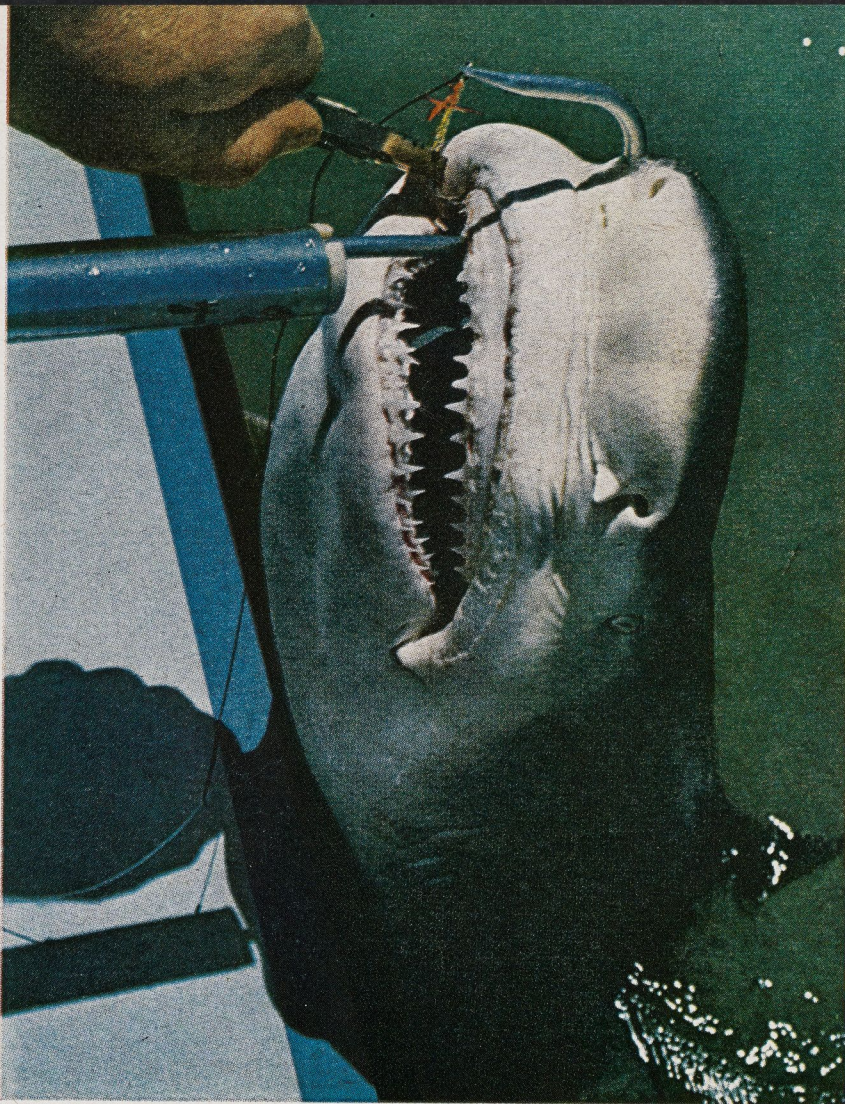


The Other World of Woodcock

BY BYRON W. DALRYMPLE

*Byron Dalrymple, a Texan, is
a veteran hunter, fisherman, and
outdoor-sports writer*



Shark fishing in the oceans surrounding the States has been steadily gathering more followers. It's an exciting new sport. Many of the species jump, run, and generally tear up the seas. Tales abound of push poles chomped in two, propellers yanked from motors, and chunks of boats neatly removed. Sharks are unpredictable, and there is a risk in angling for them.

Several organizations have recently been formed by shark enthusiasts. Besides promoting the excitement of the sport, these groups often work closely with researchers who want to learn more about the shark population. Many of the sharks caught are tagged and released alive.

Shark has never been a popular food fish in America, so restaurateurs and commercial food processors often disguise it as swordfish steak or plain fish sticks or sandwiches. Mako shark is so similar in texture, appearance, and flavor that it's easy to substitute it for the popular, high-priced swordfish. Other edible species include the blue, blacktip, spiny dogfish, and porbeagle sharks. In fact, much of the famous English "Fish 'n Chips" is made from the spiny dogfish and porbeagle.

Shark meat does not keep well and must be cared for immediately after it is boated. It should be bled and then placed on ice. If the shark is too large to fit in the ice chest, it should (Continued on page 46)

EATING SHARK- Instead of Vice Versa

BY SYLVIA BASHLINE, FOOD EDITOR



PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

With major motion pictures and television movies focusing on sharks, we are all too aware of the dangers of this toothy sea creature. But what we may not know is that shark meat is the key ingredient of many ocean-fresh, mouth-watering meals. Right, Braised Blue Shark; below, Barbecued Mako





ILLUSTRATED BY MORT ROSENFELD

Since the beginnings of American wingshooting, the woodcock—and woodcock hunters—have enjoyed a decidedly elite status. This inbetween gamebird, part uplander, part lowlander, borders on the ridiculous in appearance, what with its pop eyes, long bill, and corkscrew flight patterns. Yet it has always been associated with the tweed-shooting-jacket set, with fine double shotguns, and after-hunt gentility.

The woodlands of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, New England, the Great Lakes region—these are the prime coverts where, on crisp, golden fall days the woodcock has traditionally been gunned. Without doubt the woodcock's surroundings contribute to its aura: shining white birches with yellow fall leaves, neat balsams, poplars, gaudy maples, tag alders, thornapple, and haw thickets fringing crystal trout streams—classic woodcock grounds.

Where else does one shoot woodcock? Nowhere. *Those* are the places where the woodcock *are*. Anybody knows that. Yet in January of 1979, I was on a woodcock hunt deep in the tangled swamps of the Atchafalaya River Basin in southern Louisiana, only a short run northwest of New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico.

"Listen!" Tommy Prickett called. He stopped. So did Bruce Hammatt and I. "I don't hear Tammy's bell. We've got a point."

We went wallowing through the bottomland timber toward where the bell had been tinkling. Great leafless hardwoods towered above us. At our level, king-sized cat briar vines and giant berry canes clawed at us, some of their thickets so dense and thorny that even the dogs shied from them. Understory shrubs and scrub crisscrossed our vision and blocked every step. And, in this particular sweep of cover, at knee to head height below the brush and vines, were interlocked palmettos, an endless maze of great green fronds, rustling and crackling.

Woodcock? It was preposterous, I reflected, crashing and ramming noisily through the palmettos, trying to keep up. My partners, both natives here, were much younger than I. Their idea of a slow, short hunt, I had already gathered, was a 10-mile swamp jog. Rubber boots were mandatory. We moved from patches of damp ground through spreads of water anywhere from an inch to mid-calf deep.

"Hold up," Tommy called to me. "The dog's right in front of you. Not 4 feet."

A white setter, and at 4 feet in the palmettos I couldn't see it!

Bruce said, "Go ahead. Flush the bird. We'll back you up."

I elbowed gingerly into the rattling palmettos. Ah! There was Tammy, (Continued on page 99)



The Scrappy



The other world of woodcock

(Continued from page 31)

beautifully rigid, one hind leg trembling. Suddenly the bird went up. It looked like a woodcock. It flew like a woodcock. The unusual surroundings faded, like a dissolve in a movie. I was swinging my gun, trying to separate the wing-dancing bird from the grid of branches, then squeezing the trigger, and in the abrupt clatter of gun sound the bird was tumbling.

So THIS was the other world of the woodcock. For many years I had yearned to shoot on the bird's wintering grounds. I was remembering, as the dog brought in the bird, the countless articles I'd read—and quite a few I'd written—about the kind of cover woodcock demand, and recalling the detailed studies done on this grand gamebird, most telling, oddly, only how it is in the spring, summer, and fall worlds of the woodcock. In my own rather extensive library of outdoor books, there are only a few words about the wintering grounds.

Tommy said, "I kind of hope it won't be like last week. That was too fast."

Tommy Prickett is a biologist, an Upland Game Study Leader for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. He related how, last week, he'd lifted one dog over a wire fence. Before he could get over the fence himself the dog was pointing. He flushed the bird, shot it, the dog ran to retrieve, and accidentally flushed a second, which he also shot. During the retrieve of those two, the dog pointed again.

"By the time those three were in my coat, I bumped into a fourth, and the setter was pointing again. The whole hunt—five birds bagged, a daily limit—lasted 20 minutes and covered maybe 100 yards. I was half annoyed at myself for shooting—but it sure was exciting."

Bruce Hammatt, who also is a department man, in the Water Pollution Division, had told me earlier that if you hit the right places, it's possible to flush 200 woodcock in half a day. The reason for this is that Louisiana is wintertime woodcock mecca.

The birds nest over a vast east-west spread of the northern U.S. and southern Canada, from the Maritimes and New England to southern Ontario, Manitoba, and the Great Lakes states. But when migrations begin in the fall, the birds follow stream courses and north-south valleys. Tangent flights set a course down the Atlantic states and along the western edge of the Appalachians, but the majority of the birds begin to converge along the Mississippi River system.

By mid-December an estimated 95 percent of the entire continental flock has located in only six states from Florida across the Deep South to Arkansas and eastern Texas. In a

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several-year Fish & Wildlife study done over thirty years ago, it was estimated that, because of the fix the birds have on the Mississippi, at least 50 percent of the entire population winters in Louisiana. Later studies by Louisiana researchers indicate that the percentage may be much higher, up to possibly 75 percent. Whichever is correct, with a total continental flock estimated at 8 to 10 million birds, Louisiana packs in somewhere from 4 to 7.5 million every winter!

Even that doesn't tell the whole story. Most of those millions winter in a relatively small part of the state, but it happens to be the largest swamp region within the contiguous U.S. This is an area roughly 100 miles north-south and 60 or more east-west. It encompasses the entire length of the Atchafalaya River Basin, from Lafayette and the Bayou Teche area on the west to Baton Rouge and the banks of the Mississippi. Three parishes (counties) are the focal region, gathering the majority of the birds: St. Landry, Pointe Coupee, and Iberville.

There's good woodcocking elsewhere in Louisiana. The area north of Lake Charles is one. The Florida parishes—the region north of Lake Pontchartrain, south of the east-west Mississippi border with Louisiana, and east of the Mississippi River—winter excellent populations. There is fair to good shooting at times in the northeast, too, from Union, Ouachita, Caldwell, and Lasalle parishes east to the Mississippi River.

Why has the woodcock never become renowned in Louisiana? Simple enough. When you go "bird hunting" anywhere in the South, any Southerner knows you're talking about bobwhite quail. It is the South's dearly beloved. Yankees should understand that, since most of them think that way about ruffed grouse. Woodcock in the South have always been shot just as incidentals come upon while quail hunting. To be sure, there are a few who are dedicated to the bird, but the average Southern bird hunter thinks of the woodcock as "not much compared to a quail." Tradition dies hard.

IN ADDITION, for years, Southern woodcock were poached and market-hunted. Late in the last century and early in this, a brace brought about \$1.50 in Eastern markets. The birds do almost all of their feeding from evening until dawn, most of it in open areas, flying out from cover to favored worming grounds. A pine torch to shine the big eyes of feeding birds, and a stick to whack 'em with, for years sacked up woodcock by scores. Some Cajuns still call woodcock *bec de nuit*, which translates as "snipe of the night," or *bec de bois*, meaning "snipe of the woods." *Becasse* or *becada*, the first French and the second Spanish, used rather interchangeably for snipe or woodcock, are heard occasionally.

In addition to the stigma attached

to a bird that could be killed with a stick, many Southerners wouldn't have been caught drunk working good quail dogs on such quarry. Further, woodcock hunting in the South, compared to Yankee woodcocking, is plain hard work. A friend in Mississippi once told me how his granddad would gather a group of field hands and have them make a drive through swatches of canebrake, while he and friends covered the open fringes. Scads of woodcock would come jittering out to a racket of guns. This, mind, was a diversion, not serious bird hunting.

That first morning we didn't put up any 200 birds, but I'd guess that

Look for the special FISHING ROUNDUP in February F&S

in 3 hours we found at least fifty, and had no difficulty bagging limits. Like woodcock anywhere, some sat unbelievably tight, some ran, and some flushed wild. Many less-than-experienced woodcock hunters don't believe these birds will run. The fact is, every now and then one will skeedaddle long before the dog gets close, and either flush wild or never be located. Conversely, I've never seen woodcock sit as tight as some of these wintering birds did.

Tommy told me, "We've actually caught a bird by hand once in a while, just to see if it could be done."

One day of my hunt I carried cameras only. Both dogs were exceptionally steady, and on one point Tommy located a woodcock flat on the leaves not a yard from the dog's nose. I moved in—not quietly; there isn't any such thing in that cover—pointed a camera from a range of 4 feet and took three photos before the bird finally burst up away.

