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LANGUAGE LESSONS

by Datus Proper

Jim McCue is partly to blame for what happened, mind you. When I was looking for a pup with the right ancestors, Jim's dog was winning the biggest field trials for German shorthaired pointers, so naturally I inquired about the champion's social life. Jim told me of a promising litter and I bought Huckleberry over the telephone—one of the quickest of life's big decisions. Jim and I met a few days later at an abandoned airport, turned the pup loose, and

watched him try to catch a flock of starlings before they gained altitude. Jim said that I should let the pup tear around like that for his first year, building up enthusiasm. By the time Jim finished his sentence, Huck was out of sight and I was wondering how much more enthusiasm to expect.

Back home, I introduced the pup to a brand new kennel and concrete run—built for my wife, in a sense, because she had run out of enthusiasm for dogs that dribbled on her floors. It turned out that I should have used a thicker door for the kennel. Huck clawed a hole in the plywood and Anna thought he looked cute, peeking out for company, so she allowed him in the kitchen while I was armor-plating his quarters. By the time I was done, Anna remarked that the pup did not drool. A couple of hours later she reported that he had housebroken himself. After some few months, I sneaked out of my office and heard Huck telling Anna a tale that was making her giggle. His pronunciation was weak, you understand, especially on the consonants. What caught my attention was that he was imitating the cadence of my wife's speech and the pitch of her voice. Must have been a funny story, too, because she's Irish, with more feeling for tragedy than comedy. I'd never realized that she had such a pretty laugh.

Languages are easy to learn, at the right time of life, and that time—for humans—is before puberty. Little children can learn even Irish Gaelic, which is more than I have managed. The right timing turns out to be crucial, however. Neuropsychologists now believe that early childhood is a "critical period"—the time during which a human *must* be exposed to his or her mother tongue. A child that fails to acquire language skills does not develop the necessary brain circuits and is impaired for life. Work is being done on critical periods in dogs, too, and it is going to change the ways we raise puppies. Meanwhile, most of us have probably known dogs with circuits missing.

I do not mean to push the analogy. Huckleberry is a communicator, but neither his logic system nor his sound system has evolved in the same way as mine. What he thinks is language is, in fact, just a game. On the other hand, puppy games made him a faster learner than the kennel-raised dogs I've worked with. In

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nnel and had run It turned el. Huck ked cute, kitchen as done, of hours ter some k telling tion was s. What ce of my a funny tragedy a pretty

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particular, the way he picked up trailing seemed unusual, for a pointing dog.

During that first fall, Jim McCue's advice gave me the excuse to do what Huck and I both wanted anyhow, which was to run wild. There were bigger things than puppy training for me to worry about just then. I needed an optimistic little bundle of energy to exorcise my emotions, focus them at infinity. Optimism was part of Huck's personalities—both of them. "House angel, field demon," Anna called him. When Huck glimpsed our pond for the first time, he took a flying leap into it and



swam toward my wife, who thought he was drowning. "My puppy!" she screamed. I had not heard that tone in her voice since our baby rolled down the stairs (with similar results). Anna waded in to save Huck. He climbed out on his own, shook water all over her, then jumped back in and swam across the pond to me.

A pup this bold would not have been daunted by more early training in obedience. On the other hand, I do not regret my failure to train Huck on the usual tame bobwhites and pigeons. In lieu of them he pointed the meadowlarks, flustered the ducks, and chased the magpies. It might not have been everyone's idea of fun but the most important thing in matching man and dog, I suppose, is temperament. Part of me was right out there running with the pup, eyes shining, tongue hanging out.

The first pheasant that Huck pointed was a hen, which I of course flushed with fanfare. There were not many cocks around but he started pointing those he ran into. I took the finds as serendipitous—gifts from the angels. Any pup can run into a bird, and a pup of the right breeding is always going to point strong scent. It's in his genes. You don't know that you've got a real pheasant dog till he learns trailing.

When Huck was six months and eleven days old, however, my enthusiasm and his reached the same level. He started trailing in grass that was, I thought, too low for a pheasant. I watched for a while, concluded that he was doing a good job of hunting the wrong thing, and decided to ignore him. Hiked fifty yards. Realized that I was alone, looked around, and saw the pup on point. Ran back, caught the bird between us, waited out a great noisy glittering flush, and dropped a rooster in plain sight. Huck pounced and retrieved. He had done it all, seen it all, made the connection.

Two days later, almost at dark, he went on point in cattails. I tried extra-hard to shoot well, which is of course the best way to miss, and the rooster came down winged. I saw it land in a patch of brush and heeled Huck to the place. He tore off across an open field. I kept whistling him back, making him hunt the brush. The stars came out. We did not find the bird till the next day, by which time it was bones and pretty feathers, the rest

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eaten by a skunk. The bird had in fact headed across the open field and Huck had been on its track, if only I had let him follow his nose. That was the last time I tried to teach him anything about trailing.

In his second season, when the pup was a year old, he lost none of the hundred-odd birds that my friends and I shot over him. Hardest to smell were the singles of gray (Hungarian) partridges. Members of the grouse family ran as well as the partridges but left more scent. Pheasants, of course, were the long-distance champions, covering up to a measured mile. It seemed, too, that they shared some of the partridges' ability to suppress scent in an emergency.

Huck was experienced, considering his tender age, but he was not trained by the usual field-trial rules. He remained free to creep or break point in order to stay with a moving bird. Perhaps some pups can trail as well as Huck without being allowed equal discretion. I just haven't seen them.

A year-old pup on his own discretion was, of course, often indiscreet. He would stand on point as long as his bird held, but when it moved there were various possibilities. Hardest of them to handle was a maneuver we'll call the Montana Sprinting Squat. Pickup drivers have a similar ploy called the Texas Rolling Stop, during which the truck coasts through an octagonal sign at forty-five miles per hour. You are supposed to take good intentions into account. Pheasants intend to flush but not within eleven inches of a dog's nose, so they sprint till achieving the velocity of a Texas Rolling Stop and then go airborne, total elapsed time 0.7 seconds.

Fortunately, the Montana Sprinting Squat always worked and the birds always escaped. They were wild and strong, remember. You could not let a pup chase pen-raised birds or he'd catch some of them and perhaps decide that he could hunt successfully on his own. Huck learned that he only got pheasants when we worked together. I ladled on praise when he did things right, of course, but a bird in the mouth was all the encouragement he really needed. At the end of a day we'd both tell my wife that we'd had fun but it was not fun, exactly. It was the happiness that comes with pheasant feathers.

My system (or nonsystem) might be wrong for you. You might lack wild birds or the time to work a pup on them. Your wife might not provide language lessons for the youngster. You might have a kennel-raised dog, or one with less point in his genes. Your specialty might be eastern ruffed grouse, in which case you would be wise to insist that your dog point at first suspicion of scent and hold till released. For covey birds like the partridges and quails, I'd have preferred Huck steady to wing and shot, too, because a dog that breaks can spoil a covey rise. But for the rest I wanted him to trail. I wanted him to get me shots at the old cocks that considered themselves immortal. I wanted him to find winged birds no matter how far they ran. The rewards seemed worth the risk.

A "dog that's going to be any good puts his nose where the scent is," high or low. That's what William Harnden Foster wrote about grouse dogs back in 1942, and Huckleberry reached the same conclusion. When air scent failed, he would work a patch of snowberries on ground scent till I called him off, and a cock would flush the moment my back was turned. It turns out that roosters can run around for a long time in the same halfacre of brush. You might not want to waste time on such birds—if you have easier hunting available. We did not.

Working air scent, on the other hand, was anything but tedious. The pup would trail from one end to another of a twohundred-acre field of grasses planted under the Conservation Reserve Program. Or he'd follow birds out of a brushy bottom, up weedy draws, and into wheat stubble. Some of the pheasants would hold tight at the end of the trails. Others would flush wild. It's what most owners of pointing dogs would have predicted, and what some would call disaster. The pheasants certainly considered it disaster, because we got our share at the end of the trails. I earned the shots, mind you. My wife was teaching aerobic dance classes, working out on a ski machine, and watching her calories while I was eating like a sumo wrestler and getting skinnier by the week. Huck was going through ten cups a day of the expensive high-fat dog food. If you don't want exercise, stay away from pointer pups bred for all-age field trials.

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thing but c of a twoiservation y bottom, pheasants ould flush have presants cerat the end is teaching nine, and estler and in ten cups on't want -age field When you run a young dog almost every day, something happens to its body as well as its mind. Huck put on ten or fifteen pounds of muscles that he would not have developed if he had spent his youth in a kennel. The weight was in the right places, because running is complete exercise for a dog. Being light-boned, he did not look heavy. His brown hair was shiny as a seal's. His pads gave no trouble. His pace would have exhausted any other dog I've had in two days, but Huck kept it up all season. There was, however, a disadvantage that I learned when partridge season opened the next year on September 1: muscles hold heat. I had to whistle him in frequently, sit him down in shade, and give him water. When duck season came, swimming was harder for him too, because his body was so dense that he had to work just to stay afloat. A serious water dog needs some fat.

Perhaps trailing, the way Huck does it, really is a skill that must be acquired before puberty. I don't know. At various times, however, I have watched him hunt with seven other pointing dogs, and that's counting only the good ones. Some of the seven are competitive with him in shoot-to-retrieve trials; one is his half brother. All can follow hot body scent. When Huck takes off after a really sneaky rooster, however, the other dogs have learned that the only way to get involved is to run loops in front of him. That maneuver takes brains, too, of course.

I watch the other dogs when the realize that Huck is on a tough trail. They deduce what is going on but cannot get the hang of it themselves. They look at him as if he were speaking Gaelic, sort of.

LIBERATION

There is much to be gained from letting go of things.

HE MONDEGO RIVER PLUNGES from Portugal's highest range, cuts through the steepest gorge, and dawdles past the oldest university. The flow sections the nation's land and people: granite and shepherds at the top, then terraces and peasants, bottomlands and farmers, streets and students, salt marshes and shipyards.

Adriano and I drove from ocean to headwaters in one afternoon, winding our way up through all the strata, eager to drink from the Mondego's source. Next day at dawn we looked down at the river-half blue, half foamy-white, and small at the bottom of its canvon. Adriano showed me the goat trail down through the rocks.

I rushed to assemble my rod and tie on a team of three Portuguese wet flies. They should have been good before the sun warmed the water. I cast upstream through the pools, letting the flies drift back past me, deep. Then I fished cross-stream and watched the line swing around in the current. When all else failed, I teased the top fly along the surface, the two below it serving to keep my leader straight. It is a good method for eager trout, but these weren't.

We came to an eddy that had created a little foothold for alders. A bird was dancing in them but I paid attention only to my flies swinging under the brush, troutless. The bird still danced. It was a desperate dance, but then I was getting desperate myself. The flutter came again and I saw that the victim was a pintasilgo (English goldfinch) of sweet song. I waded the stream, boots shipping water. The finch had tried to eat a trout-fly that someone had cast across the stream with a spinning rod. The float had caught in the alders, the line had broken, and the fly had dangled, a cruel trap. I unhooked the bird and held it for a moment to calm down, soft black and yellow body quiet in my caress, scarlet face looking at me. When I opened my hand the finch lay for a moment, not realizing that it was free, and then flashed off through green leaves.

My own line had been dangling in the



current below me during the rescue operation. I waded back to shore, cleaned the flies of some flotsam they had picked up, and cast them to the upstream end of the eddy. My intention was just to get the line straightened out so that I could wind it back evenly onto the reel. Chances of catching anything after that commotion were slim. But the line twitched as it drifted under a limb and I pulled the rod tight. A strong trout flashed gold, hooked on the top fly. I trotted her downstream at once, keeping the angle between me and fish constant till she tired and slid into my net. She was a brown trout, a Portuguese native of antecedents older than Adriano's. As I released her, my back began to feel warm and little glints reflected from the current. The sun had risen over the rim of the gorge.

THERE IS A MODEST CLAIM THAT I MAY make: I have liberated myself from trophies and scores. It was not difficult—not like liberation from fear, which only a few heroes achieve. Mostly I just got older. Once I dreamt of catching big trout, read books about how to do it, and chased them from Patagonia to Donegal. When I catch one now, I am still pleased. It is a gift, but it is not a triumph.

The scores were a phase too. I had learned to return most of my trout to the water, unharmed, and thought that numbers were needed to document my prowess. It was non-consumptive consumerism, a competition without messy

Now that my affair with trout has progressed through sophistication to the primitive, I am free to pursue a two-little-fish dinner in bliss. I take comfort in the relationship enjoyed by the first people who hunted food in these streams after the glacier. The method is different and the restraints are stronger—must be, in these days of fewer trout and more anglers—but the emotion is the same. I feel sure of this. Fishing is a kind of anthropology, a way of excavating layers, digging into strata built by my ancestors, finding an underground river.

ADRIANO STOPPED CASTING AND STARTed looking for a trail up the hill. I fished with redoubled ferocity. He told me that he knew of a field of wild strawberries and would have a look for it on the way back to the village. I was to feel free to fish as long as I wished. I did wish, for some reason of incomprehensible hunger, but pretended that I did not and tagged along.

The strawberries were almost as scarce as the trout. We had to get on our knees and search through the grass for red beads. They were good but they did not flee, so I lost interest. (Adolescent males, including overgrown ones like me, are all hunters. Older men are content to be gatherers. Gathering may require a higher level of consciousness, if by "higher" you mean older and therefore closer to heaven. Then again, some of the things we call levels of consciousness may be layers of platitudes.)

We worked our way up the hill in stages. A little boy somewhere was calling for a strayed kid, urging it back to the fold before night came, and the wolves. Closer to us, a blackbird sang to the setting sun from a thicket of pines. There was no hint in his song of complaint or aggression. The melody rippled out like goats' bells across the valley, or like the bright stream over its boulders. I did not care what the ornithologists might think: that blackbird was singing the song I hum when I fish for little wild trout.

Ed Zern has retired, but reprints of classic "Exit Laughing" columns will continue to appear on this page.

Excerpted from the forthcoming book, The Last Old Place: A Search Through Portugal, by Datus C. Propel To be published by Simon & Schuster, New York, in March 1993.



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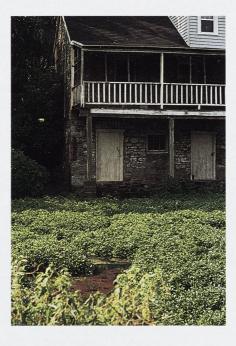
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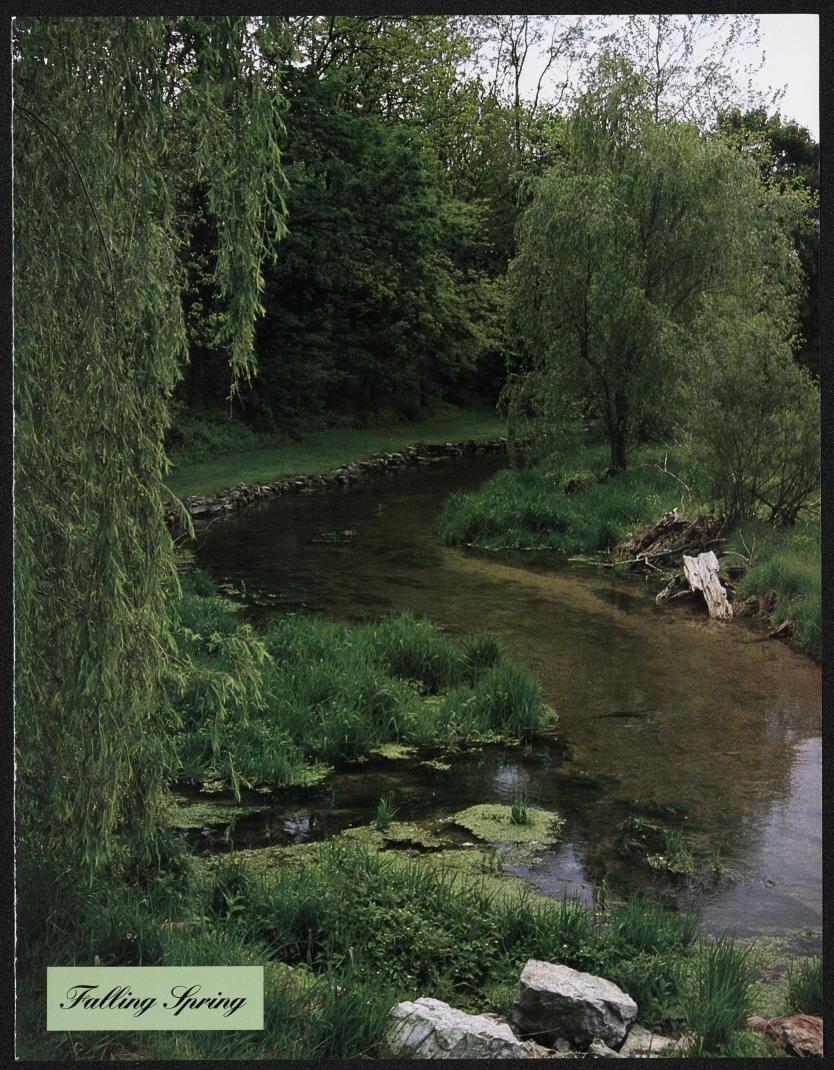
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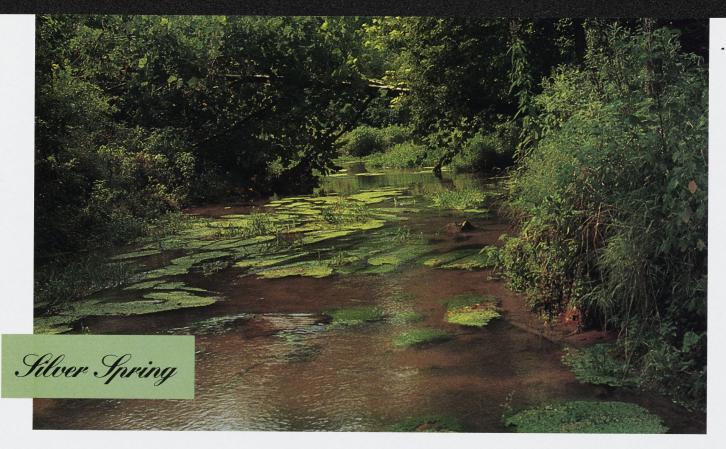
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The Limestone Country

The first things you should know about the Cumberland Valley are that it is not a valley and has no Cumberland River. It does not even lie entirely within the modern boundaries of Cumberland County. To reduce confusion, therefore, I shall refer to the area as the "limestone country." It lies in southcentral Pennsylvania. The flat part is fertile (for farmers who don't mind plowing soil peppered with rocks). The steep ridges and knobs are covered by secondgrowth forests, and in these hills are small streams – not spring creeks – that may have been good for trout when the environment was primitive but are mar-

The waters of the non-Cumberland non-Valley run in all directions. Most of them end, after a great deal of winding and merging, in the Susquehanna River. Falling Spring Branch flows to the Potomac. Saltwater is never far away, but there is a thermal barrier between trout and Atlantic: warmwater where bass and catfish and sunfish can survive, but not salmonids. More accurately, there are springfed headwaters where isolated pockets of trout survive. Their scarcity makes them doubly prized, as with all jewels.

Americans have been chasing the limestone-country trout since frontier days. Carlisle was on the edge of civilization, then, and the army built a base

which is, if I am not mistaken, the Army War College today. (I have given seminars in its old red-brick buildings and then sneaked out to fish the lower Letort where it winds through the campus. Caught some trout, too, but not wild ones.)

The region has other old houses of red brick and white frame, some of them with log-cabin skeletons underneath. Best of all are the farmhouses of gray limestone. These, at least, are so obviously rare and beautiful that they are often restored. Many of the frame and brick houses have been torn down, rented out cheaply, or just abandoned, like the good old churches on the main streets of the small towns. Many of the local folks have moved to new houses – the kind with shiny siding. It's not that they think it looks better. They want what is underneath the siding: insulation. Old houses don't have that, and Americans today like to live at a steady, draft-free 70 degrees.

The limestone country is at the south end of the North, butted right up against the Mason-Dixon line. The winters are northern enough to push pheasants into a farmer's barn and then freeze them. The summers are southern enough to push trout to the headwaters and then simmer them. It is a region of humid air and dry streams, like most of eastern America.

I love it just the same. It gave me

A popular stream of yesteryear, Silver Spring is sadly representative of numerous smaller places now forgotten - lost in recent decades to road construction and tract housing. Today little fishable water remains. Like other calcium-rich waters of southcentral Pennsylvania, Silver Spring was once thickly populated with native brook trout.

blessed relief from Washington, in all the years I lived there. This is a personal history (like all histories), and for me the best things about Washington were the roads leading away from it. If this were even a half-century earlier, I would have thought the limestone country the best place in all of America. It is still one of the best on the East Coast, and this is the biggest of its problems. It is a nice Brown trout first took hold in limestone country in Cedar Run; local anglers caught and carried them in buckets to the Letort. place to live for the semi-adventurous. There are pretty small towns within easy range of the big cities, and the climate is not as bad as in some of the other places where our forefathers did their forefathering. And so the population has doubled since I started fishing the limestone country. Some of it has reached near-urban density. Cars creep through

old Chambersburg. There are chic shoppes on the banks of the Letort. Once, recently, when I took my family on a weekend fishing trip, we got stuck in a miles-long jam of cars heading for a car-parts fair.

It's too bad. The limestone country is not California yet, but it's moving in that direction.

