, we all saw it at once:



a chunky smallmouth finning in less than a foot of water atop a gravel bed within a rod's length of us. We looked around the cove's shoreline at dozens of similar beds with a smallmouth or two on each. We looked at each other and smiled in giddy delight. The only drawback was that we had to carry our gear into the cabin before stringing rods.

Individual gear selection is surprisingly easy. Aside from personal fly tackle preferences, requirements are standard. Essentials include sunglasses, pillow, sleeping bag, toilet items, personal floatation device (I like the comfortable inflatable models that don't hinder fly casting), rain gear, insect repellent and head net, personal clothing, flashlight, and camera. Group gear should include an adequate first-aid kit, tailored to fit any particular health issues of a group member. Ignace Outposts provides a satellite phone to each fishing party, but the outpost cabins remain remote from immediate medical attention. Aircraft evacuation is weather dependent. Of course, this very remoteness is what makes the Ignace experience so memorable, but be prepared. Some anglers in remote areas like the idea of purchasing medical evacuation plans like those offered by Global Rescue and similar organizations. Health issues aside, trip planning for an Ignace Outposts adventure isn't difficult. Just remember to keep things simple.

Brad and his pilots are professionals, fittingly obsessed with cargo weight and weather. Of those twin considerations, anglers need worry only about the former. The pilot handles the weather. If flying conditions are hazardous, the pilot won't fly. I like that.

When packing for the flight in, weight is a critical factor. Food and drinks create weight issues. Each angler can transport 100 pounds of stuff, period. Plan accordingly. We have never exceeded that limitation or found ourselves needing something that we failed to bring. To make planning even easier, the Greaveses provide a detailed guest handbook that covers everything that you need to know for planning a fun trip. The handbook, downloadable at www.ignaceoutposts.com, even contains sample food and gear checklists that make planning simple.

I first envisaged a rustic cabin with no electricity and few, if any, creature comforts. An outhouse. Perhaps a bath in a frigid lake. And I was sure insects—mosquitoes of 747 proportion and bloodthirsty black flies—promised yet more discomfort. Fortunately, things turned out very differently. Ignace Outposts' cabins were a pleasant surprise.

They are rustic only in terms of location and simplicity. Depending upon location, cabin power comes from solar panels, propane, or gasoline generators. Hot showers, lights, stove, refrigerators, heated outdoor saunas, bunk beds with foam mattresses, and, yes, even indoor plumbing in the form of environmentally friendly compost-activated latrines create a comfortable retreat from the rigors of encountering unsophisticated fish. As for insects, they certainly exist, but repellents work well. We've always tucked mosquito head nets in our tackle bags, but have used them only during one trip out of six, and in one of the wettest Ontario springs ever.



This toothy pike chomped on a weighted leech pattern intended for walleyes. Glitzy patterns like Flashtail Whistlers and DNA Bush Pigs draw far more strikes.

La Raison d'Être

Ignace Outposts now offers flights to seven lakes, with airtime ranging from 15 minutes to an hour, roughly equivalent to flights of 25 to 100 miles. Each lake has one or more outpost cabins. Portage lakes, complete with boats and motors, expand already extensive fishing areas. Fish populations vary, depending upon which river creates the lake. All of the Ignace cabins stand on lakes within the Allan Water, Brightsand, Flindt, or Gamble River systems. Among these fish-rich rivers, only the Gamble River lakes harbor smallmouth bass. Irene Lake is part of the Gamble River. Irene is a stunner, obviously named after a beautiful woman. It is a cold, exceptionally clear lake in a region of mostly "dark water" lakes with slightly tannic-tinted water. Depth matches clarity. Some of Irene's 6,000 acres include water deeper than 100 feet. Irene, with its four portage lakes, is our favorite destination because of the smallmouth, but walleyes, pike, lake trout, and even whitefish round out the fly-fishing ticket.

The only other lake with a lake trout population is huge 30,000-acre Seseganaga Lake. Most lakers range from



Larry Kinder swings a streamer through the headwaters of an Irene portage lake. Bass and pike concentrate in these pristine inflows. Early-season anglers may find walleyes as well.

3 to 8 pounds, but some 25-pounders show up. Big “Ses” Lake houses four outpost cabins and a full-time resident caretaker who provides help to visiting anglers as needed. Although large, Seseganaga forms long coves and bays, with few places more than a half mile wide. Walleyes and pike, some exceeding the magical 50-inch mark, populate miles of shoreline and coves. These two iconic northwest Ontario species dominate the remaining Ignace lakes.

Kawawegama Lake beckons north of Seseganaga, on the Allan Water River. Fly anglers looking for perfect walleye conditions can find them at river’s inlet to and outlet from the 10,000-acre lake. Similarly sized Metionga Lake is a true walleye factory. Metionga has four outpost cabins and an equal number of portage lakes. Hilltop and Flindt Lakes, both about 3,500 acres, each have a single large cabin with one portage lake. Flindt Lake is on the Flindt River where it flows through Wakakimi Park. Fly anglers eager to add a walleye to their bucket list will find Flindt offers perfect areas with moving water for relatively shallow fish. While every outpost cabin is secluded, with immediate access to unpressured fish, the

seventh and final Ignace lake epitomizes remote, solitary fishing. Tri Lake has a single cabin for four, all alone on 1,800 acres of walleye and pike heaven.

Tackle, Tactics, and Flies

My first Ontario smallmouth bass was a shock. A fallen tree angled out from a tangle of reeds and submerged rock. I was pretty proud of my cast, as the size 6 chartreuse popping bug landed within a foot of the drowned tree.

Immediately, three converging water-pushing torpedoes closed in on the popper. Fortunately, the winner of the smallmouth race hooked itself while I, overcome by the violent speed of events, did nothing. And so went the following week, except that I learned to set the hook instead of simply admiring the strikes. Admittedly, that first encounter was the only time that three bass attacked simultaneously, but double attempts were common. Of course, our timing was critical for such fishing. We were casting barbless flies to smallmouth bass busily protecting their spawning territory in early June. On later trips, we missed the spawn and

Dahlberg Diver



PHOTO BY EASTERN FLY FISHING

- Hook:** TMC 800S, size 4, or Gamakatsu B10S stinger, size 2
- Thread:** Red, size 3/0
- Weed guard:** 20-lb. hard mono
- Wing:** White marabou
- Sides:** Two grizzly hackles, and pearl Mylar
- Collar:** Black deer hair
- Head:** White deer hair, spun and clipped

the ensuing surface melee by a week or so. The fly fishing was still superb, but the fish were not suicidal.

Since smallmouth are our favorite target, they captured most of our attention on early trips. Ignace smallies are beautifully marked specimens that occasionally reach 24 inches and 6 pounds. They average about 17 inches and 2 to 3 pounds. Six- to 8-weight rods are perfect for deer-hair bugs, streamers, and popping bugs. I compromise with a favorite 7-weight. Floating lines cover the waterfront for early-season bass in shallow water. As summer progresses, a sinking-tip line helps to present Woolly Buggers or similar leech patterns, Whitlock's Near 'Nuff Crayfish, Murdich Minnows, or DNA Bush Pigs. Sinking-tips also work well in areas with current. Even when smallmouth seek deeper water in July and August, they will still take surface patterns during low-light periods.

Lake trout also like low-light conditions. However, fly-rod success for Ignace lakies demands being present as early in the season as possible. Generally, ice-out occurs in early May, and lake trout remain in relatively shallow water within range of floating and sinking lines until mid- or late June. I've had luck with cisco-imitating size 6 to 8 Bush Pigs fished with both floating and sinking-tip lines. If you luck into a mayfly hatch, prepare for some memorable lake trout action. Any size 12 to 14 Adams-type fly seems to produce. Surface feeding peaks at dusk under calm conditions. After lake trout head for the depths in late June, practical fly fishing for them is over.