The following day Tommy and I hunted alone, with his two setters. There were no palmettos that day, but the vines and canes were just as tangled. Birds were everywhere. I used to believe, when I lived in northern Michigan, that I had seen the best woodcock shooting in the nation when the fall flight came tumbling into the northern Lower Peninsula from the Upper, and added to our locally raised birds. I thought the same one time in Maine. I now have to agree, however, with what one Louisiana native told me: "Hell, you Yankees don't know what lots of woodcock look like!"

For those who try the Louisiana hunting, there is another kind of cover that holds birds. This is waxmyrtle, or bayberry, a shrub that grows in heavy stands in meadows, swamp hammocks, and near shores. It has grayish berries along its twigs all winter, and the leaves are evergreen.

"This is surefire woodcock cover,"

Tommy told me, "and when you get the birds up you get them in more open shooting situations because there usually isn't the tall overhead hardwood growth."

The best Louisiana shooting is during January and early February. This is because late in season more and more cold from the north keeps pushing birds into the prime parishes. The 1979 season (of normal length) opened on December 9, and closed on February 11. Tommy explained why we didn't find birds by hundreds, as he had on several occasions a bit earlier. On their winter grounds, it seems, they are exceedingly touchy about weather.

"We usually continue to have good hunting right to the end of the season," Tommy said. "But meanwhile, there are weather-caused minor migrations that go back north 100 miles or so, and return. Whenever we get a warm spell the birds dislike it almost as much as cold. They'll move to a cooler area—and come pouring back in to the southern extremes as soon as a cold front pushes through."

The late-running season, with the best shooting during final weeks, is an advantage for a visitor. After practically all the major hunting seasons have closed down over most of the country, Louisiana woodcock are at their peak concentration in the vast lowlands of the Atchafalaya Basin. A trip there interferes with little home-state shooting and is a grand opportunity for nonresidents to extend their season.

The region is not only another world for woodcock, but for visitors. This is Evangeline country. It is also the country—near St. Francisville, north of Baton Rouge—where Oakley Plantation is located, dating back to 1799. This was where Audubon resided for some years, and where he painted eighty-four of his "Birds of America" series, and undoubtedly learned much during the winters about woodcock. That general region is the "English Louisiana" of history, with numerous restored antebellum mansions and plantations.

One warning: Cajun woodcock country is no place for weight watchers. It is the crawfish capital of the world, the only area on this continent, in fact, where freshwater crawfish are big business. Tommy and I hunted one day within a few miles of the bayou-front village of Henderson, a few miles east of Lafayette off Interstate 10, and lunched there. My wife and I had spent a couple of days previous to the hunt trying the several restaurants for which the town is famous.

PAT's, a delightful, big, sprawling place on the bayou, famous in the area, was our favorite. It claims to be the location where the business of pond-raising crawfish originated, because the owner couldn't get enough to supply the restaurant year-round from the Cajun fishermen who trap them in the swamps. We gorged on crawfish pie, stew, gumbo, bisque,

etouffée. I bought a platter of boiled whole crawfish—four or five dozen to the order—and went through them the traditional way, getting almost as much smeared on me as in me. The entire region is a welter of excellent seafood restaurants, with Louisiana oysters on the half-shell or any way you can dream up, fresh shrimp, and numerous varieties of Gulf fish, all cooked in Creole and Cajun fashion.

To illustrate how plentiful and easily accessible the woodcock are, if one can still waddle after sampling the regional food, one day we hunted barely outside the city limits of Baton Rouge, a city of about 200,000 people. A couple of warm days, my companions said, had evidently pushed most of the birds farther north. They kept apologizing for poor hunting. We flushed "only" forty-odd birds from that tract in two hours!

ADMITTEDLY, it isn't like hunting the neat New England coverts. Three times I swung on an easy shot and had the gun all but jerked out of my hands by a cat briar vine. Once I made the error of wearing regular hunting boots and was soaked all day. Rubber boots made little difference the next day. A woodcock sat on a tussock and allowed the dog, almost belly deep in water, to point it. I got in over my boots—but I bagged the bird. To wind up that hunt I fell down in the slick gumbo of a creek we crossed and was soaked to the waist.

"Everybody bleeds some," Bruce Hammatt told me with a grin when I complained about the cuts I had on my hands and face from greenbrier vines and canebrakes.

The hunt has at least one easy-to-take part—the license cost. Presently it is \$25 nonresident for the whole season, only \$10 for a trip license. Although it's by far better to have dogs, you don't have to have them, for when the birds are fully concentrated a hunter without a dog can't help walking up an ample number. He'll usually do best by hunting the edges of a timber stand or other cover, rather than wandering deep into large tracts. The reason is that birds which feed in open fields or along woods edges at night don't necessarily fly far back into cover. They spend the daytime, many of them, close to or within sight of the edge.

There are some problems for non-resident visitors (because of clubs leasing hunting lands) in finding places to hunt. The hunting club is a tradition in Louisiana. However, there are nearly forty state-owned Wildlife Management Areas, each containing from a few hundred to upwards of 60,000 acres. A few of them are in the first-choice southern woodcock areas. The Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries, (Dept. FS, P.O. Box 44095, Capitol Station, Baton Rouge, La. 70804) can furnish lists, locations, and maps of the WMA's and indicate which offer

woodcock. Further, it is no problem for an ingenious visitor to find someone to take him out, or to get permission to hunt on private unleased lands, especially for woodcock, which receive so little serious attention.

One native I asked offhand about this replied, "Every one of us loves to hunt, and Lord knows we'd be willin' to help any Yankee fine some brown snipe."

It is indeed a friendly region. Tommy assured me of it as we drove along I-10 on the south edge of Baton Rouge. He gestured ahead toward one of those big green interstate signs proclaiming the exits. It read, "Dalrymple Drive." Tommy turned, smiling, and said, "We

wanted you to feel welcome!"

As my wife and I headed back toward Texas next morning we could not resist pausing in Henderson for one more crawfish gorging. I then drove across the bayou to a fisheries place and bought 5 pounds of just-peeled tails, unfrozen, that I could put on ice to take home. The Cajun gentleman who owned the place and sold them to me handed me his card. His name was Early Robin. Yep. Early Robin. It made the solid-gold price of the crawfish easy to take. I stowed them beside my limit of birds, reflecting that this other world of the woodcock may jar with Northern tradition—but it sure produces some fringe benefits that you won't find north of the Mason-Dixon. ♪



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An Eagle of a Different Feather

BY BILL KILPATRICK

Look . . . on the road . . . it's a light truck . . . it's a car . . . no, it's . . . What is it?

The idea of the gymkhana was to drive a four-wheel-drive vehicle a single lap at varying speeds over a closed course, coming to a complete halt at three posted stops enroute. At each stop contestants were to get out of the vehicle and pick a wooden play block of a specific color out of a galvanized bucket. The three blocks, thus acquired, were to be turned in after crossing the finish line. The winner was to be the driver who completed the course in a time closest to a previously established bogey. In all, fairly tame stuff.

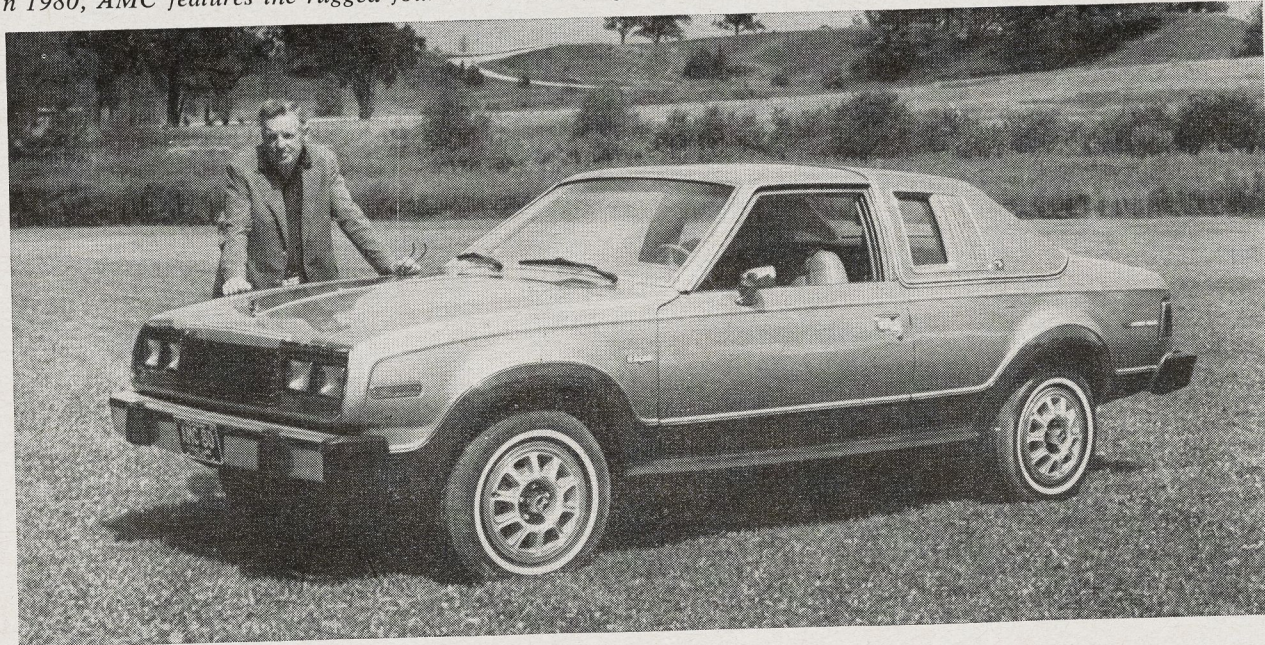
Contestants in the gymkhana—held this past summer at the Burlington, Wisconsin proving grounds of American Motors Corporation—were newspapermen and guys who write about cars, all of whom were on hand for the national press preview of AMC's 1980 line of automobiles and Jeep vehicles. The gymkhana was intended as a light-hearted, post-luncheon break in a long, tiring day during which AMC brass hats were being bullish about the Corporation's future and the guest "experts" presumably were being . . . well, expert.

The course the contestants were to drive included level surfaces paved with both asphalt and concrete, a lot of rough tracks through rolling and grassy meadows, steep and gravelly inclines, rocky and washed-out ruts, and—overall—lots of oozing, treat-to-beat-your-feet mud. In general, the course somewhat resembled the sort of precipitous mess and muck through which the British used to (and may still) conduct the automotive wallows they call "Trials."

The trick to coming anywhere near the bogey time set up for such an event is, of course, to resist the temptation to stand on it. The almost compulsive eagerness to hurtle, as quickly as possible, up a steep, deeply rutted grade in what has been posted as a 10-mph stretch must be rebuffed with a firmness normally applied to door-to-door Bible salesmen and those seeking to borrow a favored bird gun.

Being semiskilled at the rebuff business (but, you can bet, getting better at it as the years go by), I resisted reasonably well. A guy from the *Wall Street Journal* finished first, I came in third and, as a wise man once observed, nobody remembers who came in second. My prize was a heavy-duty, battery-powered, and altogether useful gray plastic lantern upon which is stenciled in black lettering the word "Jeep." But as much as I admire the lantern, I'm inclined to think the real prize of the day was the opportunity to thrash about in the unique vehicle in which I drove the (Continued on page 122)

In 1980, AMC features the rugged four-wheel-drive Eagle. This sporty car is safe, comfortable, and easy to drive



Cock O' The Woods

By Bob Gwizdz

Montague Whiting's hard-hunting Brittany Spaniel, Tank, locked up on point in the middle of a young pine thicket. We huddled for a second—a strategy meeting as it were—and then deployed. Whiting took one side of the thicket, Bill Spiller took the other, and I went in to flush the bird.

Instead of rocketing out of the thicket, the bird flushed straight up into the air. I dropped it almost on top of my head with a load of No. 8s. Such is the nature of hunting woodcock in east Texas—unpredictable and sporty.

Certainly, gunning for woodcock is novel to most Texans, who have been raised on bobwhite shooting. Though not as fast as quail, woodcock thrive in habitat that makes the shooting tricky. The birds hunker down in thickets and there's only a 50 percent chance you'll get a shot when one of them flushes. The other half of the time, you'll be wrestling with a sapling or a brier bush for possession of your firearm. And the unpredictable nature of the woodcock's escape flight makes it a tough target, too. "They fly like a drunken butterfly," Whiting says.

For that reason, most veteran East Texas woodcock hunters go in parties of two or three when hunting the birds. "Hunting them by yourself is hard," Whiting told me. He is perhaps the closest thing there is to a woodcock expert in the state of Texas. "You can't surround them," he went on.

A wildlife-management professor in the

School of Forestry at Stephan F. Austin University, in Nacogdoches. Whiting hunted the elusive woodcock before he settled in Texas. A native of Alabama, Whiting has found east Texas woodcock hunting to be, not only challenging, but productive as well. Whiting has killed more than 1,100 woodcock, over his dog Tank, since he started hunting with the dog in east Texas in the late '70s.

