

## GUEST SHOT

BY DATUS C. PROPER

# BROOK TROUT

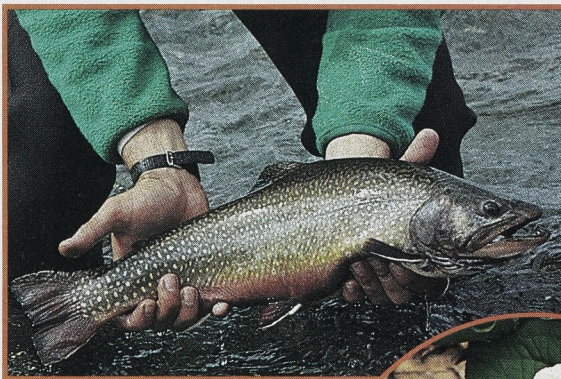
*Dogwood Run is the kind of place that ghosts like—a place as intimate as the cabins mountain people used to build on its banks.*

**I**N THE SPRING, SOME IDIOT wrote, a young man's fancy turns to love. The author was confusing humans with pandas, which have a mating season. We don't. If we did, however, it would not be until July. In the spring, young men, and some older ones, prefer to frisk with brook trout.

One day last spring I was standing on the Blue Ridge, shading my eyes, and looking down at Dogwood Run. It was 6 miles distant, 1,600 feet lower in elevation, and wedged between two mountains that were turning green. I was thinking how much I would enjoy the hike down to the stream, and how much I would not enjoy the hike back uphill. No one would undertake such a march for tiny brook trout without being afflicted by spring fever.

In a couple of hours I reached the stream, put on my hip boots, strung up my rod, and walked another mile downstream. I knew exactly where I was going. This was once my home stream. I had lived nearby in our nation's capital then, and found Dogwood Run to be an oasis in the Great American Desert. The little trout stream was spared from civilization because it was too hard for developers to reach. It was also moody, and sometimes sent me puffing back up the trail without a trout. That made me love it all the more.

I dropped to my knees and sneaked up to the good pool below a cliff. A side-arm cast hid my rod from any trout that might be watching. My little fly lit 20 feet upstream before floating back toward me. I lifted the rod to keep most of the line off the water. A fish appeared under the fly, drifted with it for a second, and sucked it down just like that—one cast, one rise, one fish on the hook. Too good to be true. The fish, however, looked too big to be a brook trout. Maybe some criminal had polluted my stream with another species. I set the hook, jumped to my feet, and ran downstream to keep the angle of pull from changing. The trout rolled on the surface. It was the real thing.



*Spending the spring searching for brook trout may put you in the neighborhood of trillium flowers, blossoming dogwoods, and these wild, magical fish.*



Once, in West Africa, I had caught a 200-pound fish that fought less, but what can you expect from a tarpon?

The truth is that there are no small brook trout. One of the special virtues of the species is that brook trout get big faster than other fish. An 8-inch rainbow trout, for example, is dinky, but an 8-inch brook trout is a weighty matter. And though a 200-pound tarpon looks big, it has less gravity than the 11-inch brook trout that splashed in my net on Dogwood Run.

I released the big trout. Do not assume, however, that I was making a statement or even a gesture. I would have savored my trophy for dinner if my motel's restaurant had been willing to cook it. I had inquired and found that the chef had never cooked anything that wasn't frozen first and was not about to start. He did not know what he was missing. Brook trout are more succulent than steak, more delicate than caviar, more supportive than mother's Thanksgiving turkey. Brook trout are prolific, too. You may eat them occasionally without guilt.

This trout gave me the nourishment I needed without eating it. As I released it

and climbed out of the stream, several trilliums burst through the soil, a dogwood tree blossomed, and a pair of mallards flew from the pool above me. Dogwood Run is poor duck habitat so I supposed that they had flown in to admire the brook trout, like me.

The next pool upstream spread widely, but the water at its head curved around three granite boulders and dug deep pockets in their lee. I fished the first two boulders carefully but found no fish around them.

One, however, was located in such a way that I could cast my line over it and let the fly drop below the third boulder, just upstream. With no line dragging, the fly lit and eddied like a natural insect. A trout rose, purposefully but without commo-

tion, as brook trout do when they are big enough to have chased their competition from a pool. This trout took the fly with confidence, and fought with more dignity than me. It sought refuge under all three of the boulders without success. It was almost as big as my first.

Some people will tell you that the point of fishing is to escape from daily worries, so if the fish do not cooperate, who cares? (I care.) People say, too, that fishing for brook trout is just an excuse to get out and look at nature. But I don't want to be a spectator; I want to play the game.

This passion for brook trout is not rational. If it made sense, it would not be a passion, would it? It is, however, widespread. If you go into any tackle shop and ask for directions to some good trout fishing spots in the area, the friendly fellow behind the counter will send you to a place with brown trout or rainbows. Ask him, then, if he could (*Continued on page 21*)



many black-footed ferrets back in the wild by 1995 as they had when the recovery program began. One wonders how many more ferrets there'd be by now—and at how much less public cost—had the FWS stopped poisoning prairie dogs when the press first ridiculed the program half a century ago; and had the FWS provided landowners with financial incentives to protect the prairie dogs and ferrets on private property. Unfortunately, like every other governmental agency, the FWS finds Congress more willing to spend millions of dollars on cures rather than pennies on prevention, even though, as every child knows, it's easier and cheaper to keep Humpty Dumpty on the wall rather than try to put him back together after a fall.

