

# Ned's Way

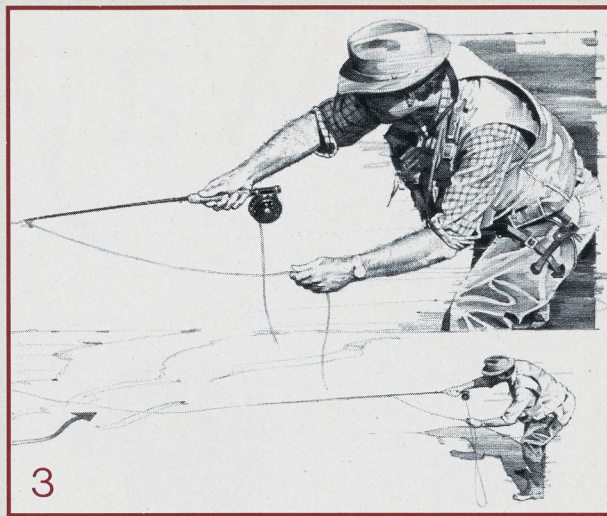
BY DATUS PROPER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOE CSATARI



against you. Here's a time-honored remedy.

# Reach Cast



## CHANGE LEVELS



### ANGLING IS A GAME

you can't lose, if that's any consolation. I mean, the trout may refuse your fly on ninety-nine casts out of a hundred, but you always get to try again. You might even catch a fish, in time, and the fish will never catch you.

Suppose that you have waded into the best position you can reach near a rising trout, made your best cast—and watched the fish reject your fly. There is a good chance that some vagary of the current made your fly drag. Perhaps you could not see its slight unnatural movement, but the trout could. The next step, in this case, is not just to change from a little gray dry fly to a little tan dry fly. Instead, pick a new design, one that fishes at a different level. Try an extra-high-floating dry fly or a near-surface nymph, for example. Either of them might let you get away with a little drag.

This is supposed to be fun, so experiment with the high-floating design first—the kind that drifts with the whole hook out of the water, point and all. The flies called variants, spiders, and skaters all float high because they use big hackles. Better still, try the fore-and-aft design, which has a tightly wound hackle at each

end—small in the front and just long-fibered enough in the rear to cover the point of the hook. Trout take this fly with more confidence than the big, bushy kind.

The advantage of any high-floating design is mobility. When it threatens to drag, you can give it a twitch, let it resume a natural float, and twitch it again. You can even dance it over the water like a crane fly in a mating ecstasy. Trout may wake up and pounce. Unfortunately, they may also slash at the fly, miss it, and then repent their reckless behavior. Fish are not very adventurous, when you get down to it, and they don't want us to enjoy ourselves either.

All right, then. Try a near-surface nymph next. Trout feel safer assassinating nymphs. On my own home stream, easily half of the events that look like rises are really the tips of tails coming out of the water—a sign that the fish was tipping down at the front for subsurface food.

This is finicky fishing. You cannot get away with strike indicators, split shot, big hooks wrapped with lead wire, or any of that heavy-metal stuff. Instead, use a tippet 3 feet long and .005 inch in diameter. At the end, tie on an unweighted nymph in size 16, 18,

or 20. A slim body of pheasant-tail herl or hare's ear almost always works, and you want just a wisp of hackle or a few fibers of hair at the front to keep the fly from sinking too fast. Grease the tippet with flotant down to within a few inches of the end, but then soak the nymph in your mouth. (What's good enough for a trout is good enough for you.) Get the fly in the water a yard upstream from the rising fish, and watch as if you had a Scottish accent—*verry* carefully.

If the trout moves at all, or opens its mouth, tighten your line quickly and gently, because a violent strike will pop the leader. Do it right and you get to chase up and down the stream for 5 minutes after a fish that is trying to break your \$200 rod. All of us anglers agree that this is fun.

If you eat the trout, which is good for your health, remember to check its stomach contents first. Not always, but usually, you will find that a fish feeding on the surface was also taking natural nymphs that happened to drift by a couple of inches deeper. And because those insects were floundering, the trout was willing to accept an imitation that may have been dragging slightly. —DATUS PROPER



OME TIME AGO, I WAS MOVING AROUND THE CONTINENTS SO OFTEN THAT I would scarcely have known where I'd touched the ground, except that there were always marshes near the airports, and in the marshes there were always snipe—the most widely distributed of the world's gamebirds. I was under the impression, therefore, that I knew something about the species even before my work took me to Ireland. There, I met Ned Maguire in his home at the foot of the Wicklow Mountains. Ned had things to teach me. Snipe were a destination for him, not a diversion. His was a boggy land, a state of wetness. What other nation would put a snipe on its coins? I think Ned saw the bird as a soul on wings, and the soul was Irish.

Ned was thin and fragile from his various operations. After I knew him awhile, my hand wanted to touch his skull—to remember its bony lines through my fingertips—though of course I did not do that. I wanted to learn the part of Ned that went beyond talking, beyond the smoky smell of his vintage tweed jacket. He knew everything that mattered. He could gauge worthless dogs within seconds and good ones within minutes. He could spot a fine old gun in the distance and tell me that the man carrying the gun did not deserve it. He was not the fount of all knowledge, exactly, but he specialized in its best parts, the relics that had come down from other old men forever. And it was Ned who showed me how snipe ought to be hunted.

We drove up into the hills. Midge, Ned's English setter, thumped her tail softly against the seat, her eyes burning bright, her body quiet. Midge lay still even when we pulled on our rubber boots and put our guns together. Then Ned gave a low command and she was off through the bog, hunting upwind, a white flash in the heather.

*Too fast, I thought. She'll bounce every snipe off Calary Bog.* But she didn't. She stopped all at once and lowered her body slowly, careful not to frighten the bird she had smelled. Setters were bred to drop like that, once upon a time, and Midge still had the knack. I would have rushed to her point, 300 yards away, but Ned could not walk fast, and I kept pace with him. Midge did not twitch. Her snipe flushed to my side, squeaked *escape*, and then did so. I opened my gun, removed two empty shells while they were still hot, and stood there, rueful.

Ned told me why I had missed. I had failed to get my head down on the stock, he said. It's a problem that people have with snipe. (I was glad that he did not narrow the people down to, say, one impetuous Yankee greenhorn.) Snipe are the same color as their marshes, by no coincidence, and they fly off low so that you cannot get them silhouetted against the sky. You lift your head for a better look, and that makes you shoot high.

We worked through more of the bog, stepping from tussock to tussock, and Ned lamented the scarcity of snipe. There used to be multitudes, he said. I guessed that he was talking about the years before World War II, which were as far back as I could imagine, but Ned had in mind an older set of good old days. He told me of a priest who had hunted Calary Bog in the 19th century, followed by a horse cart heavy with powder and shot. Ned showed me the book when we got back to his house. The priest had written that Saint Peter

*Ned didn't know everything, but he knew what mattered, like how to gauge good gun dogs and the right way to hunt snipe.*

might chide him, when the time came, for not getting out snipe shooting more often.

Before we left the bog, however, Ned and I did shoot snipe, plural. I missed one while it was still twisting and squeaking *'scape*, then dropped it with my second barrel. Midge brought the bird to Ned and he rested it on his hand, the bird's long beak hanging down. He lifted a small feather and plucked it. That's the one I wanted for tying a fly, he said. He told me to have a half-dozen Snipe-and-Purples ready for next spring, when the squalls would come and brown trout would start taking iron blue duns. I should use a Partridge hook in true size 16, Ned said, with a body of Pearsall's silk and a few turns of the snipe's feather.

I listened. The advice was practical, thrifty. It was also the core of a good life: bog, setter, gun, snipe, dinner, river, squall, mayflies, trout, another dinner. The loop opened and closed, opened and closed, all within Ned's scope. He could have sent off for fantasy feathers from a catalog, like I do. Instead, he tied real things together. He did not explain. He just kept me standing there in the heather, dark clouds drifting in, and showed me how the pieces fit one another.

Then Ned tucked the snipe into my game pocket, slowly, and I put the feather in my billfold to remember.

Ned got the next snipe, followed by a duck from a tiny pond hidden in the heather. Midge even pointed the duck. Sometimes a snipe heard the setter coming and flushed before Midge got wind of it, but she felt bad about that. A hare scampered off and Midge raced to chase it, then looked back at Ned, who was frowning. Midge forgot about the hare.

I was relaxed when I moved up for the next point. Two snipe flushed but I concentrated on just one, lifting my gun slowly and squeezing the trigger when the muzzles passed the bird. The snipe collapsed, and there was still time to make the second shot count. I don't make doubles often on anything, let alone snipe.

"You didn't waste time rushing," Ned said.

I did not worry about finding the downed birds, either. If you don't have a sharp dog, you must not let yourself think of doubles. You must keep your eye on a tuft where the snipe tumbled and head for it, unwavering. Otherwise, you lose your bird, which is a disgrace. We lost no birds

with Midge.

A mist was drifting down from the clouds. I'd have called it rain but Ned ignored it, so I must have been wrong. We had flushed every snipe on Calary Bog by then, and most of them had flown to other marshes, far away. I thought we'd head for home but Ned told me to drive up the road. There was no point in asking for reasons because he was hard of hearing at any time, and deaf when he wanted to be. We drove till Midge had been blown dry by my car's heater, and then Ned told me to turn off the paved road. We pulled in between a hawthorn hedge and a boggy brook. Ned started peering under the hedge for firewood, groaning a little when he bent down. I got the message and rustled up sticks.

Ned built a fire—a fine hot blazing fire—which seemed to me miraculous, considering that rain had been falling every day for the last century. Then I sneaked up on the brook, scared some tiny trout, and dipped water. Ned boiled it in an old black billy can and dropped in a fistful of tea leaves. The tea was almost as black as the billy can. We poured the steaming brew into tin mugs, diluted it with milk, and drank it right down to the leaves, by which time I had perceived that the contents of the clouds were, in fact, no more than mist and edging toward sunshine.

Ned removed our birds from the game pockets and laid them on the grass, which was dark green with tiny flowers between the blades. We took turns recounting the last

seconds of each snipe's life as if we had not seen it clearly enough already. We gave structure to our memories, and though we did not actually deliver eulogies, we recalled the birds as individuals. Ned's was a jacksnipe, smaller than the rest. Mine were common snipe, exactly like the ones back home in America. (We do not have jacksnipe in America, though we use the term for decoration.)

Mind you, Ned's is not the only way of hunting snipe. It is not even the most efficient method, unless you have an exceptional dog. But Ned's way is the one that changed my thinking. He's gone now, and I have not been back to Ireland, but I still pour cups of black tea from my billy can, and I still offer toasts to bogs and dogs and birds and one skinny old Irishman.

I trust that Saint Peter is writing all this down.





T H E O R I G I N A L

T R O

**B**rown trout. ONE KNOWS, RIGHT AWAY, THAT SUCH A NAME COMES FROM SOME DISTANT PLACE AND TIME. IF WE WERE TO NAME IT TODAY, WE'D CHOOSE A DESIGNER LABEL, SOMETHING WITH TRUCULENCE, GLITTER, SYLLABLES—CUTTHROAT, SAY, OR GOLDEN, OR RAINBOW. BUT THE BROWN IS THE ORIGINAL TROUT, AND IT DOES NOT NEED TO PROVE ANYTHING. THIS IS THE FISH THAT LED HUMANKIND TO INVENT FLY FISHING, WHICH IS A ROLE COMPARABLE (IN THE EYES OF ANGLERS) TO THAT OF WHEAT IN BUILDING CIVILIZATION.

**Don't let its name fool you. The brown is a designer trout that**

# LIFE

By Walter Prothero



one hitting him in the back of the neck.

If it's windy, bucks seek heavier cover. Don't bother with small patches of brush on open slopes or ridges; instead, still-hunt into the timber. One advantage of doing this is that wind ripping through branches will mask most noises you make. A disadvantage is that wise bucks are more likely to be spooked; since they know that they can't hear approaching danger, they'll run at the slightest provocation.

Bucks will also head for the forest when it's raining or snowing hard. Then, they prefer the umbrella canopy of coniferous trees. At this time dampness, and especially snow, make it easier to stalk through the woods quietly. Deer are also usually calmer than they are during a strong blow, another plus for stalking. I've stalked a number of bucks in the timber, and have found that storms often offer the only chance to stalk on a *(Continued on page 95)*



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T

by Datus Proper

illustration by Dugald Stermer

Three quirks of biology and history explain the brown trout's effect on us humans.