Woodcock summer in the Midwest, along the East Coast, and in Canada. When they move south, they stop where they are safe from the ravages of winter. Most of the birds wind up in Louisiana, where the Atchafalaya Basin provides the best woodcock hunting in the South. But more than enough spill over into East Texas to provide excellent hunting. While woodcock have been reported taken as far west as Abilene, and there are breeding records from as far south as Sinton, East Texas is their primary stomping ground in the state.

Because woodcock feed by shoving their long bills into the earth to seize worms, frozen ground makes their lives difficult. Woodcock prefer a specialized habitat, and soft, moist soils are the primary requirement.

"They prefer silty loam," Whiting told me, "but it can't be too rich. If it's too rich, there is too much vegetation and the birds can't walk around." Hard soil—too much clay, rock, or sand—makes it impossible for the birds to feed, since earthworms make up 60 to 80 percent of their diet, though

they supplement their diet with beetles, ants, and some seeds. "Anywhere you find lots of earthworms, you'll find woodcock," Whiting remarked. Seeps, creeks, and river bottoms are usually excellent woodcock habitat, but not swamps. "If you've got a good creek bottom with lots of hardwoods, and the soil's right, you're going to find woodcock," Whiting said. "But if it's too wet, there are no worms."

The vegetative requirements of woodcock habitat are dependent on the soil type as well. "A pine stand is good," Whiting said, "unless the trees are too young or too old. You see woodcock in a one-year-old pine plantation, but once the canopy closes, the woodcock leave. But sometimes you find them in mature timber if the canopy remains fairly open. Clear-cuts, replanted in pine, are generally best in their third to seventh years," he added.

Woodcock feed, for the most part, late in the afternoon and in the early morning. "That's when they're easy to find," said Whiting. "Lots of evidence indicates that on a bright day, they like the shade; so you need a thicket. You've got to have some kind of cover—southern wax myrtle, sea myrtle, pines, young sweetgum thickets, or briers."

Whiting hunts woodcock 25 to 30 times during the 65-day season, (mid-November to late January), and often collects a limit—five birds. The degree of success depends, in part, on weather conditions.

"Lots of birds stop here, but if we get a hard freeze, they move out," said Whiting. "There are usually a lot of birds here by the time the season ends. Generally, hunting is best late in the season."

While not exactly popular with Texas hunters, woodcock are attracting more attention all the time, as they should. They are an excellent gamebird. Woodcock hold well for a point, and hunters often must just about step on them to make them fly. Usually, the birds make only a short escape flight and can be refushed.

Generally, a 20-gauge shotgun is plenty of gun, though some hard-core woodcock hunters prefer a 28. A Skeet barrel is usually sufficient. You certainly wouldn't want more than Improved Cylinder. Small shot—8s or 9s—are best.

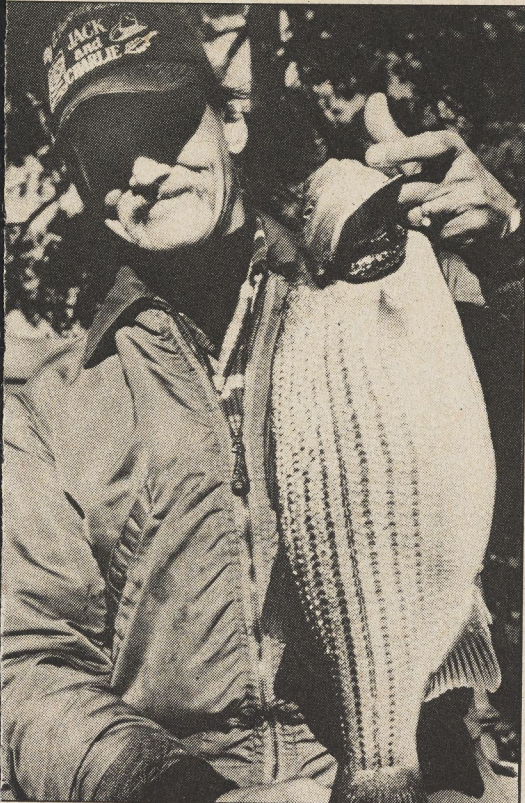
The very best attribute of woodcock, in Texas anyway, is where they are found. There is generally no need for a woodcock lease. Much of the best woodcock habitat is on open land. "They kill a lot of birds on Forest Service clearcuts," Whiting said. "There are birds on national forest land and open timber-company land. If you're willing to go out and hunt, you'll soon find them."



It takes two woodcock to make a handful, but meat is so rich that they make a good meal.



Clarks Hill Hybrids



This 6½-pound hybrid striper/white bass hit a live herring fished on light line.

By Thomas F. Ogle

It sounded more like a military operation than a fishing trip. The instructions were to launch the boats at Hester's Ferry early Friday night, and catch herring and shad from the tailwaters of the Richard B. Russell Lake dam. Then we would rendezvous at 2 a.m. to divy up the live baits, load the boats back on their trailers, and proceed some 30 miles southeast, to the Parksville boat ramp on Clarks Hill Lake, in order to be out on the water by 4 a.m. to begin a day of fishing.

Such an effort may sound tough to some, but it pays off for serious hybrid bass fishermen who know that the secret of catching the hard-fighting fish is to use the hybrids' favorite foods for bait. I am referring to blueback herring, threadfin shad, and gizzard shad. Unfortunately, they can't be purchased at local baitshops, so you have to catch your own. Sometimes, more time is spent getting live bait than fishing, but it's necessary if you want to take home a heavy fishbox.

The baitfish roam all over the Savannah

River arm of the lake, but the best place to take them during the winter months (December through February) is below the Richard B. Russell Lake dam and under the Lincolnton to McCormick highway bridge (US 378). The idea is to attract them to your boat at night by shining a bright light into the water. Your depth-recorder will show their arrival when they start circling in the beam of your light, 10 to 20 feet beneath the surface. When you spot them, drop a line, with several No. 8 gold-plated hooks on dropper loops, among the milling fish, and jig gently. The fish strike the glittering hooks.

If you fish from the South Carolina side of the Savannah River, you are permitted to use a cast net. Throw it over the area flooded by your light. Let it sink until it touches bottom, trapping the fish, and then pull the net up quickly.

Keeping these delicate fish alive is a big problem. A well-aerated, circular bait tank is a must. Ron Vest, a hybrid/striper fisherman in Greenville, South Carolina, builds custom bait wells. He improves survival rate by dumping in a handful of rock salt for each 10 gallons of water, and about two teaspoons of Bait Saver, a product of Jungle Laboratories Co. of Sanford, Florida. With these precautions, he suggests putting no more than about three dozen, medium to large baits (four to eight inches) or up to five dozen small fish (three inches) in a 30-gallon bait tank.

During the warm months of the year, hybrids are distributed throughout the 70,000-acre lake. However, Bill Mareska, a leading member of the Clarks Hill Rock Anglers fishing club, has found that, during the winter months, the fish are much more restricted in their movements. They seem to leave the Little River arm of the lake, entirely, to seek the sanctuary of the deep water along the edges of the old Savannah River channel. In fact, the largest concentration of fish is usually located between buoys No. 18 and No. 50, on both sides of the channel. Best access is from the Clarks Hill Marina near Plum Branch, South Carolina, and the Parksville public boat ramp just outside Parksville, South Carolina. Both are located near US Route 221.

Hybrids congregate early in the morning off submerged points of land in 30 to 50 feet of water. These fish are usually actively feeding and attack herring or shad with gusto. The best way to locate them is to motor slowly or drift over submerged points of land in the depths mentioned until your depth recorder marks a good concentration. Smaller hybrids, up to two pounds, may be caught on the backs of bays and shallow water, but the hefty four to eight-pounders feed in deep water. Don't forget

to work the buoys marking the old river channel. Some of the best catches are made in the buoys' immediate vicinities. Once you have located a school, ease your anchor over the side and drop a live herring or shad into the school's midst. Night crawlers also tag their share of fish, sometimes when nothing else will. Fresh-cut bait can also be very effective, so save any baitfish that turn belly-up in the bait well. You can also chop them up for chum. Spoons and jigs are among the best artificial lures and should be bounced slowly along the bottom.

Later in the day, the fish scamper away into nearby holding areas in 70 to 100 feet of water. Chart recorders often show the fish literally stacked on top of one another. The bad news is that you can't buy a strike from hybrids found in these deep-water loafing areas.

A good rig for fishing live shad or herring consists of a sliding, half-ounce egg sinker on the line above a snap swivel. Then snell an 18-inch leader, made with eight to 12-pound-test monofilament, to a 2/0 or 3/0 Kuhle hook, and attach the other end to the snap. Hook the baitfish either through the lips or through the back near the dorsal fin.

I use six and eight-pound line and set my drag at 1½ or two pounds. I check the setting by pulling out line with a spring-loaded fish scale attached to the snap.

Give winter hybrids a try. You'll have to bundle up against some bitter cold mornings but, when you find the hard-hitting fish in a feeding mood, you'll know the effort is worthwhile.



Additional Information

You can obtain a map of Clarks Hill Lake, showing the buoys, public boat ramps, marinas, and fish attractors by sending \$5 postpaid to: Resource Manager, Clarks Hill Lake, Box 10, Clarks Hill, SC 29821. Ask for the Buoy Location Map.

For daily updates on lake conditions and hybrid catches, write or call Clarks Hill Marina, Inc., Box 8A, Plum Branch, SC 29845 (803-443-5577). The marina features a fuel dock, boat repairs, camping, and rental cabins.

For more information about bait wells for herring and shad, contact Ron Vest in Greenville, South Carolina at 803-277-3425.

Hamilton Branch State Park is located between buoys 18 and 50 and features a public boat ramp and camping facilities. For more information call 803-333-2223.

Fishing the Havas

*Within the Grand
Canyon, a garden of
earthly delights*

D.L. DONALDSON

A MAN, simple in his ways, seeks the quiet pleasures of casting a fly upon clear water to a rising trout and then releasing it back into a stream that time has forgotten. Days will pass into months, into years, into centuries and this water will remain unchanged, as it has since the first native Americans roamed this way long ago.

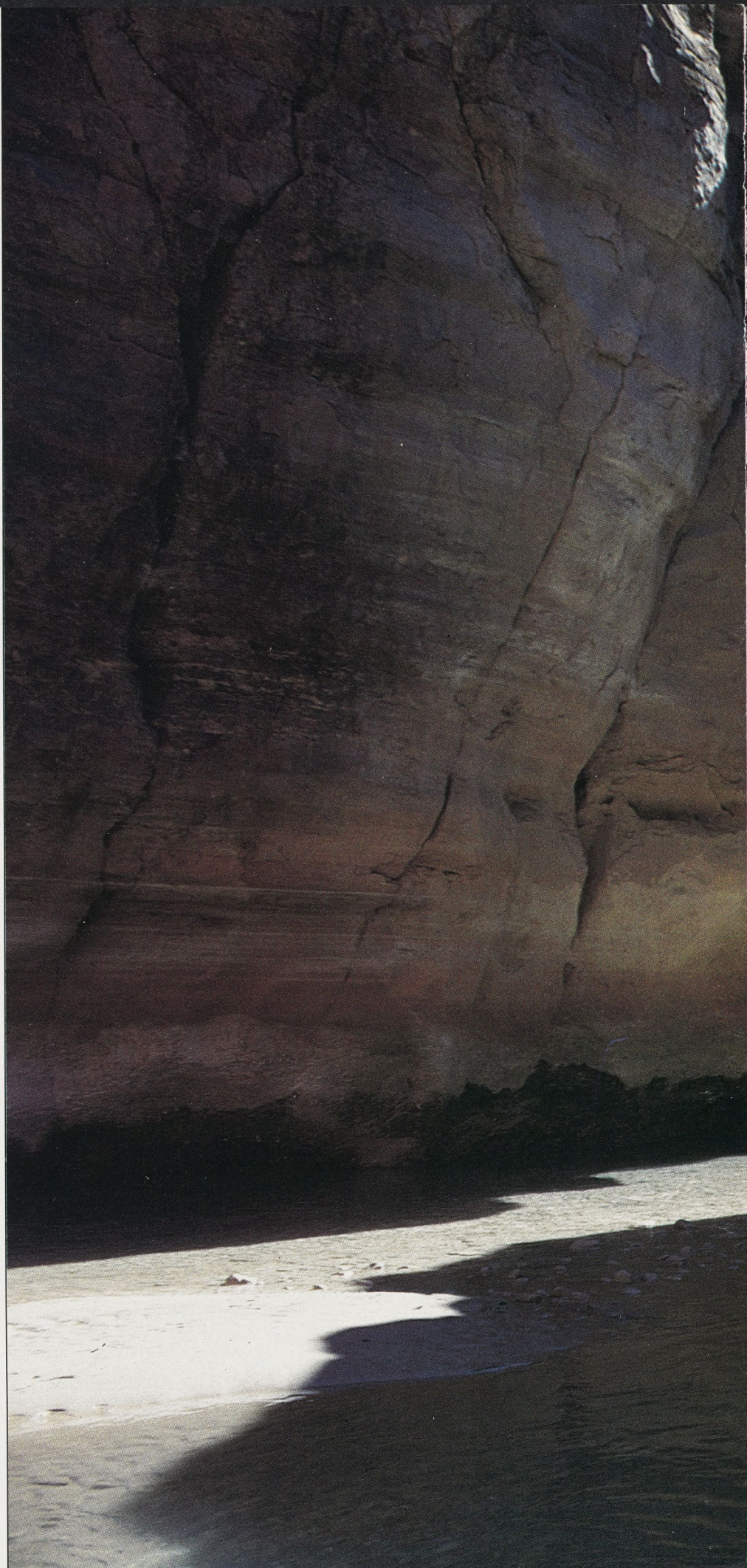
I looked at the cliff walls climbing 2,000 feet above and marveled at the eons of time it took to carve such a spectacular cleft into the earth.

