

words of text

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## THE FIRST TIME

"It's crying time again," sang Anna. "You're gonna leave me. I can see that faraway look in your eyes." Translation: My wife was hooshing me out of the house so that she could hold a meeting of her women's investment club without free advice.

By the time I reached the Madison River, it was late morning, but I would have taken time to coach the two women in clean waders and vests with empty pockets -- angling-school equivalent of the academic cap and gown. The newcomers were making thirty-foot casts in shallow water right by the parking place. When I asked what they were using, one of the women said "Prince Nymph" without looking at me, so I moved on.

A quarter-mile upstream, Baetis duns were hatching and blowing away in a gale that discouraged even swallows. Then the wind dropped -- preparing to change directions -- and the riffle above a good pool was covered by tiny sailboats tempest-tossed. Five fish began feeding on the surface and I caught two of them on a size 20 emerger. One trout was a rainbow as long as my forearm, but still thin from spawning. The other was a fat young silvery brown that jumped twice and vibrated in my hand as I removed the hook.



I released both. Fresh fish would be welcome on the table, but trout from the Madison River do not taste as good as they look.

The wind came back hard under my visor so I turned around and splashed downstream to the truck. The two women were still where I had left them, casting ten yards and wondering what to do next. (Wading takes longer to learn than casting, if you have not grown up on mossy rocks.)

When the scream came I ran to help, trained husband that I am, but the emergency was a trout, young splashing brown like mine but caught by a maiden's personal Prince. Scream turned to laugh as the fish came in at high speed and dangled in the air, swinging back and forth while the angler tried to catch it in her bare hand. She did, too. Grasped it firmly, sort of, removed the hook, turned her prey loose, and kept on screaming while cliffs on the far bank screamed back echoes.

"That's my first trout," she said.

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