**M**EANWHILE, WHAT'S CURRENTLY number one on the Endangered Species Cost List? The northern spotted owl. Last fiscal year, a spate of surveys and studies ran the owl's bill up to \$9.7 million. How can this hefty sum be justified, especially if we are to question the seemingly endless cost of restoring red wolves, black-footed ferrets, and California condors?

The justification is simple: the spotted owl is still on the wall. We don't need to

spend vast sums trying to restore it. Indeed, species like the spotted owl, and the snail darter before it, can be seen as nature's way of telling us that we should rethink the business-as-usual practices that have put such creatures at risk in the first place.

The tiny perch known as the snail darter gave all parties involved in the Tellico Dam fight time to learn that the annual food-energy yields of the Tennessee fields which were to be drowned by the rising river were far higher than the potential electrical-energy yields of the proposed dam.

Since the dam was nearly complete by the time the snail darter was discovered, however, the Tennessee Valley Authority determined it would be less embarrassing to complete the cost-ineffective dam than to leave it unfinished as a monument to a major ecological and economic mistake.

The spotted owl has provided a similar time-out in the struggle over the fate of our Pacific Northwest forests. The owl is a symbol of the climax woodland that traditional foresters insist should be cut, or it will only die of old age or disease and be wasted.

Thanks partly to the spotted owl, however, we now know that the temperate rainforests of the West are quite different and more biotically diverse in their climatic stage than the shorter-lived conifer woodlands of

Europe and eastern North America, which so many forestry management theories are based. The owl is telling us not only to stop clear-cutting a possibly irreplaceable rainforest; it's suggesting we should stop exporting its flawless raw timber to Asia where the wood is returned to us in the form of cellophane and plywood wrapped around electronic products we should be manufacturing more of at home.

We must also recognize that logging is a here-today, gone-tomorrow enterprise, while milling provides more permanent employment. The spotted owl may be giving us time to learn to cut more selectively and create more long-term jobs by exporting finished wood products rather than logs. The owl may also be giving us time to examine the rising tide of tourism in a region that is still synonymous with wilderness. Why cut the last of the old-growth forest when its wood is worth so much more alive to visitors coming to see the spotted owl?

The Endangered Species Act is up for reauthorization this year. Readers should warn their Congressmen not to throw out any babies with the bath water. At the same time, however, we must do a better job of allocating where increasingly scarce bath water should go.



# Leave Tracks Wilderness.

on the established trails. And even if someone else breaks that rule by blazing a new path—don't make matters worse by following in their tracks. Because remember, there's a name for people like that.

Toyota is a member of Tread Lightly!, Inc., a

non-profit educational organization that works to promote environmentally conscious OHV use and other forms of backcountry travel. For information on how you can become a member, call 1-800-966-9900.





dog in the car with me.

Pickup trucks with toppers allow the odoriferous dog to be segregated, but the ostracized canine is likely to bay for attention outside the motel, especially if the night is dark and the pickup bed cold. Large, burly truckers, weary from a long day on the interstate, do not take kindly to Ol' Sal howling because she's lonesome and are likely to come looking for her owner.

A bird car cannot be disguised, even if it is masquerading as the car driven by the ruling family of Kuwait. I know. I once owned a Mercedes with leather seats and burlwood paneling. Three of us went grouse hunting in northeast Iowa and we kenneled two bird dogs, my lusty Brittany, Chip, and a demure setter, Samantha, owned by my hunting buddy, Spence Turner, in the back seat of this car.

Samantha was in heat, but Spence's veterinarian had given her a defusing shot, guaranteed to render her as sexless

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO  
DISGUISE A BIRD CAR,  
ESPECIALLY AFTER  
YEARS OF NEGLECT.

as creamed chicken on toast. And so it seemed. The two dogs rode companionably and hunted efficiently through the afternoon.

We decided to treat ourselves to a meal at a local dinner theater. We parked the elegant Mercedes with the dogs in the back seat, entered the restaurant, and ordered drinks.

"Are those dogs out there?" asked the waitress when she returned. We turned to look through the window and, sure enough, those were dogs, our dogs, and they had fought through veterinary chemistry to prove once again that love triumphs.

At that moment, the theater crowd began to arrive and a procession of octogenarian ladies, elegantly coiffed and smelling of lavender, descended from various elegant Chryslers and Cadillacs.

Venerable eyes spied the sleek Mercedes and the puzzling, dimly-perceived activity within. We watched in fascination as the matriarchs of Decorah, Iowa, society tottered closer to my car and reeled back in horror.

You can fool some of the people some of the time about a bird car... but not for long.



## GUEST SHOT

(Continued from page 16)

direct you to a brook trout stream. Well, gee, no—you've got him stumped there. By a remarkable coincidence, every single sporting-goods store in North America just happens to be located in a region that has no brook trout within range of the owner's recollection. You might conclude that the species is scarce. On the contrary, it is abundant and widespread. Passion, however, is private. A fellow who would publicize a brook trout stream would write numbers on the walls of phone booths.