**First, the rise.** This fish feeds on insects near the surface of the water, where you and I can watch.

**Second, selectivity.** The brown rejects artificial flies, making us try ever harder to imitate the natural insect.

**Third, tradition.** People have been fly fishing, and writing about it, since long before the discovery of America.

#### Getting A Rise

What we humans call the surface of the water is, for a fish, the surface of the air. Insects get stuck in this bound-

ary between worlds, and trout feed on the insects. Biologist Robert Bachman describes the brown trout as "a fish that has evolved to capitalize on a very specific diet: a relatively helpless adult aquatic insect, loaded with high nutrient value—eggs."

The trout, in turn, has high nutrient value for humans, who have long tried to deceive it by wrapping hooks in feathers and fur. Today, we have the technology to keep our artificial lures afloat, and dry-fly fishing has become the most popular of methods. Historically, flies probably got soaked after a few casts and sank below the surface. Even so, they imitated surface *(Continued on page 108)*

**has more than earned its celebrity status among fly fishermen.**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEROME B. ROBINSON

*The  
fields of  
September*





pool. Not pleasant duty.

Don't be buck-obsessed. No one will pass up a big buck, but many hunters will let doe after doe walk beneath their stands. Ultimately, that position will be your downfall in the 'burbs. The problem is numbers. To control deer numbers, does must be taken.

Offer some venison, well cleaned and neatly wrapped, to the neighbors. Even if it is turned down, the gesture will be appreciated.

**Tactical:** Deer are deer, no matter where they live. They have the same needs to feed, reproduce, and seek shelter from the weather and predators in the suburbs as they do in big woods.

Perhaps the biggest error suburban hunters make is not accepting the fact that deer are out there. "You would not believe where big deer live around here," says Len Cardinale, for thirty years the owner of Butts and Bows in Belleville, New Jersey, just north of Newark. "During the shotgun season, New Jersey hunters vacuum up deer, just vacuum them up. But then in our winter bow season, we see *big* bucks. Happens every time.

"Where do they go? To backyards. They bed down next to dog houses, under window boxes, behind shrubs. You have to believe they are there because they are. The big smart ones use houses as cover. They know, all right."

Cardinale, a man who has hunted deer in the medians of highways, who has taken a ten-pointer within sight of the Empire State Building, who for twenty-six years ran a big buck contest that annually checked in over 600 deer, knows of what he speaks.

Even in the most urbanized areas, there are green pockets that hunters ignore but that deer find most appealing. A friend from St. Joseph, Missouri, found a 50-acre pocket in the midst of a subdivision. "Back in the Civil War," he explained, "limestone was mined there, so the ground is not very stable. Consequently, the developers couldn't build there. There was once a small truck farming operation on the land, but now it's mostly grown up. I drove by there a while back and counted eighteen deer, including a ten-point buck, standing next to an abandoned greenhouse. They move in and out of that sanctuary through adjoining backyards and a cemetery. There are always deer in there. The local herd has gotten so big that occasionally a deer wanders downtown. A couple of years ago one jumped through

the plate glass window of a store."

"The natural funnels are easier to spot," says Jim Hamm. "When you throw swimming pools, houses, car ports, swing sets, and fences into the equation, you channel the deer. You take away a lot of their options for movement, so that makes hunting them easier.

"On the downside, however, deer that grow up in the suburbs really get an education. If a buck makes it to two-and-a-half, he's virtually untouchable. He becomes a nocturnal animal. The only time you know he's out there is when you see a big old track in the kids' sandbox or the flower bed. Those deer live and die in the suburbs. . . die a *natural* death. They are the kings of the 'burbs.



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## ORIGINAL TROUT

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(Continued from page 55)

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insects and the trout rose to take them.

The brown trout's rise made fly fishing a game of wits played out in plain view. Anglers developed better and better equipment, and by 500 years ago, sophisticated flies were already in use. In order to survive, brown trout became clever, which in the oldest sense means, according to my dictionary, "expert to seize, dexterous." Bob Bachman demurred when I once suggested that there was something almost rational about the brown trout's decisions. All right, no fish reasons like man, but centuries of angling pressure have forced the evolution of a trout that can cope with humans.

### The Fish That Chooses

Just when you think that you finally have the hang of fly fishing, you find a trout that you are not clever enough to fool. Nick Lyons writes that what he loves most about the brown trout "are his eating habits—habits so fastidious, so snobbish, that I'd probably abhor them in humans."

Even innocent trout sometimes "concentrate on just one species" of food, writes Bob Bachman, adding that he "believes they do it to feed more efficiently." We added a complication when we made fake flies that looked like real ones. A trout that could not discern the difference would have been removed from the gene pool.

All of the insect-eating trouts are selective on occasion. Day in and day out,

however, most of us find that brown trout are the most demanding. It is not a coincidence that the trout which has known us longest is the most careful of the food it eats—or that its selectivity has been the subject of authors from Aelian, in the 2nd century, to Zern in the 20th.

### The Great Tradition

Over all the centuries, fly fishing has remained unchanged at its core. The same could be said of falconry and of the chase, which may have even longer histories. All three sports were widespread in Europe during the Renaissance, but over time their literature dwindled—with one exception. In Britain, an angling tradition took shape, flourished, and spread to her colonies.

Fly fishing in the great tradition has, by now, colonized most of the world's trout zones. Americans, Australians, Japanese, South Africans, and Scandinavians have come to share not only a method of angling, but an attitude toward the sport—a way of thinking that was already clear in the 15th-century *Treatyse of Fishing with an Angle*. It must have taken a powerful idea, and a remarkable fish, to convert the world.

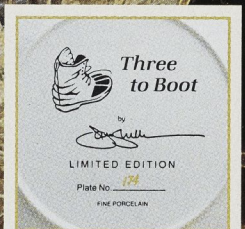
Izaak Walton portrayed anglers as gentle spirits, which shows that he did not know many fly fishermen. We are in fact a feisty tribe, and I may have stirred up old arguments by writing about rising trout and selectivity. Tradition is an even more emotive topic. We adore tradition at fairy-tale level, as we do royalty, but we do not invite it to go fishing. Unlike royalty, tradition comes along uninvited.

What is unusual about the fly-fishing tradition is that it has two dimensions: art and science. The artful side includes skills and tackle, which can get complicated if we wish—and we usually do. Rods, reels, and especially flies are such delicately appealing objects that they are collected even by non-anglers.

Science is a careful way of seeing nature, and one of its rules is that observation must be guided by a theory. Traditional fly fishing proceeds from the theory that trout are most likely to take an artificial fly resembling the natural food of the moment. It is a valid theory—simple, elegant, and accepted by many, but not all, anglers. Those who fish with imitative flies test the theory constantly.

The theory of imitation accounts for many of the fly-fishing books. Compare the abundance of angling entomologies, for example to the scarcity of literature

# Three to Boot



**Award-winning wildlife artist James Killen creates an endearing heirloom collector plate.**

These three Labrador Retriever pups are so eager to please! With a little team effort, they've managed to retrieve their master's boot. Such is the charm of "Three to Boot," a delightful work of art capturing all the spirit of sporting pups in training. Only award-winning animal artist James Killen could have brought this canine trio so vividly to life—from the determined expressions of the Yellow and Black Labs to the wide-eyed sheepishness of the Chocolate Lab. In the tradition of the most prized collectibles, this heirloom collector plate is crafted of fine porcelain and lavished with breathtaking color. It is hand-numbered and bordered in 24 karat gold. And each imported plate bears the artist's signature mark on its reverse side.

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on the pheasant—another clever species from the Old World. The bird reached America at the same time as the brown trout and remains, perhaps, equally popular. Pheasant hunting takes art and passion and a very clever dog, but there is one basic difference from trout fishing: you take a shot as soon as you flush the bird. When you have spotted your trout, you must still persuade it to eat, and that is where the science comes in.

Do you wonder what American fly fishers were like before they imported the selective brown trout? Well, 202 anglers sent letters to Mary Orvis Marbury in the 1880s. These have been reprinted in the beautiful book titled *Favorite Flies and Their Histories*. To flip its pages is to visit a land of shady streams and native brook trout. A few of the contributors, especially from Pennsylvania, seem to have been skilled fisherman, but most would not do very well today. They rarely describe their method of stream-fishing, perhaps assuming that there was only one: casting down and across the stream with big, fancy wet flies.

Of course, those were innocent times. Or were they? Native brook trout were easier to catch than browns, clearly, but the anglers in the book wrote highfalutin' prose and their flies were stiff, stylized, and gorgeous—as close to decadence as to innocence. Charles Dudley Warner (one of the contributors) wrote that “the trout fly is a ‘conventionalized’ creation, as we say of ornamentation. The theory is that, fly fishing being a high art, the fly must not be a tame imitation of nature, but an artistic suggestion of it.”

Warner's notion was not theory at all, in the scientific sense, and his ornaments burned out quickly. None of them are widely used now, in the original wet-fly form. But I do not mean to suggest that the century-old flies were worse, in some absolute way, than modern ones. By Charles Dudley Warner's standard of artistic ornamentation, the old flies were as good as or better than the new. The 1880 flies took more skill to tie than most on the market today. They meant as much to their users, too. But they imitated no insects.

Fly fishers might have continued to prefer Charles Dudley Warner's “high art,” but for the trout that arrived from Europe in 1882. Writer John McDonald

calls what happened next “the brown trout revolution in America.” The revolution spread westward from New York and Pennsylvania, and by 1927, Park Ranger Scotty Chapman was using dry flies to catch fussy brown trout in Yellowstone Park (see “An Artist With the Fly Rod,” August 1994 *FIELD & STREAM*). Anglers everywhere began tying flies to match natural insects found in the stomachs of trout—a process recommended by the *Treatyse of Fishing With an Angle* in the 15th century. The New World had become part of the great tradition.

Perhaps no fish can be said to think. The brown trout, at least, made us think.



### THE BIOLOGIST'S BROWN TROUT

■ Biologist Robert A. Bachman gathered hard information on brown trout in Spruce Creek, Pennsylvania. Young fish grew rapidly in this fertile limestone stream, reaching a length of 8 inches in two years. But it took four or even five years for the average trout to reach 12 inches. Most never attained a length of 14 inches.

The brown trout Bachman observed would dash for cover if startled, but when feeding, they occupied the same lies every day, often in bright sunlight.

Individual trout of all ages from young of the year to eight years had much the same feeding pattern. They rarely got enough to eat, so from dawn to dusk, April to October, they were always on the lookout for food. There were short flurries of more intense activity during mayfly

hatches and spinner falls at dusk in May and June.

Of more than 15,000 “feeding events” that Bachman recorded, only some 7 to 13 percent took place at the bottom of the stream. The rest of the events were divided about equally between food on the surface and midwater. Many nymphs and pupae were present on the bottom, but they were hard to see. Food items in “the drift,” on the other hand, were silhouetted against the sky and therefore easier to see.

Bachman reminds anglers who like to dredge the bottom with weighted nymphs that the trout in Spruce Creek not only took less food off the bottom but they moved a much shorter distance from their lies for bottom food than for food in the drift.—D.P.

## BOOKS & COMMENTS

**SMOKE AND SPICE**, by Cheryl Alters Jamison and Bill Jamison. 414 pps. Published by the Harvard Common Press, Dept. FS, 535 Albany St., Boston, MA 02118. Paperback, \$14.95.

**THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT BARBECUING** that differentiates it from all other methods of cooking, which are commonly lumped into a category called "women's work." Perhaps it has something to do with the fire, or maybe it's the primitive-looking extra-long cooking utensils that are used to spear and flip huge slabs of beef or pork from iron grills, but whatever the reason, I've often thought that if someone could figure out a way to hook a remote control to a barbecue, women would never need to go near the kitchen again.

But barbecuing is one thing; barbecu-

ing well is something else. If you're looking to obtain "bragging rights" barbecue skills, *Smoke & Spice* is well worth a look. The secret to good barbecue, apparently, is not in the sauce, but rather in the smoke, and whether you're using a charcoal grill or oven, a wood-burning oven, or a log pit, this book tells you how to generate the right kind of heat.

Sauces aren't forgotten, though. Recipes for rubs, pastes, marinades, and mops for everything from pork to beef to venison to salmon are featured. Also included are regional specialties and cooking tips from such barbecue capitals as Kansas City, Houston, and Owensboro, Kentucky.