On its floor, grapevines reached out in every direction. Cottonwoods, willows, oaks and elms crowded the river's edge, where a small beaver gnawed patiently on a branch. An Indian boy walked by and waved to me, holding up a stringer of trout and a big smile. His ancestors settled this area a millennium ago and today they survive each day on prayers and promises. They share their homeland with whomever will come this way to camp, fish or just look, because it is their livelihood.

They are the Havasupai Indians of Arizona, and they are the caretakers of this beautiful country hidden deep in the Grand Canyon.

It was 10 years ago that I first discovered this trout paradise, so secluded from the rest of the world. It has changed little since then. A few new houses, a new school, an overnight lodge for visitors, but most things have remained as they were. Oscar still checks visitors in as they arrive, and the small restaurant serves that thirst-quenching lemonade. The old men sit in front of the store and smoke cigarettes they roll by hand, talking to each other in a language of their own. (In fact, they've just begun to put the Havasupai dialect into an alphabet only now.) A mule train trudges into town, loaded down with supplies, and picks up the local mail, mail bearing the only mule-train postage mark in this country.

Here a man's wealth is still measured by the horses, mules and other livestock he owns, but



wanese came tearfully to the US embassy in Japan, asking that we make the Russians give back their other two ships—now, apparently, permanent Soviet property.

Such is the Russians' aptitude for law enforcement that Lauber would like to see them take it over entirely on behalf of the new four-nation fisheries organization. During a lull in the October conversation in Moscow he tactfully suggested that since the US was good at science, maybe it should handle the research end of things; and since the Soviet Union was good at dealing with scoff-laws, maybe it should police the North Pacific. At this writing he has not had a chance to ask them about providing satellite imagery, but he plans to. They sound like they might be more enthusiastic about the idea than officials of his own government.

Actually, the future does not look so bleak for Pacific salmonids as one might suppose. "Now that Mike Mansfield [our Ambassador to Japan who dedicated himself to giving that nation whatever US fish it wanted] has retired, I think we can get some movement against the Japanese after all these years," opines Pat Wood.

The states of Washington and Alaska are furious and in the process of preparing resolutions in an effort to call the new President and Congress to action.

Congress appears to see the need to strengthen the Magnuson Act—now up for renewal—with a provision called "rebuttable presumption" so that US agents won't have to prove what salmonids came from where. If they find a foreign vessel fishing the high seas with gear appropriate for salmonids in an area where US salmonids are known to occur, they could presume illegal fishing and board. At this point the foreign skipper would be free to rebut or confess.

Alaska Representative Don Young has introduced a bill that would expand the Pelly Amendment to cover more than marine products so that Japanese fish poachers would not be able to hold the United States hostage.

If both measures pass, you'll see a big improvement in salmon and steelhead fishing even if your winch is the sort you screw to a rod and crank by hand. SEACOPS may be staffed by hot-headed commercial power trollers, but I can't help liking the way they come to the point.

And the point, as they note in their most recent release, is precisely this: "The time for political rhetoric and bureaucratic twaddle is past. We must all demand immediate action from our local and national governments. If our leaders are not willing to take charge of the fight to save our steelhead and salmon, then we must punish them in the voting booths."

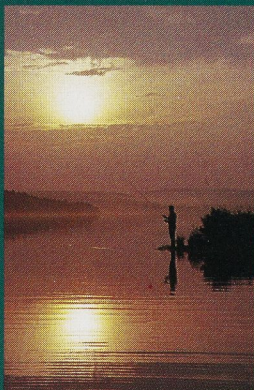
Let the spleens vent and the letters flow.

This is part II of a two-part investigation into the poaching of North Pacific salmonids. Those who wish to support SEACOPS, South Eastern Alaska Coalition Opposing Piracy of Salmon, may contact the group at 700 Water St. Upper, Ketchikan, AK 99901. 907-225-8004. ☐

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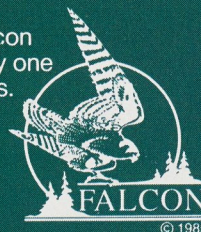


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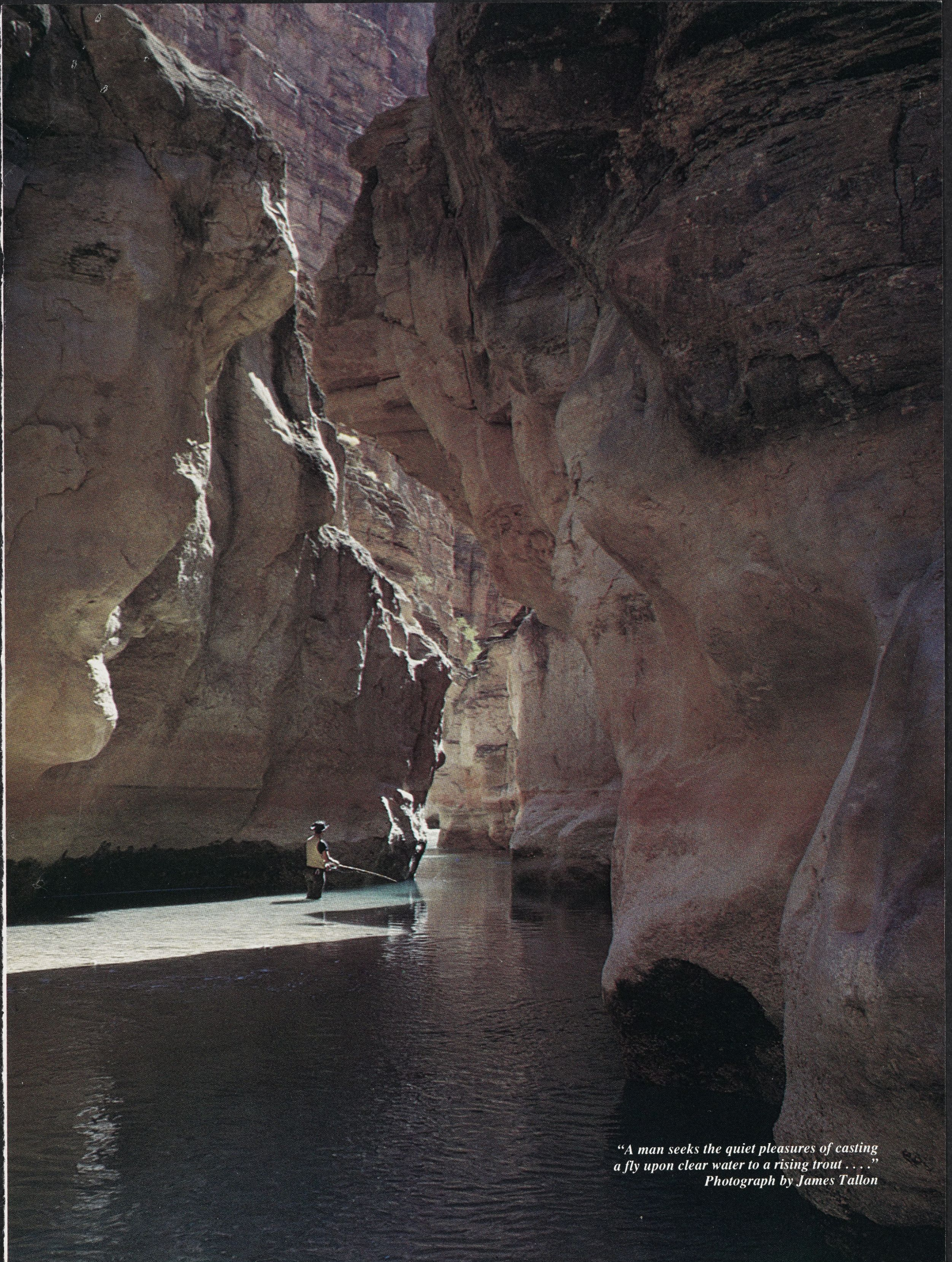
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*"A man seeks the quiet pleasures of casting
a fly upon clear water to a rising trout . . ."*
Photograph by James Tallon



"The curious and beautiful travertine dams form semicircular ridges that pool the spring waters." Photograph by Dick Dietrich

modern conveniences do not escape the Havasupai, a few satellite dishes dot the landscape. Laundry flaps on the line in the light breeze, a small child brushes down her horse, and a father mends the rigging of his mule team. Naked children jump over the lawn sprinkler and a mother sits on the porch fanning herself with a magazine; the atmosphere is always relaxed in Supai. No long lines or traffic jams. Just fresh air and friendly faces.

I went to the house where they register hikers visiting the area. A pile of backpacks and camping gear was stacked against the wall, and the wearied hikers cooled off in the shade after their seven-mile hike through the desert. The temperature reached 100 degrees in the noonday sun. Oscar was telling one of the hikers he couldn't stay if he didn't have reservations. The campgrounds fill up quickly.

"Hi Oscar, how's the fishing?" I asked.

"No *aigee* up here anymore. You have to go all the way down to Beaver Falls for fishing now. Do you know where it is?"

"I've been there a few times," I said. "What happened to the fish?"

"I don't know," he laughed and rubbed his belly. "We probably ate them all."

We talked a bit longer, but more hikers arrived and Oscar had to get back to work. I asked around about the fish near town. Some speculated that the sewage, dumped into the river for years before a septic system was installed seven years ago, was at fault. Whether the fish population disappeared because of sewage or overharvesting I can only guess.

AFTER you leave the village of Supai, the Havasu River breathes life into the desert canyon. The river grows, fed by many springs. The curious and beautiful travertine dams, created by the layering of limestone and mineral deposits, form semicircular ridges that pool the spring waters.

Navajo Falls, the first of four cascades, drops 85 feet into a lush ravine filled with ferns misted by the spray. A few hundred yards downstream, Havasu Falls plunges 100 feet into a beautiful blue-green pool.

A hike through the campground brings you to the top of Mooney Falls, named for a miner who lost his life there, which falls gracefully for 200 feet into the lower canyon. The Indians refer to the miner as "Crazy Mooney" and tell stories of his ghost still digging away in the tunnels left behind in the cliff walls.

From there the trail continues as the canyon walls close in, restricting direct sunlight to some four hours a day. From here to the Colorado River there are eight miles of uninterrupted beauty, the trail winding through acres of twisting grapevines climbing over ancient cottonwoods that have fallen to the ravages of time. There were trout here 10 years ago, just a few miles above Beaver Falls—now not a sign of them. So much quality water and habitat and not a single fish. Civilization, however modest, strikes again.

At one river crossing, chest-deep under my pack and looking to stir up some fish activity, I glanced over my shoulder at what appeared to be a couple of mountain goats plunging down a steep landslide. I finished the crossing

and looked back at the other side to see a couple of Indians—the mountain goats—waving to me. I waved back and one yelled over the rush of the water, "Where you going?"

"Beaver Falls," I yelled back.

They laughed some more and said, "Wrong way, you have to climb up this way," and pointed to the cliff they had just descended. That was when I noticed the stringers of trout hanging from their belts; must have been 10 pounds of rainbow between them. They waved goodbye and disappeared up the trail, still laughing about the lost *haiku* (white man).

The climb was 150 feet straight up a rock ridge and the sun was setting; it was dark by the time I made the final crossing for Beaver Falls. My bones ached from the day's hike of 14 miles, and soon I was dreaming of rising trout as I slept in the cool evening of a canyon far away from the tensions of the late 1980s.

AT FIRST light I went down to the stream to struggle into my waders. I slipped on the slick bank and slid into the water, neatly slicing my big toe on a stone. The water flowed red and I thought of the headline, "Fisherman Bleeds to Death in Canyon." I

*I set the hook
and he came straight
out of the water,
kicking and screaming
(maybe that was me)*

hopped back to camp. It was a deep cut and I might need stitches. My thoughts ran in every direction:

Where was I going to get stitches out here? Are there any trout close enough to crawl to? How far downstream can I drift a fly? Geez, I must be going into shock!

With a handful of Band-aids and my fly rod I limped out of camp and down to the river. It wasn't so bad. After a mile I came to the first trout, rising to a hatch of caddis. My heart, and toe, pounded as I pieced the rod together and laced the tippet through the guides.