If you insist, though, I'll tell you how to find Dogwood Run. You start in New England and drive halfway to Georgia. You park under a pine tree, leave a note in your car assuring your wife that you died happy, and walk as far as you can, plus another mile. You're there.

FROM THREE-ROCK POOL I walked upstream to a long, shallow, sunny riffle—the kind of place that produces food for trout. Above the riffle was a pool that curved to the left under a deep bank. Brush shaded the water, and under it a trout rose twice. I could see no insects on the water and guessed that beetles had slipped from the brush. I had seen them on the trail, big beetles with bodies the color of bronze peacock herl, and I knew from the old days that trout fattened themselves on the insects every spring. Catching this rising trout took no great skill, but I deserved the break, having fished the Appalachians for many whole seasons without a trophy, which is to say a brook trout over 10 inches in length. This one was fully 11, as big as my first of the day. With three great fish in a row, I could reasonably conclude that my totem trout were welcoming me back.

The sky went cloudy then, and I imagined myself slogging out of Dogwood Run in the rain. A wind gusted upstream, darkening the water, blowing the tops off miniature whitecaps. Wait—some of those splashes were made by fish working a hatch of real mayflies. I changed to a Quill Gordon and let the wind dap it over the fish. One rose and missed the bouncing fly. I saw that the fish was of no great size so I moved upstream for a better one. A fish took my fly with a splash. When it felt the hook, it ran upstream into the shallows and jumped—a low jump but a real one, an arch over the water. Brook trout do that on a few streams. This fish was 12 inches long, my best from the Appalachians in twenty years, a spirit of times past.

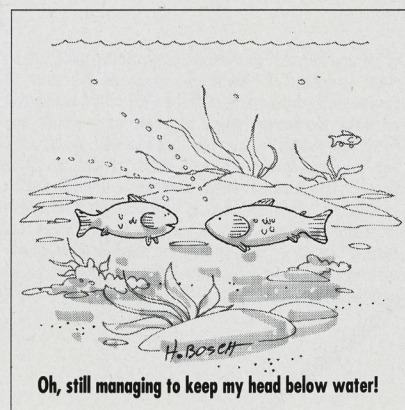
Dogwood Run is the kind of place that ghosts like, a place as intimate as the cabins that mountain people used to build on its banks. Curves in the stream give views only of woods and hills. I could believe, for a time, that the whole world was like this.

Once I had lived in a Rip Van Winkle house that had an attic for playing and a hideaway under the stairs. These places were fun just because they were secret. Dogwood Run had the secret and clear water too, and big trout between cities. It was the secret, maybe, that brought me all the way back here from Montana. Home is wherever the brook trout hide.

After the 12-inch trout Dogwood Run went to sleep, or at least its trout did. In 2 hours I caught only three fingerlings. I fished hard, too, creeping on my knees to the best places, floating my fly like a desperate beetle. Then I switched to a nymph and fished it ticking along the bottom. Nothing took it. I squinted my eyes red and saw only a smallmouth bass, which worried me. Bass are not native here, and they might bother my brook trout.

Native trout are the best of all, and I deplore the disappearance of so many native strains in the West, pushed to extinction by brook trout introduced from the East. I don't stop at deploring, either. Back in Montana I do my best to keep those brook trout under control, fishing for them through rain and cold and mosquitoes. No sacrifice is too great for a fisherman of principle.

I did not deserve any more trout from Dogwood Run, but I was not ready for the return to civilization. I hiked up to Split Rock pool, an old favorite just below the falls. My little fly floated on it, lonely as an asteroid. A brook trout appeared from nowhere in the magical way of its kind, pulled by some celestial gravity. The trout orbited for a light-year, fins quivering. When it collided with the fly, the movement was so quick that I saw only an aurora of light and color. I was grateful to whoever let me watch this all by myself. I thought that perhaps I would just keep on fishing forever.





## CAMPING CONVENIENCES

From innovative bungee cords to soft hunter's backpacks, here are six items for better outdoor living.



The elastic loops of the Jackstrap tightly hold a small (AA or AAA) flashlight on the wearer's head, thereby keeping his hands free. The direction of the flashlight is adjustable (see diagram) in three directions. Available in several colors for about \$4.95 from Liston Concepts, ☎ (801) 581-1216. The flashlight is a Maglite AA. It is made from anodized aluminum and the beam focuses from floodlight to spotlight. A series of O-rings keeps moisture out. About \$16.95 in assorted colors from Mag Instrument, ☎ (714) 947-1006.



This 100-percent stainless steel tool from Gerber folds up to about 4 inches long and opens with a flick of the wrist. The slide-out needle-nose pliers have a wire cutter. Other tools rotate out from the handles and include two knife blades, scissors, screwdrivers, a scale, and more. Handles lock open for safe use of the smaller components. Prices range from \$70 to \$80 depending on the finish and sheath. From Gerber, ☎ (800) 950-6161.



The Nuwick 120-hour candle can be used for light, or even to cook. The slow-burning, non-toxic wax won't liquify and you can use up to three wicks simultaneously in each can—though only two are needed for cooking. Each candle comes with six moveable wicks that burn for 25 to 40 hours each, waterproof matches, and tweezers to move the wicks. About \$9.95 from Nuwick, ☎ (800) 347-WICK.