What makes the book a fun read are the anecdotes contained in the margins. For example, New York State's lack of barbecue expertise may have something to do with its eighteenth-century prac-

tice of barbecuing turtles. The Memphis in May World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest, which attracts contestants from around the globe, has at times included Al Gore, and the winner of the American Royal competition walks away with a prize of \$30,000. Something to shoot for.—C.M.

**THE LIGHTWEIGHT GOURMET**, by Alan S. Kesselheim. 88 pps. Rugged Mountain Press, Dept. FS, Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17294-0850, telephone (800) 233-1128. Paperback, \$10.95.

**THERE ARE THOSE WHO CAN SUBSIST** quite happily in the outdoors on nothing but trail mix and mystery meat, and there are those who crave a higher level of culinary sophistication. Those of you who belong to the former category can stop reading now and go back to your

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# A PERFECT STREAM

*Rock Creek is a dream—with monsters.*

---

BY DATUS C. PROPER

**R**OCK CREEK RUNS CLEAR. YOU can fish it even during the peak of spring runoff, when the salmonfly hatch brings the biggest trout to the surface. The slopes above the stream are so steep that you can hardly stand on them, but old pines and firs and larches trap the snow, then filter melt-water down through thin topsoil, slowly. The watershed is like a shaded reservoir half a million acres in size.

Water from those slopes keeps Rock Creek cool during the hottest days of August, too. That's when John Adza and I went fishing. John had one day off from



PHOTO BY PAUL UPDIKE

# CURES FOR COMMON COLDS

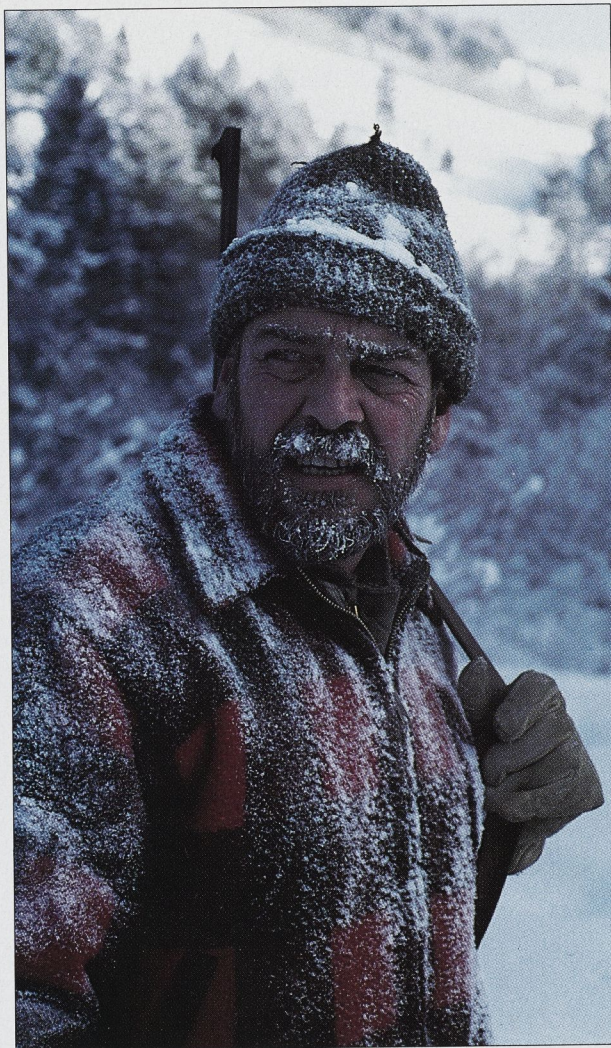
BY NORMAN STRUNG

**C**OLD THAT DRIVES to the bone is a frequent companion to outdoor sports. Ice fishing, late-season waterfowling, and big-game hunting are just a few of the pursuits that are often accompanied by low temperatures, numb fingers, and chattering teeth. But these discontents of winter have simple cures—there are lots of ways to keep from getting chilled, or to warm up once you get that way.

In order to avoid getting cold it helps to understand how it happens in the first place. Imagine your body as a combustion engine. Your torso produces energy and gives off heat, and your extremities act like a radiator, siphoning off that heat and dispersing it. When both systems are in balance, you maintain comfortable temperatures. When they are not, you become either too hot or too cold.

Following this analogy, the effects of overheating are felt a lot faster than those of cooling off. Heat is generated in the body frame, and mechanisms equivalent to thermostats reside there, so rising temperatures register quickly. The insidious thing about getting cold, however, is that heat loss works inward from the limbs so you don't feel the change until it reaches your frame, at which point considerable body mass is already chilled. The easiest way to stay warm then, is to recognize the early signs that you're cooling off.

The best indicators are fingers, toes, and the top of the head. When they start to feel cold, you're beginning to lose core heat. If you keep your extremities warm, you'll stay warm. There are three means



*There are plenty of ways to keep from getting chilled, or to warm up once you get that way.*

to this end: insulate against the cold with clothing; exercise to stoke up your engine and boost blood circulation; and add heat to your body.

The layering principle is the most effective way to insulate against cold. Trapped air keeps you warm, and several layers of clothing keep you warmer than one heavy garment of equivalent weight. A typical example of layered clothing would include polypropylene insulated underwear, wool pants and shirt, a wool sweater, a quilted down jacket, and a waterproof, hooded jacket and pants to protect you against the wind or shed rain should either prevail. Although each of us differ in how much heat our bodies produce, this combination keeps most folks warm in actual or wind-chill temperatures of 10 to 20 degrees. Another benefit of layering is the option to remove clothes a layer at a time should the weather turn warm or a brisk hike find you breaking into a sweat.

"If your feet get cold, put a hat on" is an age-old homily, but its truth is not diminished by time. Because heat rises, your head radiates a great deal of warmth, and should your hairline be receding toward the back of your neck, you'll lose it even faster. The most effective way to cap off your head is with headgear that is soft, clinging, and has a lot of loft. Depending on conditions, consider one of two hats: a plain wool watchcap or a (Continued on page 70)

❖Norm Strung passed away on October 10, 1991. A consummate professional till the end, he completed many assignments shortly before his death. These pieces will appear periodically in upcoming issues.

his outfitting business, and Rock Creek was where he wanted to spend his time. We drove upstream for an hour on a road that was not paved and never will be, I hope. A herd of bighorn sheep crossed in front of us, and later—where we traversed a talus slope—a solitary pika, running for cover. Bighorns are abundant in the watershed, and the rams reach trophy sizes. The pikas don't. Picture a miniature, fat, stub-eared rabbit that sits on rocks and squeaks at you. The two species have this in common: They are fussy about where they live.

John and I were by no means the only fishermen interested in Rock Creek. Near

its mouth was a good new fly shop. Farther up, we drove by anglers' houses. Cars were parked at the fishing access points, many with out-of-state license plates. The creek winds through its mountains for a lot of miles, though, and some pieces of water are well back from the road. John showed me a stretch where old Douglas firs lined the banks and we were the only fishermen. He tied an imitation of a spruce moth to his leader. I had no spruce moths, so I tied on a little Coachman. Its white wings would at least be easy to see on the shadowy water where a cliff slid into Rock Creek.

A few of the real moths fluttered around without falling on the stream. There was no hatch of Coachmans, either, but I teased up two rainbows, one brown trout, and a baby cutthroat. Then I stood without casting for a minute, rummaging in my vest for a fresh fly. My Coachman sank and swung below me in the current. The water bulged and my line jerked tight. I did not get organized in time to set the hook.

Rock Creek has an underlying fertility that is not obvious. Rainbows regularly grow to 18 inches, browns to 20 inches. Down deep, a few huge bull trout lurk in the rocks. They are permanent residents of the stream, not migrants. John Adza described them as freshwater equivalents of moray eels, fond of snacking on little brook trout and feasting on plump rainbows. Picture a salmonid that is colorless, potbellied, big-headed, and full of teeth—the kind of demon that every paradise requires. Despite their tough looks, however, bull trout are the most pollution-sensitive of Montana's gamefish. They can survive only where there is beautiful water and lots of it, cool all season long and low in sediments.

**I**N 1990, THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE released a plan for management of the Rock Creek watershed: 126,000 acres (about 22 percent of the total) were proposed for timber production, beginning in 1992. During the first decade, about 11,000 acres would be cut and 80 miles of new roads would be built to get the logs out. Feeder streams of Rock Creek would be in the logged area. The logging would probably require government subsidies, which is to say that the Forest Service would spend more money building roads and providing other services than it would get back from timber sales.

Public reaction has been intense. Sportsmen, streamside residents, and environmentalists have opposed large-scale logging and road-building. Loggers, lumber companies, small-town merchants, and Congressmen want the jobs logging creates. Everybody has something important to lose.

When John Adza went back to earning a living the next day, Bill Gray offered to show me a different piece of Rock Creek. Over Bill's gray hair was a cap that read "Save a Logger—Eat an Owl." He also had a vintage Chevy truck, a golden retriever, and two springer spaniels that stood in the bed of the truck and yipped at the whitetail deer along the road, which did not pay much attention.

Bill took me to the creek behind a cabin he had built for himself with lodgepole pine logs. The water was just as pretty there, but different—long runs, not a riffle-pool sequence. Bill likes to fish wet flies and nymphs. The place he chose was right for the method. I called it a good piece of river, and Bill corrected me: it's a great piece of creek. It has more water than the Beaverkill River in New York, where Bill grew up, but rivers and creeks are not distinguished by size alone. What matters is the setting. Rivers are broad, with flood marks, brown runoff, and debris on the banks. Rock Creek isn't like that.

Rock Creek is perfect. Its water is clear as a diamond, and the mountains are a flawless setting.

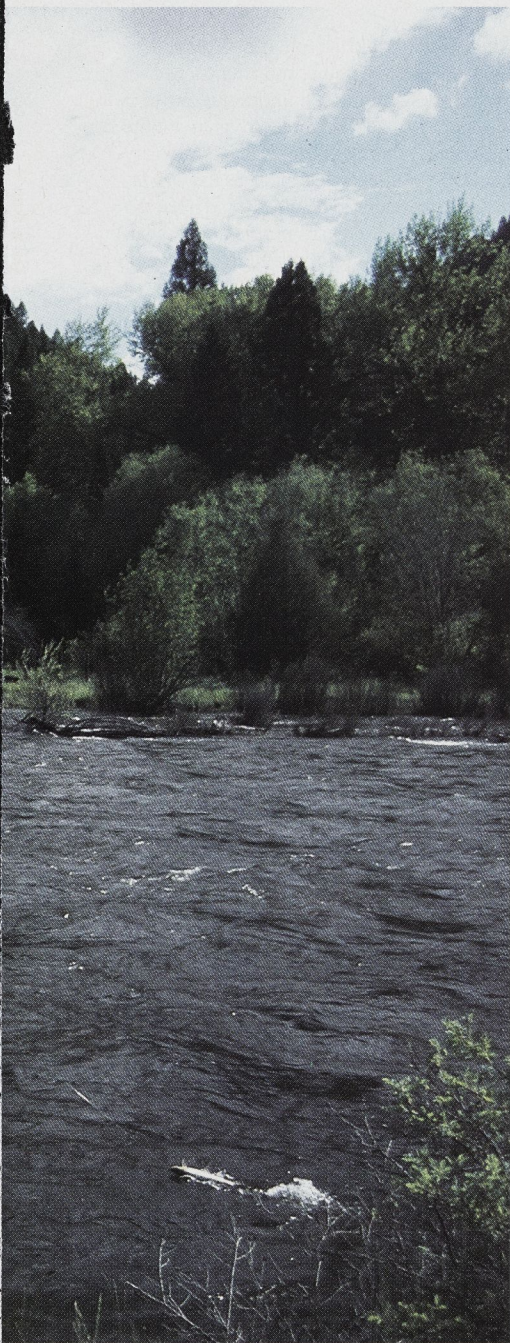
If you have ever pushed your chair back from your desk and invented a trout stream, it probably looked like this one: grassy banks with big trees for shade, slopes rising steep to keep your place private, big boulders and shimmering riffles, and deep, dark pools. Everybody notices: "This is special," they say, or different, or extra pretty—all of which is true without explaining anything. What they mean to say is this stream is a dream extended, a thin blue lifeline between a world gone wrong and a place in the headwaters.

Rock Creek is being studied for designation as a scenic river under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. I can't imagine that the decision will be difficult.