With a six-foot leader and a 7X tippet tied to a light cream caddis dry, I waded the stream and made a gentle cast. With a few mends the fly drifted in under the cloud of caddis. I was so caught up in the moment I forgot to set the hook when the trout rose to take the fly. A few more tries, with some concentration now, and I hooked and released a half-dozen bright, healthy rainbows of 10 to 12 inches.

I waded to a boulder in midstream, and spotted a fin cutting the surface under the low-hanging branch of a tamarack. This one looked to be at least 20 inches. He wouldn't take the dry so I tied on a stonefly, plopped it in above the fish to let it drift towards him. The trout must have seen that fly enter the water be-

cause he went right for it. As he scooped it up I set the hook and he came straight out of the water, kicking and screaming (maybe that was me), and then dove to the bottom, where he and my leader parted ways. I watched that fine rainbow swim downstream faster than a kid running to an ice cream truck.

I worked my way back toward camp probing the pockets and light riffles that make up the lower portions of the Havasu River. As it turned out, I caught fish all the way upstream and hooked the largest trout of the day within a hundred yards of my camp.

THE FOLLOWING day I was introduced to the Havasupai style of fishing. While I was working a little pool and getting no results, a young boy who had been watching me for half an hour reached deep down into his pocket and pulled out a tangle of line. After sorting the mess out, he spun the line like a lasso and let the lure zip to the edge of a boulder. He began to wind line slowly around his hand; it soon went tight and he pulled out a good-sized rainbow—on his first cast. He held it up for my approval and then vanished up the trail.

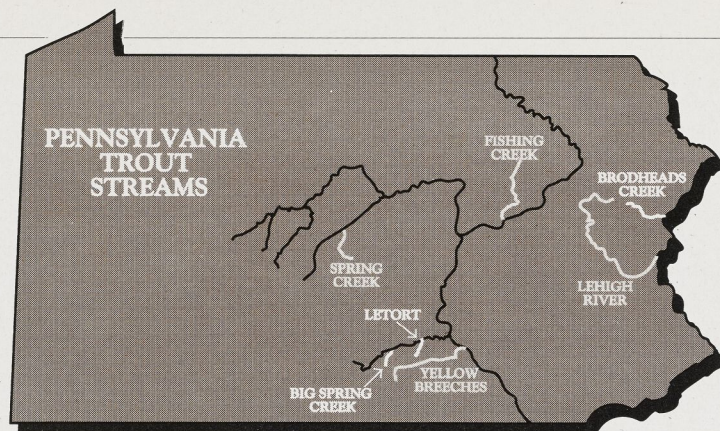
The Havasu can be considered a wilderness trout river and, at least below Mooney Falls, an unspoiled land. The rainbow trout make their way upstream from the Colorado River and they are well established up to Beaver Falls. Above the falls I could find no sign of trout in the deep pools of the canyon. If the Indians don't fish the area, you may be sure there are no fish left.

The Havasupai are the only caretakers of this land. They receive no government subsidies, as far as I know, to help out. The 20,000 yearly visitors who pass through Supai keep the Indians busy, and the tribal council maintains strict watch on the traffic through the village. All the proceeds from the fees for registration and camping go to make improvements in the area and to maintain the trails.

Spring and winter are the best times to visit because the weather is cooler and the crowds are smaller. In summer, temperatures can reach 100 degrees before noon. The colors of the foliage are spectacular in autumn, but then the canyon is subject to flash floods and the river clouds with silt for days at a time. In between, the month of August is an especially festive time, for this is when the Supai celebrate their Peach Festival and Rodeo Days. Indians arrive from all over, in full costume and dress, for a week of celebration and dance.

The Havasupai Indian Reservation lies within the south rim of the Grand Canyon. A paved road just east of Peach Springs, Arizona, on Route 66, will take you across 60 miles of the reservation to the parking area and trailhead leading to the village of Supai. Horses and pack mules are available for the seven-mile hike, but you must make reservations well in advance (call 602-448-2121).

The modern world is only a few hours away, but most of the 300 Havasupai prefer to stay where their ancestors lived, some hundred miles within the towering walls of the Grand Canyon, by a stream that wanders through their village, called the Havasu. □



PENNSYLVANIA

The true cradle of American fly-fishing?

ED HOWEY

SOFT sunshine barely lights the "For Sale" sign at the crossroads where Henryville House looms in the early morning mist, a green-trimmed, ghostly white relic of an era long past. Ghosts too, it seems, peer from rows of sightless windows. Roused from their rest, Gordon, Hewitt, Jennings and LaBranche wander fretfully down unlit corridors, fearful for the fate of this place of memories.

But rich memories notwithstanding, Henryville House came long after fly-fishing began in Pennsylvania. The exact beginning may never be pinpointed, but bits of evidence indicate that some of the British King's minions arrived in the colonies toting gear for casting a fly into new-world streams loaded with trout.

By 1732, a group of Philadelphia anglers had formed The Schuylkill Fishing Company, and by 1767 five similar organizations were active around that city. Did they include fly fishermen?

Though we cannot say for sure, it is difficult to imagine otherwise, a

hunch bolstered by the wording of Philadelphia tackle dealer Edward Pole's ad in Dunlap's *Pennsylvania Packet* in about 1777. The ad offered "Artificial flies, moths, hackles, and suitable lines of any length." That Mr. Pole was speaking to fly fishermen seems a fair conclusion.

Through the years of revolt and formation of the new government, written evidence of fly-fishing activity was skimpy, but soon afterward, as Paul Schullery observes in *American Fly Fishing: A History*, "Pennsylvania gives us the fullest record of fly-fishing in the early days of the new republic."

Among the earliest writings are those of George Gibson, a native of Pennsylvania's Cumberland County, a region of limestone streams

fished and written about today. Gibson probably started fishing Cumberland streams in the early 1790s, but his writings first appear in the September 1829 issue of a brand-new journal, *The American Turf Register & Sporting Magazine*, where he identifies the waters he fished:

"In Cumberland County there are three good trout streams: The LeTort, Big Spring, and Silver Creek."

He then tells of the abundance of trout in the early years:

"... in less than an hour I landed twenty trout from one to two pounds each."

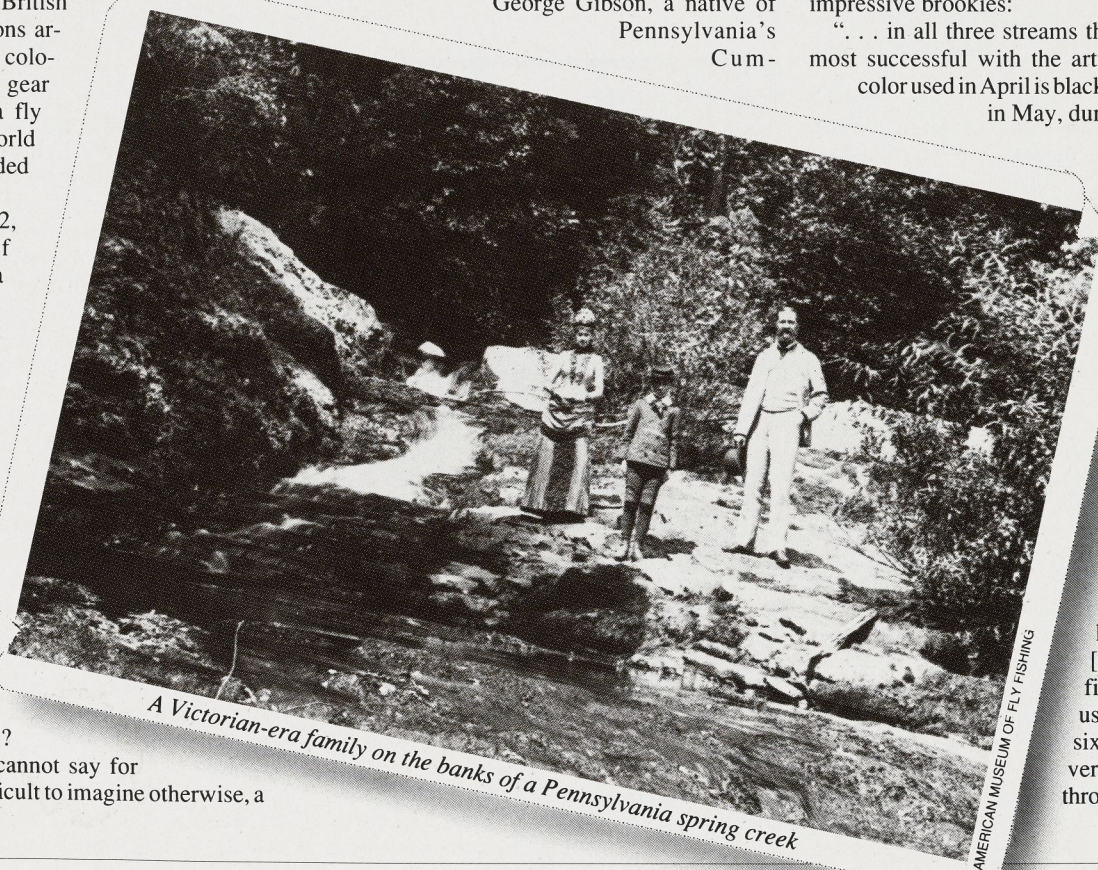
And talks about how he fished for these impressive brookies:

"... in all three streams the fisherman is most successful with the artificial fly. The color used in April is black or dark brown; in May, dun or red hackle; in June and

July imitations of the millers and candle flies are found best."

Finally he describes the tackle he used:

"... it requires nice tackle and an experienced hand to land [these large fish]. The rod used is fifteen or sixteen feet long, very delicate, and throws from twenty



A Victorian-era family on the banks of a Pennsylvania spring creek

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF FLY FISHING

seasons. After our marriage, I decided I did not want to spend many consecutive weekends alone. My husband encouraged me to come along on weekend hunts and take an active part, and I have come to enjoy it immensely. We hunt upland game and waterfowl in North Dakota.

Vicki J. Goff
Fargo, ND

Dear Editor:

Yes, Alice, there are other women hunters out there! The only thing I enjoy more than working the dogs is hunting them. My boyfriend is a professional dog trainer and when we aren't running our Labs in gun dog trials, we are hunting them.

I firmly believe our common interest in the dogs, hunting and the outdoors has made a solid foundation in our friendship. So, take note, all you "hunting widows." If you want to be with your husband/boyfriend throughout the hunting season—grab a gun and learn to hunt! It's *not* for men only.

Kay McKinney
Camden, S.C.

Dear Editor:

I would like to respond to the letter from Alice (Kalispell, MT) in your Jan/Feb 1986 issue. She wanted to know if there are any other women who hunt. Being one myself, I have wondered the same thing. I do know there are a lot of women who hunt big game and are very successful at it, but the number of women who hunt game birds are fewer, and those who are waterfowlers are fewer still.

So, yes, Alice, there are others like you. Each one of us has a different story and different hunting interests. There are probably a lot of other women who would love to try, but their husbands won't let them go. Loosen up, guys! You may be surprised to find that the best hunting partner you could ever have is right there in your own home!

Kim Spiker
Eagle, ID

Dear Editor:

Your January/February issue had three particularly interesting letters I'd like to respond to.

First, to Alice Ford of Kalispell,

MT. To remedy your problem of being short-handed, keep your own supply of shells (I know I would if I had that many grouse between the house and mailbox).

Secondly, you're in a very lucky situation. You said that "most of my women friends aren't in love with black Labs and bird hunting!" But it looks like in a very few years you'll have a hunting partner to share those "dark and rainy" Montana nights—your daughter! In addition to my wife, that will make at least three women hunters that I know of.

To Bill of southern Georgia—having lived in southern Mississippi for the last five years, I can relate to your quail hunting problems and I think I have the solution for you. Move to Phoenix, Arizona, and hunt the Mingus Mountains. (My brother will probably never speak to me again for writing this in a national magazine.)

It has everything you need: wide-open, accessible ranch land; great weather most of the year (hot summers); quail and tight-holding mourning doves for young dogs.

Finally, to W.A. Skelton of Mantee, Mississippi. You need to venture further from your corner of Mississippi if you think that "quail hunting is all we have in Mississippi."

Some of the best duck hunting in the U.S. can be found along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, not to mention dove and woodcock and, of course, you know how good the quail hunting can be. I'd get more detailed about locations, but my Lab is looking over my shoulder, growling obscenities at me for even admitting to our good fortune here on the coast.

I wish Alice, Bill and W.A. good hunting and I cheer GUN DOG to keep up the good work.

Mike Graeff
Pascagoula, MS

SORRY, GUN DOG SUBSCRIBERS!

We've run out of the deluxe 12-issue version of The GUN DOG binder. We won't be getting any more of them, but we still have the small, deluxe, six-issue binder. You'll find them listed in the GUN DOG Gift Shop on page 49.

