

July 11, 1985

Paul Schullery
414 West Chinook Street
Livingston, Montana
59047
1-406-222-2541

Datus Proper
1914 North Johnson Street
Arlington, Virginia
22207

Dear Datus:

I was glad to hear you got to fish the creek in June, and I will look forward to fishing with you when you're out. I'll try to remember to bring my camera, maybe get some pictures of the master in action.

We fished on July 4, and we had a spell of very hot, bright weather then. Thermometers on the banks here in Livingston reached 100 or more three or four days in a row. We did well that day. I hooked nine and landed five, nothing over about 14", though I hooked a monster for a minute - rolled up like a big bass. Dianne hooked and landed two, both browns, 16½" and about 10". The first was a big thrill for her, because her casting is gradually improving, and she got him on a #20 white poly spinner, 5x. He was all over the creek. She got him when we first arrived (it was just the two of us), about 10:00 in the morning at the first long straight stretch just above the property line. I had just minutes before caught a nice rainbow at the same spot where you first showed me a fish, then we moved up into that long straight stretch and a number of fish were rising.

The water looked up a little, and the weeds were really come in since our earlier trip. It is going to be interesting to see how the creek water level is affected by the low water in the rivers. On July 3 the Livingston Enterprise said that the West Gallatin was actually dried up below Manhattan, and thousands of fish were killed. The Yellowstone is much lower than usual, but it doesn't seem to be as threatened yet as other streams in the state.

As you know I don't know many mayflies on sight, but I can tell you what I saw and what it looked like. There were rises the entire time we were there, until about 4:00 in the afternoon. We never had trouble finding fish working. Intermittently we saw a small, pale mayfly, 16 or 18, that looked much like the Pale Morning Dun in the color section of Selective Trout. I'd swear I saw a few tricos, or whatever that is that is exactly the size of a trico and has the half-black, half-white body. I also caught a larger mayfly, about a #14, that was very much like the speckled spinner in Selective Trout. There were other things on the water, though we never saw the concentration of nymphs in the water that we did last time. The two best flies were your beetle and a #20 white poly spinner, which worked in the afternoon when they were taking something I couldn't locate.

Actually the smaller mayflies were more yellow than the Pale Morning Dun, and I suppose that if I had seen them in the east I would have called them sulfurs.

Datus, the fish seemed much more spooky than ever before. I suppose it could have been the brightness, but I frequently spooked them with the line before it even hit the water. I hadn't had that experience, at least not so often, before at the creek. We could not hope to hook more than one fish in a stretch, because if we got him on he'd put the others down. Often they'd be spooked by us from a distance I had thought was safe. All the fish would boil around, some would come running past us. It was unnerving, and unexpected. Does that happen often? I don't think I'd ever put so many fish down just by putting a fly over them with a good cast. I'd never seen such nervous fish except on the Battenkill. They didn't seem as bad in the morning.

We did eat the brown from that earlier trip. It wasn't bad, but it wasn't really good either.

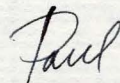
I saw a nice whitetail buck, and the usual smaller animals.

You might think I'm not properly plugged in if I tell you this, but you're the only other person who might recognize it, so I'll tell you anyway. On two or three occasions, when a fish swam past me very fast after having been spooked upstream (or just because he was going somewhere), I think I heard him. There was a fluttering noise, almost like the wings of a small bird, and it only occurred those few times fish went past. They were swimming very fast, and their tails were really going. Have you ever heard that? I don't remember ever hearing it before, and the first time I heard it then I didn't really make the connection between the noise and the trout. After a couple times I realized what it was.

Did I tell you that I have an arrangement with the folks at the Museum that they are hiring me to write a history of American fly fishing. The arrangement was just worked out, and I'm getting started. Nick Lyons will publish it. I hope to have it written by this time next year, which is a lot of work but it's a good project, one I've wanted for quite a while. It's not the sort of thing that would interest a commercial publisher without backing from an institution, so a deal like this had to be worked out.

Thanks for your letter, and let's get in touch when you're out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul".