Bill and I leaned our backs against a bull pine and waited for (Continued on page 79)

*The author, a Montana resident, has long had an interest in trout and trout streams.*

*Perfection  
is not  
a constant  
state.  
It is always  
subject to  
change.*



# THE MEANING OF LIFE

BY KEITH MCCAFFERTY

*It was just another ice-fishing trip where nothing happened. . . or was it?*

**F**OR THE LAST COUPLE WINTERS I've been trying to brainwash my boy, Tom, to keep me company when I go ice fishing. At a couple of the reservoirs far to our north this hasn't been difficult. They are places where a dividend of the sport is actually catching fish.

But the lake just south of our town is better known for its scenery than its trout. It nestles underneath the sort of peaks that grace Canadian whiskey ads in glossy magazines.

Any minute you expect White Fang to come charging across the ice, followed by a man in a fur coat who recites poems by Robert Service. My hedge against the mediocre fishing has been to tell Tom that there are dinosaur bones on the lake bottom, and that if he'll fish until it's dark we can shine a light down the hole and see them.

He bought that story twice this January. We'd eat a quick supper after school and get to the lake before it got too dark to put the shanty up. This was the part of ice fishing an eight-year-old didn't have to be fooled into

liking. Tom could sit on the sled while I strained like a malamute, and after we had set up the poles and ducked under the canvas it was like we had had built a cabin in the wilderness. Inside there was a solidarity against the elements that made us the way father and son ought to be. We would open the flap and watch the peaks purple, then, when it was dark, pump up the lantern and batten down the hatch. "Now we're cookin'," I'd tell him. "Isn't this the life?"

But after you grind the auger and tip up the glow flies with the maggots, ice fishing is



ILLUSTRATED BY BOB DACEY



## A PERFECT STREAM

(Continued from page 31)

the spruce moths to bring up the best fish. He had done a lot of logging, so I asked him about bull pines. Were they a separate species, like bull trout?

No. They were immature ponderosa pines, Bill said, with dark bark. When they grew up, they would turn yellow-brown, put on girth as well as height, and send out broad limbs. They would be beautiful, then. We were sitting on a portion of the riverbank that had been burned just eighty-one years ago, Bill thought, so the trees were still scruffy adolescents.

I asked why the growth was so slow.

### THERE AREN'T MANY PLACES

### LEFT WHERE YOU CAN FISH

### THE STREAM OF YOUR DREAMS

This was dry country, Bill said. There was little rain in the summer, when trees want to grow. You could not compare the high, arid West to the humid country on both sides of it. Out on the wet Pacific Coast, for example, you could cut down a fir in thirty years and find growth rings half an inch wide. In a place like that, you could do real commercial tree-farming, with a sustained yield. In Montana, by contrast, the rings of a stump might be thin as the blade of a penknife.

I asked how lumbering ought to be managed under Montana's slow-growth conditions.

You could hardly talk of a sustained yield, Bill said—not in country where the best trees might not mature till several generations of people had been buried. That's forever, in human terms. Very little of the nation's timber is produced here. You could cut some trees in some places, though, and get them out without damaging the watershed, using methods ranging from horses to helicopters. You could not haul logs over steep slopes by truck, because roads would speed the runoff of sediments into Rock Creek and its feeder streams. You had to remember that the water is, by any measure, a more valuable resource than the trees protecting it.

**B**ILL GRAY LIKES TO COMPROMISE, work things out, come up with solutions that protect people and their environment. He has a feel for the land. Moderates are an endangered species in Montana, though.

*My guess is that, under pressure of public opinion, the logging plans will be reduced in scale. Economic growth in the high West today is driven by people who come to the last best place for what is last and best about it: trout, big game, birds, mountains, ranches, and just living. And besides, the most valuable trees have already been cut from the low-lying, flat, easy-to-log places. Up on the higher slopes, some of the big private timberlands have been cut bare, right down to the streams. Montana still has no law to control forestry practices on private property.*

*Montana loggers need jobs. Some will build cabins and make wood products locally, adding value to a reduced harvest of timber. Some will guide sportsmen and perform other services that the new economy of the region requires. It will be a more prosperous economy, but the change is hard. It's hard on communities, hard on businesses, hard on the Forest Service, and hard on Congressmen who can't deliver the kind of work that people want where people want to live. Most of all,*

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*looking for a new job is hard on a man who's trying to settle down and raise a family.*

I fished alone on the last evening and picked a piece of stream that was studded with boulders the size of Bill Gray's cabin. I hoped that they would be home to a trout the size of Bill Gray. If I were a fish, I would choose a boulder-home. There is comfort in rock. It lends solidity and permanence to a turbulent world.

I started early. Couldn't wait. The sun was toasting the ponderosa pines, filling the air with a smell of resin. A flock of Clark's nutcrackers sassed me from the branches. I floated my fly around the boulders. As light faded, a few moths were kind enough to drown themselves—not enough to start a feeding frenzy, but enough to wake the river up. I hooked a rainbow. It dashed and jumped with the kind of manic energy that only rainbows have, and then only when they are in a river that gives them everything they need.

As it grew dark, I remembered the bigger fish that had taken my drowned Coachman the previous evening. Out of my fly book came a streamer that resembled an oversized Coachman. I should have taken time to tie on a heavier tippet, too. Something took the fly, ran under a boulder, and broke off. I do not suggest that the lost fish was a bull trout. I have my fantasies, though. During a stream survey, a bull trout that weighed more than 20 pounds had been found in the upper reaches of Rock Creek. Anglers had caught other monsters during the salmonfly hatch.

I don't want to catch many bull trout. It would be fun to land just one, though. There are not many places left where a fisherman has a chance to do a thing like that.



## THE HUNTING GUIDE

*This master host of bobwhite hunts is an independent contractor who knows how to put down sure 'nuf trained bird dogs.*

**B**UD DANIEL IS ONE part gun dog trainer and one part grassroots philosopher. Not only does he train up gun dogs you can shoot over, but he entertains you while you're doing it.

This 6-foot 2-inch, 226-pound combination Arkansas native and Texas migrant (let me explain that: he trains in Arkansas during the hot summer months, and hunts bobwhite in South Texas during bird season) says of himself, "I'm like a mule. I have no pride of ancestry and no hope for posterity." You got to be country folk to recall mules can't throw beget.

And that's the way Daniel carries on, saying such things as, "Never hire a man who wears a straw hat or smokes a pipe. . . he's forever chasing that damned hat or packing that damned pipe." His wisdom is deep and rustic—always with a sense of humor—and he makes a master hunting host. Here's how this works.

He can be an independent contractor, booking his own hunts, catch as catch can. Or he can contract with a business that wants to entertain customers, award employees, and develop new clients. Such firms rent the lease, buy the truck, furnish the noon meal, and do whatever else pleases them. Bud shows up at the lease gate at sunrise, waits for the sports, and when they arrive he takes them hunting over at least twelve bird dogs he'll carry at all times so there'll always be a fresh brace down.

"My job is to accommodate the customer," says Bud, "and I put down sure'nuf trained bird dogs, conditioned, field and bird wise, with plenty of bottom in them to get the job done. You know, in South Texas if the scenting conditions are poor, then that means the birds have flown ahead. We don't have a wind, we



don't have a breeze—we've got a southeastern drift, and we develop dogs that can work on that paucity of help.

"But we've got the birds. Why, I've moved as many as thirty-seven coveys of bobwhite in one afternoon. The other day, we stopped by a windmill for lunch. And while they were putting the trash in tote sacks I let two dogs loose. Before we left that windmill we got into eight coveys. And when I say we ran into thirty-seven coveys you've got to realize we were delayed mightily by the gunners getting off and back on the hunting truck."

Daniel, who played pulling guard at Arkansas in a single-wing formation, and surprisingly has a degree in forestry (I look around for a tree), starts talking about today's guy and his gun dog. He says, "Dogs are better than they've ever been,

it's people who aren't what they used to be. Most dogs have been bred now to the point where they have all of the best in inherent qualities. But most people who own these high-bred dogs usually have a job somewhere and can only train or bird hunt on a weekend. Now, these dogs are taken care of feedwise and medically, and they're in excellent shape as far as everything but being conditioned; and the guy lets the dog loose on a weekend and by Sunday night he's not even started to get the edge off.

"Used to be when the dogs stayed up under the house and you walked out with your shotgun and they heard the bolt fly to, they come out from under there ready to go; and it was over the fence at a real leisurely gait, and they had finding birds on their minds instead of seeing what was on the other side of that ridge. . . because they had already seen what

was on the other side of that ridge.

"And we say those oldtime dogs were better bird dogs. They weren't. We're just not the people that we used to be because our lives are geared different. Nobody has the chance to live on the land and get out to the fields each day. And that's what a gun dog needs.

"Shucks, there ain't nothing to breaking a bird dog. South Texas is such a wonderful place because you can sit there on that hunting truck and that dog can go through covey after covey after covey and make all his mistakes and keep making them over and over and you know just as soon as he's cleared that one there's another one over there just a few steps. And that's not just with one dog, that may be with four or five down, and that running lets them get all those mistakes out of their system.

**O**n the last day of pheasant season, a pup named Huckleberry picked up scent near Porcupine Creek, where the willows grew tight-packed as quills. He followed the trail quickly at first, then slowed to work out a difficult pattern. That's when I caught up. Huck discovered that the pheasant had crossed to the other side of the stream bottom, picking a place where I could not squeeze through the brush. The pup stayed on the trail while I jogged a hundred yards to find a crossing with enough room for a human.

By the time I got out of the tangle, Huck's beeper was making a signal that told me he was on point somewhere far away. He had followed the bird out of the willows, around a field of stubble, and into a draw with enough grass to provide hiding cover. Getting there took a thousand of my best heartbeats. Perhaps this bird would be a hen, but it steamed my glasses anyhow. Running, cleaning glasses, and watching a dog on point is more excitement than I need all at once.

PHEASANTS go to extremes. They sit tight, flush wild, pose like lawn ornaments, fly clear off the farm, skulk in fields of tall grass, and shriek imprecations from the depths of fetid swamps. Pheasants do everything that is good for their survival and a few things that are good for their egos. What they do best of all, however, is sneak off when they hear you coming.

Pheasants escape by running because they know more about us humans than we know about them.

We cannot hear, see, or smell them on the ground, and usually we cannot guess which way they are going. I do not mean that they calculate the odds and decide on the best tactics—though some individual birds may indeed be clever enough to do that. All are products of evolution. Their ancestors were adapted to civilization even before they reached America. In this country, they kept on evolving under pressure from the shotgun. We have now shot almost 100 generations of cocks that flushed within easy range. A few still make that mistake every year on opening day, and get removed from the gene pool. The long-distance runners live on and reproduce.

There are ways to hunt the runners without a dog, even after opening day. You can walk linear cover—hedgerows, abandoned railroad (Continued on page 84)

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*Excerpted from Pheasants of the Mind, Prentice Hall Press, New York, N.Y.*



# GO TO EXTREMES

BY DATUS C. PROPER

The fall-run rainbow trout may be the least understood and most widely ignored gamefish in our Western waters.



# POOR MAN'S STEELHEAD

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BY KEITH McCAFFERTY

I had hoped to go to British Columbia this fall, to throw a fly for steelhead in the Morice River where it winds out of the Telkwa Range near Smithers. I settled for a blue-ribbon trout river in Montana, one that was just far enough from home to give me the sense of taking a trip. In size of fish it was a long step down. But in other ways the streams had much in common. Both ran through country as yet untarnished by the hand of man. And both rivers, by the third week in

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT HUNT





Pheasant hunting is the essence of fair chase. The birds set a humbling pace, and you do your level best simply to keep up.

# PHEASANTS



recommended that a hunter not remove these glands while field-dressing a deer or skinning an animal in camp, due to the risk of accidentally contaminating the desirable meaty parts of the carcass with pungent tarsal scent. Once the final butchering of the deer is complete and the venison is safely in the freezer, however, Mackey returns to the hanging remains of the carcass to slice off the glands for future use. During the interim, he stores them in his freezer in plastic freezer boxes with snap-top lids.

Since tarsal scent is one of the main ingredients in any sex lure, Mackey uses his tarsal glands almost exclusively during the rutting season. Simply place one of the glands in a 2-foot length of discarded panty hose, tie a knot at one end, and tie the other end to your boot-lace. Then, hike to your stand. As the gland bounces on the ground it will leave an authentic buck-in-rut or doe-in-estrous trail.

Once Mackey reaches his stand location, he removes the tarsal from his boot and ties it to a nearby tree branch to divert the attention of an approaching deer. He reminds hunters hiking out of the woods at day's end always to place the gland in a

plastic bag, never directly in their coat pocket. Also, as time passes, they should occasionally sniff the gland; once it begins to lose its strong, musky aroma it's time to discard it and fetch another from the freezer.