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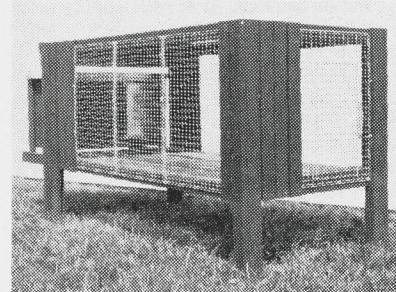
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Dear Editor:

Could it be our worries are over? I read that wildlife managers are citing the new farm bill as the best break wildlife has had since the soil bank programs of the 50's and 60's. How about a complete report?

D.C.
Omaha, NE

Dear D.C.:

Joel Vance writes about the new program in this issue of GUN DOG. In addition, we've a few words to say about it in our Potshots column.

— Ed.



Dear Editor:

I am a Charter Subscriber to your fine magazine and still have all of the old issues from the first one on.

I have enclosed a picture that one of my children took the other day of our Lab Brandy and regal Rabbitt. How is that for sit and stay?

H.B. Dew, Jr.
Wilson, N.C.

Dear Editor:

Once again you have succeeded in putting together an issue (Jan/Feb '86) in which every page contained well-written, educational and emotional articles. However, I must admit my favorite was the article by Joel Vance about his Britts and grouse hunting.

I currently provide domain for three Britts, the oldest of which I regularly Field Trial with the

National-Shoot-To-Retrieve Association. At this point I would like to refer to Gene Hill's article on quail shooting in the same issue, and say that I wholeheartedly agree with his philosophy that it's more important to have fun while hunting (or trialing) than to fill your game bag. (I wonder if Mr. Hill can help me find what's fun about spending over \$200, driving over 600 miles, having a blowout, burning up an alternator and having an allergic reaction to something yet undetermined.) To make a long story short, I failed to produce the bird in the allotted time period, so I ended up birdless for the trial.

Of course, there has been more than just this moment of embarrassment. But for every one of these times, I can recall hundreds of beautiful points, hard-earned retrieves, nights of being crowded out of bed and mornings of being awakened by a cold nose patiently waiting to be fed.

In short, I feel like Mr. Vance and believe that my dog is "the perfect grouse dog," even though we've never hunted 'em.

What we have hunted and successfully captured are hundreds of priceless memories that only someone who has owned and loved "man's best friend" could understand. With the help of such outstanding authors as Mr. Vance and Mr. Hill, I am constantly reminded of how very special these memories really are.

David C. Noland
Olathe, KS

Dear Editor:

In response to the letter from Bill in southern Georgia, he can scratch Wyoming off the list. I know that I am going to catch it for saying this, but this is one of the worst places there are for birds. The fish and game department here figures that if it doesn't have four legs and horns, it's not worth it.

Ron
Riverton, WY

If you'd like to write the editor on a subject of interest to GUN DOG readers, address your letter to: The GUN DOG MAILBAG, P.O. Box 2696, Des Moines, IA 50321. Letters may be lightly edited.

CLOSEUP:

Cimarron National Grassland

Many species of game thrive in this once-devastated corner of southwest Kansas, making it one of the best hunting areas in the state

□ In the extreme southwest corner of Kansas, where it is bordered by Oklahoma and Colorado, is the arid **Cimarron National Grassland**. It was acquired by the federal government following the infamous Dust Bowl that devastated the region in the early 1930's, and is now managed by the U.S. Forest Service. It consists of more than 107,000 acres. It is sparsely populated, but it is easily accessible via good highways and by air through feeder lines to nearby Liberal or Garden City, Kansas, from Wichita or Denver.

Because of the work done by the For-

est Service and other agencies, especially the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission, Cimarron is one of the finest hunting areas in Kansas. It has bobwhite and scaled quail, ringneck pheasants, lesser prairie chickens, mourning doves, turkeys, and mule deer and whitetail deer.

Deer and turkeys inhabit a wide area of thick brush and trees that borders the generally dry **Cimarron River**, which bisects the Grasslands. Turkey and deer hunting throughout Kansas is limited to residents on a special permit basis.

The best hunting the area offers is for quail and lesser prairie chickens. The lessers are hunted in two ways. One is to get concealed in grass, tumbleweeds, or behind a yucca plant in early morning or late evening near a milo or wheat stubblefield, and wait for a pass-shot as the birds fly to feed. The other is to walk the sage and yucca-covered hills and flush them from cover.

Quail hunting is best around the guzzlers—small shed-like structures that are about 18 inches off the ground and have 12 x 24-foot tin roofs that are slanted and have gutters on one end.

Lawrence Smith of Elkhart, a longtime rural mail carrier and well-known



Best pheasant hunting is done in draws along the Cimarron River

conservationist and sportsman, probably knows the Grassland better than anyone else. He hunts the area often. He recommends that quail hunters use bird dogs since Kansas law requires that all birds must be taken on the wing.

"The quail will take off running when someone approaches," Smith said, "and it's not easy to get them to fly. I've found that if you circle the area, 200 yards or more, you have a good chance of pinning a few of them down and making them fly."

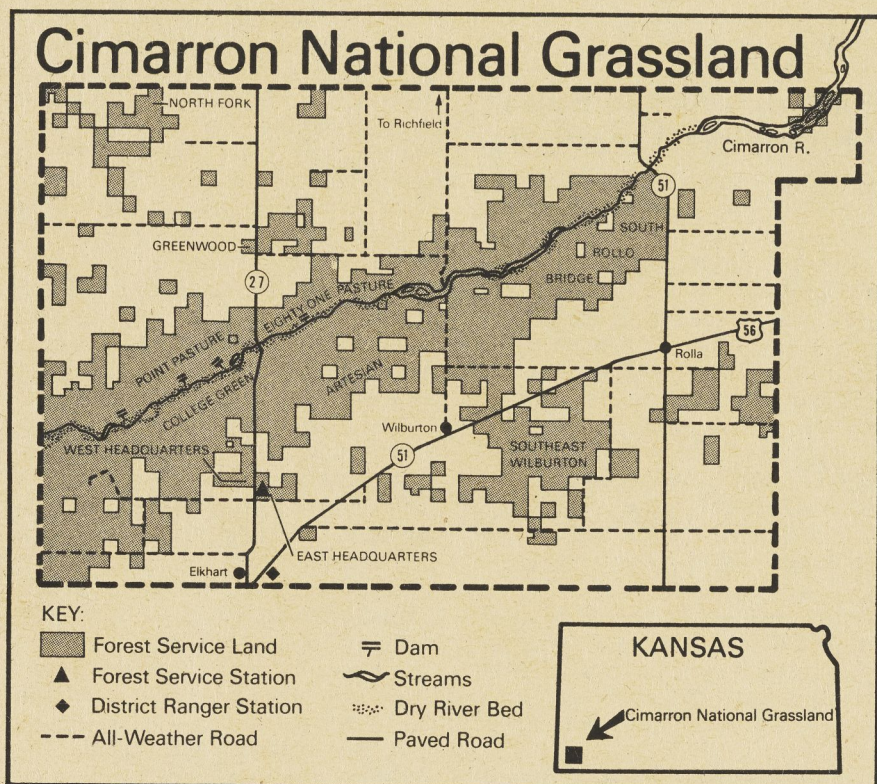
Pheasant hunting is best in the draws and brush-and-tree areas along the Cimarron River, in foundations, and in grown-up fence corners piled with tumbleweeds and old farm machinery.

Don Mecklenburg, Grasslands manager, says he expects quail, pheasant, and prairie chicken hunting to be good during the 1979-80 seasons.

"We've had a good year, with more than 21 inches of rain," he said. "Normal rainfall is about 17 inches. There was a good hatch of birds in the spring, and all signs point to a good season."

Information about seasons, bag limits, maps, and so on is available from the Cimarron National Grassland, U.S. Forest Service, Elkhart, KS 67950 (maps cost 50¢), or the Public Information Office, Forestry, Fish and Game Commission, Route 2, Box 54A, Pratt, KS 67124.

There are motels and restaurants in Elkhart. It is served by U.S. 56 and is about 120 miles southwest of Dodge City. There is a fine roadside park north of Elkhart on Highway K-27, where it crosses the river. It has fireplaces, picnic tables, a water well, toilets, and other facilities. RV's and overnight campers are welcome.—Thayne Smith.



This area, once part of the 1930's Dust Bowl, offers prime hunting for deer, upland game



These sandhill cranes were taken after a morning hunt in a west Texas grain field

by stalking the birds while they were feeding in grainfields. Then it was found out that they could be decoyed with a spread of gray rags, much the same as geese are decoyed with white rags.

An adult little brown sandhill crane has a wingspan up to five feet, and it will weigh eight to 10 pounds. Only the breast of the bird, sliced and fried, is eaten. The crane's loud cry sounds like the noise made by several horse-drawn wagons that have wheels badly in need of grease.

Kenny Redin of Plainview, Texas, is a pioneer of crane hunting over gray-rag spreads and with silhouette decoys. He guides hunters in Bailey, Cochran, and Lamb counties in Zone A, and in Floyd and Briscoe counties in Zone B. He can be reached at 2812 West 10th, Plainview, TX 79072 (806 293-7751).—*Gene Kirkley.*

When It's Below Zero, Fish At Big Stone Lake

□ This is the time of year to catch big walleyes, but it takes a hardy soul to withstand the bitter cold. Most of the water is frozen in the north by now, but **Big Stone Lake**, which borders South Dakota and Minnesota, has a small stretch of open water near the outlet of the Ottertail power plant. Walleye fishing there is often fantastic.

Last winter Eldon and Irwin Lonnen of Bloomington, Minnesota, hit the jackpot. On one fishing trip Eldon landed six walleyes that added up to 56½ pounds. The largest weighed 12 pounds

2 ounces and the smallest 9 pounds 7 ounces. He fished a couple of weeks later and caught six walleyes that together weighed 56 pounds. His largest fish weighed 11 pounds 12 ounces. The next evening he was joined by his brother and together they landed 67 pounds of walleyes, the largest weighing 10 pounds 11 ounces.

Fishing is best during the night and into dawn.—*Chuck Post.*

Oklahoma Lakes Suffer From Severe Pollution

□ Oklahoma sportsmen have been shocked to learn that several popular lakes in the eastern part of the state have serious pollution problems.

Fort Gibson Lake, on the Grand River system, has been hardest hit. Heavy levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were found in fish. The Oklahoma Health Department issued warnings against eating channel catfish, flathead catfish, and buffaloes taken from it. White bass, crappies, and black bass are safe to eat, according to health officials. The pollution comes from **Pryor Creek**, where there is a large industrial complex.

Upstream from Gibson, Lake Hudson's **Big Cabin Creek** is heavily polluted. Investigations showed that many cattle were dying after drinking the toxic creek water. More studies are under way.

The latest lake to be added to the pollution list is **Oologah**. The fish in it have high levels of cadmium in them.

Some carp and white bass taken from the upper end of the lake had the heaviest levels of cadmium of any fish studied nationwide by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists.

That study was made back in 1977, and people are questioning why the findings are just coming to light. Federal spokesmen said they did not have enough evidence to "pinpoint" polluting sources in Oologah, which is fed by the Verdigris River. Nor did they know if fish were still being affected.

Health officials are conducting further studies on Oologah, and statements on toxic levels in the fish are expected.—*Sam Powell.*

Hunting For Cranes Continues In Oklahoma

□ Many Oklahoma waterfowl gunners are unaware that they may hunt an unusual bird, especially in January. A special season on sandhill cranes, which runs through January 20, is open in the area west of U.S. 81.

The state's Department of Wildlife Conservation calls these birds little brown cranes, but most waterfowlers know them as sandhills. By January there should be large concentrations of them in several western areas.

Foss Reservoir, northwest of Clinton, is a top spot to hunt sandhills. Many birds stop there each winter on the Washita National Wildlife Refuge. There are also several species of geese available. There is no public land around Foss. Most of the hunting is done on leased farmland. It is wheat country, and large flights of ducks, geese, and cranes move off the refuge each morning to feed in stubblefields. Access is often possible by asking farmers for permission.

Fort Supply Lake, near Woodward is another good place to hunt cranes. There are about 5,500 acres of public hunting land, and they usually have sandhills on them by late winter.

The largest concentration of sandhills in the state is along the **Red River** valley in the extreme southwest. The hunting is excellent near the river and bottomlands from the Oklahoma-Texas border back east to the Davidson and Grandfield areas. This is all private property, and it's necessary to get landowner permission to hunt.

Crane hunters must get a free special permit from the Department of Wildlife Conservation, 1801 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, OK 73105.

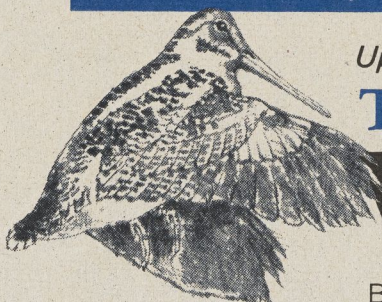
The daily limit on sandhills that hunters can take is three, and the possession limit is six.—*Sam Powell.*

Upland-bird hunters may finally discover Oklahoma's timberdoodles.