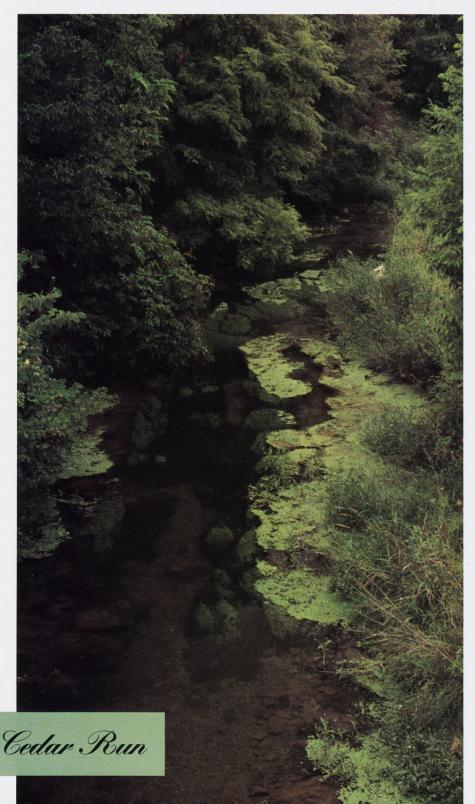
The spring creeks are at the bottom of the heap - literally. They run not on the forested hillsides but in the lowest valleys, where people live, sewage drains, and interstate highways follow the path of least resistance. On some of the Letort, the banks shake from trucks blasting by, and there are not many stretches that can still be called beautiful. The pattern of small riparian holdings has been hard on the fishing too; few landowners have had economic incentives to restore their streams. Even so, as we will see, the news is not all bad. Some of the people who loved the limestone streams to death now want to love them back to life.

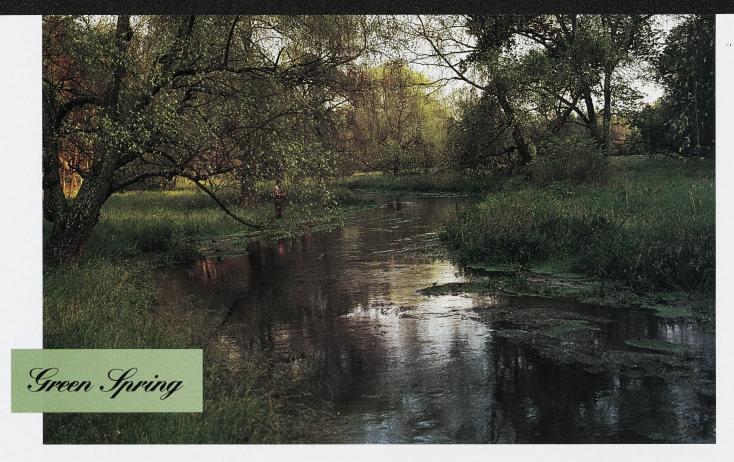
The Cradle of American Fly Fishing?

Well, no. American fly fishing did not start in America. It had its origins in Britain and Ireland – misty islands some distance east of Pennsylvania. But there was, if not a cradle, at least a sort of American barbell of angling. It ran from a weighty bulge in the Catskills down through the Poconos to another bulge in the limestone country of southcentral Pennsylvania. There are good limestone streams elsewhere in Pennsylvania – Penns Creek and Spruce Creek in the middle of the state, for example – but that was Indian country back when Carlisle was an army base.

The writers who fished in the barbell seem to me to have developed faster than most of the those in the rest of America. Theodore Gordon, for example, ended in the Catskills but began (or at least fished from the age of 14) in the Cumberland Valley, "where there are many fine streams that gush forth in full volume from a great spring or springs in the solid limestone rocks of that section." Gordon is the first American whose accounts I can easily understand, because he fished in the ways that you and I fish today.

General Gibson, on the other hand, was an antique, but he must have known





how to handle his tackle. He began using it in 1790, in the big old Cumberland County. He found "three good trout streams" - "Big Springs," the "Letart" and Silver Spring. The latter had "the largest and best trout in the State. They are from one to three pounds...." They were all wild, native brook trout, back then. Once Gibson landed 20 in a hour on flies.² (The biggest brook trout I have caught in the limestone country was smaller than the smallest of his.)

At Big Spring, Gibson also met "Laughing Joe," who "makes his own lines and flies, holds a rod eighteen feet long and throws thirty-six or forty feet of line with one hand...." This is the kind of thing that puzzles me about so many old American accounts. I have an ancient 18-foot rod that is difficult to hold off the ground, let alone cast, with one hand. How did Laughing Joe do it? Did he cast his flies up- or downstream? How far did he let them sink? He must have been good, because the water was hardfished even then.

Gordon helps me to understand. On opening day, he says, there would be a hundred anglers on Big Spring, and the total catch would add up to three or four thousand trout. "The native anglers made their own rods of two pieces of hickory, lashed or ferruled together and painted green. Usually they cared not

for a reel," and they used but one fly. Later, Gordon found the same stream ideal for dry flies.3 And I remember old anglers telling me that Big Spring stayed good till after World War II, with brook trout rising for small mayflies.

The strangest thing about the history - stranger even than one-handed 18foot hickory rods – is that until recently the limestone spring creeks made so little impact on American anglers and angling methods. There are repeated references like this one from 1911: "Difficulties we have to overcome, but they are not the difficulties of the English chalk stream." 4 Most American anglers - even the writers - had no notion that chalkstream techniques could be relevant on this side of the Atlantic. Fishing conditions are in fact much the same on British chalkstreams and American limestoners. Theodore Gordon did not understand that, but he had never been to England. Edward R. Hewitt did not understand, and he had been to England.

Vincent C. Marinaro understood. He must have made the connection between limestone and chalk by reading, because he did not actually visit the chalkstreams till long after he published A Modern Dry Fly Code in 1950. There had been other good American writers, but none had grasped British precedents well enough to build on them. It was not

Green Spring is still a fine, fishable limestoner of several miles in length. A number of large, active farms along its banks have insulated it against development. Nutrients from a commercial trout hatchery in the headwaters, however, contribute to channelchoking weed growth.

till mid-twentieth century that we got our first world-class angling book, the first that did not have to start by re-inventing the wheel. It sprang from the streams of the limestone country.

Stenothermal Waters

Limestone spring creeks and chalkstreams are not the same but they are chemically similar, and the chemistry provides high fertility. Equally important, they are stenothermal – meaning that their temperatures fluctuate in a

narrow range, relative to that of streams fed directly by rain or snowmelt. (In Pennsylvania, these latter streams are called "freestone" – as opposed to limestone – waters. My dictionary does not give a definition for "freestone" in this sense, and in most of the world the term is not used.)

Streams that issue from springs should not form anchor-ice in the winter or reach temperatures lethal to trout

Famous Letort Spring Run at Bonny Brook, site of a limestone quarry. Doses of insecticides from an upstream watercress farm have killed fish in recent years. Weed-cutting and placement of fresh spawning gravel by Trout Unlimited volunteers have helped. in the summer. Further, water volumes are *relatively* constant when streams elsewhere are in drought or flood. I have, nevertheless, seen both the Letort and Falling Springs Branch when local downpours made them too high and dirty to fish. The Yellow Breeches has important rain-water sources.

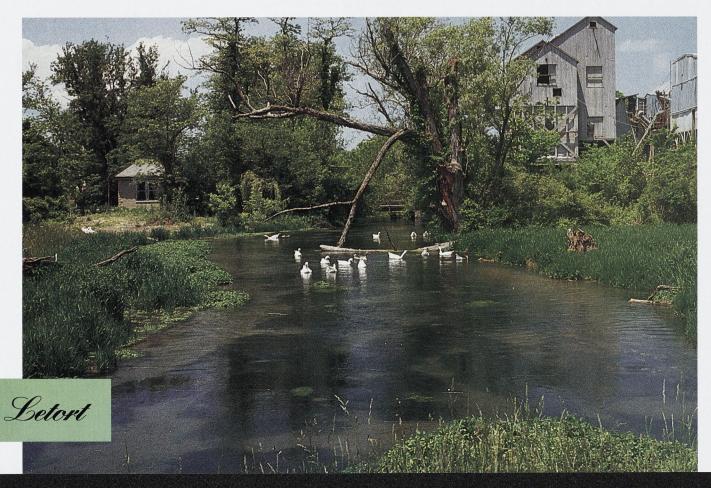
There are spring creeks in the West which are, today, in better condition than either the Pennsylvania limestoners or the English chalkstreams. There are tailwater fisheries that provide the same kind of fishing, and more of it, without sources in springs. Americans have come to love such fishing. Our fly fishing boom of recent years has focused on the spring creeks and other rich streams. We have by no means stopped fishing in the less-fertile waters, but our books and our fishing schools have emphasized the techniques of stenothermal streams. Such waters tend to produce heavy hatches and rising fish which we catch, or try to catch, with imitative flies – those that match the hatch. The fish often feed visibly on or near the surface, so we use many dry flies or nearsurface nymphs. It is a kind of hunting, really: stalking and aiming at a visible quarry, rather than waiting for something mysterious to happen in the depths. The people who are drawn to fly fishing in the first place often seem especially drawn to this particular kind.

The Spring Creeks Today

The Pennsylvania limestone creeks, then, offer a sport of special attractions to the residents of Megalopolis. In the absence of private waters, the offer is almost without costs and restrictions. And so, of course, the fishing has drawn crowds that seem enormous by comparison to those of the sixties. I have stayed as far as possible from the crowds. This is why I promised not to give you a flyshop's guide. My personal limestone map is different from most.

You have to decide, first, whether to fish on your schedule or Nature's. Perhaps the best time for you is a Sunday afternoon. You drive to the Letort Spring Run after a late breakfast, park, and wander where the mood takes you. It feels good. You don't catch much, but you were not expecting to do so; everybody has told you what a difficult stream this is

If you want to fish during convenient hours, there is an alternative: Go where there is a concentration of trout willing to take a deep nymph at any time. You could try the Yellow Breeches. It has a





caught a few times — which usually does not take long. There is a concentration of anglers, too.

Alternatively, you could time your visits to hit the hatches: Nature's schedule. It is not convenient. The *Tricos* provide the most abundant and long-lasting of hatches, but it comes in the early morning, or even late at night if the weather is unusually hot. This timing thins out the anglers.

The Letort has had its troubles - the usual assortment, plus insecticides that washed down from the cress beds at the headwaters – but of all the limestoners, it is the only one that improved while I was watching. Earlier in this century, sewage from the town of Carlisle had turned the lower part of the Letort from a brook trout stream into a sewer. A new sewage-treatment facility changed that.

Vince Marinaro is often associated in writing with the upper Letort, so I should mention that he liked the lower part better. He showed it to me at sunrise on July 20, 1985, right after I had returned from a tour of duty in Europe. Vince's bad hip made walking difficult, by then, so he waded into the river right below a bridge and spent the whole *Trico* hatch casting to a few fish that he had been educating all summer. I roamed a mile of the stream. There

and they took flies without caution. The fish-breeders had managed to perfect a strain of browns as stupid as the usual hatchery rainbows. I worried about the impact of degenerate genes on the old Letort strain. Fortunately, most of the stocked fish could not figure out how to reproduce. (I watched them trying in the fall.)

The rise was over by mid-morning, so Vince guided me to other access points just for a look. The stream had good pools and runs everywhere. Vince said that he'd been watching it through the years and thinking how wonderful it could be. Now that it had trout in it instead of sewage, he was delighted.

Other developments on the Letort have not been so encouraging. Bill Horn tells me that in 1989 there was a major die-off of weeds from the watercress farm at the head of one fork down to Fox's meadow. The Trico hatch was weak too. The sulfur duns have been growing scarcer for a long time. Twenty years ago, you might have done well during their afternoon hatch. It is so thin now that you have to wait till late evening, when the spinners all fall within a few minutes and the trout see enough food to arouse their interest.

Big Spring, near Newville, is of all the limestone-country streams the one I

TU volunteers launch the Falling Spring Greenway by collecting samples of stream biota - Vincent Marinaro once calculated that a limestone trout had available 5,000 pounds of food per acre!

would have been most eager to fish 50 years ago. Before I got to it, however, water quality collapsed. Most of the brook trout and mayflies went with it. The stream was taken over by cress bugs (alias sow bugs or water lice). At a Trout Unlimited meeting, we asked state fisheries biologists about this, and one of them said: "We can't manage a stream for invertebrates." It was a

memorable position – about like a dairy farmer refusing to consider the condition of his pasture. Perhaps attitudes have changed. This stream has a single source in a spring that is indeed big, so it could be cleaned up more easily than most. It always did have some good brown trout in its lower reaches for diligent seekers of truth.

Electrofishing found predictably few fish in stretches of severely degraded habitat. The ambitious Greenway project (see Trout's Window, p. 9) aims to restore Falling Spring Branch to its former glory.

Falling Spring Branch, near Chambersburg, was my favorite until 1980. An occasional trout could be found rising to terrestrials even during the off-hours. (The stream is so small in the midst of its meadows that insects are bound to fall in.) Water quality was the way Tricos liked it: not as poor as Big Spring but not pristine, either. Most anglers had not yet figured out how to fish the *Tricos* and I had stretches to myself on summer dawns. Today, however, the stream's wild rainbows - unusual in this part of the country - are almost gone. Some stretches of stream are barren of all fish, but other sections have wild browns. (Bill Horn heard of one 23 inches long that was caught in 1990.) Some dedicated people are working hard to restore the stream with a Falling Spring Greenway. Blessings on them. This is something worth saving.

Over the years, I sampled all of the well-known limestone streams and others not so well known. Silver Spring and Green Spring Run had some fishing but were not as good as the Letort. There were other little spring creeks too. Some of them are still there, but I heard of one that was paved over for an interstate it. I've watched the process in England and participated in it in Montana. (In both cases, admittedly, the pattern of land-ownership provides more incentives.) You cut off sources of pollution and fence off the banks to prevent degradation by cattle. You put in stream improvements to restore pools and clean spawning-gravel. You shore up crumbling banks. If you can afford it, you get into the stream with heavy equipment that lifts out silt and corrects decades of abuse in a few days. It looks like a violent cure. It works splendidly when it's done right, and we have learned more about avoiding errors.

What do we do with the reclaimed streams? We go fishing in them. There are a lot of us, and God isn't making trout streams any more. We have seldom been successful in apportioning access to public streams. Americans chafe under such restrictions.

Can we learn to manage success?



Gordon, Theodore. The Complete Fly Fisherman, edited by John McDonald. NY:Nick Lyons Books, 1989, p.111.

²The quotations from Gibson are drawn from an article by Austin S. Hogan in The American Fly Fisher, Vol. 3 No. 4 (Fall 1976), p.12.

In The Complete Fly Fisherman, pp. 112 and 188. ⁴Rice, E.B., from The Field & Stream Treasury of Trout Fishing, edited by Leonard M. Wright, Jr.





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angler can match with small (size 20 to 22) Blue Wing Olives. Midges hatch consistently throughout the winter, offering challenging dry-fly fishing with Griffith's Gnats (size 20 to 24). With the low, clear winter water levels, the wading angler can prowl the banks and cast nymphs to big pods of visible fish. Scud imitations, small Pheasant Tails, and midge pupae work best.

The winter sun doesn't penetrate the canyon until about 11 A.M. and darkness sets in around 4 P.M., so midday is the time to be there. Fish downstream from the dam or upstream from Little Hole: both access points are a short drive from the Flaming Gorge Lodge ([801] 889-3773), where housekeeping facilities can be rented. Although guide services are not generally available in the winter, the Spinner Fall Fly Shop in Salt Lake City ([801] 583-2602) can provide reliable advice as well as flies and equipment.

Expect both water and air temperatures in the 30s to low 40s and dress accordingly. And, yes, it might snow. Remember—this is Utah, self-proclaimed ski capital of the nation.—WILLIAM G. TAPPLY

THE MADISON

Winter fishing in the northern Rockies is not something that you can plan, exactly. The weather is too unpredictable. On the other hand, let us suppose that your spouse wants to vacation at a ski lodge so that the two of you can meet some other nice couples for a change. There are ski resorts near the Madison River. By a happy coincidence, there are also fly shops with tackle for rent, just in case you decide not to raise suspicions by packing your own.

When you get to the river's bank, you will not have to wait in line for your recreation. You will walk on snow where the only other tracks were made by a mink. You may hear an ouzel singing in the willows, too, and when you do, tip your hat. The ouzel is an unconventional bird who fishes the Madison all winter and thinks that spring starts in February. (Your spouse may know somebody else who fits that description.)

The Madison runs at minimum volume in winter, making wading easy, and the fishing pressure is low enough that the trout can relax. I have landed them in near-blizzards, releasing them under water so that they would not turn into fish-flavored popsicles. These days, however, I wait for pleasant weather, which comes along sometimes in January and frequently thereafter.

On the lower reaches of the Madison

especially, the fish may not be willing to move far for their lunch. In this case you can prospect with a float and split shot, letting your nymph bump right along the bottom, covering the water foot by foot. It is meticulous work, but it beats riding a lift uphill and skiing back down.

One advantage of the float-and-shot method is that—with a long rod—you can fish without stripping in line on every cast. This in turn means that you can use full-fingered neoprene gloves. The rest of you is easy to keep warm, but fingers are a weak point in the design of the human body. Another of our factory defects is that we have only two legs with which to retain balance. The solution is a pair of wading shoes with felt soles or cleats. Falling into the river is not as much fun as it might be in August.

Best news last. What is surprising about the Madison is not that the winter fishing is sometimes slow, but that it is often lively. Look for a good hatch of midges—especially on a mild, gray day in February and March. Be prepared then to stalk feeding fish as you would in summer. Use light tackle and fish upstream with an unweighted midge pupa, or even a dry fly. I don't know why heavy rainbows bother to rise through cold water for such minuscule insects.

Before you set out, get a current report on the fishing. For the upper Madison, call Blue Ribbon Flies in West Yellowstone ([406] 646-7642). For the Madison below Beartrap Canyon, call one of the Bozeman shops: Montana Troutfitters ([406] 587-4707) or The River's Edge ([406] 586-5373).—DATUS PROPER

WHITE RIVER

To trout-fishing enthusiasts, the White River in north Arkansas is sacred water. Never mind that it lacks the true backcountry essence of, say, the Yellowstone or the Madison. Don't worry that's it's in the South and not the West. Try to forget that most anglers passing by in the long green johnboats with movie-directors' chairs are casting corn and marshmallows instead of handtied flies. These things don't matter, because the White is quite possibly America's best trout river in terms of the number and size of fish it produces. Winter fishing is extraordinary.

The two most popular sections are the Bull Shoals tailwater, a 100-mile stretch from Bull Shoals Dam to Guion, and the Beaver Dam tailwater, 5 miles of water off U.S. Highway 62 near Eureka Springs. A 4.5-mile-long tributary of the White, the North Fork River below

Norfork Dam, also draws considerable attention. Here, near the town of Norfork, Mike Manley caught the 38-pound 9-ounce former world-record brown trout in 1988.

Big browns are the White's main attraction, especially in November when large mature fish spawn in the upper reaches of the Bull Shoals tailwater. Three- to 5-pounders are common, and browns running 10 to 30 pounds and more are always a possibility.

Rainbows are the White's bread-andbutter trout. Over a million were stocked in 1992, and at times nearly every cast will garner a 9- to 16-inch fish. A smattering of cutthroats is also present, thanks to stepped-up stocking efforts by the game and fish commission.

When dam releases are low, fly anglers enjoy good fishing. Suggested winter patterns include Woolly Buggers, Woolly Worms, sow bugs, scuds, and nymphs like the Tellico, Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear, Montana, and brown. A 6-weight 8- or 9-foot rod with weight-forward line is ideal for most conditions.

Spin fishermen prefer ultralight to medium rods rigged with 4- to 8-poundtest line. For best results use small lures; top producers are in-line spinners, spoons, and sinking crankbaits.

The stretch of river from Bull Shoals Dam to the downstream boundary of Bull Shoals State Park is designated a "catch-and-release only" brown trout fishery from November 1 through January 31. Tackle in that reach at that time is limited to artificial lures or flies with a single, barbless hook, not larger than size 8. On the rest of the White, the creel limit is two browns in the total creel of six trout. Browns in possession must be at least 16 inches long. Information about guided fishing, resorts, and other services is available by phoning the chambers of commerce in Mountain Home ([501] 425-5111) or Mountain View ([501] 269-8068). A fishing regulations guide and free White River map are available from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Information and Education Division, Dept. FS, 2 Natural Resources Dr., Little Rock, Ark. 72205 ([501] 223-6351). To order a fishing license and trout permit, have your Visa or Mastercard ready and phone toll-free, (800) 364-GAME.—KEITH SUTTON

SAN JUAN RIVER

Many factors make for an ideal winter trout stream. Accessibility and moderate climate are important, but above all, the stream must have plenty of good-sized trout that feed through the winter. The

days that you like, you can count on some midges. Whether or not the trout come up to them is another question, and I can't answer it for you except to say sometimes they do and sometimes they don't-which is one of the things I love about trout. There's winter caddis, too. Stream I know in Connecticut, tiny little caddisflies sometimes hatch even on the real cold days. I like to cast right up onto the shell ice and twitch the fly into the water. Those trout lie tight against the ice. Their little noses poke up within an inch of it. I've had good dry-fly fishing to that caddisfly hatch on days when my reel froze up solid."

We sat quietly for a few minutes sipping our coffee and gazing at the water. Ed's little fire had died to a few smoldering embers. I sensed that he was about to wade back into the stream. "You've told me how to find them and how to get them to bite," I said. "You said there was a third thing. . . ."

He grinned. "Enjoying it. You're young and smart. You like the warm days. So do I. So do the trout, for that matter. But even then it's tough. And when you do manage to hook one of them, he gives you a fight like a hunk of frozen driftwood. If you want fast fishing, if you want your trout to tear line off your reel—hell, if you want to be comfortable—wait till June. Fishing's always tough in winter."

He stood up, fastened the flaps of his cap under his chin, and picked up his rod. "But if you're a nutty old codger like me, you like it tough. It reminds you that

you're still alive."

TRY IT ED'S WAY A FEW TIMES EACH winter—just to verify that I'm alive. I shiver in knee-deep water and knock ice from my guides, allotting myself 15 minutes between trips to my bankside fire. Now and then I even catch a few trout. Glo-bugs work on even the coldest winter days when I've managed to locate some trout clustered in a spring hole.

A trout river in the dead of winter can be a desolately beautiful black-and-white place—all dark ice and gray snow and black water and bare, gnarled trees. The fisherman feels that he and maybe a few distant crows are the only living things around—no warblers in the bushes, no insects in the air, no other fishermen in the water. Snowflakes spit from low pewter skies. Trout sulk on the bottom. It's a test for the spirit, and bitter but nourishing medicine for the soul.

I still look forward to that January

thaw, though. I'm not as tough as old Ed, I know, because even on those fair days, the best part comes when I stop.