Walleyes like relatively deep water during the summer but don't descend beyond fly-fishing depth. However, the most enjoyable and productive walleye fly-rod action occurs early. When smallmouth bass are spawning, walleyes have already done so but remain in water shallow enough for fly fishing. In fact, inlets and outlets in lakes like Metionga, Flindt, and Kawawegama create wonderful places to cast weighted leech patterns or streamers on sinking-tip lines. Irene has some beastly walleyes in the 10-pound class, but clear water makes nocturnal fishing more effective. Take your mosquito head net if you want to try the after-hours trophy approach. Don't ask how I know that.

Unlike the walleyes, which like low light, northern pike will take flies under all conditions. I've saved pike for last, because if there were no smallmouth, pike would be my favorite Ignace fly-rod quarry. There's something elemental and savage about pike that makes me grab an 8- or 9-weight rod, add a fly box filled with size 2/0 Whistlers, and head for the nearest shallow bay. Pike are killers all, from savage little hammerheads a foot or so long to full-grown 30- to 50-inch beasts. And they want to kill a big flashy fly.

In June, before weedbeds reach summer bloom, look for pike in dark-bottom bays and inlets. They like to lurk around lake inlets and outlets, where they prowl for careless walleyes. I don't think you can strip a fly too fast for pike. If they follow but don't take, strip faster. In midsummer, pike

Ignace Outposts NOTEBOOK



When: Mid-May–September.

Where: Northwest Ontario, about 350 mi. north of Duluth, MN.

Access: Fly-in/cabin-rental trips to a variety of lakes.

Headquarters: Ignace, Ontario.

Appropriate gear: 6- to 9-wt. rods, floating and sinking-tip lines; 10- or 12-lb. tippets; wire or 50-lb. fluorocarbon shock tippets for pike.

Useful fly patterns: Popping bugs (yellow, black, or chartreuse), Dahlberg Diver, Whitlock's Near 'Nuff Crayfish, Whitlock's Diving Frog, Blanton's Flashtail Whistler, Woolly Buggers, Parachute Adams, Murdich Minnow, beadhead leech, Whitlock's Damsel Nymph, Barr's Meat Whistle, DNA Bush Pig, Stealth Bomber.

Nonresident license: Ontario Outdoors Card, CDN \$9.68; conservation license, CDN \$30.53/8 days. Both can be purchased at Ignace Outposts upon arrival, or online at www.ontario.ca/page/get-outdoors-card.

Lodging/air service: Ignace Outposts, (807) 934-2273, www.ignaceoutposts.com.

Books: *Smallmouth Fly Fishing* by Tim Holschlag.

will hang around both emergent and submerged aquatic vegetation. Floating lines work well, but don't hesitate to try a clear-tip intermediate line around weedbeds. Sometimes the stealthier line makes a difference.

No matter the species, from muscularly acrobatic smallmouth to big pike bullies, Ignace Outposts fishing is the truest of adventures. Take the yellow de Havilland magic carpet ride from Ignace to the lake of your fly-fishing dreams. ➡➡

Alabama-based freelance writer and photographer Pete Elkins is a frequent contributor to Eastern Fly Fishing.



PHOTO BY JON LUKE

James River, VA

In the Shadow of the City

By Chris Malgee

Spring doesn't have to wait for the vernal equinox in Richmond, Virginia. For centuries, the blooming of the aptly named shadbush (*Amelanchier canadensis*) means the river is full of fish. This isn't the normal vision of solitude and serenity that most fly anglers are accustomed to dreaming of. The fall line of the James holds hickory and American shad, almost directly underneath centuries-old tobacco warehouses mixed with financial district skyscrapers. A sunny weekend day means dozens or hundreds of boats jockeying for position in spots where the shad amass before they continue their journey upriver to their final spawning site.

This spring shad run has played an integral role in the history of our nation. Native Americans taught early settlers how to fish for them, and the fortunate timing kept our Revolutionary troops from starving at Valley Forge. On the James River, this history is still evident. Amid modern trappings like the Interstate 95 bridge and towering buildings, signs of the past abound. America's founding river, as the James is known, runs through Richmond, Virginia, former capital of the Confederate States of America, and from the river's banks you can see Hollywood Cemetery (the final resting place for two American presidents and the only Confederate president), brilliant stonework from George Washington's Kanawha Canal, the steeple of Saint John's Church (where Patrick Henry proclaimed, "Give me liberty or give me death!"), and Rocketts Landing, where Abraham Lincoln came to see the city after its burning in 1865.

While Richmond's long history contains both proud achievements and disturbing evil, all play a role in who its citizens are and what the city is today. Along the south side of the James River is an interpretive walking path known as the Richmond Slave Trail. Later in the area's history, the river itself was exploited. From the late 1890s into the 1940s, regionwide commercial fishing harvest of American and hickory shad totaled more than 40 million pounds annually. Documentation was poor at the time, but the James accounted for at least 10 percent of this total. Devastating overfishing, in conjunction with reduced spawning grounds and increased

"Connecticut," who once peered out from the Richmond Braves baseball stadium (The Diamond), now looks over the James River from the reclaimed Lucky Strike building. The former tobacco warehouse has been converted to loft apartments, and Connecticut is where he belongs, as the statue's name stems from the Native American word for "beside the long tidal river" (right)

pollution, strained the populations of both species. The fishery was almost nonexistent by the 1970s, and was closed to commercial harvest in the 1980s.

Pollution control in the last few decades has significantly improved the water quality in what had become a struggling ecosystem. The James River Association (www.jamesriverassociation.org) has been a fantastic steward of the river, and the changes over the last 20 years have been astonishing. In 2012, Richmond was voted America's Best River Town in an *Outside* magazine competition, and the future is bright as residents and businesses begin to understand the importance of sustaining this great resource. Atlantic sturgeon are returning to the river and spawning in areas that have historically been plagued by poor water health; 1989 brought an initiative to begin removing impediments to anadromous species through dam removal, passages, and fish ladders. More than 2,300 river miles attached to Chesapeake Bay have been reopened since this program began, and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has stocked more than 120 million American and hickory shad fry since a 1992 initiative to aid population recovery.

The American shad still has its struggles in Virginia's tidal waters. The James River Association shows populations at only 21 percent of the benchmark number for the species. Virginia law is therefore designed to protect the American

shad and permits only catch-and-release fishing. Hickory shad, on the other hand, are quite abundant; populations have rebounded fantastically since the periods of overfishing, and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission does not limit the number of fish that can be taken. After enough experience, you can tell which shad species you have on your line, but the two easiest ways to identify them are by their jaws and the arch of their backs. American shad do not have a protruding jaw, and they have a high rounded back, giving them more of a football shape. The hickory shad's lower jaw protrudes much like that of a tarpon or largemouth bass, and the back of the fish is less rounded than its underside.

Spring Has Arrived

On a spring day with the promise of unseasonable warmth last year, my cousin Cory and I took my boat out from the aforementioned Rocketts Landing in pursuit of shad. While it



PHOTO BY SOMMER QUILLEN



PHOTO BY SOMMER QUILLEN

Just south of Richmond, new and old merge: the large condo building at Rockets Landing stands next to the shell of a 19th-century steel production facility (above). Richmond and the James River—an area steeped in history—host a visit from replicas of Columbus’s Nina and Pinta. Made in Brazil, these ships are similar to the originals, with the convenient exception of added motors (Notebook).

was still a week or two away from the beginning of the actual spawn, the shad had already begun to arrive for the party.

Cory and I were armed with three fly rods loaded with sinking lines, and a boxful of Woolly Jiggers. The name gives away the pattern, which is simply a standard-issue Woolly Bugger tied on a size 4, 1/32-ounce jig-head hook. The sinking line allows you to cast this heavy fly easily enough, but a big, wide loop is advisable on windy days to keep you from being whipped by the jig head (rest assured, getting clunked in the shoulder by one of these flies as it sails past hurts just as much as a small hook that stays there). Shad don’t eat during their spawning runs, but for reasons unknown they’ll still attack a fly. A variety of colors are effective, though in my experience it does not seem to be as much about the color itself, but instead about more than one color being used.