THE UNKNOWN

WOODCOCK

BY JIM MURPHY



Woodcock are perhaps the last upland gamebird most Oklahoma hunters associate with their state. And that's probably just fine with the small number of sportsmen who have learned timberdoodles migrate into and through eastern Oklahoma in respectable numbers every autumn.

How good can the hunting be? Rod Smith, game biologist for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, says, "If a hunter can find areas of quality habitat, and if he watches for major cold fronts pushing birds southward, I'll bet he can have some of the best hunting in the Central Flyway, with the exception of Louisiana [which winters more birds than any other state in either Central or Eastern Flyways]."

Smith should know. His research as a graduate student at Oklahoma State University in the 1970's helped to extend the principal known breeding, and migrating, range of the American woodcock from far eastern Oklahoma to include virtually the entire eastern half of the state, with Interstate 35 as the rough boundary. The woodcock's affinity for inhospitably thick cover along creeks and rivers and its largely nocturnal and solitary lifestyle obviously helped it avoid the notice of even professional biologists.

Such factors also undoubtedly contributed to hunter neglect, as did a traditional late-November season opening, its timing designed more to protect quail, Oklahoma's premier gamebird, than to coincide with the state's major influx of migrating woodcock, which begins in late October and continues through November. Last year the Oklahoma Wildlife Commission broke with tradition by establishing a new season, October 24 through December 27. With woodcock sure to be plentiful, and without quail as competition the first month, perhaps now more of Oklahoma's countless bird-dog owners will discover the long-beaked, bug-eyed sprites reknowned for producing classy, rock-solid points.

Hunters new to woodcock soon learn that locating quality habitat is at least half the battle. There's no shortage of places to search. Eastern Oklahoma is ribboned with thousands of miles of permanent and wet-weather creeks and larger rivers. Pockets of suitable cover, usually encompassing one to several acres, exist in or near the floodplains of many of them.

Vegetation heights and densities are important clues for pinpointing promising spots. In general terms, woodcock want mini-jungles. One frequent characteristic is a fairly high density of tree saplings or

CHOKES AND LOADS

■ *A shotgun's choke is more important than gauge for woodcock hunting. A 25-yard shot is a very long one, considering the short-range visibility through typical cover, which means improved cylinder is the tightest choke warranted. Skeet or open cylinder are better.*

An extra-wide pattern also helps compensate for the bird's erratic flight behavior. Sideslipping, towering, and abrupt turns in any direction are effective, and routine, evasive tactics for this slowest of gamebirds. Given that unpredictability, plus the short ranges involved, forward allowance (lead) is seldom needed. (Frequently there's not enough room to swing a gun much anyway.) Poke and shoot is the style of many successful woodcock hunters.

Minimal distances and a quarry easy to anchor dictate light loads, with number 8 or 9 shot preferred for most efficient pattern density.

similar woody growth from about 5 to 15 or 20 feet tall. Abandoned fields and other bottomland openings that are slowly reverting to second-growth woodland can be prime prospects.

Contributing to a junglelike appearance will invariably be a profusion of shorter bushes, shrubs, berry brambles, and greenbrier. Smith found the prickly, viny greenbrier, along with roughleaf dogwood, especially common to many woodcock haunts he studied throughout eastern Oklahoma. Two vegetation types that won't be abundant within good woodcock cover are heavy grasses, which hinder birds' walking, and tall timber—a closed canopy eliminates most of the necessary understory.

Together with an umbrella of protective vegetation for daytime resting,

woodcock also require nearby bare-soil areas that are rich with earthworms, the main target of their nightly foraging. Suitably soft, silty loams are readily available along most waterways, although Smith notes some central Oklahoma floodplains are too high in hard red clay.

The mostly solitary and sporadic nature of woodcock migration and the small size of most habitats make it wise to locate a number of potential covers in the same general area. Some will prove to be consistent producers of four to eight or more birds throughout the season, barring ground-freezing temperatures or snow, while others may yield only one or two (or even none) unless a major migratory concentration arrives.

Two autumn weather conditions greatly improve chances for success. A strong Arctic cold front that pushes south almost to Oklahoma will force an en masse migration into the state. A strong warm front moving up from the Gulf of Mexico and lingering will stall migration behind its leading edge, concentrating birds as new arrivals trickle south.

Public hunting opportunities abound for woodcock. The ODWC manages hundreds of thousands of acres around eastern reservoirs and, most importantly, along tributary creeks and rivers. (The agency's Public Hunting Lands atlas is available by mail for \$2 from the License Section, Dept. FS, 1801 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, Okla. 73105.)

Opportunities on private land may also be good; it will be the rare landowner who's ever been asked for permission to hunt woodcock. Unheralded Oklahoma woodcock offer an upland hunting bonanza just waiting to be discovered. □

Jim Murphy is a freelance outdoor writer living in Meeker, Oklahoma. He has worked as an information specialist for that state's wildlife department.

TO DOG OR NOT TO DOG

■ *Woodcock hunting is generally more productive with a bird dog, but the dogless hunter need not stay home. The small size of most covers and a flushed bird's inclination simply to fly to another part of the cover work to a dogless hunter's advantage.*

Basic tactics still apply: locating suitable habitat and keeping tabs on weather fronts. Briarproof clothing is especially important for the dogless hunter because he must do all the heavy brush-busting himself.

Slowly zigzagging through cover and making frequent long pauses works well to unnerve these birds that hold incredibly tight for man or dog (no doubt instinctively secure about their perfectly camouflaged plumage and nearly impenetrable shelter). Sometimes talking while stopped will flush a nearby woodcock. Keep as quiet as possible while moving, however, to be able to hear and pinpoint the distinctive wing-twitter of a rising bird.

With or without partners, it's always smart to wear some fluorescent-orange clothing.



began tapping that hidden resource two to three decades ago, it changed the face of the prairie. Farmers began planting crops other than dryland wheat—corn, alfalfa, beets, beans, and other irrigated crops have given deer ample feed.

As a result, deer herds have been slowly expanding throughout eastern Colorado, as they have in other neighboring states like Nebraska and Kansas.

"Several things have happened," says biologist Tully. "Years ago, the deer were

Some of the most impressive trophy whitetail deer in the state have been taken near Bonny Dam State Recreation Area, the only public hunting area in that section of the state. Bonny Dam is located between the communities of Burlington and Wray.

The third watershed is the South Platte River. When Mark Twain crossed the Platte near Julesburg in the late 1800's by stagecoach, he wrote that it was "a melancholy stream" and wondered aloud if he had ever seen "a sicker or sorrier" river in his life. After falling out of the Colorado Rockies near Denver, the Platte begins a northeastward journey through the rolling plains of Colorado near the cities of Fort Morgan and Sterling. There are several small public hunting areas along its course, including Tamarac State Wildlife Area, the Bob Elliott Wildlife Area, and the Cottonwood State Wildlife Area. Comparatively, hunting success rates along the South Platte River are among the highest in the state. Units in and around Morgan, Weld, Logan, and Sedgwick Counties are the trophy territories.

The South Platte River success rates are not the exception. As a rule, all of the eastern plains unit offers significantly higher success rates compared to the mountain units. Last year, for example, hunters in eastern Colorado enjoyed a 66 percent success rate compared to a 31 percent success rate statewide. Those figures are somewhat misleading, however, since perhaps 80 percent of the deer hunting in Colorado occurs in the western portion of the state where unlimited rifle hunting is available.

Regardless, the quality of deer hunting in eastern Colorado has put the plains permits at a premium, according to Tully: "You just can't put in for a license nowadays and get one—there's such a demand for plains rifle permits now."

"The good thing is that we have two different seasons for some of those



units, both archery and firearms," he says. "In the northeast corner, for example, adjacent to the Platte, there are two seasons that give more people the chance to hunt. The December season is particularly good."

Although there are some negative aspects associated with the limited permit system in eastern Colorado, it has spared the herds from overhunting and the necessity for the three-point rule now in effect in many of the mountain units for deer.

Conversely, the limited hunting pressure on the eastern herds has already accomplished what the three-point rule was intended for—to improve trophies.

"Biologically, it's intended to increase the low buck-to-doe ratios. The plains herds do not have the problems we have had in western Colorado. In fact, some of the ratios in eastern Colorado are running thirty and forty bucks for every 100 does," Schoonveld explains.

So what can Colorado hunters expect in the eastern portion of Colorado this year? According to Schoonveld and other Colorado Division of Wildlife biologists, more of the same.

"There'll be more trophies shot again this year," Schoonveld says. "Just how big, there's no telling."

Matt Vincent was born and raised in Yuma, Colorado, and is an outdoor writer currently residing in Arizona. When not hunting, he can be found behind his typewriter.

COLORADO CONTACTS

■ **For more information on specific topics, contact the agencies below.**

HUNTING: Colorado Division of Wildlife, Dept. FS, 6060 Broadway, Denver, Colo. 80203, telephone (303) 297-1192.

GUIDING: Colorado Outfitters Licensing Board, Dept. FS, 1525 Sherman St., Room 600, Denver, Colo. 80203, telephone (303) 866-3898.

CAMPING: Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Dept. FS, 1313 Sherman St., Room 618, Denver, Colo. 80203, telephone (303) 866-3437.

PUBLIC ACCESS: Bureau of Land Management, Dept. FS, 1037 20th St., Denver, Colo. 80202, telephone (303) 236-2100; and National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Region, Dept. FS, Box 12795, Denver, Colo. 80225, telephone (303) 969-2000.

GENERAL INFORMATION: Colorado Division of Tourism, Dept. FS, 1625 Broadway, Suite 1700, Denver, Colo. 80202, telephone (303) 592-5410.

confined to the river bottom areas. Since the 1950's, the populations of mule deer and whitetails have been spreading out. They moved out of the river bottom because of the increasing population densities, and they found a home in the sunflowers. Eventually, they have moved out into the farmlands and ranch lands."

Unlike western sections of Colorado, the rivers of eastern Colorado play a vital role in locating deer. The major populations of both whitetail and mule deer in eastern Colorado run along rivers.

There are three major arteries flowing across the heart of the eastern Colorado plains. They include the South Platte, Republican, and Arkansas Rivers and their respective tributaries. These three watersheds divide the state into three primary deer hunting zones, and the units bordering these rivers annually produce the top hunting trophies.

The Arkansas River drops out of the Colorado Rockies near Pueblo and makes an eastward journey into Kansas through the communities of La Junta and Lamar. Those units located in and around Pueblo County, Crowley County, Kiowa County, and Prowers County normally offer the best hunting potential. Additionally, sections of the Comanche National Grassland have produced several trophies.

The Republican River drainage is located in the central portion of eastern Colorado in Yuma and Kit Carson Counties. It consists of three small streams—the North Fork, the South Fork, and the tiny Arikaree River sandwiched in between.

GAINING ACCESS TO COLORADO'S PRIVATE LAND



■ **It is against the law to hunt on private land in Colorado without first gaining permission from the landowner. Because some of the best deer hunting can be found on private land, and because there are relatively few public hunting areas in the eastern half of the state, gaining access is one of the biggest obstacles facing the deer hunter.**

Approximately 80 percent of Colorado's private ground can be hunted, according to the Colorado Division of Wildlife, if the individual is willing to invest time and effort in advance of the hunting season. The following are some guidelines that may unlock the gates to a successful season.

♦ **Purchase a detailed map of the region and decide on an area you are interested in hunting. Then take a trip to the region several months prior to opening day. Scout the area by driving backroads. When you see a promising location, mark it on the map for reference. But do not cross any fences until you have first talked with the owner.**

♦ **After meeting the landowner, explain why you would like to hunt on his property. Indicate which parcel of land on the map you marked. Provide the landowner with your personal background and offer to provide him with a list of references.**

♦ **If permission is denied, cordially thank him and ask if he knows of anyone else in the area who might grant hunting access.**

♦ **When and if access is granted, establish the ground rules. Then keep in touch with the landowner during the weeks prior to the hunting season. Notify him of when you plan to arrive, and keep your word.**

♦ **Treat the property with respect. That is why most landowners deny access today—that lack of respect locks gates permanently.**

♦ **Before leaving, check back in with the landowner to thank him for the privilege of hunting. If your hunt was successful, offer him part of your game as a courtesy.**

♦ **Keep in touch with the landowner after the hunt is over. You might not only gain access to his land again—you might also gain a friend.**

FAMILY WILDERNESS VACATION **ADVENTURE AT EVERY BEND**

Seventy miles from the nearest phone, we find trout galore and many other pleasures

By JOHN R. HIGLEY

THE WARM afternoon breeze, funneled down the canyon by lofty rock walls, whipped crazily through the cracks and shafts of the bluff above me. With each gust the precipice seemed to moan in agony, creating strange visions in my overactive mind.

Historically this was Indian country. First inhabited by cliff dwellers and later by Apaches, the area has changed little with time. Now, listening to the eerie sounds, I wondered if I could be hearing ghosts.

You won't find Mournful Cliff, as I named the place, on any map, but I'll remember where it is. Not because of the weird sounds, but because of the fine trout pool directly beneath it.