THE DESCHUTES

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- Waterproof boots or neoprene waders (as fashion or conditions require), two pairs of socks (polypropylene and wool), thermal long johns, fingerless gloves, a warm hat, and enough layers of outer garments to allow peeling down when, and if, the day warms up.
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- snow on the ground, the reflected light will, quite simply, blind you. If you drop one pair of glasses in the drink, you're finished for the day, so bring a backup.
- Plenty of food. It's winter, so spoil yourself. Sandwiches, hot coffee, smoked meats, fruit, pockets full of nuts and raisins and hard candies will give the day a warm glow even if the fish don't bite.
- If you want a fire for a midday meal or a warmup in the late afternoon, pack along kindling and wood (there won't likely be any dry stuff around). But stay in the fire rings.
- If you must wade, wear a flotation device. Because of the risk of hypothermia and shock, winter water is too cold to gamble with.
- Finally, check local regulations. Some states prohibit trout fishing during some or all of the winter months, and many areas close some waters seasonally but permit fishing on others, often under special winter restrictions.

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angler can match with small (size 20 to 22) Blue Wing Olives. Midges hatch consistently throughout the winter, offering challenging dry-fly fishing with Griffith's Gnats (size 20 to 24). With the low, clear winter water levels, the wading angler can prowl the banks and cast nymphs to big pods of visible fish. Scud imitations, small Pheasant Tails, and midge pupae work best.

The winter sun doesn't penetrate the canyon until about 11 A.M. and darkness sets in around 4 P.M., so midday is the time to be there. Fish downstream from the dam or upstream from Little Hole: both access points are a short drive from the Flaming Gorge Lodge ([801] 889-3773), where housekeeping facilities can be rented. Although guide services are not generally available in the winter, the Spinner Fall Fly Shop in Salt Lake City ([801] 583-2602) can provide reliable advice as well as flies and equipment.

Expect both water and air temperatures in the 30s to low 40s and dress accordingly. And, yes, it might snow. Remember—this is Utah, self-proclaimed ski capital of the ration.—WILLIAM G. TAPPLY

THE MADISON

Winter fishing in the northern Rockies is not something that you can plan, exactly. The weather is too unpredictable. On the other hand, let us suppose that your spouse wants to vacation at a ski lodge so that the two of you can meet some other nice couples for a change. There are ski resorts near the Madison River. By a happy coincidence, there are also fly shops with tackle for rent, just in case you decide not to raise suspicions by packing your own.

When you get to the river's bank, you will not have to wait in line for your recreation. You will walk on snow where the only other tracks were made by a mink. You may hear an ouzel singing in the willows, too, and when you do, tip your hat. The ouzel is an unconventional bird who fishes the Madison all winter and thinks that spring starts in February. (Your spouse may know somebody else who fits that description.)

The Madison runs at minimum volume in winter, making wading easy, and the fishing pressure is low enough that the trout can relax. I have landed them in near-blizzards, releasing them under water so that they would not turn into fish-flavored popsicles. These days, however, I wait for pleasant weather, which comes along sometimes in January and frequently thereafter.

On the lower reaches of the Madison

especially, the fish may not be willing to move far for their lunch. In this case you can prospect with a float and split shot, letting your nymph bump right along the bottom, covering the water foot by foot. It is meticulous work, but it beats riding a lift uphill and skiing back down.

One advantage of the float-and-shot method is that—with a long rod—you can fish without stripping in line on every cast. This in turn means that you can use full-fingered neoprene gloves. The rest of you is easy to keep warm, but fingers are a weak point in the design of the human body. Another of our factory defects is that we have only two legs with which to retain balance. The solution is a pair of wading shoes with felt soles or cleats. Falling into the river is not as much fun as it might be in August.

Best news last. What is surprising about the Madison is not that the winter fishing is sometimes slow, but that it is often lively. Look for a good hatch of midges—especially on a mild, gray day in February and March. Be prepared then to stalk feeding fish as you would in summer. Use light tackle and fish upstream with an unweighted midge pupa, or even a dry fly. I don't know why heavy rainbows bother to rise through cold water for such minuscule insects.

Before you set out, get a current report on the fishing. For the upper Madison, call Blue Ribbon Flies in West Yellowstone ([406] 646-7642). For the Madison below Beartrap Canyon, call one of the Bozeman shops: Montana Troutfitters ([406] 587-4707) or The River's Edge ([406] 586-5373).—DATUS PROPER

WHITE RIVER

To trout-fishing enthusiasts, the White River in north Arkansas is sacred water. Never mind that it lacks the true backcountry essence of, say, the Yellowstone or the Madison. Don't worry that's it's in the South and not the West. Try to forget that most anglers passing by in the long green johnboats with movie-directors' chairs are casting corn and marshmallows instead of handtied flies. These things don't matter, because the White is quite possibly America's best trout river in terms of the number and size of fish it produces. Winter fishing is extraordinary.

The two most popular sections are the Bull Shoals tailwater, a 100-mile stretch from Bull Shoals Dam to Guion, and the Beaver Dam tailwater, 5 miles of water off U.S. Highway 62 near Eureka Springs. A 4.5-mile-long tributary of the White, the North Fork River below

Norfork Dam, also draws considerable attention. Here, near the town of Norfork, Mike Manley caught the 38-pound 9-ounce former world-record brown trout in 1988.

Big browns are the White's main attraction, especially in November when large mature fish spawn in the upper reaches of the Bull Shoals tailwater. Three- to 5-pounders are common, and browns running 10 to 30 pounds and more are always a possibility.

Rainbows are the White's bread-andbutter trout. Over a million were stocked in 1992, and at times nearly every cast will garner a 9- to 16-inch fish. A smattering of cutthroats is also present, thanks to stepped-up stocking efforts by the game and fish commission.

When dam releases are low, fly anglers enjoy good fishing. Suggested winter patterns include Woolly Buggers, Woolly Worms, sow bugs, scuds, and nymphs like the Tellico, Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear, Montana, and brown. A 6-weight 8- or 9-foot rod with weight-forward line is ideal for most conditions.

Spin fishermen prefer ultralight to medium rods rigged with 4- to 8-pound-test line. For best results use small lures; top producers are in-line spinners, spoons, and sinking crankbaits.

The stretch of river from Bull Shoals Dam to the downstream boundary of Bull Shoals State Park is designated a "catch-and-release only" brown trout fishery from November 1 through January 31. Tackle in that reach at that time is limited to artificial lures or flies with a single, barbless hook, not larger than size 8. On the rest of the White, the creel limit is two browns in the total creel of six trout. Browns in possession must be at least 16 inches long. Information about guided fishing, resorts, and other services is available by phoning the chambers of commerce in Mountain Home ([501] 425-5111) or Mountain View ([501] 269-8068). A fishing regulations guide and free White River map are available from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Information and Education Division, Dept. FS, 2 Natural Resources Dr., Little Rock, Ark. 72205 ([501] 223-6351). To order a fishing license and trout permit, have your Visa or Mastercard ready and phone toll-free, (800) 364-GAME.—KEITH SUTTON

SAN JUAN RIVER

Many factors make for an ideal winter trout stream. Accessibility and moderate climate are important, but above all, the stream must have plenty of good-sized trout that feed through the winter. The days that you like, you can count on some midges. Whether or not the trout come up to them is another question, and I can't answer it for you except to say sometimes they do and sometimes they don't—which is one of the things I love about trout. There's winter caddis, too. Stream I know in Connecticut, tiny little caddisflies sometimes hatch even on the real cold days. I like to cast right up onto the shell ice and twitch the fly into the water. Those trout lie tight against the ice. Their little noses poke up within an inch of it. I've had good dry-fly fishing to that caddisfly hatch on days when my reel froze up solid."

We sat quietly for a few minutes sipping our coffee and gazing at the water. Ed's little fire had died to a few smoldering embers. I sensed that he was about to wade back into the stream. "You've told me how to find them and how to get them to bite," I said. "You said there was

a third thing...."

He grinned. "Enjoying it. You're young and smart. You like the warm days. So do I. So do the trout, for that matter. But even then it's tough. And when you do manage to hook one of them, he gives you a fight like a hunk of frozen driftwood. If you want fast fishing, if you want your trout to tear line off your reel—hell, if you want to be comfortable—wait till June. Fishing's always tough in winter."

He stood up, fastened the flaps of his cap under his chin, and picked up his rod. "But if you're a nutty old codger like me, you like it tough. It reminds you that

you're still alive."

TRY IT ED'S WAY A FEW TIMES EACH winter—just to verify that I'm alive. I shiver in knee-deep water and knock ice from my guides, allotting myself 15 minutes between trips to my bankside fire. Now and then I even catch a few trout. Glo-bugs work on even the coldest winter days when I've managed to locate some trout clustered in a spring hole.

A trout river in the dead of winter can be a desolately beautiful black-and-white place—all dark ice and gray snow and black water and bare, gnarled trees. The fisherman feels that he and maybe a few distant crows are the only living things around—no warblers in the bushes, no insects in the air, no other fishermen in the water. Snowflakes spit from low pewter skies. Trout sulk on the bottom. It's a test for the spirit, and bitter but nourishing medicine for the soul.

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thaw, though. I'm not as tough as old Ed, I know, because even on those fair days, the best part comes when I stop.

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MANAGING

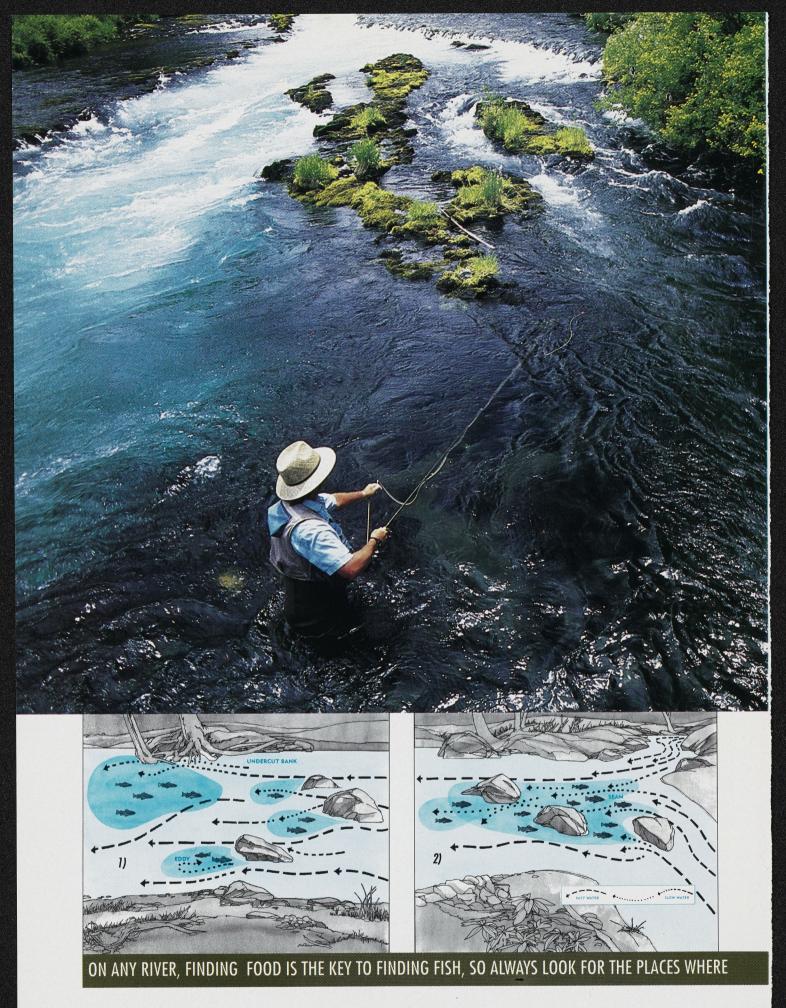
THE NATURAL REGULATION POLICY OF YELLOWSTONE PARK MAY BE THE DEATH OF IT YET.

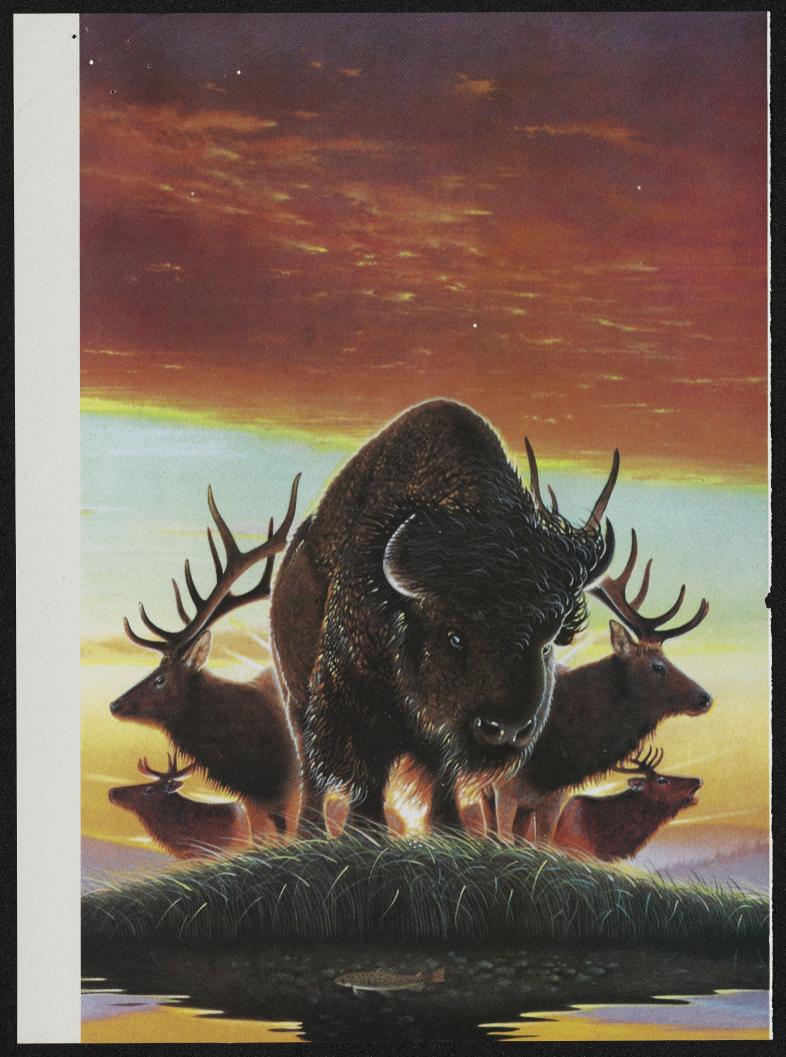
EDEN

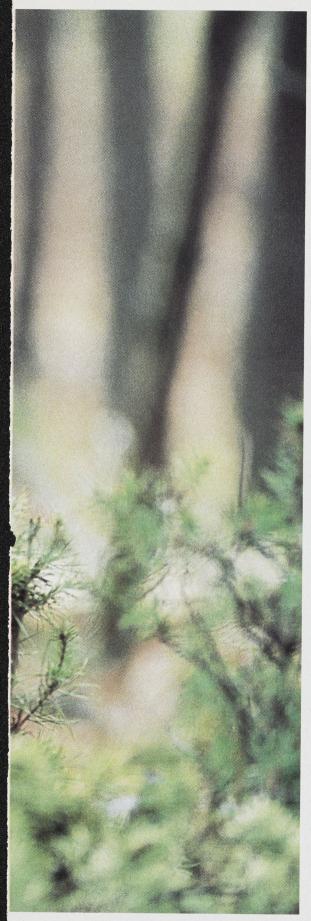
■ YELLOWSTONE PARK IS EDEN. THE CONGRESSMEN WHO WROTE ITS CHARTER 120 YEARS AGO DID NOT FORESEE THAT THE PARK WOULD, IN TIME, BE CONSIDERED PARADISE WITH A CAPITAL P, BUT OUR EVERYDAY WORLD GREW UGLY AND WE NEEDED A PLACE TO CALL SACRED. YELLOWSTONE IS BEAUTIFUL ENOUGH TO QUALIFY. DO NOT GET OUT OF YOUR CAR, HOWEVER, AND LOOK TOO CLOSELY. SOME OF THE NATIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS THAT USED TO BE COMMON ARE HARD TO FIND NOW, WHILE THE ELK AND BISON THAT ONCE WERE RELATIVELY SCARCE HAVE OVERPOPULATED THEIR RANGE. THE PROBLEM IN PARADISE IS THAT ITS MANAGERS ARE AFRAID TO MANAGE. THE OFFICIAL OXYMORON FOR THIS HANDS-OFF POLICY IS "NATURAL REGULATION"—A SPIRITUAL CONCEPT, HUM-BLE RECOGNITION THAT NATURE DOES MANY THINGS BETTER THAN HUMANS. ALAS, NOT EVEN YELLOWSTONE IS BIG ENOUGH, OR NATURAL ENOUGH, TO DO WITHOUT RATIONAL OVERSIGHT. AS IT HAPPENS, I GREW UP IN THE PARK, CLEARED ITS TRAILS, FOUGHT ITS FIRES, SURVEYED ITS CAMP-GROUNDS, AND—WHEN OFF-DUTY, OF COURSE—WENT DIPPING WITH EVE IN THE HOT SPRINGS. I THEREFORE APPOINT MYSELF ADAM (NOT AN ELECTIVE OF-FICE) AND PROVIDE THIS STATE OF EDEN MESSAGE. I'D LIKE TO START WITH A PERSONAL REPORT ON TWO FAVORITE FISHING (CONTINUED ON PAGE 94)

By Datus Proper

ILLUSTRATION BY W. HARDBARK McLOUGHLIN







your yelp. After he gobbled twice, he waited on the roost, and when the hen did not appear, he flew down. He gobbled two or three times on the ground and when the hen still did not appear, he stopped gobbling and went into what biologists call "display." Gobbling is what he uses for long-range attraction, but for close work, he switches to display. He thinks this strutting and tail fanning makes him irresistible to hens, and he is going to continue it until the hen appears. It is now your move—you are the only hen there—and you can't make it unless you happen to look like a hen turkey or can render yourself invisible.

There is nothing you or anybody else can do in this situation except wait.

Doing nothing is the best course of action, because the gobbler might get to thinking you have moved off and might come a little closer. The worst thing you can do is yelp again, because this only redoubles his struts and pirouettes, and drags things out. In between these two extremes, there are probably five pages of maybes.

NOBODY DID ANYTHING WRONG. THE TURKEY IS DOING WHAT IS biologically normal for him. You are doing the best you can, for you. If at all possible, sit back and relax and enjoy the show. The gobbler may decide to come your way, or he may walk off out of sight, which then opens two or three more pages of maybes. But even if the story ends here, you heard him and went to him and opened a dialogue and made him think you were a hen and got to watch the gobbler on the ground.

If you haven't been on worse turkey hunts than that, you ain't been at it long enough for your opinions to matter. Unless you use decoys, you are not going to carry home much more than a quarter of the birds you sit down to, and that is the way it ought to be. If you want long strings of unbroken numbers, take up skeet. Then, after you get real good at it, you can go home and scream at the children and kick the dog, because it is their fault you didn't break 100 straight.

If you want to use your gun a lot on game, hunt doves. When turkey hunting, the only thing you are going to do a lot of with your

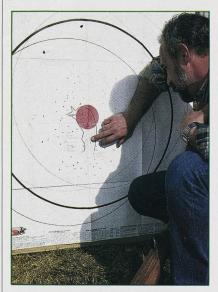
gun is carry it and unload it—mostly from the back, not through the muzzle.

Turkey hunting is a magical, intellectual, tactical exercise conducted out of doors. It is a personal, contemplative sport that does not necessarily require the production of a dead turkey to be classified a success.

As with the lover on John Keats' *Grecian Urn*, the only requirement is that you chase. Nowhere is it written that you have to catch.



PHOTOGRAPH BY LYNDA RICHARDSO



Patterning a shotgun is as much a part of the sport as camouflage and calls. . . for successful hunters, that is.

to hold that gun at the ready for a while until he quits strutting and steps out again. That's the moment of truth in which turkey fever mesmerizes us into looking *over* the gun barrel rather than down it.

After all these years and turkeys, that's what I did on a gobbler last spring. He went down, just edged by the pattern, and was instantly up and running. But I at least had gumption enough to get off a quick second shot, followed by a mad dash to stand on his neck. You learn to do these things very quickly after seeing a stunned flopper or two get up and run off.

You also learn that the best time to shoot a gobbler is not when he's all puffed up in full strut. Years ago in Mexico, I shot one in that shape, and the effect was like blasting at a bowling ball. He rolled, and as far as I know is still rolling—a black streak disappearing in the jungle. Maybe it's the cushioning effect of fluffed-up feathers and neck vertebrae squashed together that makes strutting gobblers such tough turkeys, but whatever the explanation, it's usually best to hold fire until his neck is up.

Probably the most common reasons for lost turkeys are shots taken at too great a range, and insufficient pellet penetration. To avoid the latter, I use the largest size of shot (up to No. 4) that will consistently put at least ten to fifteen pellet strikes into the head and neck at 40 yards. With some guns, that will turn out to be No. 6 shot, but 6s are questionable much beyond 35 yards.

Although I take most of my birds inside that range, I still use No. 5 or No. 4 in case I misjudge the range, or the shot

is deflected, or a second, longer shot is needed. Patterns look prettier with 6s, and with a 2³/4-inch-chambered 12-gauge or any smaller gauge, 6s are usually best; but if you're going to shoot beyond 35 yards, a dozen pellets that penetrate are better than 100 that don't.

Most expert turkey hunters in the South and East kill the majority of their birds inside 30 yards. In the more open country of the West, shots are often a little longer because the birds can see farther and may become suspicious when they can't locate the "hen" they hear calling. Although big shot such as 2s and BBs will kill turkeys a long way (and also cripple a long way), they tend to encourage shots that are too long for either common sense or good sportsmanship. Some states prohibit the use of these larger shot sizes. One reason is that the farther off the target, the more likely that a human will be mistaken for a turkey. The other is that if a hunter is shot by accident, he is more likely to survive a load of small shot.

yards to a turkey that "hangs up" (refuses to come within shooting range) can be tricky, particularly in unfamiliar terrain or poor light. What can help greatly is a split-image rangefinder. Ranging, Inc., makes a small, lightweight model in camo finish that's designed for turkey hunting and is quite accurate out to 60 yards. These can be focused directly on the target, or better yet, on trees, bushes, etc., surrounding your blind so you'll know instantly when a gobbler crosses into your kill zone.