As Cory and I got under way, I tied on a citrus-colored fly and Cory chose a purple, orange, and white abomination that can only happen when you’ve spent too much time at the vise. We headed to the opposite side of the river and settled in at a spot we were surprised had room for us with so many other anglers out that morning. Only a few casts in, I noticed a fish jumping. I prepare to cast in that direction, but then distinctly saw a line running from the shad’s mouth to the tip of Cory’s rod. Attached to the rod was my cousin, giving me a look that suggested, “Do you need me to show you how to do this?”

don’t know if it’s the action of the retrieve or how often they see the same shad dart sold at every local fishing shop, but both American and hickory shad respond better to flies than to spinning gear here in Richmond. Our success inevitably had the surrounding boats slowly encroaching on our location, so we called it a morning and headed back for an early lunch.

There was little doubt that we would return later in the evening, as shad are rather lucifugous, and the fishing really heats up at sunset. If you have only a short time to be on the water, late evening is the easy choice. At the peak of the migration, don’t be surprised to hook fish on 10 consecutive casts.

With such fast and furious fishing, you may have trouble pulling yourself away even after dark, but safety first: the river can provide boaters with nasty surprises in the form of large rocks just under the surface well away from the fall line.

Estaz Woolly Jigger



PHOTO BY EASTERN FLY FISHING

- Hook:** 1/32-oz. jig head, painted (assorted colors), size 4
- Thread:** Chartreuse 210-denier flat waxed nylon
- Body:** Orange Estaz or large tinsel chenille
- Tail:** Chartreuse marabou

Not Your Daddy’s Trout Stream

This is the tidal section of the James. The downtown Richmond stretch can rise and fall more than 4 feet over the course of a tide change, and the behavior of the shad is affected. As the tide goes out, they

tend to concentrate on points adjacent to deep water, but such locations make them vulnerable to predation by striped bass and huge blue catfish, so the shad are not as willing to chase a lure into the channel. Still, being concentrated in dense schools on the low tide makes shad fishable: find a prime location, get a fly into the school of fish, and hook them easily.


On the opposite end of the spectrum, a strong incoming tide can push shad into water so shallow it would make a bonefish blush. I have never seen a shad tailing, but I have caught them in places that I couldn't have imagined a fish's whole body could be underwater. So on the flood tides, don't hesitate to cast right up against the shore.

Regardless of where the shad are at certain times, the James is much deeper than most fly anglers are accustomed to. Sinking-tip and sinking lines help get the fly down to the fish but create their own challenges. This run peaks in March and April, when the water levels can be quite high. Often a sinking line can bow quite a bit downstream with the current, leaving you without the ability to feel the fish strike. To counteract this, be sure to cast slightly upstream (downstream on a strong incoming tide), and if you use a sinking-tip line, mend the floating portion of the line as the fly enters the water. Immediately point the end of the rod in the direction of the fly, pushing the tip down into or at the water before you, and strip line from this position. Long, fast strips seem to best trigger strikes, and don't be concerned with retrieving too quickly. You cannot make your fly move faster than a shad that has become interested in biting it.

Just Keep Casting

Cory and I eventually made our way back down to the river late that Saturday afternoon. Even with the most prolific action yet to come, the mass of boats had begun to subside and we enjoyed a rarity on the James River: a bit of solitude during the shad run. The towering skyscrapers seemed so far away as the burning sunset colors were reflected on their seemingly infinite windows.

The fishing continued apace, as intense as it had been that morning. We hooked fish after fish, relishing their hard-fighting antics and releasing them quickly when they came to hand. Highly technical angling this was not, but the most important aspect was still there. Amid the bustling city, there was respite in the outdoors, an enjoyable and generally quiet conversation between friends, interrupted only by the somehow still surprising strike of a shad, or by laughter over highly inappropriate jokes.

As the city continues to grow, so do the pressures faced by this legendary waterway. But thanks to careful stewardship and enlightened management, the river seems to be growing healthier, a direction that excites and invigorates me. This fishery was almost lost, and now it appears that future generations will be able to enjoy shad fishing on the James. Many generations ago, Native Americans taught immigrant Europeans how to use this resource, and we have the same responsibility now—it's time to pay it forward on the James so many more fly anglers can appreciate the arrival of spring in Richmond. 

Fly-fishing-addicted shad expert Chris Malgee lives in Virginia. This is his first contribution to Eastern Fly Fishing magazine.

James River NOTEBOOK



PHOTO BY SOMMER QUILLEN

When: March 15–April 30.

Where: Downtown Richmond, VA.

Headquarters: Richmond. **Information:** James River Association, (804) 788-8811, www.jamesriverassociation.org; James River Park System, (804) 646-8911, www.jamesriverpark.org; Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce, (804) 648-1234, www.grcc.com.

Access: Multiple ramps for powerboats, including Dutch Gap, Osborne Landing, and Ancarrow's Landing; for kayaks/canoes, Ancarrow's Landing is close to the prime 2-mi. stretch of water. Shore access at the 14th Street Bridge; wading access (be cautious of higher water) at the Riverside Meadow, Belle Isle, and Reedy Creek locations of the James River Park System.

Appropriate gear: 5- to 7-wt. rods; sinking lines; 4- to 6-ft., 0X–2X leaders.

Useful fly patterns: Estaz Woolly Jigger, Shewey's Shad Comet, Shewey's Shad Shafter, Red and White, Clouser Minnows, Half and Half Deep Minnow, leech patterns, cone- or beadhead Woolly Buggers, bright-colored nymphs.

Necessary accessories: Sunscreen, polarized sunglasses, map of James River that includes channels.

Nonresident license: \$8/1 day, \$21/5 days, \$47/annual.

Fly shops/guides: **Ashland:** Green Top Hunting & Fishing, (804) 550-2188, www.greentophuntfish.com. **Short Pump:** Orvis, (804) 253-9000, www.orvis.com. Knot the Reel World Fly Fishing, (571) 334-4721, www.knotthereelworld.com.

Maps: Stream Map USA, (215) 491-4223, www.streammapusa.com; James River Association Water Trail Map (Lower Section for boating, Middle Section for wading), www.jamesriverassociation.org/enjoy-the-james/james-river-maps; GMCO Pro Series Map of Tidal James River by GMCO Maps & Charts, www.gmcomaps.com.

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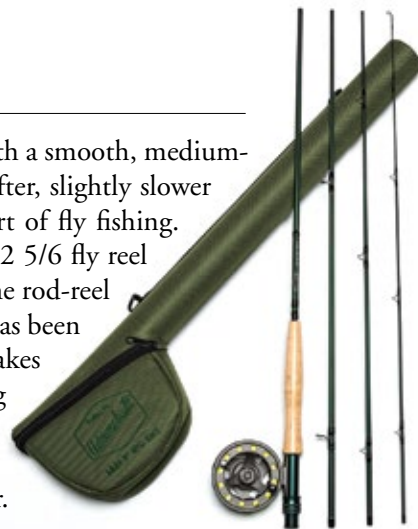
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The Adamsbuilt MMH Fly Combo was designed for anglers of any skill level, with a smooth, medium-fast, progressive-action rod that is very forgiving for novice casters. The rod's softer, slightly slower action creates a tempo that allows beginners to cast easily while learning the art of fly fishing. This four-piece, 9-foot, 5-weight rod comes with a precision-cast aluminum AB2 5/6 fly reel preloaded with a balanced weight-forward 5-weight floating line and backing. The rod-reel combo comes complete in a hard rod case with an attached reel pouch. This rod has been thoroughly tested on waters ranging from small creeks with average-size trout to lakes with big, strong fish, and it has proven to be highly versatile in the hands of beginning anglers and veterans alike. Retailing for only \$199.95, the Adamsbuilt MMH Fly Combo is perfect for anglers who want a quality rod and reel for a great price. To purchase, visit www.adamsbuiltfishing.com, or see your nearest Adamsbuilt dealer.