"The tarsal scent of a doe in heat has a mesmerizing effect upon amorous bucks and sometimes even makes them go loco," Mackey says. "One time, a buck approached my stand with none of the usual caution you might expect and just stood there nuzzling the panty hose containing the gland for long moments, allowing me plenty of time to place an arrow just behind his shoulder."

Yet another time, there was no opportunity for Mackey to shoot. A buck following the scent trail he laid down quickly homed in on the hanging gland, snatched it from the branch in his mouth, and dashed away snorting and wheezing with his head wagging from side to side.

A resourceful hunter who goes back to nature for his deer scents also recognizes the value of using deer pellets on a regular basis. If they are still moist and are squished beneath a hunter's boot soles, they create an effective illusion that may cause deer to follow the hunter right to his

stand. Whitetails are highly gregarious and socially oriented creatures, so when a deer crosses the scent trail of other animals it often feels compelled to follow.

Even old, dried-out pellets can be put to good use. Crumble them between the palms of your hands and rub the powdery residue on your lower pant legs to hide any human odor that otherwise might be transferred to trailside vegetation as you hike to your hunting location. Or, as noted Texas animal caller Murry Burnham suggests, throw a handful of pellets into the plastic bag where you store your outer hunting garments so that, in time, a subtle "deer aroma" permeates the fabric.

In farm country, a common practice among insightful hunters heading to their stands is to step into fresh livestock dung. This needn't be a messy affair since livestock dung is quite potent; just a bit smeared on the bottom of your boots should be adequate to cover your scent. Conversely, when hunting in a region where cattle, sheep, or horses are not pastured, always *(Continued on page 104)*

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*The author is a frequent contributor and a natural at hunting whitetails.*

## PHEASANTS

(Continued from page 43)

tracks, and the like. (Perhaps a cock will think that you are on his trail, lose his nerve, and give you a shot.) You can work other kinds of cover that attract birds to small areas, such as "rock breaks" in the middle of a harvested field. (A pheasant in there cannot sneak away unseen.) You can try to push birds from thick cover toward bare ground, and then kick the last clump of grass. You can wait for a snow heavy enough to cut off the escape routes. You can organize a drive, if you have enough friends and know of a place with a fair number of birds. All of these methods worked for me in the 1960's, and sometimes even in the 1970's. They still work in parts of the country—especially the Midwest—where birds are reasonably abundant.

Unfortunately, the latest research suggests that pheasant numbers in North America have fallen by about half since the early 1970's. They are not only smarter but scarcer. I simply cannot find them in most places, but Huckleberry can. Unlike me, he can follow a pheasant when it runs. A dog has the only sensor that works: a nose.

You can have a pheasant dog if you are willing to put yourself into the project. Money does not help much. Maybe it hurts, because if you have money, you probably do not have time, and nobody else is likely to make a pheasant dog out of your pup for you. You have to start by training yourself. If you choose a pup from one of the pointing breeds, you have to abandon most of what you thought you knew about hunting and learn it over from him.

Flushing dogs are less complicated. A springer or Labrador pup will fit in with your old group of hunting friends, doing things that make sense to humans: working close, sniffing the ground, probing brush, handling rabbits and birds alike. Be careful, however, to avoid fluffy spaniels bred for shows and big retrievers specialized in water work. You need a small- to medium-sized dog adapted to long, hot, hard work in the uplands.

A flushing dog is bred to push out birds himself, as soon as he finds them. Clearly, then, he must work close to his human, and even so the shots tend to be difficult. Some hunters keep their flushing dogs under control by training them to sit on command. Such training is a substitute for the pointing instinct, but unlike the point it goes against the dog's nature. Most of my friends take an easier way out, letting their dogs know what is wanted and counting on them to help. A good flushing dog will try hard to do what the boss needs, even if it does not fit formal rules.

The pointing dog has this fundamental difference: he comes equipped with

brakes, and when he finds a bird that will hold, he slams them on. Almost everybody likes to see this, in principle. The point gives the hunter a better chance at a close shot and clean kill. Not everybody likes the qualities that go along with the point, however. A dog that has brakes is usually equipped with faster running gear, too. His game is stop and go—opposites that depend on each other, like love and death. His speed and range may be too much for a human who wants to go slow. A pointing dog is a sports car rather than a family sedan. He needs attention. He gets in trouble. He may not fit your way of hunting.

He fits mine. I hunt alone, mostly, or with one friend. We don't mind walking. We need a dog that searches wide, finds the only cock in a square mile, and then slows down to work out its trail. Most of all we want a dog that will point at the end of the trail, with no whistles or shouts that might cause a wild flush. Only a pointer is bred to do that.

It happens, too, that young Huckleberry looks good while he's looking around. On point he is tension crystallized, emotion prolonged. When the season closes, I take him out anyhow, leaving the gun at home. Just watching him point birds is more fun than most things I can think of.

You should know, however, that most pointing dogs are trained *not* to trail pheasants. My old Trooper was like that. He was a German shorthaired pointer, good at what he had been taught to do. He was keen, steady, and equipped with an outstanding nose. (I knew that because he won field trials.) Over the years he found many birds for me. He would get the scent if it was there, point the pheasant if it would sit, and hold it if it could be held. If it ran, however, he would often lose it.

Trooper had been trained by the bobwhite's rules. Once the quail was our leading gamebird as far north as the Catskills. Ruffed grouse and pheasants were late-starters, gaining status only in the late 19th century. The American pointing-dog myth is a bobwhite myth, though I don't suppose most people today think of it that way. The innocent bobwhite of the 19th century shaped our dogs, and the dogs shaped our field trials, and those trials became the game which most professional dog trainers had to master. By now the sport is uniquely American—more so than baseball. It is a great game, but wild pheasants won't play it.

I am using the term "myth" respectfully. Myths give us our most powerful rules—the ones we accept as profoundly right, without thinking about them. Perhaps we hunters crave mythic guidance more than most people. And so, if we live in America (but not in other countries), we train our pointers in the good old American way. When they do a poor job of hunting pheasants, we blame the bird. Confounded roosters just won't behave

like gentlemen's game.

Here is how not to get a pheasant dog. You start with a talented dog like Trooper. You never let him break point on his own initiative to work out a scent. You make him steady to wing and shot, which means that he remains on point even when the bird flushes and is killed. To reinforce his steadiness, you do not let him retrieve anything until he is a year or two old. It works. You get what is called (in a sort of Freudian slip) "a finished dog." Like old Trooper, he wins trials of the good old American kind and adapts to tight-sitting wild birds. For pheasants he is, if not finished, at least handicapped. He has spent his youth learning the wrong things.

When Trooper's time ran out, my wife and I got another shorthair. The breed did not matter to me, but it did to her. She did not want long hair on the rug, which ruled out setters, and she did not share my admiration for English pointers. Her good will was important. The new pup, unlike Trooper, was to be raised in the house. I wanted him to grow up smarter than a pheasant, and kennels provide few stimuli for developing brains. I wanted Huck to get used to being on my team, too. Man and dog must often work together to surround a running pheasant.

We bought a pup from outstanding parents, and then we raised him to be a pheasant dog. We praised Huckleberry for retrieving anything. Anything. That included slippers, rugs, bags of groceries with the pickles falling out, long-dead muskrats, and live, complaining gophers. I took him outside for half an hour most afternoons, and as he got on the scent of pheasants during our rambles, I encouraged him to sniff and trail. He started pointing wild birds when he was six months old. When I shot the first cock over his point, he perceived the meaning of life. From then on he followed hot air-scent at a gallop, nose high. It took him longer to get his nose down and follow weak ground scent. He was not finished. He was started, on the real thing.

This is not to say that Huckleberry was self-trained. (A pup who can intimidate cock pheasants is most unlikely to agree with his human on every little thing.) He had to learn commands like "no," "come," "fetch," "heel," and "whoa." If I had realized quite how bold he was, I would have leaned on him even earlier.

Training, however, is no substitute for hunting. You can train a dog to avoid behavior that you do not want. If he has the right instincts, you can encourage him to intensify habits that are useful to you. You cannot teach him to hunt. You do not know the real game. We humans see cock pheasants in the air, or strutting over a field in the distance, and have to deduce the rest. Only a dog can sense every move they make. Only he knows their resourcefulness and strength, and he learns only

Grandpa told me to cast toward the bank and around any cover I could see in the lagoon. I got one spectacular hit, but I couldn't hold whatever it was at the other end, and I lost my lure and most of my leader. It was then Grandpa explained that along with the cutthroats, there were big "jack" coho salmon coming in from the ocean.

I put on a pink roostertail and picked up another nice cutt that took half my line on the first run. Grandpa was having plenty of action, too, and he had just released his third cutt when we heard shouts from the direction of the island.

"HELP!! HELP!! HELP ME!!"

I stood up in the bow and looked toward the bank side of the island. Through the high grass I could see the kid who'd been fly-fishing waving his arms in the air. He was roughly 150 yards away and nearly invisible.

Grandpa, who was facing the opposite direction from the shouts, said: "Is that the kid by the channel?"

Before I could answer the kid began yelling again. This time we could hear the panic in his voice: "HELP! QUICKSAND! I CAN'T GET OUT!!"

The old man had already pulled the starter cord on the outboard and had the engine revving. He put it in gear and the skiff headed across the lagoon toward the desperate voice.

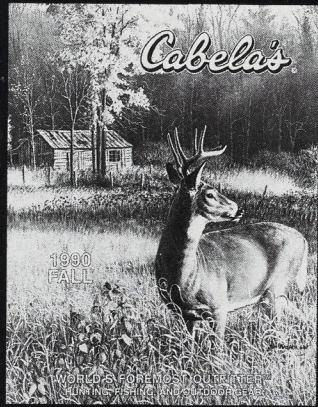
Grandpa yelled at me: "Get the anchor rope ready to throw to him!" I crouched in the bow and began coiling it on my arm.

It took about 25 seconds to cover the distance but it seemed twice as long. Grandpa's comment about the "tricky" bottom earlier in the day flashed through my mind. I wondered if the kid could swim and in the next second realized that if you're caught in quicksand you can't get free enough to swim.

As we rounded the tip of the island we could see the kid was struggling to stay afloat. Water had filled his waders and only his head and neck were visible. It was obvious his body and legs were sinking deeper into the sand. Just when it looked like he was about to go under he saw us and made even more of an effort to work himself loose.

Grandpa cut the engine and in another few seconds we were on top of the kid. He reached out and grabbed the gunwales on our skiff and held on. Grandpa barked out in urgent tones: "Hurry up! Put the rope under his arms and around his back!"

The kid was terrified and when I tried to pass the rope under his arms he wouldn't let go of the skiff. He'd stopped yelling but he was still stuck in the sand over his waist and the water in his waders was pulling him down, making him think he was going under. I asked him if he could move and he shook his head. He was afraid to talk, and I could see the fear in his eyes and feel it in his arms and hands that wouldn't let go. His grip on the gunwales was like a pair of iron clamps. Once I got the rope around his back and told him he



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wouldn't sink, I could sense he relaxed a little. But not much.

Grandpa moved up to the middle of the boat to see if he could help. It was obvious I couldn't do anything alone. I'd pulled on the rope and the kid hadn't budged.

Just then the boy tried to lift himself up and the weight in the boat shifted. For a second I thought we were going to capsize—our fishing gear clattered to the downside, the tackle box fell over, and plugs, hooks, leaders, and sinkers all tangled together. But Grandpa quickly trimmed the skiff and then decided that the only way we could pull the kid out was by using the motor. With the anchor rope wrapped securely under the kid's arms and around his back so he couldn't go under and me pulling, we began making progress. Inch by inch the kid started moving.


After 5 minutes of working him along the bottom the kid said the sand was getting firmer. In a few minutes we had him on safe ground.

Grandpa explained what had happened. The 15 feet between the bank and the island was the main channel of Ten Mile Creek. Winter rains had dug out a deep hole—like the holes in the lagoon. But every day the incoming tide refilled the hole with loose debris—leaves and bits of wood. The tidal action kept stirring up the sand and debris, which would then

settle down, looking like the rest of the creek bottom. But looks were deceptive, for the bottom was treacherous. And although the creek normally had only a 3-foot flow, when combined with a high tide and a mountain freshet, a short man or a young boy could sink deep enough to drown. In short, all the conditions for a disaster were present.