Paul Schullery

1914 N. Johnson St.
Arlington, VA 22207

Sept. 19, 1985

Dear Paul,

I enjoyed Mountain Time more than anything I've read in a long time. Kind of thought I would, so I waited till I was in a good mood and consumed it with a bottle of stout.

In my file is a short list of titles (and names of pointing dogs) I'd like to use some day. You beat me to one of them. Remarkable coincidence, when you consider how many titles are used every year.

There is one issue on which I'd like to convert you, though I expect we'll have to agree to disagree. I wish you'd object passionately to the idea of closing the Park(s) to fishing. For me, that would be the end of the world, and perhaps it really would be, in a sense. At least it would be the end of a world I've known and suspect to be superior to the next world.

My bias is obvious, but I don't actually have to fish in the Park myself now (and haven't for a few years). Sometimes I can rise above biases. I've known and loved motorcycles but would argue for excluding them from all wild areas, for exactly the reasons you cite.

Fishing, I'd argue, is about the highest and best use of the parks. Higher than the geysers. The geysers are wonderful but not very pretty, and they don't perform for me. (Talk about bias!)

I guess it would be important to distinguish between the concepts of wildness and purity.

Wildness I've felt in European places that have been inhabited since the ice age, though I'd expect more in Yellowstone. Grizzlies are both wild and pure. The trout in the Firehole are every bit as wild as Cutthroats, but not as pure. (I'd be happy to give them a naturalization certificate.)

Purity is a much trickier concept than wildness, and full of pitfalls. We should certainly eliminate the lake trout, if we ever can, and the brook trout in Arnica creek (which made the Washington Post this week). They degrade something better as well as more pure. But I'd consider it foolishness to poison the trout in the Firehole to help out the salamanders, or whatever used to be there before the trout. The result would be more purity but less wildness.

Maybe the concept of scale helps to keep purity in proportion. Swatting a mosquito is different from catching a trout, even if the mosquito is killed and the trout isn't. But scale seems to be the difference. Lassoing an elk is even more different from catching a trout. About 500 pounds different. The difference of scale means that we can catch and release a trout easily, whereas it's pretty tough with an elk.

All of these concepts are human: wildness, scale, better/worse, and also purity. Nature has no interest in purity.

So it depends on which humans we want to heed. I want parks

for people -- the original concept -- and no apologies. But I want people who want wildness as a participatory sport. I have limited faith in the nature spectators, in front of a TV set or behind the windows of a pigrig (great chapter). They would, I suppose, be happy to ban all kinds of things in the parks, except electrical outlets and wide roads. They wouldn't get passionately involved when the parks are threatened. I'm not so sure the fishermen will either, but at least we have a chance there of the building the kind of constituency that makes the NRA what it is (in the wrong cause). We need the kind of people who consider the parks to be the single decisive issue when they cast their vote.

When I grew up in the park, the fishermen were about the only people who really got out and in it. Today there are a lot more backpackers and other participants.

But I don't expect ever to see fish-watching as a spectator sport. There are limited exceptions, which you cite, but fish are usually very tough to see. I have yet to see a single person wandering along a stream trying to see trout. Only the fishermen can recognize the fish, for the most part.

(Incidentally, fishing bridge used to be such a circus that I never dangled a hook there, even as a kid. Thank goodness they closed it. But, even in the bad old days, you could watch a lot of trout there. I used to do it and wish the people with treble hooks would fall in.)

I'm not knocking the concept of existence value. For me it works, but it might not if I hadn't also been a participant. I doubt that many people vote for existence value, as opposed to jobs. It's pretty hard to get people to vote for anything as opposed to jobs, isn't it?

Beyond that, to repeat myself, I'm just very wary of armchair environmentalists. Where I hunt -- or used to hunt -- near Washington, they're doing more damage than people who think acid rain is good for you. Give me the old-fashioned farmers who shoot things but leave a little bit of cover for new things to live in. The new crowd wouldn't harm a mouse and doesn't have to harm a mouse, because they've left no cover where a mouse could survive. I'd hate to trust Yellowstone to the instincts of these guys.