I used to laugh when I saw sights or scopes on turkey guns, but not any more. Any type of sight that encourages the shooter to aim more precisely is added insurance that the pattern will be centered where it belongs. A low-powered scope can instantly reveal whether you're aiming at a turkey or another hunter. If the "mistaken for game" shootings continue to increase, we may someday see mandatory use of scopes for turkeys.

A sighted slug gun for deer can work fine for turkeys, so long as it's not a *rifled* shotgun barrel designed for slugs. Rifling swirls the pellets into quick-opening patterns that are exactly the opposite of what's needed, but a smoothbore slug barrel with interchangeable chokes can become a turkey gun simply by screwing in a tight choke tube. Some guns (notably Remington's new camouflaged pump and auto combination guns), feature short barrels, open sights, and the option of a rifled tube for deer

slugs and a super-tight, smoothbore tube for turkeys.

Finally, remember that equipment is only half the story. A super-tight choke and a dinner pail full of shot will not get you a gobbler. Turkeys are taken by the same things that take other game—skill and patience and marksmanship.

MANAGING EDEN

(Continued from page 57)

spots of my youth. You can reach them from Mammoth Hot Springs—the Park headquarters—by bicycle. That's how I used to do it, anyhow. You head south out of Mammoth, pedaling uphill for a mile or so on the main road toward the Norris Geyser Basin. Where the road makes a 180-degree bend to the right, you turn left on a gravel road. You ride through a trailer-park for employees and wind up at a pond named Joffe Lake after old Joe Joffe, who sold me my first fly rod. Leave your bike at the pond, which you'll fish later, and hike east till you hit Glen Creek in its lower reaches.

By now you will have realized why I am passing out secrets. You will not bother to fish in this stretch because it is shallow and sunburned, spread wide over bare gravel. Lower Glen Creek used to be deep and narrow, perfect trout water in miniature. It had riffles, falls, boulders to break the flow, and shaded pools. There were brook trout everywhere, and a few browns. Farther downstream, near the Gardner River, the big rainbows seemed out of scale with the stream. Today, this bit of Paradise is gone.

I do not know exactly how to apportion responsibility for the degradation of lower Glen Creek. Fires, big game, and high water were all involved in one way or another. But whatever caused the damage, nature has mechanisms that should heal it. The willows should close in, stabilize the banks, narrow the stream, and yield in time to pines and aspens, like the ones that used to be there. By the time my great grandchildren are ready to fish, Glen Creek could be almost as good as it was for me. But it won't be, thanks to Yellowstone's overabundant elk, which eat the willows and aspens as soon as they sprout.

On your way back from Glen Creek you might want to try a few casts in Joffe Lake, where you left your bike. The fires of 1988 did not quite reach this pond, so it remains one of the prettiest in Eden.

TURKEY HUNTING SAFETY RULES

- Hunting accidents do not occur when hunters strictly adhere to the following rules:
- Positively identify your target. Never shoot at movement or sounds.
- Don't shoot at a piece of a turkey. You must see the whole bird to determine whether it is safe and legal to shoot.
- Assume that every sound you hear and every movement you see is made by another hunter—until a complete view proves otherwise.
- Don't make hunting a competition. Peer pressure to be first to get a turkey or to bag the biggest bird leads to poor judament.
- Preselect a zone of fire. Shoot at a turkey only in that predetermined zone, and only when you are certain it is safe to shoot.
- 6) Choose safe and ethical hunting companions. Know where they are at all times. Hunt defensively and be on the alert for those who don't.—J.R.

volving shotguns were fatal. From 1975 to 1991 in Pennsylvania, 42 percent of the turkey hunting accidents involving a rifle were fatal, compared to less than 3 percent involving a shotgun.

In states where completion of certified hunter education courses is required before hunting licenses are issued, turkey hunting accident rates are roughly half of those in states that do not require hunter education.

However, states that require completion of hunter education courses for first-time hunting license applicants rarely require hunter education for previous license holders. Consequently, a significant number of older licensed hunters have never taken hunter safety courses of any kind. Delaware and Vermont are the only two states that require completion of a special course in order to hunt turkeys.

În an effort to provide a coordinated, consistent, nationwide turkey hunting safety program, the National Wild Turkey Federation is now distributing special safety-education material to state hunter education agencies, sportsclubs, and individuals. Educational pamphlets, videotapes, posters, and lessons in defensive turkey hunting tactics are available for use in turkey hunting safety seminars by writing National Wild Turkey Federation, Inc., Dept. FS, P.O. Box 530, Edgefield, S.C. 29824, telephone (803) 637-3106.

TO HIT A TURKEY

(Continued from page 49)

center as you expect. Usually, it's the right target for right-handed shooters, and vice versa. If so, set up your ambushes to slightly favor your "weak" side.

Some shooters can twist around better than others, due to body configuration and/or age and agility, but we all tend to panic to some degree when a sharp-eyed old gobbler is watching us try to get our act together. Sometimes it's easier to slowly turn and ease up on one knee rather than risk shooting with the gun across the body—a position that gives mighty magnums a chance to bust noses.

fearsome turkey loads with 2 ounces or more of shot, you dare not wait to do your patterning until the day of the hunt. These loads kick like mules in a light gun, and you'll flinch, yank the trigger, or somehow screw up the shot. I know many good hunters who've missed turkeys the morning after a prolonged gun-patterning session that made them subconsciously afraid of the gun. This is a problem that seems to be increasing along with the use of $3^{1/2}$ -inch 12- or 10-gauge magnum loads in fixed-breech guns that are too light for elephant-gun recoil.

Kick can be moderated (and chances of hitting improved) by using a gas-operated autoloader or by weighting a light pump or autoloader with recoil reducers in the stock and magazine tube. The heavier gun will seem to kick less, but it will also be harder to carry and to hold at your shoulder, waiting for a gobbler to step clear of the brush. Several veteran turkey hunters I know have solved the problem by staying with a light gun, while using lighter-kicking 23/4-inch buffered magnums in their 3- or 31/2inch chambers and a 31/2-inch backup boomer in the magazine. They've learned that if they make good use of the light load, they'll rarely need the heavy one. In any case, it's more important to be able to maneuver the gun and get off an accurate shot than it is to throw a bucketload of pellets that miss.

When a long-bearded old gobbler suddenly appears, looking as big as a boar hog, his beady black eye staring straight through your camo suit, you know you can't move. And when his head goes momentarily behind brush, you know the gun must be shouldered at that instant so he can't see the movement. You may have





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Last summer a big brown-phase bear was poking around near the inlet stream. I fished at the other end of the pond and caught small, skinny brook trout. Joffe Lake's problem, unlike that of nearby Glen Creek, is invisible unless you put on polarized glasses, wade out, and check the delta of sediment spreading from the mouth of the inlet. Or you could return over the years, like me, and consult the trout as an indicator species. In 1965, some were 15 inches long, a pound and a half in weight. In recent years, the best I have caught weighed less than a quarter pound.

Silt is filling Joffe Lake. It was constructed long ago as part of the water-supply system for Park headquarters at Mammoth, and the silt was removed once, some years later. With the watershed in worse shape today, the pond needs help again. The help

is not forthcoming.

Those of us who grew up with Joffe Lake may be lucky that it is being allowed to die slowly. Not long ago, Yellowstone's administrators set out to destroy it outright, along with another pond called Trout Lake. Both had been blighted by original sin: a human role in their construction. They were spared only after a public outcry.

The arguments for and against saving Joffe Lake—if I understand them correctly—help to clarify what is going on

in Yellowstone today.

Pros: The pond's beauty is natural, even if man lent nature a hand. Given the history, Joffe Lake may well be "as natural as possible," which fits one definition of Park policy. Generations of people have enjoyed visiting this spot. According to Park surveys, anglers rate their overall experience on the lake as excellent, despite the modest fishing.

Cons: A Park with many bodies of water created by nature does not need another with embarrassing origins. Further, the species at the top of its food chain is the brook trout—a fish native to eastern America, but not Yellowstone. Neither the pond nor its biota deserve help.

The arguments in favor of Joffe Lake are secular. The arguments against it are sacred. By this I mean (reaching for my dictionary) that the arguments for Joffe Lake's death express values, transcend the merely practical, and declare certain things worthy of respect and reverence. The pond lacks those things, as they are currently defined.

But there is no case whatever for letting lower Glen Creek die. Its only sin is being part of a Park that now supports between 20,000 and 60,000 elk, depend-

ing on whose estimate you accept. There are also about 3,000 bison. Whatever the exact numbers, almost everyone agrees that they are larger than at any time in recorded history.

The Park's "research interpreter" tells the press that grazing by these native wildlife species is having "a profound positive effect" on the northern range—but I see that the willows and aspens are no longer reproducing successfully. Weren't they part of the range? I find none of the beavers and ruffed grouse that used to live on willows and mixed-age aspens. Weren't they native wildlife, too? I discover that my old fishing holes are in trouble. Is that a positive effect?

I start to wonder about the difference, if any, between a research interpreter and a spin doctor. It is not a pleasant thought. I grew up in the Park Service. I am weary of downbeat environmental reports, anyhow. I want to feel warm and fuzzy about Yellowstone, but Glen Creek and Joffe Lake give me a problem of conscience.

ADMINISTRATORS OF OTHER NATURE reserves across the country are trying as hard as those in Yellowstone to duck the issue of overabundant big game. Elk may, for example, be doing even more damage to Rocky Mountain National Park, in Colorado. A problem so widespread must be caused by perverse incentives.

The incentives seem clear. A manager professing faith in "natural regulation" of wildlife makes the voters feel good. One proposing reduction of the herds would risk trouble. The likely agent of trouble is Congress, which in recent years has paid more attention than Presidents to the National Parks. And Congress always pays attention to its constituents.

The core problem, then, is not the politicians and bureaucrats who usually get the blame. The problem is us, the voters. Most of us live in cities and are exposed to wild animals mainly through television programs with reverent music. The gap between nature-lovers and nature has never been so wide. The apparent public consensus is that nature is sacred, that Yellowstone's nature is especially sacred, and that it should be managed accordingly—which is to say that it should not be managed at all.

Montana's newspapers print letters from Easterners who swear never again to vacation in a state that instructs its wardens to shoot bison leaving the Park. The writers are articulate and devout. It is a safe bet that they would complain to their congressmen if Park Rangers re-

duced elk herds by shooting. That was the policy when I lived in Eden.

Some hunters would write letters, too. In recent years, thousands of elk have migrated from the Park in fall and winter. They have fanned out into the mountains, in most places, providing real hunting. Near the Park's north entrance, however, there is a firing line. Every morning in the late season, many people park, walk what is usually a short distance from their cars, and shoot hungry elk leaving Yellowstone for better range. It is a curious consequence of management for spiritual values.

SIMPLE FAITH MAY BE ESPECIALLY IMportant at a time when so many old values are on the list of endangered species. Unfortunately, today's religion is yester-

day's science.

"There is a widespread perception," one scientist says, "that there is a balance of nature, that in the absence of human interference, systems are going to settle down at this mythical balance point. . . that all we really have to do is leave these systems alone and everything's going to be ducky. . . ." (Call it the sacred persuasion.) The source is Dr. William K. Schaffer of the University of Arizona, as quoted by The New York Times. "What we have to do," he says, "is understand how these systems behave and then we as people can decide what we want, how to manage them appropriately." (Call it the secular approach.)

The secular approach does not exclude devotion but insists on separation of church and state, spiritual and scientific. Humans are obliged to be stewards of nature in today's world, though we may

not relish the task.

The secular approach would involve managing Yellowstone appropriately, to borrow an adverb from the scientist quoted above. I should think that a manager would look to biodiversity and water quality in addition to forage, because there is more to Yellowstone than ungulates. If Glen Creek were on a private ranch, the owner would surely be advised to reduce his herd without further studies.

As TIME ROLLS ON AND MUD ROLLS down the streams, more scientists are recommending reduction of Yellowstone's herds. But biologists have careers too, and—as in all adversarial proceedings—expert witnesses can be found to support any proposition. Nobody can prove beyond question that natural regulation has failed until the collapse is catastrophic. For me, the collapse of aspens and willows and beavers and

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ruffed grouse comes close enough to a catastrophe, but there are those with stronger stomachs.

It would seem wise to err on the side of caution. Big-game species from whitetail deer to elephants have a way of turning into their own worst enemies. This is arid country with thin topsoil and a short growing season—not an easy ecosystem to restore.

Enter the wolves. They, being nature's agents, can kill elk without causing a public-relations problem for human managers. Wolves are movie stars these days, nature's Nureyevs. They have more charisma than any other predator, which is saying a great deal. So far, however, they are not known to be present in the Park, and even if they were, Park Service experts do not believe that the wolves would sharply reduce the Yellowstone herd.

In most of the world, there remains only one practical way to control populations of big game: hunting. It would work in Yellowstone Park, too, at no cost to the taxpayers, and perhaps even at a profit. Hunting could be tightly controlled, and it would get rid of the firingline near Gardiner. But this is secular talk. A public that blocks reduction of nonnative mustang populations in nonsacred land will hardly accept an open season in Eden.

Meanwhile, the buck stops in the State of Montana. Its officials have had no choice but to manage elk and bison leaving the Park. The problem is that the animals learn where the boundary is—elk quickly, being clever, and bison slowly, being bison. The effect of management at a line is to concentrate animals behind it, in the Park, where the range is already in trouble.

Somebody in Montana had a brilliant idea. He got Native Americans involved with the bison. State wardens did the actual shooting, but then Indians processed the carcasses, transported them back to the tribes, and talked eloquently to the media. Protests have not ended, but they have lost resonance. The Indian/bison association is as mythic as anything in North America.

Native Americans no longer live in the Park, but there are plenty near Yellowstone, in Montana and Wyoming, and they seem eager to help in the management of sacred values. This may provide less than an ideal solution, but real-world solutions are seldom ideal. If nobody can come up with a better idea, let's call in the Indians. Paradise could use their help.

BIKING FOR BUCKS

(Continued from page 61)

"I got onto the bicycle thing on my own, although I've since heard of different hunters using them," said Warner. "Bobby Parker and I are always trying new things; we try not to be conventional because mature bucks can be awfully good at figuring out predictable routines. And one of the most predictable, at least around here, is a big increase in vehicle traffic in the brush during hunting season. You think those mature bucks don't know that a truck means trouble?

"That double-drop buck—we had seen him at a distance from a vehicle once or twice. He was feeding on a patch of winter forbs near a small tank—a water hole—back in the brush. We put a tripod stand near the tank and at least two good trophy-buck hunters sat in that stand. They tried sitting and rattling—nothing.

"The problem was, the buck always knew they were there. The hunters would come in before daylight, but they were dropped off by a truck. The buck would move out when he heard the approaching truck—simple."

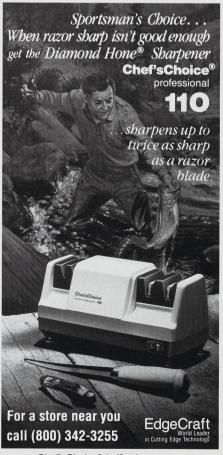
Warner evaluated the problem. Driving was out. A long walk before dawn was a time-consuming hassle, and the prolonged hike might leave a lingering scent stream. A fast, quiet bike ride seemed to be the most sensible approach.

"I rode about 2 miles, using a ranch trail, then stashed the bike about 200 yards from the tank. I crawled in and waited on the ground, figuring that climbing into the stand might make too much noise. At first, gray light, I could see three deer feeding about 80 yards away. The big buck was the closest one. I'm convinced I never would have gotten that deer if I had driven in by truck."

Pumped by these and other twowheeled anecdotes, I decided to try a Tour de Lease last season on a South Texas ranch. Outfitter Rick Hodges of Southwest Safaris located a mountain bike—the only kind of bike that merits serious consideration for offroad duty. A mountain or trail bike boasts rugged construction, upright pedaling posture, and knobby, stable tires. Solid, punctureproof tubes can be obtained for serious offroad rambling. The typical racing bike, with its narrow tires and lighter, more fragile construction, is impractical in the brush. You are not going to be covering long distances at high speeds; you merely need a bike that will transport you quietly







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Mountain Bike Basics

ANY HUNTERS AND fishermen are beginning to think that a mountain bike might just be the best innovation in low-impact ground transportation since the human foot. Compared to most transports, a mountain bike scores well for several reasons: walking is often too slow, motorcycles are too noisy (and often illegal), and horses require too much attention and trailering. Easily transported, very mobile, and extremely quiet (the only noise you'll hear will be the sound of your own heavy breathing as you pedal uphill), a mountain bike moves easily at good speeds—especially while coasting downhill. Mountain bike maintenance is low, and the feed bill is zero.

If you're trying to decide whether or not to purchase a mountain bike, don't let the word "mountain" restrain you. These bikes can be used in almost all terrain-flat, hilly, or mountainous. A mountain bike is just as suitable for jackrabbit hunting in rolling hill country as it is for trout fishing in flat, desert terrain. It's the perfect vehicle for covering easy trails to distant lakes, for moving from one plunge pool to the next along valley streams, or even for following big, slow rivers. Exceptions include dunes and marshes, since mountain bikes sink in soft sand and mud.

It's important to note, however, that these days the term "mountain bike" is applied to a wide variety of models. Keep in mind that a mountain bike for hunting or fishing will be very different from a mountain bike used for racing. Too often, salespeople will try to sell the first-time buyer a bicycle loaded with all the latest equipment for riding faster. But speed isn't what you need; you're looking for a bike that offers a quiet, comfortable, and reliable ride—especially since

you'll be carrying a gun or a fishing rod. Given these requirements, here's what you should be looking for:



Get a chrome-moly frame and fork. Be

sure the fork is chrome-moly, as well as the frame, as some of the less-expensive mountain bikes will feature a chrome-moly frame, but a manganese-alloy-steel front fork. Manganese steel is not as strong as chrome-moly, and will bend and tweak under heavy use or after a severe bump. Also, while composite fiber and aluminum frames are lighter, the weight advantage is offset by a decrease in

SIZING. When it comes to mountain bikes, one size does not fit all. Most salespeople can help you pick the right-sized bike, but the general rule is this: while you are standing with both feet flat on the ground, and straddling the center bar, there should be a 1- to 2-inch space between the top tube and the crotch of your trousers.

Wheel size means nothing;

standing comfortably over the

bike is everything.

strength and durability.

THE NECK. Having the right handlebar neck can make a huge difference in good mountain bike functioning. Forward-pitched necks that extend out over the wheel cause the rider to lean down and forward, putting unnecessary stress and strain on the lower back. Forward-pitched necks are great for racing, but not very practical for hunters and fishermen.

TIRES. Mountain bike tire varieties are so numerous that the options can be mind boggling. However, a good rule of thumb for hunting and fishing and all offroad use (trails, logging roads, etc.) is

the wider the tire, the better. Also, the more aggressive the tread design, the less slippage you'll experience under muddy conditions.

The most common-sized mountain bike tire is 1.90 or 1.95 inches. But the better choice for the hunter or fisherman is 2.125. The fatter the tire, the less you'll sink into the ground—and the less damage you'll do to a muddy trail or roadbed (even a bicycle tire can cut into the soil, lay a "stream bed," and begin destructive erosion of mountain trails). Also, wider tires absorb shocks better, providing a softer ride.

bikes that offer more gears than they need. Unless your intentions are to race a mountain bike, fifteen or eighteen speeds should be

eighteen speeds should be enough. Eighteen may sound like a lot of gears, but they are quickly mastered.

COMPONENTS (shifters, derailleurs, etc.). Several developments in shifting and shift levers have taken place in the last couple of years. To guide you through this high-tech jungle, consult with a mountain bike specialist at your local bike shop. Most mid- to upper-price-range mountain bikes come equipped with excellent components, most of which are so similarly manu-



factured that any brand name will deliver good quality for the price.

Those are the basic guidelines to buying a mountain bike. Of course, you'll need to be in decent shape to enjoy riding a mountain bike (despite their high-tech performance they remain human powered), but a few days of hill riding will get you into reasonably good condition. You'll also need to learn how to shift quickly, since mountain terrain often changes abruptly. And don't forget: mountain bikes are not legal in designated Wilderness Areas. -By SCOTT QUINNETT

Datus Proper

Yellowstone Park is Eden. But do not get out of your car and look too closely. Some of the native plants and animals that used to be common are hard to find now. The Park's elk and bison have overpopulated their range and diminished its biodiversity.

The problem in Eden is that its managers are afraid to manage. The official oxymoron for a hands-off policy is "natural regulation," a spiritual concept signifying a humble recognition that nature does many things better than humans. Alas, not even Yellowstone is big enough, or natural enough, to do without rational oversight.

As it happens, I grew up in the Park, cleared its trails, fought its fires, and surveyed its campgrounds. I therefore appoint myself Adam (not an elective office) and provide this State of Eden message. It starts with a personal report on one of the favorite fishing holes of my youth.

You would not bother to fish this stretch of lower Glen Creek today because it is shallow, sunburned, and spread wide over bare gravel. I do not know exactly how to apportion responsibility for the degradation of lower Glen Creek. Fires, big game, and high water were all involved in one

another. However, nature has mechanisms to cure the damage: willows close in, stabilize the banks, narrow the stream, and yield in time to pines and aspens like the ones that used to be there. But the overabundant elk eat the willows and aspens as soon as they sprout.

The degradation of lower Glen Creek is symptomatic of a Park that today supports between 20,000 and 60,000 elk, depending on whose estimate you accept. There are also about 3,000 bison. Whatever the exact numbers, almost everyone agrees that they are larger than at any time in recorded history.

The Park's "research interpreter" tells the press that grazing by these native wildlife species is having "a profound positive effect" on the northern range — but I see that the willows and aspens are no longer reproducing successfully. I find none of the beavers and ruffed grouse that used to live on willows and mixed-age aspens. I discover that my old fishing holes are in trouble. These are positive effects?