If you've ever worried about scratching your equipment—or yourself—with the hooks on the ends of bungee cords, take a look at these elastic Snakes. Instead of hooks, the Snakes have a new type of hook-and-loop fabric that snugly fastens the ends together. A "double" Snake forms a loop at each end, and a "single" can either be made into a loop by itself, or fastened to other snakes to form a longer cord. Snakes, which are ideal for use in most situations where you'd normally use a bungee cord (but NOT for car-topping boats), are made in assorted colors and three different lengths. Prices range from \$6.95 to \$11.25. From JFI, ☎ (608) 756-0428.



Here's a hunter's frame pack that can be used in several different configurations. The external shells of the Peak 1 camouflage bags are made from a soft fleece that allows a hunter to move quietly through brush. The internal lining is a waterproof nylon. The smaller bag at the bottom detaches to become a fanny pack. Compression straps on both bags keep loads snugly in place. About \$175 from Coleman Outdoor Products, ☎ (800) 835-3278.



Trout Section.

176 words

Datus Proper  
1085 Hamilton Road  
Belgrade, MT 59714  
(406) 388-3345

Out numbered

### BLIZZARD HATCH

(See also "Fish in a Fly" - last section.)

It's about time. All winter you have been tying flies for this hatch and now here it is and you are surrounded by feeding trout and you are going to catch them all, starting with the biggest. Its tawny flank rolls in the current. You cast a size 20 skittering sedge and give it a twitch, and pretend that you went to the end. The trout rolls again but your fly is still on the water, rocking in the ring of the rise. So forget the fast food. Try a partridge-hackle emerger.

Well, maybe not. Maybe that brown was chasing a caddis pupa. Cast a bead-head imitation and let it sink and then lift it in front of the fish. And don't forget to breathe.

He missed! Or maybe that old brown ignored your fly and took one of the real insects. But hey, the caddisflies love you. Look at their pretty green egg sacs on your waders. and keep your mouth shut

Well, spit it out. You picked a bad time to hyperventilate. With ten thousand flies in the air, you've got to keep your mouth shut.

Trout  
FISH  
Brown  
Brook (Shor. Brook?)  
RB - something from  
home?  
Carp?



178 words

Datus Proper  
1085 Hamilton Road  
Belgrade, MT 59714  
(406) 388-3345

### TOO MANY FLIES

e (Alternative titles: Talking to Yourself  
→ Blizzard Hatch

It's about time. All winter you have been tying flies for this hatch and now here it is and you are surrounded by feeding trout and you are going to catch all of them, starting with the biggest. Its tawny flank rolls in the current. You cast a skittering sedge and give it a twitch.

The trout rolls again but your fly is still on the water, rocking in the ring of the rise. So forget the fast food. Try a partridge-hackle emerger.

Well, maybe not. Maybe that brown was chasing a caddis pupa. Cast a bead-head imitation and let it sink and then lift it in front of the fish. And don't forget to breathe.

He missed! Or maybe not. Maybe that old brown ignored your fly and took one of the real insects. But hey, the caddisflies love you. Look at their pretty green egg sacs on your waders.

Well, spit it out. You picked a bad time to hyperventilate. With ten thousand flies in the air, you've got to keep your mouth shut.



It's about time. All winter I have been tying flies for the numerosus hatch and now here it is and I am surrounded by a hundred hungry fish and I am going to catch all of them.

That brown slashed at a caddisfly hopping on the surface. So let's try a skittering sedge.

Okay, so he doesn't want fast food. Tie on a good old elk-hair caddis.

Doesn't work. Nothing works. All right, so I can't catch fish. But the flies don't have to lay eggs on me.

Yicch! Opened my mouth at the wrong time. Ate my first caddisfly just when the trout stopped feeding. \

Why would a trout take your fly when he is stuffed with naturals?

TALKING TO YOURSELF  
The Glut  
Blizzard Hatch  
Too Many Flies

These flies are of the species called numerosus, by no coincidence, and the your trout could have taken one of a hundred naturals.

But maybe you learned something. The trout like real caddisflies because they slide down easier than the kind with hooks.

sunburst of life, flow of energy

Why would he fall for your imitation with so many of the real thing around?



180 words

Datus Proper  
1085 Hamilton Road  
Belgrade, MT 59714  
(406) 388-3345

### TOO MANY FLIES

*u* Alternative titles: Talking to Yourself  
Blizzard Hatch →

It's about time. All winter you have been tying flies for this hatch and now it is here in a sunburst of life and you are going to catch every trout in the river.

A tawny flank rolls in the current and a caddisfly disappears. Try a skittering sedge.

The trout <sup>comes up</sup> rises again but your fly is still on the water, rocking in the ring of the rise. So forget the fast food. Tie on a partridge-hackle emerger. And don't forget to breathe.

Well, maybe that brown was chasing a caddis pupa. Cast a bead-head upstream and let it sink and then lift it in front of the fish.

Missed! Or maybe not. Maybe that old brown ignored your fly and rose for one of the real grannoms bouncing on the water. But if you can't catch a trout, you can at least fool the insects. Look at their pretty green egg sacs on your waders.