When we finally got the kid up on the bank, safe and sound, he thanked us for helping him out of a dangerous situation. We found his fly rod about 20 yards downstream and retrieved it and then said goodbye. We looked for Andy, but he'd evidently caught his fish and gone home. It was close to 11:00 when we started back up Ten Mile Creek, and Grandpa asked me if I'd learned anything about sea-run cutthroat trout.

I replied, "I sure did, Grandpa. I'll never make fun of those Ghost Trout again. But, you know, I learned something else today. No matter how little a creek or lagoon may be, when you go fishing or hunting you better think about what you're doing and check things out. That kid would have drowned back there if we hadn't come along."

"Amen!" said Grandpa. "Now let's check this creek out for some mallards. We might be coming back here again, real soon, and we've got to think how we're gonna approach 'em. . . ." 



# Move to Malibu

by chasing them through cattails and cornfields, weeds and willows.

He should learn all he really needs to know in kindergarten. My friends and I shot about sixty pheasants during Huckleberry's first full season, and I kicked up only one of them before he found it. Conclusion: a year-old dog can locate pheasants about fifty-nine times better than a human. Huck also retrieved all that I shot, except for one that came down on property where we could not get permission to follow. To make up for that, he brought me two winged birds that other hunters had failed to recover. This was better than I did even in the good old days of high pheasant populations.

**P**lease do not take this to mean that hunting is about scores. It is not. It's about one man and one dog chasing one pheasant at a time, and earning the ones they get.


This is never going to be called a gentleman's sport, because no one else does the work for you. You do not stand around while someone drives birds in your direction; you do not ride in a vehicle and dismount for a shot when the dog goes on point. Pheasants won't sit still for that. They take real hunting, not just shooting. They are not somebody else's myth. They are yours, in the making.

Early in the season, some birds sit tight in grass that is still thick enough to hide them. When the cover gets thin, however, many pheasants flush wild, no matter how well your dog hunts. If you want a shot, you try to keep up. You play the odds. You and your pup are like wolves running a herd of caribou to see if one of them is vulnerable. Call it fair chase. If predation were a 100 percent successful, you would not want to be a part of it, would you?

During the chasing, you sweat. I recommend that you put an anti-fog solution on your glasses before every hunt. If you forget, you will be standing there like me, cleaning off your shooting-

eye lens with a gloved finger and hoping that you are not about to miss the season's last chance.

THE DECEMBER bird that Huckleberry trailed and pointed was a cock. It held till I got close, but I was too flustered to shoot well. A fringe pellet angled the pheasant down into brush that looked thick enough to stop a weasel. With Trooper, that wounded rooster would have escaped, but Huck squirmed into the willows and found scent. He worked the bottom and ran down what he was looking for, an old rooster with eagle-eyes glaring at me, almost a survivor. My gun was open by then; I had promised to quit if rewarded by a holiday pheasant that I did not deserve.

Huckleberry came to heel and followed me back to the truck. He looked puzzled. He'd made no promises and could not understand why anyone would quit when there were still pheasants to be trailed. 

## WHITETAILS

(Continued from page 51)

have bedding sites that are removed from feeding grounds, but during the day the deer are often quite content to rest and ruminate right in or near the places they like to feed. So, moving slowly through a stand of aspen or stripped maples or oak will often be the best way to find whitetails in the afternoon.

However, the all-time favorite and most productive whitetail stalking grounds for me are hillsides above brushy thickets. Because whitetails are especially jumpy during hunting season, they may spend their days in thicker cover than usual, making them particularly difficult to see. But, if you can stalk above this cover and look down into it, you may be surprised at how many whitetails can pack into even a small patch of brush.

The strip of hawthorn I like to hunt is so obnoxious I would never try to hunt *in* it. But it comes with a steep hillside at its back and a narrow, yet relatively level, game trail on which I can stalk



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Abride 2

## Pheasants in the Grass

*As conservation reserves come back, so do the pheasants.*

Our leading character has two long legs and is seldom caught sleeping. The biped I have in mind is named David King but my description applies equally to the pheasant, so take your choice. Neither the man nor the bird is among life's casual onlookers. David is the only physician in a town that is not quite small enough to allow him any leisure, so instead of wasting time abed he



## How to Have More "Wild"

# PHEASANTS

BY JEROME B. ROBINSON

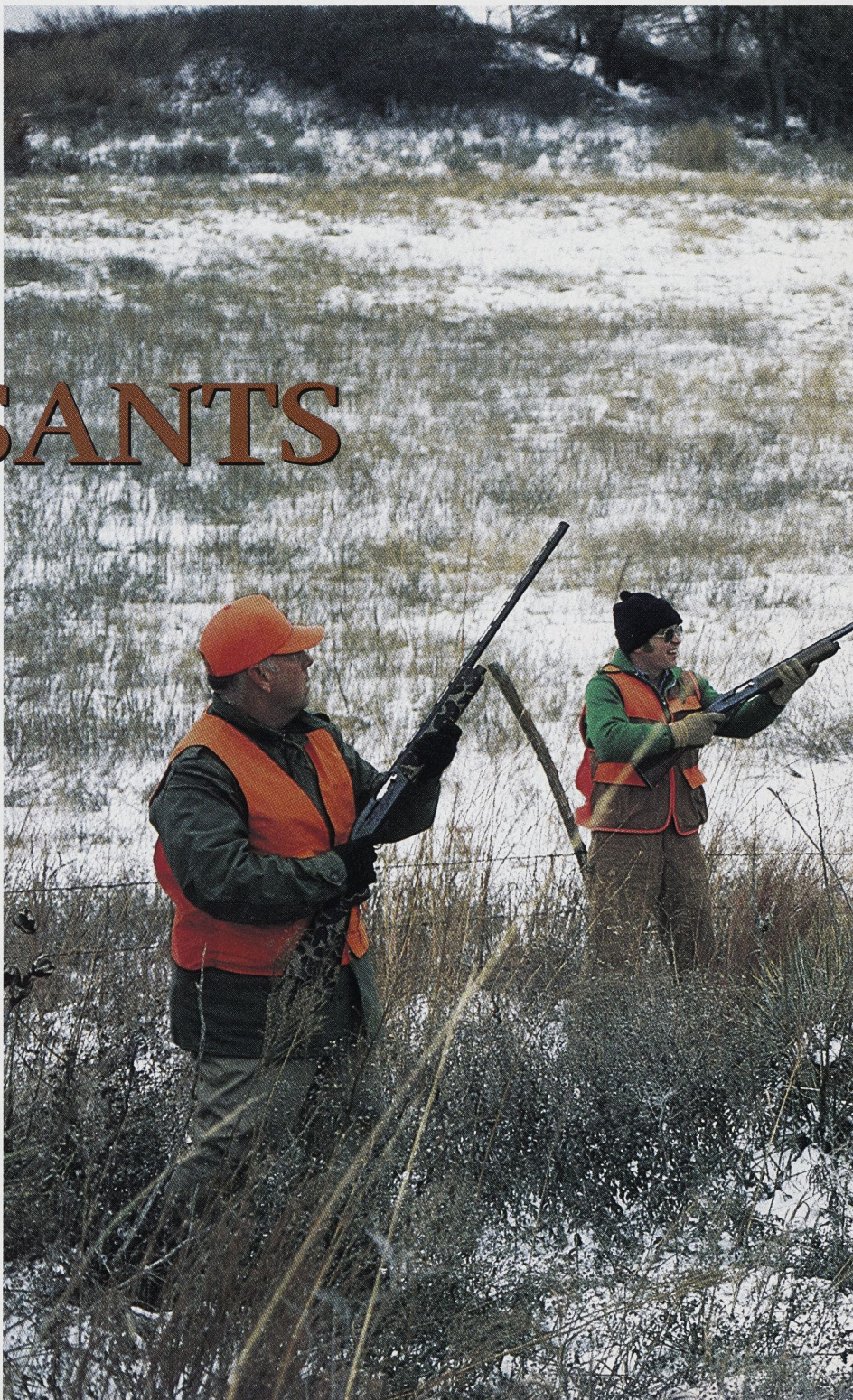


**STOCKED PHEASANTS** that experienced hunters can't tell from wild ones? This may sound impossible, but Clint and Deanna Smith of Miller, South Dakota, have developed a method for propagating in the wild large numbers of pheasants which are indistinguishable from natural wild birds.

Each year they produce thousands of light-bodied, fast-flying, long-tailed roosters that are a match for native cockbirds in every aspect of behavior and aerial performance. The only noticeable difference is that when you are on the Smith's 680-acre farm and the 25,000 additional acres they lease for hunting, the pheasants occur in more than normal numbers and the *(Continued on page 97)*

PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE BLAIR

THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO GO: INNOVATIVE





works nights in the hospital and spends a few daylight hours hunting the tall grass, portable telephone in belt holster. I am proud to have introduced him to a bird which is related to him by temperament.

It was fate, sort of. Dr. King bought his first shotgun just as ducks were getting scarce and pheasants were pulling out of a long decline. Like many other wildlife

species, the ring-necked pheasant depends on undisturbed grasslands, and that kind of habitat had been shrinking for some twenty-five years throughout the bird's North American range. The stage was set for recovery in 1985, when Congress authorized the Conservation Reserve Program—CRP for short. Farmers began to seed large areas (*Continued on page 97*)

## STOCKING PROGRAMS AND RESTORATION OF PHEASANT RANGE.





# GROUSE CYCLES...

BY WILLIAM G. TAPPLY

PHOTOGRAPH BY TIM LEARY



**WHENEVER A LONG DAY OF CHASING A SETTER THROUGH** Mankiller and Tripwire and Crankcase and my other New Hampshire partridge covers proves uneventful, I don't blame my skill or my luck or my dog's nose. Instead, I comfort myself with this handy explanation: The cycle must be down this year.

And when the other members of my New England grouse-shooting network also report scarce birds, even taking into account the Machiavellian secretiveness of partridge fanatics (we do not necessarily trust each other), we deduce a trend.

If the reports are consistently morose throughout the season, we assume we know why. Grouse populations are cyclical. Some years are better than others.

I know that tromping through the same string of covers behind a mediocre

## **BLAMING A BAD BIRD SEASON ON A POPULATION PATTERN IS NOT JUST AN EMPTY EXCUSE.**

bird dog for six autumn weekends a year is not the most scientific method for sampling the grouse population. But I keep careful count of the birds I flush, do not count second starts, and do it year after year. I find patterns, and the patterns I find seem to match those observed by the others who hunt grouse in my part of New England.

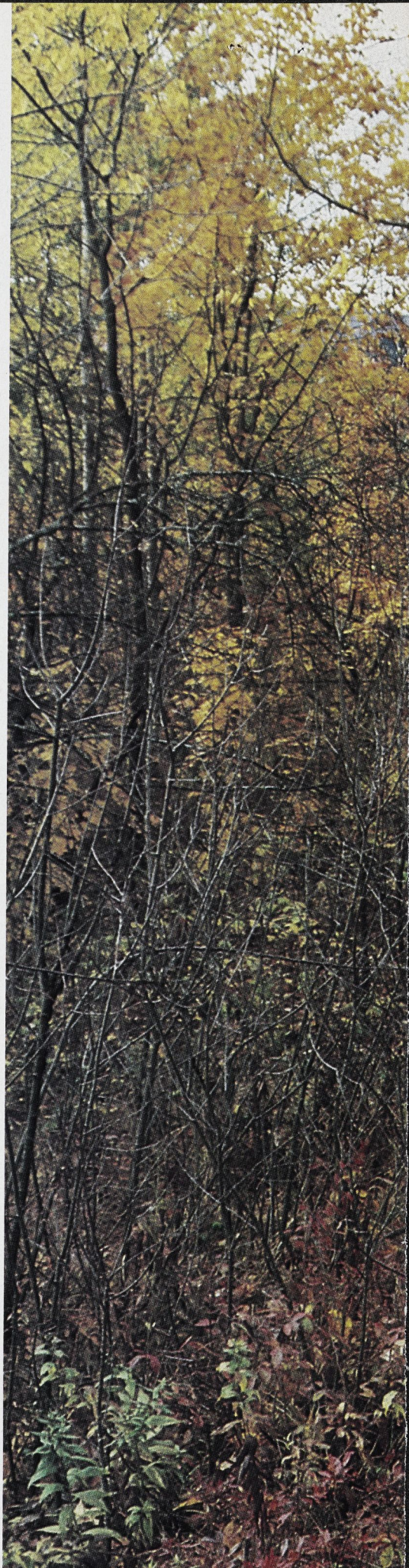
Why don't we find more grouse during those lean seasons? Because the cycle is down. For us, that is a complete and satisfactory explanation. The cycle is a cause, not an effect—which, of course, is akin to saying that high prices cause inflation.