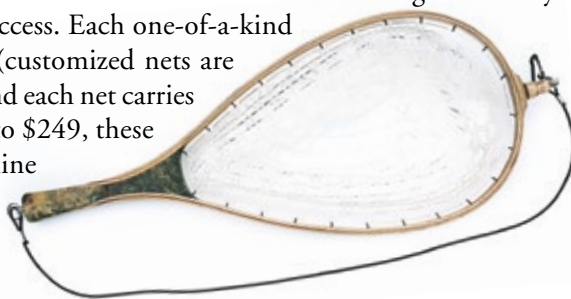
Varivas 2600 Series Hooks

Varivas 2600 Series hooks are designed to efficiently hook and handle both saltwater game fish and large, powerful freshwater quarry. The 2600 Series hooks, available in three styles, feature unique bends and optimized point angles, which, combined with wide-gap designs and Varivas V-cut points, ensure minimal resistance during the hook set and solid, reliable hook penetration. The 2600V, available in sizes 4/0 through 1, is for salt water and is made from high-power carbon steel. The 2600 ST-V (sizes 4/0 through 8) is a heavy-wire stainless steel version of the 2600V. The 2610 ST-V (sizes 2/0 through 6) is a long-shank version of the 2600ST-V, ideal for poppers and other designs where shorter-shank hooks might lead to short strikes. Varivas 2600 series hooks are available through Whitewater Flies, www.whitewaterflies.com.



Bitterroot Nets

Form and function coalesce in beautiful handcrafted Bitterroot nets, each one a work of art that exhibits extreme attention to detail. The burl handles are submersed in an acrylic stabilizing fluid in a vacuum chamber. When the vacuum is released, the fluid is pulled into the wood, filling all of the pores. The handles are then heated to harden the acrylic in the wood. This process not only strengthens the handles, but prevents the wood from absorbing moisture. The stabilization process also allows Bitterroot to dye some of the burls to create unique patterns. Some handles are embellished with semiprecious stones, such as turquoise or malachite. Even hand-tied flies can be inlaid when just the right bark inclusion is found in a burl. The Stream Nets also include Bitterroot's built-in Magnetic Carry System, which allows the net to be carried handle down for easy access. Each one-of-a-kind net includes your choice of a soft nylon or clear rubber net bag (customized nets are available). The Bitterroot lineup comprises four different models, and each net carries a lifetime guarantee on the workmanship and finish. At just \$169 to \$249, these stunning nets sell for little more than comparable-size production-line nets, and each is one of a kind. Nets can be personalized with laser engraving for a small fee, or a name or phrase can be added for free. For more information and to order, visit www.bitterrootnets.com.



Fenwick World Class Fly Rods

The new Fenwick World Class fly rods (\$299.95 to \$349.95) feature the latest strength-to-weight construction and technology, with fast-action blanks built with 3M Powerlux 500 technology and composites, a process unique to Fenwick. A high concentration of nano-size silica spheres is combined with high-modulus graphite fibers to create extremely lightweight and powerful rod blanks. The rods also feature secure, exotic hardwood reel seats. The butt cap is laser-engraved with the Fenwick logo. The 11 models range in length from 7 feet 6 inches to 9 feet, with weight classes from the 3-weight for trout and panfish to the tarpon-class 12-weight. All World Class fly rods are four-piece and delivered with custom Fenwick cloth-covered rod tube and bag. For more details, to purchase, or to find your nearest dealer, visit www.fenwickfishing.com.



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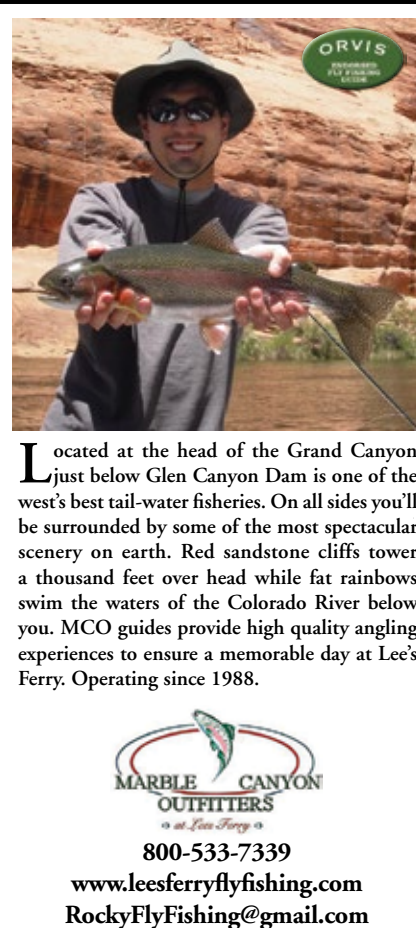


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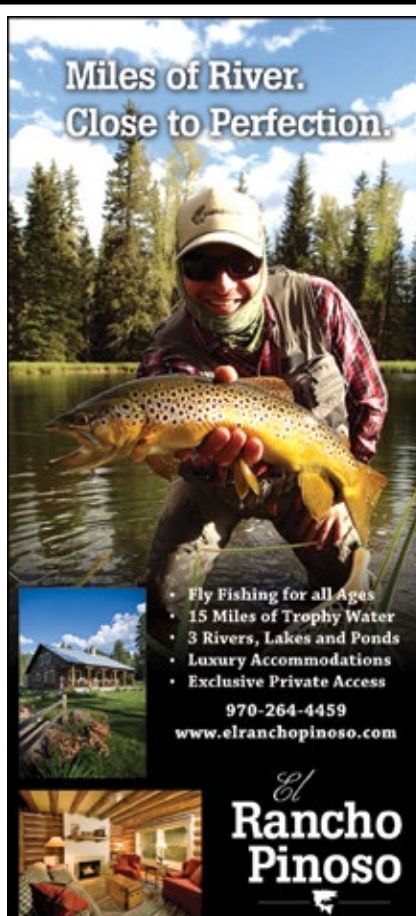
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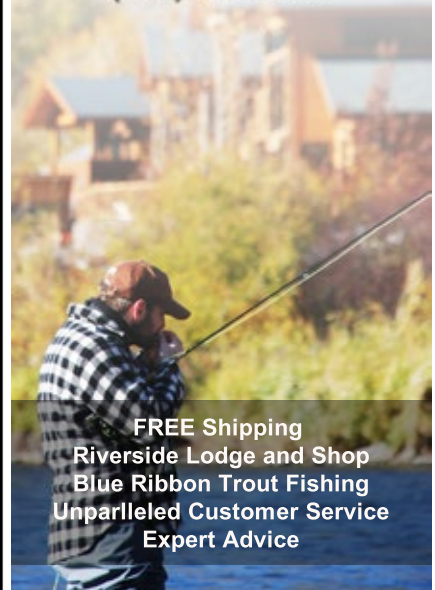
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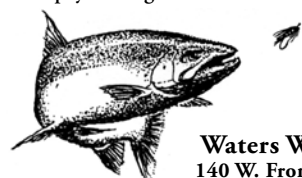
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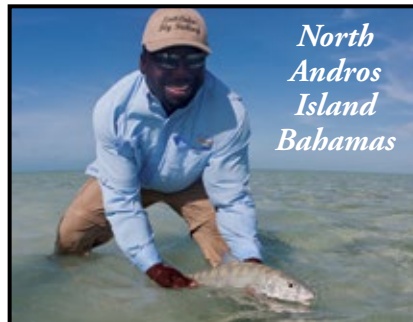
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Trout Town

Missoula, Montana *By Michael Hamilton*



PHOTO COURTESY OF TAYLOR ROBBINS FOR DESTINATION MISSOULA

Missoula, Montana, may offer visiting anglers too darn many choices. Do you just want to fish? No problem. Five legendary trout streams are located within an hour's drive of town. How about day hiking? Easy. Seven designated wilderness areas are close by. Need a beer? Sweet! Six local breweries pour some of the best microbrews in the West (and you can often find anglers and guides sharing a beer and telling tall tales about their day on the water). Maybe you have something more urbane in mind? No worries. A vibrant, active downtown scene on the banks of the Clark Fork buzzes with coffeehouses, pubs, cafés, boutiques, music venues, nightlife, and more.