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re-

serves across the country are trying as hard as those in Yellowstone to duck the issue of overabundant big game. Elk may, for example, be doing even more damage to Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. A problem so widespread must be caused by perverse incentives.

The incentives seem clear. A manager professing faith in "natural regulation" of wildlife makes the voters feel good. One proposing reduction of the herds would risk trouble in Congress, which in recent years has paid more attention to the National Parks. And Congress always pays attention to its constituents.

The core problem, then, is not the politicians and bureaucrats. The problem is us, the voters. Most of us are exposed to wild animals mainly through television programs. The gap between nature-lovers and nature has never been so wide. The apparent public consensus is that nature is sacred, Yellowstone's nature is especially sacred, and it should be managed accordingly — which is to say that it should not be managed at all.

I should think that a manager would look to biodiversity and water quality, in addition to forage, because there is more to Yellowstone than ungulates. If Glén Creek were on a private ranch, the owner would surely be advised to reduce his herd without further studies.

It would seem wise to err on the side of caution. Big-game species, from white-tailed deer to elephants, have a way of turning into their own worst enemies. This is arid country with thin topsoil and a short growing season — not an easy ecosystem to restore.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



FREE Perspectives 9

Biodiversity Trust Funds

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

The key is unleashing the capacity of people on all sides of the issue to act in ways that preserve the integrity of the region's natural ecosystems. Often that means using free-market solutions, such as preservation trusts, biodiversity trusts, or financial incentive programs for land owners.

For instance, the goal of protecting an ecosystem could be agreed upon both locally and nationally. Local entities, such as a biodiversity trust, could be given total independence in working out a solution.

However, if a nationally recognized panel of scientists is convinced their plans fall short, the potential for outside interference would be made clear. The incentive to work out a positive solution that truly works would be higher than if the locals were left to their own devices.

This can be done under the Endangered Species Act in two ways. A biodiversity trust could be established as part of a recovery plan with its independence recognized by the agencies involved. Then in the consultation process between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other federal agencies, the activities of the biodiversity

trust could be considered a part of the consulation process. Their proposals, if approved by a national panel of scientists, could be considered "a reasonable alternative," meeting the law.

Even if minor changes are required in the Act to allow these innovative solutions, the heart of the law — its requirement that preserving biodiversity be done whatever the economic cost — should not be changed. Even though good economics and good ecology can minimize the times when the absolute mandate is required, without it, the destruction of necessary habitat will continue.



Lessons from the Falcon and the Ferret

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

in 1971. There were many in the so-called "wildlife community" who held falconers to be evil "hedonists." Some even advocated that all efforts be federal, that all falconers be compelled to give up their birds to the government and

relinquish all hold and title to them.

Yet when it came time to release birds into the wild — a labor-and-knowledge intensive effort — nobody knew what to do, or how to do it, but falconers. So let me say it here for the record:

falconers brought back the peregrine.

My conclusions are rather simple. Encourage, or at least allow, or at the very least don't discourage, private initiatives in wildlife conservation.



Yellowstone and Prospects for Diversity

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

calls "natural regulation." This oxymoronic euphemism is topped only by the U.S. Forest Service, which has lately taken to referring to forest clear-cuts as "temporary meadows."

Natural regulation means the Park Service will do nothing, and let nature take its course, as though man were not a part of nature and had done nothing to upset the balance of nature that nature itself cannot fix. All of this suggests two important and related conclusions. First, that our government guardians of nature are manifestly incompetent at the job. FREE suggests that Yellowstone ought to be given to a private trust, perhaps to be run by the Nature Conservancy or even the Sierra Club.

Second, the Yellowstone experience casts grave doubts about the nascent environmental policy of biodiversity, which both the Clinton administration

reprinted from The Sacramento Union August 22, 1993

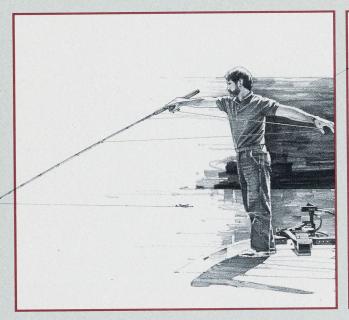
in Washington and Resources Secretary Doug Wheeler here in California are pushing as the next great green idea. If the government can't manage the relatively simple biodiversity of a small ecosystem like Yellowstone, what makes the government think it can intelligently manage the biodiversity of the entire nation?

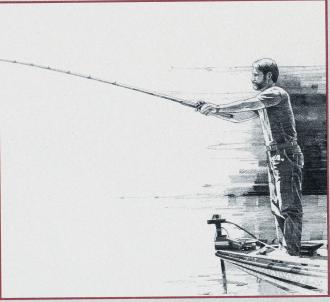
Something to ponder next time you're out riding your bike.



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ONE KEY TO THE CAST IS A SMOOTH CONTINUOUS motion that allows no slack to develop at any time. At the peak of the backward cast, the lure and line will be parallel to the water's surface. At the same time, the rod handle must extend above the wrist. Failure to do this will scuttle the cast.

As YOU FINISH, REMEMBER TO FEED LINE through the rod guide fast enough to keep the lure close to the water, but don't allow slack line to develop at any time. The free hand must maintain line control throughout the cast.

your thumb or in the crotch between your thumb and forefinger throughout the cast.

2) As the lure swings in past the rod tip, fully extend the rod arm while sweeping the rod tip down in one smooth, continuous motion. Sweep the line hand back in sync with the jig until the lure reaches the end of its swing and is parallel to the water.

At the peak of the backward swing, the rod's handle must extend above the wrist on either the inside or outside of the arm. The line between the rod tip and the lure should remain straight throughout the cast.

3) In one fluid motion, sweep the rod tip up slightly above horizontal while following the jig forward with the free hand. Feed line fast enough

to keep the lure close to the water, but don't allow any slack line.

Just before the jig reaches its target, dip the rod tip slightly and snub the lure's progress by stalling the line with your free hand. This makes the jig assume the proper posture and land lightly. Your free hand must maintain control of the line throughout the cast.

A BROWN TROUT WAS WAYLAYING INSECTS the other morning and I was trying to identify the victims. The scene was a fertile spring creekthe kind that often has two or more hatches going on at the same time. The only clue was that my peacock-herl midge drifted repeatedly over a trout that showed no interest in it. Meanwhile, natural flies continued to vanish in stealthy little rise-bubbles.

Fly fishermen have been investigating such cold-blooded violence since the 15th century, and probably longer. There are variations in the details—as you would expect from a mystery series running 500 years—but at its core the plot changes little. There is a furtive wrinkle on the surface of the stream, or perhaps a violent slash. The angler tries to deduce the identity of the insect that just went swimming with the fishes. He then offers the trout an artifi-

cial fly that resembles the natural, but with a hook in it. There is, of course, nothing that obliges you to delve into cases of missing insects. The plots can be complicated. The same mayfly, for example, may disappear at any stage of its life—as an immature nymph, juvenile dun, or mature spinner. The trout may also feed on midges, caddisflies, stoneflies, ants, and various other innocents. You could do less thinking for better pay elsewhere. Or you could try a good general fly. But it just so happens that for reasons best left to philosophers—many of us anglers enjoy playing detective. Sometimes we even solve our mysteries and catch trout.

The sleuth in this story knelt by the stream, trying to identify the victims of foul play. Down the current came a tiny mayfly—wings above the water, body still emerging from its nymphal shuck. It drifted into an insect net and posed under a magnifying lens. (Don't laugh at my



BY DATUS PROPER

detective kit. This is a tale in the style of Sherlock Holmes, not Mike Hammer.)

The insect was a trico, appearing before the hatch was expected. Trico is short for Tricorythodes, a genus of mayfly that reaches a maximum length of about 7 millimeters. Anglers failed to notice the tiny insects—or at least failed to mention them in any major publication—until 1969. It was the most important oversight in the history of American angling. In some streams during the summer months, tricos are to trout what hamburgers are to human teenagers in the fast-food outlet just up the road.

The obvious fly to try was one imitating a trico dun-the teenaged stage, old enough to leave the nymphal shuck but not ready to start a family. The trout fell for this ruse, ran out most of my line upstream, caught the

hook in pondweed, and twisted free. At least the fly did not break off. Leader materials are stronger than they were a few years ago, simplifying what used to be an expert's game.

That was a sizable fish. The next one was not big, for the stream, but on its third jump it lit on the bank, a 13inch rainbow, fat and trembling.

It would be wrong to deduce in this particular case that those two trout were feeding selectively on emerging tricos. To be sure that the evidence would stand up in court, a better detective would have checked the stomach contents of the fish. The trout could have been eating not only trico duns but anything else that floated by, except, of course, peacock-herl midges. Trout and anglers often tell different stories about the same event.

What happened next was so unmistakable, however, that I put off taking the stomach (Continued on page 105)



ONE OF THE GREAT MYSTERIES OF FLY FISHING IS WHAT INSECTS ARE BEING GOBBLED UP BY TROUT. BUT ONCE YOU CRACK THE CASE, IT'S ELEMENTARY.



PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR



MAYFLY MURDERS

(Continued from page 51)

sample. The trico duns molted in midair, turning into the adults called spin-

ners. They then mated while flying. (No wonder thev looked dizzy.) Finally, the females lit on the water to lay their eggs, and hundreds of the spinners disappeared into excited little rises. (This means that the detective was excited and the fish seemed to get carried away, too.) I landed a brown and a rainbow, both small, and then cast to another tiny bubble. The rising trout turned out to be anything but tiny. It tangled the leader in weeds, jumped, and broke off the

By the time Sherlock got back in business, the tricos were gone and the fish were rising cautiously to a few hatching olives-mayflies of the genus Baetis. These were small, too. Fly fishing has changed since anglers learned to identify the trout's real prey. The most important springcreek insects. bear little re-

semblance to our traditional, bushy, size-14 dry flies.

I went back to the same small pheasant-tail parachute fly that had worked for the trico duns. It might have worked for the olives, too, if the trout's accomplice had not put in an appearance.

Ms. Teal is an actress of modest size and major talent. First she led me to think that she was decoying me away from her brood, and I went along with the routine. Then she got carried away by her performance and forgot the sight stopped rising. I took a hike.

Far upstream in the duck-blind pool, where I refrain from shooting Ms. Teal every October, three trout were acting out a different drama. They streaked around just beneath the surface, displacing more water than a mother duck at her most melodramatic. This was baffling behavior for fish that are ordi-

narily cautious. There are no minnows in the spring creek and the usual mayflies and midges do not require an active chase. Mystery.

Solution: a parachute beetle. It clearly did not represent what the fish were feeding on, but a fat beetle can sometimes tempt a trout away from its regular food. After several long casts, the fly lit in front of the closest of the three streaking fish. The rise was violent and so was the fight that followed—a series of leaps that tired the trout before it sought shelter in the weeds. The only trick was to slacken the line with every jump so that the rainbow's weight would not fall on a taut leader.

The fish was fat, shiny, and 18 inches long—enough to make any angler's day. Furthermore, forensic medicine was going to provide a clue that might help me to

catch the trout's cronies.

Isn't it time you threw in the towel? Pick up a chamois instead.

Quit drying your car with towels. Towels can hold on to dirt and grit that can streak and scratch your car's paint.

Only genuine chamois rinses clean, so it's gentler on your car.

And, since chamois holds more than four times its weight in water, it not only dries gentler, it dries faster.

Only chamois is made from sheepskin. There's nothing in the world as gentle and absorbent.

You can pick up genuine chamois wherever fine car care products are sold.



Genuine Chamois.

The gentlest way to dry your car.

ducklings entirely. When her audience—me—fled to a new spot, she flew along and splashed down 30 feet away. There she uttered piteous quacks and flailed her wings till the only trout in

The obvious way to take a stomach sample is to kill the fish, but then I would have been obliged to eat it, and this creek's rainbows taste as

THE PARACHUTE FLY

Hook: Strong wire, 7 to 9 mm. Overall length (Sizes 16 to 20).

THREAD: Fine yellow or olive.

WING: white calf hair or synthetic yarn HACKLE: Blue dun, wound around base of wing.

TAIL: Fibers of same hackle.

BODY: One or two herls from pheasant tail twisted around tying thread and then wound on hook.

Change the body from thin pheasant-tail herl to hare's-ear dubbing or fat peacock herl, depending on whether you want to imitate a nymph or dun or beetle. For the wing, use whatever color you find most visible.—D.P.

strong as they fight. Alternatively, a stomach pump could have been used, but that process makes me feel as guilty as if I had shot Ms. Teal. So I pulled a scoop from my detective kit. The instrument is slender and rounded, and it does the job gently.

The kit had another gadget that came in handy now—a shallow, transparent plastic box. The trick was to put the top part of the stomach contents in the box, add water, and stir till the trout's prey were separated. The mystery insects turned out to be cranefly larvae, big and ugly.

Nothing in my fly-box looked exactly like a cranefly larva, but an unweighted hare's-nymph came close. It was big enough to work well on a stouter tippet, too. The first few casts failed to intercept the next of the trout that cruised

the pool. In time the geometry looked

right. I lifted my rod tip, pulled the imitation larva past the fish, and watched it take like a tarpon. This rainbow was 19 inches long but the strong leader allowed me to release it while it still had some jump left.

Three big spring-creek trout do not often make fools of themselves, one after the other, but the sprinting larva was extraordinarily tempting. The third rainbow was as violent as the other two and a nose over 20 inches long.

You might say that the day's fishing involved a little bit of everything—duns, spinners, hatching nymphs, even the cranefly Olympics. But there was a common link. All of the trout's victims had died within the top inch of the stream.

For the last century (but not before), we humans have drawn a sharp distinction between dry and wet flies. Trout have not caught up on the literature. They feed wherever their victims are easiest to catch, which in some waters may be near the bottom. In shallow, fertile, weedy streams, however, the surface film traps a concentration of insects. Some of them are in the film and some just below, but all are vulnerable.

Because spring creeks, tailwaters, and chalk streams are so attractive to anglers, many suitable flies are available. They include dry flies, unweighted nymphs, and soft hackles. If you are at a loss for clues, though, consider the parachute fly. On this particular day it worked about half the time.

The advantage of the parachute design is that it transcends the surface film—body down in the trout's world, wing up in the air where you and I can see it. Think of the fly as a nymph with a built-in strike indicator, more pleas-

ant to use than a piece of plastic stuck to your leader. And if the parachute deceives even one stupid trout, you can do your forensic medicine and learn how to catch its smarter relatives.

The point is not to prepare for any particular mystery. You will never have a day exactly like the one described in this tale and neither will I, ever again. Repeating it would be less exciting anyhow. A mystery solved is a mystery no more. The endless satisfaction of fly fishing comes from a drama of suspense played out on the best of stages.

REAL ELK HUNT

(Continued from page 53)

the barbecue next July, is to kill the first legal one you can find. The bull that had just disappeared would do, even if he was a two-year-old with his first set of branched antlers, the sort of bull called a "raghorn" by Western hunters. For that matter, so would either of the spikes.

So why didn't I get over there and take my pick? Because the timber was dry, and by the time I got there the bulls would be bedded somewhere unreachable. I was looking at elk 3 miles away because I wanted to know exactly where they were now, which was where I wanted to be when the first snow of the season blew in during the night—as Mark May, the trustiest weatherman of the Northern Rockies, was predicting it would.

I confess that I'm not a real elk hunter, one who must kill an elk every year, regardless of pain or pleasure. You can ruin an autumn that way. Ever since my stepson foisted his adolescent appetite on the taxpayers of the United States by joining the Marines, my wife and I have found we only need an elk every two or three years. In the off years, while the freezer hums efficiently around slabs of elk, I still chase them, if only for a week each fall, saying to myself (nobody else will listen) that I'm looking for the big six-pointer in the sky.

I am not a lucky hunter; over the past five years my wife, Eileen, has drawn moose and bighorn tags, while in almost two decades the state lottery has never given me anything more exotic than a cow elk permit. I have accepted my fate: to work hard at hunting, once in a while finding a small acorn. Or raghorn. (Please turn page)

THE DETECTIVE'S KIT

- 1. INSECT NET: Stitch fine-meshed netting (available in sewing shops) into the throat of your landing net. An aquarium net works as well but is less handy.
- **2. MAGNIFYING LENS:** A collapsible 10-power model is enough to identify the genus of a mayfly, and sometimes the species.
- **3. MAGNIFYING BOX:** On the stream, the most convenient magnifier is a transparent plastic box with low-power lens built in. Unfortunately, these gadgets can be hard to find.
- **4. Scoop:** plastic or metal models are occasionally available in fly shops, but I prefer mine, which Vincent Marinaro made from a kitchen spoon. With hammer, file, and vise with anvil,

- you could make a similar small scoop. A semicircular scoop with rounded edges should retrieve a few insects from a sizable fish without damage.
- **5. PLASTIC BOX:** Pick one that is white or transparent and small enough to fit in a vest pocket.

When you are ready to take a sample, lift the trout from the water with its head slightly down. Run the scoop in through the fish's mouth just deep enough to remove the insects most recently eaten. Remove the scoop and release the fish, which should have been out of water for only a few seconds. Place the contents of the scoop in the plastic box, add water, and stir to separate.—D.P.

ONE SHOT

2 pieces - The meeting place - a place of our own ball, took monster truck rides on ice, watched skydivers jump onto the ice, saw helicopters land on the ice, and watched the big board to check on the fish entered in the ice-fishing contest. Unfortunately, I was there on the wrong weekend to witness the iciest event of all, the Polar Bear Dip, a plunge into the frigid lake waters that separates the merely hardy from those with antifreeze in their veins.

ATER, OUT ON THE ICE, ROD TOLD ME ABOUT the impromptu Polar Bear Dip he took that morning when he drove his four-wheeler across the infamous pressure crack. The ice gave way over 8 feet of water, depositing both Rod and machine into Houghton Lake. The rear rack of the four-wheeler caught the edges of the hole and kept it from sinking to the bottom. Rod stayed on the brand-new ATV while Dave and Henry towed it out.

"Was the water cold?" I asked.

"You could say that," answered Rod, hefting a spud to begin clearing the fishing holes. We'd be working the edges of a weedbed, one of Dave and Henry's prime spots. With luck, the walleyes would start to forage there late in the day.

Jack used a power auger to drill some new holes, bringing up a surge of fresh, cold water when he lifted the auger out of each one. Once the holes were drilled and scooped free of ice, everyone spread out on the ice and began jigging, using short rods rigged with Swedish Pimple spoons or Rapalas and the secret ingredient: a bit of minnow tail on the hook. Dave caught the first fish, a 17-inch keeper. While I stood with Jack watching his hole, Garner hustled over with the video camera.

"I hope Henry catches one soon," said Jack.
"They're best friends, but they're very competitive. I don't fish with 'em every day, but when I come over to Henry's in the morning, I can tell which one is catching fish and which isn't. Some days when they're yelling at each other and slamming doors, I don't even like to go into the house with 'em."

Harmony was assured when Henry pulled up a fish identical to Dave's. Henry's walleye spat out the hook as it was coming through the hole, and struggled for a moment trying to turn around in the narrow chute of ice. Henry sprang up, knocking over his bucket, and scrambled for his homemade gaff—a cutoff golf club handle with a treble hook in the shaft. He lunged back to the hole in time to flip the walleye out onto the ice. Henry, I decided, went to his left pretty well for an eighty-one-year-old.

GARNER BROUGHT THE VIDEO CAMera over to capture Henry on tape with his fish. "So, what's the secret to catching walleyes through the ice, Henry?" he prompted, squinting through the viewfinder.

"Patience," expounded Henry, who, with a keeper on the ice and the camera rolling, warmed up for a full-scale Grumpy-Old-Man-style oration about the old days. "I fished Houghton Lake in 1925 when there were only rowboats out here and it's still the same thing. Patience. Put in your time. Wait for hours—Whoa, I got another one."

And the evening bite was on.

Henry landed the fish. Dave caught another. Jack pulled up several undersize fish and a couple of keepers. "Really, this is a lot less work than fishing here in the summer," he explained. "You couldn't troll over these weedbeds. They're too thick and you'd get snagged all the time. Here, we can pick our spot and jig straight down."

Bob exchanged his video camera for a rod and caught one or two nice fish himself. Only Rod, with whom I stood guard at the far end of the weedbed as the sun sank toward the lake surface, missed out, catching just a couple of undersize walleyes. Still, Rod had landed a 20-inch walleye the day before and survived a potential trip to the bottom of Houghton Lake in the morning; he knew "unlucky" is a relative term.

ROUND DUSK WE PACKED UP.

"Dave and Henry outfished me again," shrugged Rod, not unhappily, putting his rods into his 5-gallon bucket. "They always do."
Rod admitted to me that he, like Dave and Henry, doesn't fish in the summer. Neither does

and Henry, doesn't fish in the summer. Neither does Jack. "Jack's got a new boat, motor—everything—he hasn't had it out in three or four years," said Rod as we walked across the hard lake. It stretched for miles in all directions like a frozen desert, the surface burnished to a dull brass glow under the low winter sun. The temperature hovered at a pleasant 8 or 9 degrees. I was beginning to understand how these people thought. Why

boat out to this weedbed and slop around in an aqueous mess, slapping mosquitoes and losing lures, when you could stand right on top of the fish and jig down to them?

I'd come too far north, maybe, or stood too long in the cold without a hat; suddenly I understood perfectly why winter is the best, maybe the only time to fish, when the lake is rock-solid in its natural, normal state. Solid enough to walk on, play on, fish on twice a day, every day. Solid enough to hold a festival on. I tapped the ice experimentally with a boot heel.

Maybe it was even solid enough to slide a house over, after all.

VISITING TIP-UP TOWN

If you want to go, put this magazine down and make your reservations right now. Don't be surprised if you wind up staying as far away as Cadillac, Grayling, or Harrison. Rooms get booked a year in advance.

Highway 27 or I-75 will take you north to Houghton Lake, which sits astride east-and west-running Highway M-55. You'll know you're on the road to Tip-Up Town because every other car on the road will be towing a snowmobile. For more information on Tip-Up Town, U.S.A., call the Houghton Lake Area Chamber of Commerce at (800) 248-LAKE.—P.B.