Sorry. You hyperventilated at a bad time. With ten thousand flies in the air, you should learn to keep your mouth shut.

≈



176 words

Datus Proper  
1085 Hamilton Road  
Belgrade, MT 59714  
(406) 388-3345

### TOO MANY FLIES

(alternatives: Talking to Yourself)  
Bl. 77 and H. L. H.

It's about time. You have waited all winter for this sunburst of life and now here it is and you are going to catch every trout in the river.

A tawny flank rolls in the current and a ~~hopping~~ caddisfly disappears. Try a skittering sedge.

The trout rises again but your fly is still on the water, rocking in the ring of the rise. So forget the fast food. Tie on a partridge-hackle emerger.

Well, maybe that brown is following pupae up from the bottom. Cast a bead-head upstream and let it sink and then ~~pull~~ <sup>light</sup> it ~~up~~ in front of the fish. And don't forget to breathe. <sup>of</sup>

Missed! Or maybe not. Maybe that old brown rose for one the real flies bouncing around on the water. But if you can't catch a trout, you can at least fool the insects. Look at all the pretty green egg sacs on your waders.

Yicch! You howled at the wrong time. With ten thousand flies in the air, you should learn to keep your mouth shut.



176 words

Datus Proper  
1085 Hamilton Road  
Belgrade, MT 59714  
(406) 388-3345

### BLIZZARD HATCH

It's about time. All winter you have been tying flies for this hatch and now here it is and you are surrounded by feeding trout and you are going to catch them all, starting with the biggest. Its tawny flank rolls in the current. You cast a skittering sedge and give it a twitch.

The trout rolls again but your fly is still on the water, rocking in the ring of the rise. So forget the fast food. Try a partridge-hackle emerger.

Well, maybe not. Maybe that brown was chasing a caddis pupa. Cast a bead-head imitation and let it sink and then lift it in front of the fish. And don't forget to breathe.

He missed! Or maybe that old brown ignored your fly and took one of the real insects. But hey, the caddisflies love you. Look at their pretty green egg sacs on your waders.

Well, spit it out. You picked a bad time to hyperventilate. With ten thousand flies in the air, you've got to keep your mouth shut.



105 words

open trout  
Section

Datus Proper  
1085 Hamilton Road  
Belgrade, MT 59714  
(406) 388-3345

Trout

FAITH IN A ~~FLY\*~~

[Outnumbered]

You kept the faith through cold months, tying flies by the fire. You knew that the forsythia would bloom and the tulip trees would send out buds like ducks' bills. You knew the sun would pull up grannoms, the grannoms would pull up trout, and the trout would pull you into running water. None are sun-lovers, exactly. Fish and caddisflies are usually most active under mild gray skies and so are you, but in spring you need a burst of energy and a surge of life. You may not catch many trout, with so much competition from nature. But you will be awake.

≈

\* Title echoes Thoreau's Faith in a Seed.



Is there a policy against parentheses?

## BROOK TROUT by Datus C. Proper

IN THE SPRING, SOME IDIOT WROTE, a young man's fancy turns to love. The author was confusing humans with pandas, which have a mating season. We don't. If we did, however, it would not be until July. In the spring, young men, and some older ones, prefer to frisk with brook trout.

One day last spring I was standing on the Blue Ridge, shading my eyes, and looking down at Dogwood Run. It was 6 miles distant, 1,600 feet lower in elevation, and wedged between two mountains that were turning green. I was thinking how much I would enjoy the hike down to the stream, and how much I would not enjoy the hike back uphill. No one would undertake such a march for tiny brook trout without being afflicted by spring fever.

In a couple of hours I reached the stream, put on my hip boots, strung up my rod, and walked another mile downstream. I knew exactly where I was going. This was once my home-stream. I had lived nearby in our nation's capital then, and found Dogwood Run to be an oasis in the Great American Desert of Civilization. The little trout stream was spared because it was too hard for developers to reach. It was also moody, and sometimes sent me puffing back up the trail without a trout. That made me love it all the more.

I dropped to my knees and sneaked up to a good pool below a cliff. A side-arm cast hid my rod from any trout that might be watching. My little fly lit 20 feet upstream before lazily floating back toward me. I lifted the rod to keep most of the line off the water. A fish appeared under the fly, drifted with it for a second, and sucked it down just like that—one cast, one rise, one fish on the hook. Too good to be true. The fish, however, looked too big to be a brook trout. Had some criminal polluted my stream with another species? I set the hook, jumped to my feet, and ran downstream to keep the angle of pull from changing. The trout rolled on the surface. It was the real thing.

Once, in West Africa, I caught a 200-pound fish that fought less, but what can you expect from a tarpon?

The truth is that are no small brook trout. One of the special virtues of the species is that brook trout get big faster than other fish. An 8-inch rainbow trout, for example, is dinky, but an 8-inch brook trout is a weighty matter. And though a 200-pound tarpon looks big, it has less gravity than the 11-inch brook trout that splashed in my net on

Dogwood Run.