"Think of Missoula as an adventurous good friend that won't let you down," says Mayor John Engen. "Old-fashioned Mayberry meets outdoor cool is the way I like to describe Missoula today."

Prior to 1992, Missoula was largely off the angling radar. But Hollywood changed that. With the release of the film version of Norman Maclean's novell, *A River Runs Through It*, Montana and Missoula boomed. First, the local fly-fishing industry saw an immediate eye-popping jump of 60 percent in retail sales.

Second, droves of veteran and rookie fly fishers descended on Montana and Missoula proper, where the story was set.

"As far as driving tourism, there's never been another movie that can touch it," says Tia Troy, public relations and communication manager for Glacier Country Regional Tourism Commission.



PHOTO BY STEVE MAEDER

Need a beer? Sweet! Six local breweries pour some of the best microbrews in the West.

Personally, I've always wondered if the film's director, veteran actor Robert Redford, ever imagined the impact his film would have on the fly-fishing industry. Fortunately, Brian Wimmer, a fishing comrade, actor, longtime friend of the Redford family, and fly-fishing ambassador to Utah's Sundance Mountain Resort (founded by Redford in 1969), posed my question to Redford.

"No, I did not," replied Redford, "but it was a pleasant surprise."

Indeed, sometimes unexpected results spring from creative genius.

Today, Missoula's population has grown to more than 69,000, almost a 20 percent increase since the release of *A River Runs Through It*. "The city has never lost its vibe," quips Engen. Winter ski areas, golf courses, mountain biking, river surfing (it looks real scary), festivals, fairs, and, yes, at least nine months of superb fly fishing, says Engen, continue to make Missoula a hip destination and true trout mecca.

If you need more ammo to angle, consider this: within a 60-mile radius of Missoula, there are more than 300 miles of floatable water, with an almost endless selection of stretches to explore. Four celebrated rivers—the Blackfoot, Clark Fork, Rock Creek, and the main stem of the Bitterroot, along with its East and West Forks—surround Missoula to form a unique concentration of history, geography, geology, and legendary fly fishing.

And trout-fishing opportunities abound in those seven wilderness areas: Bob Marshall, Mission Mountains, Anaconda–Pintler, Rattlesnake, Scapegoat, Selway–Bitterroot, and Welcome Creek are each within 100 miles of Missoula. On top of all that, numerous creeks, such as Blodgett, Fish, Tin Cup, No Name, North Fork of the Bitterroot, Gold, Montaur, Lolo, and Skalkaho, rush from the high country or meander through verdant valleys. Only a handful of guides and locals fish these tiny streams rich with native westslope cutthroat trout and wild German brown trout.

If lake fishing is more your speed, options abound. Flathead, Georgetown, Seeley, Como, Holland, and Browns Lake, as well as Frenchtown Pond, are all within easy striking distance from Missoula.

Plenty of strong fish, heavy hatches, and optimum flows (in nondrought years) combine to provide the waters around Missoula and the surrounding towns of Ovando, Florence, Hamilton, and Darby with some of the most diverse fly fishing in the Lower 48. Served by five major airlines, Missoula is easy to reach from anywhere in the country.

"You could spend a lifetime and not touch all of the trout water around Missoula," chuckles Dan Sheppard,



Winter ski areas, golf courses, mountain biking, river surfing (it looks real scary), festivals, fairs, and, yes, at least nine months of superb fly fishing, says Engen, continue to make Missoula a hip destination and true trout mecca.

former managing partner of Missoula's Grizzly Hackle Fly Shop. "Fly fishing is absolutely central to this community. It's a way of life, plain and simple."

Blackfoot River

With headwaters along the Continental Divide above Lincoln, Montana, the Blackfoot River tumbles, glides, and meanders for 130 miles before it joins the Clark Fork about 5 miles east of Missoula. In the past decade, the Blackfoot has emerged from a 100-year legacy of hard-rock mining to become "a bullish, badass fishery," in the words of longtime Grizzly Hackle Fly Shop guide Matt Bryn. After runoff, usually by the third week of June, it's game on. Marauding trout crush huge Salmonflies that must look like Big Macs. Use 9-foot leaders, stout 2X or 3X tippets, and hold on. River Junction to Russell Gates, a distance of 12.4 miles, is the perfect float. In midsummer, the Blackfoot often hosts a spruce moth hatch.

"Big trout will move 6 to 7 feet off the bottom to explode all over your imitation Spruce," notes Sheppard. He likes Denny's Spruce Moth, a size 12 or 14 pattern designed by local angler Denny Waln.

In addition to all the summertime fun, many anglers love to fish the Blackfoot in October. Chucking streamers tight to the banks often results in vicious strikes; in late afternoon, switch to an October Caddis pattern for an exciting finish to a great day of fly fishing. Access river-wide is excellent. Montana State Route 200 from Bonner follows much of the river, and along the 26-mile Blackfoot River Corridor alone, from Johnsrud Park easterly to Russell Gates Memorial, there are 16 public access sites.



PHOTO BY STEVE MAEDER

Clark Fork

The Clark Fork begins near the Continental Divide and meanders 310 miles through vast mountain valleys before emptying into Lake Pend Oreille in northern Idaho. This lengthy river is best considered as two different sections: above Rock Creek and below Rock Creek. The upper stretch from Drummond (50 miles southeast of Missoula on Interstate 90) to Rock Creek is a sleeper. Mostly overlooked by anglers because of its sparser trout populations, this 30-plus-mile section nonetheless holds big browns that will inhale streamers or crunch hoppers in late summer. Notably, both westslope cutthroat and rainbows have repopulated this upper reach after the Milltown Dam came down in 2010.

"Taking the dam out was a common cause that connected with the community," says Karen Knudsen, executive director of the Clark Fork Coalition. "Today,

the river sustains and inspires us."

Below the Rock Creek confluence, pods of 16- to 20-inch cutthroat, rainbows, and cuttbows are common. The fish circle foam lines and feed on abundant mayfly and caddisfly hatches that start in June and run well into October. I've seen 40 heads sipping PMDs. It's enough to make your knees shake. The Clark Fork also hosts a prolific spring *Skwala* stonefly hatch, which some anglers say is even stronger than the better-known *Skwala* hatch on the Bitterroot. Mid-April fishing can be lights out on a cloudy day. Be forewarned: Clark Fork trout are acrobats and bulldogs. Use a 5-weight rod for dries and nymphs, and at least a 6-weight for fishing streamers.

A popular float runs 5 miles from the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Sha-Ron Fishing Access Site (FAS), through downtown Missoula to the Silver Park boat landing near Osprey Stadium. In the case of Missoula, a river does run through it—a very good river.

Downstream from Missoula, the fishing just keeps getting better. The waters below Albion as well as through the towns of Superior and Saint Regis and westward to the river's confluence with the Flathead River could easily justify a feature story all its own. The bottom line is that the Clark Fork offers some of the best match-the-hatch dry-fly fishing in the West.

Bitterroot River

Locals like to say, "If God



PHOTO BY JON LUKE

created a trout stream, it's the Bitterroot."

From March to November, fish rise to a smorgasbord of hatching insects, making the Bitterroot a true dry-fly paradise. *Skwala* stoneflies hatch in March and April. Cast size 8 or 10 *Skwala* dry-fly patterns on 7.5-foot leaders with 3X tippet to hard-charging, 16- to 20-inch-plus cutthroat, rainbow, and brown trout that seem as hungry as a hostage after a winter diet of tiny midges.