Ring"
or Zah
Foreword

The Meeting Place

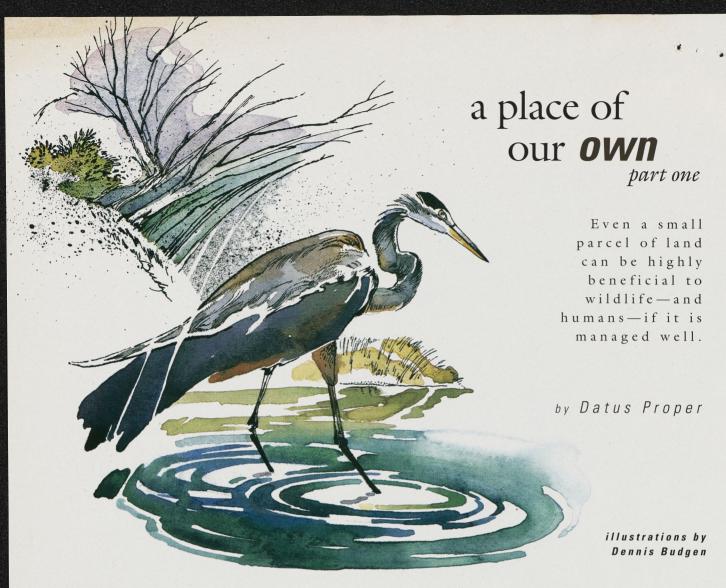
HREE LIVES COME TOGETHER in a circle on the water. A mayfly nymph climbs from the silt, swims toward unaccustomed light, and is beginning the winged life when a trout pulls it down. Another fly then floats by, but this one has a hook in it. Trout rises gently. Angler swallows deep.

These are matters of life and death. The mayfly might have finished its sundance but for the trout. The trout might have stored fat for the winter but for your fly with a sting. And you, at the top of the food chain: What brought you here? What drew you to the edge of the stream?

You are here to walk, but not for the exercise, and to sweat off some flab, though nobody could pay you to work this hard. You are here to crouch in cold water, cast to a trout and catch it or put it down, then stretch the cramp in your thigh and move on up and up where the stream runs small and its fish never saw a fly they didn't like.

You keep going because your prey believes in you. The trout is still dappled to hide when you pass, still swift to flee from your clumsy feet. The mayfly believes in the trout, too, and unfolds wings clear as air. You kneel by the river, shoot your line, and hit the ring of the rise.—Datus Proper

photograph by R. Valentine Atkinson



ILDLIFE USES ALL OF OUR FARM, FANNING OUT from a marshy core that has survived without much change since Lewis and Clark passed through, simply because it is too wet to plow and too brushy for cattle. You can sit in the shade of a cottonwood and watch whatever show is playing. Yesterday the actors were baby teal skittering after midges, dancing sandhill cranes, and sora rails practicing their ventriloquist act.

Being able to immerse yourself in nature is the best part of this place. It's not paradise, mind you—not when you learn the problems—and 60 acres are barely enough to give me and my dogs a run. None of us are complaining, though. We've all done time on pavement, and this is better.

Getting **Particular**When you add water to a piece of Montana, you bring to the surface a curious, post-glacial fertility. We dug a deep pond, and now painted turtles crawl up on the banks for what must be their mating season (though it's hard to be sure, with turtles), and diving ducks drop in on their way to Canada. And once a loon called while we were having breakfast.

The problem with still water in this climate is that ice keeps birds and mammals away for three or four months. Trout in the pond may run short of oxygen, too. Meanwhile, the spring creek remains open, a winding corridor with riffles and pools and deep, dark holes where a monster could hide. The brown trout have the courtesy to feed discreetly, but the rainbows will get you talking to yourself. They lie in midstream, taking every mayfly that comes by, except for the one with the hook in it.

We began marking each trout we could land by clipping its adipose fin, then releasing it and trying to catch it again. What we found was embarrassing: These fish learn faster than humans. With the occasional exception, trout in this creek do not fall for a fly twice in the same year.

Somewhere along the banks, however, there is usually a better fisherman. The heron moves in geologic time. I cannot keep up with its slowness. My attention wanders. But when I look again, the great gangly bird has a squirming rainbow in its beak.

It pays to take a lesson from the heron. You sneak up on one particular trout till you can see its spots. You figure out that it is taking sulfur duns in the surface film, and then you offer the fly it expects to see. You watch first and cast later.

The same approach is needed for everything else on

the place. You don't just do something. You stand there. But you keep your eyes open, like the great blue heron.

Learning to **See**Take our lazy-man's lawn, for example. After an adjoining field burned, we developed a keen interest in the firebreak around our house, and from there one thing led to another. The whitetail deersupposedly browsersspent winter nights cropping the grass. In return they left genuine organic fertilizer pellets, which revived growth early in the spring. And that ring of green lawn turned into a circus.

The opening act was a snipe (presumably female) who trundled over the short grass, pursued by others (presumably male) who acted like jerks. She pretended to ignore them. At about the same time, several killdeers appointed themselves night watchmen, and a pair of spotted sandpipers hatched young so tiny that they could barely navigate through the dande-

shooed him off.

Conclusion: One weedy lawn per 60 acres creates an edge effect and attracts wildlife. It is not a problem and

lions. A harrier took an interest in the chicks but I

does not need fixing.

There are stories—some accurate—about folks who love the pretty purple flowers that spring up around their homes. And no wonder. Knapweed is the most carefree ground cover there is, short of the plastic stuff that carpets stadiums. With knapweed, you needn't worry about harriers eating sandpipers. There are no sandpipers. There isn't much wildlife of any kind.

Our backpack sprayer controls knapweed and other noxious Eurasian plants, but it's a neverending job. Our teenager would be good at spot-spraying if he weren't always at his computer, zapping aliens from outer space. I'm stuck with the kind here on the ground.

Managing **Mud**

THE SPRING CREEK has also been labor-intensive. Most of the willows along its course are gone now, and so are the native grayling. They lost their cool, deep habitat when cattle knocked down the banks and widened the channel.

Experiments taught us a method of restoration that works in this particular creek. With cheap boards and bailing wire, you build wing dams-planks angling downstream across part of the channel. Silt settles below the wings and watercress stabilizes the accretion. There are no floods to scour the deposits, so the process repeats itself year after year. Eventually a vegetated point protrudes into the stream, forming a pool.

If an impartial professor were passing out grades for mud management, our stream improvements might deserve a B, maybe even a B+, considering the low cost. In real life, the trout let us know how we're doing and they show up whenever a new pool offers shelter from the heron.

> Farther down the food chain, life is exuberant. We were watering trees from the creek when we noticed squadrons of mayfly nymphs in our buckets. We put them back in the stream.

When you find yourself scooping up hundreds of nymphs by accident, it comes as no surprise that the trout are fat. The spring creek's new sunlit bed may

even be producing more fish food than in primitive times. Indeed, the whole farm seems to have more life per acre than the wilderness areas where we fish and hunt. For quantity of fauna from warblers to eagles, this place gets an A.

Innocence Lost

THE ORIGINAL ECOLOGY, however, can never be restored. None of the trout now present are native to the watershed. Neither are the whitetail deer, who are hard on vegetation, nor the raccoons, who raid ground-nesting birds. The bluegrass on the banks is an exotic that took hold because it could tolerate heavy grazing. The pheasants are from China. And come to think of it, my wife is Irish.

In the days of Lewis and Clark, large predators would have controlled populations of both smaller predators and big game. Today, the large predators in this valley are the humans and we most often

come equipped with the viewpoint of a wideangle lens. We see woods and fields as islands of tranquility in an ugly urban world. But by zooming in, you can see that nature is not peaceful and certainly not stable. The whitetail deer, for example, have outgrown their food supply.

Late on a November afternoon, there comes an opportunity to prune the herd selectively. Deer feed in an open field; I sneak to its edge through brush, reversing the normal habitat of hunter and whitetail. There is time to pick a doe without fawnsprobably one who lost this year's twins but will breed again soon. A bipod keeps the crosshairs steady

on her heart. For some quaint masculine reason I don't want to do this, but she is plump for a deer, and she will taste better than one of us raunchy old bucks.

Give me a C for deer management. They are still browsing back the buffaloberry brush, but at least



the herd has not built up to a bust.

With ducks, make the grade a D. When I looked up from work just now, the creek was full of green heads, yellow beaks, and wiggles-mallard drakes in courtship display. Another drake has just dropped in, wings cupped, orange feet down as if landing in decoys.

Nature is not peaceful and certainly not stable. The whitetail deer, for example, have outgrown their food supply.

What concerns me (and the bachelor drakes) is that only one hen has shown up for the party.

I think I know why the hens are scarce. My steady old dog helps me with an annual, informal census, and finding nests is a cinch for him. It is probably equally easy for skunks-who won't stop on point.

Some good-size broods nevertheless hatch and reach the stream, where I see a hen mallard with eleven fuzzy ducklings the first day, then nine, six, five, three.

The problem is habitat. It favors small predators over prey in ways that cannot be changed much in a valley with ever more people. More houses produce more roving cats, more fragmented cover for magpies, and more trees for great horned owls. It all looks nice-unless vou're a duck.

Biologists' studies confirm that ducks are having trouble staying ahead of predation. Trappers could help even the balance, but low fur prices provide

little incentive.

Costs and **Benefits**

WE ARE AIMING FOR THE ECOLOGY of an old-fashioned farm with small fields, hedgerows, marshes, and treesnot the best of all possible worlds, but the best available.

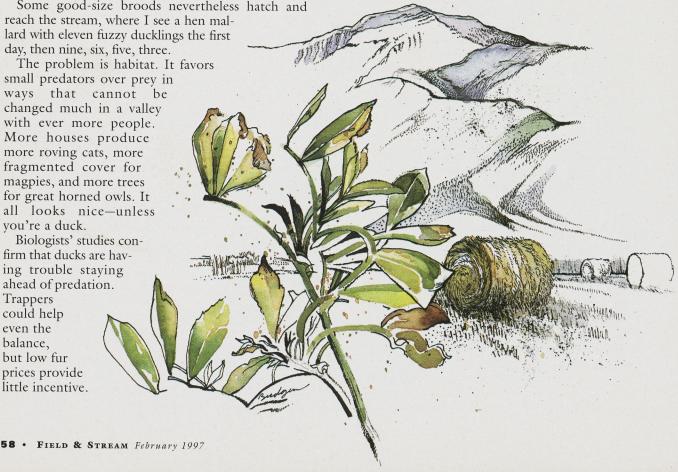
Our hayfield is in a mixture of alfalfa and grass, which is good for a brood of pheasants but must not be cut before they are off the nest. The other field is in barley, which the deer will eat if it is left standing too long. When harvested, however, some grain spills on the ground for ducks, pheasants, cranes, geese, and passerine birds.

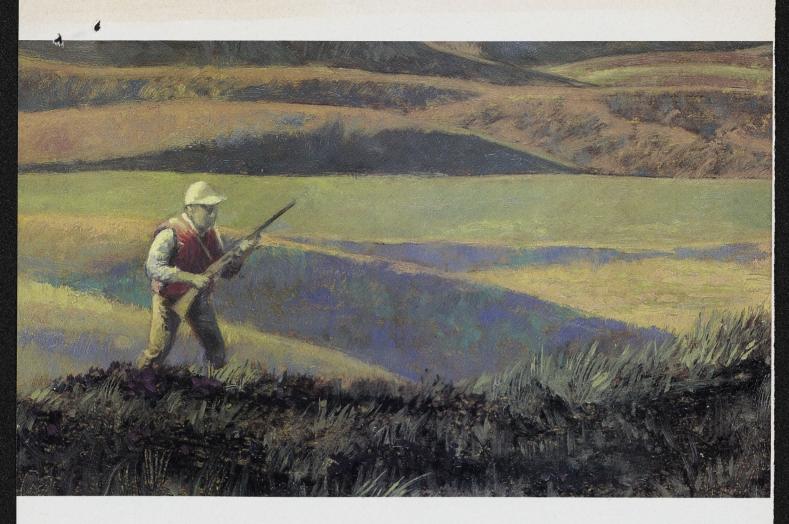
There are costs. Alfalfa harvested late can lose value, and a field of barley left in stubble is harder to work when spring comes around. You give up a little of the income from other crops to produce wildlife. In one sense, game is a crop, too. When you hunt or fish, game becomes "God's meat" (Aldo Leopold's term). Your investment may have been financial, but your returns come in a different medium.

Psychic rewards are elusive, but the marketplace provides one way of measuring them. Diversity outsells monoculture: Land with both wildlife and crops goes for a higher price than a "clean" field. The difference, I suppose, shows how much people like to live with

Maybe something in us is wild, too.

Next month: FIELD & STREAM shows you how four landowners have improved wildlife habitat on their farms, plus tips on how you can do the same.





Middle of



RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE, MY PUP WHINED AND PRESSED his nose into an air stream from the truck's window. I pulled over and let him out. He ran 10 yards and lifted his hind leg, which was what I expected—and then he stood there with his leg up and nose stretched out, which was not what I expected. That dog was pointing.

I reached for my shotgun, then put it back out of temptation's way. I did not have permission to hunt, and I wanted to get along with the folks who owned all this prairie grass that rolled back into sagebrush hills. Anyhow, I wanted some pictures. Thought I'd snap a photo of

owhere

SHARPTAILS ARE HUNTED IN WIDE-OPEN SPACES THAT SEEMINGLY

bothered much on this border. They survive from year to year, and that, essentially, is much of what goes into growing large antlers. But because they aren't pushed around by hunting pressure, they don't have to expend much energy to fulfill their basic needs. Meadow grasses and forbs provide adequate nutrition, especially since there is little or no competition for food from does and fawns, which prefer borders at lower elevations. So bucks put most of their (Continued on page 114)

THERE ARE GRADUAL BORDERS AND ABRUPT BORDERS, BUT THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS AN UNPRODUCTIVE BORDER.

1



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARYJANE AND NEAL MISHLER



Huckleberry on point, with sharptail grouse flushing. What I had forgotten is that these birds conduct psychological warfare. Four of them flew past me, sassing *tut-tut-tut*, but what they meant was, "Your eyes are bugging out."

Huckleberry lost his composure, too. The pup bounded after the flying sharptails until he hit the scent of another bird that was still sitting and decided to point it—while he was in midair. Bad timing. Huck hit the ground on his side, hard enough to raise dust. The sitting bird flushed. The dog chased it, and for a few seconds the race was close. By then, another dozen grouse were in the air. They wanted to be somewhere far from us. We watched them, flapping and gliding, smaller and smaller in a bright sky, coasting over a distant ridge, and merging with the blue of the Snowy Range.

Well, it was good to know that the breeding season had produced so many young birds. I rushed into town for reinforcements and found them in the person of John Bietenduefel. John knows the secret of happiness: living in the exact center of Montana with a bird dog. He also knew where to get permission to hunt the sharptails.

The landowner said that we might find the birds anywhere at all, "standing around looking goofy." Then again, we might never run into them. Those are sharptails for you. They are innocent, sometimes, because they have had little time to adapt to humans. On the other

hand, their harsh habitat has given them a range of behavior that is—to put it mildly—extreme. Sharptails are as wary as pheasants and as casual as spruce grouse, as fast as mallards and as slow as coots, as skittish as snipe and as tight-sitting as woodcock, as tender as teal and as tough as old ganders. You can learn quickly where to look for the compact covers of ruffed grouse or bobwhites, but sharptails live in what looks like the whole world, or at least the best remaining piece of it.

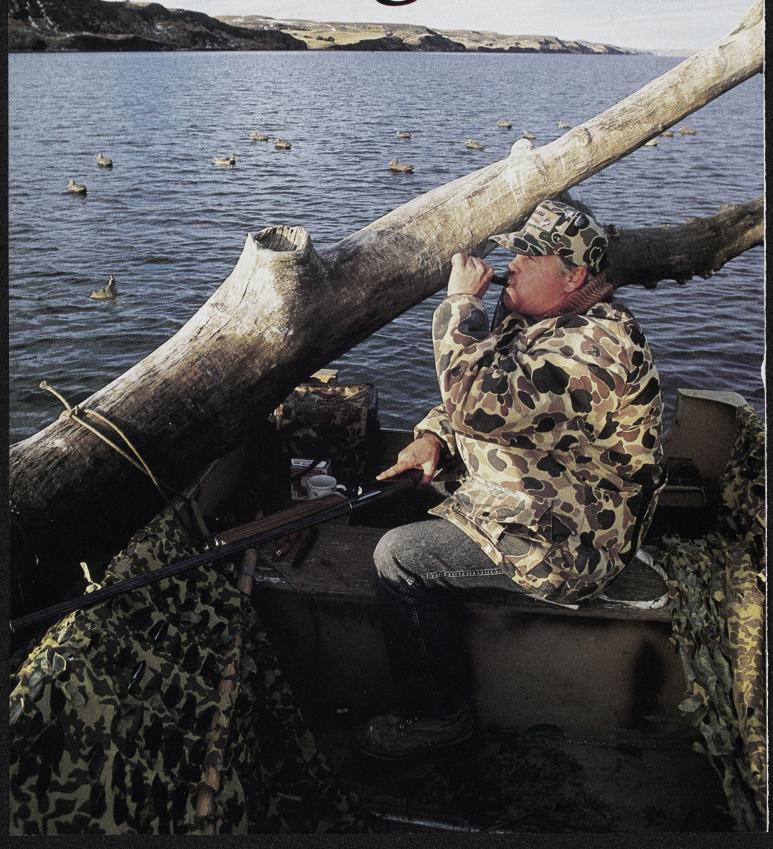
You hunt other birds in places. You hunt prairie grouse in spaces. You grasp the difference in your hand when you sit on the tailgate dressing a sharptail. It looks tighter-feathered than a ruffed grouse and just a little bigger. In fact, it is half-again heavier. The flesh of a sharptail's breast is driven by a pump much larger than a pheasant's. The sharptail is built to fly high in the prairie falcon's clear, blue sky. It takes heart.

In the Eastern U.S., heath hens have long been extinct. Western pinnated grouse—prairie chickens—are scarce over much of their original range, relics from the time when their eggs came up broken and dripping on iron-rimmed wooden wheels. But if you want to know what prairie grouse used to be like, sharptails are doing fine on the high plains.

John Bietenduefel and I bounced down the farm road, the truck moving as slow as a (Continued on page 96)

ENCOMPASS THE WHOLE WORLD. * By Datus C. Proper Illustrations by Shannon Stirnweis

Getting Closer



A PERMANENT LIFETIME ANSWER TO BALDNESS!

- * Not a conventional hair piece
- * Not a hair weave
- * Not scalp reduction
- * Thicken existing hair
- * See own scalp
- * No limt to length of hair you want
- * Performed by doctors
- * Cost \$1200. \$5500.
- * Reversible if desired
- Natural waving duplication

THIS COULD BE YOUR VERY OWN HAIR!



- * Not a hair transplant
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- * Comb hair back
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- * Hair lines filled in
- * Lifetime Warranty
- * No scheduled maintenance appointments
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NOWHERE

(Continued from page 63)

Conestoga wagon. The grass looked as it did when buffalo grazed it, bunches of it reaching to the tops of our wheels. Maybe the covey I had flushed would have landed in a place like this. Our dogs would find out.

John's pup, Jake, was a half-brother to Huckleberry. They were from bigrunning field-trial stock, and they hunted with demonic happiness. Human legs could not keep up, but our eyes did. A herd of pronghorns spooked and flushed a small bunch of sharptails, which our crazy pups chased. At long range, dogs and antelope and grouse all seemed to fly. I was flying, too, and John's laugh sounded like wing beats. We loosened our muscles and swung our legs from the hip and smiled.

You don't need big-running dogs to hunt sharptails. These birds also like brushy draws, especially those that climb from grainfields to lightly-grazed prairies. In such cover, you can push birds out of the same spots every year, and hunters who know where to look get their grouse with no dogs at all. Visitors do well with spaniels or retrievers to explore the thick stuff. It is a good game. Sometimes, though, you want the Oregon Trail—the feeling of skimming the prairies toward the horizon.

Jake followed Huck to find out what we were all looking for. This was Jake's first season, and he was a gonna-be: going to be good, with experience. It came fast. Huck pointed, his tail sticking up, quivering above the grass, and Jake moved in to see what the excitement was about, pushing out a single sharptail. Jake graduated from the gonna-be class right then. For the next hour he was (as John said) a historian, pointing at places where sharptails had been, but no longer were. That's progress.

John was starting a new pup because he had lost the two dogs he had been counting on. Sharptail country has hazards that you should know about before you pile your dogs in the car and head for the plains. There are porcupines and some rattlesnakes. There are too many skunks. There are prickly pears that fill a pup's pads and barbed-wire fences that rip his skin. There are hungry coyotes and mountain lions. There are sheep farmers who have a right to shoot. And there is that most ferocious of all predators, the jackrabbit, which lures dogs off on long chases and gets them lost. Pointer pups are at special risk because they are fast and wild. Fear is something they have to learn.

Huck pointed a cow that had been dead since the spring thaw. I told him that he ought to know better. He rolled his eyes at me without moving, and a sharptail flushed. I adjusted my assumptions just in time to shoot it, and Huck retrieved with a told-you-so twist to his head. I believe he was suggesting that I could have maggoty beef if I wanted it, but as for himself, he preferred to hunt grouse.

I commended his taste. He worked a scent for 50 yards (though how he could smell anything but ripe cow puzzled me), and pointed at another sharptail. It went off, saying *tut-tut-tut*, and John took the shot. I managed to collar Huck in time to let his apprentice make

the retrieve. Jake picked up the grouse, put it down, cogitated, picked it up, and brought it to John. Then Jake

WHERE TO GO

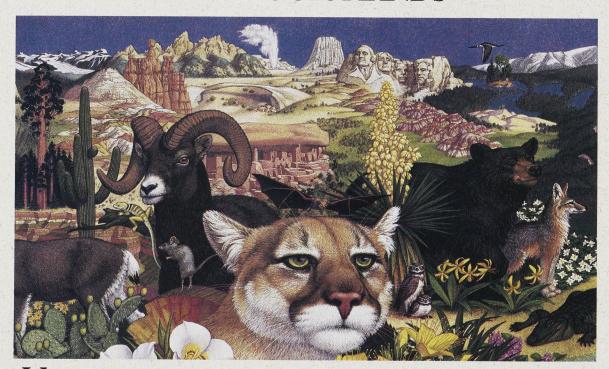
■ There are only a few places that offer serious upland hunting for sharptails in early September, and central Montana is near the top of the list. The general public has discovered it, however, and access is difficult. If you are on a tight budget, you might look for sharptails in eastern Montana, parts of the Dakotas, or Canada's prairie provinces. Alternatively, there are outfitters in central Montana with experienced Western dogs and access to good land.