Well, as every lawyer knows, it's much harder to agree on concepts than on specifics, because when we think we're talking about general principles we're really just reasoning from specific experiences that have shaped us. Yellowstone shaped me as a fisherman first. We agree on the specifics: save the bears, scuttle the motorcycles, ban trout-snagging from Fishing Bridge, and go fishing somewhere else tomorrow. That's plenty of decisions for today.

Yours,

D. Atkin

October 25, 1985

Paul Schullery
414 West Chinook Street
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Datus Proper
1914 North Johnson Street
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Dear Datus:

I really enjoyed your letter and your comments on Mountain Time. I think we probably disagree less than you imagine about fishing in Yellowstone Park. It all does, as you say, depend on which humans we want to heed. As I suggest in the book, I'd not like to see fishing done away with in Yellowstone, but I find that I am attracted to the principle, if not always the practice, of some less direct form of appreciation of a wild setting. Some of the park naturalists have tried for a long time to get people, especially non-fishermen who don't even think of fish as animals, to think of them as sort of underwater butterflies, creatures of considerable interest and glory, and I am attracted to the idea that I can learn, if I want, to appreciate any natural thing without having to consume, snare, or otherwise interfere with it.

That's not to say that I want to deal with nature only that way; what attracts me to it is the possibility that I may be able to heighten my appreciation of something by being aware of as many ways to appreciate it as possible.

I realize that that is all pretty airy for a boy who grew up catching bluegills and catfish, but it still interests me. More immediately to the issue of fishing in Yellowstone, I'm not worried about it being outlawed for a long time. Too many other things to fight over.

I will tell you, though, that fish-watching is becoming a formal, definable activity in Yellowstone. Naturalists even lead walks to LeHardy Rapids to watch the fish. There is considerable interest in some other parks in similar programs, especially where there are salmon to be seen. So fish-watching ought to be respected. Fish need a larger constituency than fishermen can provide them.

I share your suspicion of the urbanites who disapprove of all wild animal killing (as I say in the book, I can't see how they differentiate between wild animal killing and domestic animal killing, except that they never see what they eat get killed), but I don't think that the moral judgments of the anti- or pro-hunting factions are the issue here. The park has a whole other set of requirements, to wildness, or purity, or whatever we should call it. Unfortunately, the anti's are liable to abuse the legislative leverage of the park, which is aimed at some ecological naturalness, in order to further their

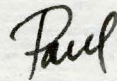
own moral causes, which are based in no sound understanding of the ecology of anything. Oh well.

Anyway, your letter reminded me of something I recently read that I think you will really enjoy. It isn't directly on the subject of fishing in Yellowstone, but it does discuss some of the same ideas your letter does, and applies them to wildlife management. I enclose it. It's a chapter from a textbook for Australian students. Graeme Caughley is one of the leading population specialists in wildlife ecology, author of one of the standard texts in wild animal population management, and a very good writer. He has a wonderful sense of humor, as you will see in this chapter, and a much more lively way of expressing himself than most scientists. Here I think you will see some of the things you expressed in your letter expressed in even more detail (especially the stuff about it depending on which humans we heed).

I think you might enjoy this short article on fishing in your neighborhood 145 years ago. "G" is the initial of General George Gibson, who wrote a series of short articles in this and another periodical then. He was one of our first fly fishing writers, from a generation or two before the ones everybody gets excited about now. I've got several of his other articles. The copy isn't very good. I photographed the page at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts and then printed the negative on a microfilm reader out here. Gibson is one of many reasons that the myth that the Catskills were somehow the fly fishing birthplace is so troubling. He was fishing the Letort and other streams by 1800, long before New Yorkers were getting up to the Beaverkill. New Yorkers were fishing Long Island and other nearby places long before they fished the Catskills anyway.

Thank you again for your letter and your good comments. More and more I find that my attitude about park issues of this kind is a detached ambivalence. The arguments are more interesting, and sometimes more useful, than the results.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul".

Paul Schullery