Be prepared to share. The hatch uncorks a frenzy of eager fly anglers. Little Brown Stoneflies and Western March Browns hatch on the heels of the *Skwala* stoneflies. Some years, a Mother's Day Caddis hatch occurs just before the spring runoff that usually begins in mid-May.

"I like to start fishing the main stem the end of the first week of July when flows are typically under 2,000 cubic feet per second," states Sean O'Brien, owner of Osprey Outfitters in Hamilton, a 40-minute drive from Missoula. O'Brien calls July on the Bitterroot "stonefly madness" because several species hatch river-wide.

Westslope cutthroat dominate the upper river south of Hamilton. The heavily braided middle stretch, from Tucker Crossing FAS 6 miles north to Bell Crossing FAS, boasts rainbows, browns, and cutthroat to 20 inches. From Stevensville to Missoula, the Bitterroot widens. Abundant hatches of stoneflies, mayflies, caddisflies, and terrestrials make the

Bitterroot a great option for spring, summer, and fall—and, says O'Brien, "Streamers in October can be dynamite."

The Bitterroot River's two main tributaries—the East and West Forks—also offer fine angling prospects. The East Fork is mainly a walk-and-wade fishery, but it is floatable in early spring from the town of Sula (pop. 37 in the 2010



census) north. If you seek solitude, rugged scenery, and lots of 12- to 16-inch cutthroat and brown trout eating dry flies, the East Fork is definitely worth exploring.

The West Fork is born high up in the Bitterroot Mountains, close to the Montana-Idaho border. Fed by three tributaries, the river flows into Painted Rocks Reservoir.

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Missoula INSIDER

Local intel: Glacier Country Regional Tourism Commission, (800) 338-5072, www.glaciermt.com; Destination Missoula, (406) 541-9465, www.destinationmissoula.org; Missoula Chamber of Commerce, (800) 847-4868, www.visitmt.com; Missoula Downtown Association, (406) 543-4238, www.missouladowntown.com.

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Fly shops/guides: Grizzly Hackle Fly Shop, (406) 721-8996, www.grizzlyhackle.com; Osprey Outfitters (Hamilton), (406) 363-1000, www.ospreyoutfittersflyshop.com; John Perry's Montana Fly Fishing, (406) 370-9183, www.johnperryflyfishing.com; The Kingfisher, (406) 721-6141, www.kingfisherflyshop.com; The Missoulia Angler Fly Shop, (406) 728-7766, www.missouliaangler.com; Blackfoot River Outfitters, (406) 542-7411, www.blackfootriver.com; Clear Creek Outfitters, (406) 370-7039, www.clearcreekoutfitters.com; Montana Trout Outfitters, (406) 544-3516, www.mttroutguides.com; Missoula on the Fly, (406) 360-7373, www.missoulamontanaflyfishing.com; Missoula River Lodge, (877) 327-7878, www.montanaflyfishingguide.com; Clark Fork Trout, (406) 382-0161, www.clarkforktrout.com; Trout Bums, (406) 825-6146, www.rockcreektroutbums.com.

The best fishing is the 23-mile stretch from below the reservoir to the confluence with the main stem of the Bitterroot. Access is good. Four miles south of Darby on US Highway 93, turn right onto West Fork Road, which follows the river to the dam. During the Salmonfly and Golden Stonefly madness of June and July, it's a run-and-gun show fishing from rafts or drift boats, and 30-plus-fish dry-fly days are not uncommon. As flows diminish in mid- to late summer, the West Fork becomes a consistent walk-and-wade fishery for the balance of the season.

Rock Creek

Rock Creek is in a league of its own. This famous creek is everything a classic free-stone stream should be, offering excellent fly fishing for rainbow, cutthroat, and brown trout in a wild and scenic setting. Two forks merge to form the main stem near Philipsburg. Flowing 52 miles, mainly through the Lolo National Forest about 30 minutes from Missoula, Rock Creek is simply a perfect trout stream.

"The creek boasts trout populations of 2,200 fish per mile. It offers anglers of all skill levels miles of deep pools, big boulders, fast currents, riffles, and more pocket water than an angler could fish in a lifetime," beams John Perry, guide, outfitter, lodge owner, and avid outdoorsman.

Perry started guiding on Montana's rivers in the early 1980s. His fly patterns, such as the Bugmeister, Transformer, Nightmare, Hymen



PHOTO BY STEVE MAEDER

Hopper, and Congo Caddis, have made him something of a local legend. Perry begins fishing the creek in early spring, before runoff, casting stonefly nymph patterns, such as Pat's Rubber Legs or Bitch Creek, tight to the banks.

"We can get away with short leaders and 2X tippet," he notes.

In June, the creek's most famous hatch takes flight. Perry says the sky can be literally clouded with thousands of giant Salmonflies. "If we get an early runoff, the dry fishing can be epic, unbelievable really, with fish to the fly almost every cast."

As the summer flows begin to drop, Rock Creek becomes a premier walk-and-wade fishery. Worth noting is the creek's spruce moth hatch in August. Use light-colored down-wing patterns, such as a size 10 or 12 Elk Hair Caddis. Skittering the fly across the surface and letting it swing will draw explosive strikes.

Fall fishing is a mixed bag of top-water and subsurface tactics. On a cloudy day, Blue-Winged Olives are abundant. If you see rising fish, park your rig and walk the creek below the rises.

"You can pick 'em off casting your way back upstream," Perry notes.

During their fall spawning season, big browns will slam streamers cast tight to the banks on the 10 miles above the creek's mouth. Public access along Rock Creek is excellent, although a partially paved road that runs the length of the creek can be gritty and bumpy. A word of caution: watch out for mama moose. The temperamental animals are common along the creek.

Trout Town Beckons

I believe that fly fishing connects us with our true selves. It exposes our feelings, many of them raw, and leaves us exhilarated, peaceful, and happier than we have been at most other times in our lives. The opportunity to plug in to the natural beauty and tranquility of a trout stream and tune out the cacophony of everyday life is only a cast away in Missoula, truly one of the continent's great trout towns. 🐟

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In the Vise

Silvey's Dragon Popper/By Dennis Collier



Every now and then a fly pattern comes along that shouts “Fish me,” and that is exactly what Brian Silvey’s Dragon Popper exclaimed the first time I saw it. I immediately imagined myself in a float tube, prowling along the cattail-lined perimeter of a favorite lake or one of the many warm-water bass ponds that dot the high plains region along Colorado’s Front Range not far from my home. Blackbirds scold my intrusion with raucous chatter as I softly cast and twitch this enticing adult dragonfly look-alike against the reeds, holding my breath in anticipation of the explosive surface strike I know is about to come from one of the resident fish. No cellphones, no rush-hour traffic; the honey-do list has been put on hold. It is just me and the fish—life is good.

For fly tiers, this pattern presents a little more of a challenge, than say, a Gold Ribbed Hare’s Ear, but that is also part of the fun. First, shape a small 0.25-inch-diameter piece of hard white foam or balsa wood, cutting a shallow slant to the front, and cutting a groove in the bottom to accept the hook. Epoxy the head onto the hook shank immediately behind the eye, then, as the epoxy starts to harden, align the head so it sits exactly on top of the shank. After the head is secured to the hook, use acrylic hobby paints to color the entire head blue and set it aside to dry; next, add a black stripe on the top.