One oldtimer claims he can predict the abundance of grouse by the frequency of chipmunk sightings on the stone walls along the back roads. Lots of chipmunks, he likes to say, means there will be lots of grouse.

According to my hunting journal, grouse populations in New England fluctuate on a crude seven-year cycle. So, probably, do chipmunk cycles.

AN EXCERPT FROM A RECENT BOOK, *CYCLE SYNCHRONIES*, REPORTS THAT ruffed grouse abundance in New England fluctuates on the same four-year cycle as salmon abundance, UFO sightings, German pork prices, plankton yields in Lake Michigan, and cheese consumption. The book offers the cautious thesis that some of these correspondences might not be coincidental.

I don't know who counted grouse for the authors of the book. Nowhere else



## PHEASANTS

(Continued from page 37)

ratio of cocks to hens is appreciably higher. Upon close examination, the birds the Smiths propagate can be recognized by a missing toe, clipped for identification purposes.

Their success depends upon releasing the birds in August when they are

only twelve weeks old, and letting them complete their growth in the wild. When hunting season opens late in October, the Smith's pheasants have been living wild, feeding on natural feeds, and making long flights for more than two months.

Clint and Deanna have been raising pheasants in the wild for ten years in order to keep their land well-stocked for guests who pay to hunt there. But the system they have worked out for increasing "wild" bird populations serves as a model for anyone who de-

sires to boost pheasant numbers on suitable land.

The Smiths buy day-old sexed pheasant chicks from a game farm that produces an especially wild, small-bodied, light-framed type of pheasant. They raise the birds for twelve weeks with a minimum of human contact. In order to preserve their wildness, the birds are held in large pens with high sides that block them from seeing human activity. The birds are fed a special gamebird mix, and protective plastic guards are used

## PHEASANTS IN THE GRASS

(Continued from page 37)

in grass that could not be grazed or mowed. Pheasants responded to their opportunity. David King and I responded to the pheasants.

Our first hunt together was in 1987, late in the season, on a farm seeded under the new program. We turned loose David's yellow Labrador retriever and my six-month-old German short-haired pointer. Stiff wheatgrass wore them out before they could run down a rooster.

We retreated to a brushy creek bottom between fields—the kind of place that hunters have come to associate with pheasants, if only because little else has been available for a generation. The brush was dense at human eye-level but relatively open down where the Labrador and shorthair pup were working. They found a few hens but no cocks. That's the trouble with cover that is easy to work. Its roosters are usually skimmed off early in the season.

When David and I returned in 1988, however, we found the fields full of pheasants. Tall grass makes ideal nesting cover and produces great quantities of the insects needed to feed chicks. Every hen on that farm must have raised a big brood.

Mind you, the hunting was a sporting proposition. As opposed to naturally seeded prairies, the CRP acres had been planted in rows just far enough apart to serve as pheasant racetracks. Furthermore, the wheatgrass had grown so high that the dogs could not work birds and see us humans at the same time. Under these circumstances, David found it best to keep the Labrador at heel for retrieves and occasional tight-sitting birds. The pointer, now eighteen months old, was able to hold running roosters—sometimes—till we got in position to shoot.

The problem was that David and I had to keep track of the pup by sound. The solution was a beeper-collar. Its running signal kept us in touch as we walked along, or jogged along, or wobbled behind puffing. Some of the trails took us for hundreds of yards but, at the end, we would hear the beeper switch to a point-signal somewhere down in the grass. Then we looped in from opposite sides, trying to be prepared for a flush in any direction. One or the other of us would get a shot—unless David's portable telephone picked that moment to ring.

If all this sounds hyperkinetic, I have conveyed the right message. Complaints about the tall grass have been filtering in from gunners accustomed to more compact covers. If you insist on an orderly, slow-moving hunt, you can wind up cursing CRP pheasants and their vast, amorphous habitat. If, on the

other hand, you are willing to weave along with David and me, grasslands offer the best kind of chaos.

When we returned in 1989, the clumps of wheatgrass had filled out and given the birds more places to hide. They had entirely abandoned the stream-bottom brush between the fields—evidence that ring-necked pheasants are, as the biologists say, genetically adapted to tall grass. It sheltered as many pheasants as I had ever seen on a farm of that size, even during the good old days in Nebraska and Pennsylvania.

By 1990, the population had started to change in a way that puzzled us. Of six cocks that David and I shot, only two had short spurs. The other four were old roosters between 3 pounds 2 ounces and 3 pounds 8. We were glad to see that pheasants in CRP could reach such impressive weights, but we were puzzled by the scarcity of young birds. Under normal conditions, they would have made up most of our bag.

In October of 1991, there were almost no young cocks on the farm, and we saw roughly three times as many hens—the sort of female/male ratio that we would have expected to find at the end of a season, not the beginning. I kept assuring David that, with so many breeders around, we would find progeny in time—but we didn't.

After a morning with no shots, we paused in the shade of a wooden granary, gray and abandoned. David climbed a rickety ladder to the top. A great horned owl flew out of the old building. I went up for a look. What David and I saw was a floor carpeted by feathers from pheasants of both sexes, with no sign of remains from other prey species. There were many tail-feathers from half-grown roosters, but no fully grown tails. The owl had evidently specialized in taking young birds.

I almost wished that we had not discovered what happened to the class of 1991. I had wanted to believe that no predator would seriously impact game-bird populations in good habitat. A generation ago, even biologists preached that gospel. Recent research has been less optimistic.

Fortunately, it is clear that humans do not diminish pheasant populations by shooting only roosters. David and I hunted the rest of the farm all afternoon, and two cocks finally held till we got within range—one of them with tailfeathers over 26 inches in length. Both were trophies. In its way, the hunting was still better than on places nearby.

A population of gamebirds cannot maintain itself long without raising young, however. We are anxious to find out how the CRP pheasants are doing in 1992.—DATUS C. PROPER



to prevent cannibalism. Once they become feathered, the birds are showered briefly with water twice a day to encourage preening and oil sac development. By twelve weeks the birds have gained a little more than half of their potential weight, have produced their secondary feathers, which give them pretty good weatherproofing, and have become capable of sustained flights.

"The cost per bird is a lot less than for birds that are kept in pens until they reach maturity at twenty-two weeks," Clint says. "After twelve weeks of age they eat an enormous amount of feed and the cost of keeping them in pens skyrockets."

Before releasing the birds in August, Clint prepares release sites by dumping truckloads of grain-rich sweepings from harvesting machines in places where extensive heavy cover exists close to a constant water source. Several hundred young pheasants are then turned loose on each such site.

"Until the birds learn to find insects and natural foods, they always have that cost-free pile of sweepings to return to for a dependable food source," Clint explains. "Gradually, they disperse and eventually become fully reliant on natural foods. Food, water, and cover is all they need—if predators are kept

under control."

Predator control is key to the success of this type of operation. Clint is a skilled trapper and he maintains snares for foxes and coyotes (on which there is no closed season) year-round, except during hunting season when bird dogs are being used on the grounds. Skunks, raccoons, and other nest-raiders are also kept to a minimum.

"Birds of prey, particularly great horned owls, do kill a lot of birds, and there is nothing we can do about that," Clint admits. "Those losses are part of the price we pay to have impressive numbers of wild pheasants on our land in hunting season."

The Smiths hold the birds on their land by maintaining an ideal mix of cover and food crops. In autumn, when other area farmers have harvested their crops, the Smith land stands out—it is rough with cover and the crop fields are only partially harvested. Unmowed hayfields provide ideal nesting and escape cover, encouraging successful natural reproduction the following spring by about a thousand henbirds which are released along with the cockbirds in August at twelve weeks of age.

About 60 percent of the 5,500 twelve-week-old cockbirds the Smiths release are harvested by their paying clientele between late October and mid-December. "Those are the birds we actually shoot," Clint notes. "We



PHOTOGRAPH BY RON SPOWER

really can't count how many escape being shot and survive in the wild, but that is also a considerable number."

**W**HEN HE WAS A BOY GROWING up on the farm, Clint's family took in hunters each fall. The guests paid for room and board and hunted on land the Smiths owned or leased. "It was all wild bird hunting, and the folks that came to stay with us became friends of the family. We looked forward to having them return each fall," Clint recalls.

When the farm became theirs, Clint and Deanna elected to recreate those happy days by farming for pheasants instead of for cash crops, and by operating a unique shooting preserve that guaranteed exceptional wild bird hunting. In South Dakota, where wild pheasant hunting opportunities abound, the Smiths knew that people would not pay to shoot the fat, slow-flying, put-and-take birds that shooting preserves were using in areas where fewer wild bird hunting opportunities existed.

"We set out to offer the best wild bird hunting opportunity people could find," Clint recalled. "To do that we had to learn how to produce large numbers of birds that experienced hunters honestly cannot tell from wild ones."

For information about the Smith's hunting opportunities, contact Dakota Expeditions, Inc., Dept. FS, Rt. 4, Box 109, Miller, S. Dak. 57362, telephone (605) 853-2545.

### FASTER PHEASANTS FOR STOCKING

■ The desirability of smaller, wilder, faster-flying pheasants is growing, according to Bill MacFarlane of MacFarlane Pheasant Farm Inc., Janesville, Wisconsin, one of the nation's largest pheasant hatcheries (800,000 chicks were scheduled for spring 1992.)

In 1989, after lengthy negotiations and red tape, MacFarlane imported 500 eggs gathered from wild pheasant nests in Jilin Province, China, where a small-bodied, very wild, fast-flying pheasant is the native species.

In 1990 and 1991, MacFarlane bred the imports; he is now using the new strain to produce lighter, faster-flying pheasants for sale to shooting preserve operators. In addition, the State of Wisconsin has entered into a joint project with MacFarlane to produce a lighter, faster-flying bird for the state's pheasant stocking programs.

"These small Chinese pheasants are very similar to the wild type that estab-

lished the original populations in South Dakota and Iowa," MacFarlane declares.

With wilder pheasant chicks becoming commercially procurable, and more good pheasant habitat available due to crop reduction programs, a great opportunity exists right now to repopulate areas where pheasant numbers are low due to the agricultural excesses which caused enormous habitat losses during the years when Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz was pressing farmers to plow and plant "from the road ditch to the porch." For information regarding availability of the new small Chinese pheasants, contact MacFarlane Pheasant Farm, Inc., Dept. FS, Box 646, Janesville, Wisc. 53547, ☎ (608) 752-4403.

For a nationwide list of shooting preserves, contact Walter Walker, Sec'y., North American Gamebird Breeders Assn., Dept. FS, P.O. Box 2105, Cayce-West Columbia, S.C. 29171, ☎ (803) 796-8163.



BY DATUS C. PROPER

# A PLACE AT DAWN

**O**ur nation's capital is not an obvious place to look for trout fishermen. It steeps in a region of humid air, dry rivers, low altitude, and high confusion. Most of the week Washington frets about anything except fish. Put yourself in this situation, however, and tell me what you would like to do on the weekend. People are the same here. Even though there must be somebody in the town who doesn't want to go fishing—perhaps even several such people—I haven't met them. The difference is that upscale young professionals don't start with worms and sunfish, like the rest of us. When they've bought their cathedral-ceilinged town houses and BMWs, the next thing they want is fly rods. Then they go to fishing schools and start taking up space on my favorite streams.

The change is for the good—I guess. We need the newcomers to vote for running water and care for it. It's just that they care so unanimously, every Saturday. If I

wanted a social gathering, I'd go to a party—if there were anybody left in town to give parties.

Shall I tell you of a secret stream that the biologists say is underfished? It is halfway

**When all of the  
"secret" trout streams  
have been overrun,  
you can find private  
water in that  
little-used time  
between moon and sun.**

between Novosibirsk and Vladivostok, and it has carp.

There is, however, a secret place in time. The time is when the moon has set and the rising sun is a deep red. My stream will be there, still secret, under the river mists of next summer's dawns.

Company is nice on long dark trips, so a hard-driving buddy and I teamed up a couple of times last year. Getting there was half the fun. Maybe a little more than half: H.F. makes great conversation. He didn't take all that long to wake up, considering that this was three hours earlier than usual, and Lord knows he has a right to be tired. We rummaged around for his gear, then drove to the Quik & Dirty for a breakfast of home-fried cholesterol, which improved his attitude. Strong coffee got the talk flowing, among other things. Coffee is a diuretic. (Translation: it requires a stop half an hour down the road.) By that time, the caffeine was wearing off, so we tanked up again. Made it to the river after just one more stop.