I released the big trout, but do not assume that I was making a statement or even a gesture. I would have savored my trophy for dinner, if my motel's restaurant had been willing to cook it. I had inquired and found that the chef had never cooked anything that wasn't frozen first and furthermore was not about to start. He did not know what he was missing. Brook trout are more succulent than steak, more delicate than caviar, more supportive than mother's Thanksgiving turkey. Brook trout are prolific, too. You may eat them occasionally without guilt.

This trout gave me the nourishment I needed without eating it. As I released it and climbed out of the stream, several trillium plants burst through the soil, a dogwood tree blossomed, and a pair of mallards flew from the pool above me. Dogwood Run is poor duck habitat so I supposed that they had flown in to admire the brook trout, like me.

The next pool upstream spread widely, but the water at its head curved around three granite boulders and dug deep pockets in their lee. I fished the first two boulders carefully but found no fish around them. One, however, was located in such a way that I could cast my line over it and let the fly drop below the third boulder, just upstream. With no line dragging, the fly lit and eddied like a natural insect. A trout rose, purposefully but without commotion, as brook trout do when they are big enough to have chased their competition from a pool. This trout took the fly with confidence, and fought with more dignity than me. It sought refuge under all three of the boulders without success. It was almost as big as my first.

SOME PEOPLE WILL TELL YOU THAT the point of fishing is to escape from daily worries, so if the fish do not cooperate, who cares? (I care.) People say, too, that fishing for brook trout is just an excuse to get out and look at nature. But I don't want to be a spectator; I want to play the game.

This passion for brook trout is not rational. If it made sense, it would not be a passion, would it? It is, however, widespread. If you go into any tackle shop and ask for directions to some good trout fishing spots in the area, the friendly fellow behind the counter will send you to a place with brown trout or rainbows. Ask him, then, if he could direct you to a brook-trout stream. Well, gee, no—you've got him stumped there. By a remarkable coincidence, every single sporting-goods store in North America just happens to be located in a region that has no brook trout within range of the owner's recollection. You might conclude

Theresa  
Cover  
4/92

800-227-2224  
X5290  
Deletion

from civilization

Deletion  
ok

anyhow

though

lozy

maybe

the original

but

It then  
seeking  
Deletion hunt  
flow

Deletion



change look.  
that the species is scarce, but actually it is abundant. Passion, however, is private. A fellow who would publicize a brook-trout stream would also probably write numbers on the walls of phone booths.

change  
But if you insist, I'll tell you how to find Dogwood Run. You start in New England and drive halfway to Georgia. You park under a pine tree, leave a note in your car assuring your wife that you died happy, and walk as far as you can, plus another mile. You're there.

above  
FROM THREE-ROCK POOL—I walked upstream to a long, shallow, sunny riffle—the kind of place that produces food for trout. Above the riffle was a pool that curved to the left under a deep bank. Brush shaded the water, and under it a trout rose twice. I could see no insects on the water and guessed that beetles had slipped from the brush. I had seen them on the trail, big beetles with bodies the color of bronze peacock herl, and I knew from the old days that trout fattened themselves on the insects every spring. Catching this rising trout took no great skill, but I deserved the break, having fished the Appalachians for many whole seasons without a trophy, which is to say a brook trout over 10 inches in length. This one was 11 inches, as big as my first of the day. With three great fish in a row, I could reasonably conclude that my totem trout were welcoming me back.

st,  
The sky went cloudy, then, and I imagined myself slogging out of Dogwood Run in the rain. A wind gust ed upstream, darkening the water, blowing the tops off miniature whitecaps. Wait—some of those splashes were made by fish working a hatch of real mayflies. I changed to a Quill Gordon and let the wind dap it over the fish. One rose and missed the bouncing fly. I saw that the fish was of no great size so I moved upstream for a better one. A fish took my fly with a splash. When it felt the hook, it ran upstream into the shallows and jumped—a low jump but a real one, an arch over the water. Brook trout do that on a few streams. This fish was 12 inches long, my best from the Appalachians in twenty years, a spirit of times past.

) post house for whole  
Dogwood Run is the kind of place that ghosts like, a place as intimate as the cabins that mountain people used to build on its banks. Curves in the stream give views only of woods and hills. I could believe, for a time, that the whole world was like this.

had  
Once I lived in a Rip Van Winkle house that had an attic for playing and a hideaway under the stairs. These places were fun just because they were secret. Dogwood Run has the secret and clear

even  
water too, and big trout between cities. It was the secret, maybe, that brought me all the way back here from Montana. Home is where the brook trout hide.

After the 12-inch trout Dogwood Run went to sleep, or at least its trout did. In two hours I caught only three fingerlings. I fished hard, too, creeping on my knees to the best places, floating my fly like a desperate beetle. Then I switched to a nymph and fished it ticking along the bottom. Nothing took it. I squinted my eyes red and saw only a smallmouth bass, which worried me. Bass are not native here, and they might bother my brook trout.