I have hunted with the first of the following and talked, but not hunted, with the others.

- ♦ Dennis Kavanagh, Montana Bird Hunts, Dept. FS, P.O. Box 5031, Bozeman, Mont. 59717, ☎ (406) 587-5923. Uses English setters and German shorthaired pointers.
- ❖ Roy Olson, Dept. FS, P.O. Box 836, Grass Range, Mont. 59032, ☎ (406) 428-2195. Uses vizslas and shorthairs.
- ❖ Richard Cox, Dept. FS, HC 85, P.O. Box 4056, Lewiston, Mont. 59457, ☎ (406) 538-7821. Uses English pointers and Labradors.

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frisked around to celebrate his discovery of the meaning of life. He and Huck are German shorthaired pointers, though they don't know that. They are also from Missouri. They tolerate training because it beats lying around the house chewing on furniture, but they don't see much point to the exercise. When they meet real birds, however, they wrinkle up their brows and think deep thoughts.

One thing they have not learned, unfortunately, is how to read. They point pheasants as happily as they do sharptails, even if the regulations say that pheasant season is closed for another month. The two species inhabit much of the same range, and when young, they can be hard to tell apart. The sure way to avoid expensive early-season mistakes is to shoot only those birds that make a low, gentle cluck. Sharptails usually do that. Pheasants either say nothing or make a raucous cackle.

E HUNTED TOWARD A TINY alfalfa field off on the horizon. It grew and grew until, when we got there, it had some 320 acres. John worked the bottom side and I trotted to the fringe of sagebrush on top. I was in a hurry because every mile had made me ten years younger, and I was about sixteen at that point. We discovered why we had not found many grouse in the grass: They were all dining on an evening salad of greens with little blue flowers. Huck found a covey hiding in alfalfa that did not look high enough to cover a mouse. I walked in, flushed the birds, and fired both barrels coolly. Or perhaps lukewarmly. A dozen sharptails flew off discussing the incident. We watched for two of them to discover that they were dead, but they never did. I excused my gun for firing crookedly. It had not been in the midst of a flock of big clucking birds for a year.

Huck found the next sharptails as singles. These were older, wiser grouse. They ran downwind, which makes trailing tricky, and they flushed wild when the pup pushed his luck. But he held some of them, and I shot two. Never mind how many I didn't shoot.

Sharptails do have one semi-predictable cycle: In late season, they bunch up and flush at impossible distances. In early season, they may sit so close that you feel obliged to lift your gun and let them go. You tell yourself that you are just dog-training. But there is a point in the cycle when prairie grouse are neither impossible nor too easy. They are learning. Pheasants and partridges had a few centuries' head WINCHESTER SUPER STEEL.
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What America Shoots

start, but sharptails are catching up, and in that alfalfa they were the real thing.

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John Bietenduefel was a distant speck on the green field. In between us was another speck: Jake. He was standing still. John was running to the point. I could not see the grouse flush but John's gun went off twice, and Jake made two retrieves. John had played college football a few years back and still had coordination to spare.

My three birds were all I wanted to pluck, so Huck and I wandered back to the truck. The low sun played tricks. Each bunch of grass had a shadow as long as a tree. Prairie that had been smooth at noon took on texture. I saw what looked like a sharptail standing on a mound several hundred yards away, called my pup to heel, and tried to see how close we could get. As we got closer, the bird got smaller. When we got close enough to hear it, it sang like a meadowlark, which it was. Crickets joined in for their last concert before frost. I took off my sunglasses because the light was no longer yellow or bright. It was the color of the pocket watch my grandfather had left me, gold that had not been polished for a long time.

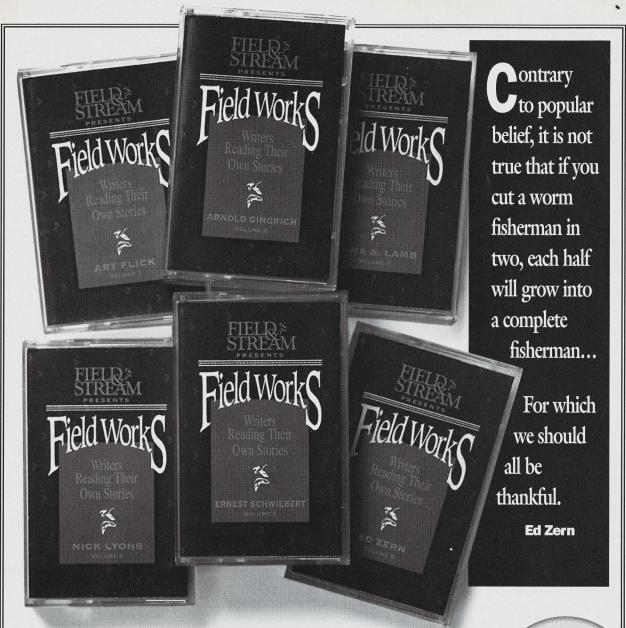
ANATOMY OF A POOL

(Continued from page 51)

strike indicator up the leader 4 to 6 feet, and tie a nymph to the tippet. Try something generic: a size 14 or 16 Hare's Ear, Zug Bug, or Muskrat. Pinch on one or two split shot (depending on the depth and speed of the water) about 10 inches above the nymph. Then fish this rig upstream along the same current seam you fished with the dry fly.

Drift the nymph down the inside and the outside of the seam. Make sure it reaches bottom; if trout were willing to move far, they'd have darted up to take your dry fly. So get the nymph down, fish it dead drift, and watch the indicator.

When you move from the head to the body of a classic pool, continue to fish the same nymph setup. But consider going to a bigger fly; trout down in darkness like bigger bites. Slip the indicator up to the line tip, 8 to 10 feet above the fly. If the water is more than 6 feet deep, add a 2- to 4-foot tippet—not to help



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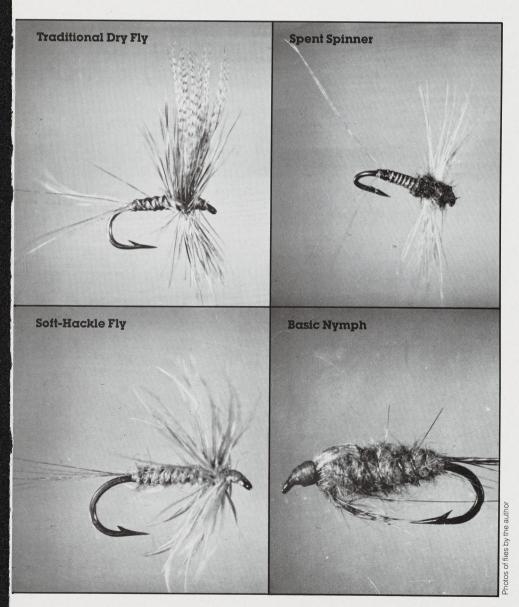


FIELD STREAM

Mind Your Behavior

When trout ignore your fly, don't assume it's the color or size. It might be its behavior.

BY DATUS PROPER



ontana's Henrietta Creek wiggles through rounded foothills and out into the meadow pools. She smells of lodgepole. pines and mossy rocks and sagebrush and sun-bleached hay. But she has more than this going for her.

You expect Henrietta to be full of brook trout who have a tough time making a living, as in many other snow-fed Rocky Mountain headwaters. There are good hatches - mainly, I think, of mayflies. Slate Run in Pennsylvania is of the same size and has a similar deceptive fertility. You may know Slate Run; too many do. I have not seen you fishing Henrietta. A few worm-fishermen give her a try with spin-casting rods, but she ignores clumsy suitors.

Last August Henrietta was almost ignoring me. She would dance with me, casually, and reward my artificial mayflies with little brook trout — fat ones, not skinny. I had five in the creel. (In Montana, there is no need to feel guilty about dining on little brook trout.) But Henrietta nurtures browns and rainbows too, and they help keep the brookies from overpopulating. I wanted to catch a couple of the big ones. They would be released. And if a 14-inch trout out of a little freestone creek does not sound like a big fish to you, you should be careful about what kind of fishing stories you choose to believe.

So how to catch Leviathan? Grasshoppers, of course - they were buzzing around the meadows and committing suicide on windshields — but my artificial hopper caught only two more small brookies. Then a weighted nymph failed completely. Perhaps the day was too hot and bright.

Instead of trying to tell the trout what I thought they should eat, I sat down and listened. Now this is my specialty. You might think I was lazy, but every sense was vibrating keenly to the rhythms of

Nature has some drowsy rhythms. When my eyes opened, the only sign of life was a dragonfly chasing midges on the pool upstream. The stream collided with a glacial boulder, cascaded to the right, flattened into a deep eddy, then swerved back to the left again around a clump of the willows that define Henrietta Creek's miniature floodplain. The bestlooking part of the pool was tucked up tight against the willows in a jumble of

Datus Proper is an American Foreign Service Officer presently stationed in Washington, D.C. He is the author of "What the Trout Said," a book on the design of trout flies, and has contributed to several national



A beauty about to be released. Trout like this, says the author, consider behavior to be the most important characteristic of a fly.

conflicting currents. I did not hurry to cast, because my fly would have dragged instantly. The dragonfly hurried too much, caught a wing in the water, and flopped around trying to get airborne again. Leviathan intervened loudly. Dragonfly catches midges; trout catches dragonfly; fisherman tries to catch trout.

How many three-inch-long flies in electric blue do you have tucked away among your size 16's? I had nothing that looked like a dragonfly to human eyes, but there was a palmer dry fly that might hop around in the same way on the surface of that back eddy. I greased its red-brown hackles, cast it 20 feet, and danced it back. There was nothing subtle about the rise. Judging from the depth of the brown trout's belly, he may have been fond of small relatives as well as dragonflies. He was almost 14 inches long (13 is almost 14).

Of course I wanted to continue waltzing my dry fly. The system, it turned out, was to fish cross-stream from the wide gravel bars that flanked Henrietta on alternate sides. Snow-melt streams are like that; high water in spring washes out even

some of the willows. I could sneak upstream, crawl out on the sunbaked bars, and cast over 20 feet of gravel to the big pools, which are the only ones deep enough for big trout in Henrietta. I could cast the palmer fly to the top of a pool, let it float a foot or so, then give it a twitch. Nothing fancy. But two more of the big fish caught up with the palmer in the next 45 minutes. So did a couple of the good brook trout, 10 inches long and wide across the back.

It is hard to explain why the dancing palmer worked so well. The trout cannot have been catching many dragonflies, and I had seen no hatch of caddisflies, craneflies, or anything else that skitters. But when trout tell you what they want, there is no sense in arguing, unless you are fond of moral victories.

Clearly the trout wanted a fly that behaved in a certain way. The palmer resembled no obvious natural fly in size, shape, or color. It was just light on its toes. There are many other high-floating designs, and probably most of them would have worked as well.

We anglers are artistic souls (or so we

say in our books). We have long classified our flies by their color above all, and by size and shape. These features are easily seen while the fly is parked in a vise, but trout, of course, have never seen a fly in a vise. A good deal of evidence suggests that the fish are more interested in their diet's behavior than its hue.

There is, of course, a lot more to fly behavior than whether it skitters or not. The level at which dry flies float is important, even if they drift naturally. And it matters a great deal whether nymphs bump along the bottom, drift quietly in mid-water, or swing across the stream at the end of a tight line.

Behavior, from the trout's point of view, has three phases: **presentation**, **movement** and **level of float**.

Presentation

This is what you do with your fly before it hits the water. A lot has been written on the subject, but more than any other part of fly-fishing, presentation has to be learned by practice on the river. It starts with the choice of a fly line, which for trout may be a 4-weight floater or an 8-weight fast-sinker for rolling stonefly nymphs along the bottom during high water. Next, of course, the rod has to be able to cast the line. Then the leader has to get the fly to the water, gently, at the end of 10 feet of nylon on Henrietta Creek, untangled at the end of three feet for those heavy nymphs. If, as is often the case, you want to present your fly softly, you can buy or design one that has enough air resistance to cushion its landing.

For much trout fishing, you can pick any plausible fly and rely on presentation to do the rest. Anglers of the presentation school, however, may be lost when new streams demand new ideas. Once I guided some good American anglers around an Irish limestone stream. Those Irish trout would not respond to what works in the Catskills. After a lot of good presentations, results were zero: not one or two, but zero.

Presentation stops when the fly hits the water, and that is just the time when the trout's interest begins.

Movement

Sinking flies (nymphs, streamers, wet flies) are often moved in relation to the current in rivers and are almost always moved in lakes. The movement can be as simple as casting a wet fly cross-stream and letting it drift around on a tight line, with or without a retrieve to impart action. This traditional method is the easiest way to learn fly fishing. At the other extreme, one of the toughest maneuvers in fishing is to drift a nymph drag-free, then twitch it just a little as it nears a fish. The skittered dry fly is the floating equivalent of the twitched nymph. For me this is not a method that works all the time. The best movement is often no movement at all: zero drag

In buying or tying a fly designed for movement, here are some points to look for:

- 1. Dry flies should be extra-high-floaters, designed if possible to keep their hook completely out of the water. Such a fly can be floated drag-free for a while, then twitched or danced back over the surface. Trout will take in both modes.
- 2. The simple, traditional nymph does the same job underwater. You can cast upand-across, let the nymph sink to the proper level, then impart a slight movement to get a trout's attention. Trout often take with confidence: this is the kind of behavior they see in natural nymphs. Softhackle wet flies also work well when fished this way.
- 3. Suppose, however, you want a fly to be fished across-and-downstream. You might want to try a design with stiffer hackles or wings to resist the current and create a built-in pulsating action. Examples: a wet fly with a single cock's hackle, a woolly worm with a saddle hackle, or a fly with a squirrel-tail wing.

Level

The level at which a fly floats (or sinks) is largely built into it while it is being tied. Enough lead will get nymphs to almost any level, but in dry flies the basic design is very important. A few examples are shown here, with an emphasis on simple designs anyone can tie. The point is to choose a wide range rather than, for example, tying or buying the same basic design in a variety of colors.

At one extreme, the palmer fly floats high above the water surface. Probably this is the oldest dry fly in existence. It remains the lightest, which is to say that it is bulkier in proportion to its weight than any other design

The traditional dry fly hackled at the head only, works well but is very seldom a high-floater, despite what some anglers like to think. The hook is usually caught in the surface film.

Many low-floating designs, some old and some recent, imitate insects hatching or returning to lay their eggs. Almost all the land-based (terrestrial) insects which fall in the water also float at this soggy level. Trout like easy feeding and seek such insects, though the rises may be hard to see. As a small sample of low-floating flies, the illustrations show both the traditional spent spinner, made by winding the hackle flat on both top and bottom, and a hatching dun which has hackle-point wings and a hackle wound flat at the bottom only. I call this latter fly the Perfect Dun (d) in self-derision. A really perfect fly will be found as soon as the Holy Grail.

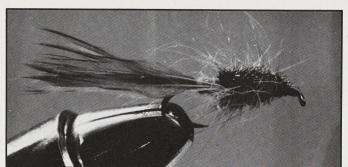
Flies which drift just under the surface film are also eagerly sought by trout. The one illustrated is the ancient softhackled wet fly. You can make it sound more modern by calling it a nymph. The strands of soft feather from a game bird or hen seem to look like the wings of a hatching insect, and they also keep the fly from sinking quickly. If the hackle is greased. this fly will stay caught in the surface film, making rises easier to spot.

The last design shown is a basic nymph. It can be tied large or small and fished upstream or down. If tied large and weighted with lead wire, this design will sink about as deep as any fly can. If tied smaller and with little or no weight, the fly will fish in mid-water, and trout like mid-water flies. For people who buy their flies, the main disadvantage of this design may be that the lead wire is invisible in the finished product. You might have to weigh the nymph on a handloader's scale to guess how deep it will fish.

It makes sense to classify flies by behavior because trout do, in the sense that they consider behavior to be the most important characteristic of a fly. But size is important too. The shape of the fly matters frequently and its color sometimes.

I do not mind arguing with trout about whether they are going to fit in a landing net. When it comes to choosing flies, the trout is the customer and the customer is always right. Mostly he wants his dinner to behave itself before he ventures to try its flavor





This marabou damselfly nymph was designed to be fished with a strip/tease retrieve.

To Fish a Nymph

Six ways to offer a trout an artificial that says "natural."

BY GARY BORGER

n the desert, there is no transition; the day starts hot. To escape the searing heat. we fished the umber hours of dawn. Beneath the paling stars, we waded, casting expectantly to familiar lies. The trout were there, rummaging in the river's gravelly shoals, searching for a nymph, or larva, or worm. Not the time for dries, but for nymph imitations fished close over the rocks. The flies had to tick and catch and occasionally pull a clump of algae from the stones. But oft as not, when the hook caught firm, it was at the corner of a trout's jaw - rainbows in the starlight! Never, it seemed, had fishing been so good. Then the sun burst over the mesa and bathed us in its bright burning heat. "Tomorrow morning," we promised ourselves and headed back to camp.

Modern nymph fishing had its genesis on the chalk streams of England at the turning of the century. There, G.E.M. Skues, through careful observation, determined that many apparently rising trout were actually feeding on preemergent mayfly nymphs. Skues's delicate patterns bespeak the intimate knowledge he had of such nymphing trout. Since then, a great deal has been discovered about the underwater feeding behavior of trout and how to fish nymphs to them.

Consistent success in nymph fishing requires a working knowledge of the fish's food organisms. You do not need to be intimately acquainted with scientific names, but certainly you should be able to recognize major groups of food organisms and know something about the be-

havorial profiles of these groups.

Although tying your own flies is a delightful adjunct to nymphing, it is not necessary; however, an understanding of fly design and tying materials is. The nymph fisher also must be well versed in fly fishing tactics. These understandings and skills are integrated into a series of presentation methods that fit the food organism, feeding mode of the trout and the water type.

Strip/Tease Retrieve

Damselflies are creatures of lakes and slow water areas of streams. The nymph is elongate with three, willow leaf-shaped tails, rangy legs, bulging eyes and a carnivorous disposition. In its developing stage, it spends its days skulking among beds of aquatic vegetation or sprawling on the bottom. When the nymph reaches full size, it metamorphoses into an adult. This winged insect forms within the nymphal husk. To escape, it must row the encasing nymphal armor to shore and burst it. These migrating adults swim along rigorously just under the surface with a strong side-to-side sculling motion of the nymphal body. The tails are held together and act as a paddle. Legs are held out to the sides as stabilizers to keep the thorax from being whipped side by side by the beating abdomen. At first glance, these insects look like tiny minnows wiggling to shore. Trout grab them eagerly and aggressively.

A fly tied on a long-shank hook with three, broad, outspread tails, six legs, and teddy-bear eyes certainly *looks* like a damselfly nymph, or at least like a dead one. It looks nothing like the living, swimming insect, and no fly fishing tactic can make it behave like one. The best pattern is tied on a regular-length hook and has a

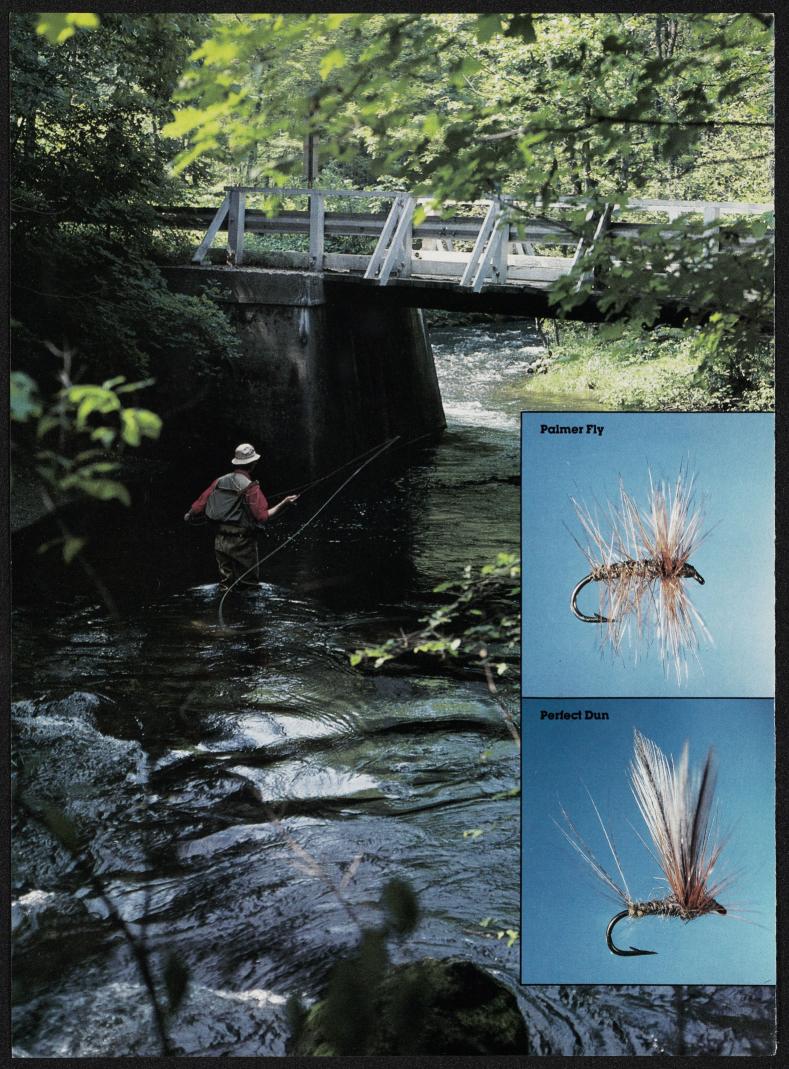
long marabou tail that represents the abdomen and tail of the natural. The front one-half of the hook shank is weighted with lead wire and the thorax tied over it. Legs should be hair or stiff hackle and should extend out to the sides. A bulky thorax brought up tight against the head of the fly eliminates the need to tie in eyes.