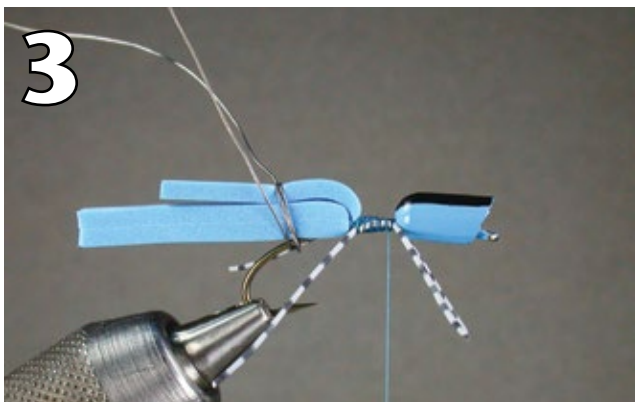
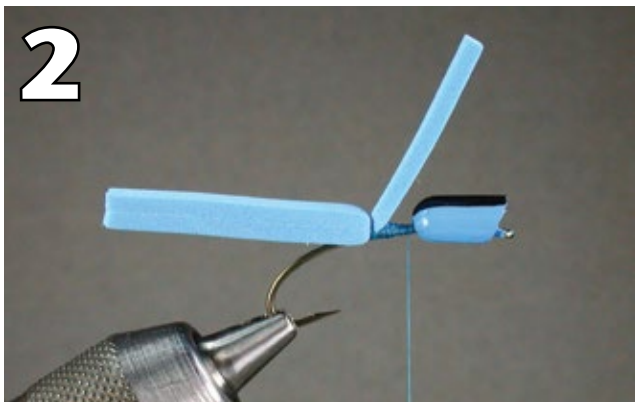
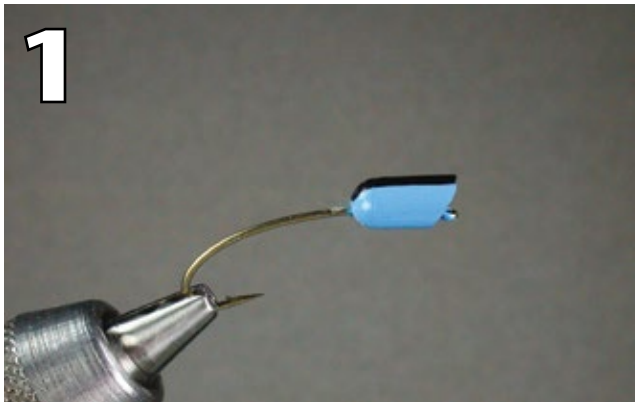
For the abdomen, cut a 4-inch-long strip of 2 mm sheet foam about 5/16-inch wide. Apply superglue to the center section of the strip, then fold it over to double the foam thickness. Leave at least 0.5 inch of unglued foam tags for the back and a tie-in area. Use a very sharp pair of scissors (such as Dr. Slick Razor) or a new razor blade to carefully trim the corners off all four sides of the foam, slightly rounding the body. Rainy’s round foam damself/dragonfly bodies (available in blue only) can be substituted if you choose to skip this step.

Here’s another 50-cent tip: make the segmentation and back markings after the fly is completed to avoid smearing the ink during the tying process.

Dragonflies belong to the order Odonata, are widespread, and come in such a wide variety of colors and sizes that I suspect angler-entomologists will probably do a little home water research, then tie their exact imitations accordingly. That said, I seriously doubt the average opportunistically feeding fish is going to morph into ultra-selective mode and pass up such a delicious-looking mouthful of insect when it comes dancing into its field of vision—exact match or not. If you prefer to buy rather than tie, Umpqua Feather Merchants currently offers this pattern in both blue and tan. Either way, this fly has a day of fishing fun written all over it.

Materials

Hook:	TMC 200R, size 6
Thread:	Dark-blue UNI-Thread, size 6/0
Head:	Hard foam or balsa wood, shaped and painted
Thorax:	Dark blue dry-fly dubbing of choice
Abdomen/ wing case:	Blue 2 mm foam
Wing:	Smoke Super Hair and pearl Flashabou
Legs:	Small barred blue Centipede Legs
Indicator:	Orange 2 mm foam



Step 1: As described in the text, epoxy the head onto the hook shank, ensuring that it sits exactly on top of the hook. Paint the head blue and allow to dry. Next, paint a narrow black stripe on top. Check your work to make sure the hook eye is clear of paint.

Step 2: Tie in the foam abdomen where the two unglued layers separate. Trim the bottom half of the foam just short of the head, then secure with several thread wraps. Leave at least 0.25-inch of space between the head and foam tie-in point to allow for the legs and wings.

Step 3: Fold the top piece of foam back and secure it out of the way with a few loose wraps of lead wire. Tie in a single strand of Centipede Legs material on each side of the hook shank, separating the legs the distance between the head and foam to accommodate the wing and thorax dubbing.

Step 4: Trim a 6-inch hank of Super Hair and lay two strands of Pearl Flashabou on top of the material. Grasp the wing at its midpoint and tie in with several X wraps of thread. Do not trim the wings at this point because you'll want to grip the ends of the material while making the black bars.

Step 5: Fold the foam back to the front and secure with a few thread wraps right behind the head. Trim very close. Tie in and trim a small piece of orange indicator foam. Whip-finish and cement. Using a razor blade, cut a small vertical notch out of the butt end of the abdomen. Finally, using both fine and wide-tipped indelible black markers, band the foam and wings as shown in the photograph. Do a final trim of the wings to the overall length of the fly.

Step 6: This is the tan version of the fly. Note the glued yellow foam insert in the butt end of the abdomen.

In the Vise

Floating Dragonfly Nymph/By Dennis Collier



Materials

Hook:	TMC 2302, size 6; or TMC 300 or 9395, sizes 4–6
Thread:	Olive UNI-Thread, size 6/0
Tail:	Olive-dyed grizzly marabou
Abdomen:	Olive-dyed deer hair, spun
Legs:	Olive-dyed grizzly marabou
Thorax:	Olive Sow Scud dubbing
Wing case:	Dark olive Swiss straw
Eyes:	Black pre-formed plastic or bead chain

Roughly 40 miles due west of “Wherethehellarewe,” Wyoming, lies a nutrient-rich, high plains lake, harboring a population of trout grown obese from a food base the likes of which would make the lunchtime spread at an Amish barn-raising look meager by comparison. For the fly-fishing student of entomology, it was a classroom of profound learning opportunity.

Among the many aquatic insect species found in lakes of this type, dragonflies are probably secondary to more prolific inhabitants, such as damselflies and Chironomids. But due to their size, dragonfly nymphs provide a lot of calories per bite for the fish. In the aforementioned Wyoming lake, I’ve captured and photographed robust dragonfly nymph specimens well over 2 inches long.

Dragonflies belong to the order Odonata; they are the Vikings of the aquatic landscape, attacking and devouring their neighbors without reservation. Damselflies, scuds, caddisflies, Chironomids, *Callibaetis* nymphs, and even small baitfish are all fair game for this ambush predator with a ravenous appetite. Dragonflies, in turn, are fair game for finned inhabitants sharing the same water.

The floating dragonfly nymph pattern presented here was first made public in Randall Kaufmann’s book *The Fly Tyers Nymph Manual*, published in 1986. Today’s commercially available Orvis pattern has been slightly altered from the original tie to encourage neutral buoyancy. How and where the fly is intended to be fished should determine how you tie your own flies.

John Shewey, editor in chief of this magazine, offers this sage tactical advice garnered from years of personal experience: “Back in the 1980s, a buddy of mine by the name of Brent Snow put me onto a deadly and fascinating tactic. On Oregon’s super-fertile Davis Lake, during June when the dragonflies hatched in big numbers, he would use fast-sinking lines and leaders of about 15 feet with the Floating Dragonfly Nymph. In the ’90s, Davis Lake hit its best-ever conditions with ’bows to 10 pounds. Fishing by watercraft, Forrest Maxwell and I would use Brent’s trick: cast as far as we could and allow the line to sink to the bottom while the dragonfly nymph remained afloat. Water ranged from 10 to 20 feet deep, so when the line sank deep enough you could see it start tugging at the floating fly, and that was the signal to start the retrieve: fast, 6-inch strips—three or four in succession—then a pronounced pause. In effect, we were retrieving the fly downward, and the trout loved it!”

There you have it from some gentlemen who have paid their dues and know their stuff.