Native trout are the best of all, and I deplore the disappearance of so many native strains in the West, pushed to extinction by brook trout introduced from the East. I don't stop at deploring, either. Back in Montana I do my best to keep those brook trout under control, fishing for them through rain and cold and mosquitoes. No sacrifice is too great for a fisherman of principle.

the  
I did not deserve any more trout from Dogwood Run, but I was not ready for the return to civilization. I hiked up to Split-Rock pool, an old favorite just below the falls. My little fly floated on it, lonely as an asteroid. A brook trout appeared from nowhere in the magical way of its kind, pulled by some celestial gravity. The trout orbited for a light-year, fins quivering. When it collided with the fly, the movement was so quick that I saw only an aurora of light and color. I was grateful to whomever let me watch this all by myself. I thought that perhaps I would just keep on fishing forever.



1/8/91

About 2000 words

Datus C. Proper  
1085 Hamilton Road  
Belgrade, MT 59715

### BROOK TROUT

(Alternative title: Spring Fever)

Brook trout and spring fever  
are the same thing.

In the spring, some idiot wrote, a young man's fancy turns to love. The author was confusing humans with pandas, which have a mating season. We don't. If we did, however, we would postpone it till July. In the spring, young men (and some older ones) prefer to frisk with brook trout.

One day last spring, therefore, I was standing on the Blue Ridge, shading my eyes, and looking down at Dogwood Run. It was six miles distant, and <sup>1600</sup> sixteen hundred feet lower in elevation, <sup>and</sup>



wedged between two mountains turning green. I was thinking how much I would enjoy the hike down to the stream, and how much I would not enjoy the hike back uphill. No one would undertake such a march for tiny brook trout unless he were afflicted by spring fever.

*deleted* { (Spring fever is not laziness, you know. On the contrary, it is energy released by the sun, then absorbed by the maple sap, the wild garlic, and me. The best place to cool off is a trout stream. Dogwood Run is as cool as they get.)

In a couple of hours I reached the stream, <sup>put on my</sup> pulled the hip-boots from my backpack, put them on, strung up my rod, and walked another mile downstream. I knew exactly where I was going. This was my home-stream, once. I lived near here then, in our nation's capital, and found Dogwood Run an oasis in the Great American Desert. The little trout stream was spared from civilization because it was hard to reach. It was moody, though, and sometimes it sent me puffing back up the trail without a trout. That made me love it all the more.

*deleted* { (The Great American Desert is another of those topics on which there has been confusion. It used to be a large area in the middle of the country, but in this century it has drifted to the coasts. It is made up of shopping malls, roads between shopping malls, and cars driving to shopping malls with their air-conditioners turned on.)



I dropped to my knees and sneaked up to the good pool below the cliff. A side-arm cast hid my rod from any trout that might be watching. My little fly lit twenty feet upstream and floated back toward me, lazy. I lifted the rod to keep most of the line off the water. A fish appeared under the fly, drifted with it for a second, and sucked it down just like that: one cast, one rise, one fish on the hook. Too good to be true. The fish, however, looked too big to be a brook trout. Maybe some criminal had polluted my stream with another species. I set the hook, jumped to my feet, and ran downstream to keep the angle of pull from changing. The trout rolled on the surface. It was the real thing.

Once, in West Africa, I had caught a 200-pound fish that fought less, but what would you expect? That was only a tarpon.

Allow me to apologize for suggesting, a few miles back, that Dogwood Run has small trout. There are no small brook trout. One of the special virtues of the species is that brook trout get big faster than other fish. An eight-inch rainbow trout, for example, is dinky, but an eight-inch brook trout is a weighty matter. A two-hundred-pound tarpon looks big but has less gravity than the eleven-inch brook trout that splashed in my net on Dogwood Run.

I released the big trout. Do not assume, however, that I was making a statement or even a gesture. (Fly-fishermen are perfect in most other respects but fond of statements and gestures.) No. I would have savored my trophy for dinner, if my motel's

26th



restaurant had been willing to cook it. I had inquired and found that the chef had never cooked anything unfrozen and was not about to start. He did not know what he was missing. Brook trout are more succulent than steak, more delicate than caviar, more supportive than mother's Thanksgiving turkey. Brook trout are prolific, too. You may eat them occasionally without guilt.

This trout gave me the nourishment I needed anyhow. As I released it and climbed out of the stream, several trilliums burst through the soil, a dogwood tree rushed into blossom, and a pair of mallards flew from the pool above me. Dogwood Run is poor duck habitat so I supposed that they had flown in to admire the brook trout, like me.

Brook trout are the most beautiful of fish. I expect no argument on that subject, but tell me: are they beautiful because they live in such places or are the places beautiful because they harbor such trout?

The next pool upstream was spread ~~more~~ widely, but the water at its head curved around three scattered granite boulders and dug deep pockets in their lee. I fished the first two boulders carefully but found no fish around them. One, however, was located in such a way that I could cast my line over it and let the fly drop below the third boulder, just upstream. With no line dragging, the fly lit and eddied like a natural insect. A trout rose, purposefully but without commotion, as brook trout do when



they are big enough to have chased their competition from a pool. This one took the fly with confidence. It then fought with more dignity than me, seeking refuge under all three of the boulders without success. It was almost as big as my first, ten-inches-plus.

I give you these statistics in order to brag convincingly. Some people will tell you that the point of fishing is to escape from daily worries, so if the fish do not cooperate, who cares? (I care.) People say, too, that fishing for brook trout is just an excuse to get out and look at nature. (But I don't want to be a spectator. I want to play the game.)