As good as it is, this marabou damsel nymph catches few fish if presented incorrectly. This fly was designed to be fished in a certain way. The natural swims slowly and rests often. If the imitation is pulled through the water in long, fast strips, all it elicits from the fish is a surprised look. Fished with a strip/tease retrieve, however, this fly is so effective it may be in danger of being outlawed. Remember, though, it's not the fly alone, it's not the tactic alone, it's the particular combination of fly and tactic that spells success.

To fish the marabou damsel, use a floating line, and as it drops to the surface, follow it down with the rod tip. Catch the line under the finger of the rod hand and strip out the excess slack. Don't move the fly at this time, however. Give it a few moments to sink. Watch carefully, for the imitation will "swim" as it settles. After the fly has sunk a short ways, slowly draw in a foot or two of line (a rate of four inches a second is about right). As the line comes in (the "strip"), gently twitch the rod tip (the "tease"). Stop. Wait. Strip/tease again. Repeat until the cast is fished out. The take may come at any time. If the leader darts under, set the hook.

When the damselfly nymphs are migrating, the trout follow them in, often cruising within a rod's length of shore. Fishing from a boat is usually counterproductive unless the nymphs are migrating from extensive weed beds. Wading also

Gary Borger has authored two trout fishing books and is the instructor on four video tapes on fly fishing and fly tying. He is also the Midwest Editor of *Fly Fisherman* magazine and a botany professor at the University of Wisconsin.



heavy for deep. Give a wet fly a good, long try, varying the depth and speed of retrieve, before you change patterns.

According to many experts, streamers don't work in alpine lakes because of the absence of forage fish, but I've done well with streamers often enough that I'd feel quilty if I didn't mention them. Brook trout seem to be especially susceptible, but I've also taken a fair number of supposedly non-fish-eating cutthroats on streamers. Typically, I try a streamer either when absolutely nothing is happening or when I'm taking so many trout I feel secure in experimenting. In both cases, streamers have sometimes accounted for the biggest fish of the trip. Basic patterns like the Brown and White Bucktail and Muddler Minnow, in small sizes, are best.

A good high lake fly selection should be heavy on generic wet fly patterns with a good smattering of midges, mayflies, caddis, flying ants and a few streamers. It's also a good idea to take along a few fancy attractor patterns. Now and then, for reasons known only to themselves, alpine lake trout will get very selective to something like a # 14 Royal Coachman. Put another way, trout fishing can be full of surprises and the best fishermen prepare for them and learn to enjoy them.

When it comes to the ideal fly rod for alpine lakes, you have to compromise. You need a rod that will let you deliver delicate casts with small flies one minute and

Remote, little known waters are always the most tantalizing.

punch a long line into the wind the next. I prefer a 9 or 9½-foot graphite for a # 5 or 6 line, but it should be pointed out that casting skill is much more important than a specialized rod.

The rest of your gear will depend largely on how far into the backcountry you're going and how long you plan to stay. I won't get into it too deeply here except to suggest that you keep the luxuries small and light. I carry a good sleeping bag, plenty of food, clothes, and keep the fishing tackle to a minimum. I like to pare my fly selection down until it fits in two small boxes. If you can stand to part with it, leave the vest at home. I wear a shirt with big pockets.

Lakes in the high country can be finicky, so I like to fish one at least an entire day, if not two. Even if catching the trout on the feed wasn't a consideration, a campfire and a night under the stars are among the finer things in life. It may be hard to resist keeping a trout for dinner,

but bear in mind that many high lakes are incredibly delicate, especially the cutthroat and golden fisheries. In most cases, you'll do yourself and other fishermen a favor by releasing your catch.

Actually locating a good alpine trout lake can take some doing. It's possible to just pick a blue spot on a map and luck out, but a little research can be a big help. Guidebooks, magazine articles, fly shops, outfitters, rangers, field biologists, bush pilots and guides can all be good sources of information, but keep in mind that you probably won't get the whole truth in any one place. If you knew of a secluded lake full of 18-inch cutthroats, how many strangers would you tell?

A lake at the headwaters of a stream known to hold trout is usually a good bet. Lakes and ponds isolated from major stream systems are sometimes sterile, but many of these are stocked and hold good populations. Trout might not be found above a natural barrier, such as a waterfall, or it may simply mark the boundary between the brook trout and the cutthroat fisheries.

You can play it safe and fish only the well known lakes, but the remote and little known waters are always the most tantilizing. Are they sterile or are they full of trout and just so remote that no one ever fishes them? Sometimes the only thing you can do is shoulder your pack and go find out.

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A NOSSA CAPA

Para a primeira capa deste nosso segundo ano de existência (que aparece melhorada) escolhemos o registo de um momento que qualquer um de nós gostaria de viver.

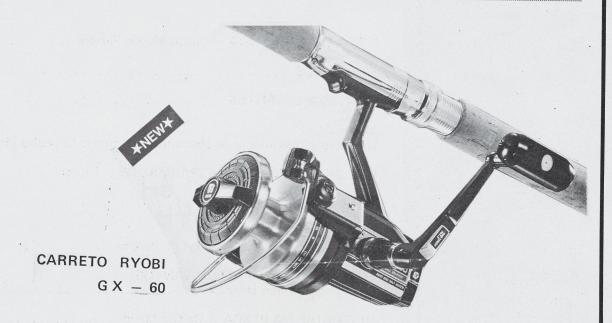
Na foto, um salmão não migratório (L.A.M. — Land Locked Salmon), após ser capturado na Patagónia (Argentina), por Datus C. Proper.

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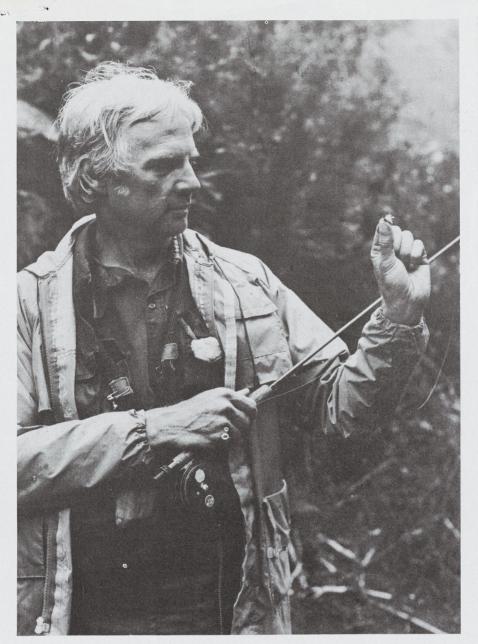
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É com imensa satisfação que incluímos nas páginas da nossa revista o primeiro artigo de uma série da autoria de um pescador que já foi capa no número de Dezembro: Datus Proper.

Diplomata de carreira, é um dos nomes sonantes na pesca à mosca além fronteiras. Poucos são os rios famosos das Américas e da Europa que não foram criteriosamente 'batidos' pela sua experiente mão.

Tem colaborado em algumas revistas estrangeiras da especialidade. Entretanto, acaba de ser posto à venda nos Estados Unidos o seu livro "what the trout said" (O que diz a truta), que apresenta uma ilustração de uma truta do famoso pintor americano Winslow Homer. Um livro profundo de leitura obrigatória.

Conhecedor das nossas águas, onde há alguns anos pesca, escreve-nos sobre a mosca em Portugal, não se coibindo de, detalhadamente, analisar as características dos nossos rios truteiros.

CMP

A Mosca Seca Em Portugal

Tenho hesitado em escrever sobre a pesca à mosca seca em Portugal e não digo isto por mera delicadeza. O primeiro motivo da minha hesitação é que, até agora, tenho tido o prazer de ter quase uma reserva privada — e como todos sabemos, reservas privadas já não se encontram facilmente na Lusitânia. Mas há razões que são menos egoístas e este artigo distina-se a explicá-las.

Primeiramente algumas definições: a mosca seca, como muitos leitores saberão, é simplesmente uma mosca artificial que é construída e trabalha de maneira a flutuar na água. Uso o termo mosca "fly" em vez de pluma "feather" porque muitas vezes a mosca não tem qualquer pluma ou pena e igualmente porque é importante lembrar que a nossa meta é imitar o insecto verdadeiro.

Se o insecto estiver abaixo da superfície da água, chamaríamos a essa imitação mosca afogada "wet fly". Este vocábulo, contudo, não é excelenPor Datus C. Proper

te porque muitos insectos abaixo da superfície da água não estão realmente afogados.

Parte do prazer da pesca à mosca afogada ou seca, é tentar descobrir qual é o insecto que a truta está a comer, e então oferecer-lhe essa imitação. Quando resulta, resolvemos um problema que necessita tanto de inteligência como de energia. Quando falhamos, tentamos descobrir o porquê e começamos novamente. Não precisamos de pensar que é uma fatalidade

e dizer simplesmente "elas não queriam".

Mas só algumas vezes é necessário nos rios portugueses ter-se uma imitação precisa da alimentação da truta. Meia dúzia de diferentes moscas imitando a generalidade dos insectos bastarão na pior parte dos casos.

Em três anos de pesca em rios truteiros portugueses, só vi um pescador usar a mosca seca. Esse pescador é o meu amigo Carlos Pereira, e inicialmente eu penso que mesmo Carlos duvidada que a mosca seca resultasse tão frequentemente. A maior parte dos pescadores portugueses não têm qualquer dúvida: eles têm a certeza de que a mosca seca não resulta entre nós, embora aceitem que, por vezes, a mosca afogada dá certos resultados.

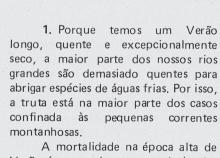
De facto a mosca seca resulta. Não é a melhor escolha para todos os dias mas, tomando a época de 1981 em geral — de Abril a Junho — a mosca flutuante resultou mais vezes de que outros métodos desportivos. Esta é em parte uma das razões da minha hesitação em escrever. Se os leitores se interessam únicamente sobre outra forma de matar trutas, eu terei sido culpado da destruição de um recurso que necessita de rápida ajuda, não de uma maior exploração.

Para tornar isto mais claro, é necessário descrever as características dos nossos recursos de pesca à truta em Portugal. Digo "nossos" recursos porque, mesmo não sendo um cidadão

português, sou um cidadão orgulhoso de alguns rios da Serra da Estrela e outros mais ao sul. Ninguém é melhor cidadão de um rio do que a truta, o moleiro e o pescador consciencioso.

Tenho como princípio de que ninguém conhece verdadeiramente o seu país se não conhecer as águas mais longínquas do seu maior rio. Eu conheço a nascente do Mondego razoavelmente bem.

Os nossos recursos, por isso, têm na generalidade estas características.



A mortalidade na época alta de Verão é provavelmente grande (tenho visto algumas barragens de trutas na Serra da Estrela mas infelizmente desde que estou no país que a pesca é proibida).



Foto M. Pereira

- 2. Porque muitos dos rios de trutas são rápidos, repletos de pedregulhos e de baixa alcalinidade, não são muito férteis. A truta demora a crescer e muito raramente atinge tamanhos grandes. A produção julgo não ser elevada, considerando-a em termos absolutos ou em quilogramas de trutas por hectare de superfície.
- 3. Por outro lado, os Invernos são suaves e as correntes têm bons locais de postura. A reprodução natural é excelente (quando se deixou alguma truta para a reprodução). A mortalidade de Inverno é provavelmente baixa.
- 4. A maior parte das correntes têm uma larga variedade de insectos próprios para a alimentação truteira. Os insectos não existem em grandes quantidades mas distribuem-se por todo o ano (a única excepção que

conheço é a Ilha de S. Miguel que me parece fraca em insectos aquáticos).

- 5. A nossa truta índigena é esteticamente perfeita, algumas vezes boa para comer, extremamente rápida, excepto no início da Primavera e perfeitamente adaptada através de milénios da sua evolução às difíceis condições geográficas e climatéricas. O organismo responsável deveria proteger a nossa truta sapeira porque é a melhor do mundo (digo isto com base na minha experência de pescador na América do Norte, América do Sul e Europa).
- 6. Não há repovoamentos conscientes. As truticulturas quer estatais quer privadas especializam-se na produção de truta arco-íris que só serve para fornecer "truta do Rio Minho" ao comércio do país. O falhanço das truticulturas em repovoar os nossos

E.U.A. – mostraram que a truta mansa ou de viveiro, por incrivel que pareça, piora o rio, passando a competir com a truta índigena na alimentação e refúgio.

O peixe de viveiro morre antes de se poder reproduzir ou proporcionar algum desporto. Eu vi uma truticultura bem organizada na ilha de S. Miguel mas aí o peixe era pior que o peixe das correntes abandonadas do continente. As trutas arco-íris só servem para os lagos ou para os rios que não tenham reprodução natural.

7. Infelizmente a orgnização da pesca não é competente e o efeito é quase desastroso. Há em Portugal costumes do século XIX e pressão de pesca do século XX. Portugal é o único País que eu conheço onde ainda não há limite diário na captura. Nem sequer alguns dos mehores rios foram regulamentados com qualquer restri-



Foto M. Pereira

Datus Proper: os nossos recursos truteiros têm um potencial capaz de atrair turistas para regiões que necessitam enormemente de receitas

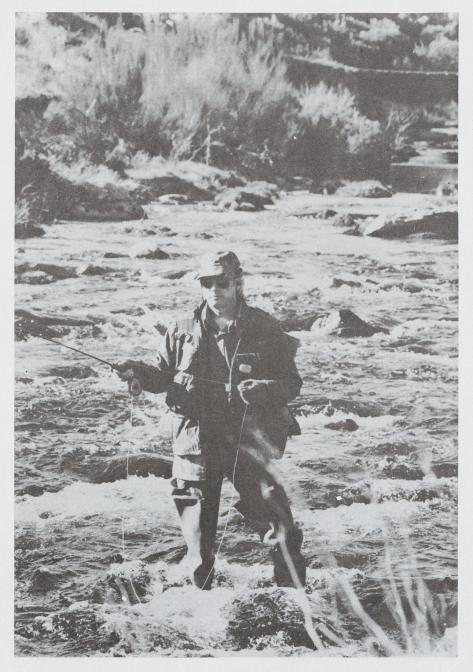




Foto M. Pereira

ção à pesca. A pesca com minhoca é permitida em todo o lado e não há proibição de venda de trutas índigenas. O resultado é que a maior parte das trutas são tiradas dos rios por alguns comerciantes em Março ou Abril, com água alta e quando as trutas estão fracas e com fome. Nesta altura a truta é tão magra que nem sequer é boa para comer.

8. Contudo, para terminar esta lista com uma nota optimista, as nossas correntes são excepcionalmente bem encenadas pela natureza e rodeadas por lindas aldeias habitadas por pessoas excepcionalmente agradáveis. Os nosso recursos truteiros têm um potencial capaz de atrair turistas para regiões que necessitam enormemente de receitas e em que faltam outras atacções turisticas. Em resumo, nós temos rios que são pequenos, limitados em produtividade e degradados substancialmente por pesca não desportiva.

Em matéria de proteínas, a nossa truta selvagem é e sempre será fraca. Por outro lado os nossos rios são de uma rara beleza e, com o mínimo de protecção, conseguem um repovoamento rápido devido à excelente raça de truta selvagem. O que falta aos nossos rios no campo da produção de proteínas pode ser compensado na satisfação emocional — o que é o mesmo que dizer desporto e (com um mínimo de administração) em termos turísticos.

Mais uma vez alguns pescadores discordarão pensando nos enormes cestos de trutas pescados no passado, quando o número de pescadores era pequeno. Hoje em dia, raras são as ocasiões em que é possível fazer uma cestada. Mas fazê-lo hoje, deverá ser motivo de vergonha e não de orgulho. Matar muitas trutas é privar muitos outros pescadores do prazer de apanhar apenas uma.

O que precisamos é de um método que nos permita apanhar a truta mais difícil — e simultâneamente com o máximo de emoção. Acima de tudo precisamos de um método que nos permita soltar trutas indefesas e uma ética que nos encorage a fazê-lo.

Para tal a pesca à mosca é a ideal. Pode dar-nos o peixe, a emoção e a ética.

CONTINUA

MRS. THOMPSON'S FRIED PHEASANT

The secret to fixing fine food is simple: Keep your eyes on the contents of the pan, rather than the time on the clock.

ORA THOMPSON IS THE kind of lady you would like to have for a grandmother, and she lives exactly where you wish your grandmother had settled. You have to slow down on the gravel road that leads to her house so you don't hit a deer. A pair of mallards flushes as you turn in to the farmhouse, and when you slam your car door, a pheasant crows at you from the river's bank. Trout always seem to be rising down by the willows. There are varmints around, too, but Mrs. Thompson keeps a rifle by the door to discourage them. Nothing could persuade her to move from the old place, she says, though several realtors have tried.

Zora was from West Virginia and Cecil Thompson was from Montana, so of course they met in Chicago. That was America's pivot, back in 1938. Zora met Cecil when he came to town to sell a load of spuds, after which she rode the Northern Pacific west and the two of them built a life. It was a big change, she says. After West Virginia's rolling hills and short horizons, the farm in Montana was an exaggeration—a broad, flat valley edged by mountains that rose sharply.

The flat and the steep were both fertile with game, however. Cecil is gone now, but Zora tells how he used to ride from the farmhouse to the mountains and come back with never less than fifteen birds hanging from his saddle—big sage hens from the lower country, little ruffed grouse from the creek bottoms, and mediumsized blues from the high ridges. The old blue and sage grouse were strongtasting, but the younger grouse of all kinds were good. The very best birds for eating, however, were the pheas-

ants that lived right there on the farm. You just had to treat them right. You can't rush through the process and expect them to taste the way they should, Zora says.

My wife and I had dinner with Mrs. Thompson a short while ago, and although her recipe might be simple, you wouldn't find a better pheasant dish if you flew to Paris for the purpose. This is the gentle, rolling, West Virginia truth.

Bear in mind, however, that frying is for young pheasants only. If you bag a rooster with long, sharp spurs, Mrs. Thompson recommends roasting it instead.

ZORA'S FRIED PHEASANT

2 cock pheasants with short,
rounded spurs
4 large strips streaky bacon
Salt to taste
Flour for dusting and making
gravy
2 cups pheasant stock
(optional)

♦ Hang the birds in a cool place for a week or so, or keep them in the refrigerator with space to dry out. Pluck them when you get a chance. The skin should be intact for this cooking method.

Remove the crop and the contents of the body cavity. Save the liver, heart, gizzard, neck, and feet. Pull the veins out of the liver. (If you have not drawn a pheasant before, don't worry; it will smell much better after it has been cooked.)

Cut each bird into five pieces—two breast halves, two legs with thighs, and the back—leaving the bones intact.

Put the backs, necks, giblets, and feet (scrubbed) in a saucepan containing stock made from pheasant bones and scraps. (Plain water would be all right too, Zora said.) After bringing the contents to a boil, cover the pan and let the mixture simmer while the rest of the cooking goes ahead.

Render the fat from the bacon, which Zora fries in two cast-iron skillets—8- and 10-inch sizes—over low heat. Then remove the bacon and turn the heat up. The four pheasant

LUSTRATION BY PHILIP HOOD

legs go into the smaller skillet; the four breasts into the larger.

Zora browned the skin for about 15 minutes, sitting by the stove and adjusting the burner so that the fat never got hot enough to splatter. When she had turned the pieces a couple of times and was satisfied with their color, she poured a little stock from the saucepan into the skillets-enough to keep the birds from burning but not enough to cover them. Then Zora lowered the heat, put loose-fitting lids on the skillets, and simmered the meat for about half an hour longer, for a total cooking time of 45 minutes.

Mind you, only my wife and I watched the time. If there is a secret to Mrs. Thompson's method, it is that

Con Se 1 635.

BEAR IN MIND THAT

FRYING IS FOR YOUNG

PHEASANTS ONLY:

ROOSTERS WITH LONG.

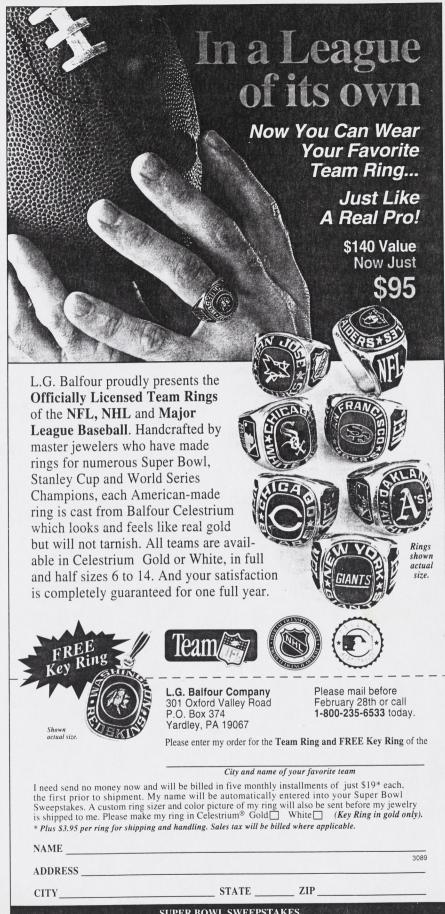
SHARP SPURS SHOULD

BE ROASTED INSTEAD.

she pays attention to the contents of the pan rather than the clock. She tested the legs and breasts with a fork until the juices began to run clear, beyond which point the meat would have lost flavor and grown tough.

The legs were done first, so Zora removed them from their skillet, kept them warm, and used the empty skillet to make gravy, stirring in flour little by little and letting it brown. She then added some of the stock from the saucepan and stirred the mixture to smooth out the lumps. When the breasts were removed from the other skillet, she added the rest of the stock to that one, deglazing it. The juices from this second pan were poured into the first and blended with the gravy, which was then poured into a serving dish.

Finally, the pheasants went to the table, along with the gravy, real mashed potatoes, peas, red wine, and a reverent hush.



SUPER BOWL SWEEPSTAKES

Respond to this ad before December 31st, 1993 and you will be eligible to win a pair of tickets to Super Bowl XXVIII, including round trip airfare and deluxe hotel accommodations. No purchase is necessary and complete details will be sent by return mail