My personal experience of fishing dragonfly nymphs is more closely related to small Colorado and Wyoming lakes with a lot of shoreline weed growth. I use a float- ing or perhaps an intermediate line and work the fly as close to the vegetated banks as is feasible. Big fish who know where the feedbag is located will smash a Floating Dragonfly Nymph that swims into view. It’s all a matter of matching your tactics to the water being fished.

Step 1: To form the tail, measure and tie in two grizzly marabou plumes at a point above the hook barb. A fairly heavy thread is appropriate here as you will be spinning deer hair in the following step (after finishing step 3 you can switch to a lighter-weight thread).



Step 2: Clip, clean, and trim the tips of a pencil-size clump of deer hair. Tie in the hair just ahead of the tail tie-in point, and flare it with thread pressure. Pack the hair to the rear as tightly as possible; repeat this process until deer hair covers two-thirds of the hook shank.



Step 3: Whip-finish the thread, and clip off. Remove the hook from the vise and, using a new double-edged razor blade (very carefully), begin carefully trimming the abdomen to shape. I like to start by flattening the bottom, and then, by bending the blade to a concave shape, start trimming the top. Finish by trimming the sides.



Step 4: Reattach the thread and tie in two measured grizzly marabou plumes on each side of the hook, immediately in front of the deer hair. Tie in a slip of Swiss straw right behind the hook eye, then attach a set of dumbbell eyes on top of the Swiss straw. Superglue the eyes to secure them.



Step 5: Apply a generous amount of dubbing to the thorax section between the eyes and the deer-hair abdomen. Pull the Swiss straw back and make two or three thread wraps immediately behind the eyes, then bring the thread under the thorax and make a second tie-down right in front of the legs. Whip-finish and cement.



Step 6: This is a side view showing the flattened bottom and hook-gap clearance. Note the continuity of body shape and proportion. Orvis uses bead-chain eyes on their commercial patterns to add a bit of weight and encourage neutral buoyancy.



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

Fish Tales

Ask Me No Questions/By Alan Lier

During the never-ending summer of my eighth year, my family took a long vacation to Missouri to visit relatives. I vaguely remember motel swimming pools, fried restaurant catfish, and miles of hardwood forests, but a cheap wooden plaque with an inscribed poem in South Dakota's famed Wall Drug Store is what I remember most:

*I ask a simple question.
The truth I only wish.
Are all fishermen liars?
Or do only liars fish?*

I have contemplated this poem for many years. Most fly fishermen, I've discovered, are decent sorts. But a few have come to equate others' perception of their casting and catching prowess as an indicator of their overall goodness, intelligence, and masculinity; therefore, they tell lies to maintain their image. That is not to say members of the female species are

above stretching a fish's length by a few inches or developing convenient forgetfulness when describing a particularly successful angling technique, but I've found women to be generally more candid.

Personally, I have never deviated from "the truth and nothing but the truth" in my fishing revelations. Oh, perhaps I overestimated the length of that big Crab Creek brown trout or conveniently left out some important details about the fly on which I caught so many big pike. Perhaps I even told my friends I caught and released "my limit," neglecting to tell them my personal limit is often less than the legal limit as stated in the fishing regulations. But never, *never*, have I looked a fellow fly fisherman in the eye and given him false information—until just recently, when peer pressure on a fishing trip to Devils Lake, North Dakota, caused me to lie.

Four friends and I had hit some terrible weather. It was raining, and the wind was howling. It was much too

miserable to fish from our boat, but rather than sit in our motel, we found some sheltered water underneath a bridge and fished from shore with big flies, some of which were tipped with a small piece of worm. Glory be: we caught big walleyes and northern pike on every other cast.

"We need to come back here tomorrow," one of my friends said. "So don't tell anyone at the cleaning station back at the motel where we were fishing or what we were using."

With our honey hole's close proximity to the highway, he was afraid it would be overrun with less worthy anglers the next day.

Back at the motel, I lugged our bulging cooler into the cleaning station and put it on the floor. Four fishermen from Ontario, Canada, were already there filleting an anemic batch of walleyes.

"Where in the world did you get those beauties?" one of them asked when I raised the cooler lid.

"Pelican Bay," I

lied quickly. "On leeches over rocky bottoms."

The next morning, our honey hole was not producing. Our catch for the entire day was four small walleyes and two small pike. With no little embarrassment, I entered the cleaning station back at the motel, and there was my Ontario friend. This time, he and his group were working on a prodigious pile of walleyes, all over 2 pounds.

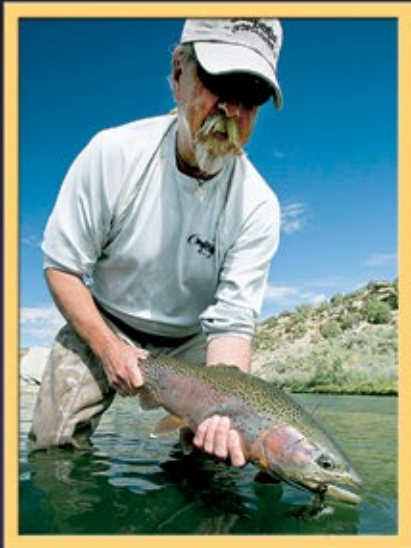
"Nice fish," I said, trying to show less envy than I was feeling. "Where'd you find 'em?"

"Right where you told us!" he enthused. "Pelican Bay. Leeches. We sure appreciate the advice!"

Most likely it was a great example of irony and just deserts, but I still wonder if he was just a better liar than I am.



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



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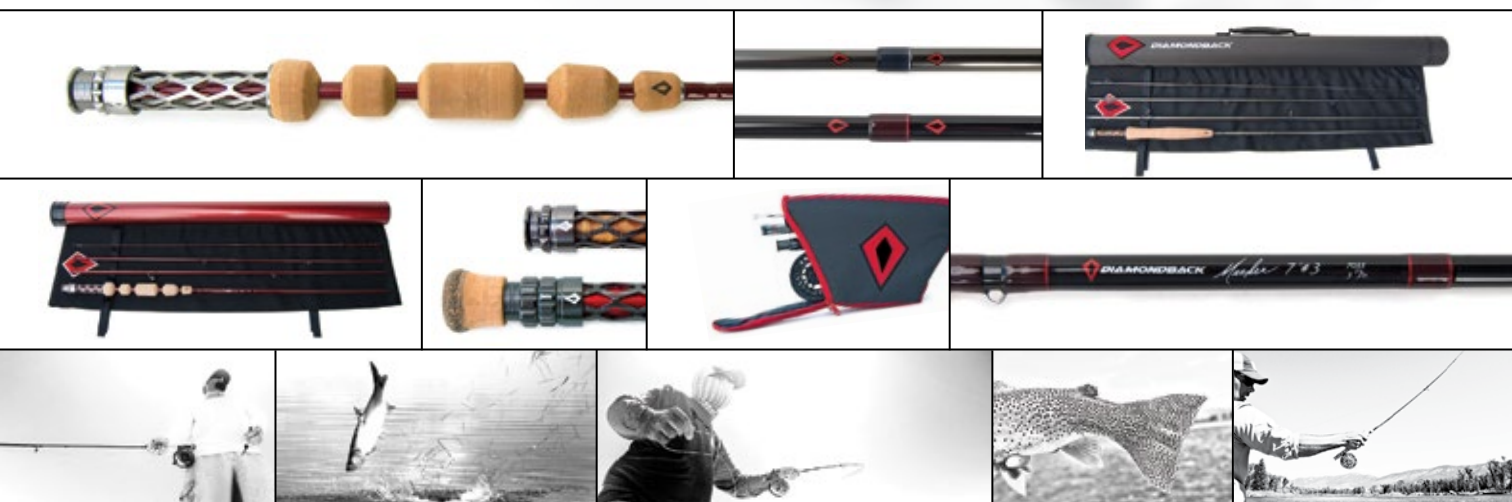
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