The passion for brook trout is not rational. If it made sense, it would not be passion, would it? It is, however, widespread. You can prove this to yourself by going into any tackle shop and asking for directions to some good trout fishing in the area. You will get them. The friendly fellow behind the counter will send you to a place with brown trout or rainbows. Ask him, then, if he could direct you to a brook-trout stream. Well, gee, no -- you've got him stumped there. By a remarkable coincidence, every single sporting-goods store in America just happens to be located in a region that has no brook trout within range of the owner's recollection. You might conclude that the species is scarce. On the contrary, it is widespread and abundant. Passion, however, is private. A fellow who would




publicize a brook-trout stream would write numbers on the walls of phone booths.

(Listen carefully, now, because I'll only tell you once how to find Dogwood Run. You start in New England and drive half-way to Georgia. You park under a pine tree, leave a note in your car assuring your wife that you died happy, and walk as far as you can, plus another mile. You're there.)

Above the Three-Rock Pool was a long, shallow, sunny riffle -- the kind of place that produces food for trout -- and above the riffle was a pool that curved to the left under a deep bank. Brush shaded the water. Here a trout rose twice. I could see no insects on the water and guessed that beetles had slipped from the brush. I had seen them on the trail, big beetles with bodies the color of bronze peacock herl, and I knew from the old days that trout fattened on them every spring. Catching this rising trout took no great skill but I deserved it, having fished the Appalachians for many whole seasons without a trophy, which is to say a brook trout over ten inches in length. This one was fully eleven, as big as my first of the day. With three great fish in a row, I could reasonably conclude that my totem trout were welcoming me back.

I am happy for my friends who go to Alaska for vast fish of several kinds, and I am happy for me that the travelers vacate space on the little, hidden brook-trout waters. I did, however,



travel to Patagonia twice. Brook trout and landlocked salmon had been the first salmonids introduced there, and both had reached record sizes. Then somebody introduced other trouts and the game was over. But there is a place in Canada where big brook trout still rise for mayflies, and maybe I'll find a way to try that. A fourteen-pound-nine-ounce fish would be a record, the best of the last, bigger even than the one caught in the Nipigon River in 1916. Trout and I would both become immortal. 

The sky went cloudy, then, and I imagined myself slogging out of Dogwood Run in the rain. A wind gusted upstream, darkening the water, blowing the tops off miniature whitecaps. Wait: some of those splashes were made by fish working a hatch of real mayflies. I changed to a Quill Gordon and let the wind dap it over the fish. One rose and missed the bouncing fly. I saw that the fish was of no great size and moved upstream for a better one. It took with a splash. When it felt the hook, it ran upstream into the shallows and jumped -- a low jump but a real one, arching over the water. Brook trout do that on a few streams. This fish was twelve inches long, my best from the Appalachians for twenty years, a spirit of times past.

Dogwood Run <sup>is</sup> was the kind of place that ghosts like, a place as intimate as the cabins that mountain people used to build on its banks. Curves in the stream gave views only of woods and hills. I could believe, for a time, that the whole world was like



this.

Once I had lived in a Rip Van Winkle house that had an attic for playing and a hideaway under the stairs. These places were fun just because they were secret. Dogwood run had the secret and clear water too, and big pretty trout cozy between cities. It was the secret, maybe, that brought me all the way back here from Montana. Home is wherever the brook trout hide.

Dogwood Run went to sleep, then, or at least its trout did. In two hours I caught only three fingerlings. I fished hard, too, creeping on my knees to the best places, floating my fly like a desperate beetle. Then I switched to a nymph and fished it ticking along the bottom. Nothing took it. I squinted my eyes red and saw only a smallmouth bass, which worried me. Bass are not native here, and they might bother my brook trout.

Native trout are the best of all, and I deplore the disappearance of so many native strains in the west, pushed to extinction by brook trout introduced from the east. I don't stop at deploring, either. I do my best to keep those brook trout under control, fishing for them through rain and cold and mosquitoes. No sacrifice is too great for a fisherman of principle.

I did not deserve any more trout from Dogwood Run, but I was not ready for the return to civilization. I hiked up to the Split-Rock pool, an old favorite just below the falls. My little



fly floated on it lonely as an asteroid. A brook trout appeared in the magic way of its kind, coming from nowhere, pulled by some celestial gravity. It orbited for a light-year, fins quivering. When it collided with the fly, the movement was so quick that I saw only an aurora of light and color. I was grateful to whomever let me watch this all by myself. I thought that perhaps I would just keep on fishing forever.

## BROOK TROUT

(Alternative title: Spring fever)

Brook trout and spring fever  
are the same thing.

In the spring, some idiot wrote, a young man's fancy turns to love. The author was confusing humans with pandas, which have a mating season. We don't. If we did, however, we would postpone it till July. In the spring, young men (and some older ones) prefer to frisk with brook trout.

One day last spring, therefore, I was standing on the Blue Ridge, shading my eyes, and looking down at Skywood Run. It was six miles distant and sixteen hundred feet lower in elevation.



Cole Slator

I can shorten it needs. To what length?

Is there a policy against poems?

Somebody want around adding adjectives  
+ adverbs; + spoiling sentence rhythm.