I was only half-right about the BMWs. The other half is four-wheel-drive trucks. When we got to the bridge, their 7.2-liter

*Datus C. Proper, author of What the Trout Said, has long sought trout and solitude.*



ILLUSTRATED BY HUGH MOSSMAN

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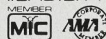
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V8s were already subduing the puddles in the parking pull-out.

That's when I knew we were late—your huddled masses yearning to breathe free never show up until the fishing is over. The sun was throwing sharp shadows as I broke a record for the 1,000-yard dash in chest waders. Somewhere upstream there had to be a trout working overtime. H.F. was running low on fuel by now, so he fished near the car. He said later that he'd had a good time, even if the trout didn't appreciate the sacrifices he'd made for them.

Those trips got us out of the town, all right, but they didn't get the town out of us. So these days, having run out of victims, I generally follow another rhythm. Funny how many years it took to hear. The streams were simple enough to locate, but it wasn't easy to find the dawn.

**L**isten to the ghosts. They move before the east begins to turn light on hot summer mornings. The first to appear are those you don't like: ghosts of in-baskets past, present, and future. Whether you like Washington or not—and I don't—you have to admit that people here work hard, and then worry about not working more. An old college coach used to say that every hour of sleep before midnight was worth two afterwards. I guess he knew that the ghost of work unfinished likes to rouse a fellow in the small hours.

You could put a pillow over your head and return to a sweaty sleep. You could go to work instead of fishing. Alternatively, you could call up a better variety of ghost. I tune in the Pennsylvania limestone country, back when there was a cock pheasant crowing in each fallow field. I see spring creeks running full, without foam plastic cups bobbing around. Vince Marinaro is moving upstream at first light with his cigar laying down a fog. I wish he'd hold still. I'll go check out a couple of places he showed me.

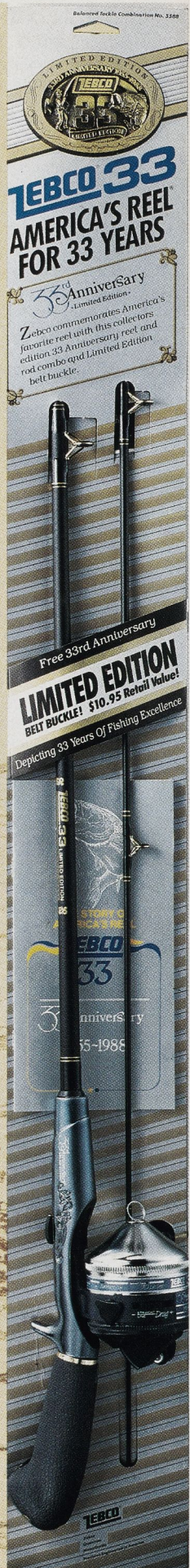
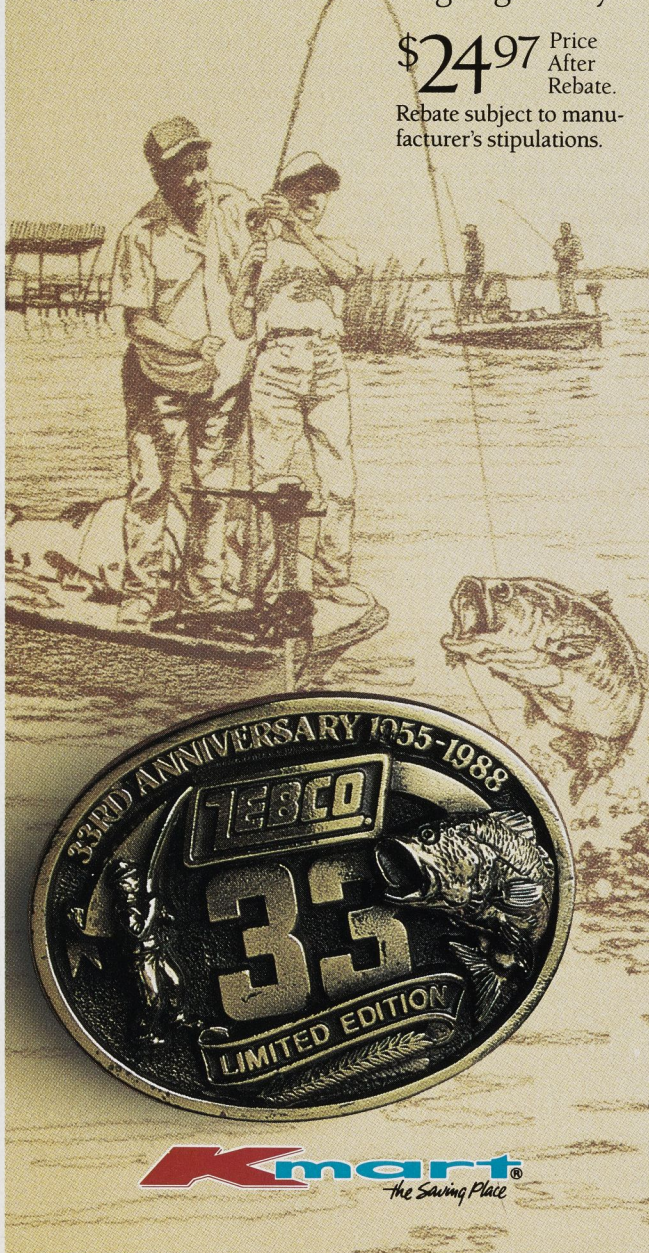
This kind of ghost is tuned into the right frequency, unlike my clock-radio with its 1987 bad news. The distance between bed and car is short, and getting out of town is easy, too—all roads start here, and no one is on them at this hour except me, a raccoon flashing his eyes just up the street, and a fox wafting across the beam of my headlights. Let's not count the puree of parkway possum; possums should never attempt to waft. Except for them, the ghosts are comforting. Like other urban areas, Washington is a wildlife refuge, up to a point. You wouldn't expect grizzly bears. The BMW kids welcome nature until it tears up the garbage.

I am awake. Not alert, but not about to doze off, either. As a kid in Montana, one of my great discoveries was that coffee made the sun rise. Imagine my surprise when, as an older kid in Washington, I discovered that what goes up must come down. I don't want to be down when the

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fish start rising. The ghosts are enough to keep me awake at the wheel.

There are plenty to look out for in the limestone country. Once it was covered with passenger pigeons, and there were elk, even bison. When I first got here in the 1960's, buffalo were scarce, but there were still so many pheasants, quail, and rabbits that we could hunt any old way and get enough for Sunday dinner. Now I slow, roll down the window, and let a soft breeze wash me clean of town. At the same time I breakfast on Proper's Patented Silent Sandwiches. The real world isn't quite ready for the recipe, but you can believe that they will sustain me through a day's fishing without lunch, if it comes to that. They will also let me drive, eat, and listen for cackling pheasants at the same time. I do not hear any. The limestone abundance is still there, but these days it seems to be expressed in grackles and starlings, which are surly before sunrise, like upscale young professionals.

On a side road closer to Vince's old Spring Run, the rabbits reappear in force. One of them seems to be playing with a gray squirrel or—more likely—discussing who's in charge around here. A woodchuck waddles for his hole when I slow down. He looks like me in waders. These are animals that thrive either on the farms or in suburbia, and the limestone country is now a mixture. Brandnew houses with brandnew trucks are just behind the fog. This used to be a country of prosperous small farms, nice to live in. More nice people want to live that way now. The old red-roofed barns are still there, but the farmhouses are rented. The farmers are in Florida.

At this time between night and day,



"I certainly have to admire your attitude."

though, the town called York Springs looks about as it used to—the new money wants country, not old towns. There is Bosserman's Grocery, Ma's Kitchen, big old brick houses, little white frame houses built, perhaps, around cores of cabin logs. Just on the other side of the Appalachian Trail, there's a spring where I will drink on the way home. It runs from hills where a few American chestnuts still live long enough to produce a sweet harvest. Tourists at the fruit stand are willing to pay more for the stale, glossy-hulled European nuts; it's what they recognize.

**M**ist still hangs thick over the stream. Good. The tricos might hatch before dawn on a hot night with clear skies. Tricos are very small mayflies that emerge in very large numbers. This is progress: before the new sewage plant, the water was too polluted for mayflies or trout. Now the fish gorge from July through September. I don't think they eat anything but tricos; they don't need to. Of course, if I want to catch trout, I need to arrive with the ghosts, sneaking far off before the trucks show up and somebody wants to follow me.

There is another reason for furtiveness: women. They appeared on this stream shortly after the trout. They come in the front of BMWs and the back of pickup trucks. Each woman is accompanied by a man, and each pair is dressed in silver-gray vests, khaki safari shirts, new caps, and shiny black fly rods. This too is progress. When women defend trout streams, politicians listen. Besides, the newcomers look nice even in neoprene waders.

The problem is that I do not measure up. The real me is hidden by a sweaty visor, a pair of flip-up sunglasses, a shirt that gave at the office, and Army-surplus pants with one pocket converted to a patch. My rod has a kink from the time I glued its ferrule back in place. My image began to worry me when I noticed the girls scooting back toward their boyfriends as I stalked the banks. Then I saw how the hero dressed in a movie called *Revenge of the Nerds*. Everything became clear: I thought I was looking for trout, but the women thought I was looking for revenge.

This will change. Khaki paraphernalia comes on sale in September. I shall stock up, and next summer, Ma'am, you will see a new man on the Spring Run. You are a civilizing influence.

Upstream, the spoor of the anglers dwindles quickly. They can't drive here. The bottom is rank with sedges, thistles, and wild snapdragons; underfoot there are muskrat holes dropping suddenly to 4 feet of spring water. It's not an easy hike, and it's not beautiful, either—not like a brook trout stream in the woods—but it's wild. A pheasant agrees. I hear the first of the day crowing, down in that jungle somewhere, then a second replying from far upstream. They complete the exorcising of Washington.

I stop to watch two big water snakes that have crawled out on a jumble of logs blocking a side current. Last week I was casting to a decent brown trout near here when a snake grabbed it by the tail. The trout got loose, but not until all three of us argued for awhile. Now, while the snakes glare at me and I glare back, there is the faintest movement at the edge of the scum above the logs. A minute later the ripple comes again. I cast over the logs and a trout takes innocently. It could tangle me, if it knew what to do, but it doesn't, and it comes flapping over the logs before it figures out what happened. It had been taking nymphs like a real fish, but it's only a stocked rainbow, stubby fins betraying ignoble birth.

A trico drifts safely downstream, so I turn around and squint toward the light in the east, seeing more: little disembodied wings glinting in the air like sunbeams. The trout will tell me what to do from now on.

This stream is supposed to be difficult to fish. It is, for the folks who get here after the rise. But now there are enough tricos to interest the trout and not enough to distract them from my fly. They feel safe in deep, cool water. Humid air dims the low sun enough to let me slip up and cast from a comfortable 20 or 30 feet. It is a place to renew my confidence that I am sometimes smarter than a fish.

Or at least smarter than stocked rainbows. The stocked browns aren't much more clever—they've been in the stream over winter, but they come from a strain bred for peaceful coexistence in the hatchery. These are not the ghosts I seek.

One rises at last, though. He lives beneath overhanging clumps of grass, so the fly has to land in the inches between two clumps, then float under others. When everything works, the fish takes, pulls harder than the rest, but comes to the net. This is a real trout—a brown with fins like a butterfly's wings and a bright rim of sunrise-red on the adipose. Tame trout don't have that.

Back at the parking spot, there is a casting school going on. Some of those people are good at it, too. Reminds me that I've been meaning to learn how to cast one of these days. Meanwhile, I try to sneak into the old moss-colored station wagon. It's moss-colored because there's moss growing on it. There is no truth, however, to the story that I forgot a woodcock under the seat; I don't get enough woodcock to forget one. Perhaps a silent sandwich did sneak off and hide.

Next season, Ma'am, you'll see me in a new metallic khaki four-wheel-drive, capable of fording the worst humidity this country's got. I'll still be evasive about the fishing, though. It's not a secret, exactly, but I'd just as soon not spread the word that real trout are in here. Besides, you might laugh if I tried to explain about an old place upstream between moon and sun.

