484 words of text

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

# UP THE MOUNTAIN AND INTO THE WOODS

**You might stumble into good fishing.**

I know a stream that no one else has fished. An Indian would hardly have bothered with its little trout, not when he saw the moose-tracks all around, and an angler in step with the times would ignore a thin blue line on the map. Neither big-game hunter nor big-water angler would have the right equipment, anyhow. Flint arrowhead could not hit a shadow-fish. Neoprene waders would not survive the talus slope.

My discovery came when I was hunting grouse in yellow aspens, one fall, and stumbled into water deep enough to soak my socks. The creek was hidden by overhanging grass and so cold that it made me jump. I was not sure that my secret stream was big enough to hold trout and did not try to find them, not just then. With winter around the corner, there was no need to clutter my imagination with the facts.

Next summer, however, when rivers down in the civilized world were growing pondweed, I climbed back into grouse valley and explored what turned out to be a real spring creek, tiny but brimful. In its first pool, there was a puff of silt -- not much of a sign, but enough to show that a fish had spooked.

An arrow-shot upstream, I cast a fly where the trunk of a fallen spruce backed up dark water. What happened next did not look like a fish. It looked like an iris opening its flower, blossoming without motion, growing closer to the sun. I struck when the petals came to resemble fins, but the trout had not reached full bloom. It folded itself back into shadow.

For the next pool, I switched to a beetle-fly because an eminent scientist had concluded that God is inordinately fond of beetles. A fish took the fly, rasped my tippet on a boulder, but could not break off. When the trout slid onto my hand, it reached from fingertip to cuff-button and shivered with the colors of spruces and sunsets. I thought that God must be inordinately fond of brook trout, too.

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My discovery is not in the guidebooks, mind you, and neither are other streams of its size, but I have found them -- by serendipity or on purpose -- everywhere in the trout zone from New England to New Mexico, Virginia to Montana. Each big river, after all, is fed by many more highland branches, creeks, and springs. The trout know about all of them.

You could start to organize now, pruning your fishing gear until it fits into a small knapsack with a pair of hip boots. In ~~my part of the country,~~ bear country add a little bell to keep from surprising things that go wuff in the woods. Then lay out your hike on a topographic map. A map is a work of the imagination, when the mountains are covered by snow.

473 words of text

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My discovery is not in the guidebooks, mind you, and neither are other streams of its size, but you can find them on topographic maps -- even when the real thing is covered by snow. You will notice that each big river is fed by many more highland branches, creeks, and springs. The trout know about them. You can count on it.

You could prune your fishing gear, too, until it fits into a small knapsack with a pair of hip boots. In my part of the country, add a little bell to keep from surprising things that go wuff in the woods. Then lay out your hike on the map. A map is a work of the imagination, in winter.

"The land that never was." p. 72 Hamilton

FIELD & STREAM®

July 20, 1994

Too broad
all trout for whole U.S. - plus address - + lyrical
in 400 words?

**Field & Stream**
R.D. #1, Box 892
Dorset, VT 05251
(802) 867-5964

**Lionel Atwill**
Contributing Editor

Datus Proper
Contributing Editor
**Field & Stream**
1085 Hamilton Rd.
Belgrade, MT 59714

Dear Datus :

We have revised the concept for January's travel section.

Adventure will still be the theme, but instead of concentrating on one location--an area of the country that might hold an adventurous trip--we would like you to focus on ***one species*** and tell how adventurous trips ***to several general regions*** in quest of that species enhance the experience of hunting or fishing for that particular creature.

For example, I'm doing a piece on turkey. I plan to write about how getting back to wild country --New Mexico by mule, South Dakota on foot, the Ozarks of Missouri by canoe--enriches the turkey hunting experience. Obviously, there are lots of turkeys in semi-tame locations, but a retreat to wild country--*the creation of an adventure*--changes the rules and one's perception of the game. Some specifics: Living conditions may be harder, but the birds are not as call shy. And mornings are easier because you don't have to get up so damn early to drive someplace, since you're already there.

This approach--***one species/several general regions***--we hope will encourage readers to travel and to seek adventure (ranging from wild to near-suburban, depending on the experience and the perception of the reader) **WITHOUT** placing undue pressure on specific locations.

We would like you to cover trout. Please use examples from the previous suggestion you submitted. That is the sort of stuff we want. But spread out from there and draw on examples from other parts of the country. Mention appropriate gear or techniques if you wish, but the emphasis need not be on hardware. The treatment should be more romantic, more lyrical. We want to re-emphasize the fun part of hunting and fishing and de-emphasize the hard sell on where.

For each subject, we need a source for more information. This should be most general and ***should not include outfitters***. Instead, refer to Chambers of Commerce, established sporting travel services, or state agencies.

We would like 400 to 500 words on this subject. Please ship to me, (hard copy and disc, 3 1/2" preferred) by August 20th. If you have questions, please give me a call.

Best,
Tony

Times Mirror Magazines

August 6, 1994

Mr. Lionel Atwill
R.D.#1
Dorset, VT 05251

Dear Tony,

Short story enclosed, in response to your letter of July 20 and our talk on the telephone. I've made the topic narrow enough to jump across and put in what is supposed to be poetry (in prose).

The obvious illustration would be a brook trout about 10" long in glowing colors. I could arrange a photo expedition with Ben Williams, with whom I've teamed up on other recent stories.

Yours,

Enclosed: "Up the Mountain and into the Woods"
Diskette

(Leftovers)

Above blow-downs and boulders are pools with trout as long as my hand and as well-fed as congressmen. In a good year there are even a few senators. I can watch one drifting closer, rising, inspecting my dry fly. My hand starts trembling, wanting to strike.

The patience matters more than the pattern, because no two successive insects tumbling off the banks are likely to be the same. My rod is 7½' long, my line a 3-weight, my leader fine. The rest of the tackle is a pruning shear for the brush and a little bell to warn off things that go woof in the woods.

When you find what you want, you will feel like Columbus, but please don't make as much noise as he did. There has been too much discovery already. Anglers don't need new worlds growing old. What we need is the "land that never was" of myth.

The swamp-water would be acidic but for the alkaline geology, which produces

The right time to fish (and everything must be done right here) comes when young grouse are big enough to perch on aspen-limbs, looking down at my dog. They are his favorite scent. He takes account of other life in the woods, however, and informs me of problems before they go woof.

Nobody but my dog would be likely to find where I am fishing, because

My stream in the wilderness seeped through roots of alders and red-osier [] dogwoods, then trickles under grassy banks. You

Write about someone else. Case study.
Show them - don't tell them

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