At the pool's head the gentle current of the Gila River's Middle Fork flows toward a shadowy



I pose with a sizable rainbow that I enticed from a glide on Middle Fork of the Gila River, shown at the right





En route home we visited the Gila Cliff Dwellings, dating back to the 1200's

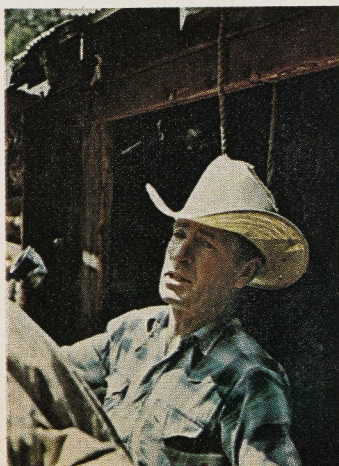
ADVENTURE AT EVERY BEND *continued*

undercut. It is the kind of spot in which trout wait for passing food. I tied a No. 14 Black Gnat to my tapered leader and made ready to test my theory.

With a wave of my 7½-foot fly rod I sent the Gnat forward to the edge of the current, where it was immediately swept toward the overhang. As expected, a hungry rainbow hit it fast, but I reacted by rearing back too hard. I know better. You simply don't yank back on a two-pound-test tippet without parting company with your 50¢ dry fly. While I gathered in my limp line, Mournful Cliff seemed to laugh.

"Isn't funny," I muttered, moving on toward camp.

Quentin Hulse, local packer for trips to Gila River



I knew my wife Judie would be starting coffee while our boys, Mark and Mike, pitched in to gather wood for the evening fire. I wore no watch, but I reckoned by the setting sun that I had an hour yet to fish before joining them for dinner. I knew they wouldn't eat without me—I was the appointed cook.

A short while earlier

I had left them in order to take a quick hike down the Middle Fork for about a mile. I wanted to fish the stream alone for a while to see how its large population of wild rainbows and browns would treat this misplaced Californian and his meager offerings of feathers and steel. So far they were being right neighborly. As the shadows steadily lengthened across the water, I was getting strikes at every likely spot. Working slowly back to camp, I realized just how well our first family wilderness adventure was progressing. My only regret was that we hadn't tried it sooner.

The past few years had been hectic ones for us. Besides running a small-scale maintenance business, I've been actively pursuing freelance outdoor writing. Meanwhile Judie, my wife of 13 years, has worked fulltime as a nurse. So life has been fast-paced at our home just outside Los Angeles, California.

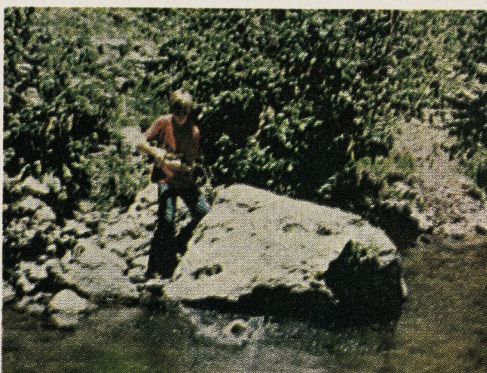
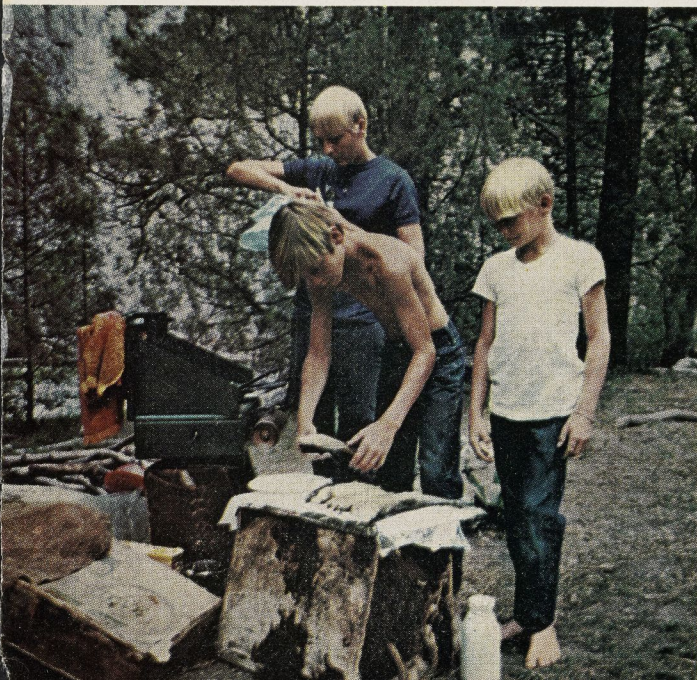
As a writer I have seen many remote Western regions, but most of my trips have, by necessity, been quick and tiring. As a result, much of our family recreation has taken place in easily reached areas only a few hours from home. Nonetheless Mark, 12, and Mike, 9, look forward to every camping and fishing excursion, and both show a gratifying interest in the outdoors. Somehow, though, Judie, who likes to fish occasionally, has never really taken to rough camping. Happiness to her (*continued on page 138*)



Top: the first adventure was a scenic packtrain trip across lush meadows and over rocky trails of the Gila Forest. Left: my two sons take a cooling dip in a pool near our camping spot



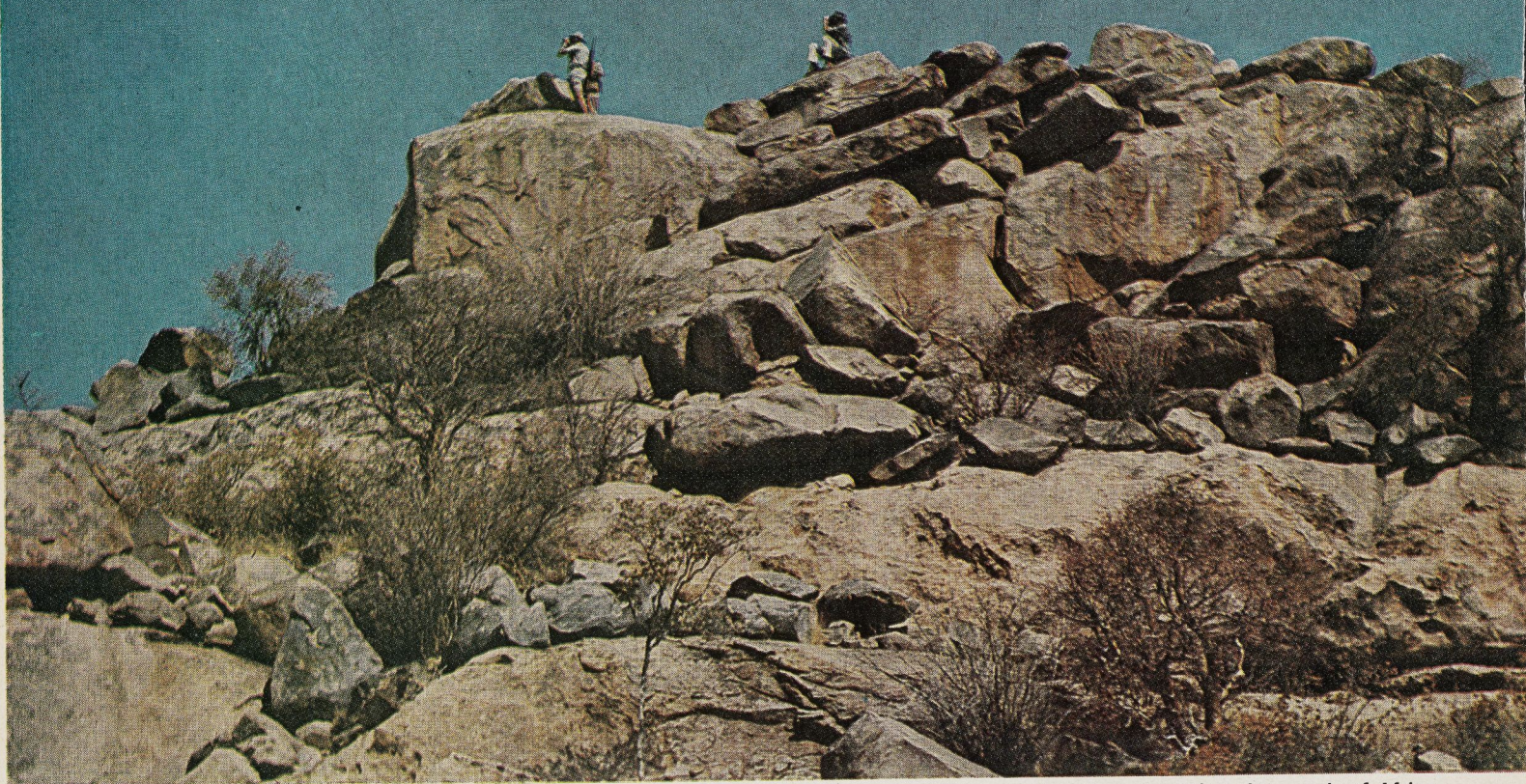
Above: Mark, left, and Mike compare catches. Mike's 16-inch rainbow was the biggest fish of the trip, but Mark's was nearly as large. Their fish hit grasshoppers collected on the spot. Below: Mark flours the trout as Mike looks on and Judie readies pan for a fish supper



Above: Judie comes up with a good trout of her own. Left: Mark pulls a brownie out from beneath an overhanging rock

New Kind of Safari

BIG KUDU IN "SOUTH WEST"



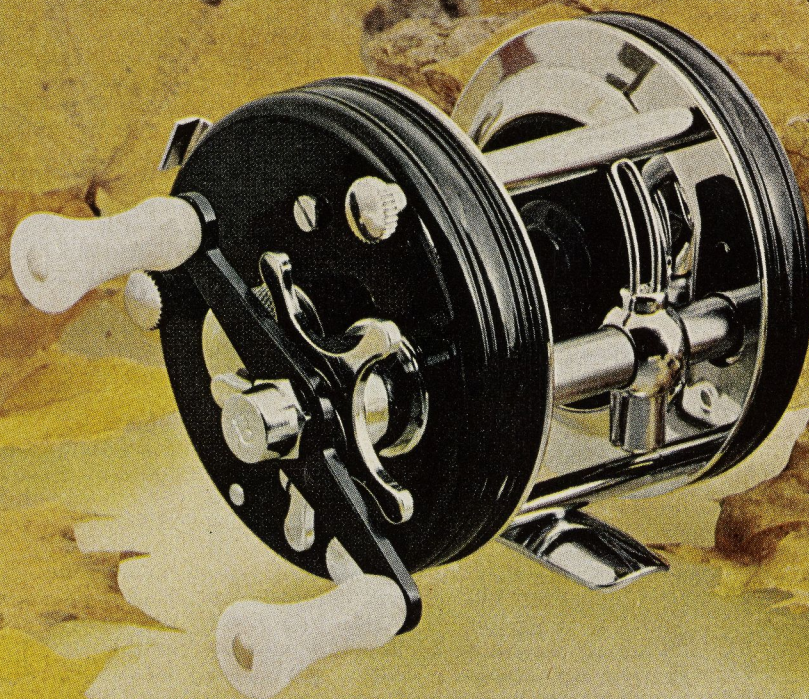
Bradford and Volker glass flat land for kudu from one of the many kopjes, or boulder piles, that dot much of Africa

Peter Böhmker raised these tame cheetahs from cubs



Gemsbok I wounded is loaded after terrier tracked it down





Ambassadeur 5000C... So good, we call it the ultimate baitcasting reel.

It's the baitcasting reel for the perfectionist...the man who wants the ultimate.

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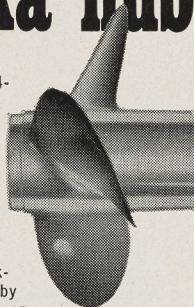
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ADVENTURE EVERY BEND

(continued from page 64)

is a stretch of sand, sunlight, and a good book. So it came as a pleasant surprise when she made the following announcement one evening this spring:

"You know," she said, sounding a little weary, "I could really use a change. I want to get away from all the hassle for a while."

"Go on," I replied, suddenly very interested.

"Well, I know you're still looking for a partner for that trip to New Mexico, and I was just thinking, maybe we should all tag along."

"That's a fine idea!" I said enthusiastically. "If you're really serious we can leave the day the boys get out of school."

Since early 1972, sketchy plans for a summer trip to the 2.7-million-acre Gila National Forest, in west-central New Mexico, had been forming in the back of my mind. I wanted to fish the Middle Fork of the Gila River, which flows through the 500,000-acre Gila Wilderness, the nation's first area to be so designated. I'd been told about the stream two years before by rancher-outfitter Quentin Hulse, who lives along the edge of the wilderness beside Canyon Creek, in the Beaverhead Ranger District. I'd met Quentin while deer hunting with a group of fellow Californians. His description of the place sold me on it sight-unseen.

I guess all of us have favorite fishing spots. High on my list are out-of-the-way streams, large or small. Show me an abundance of trout in a wilderness setting, and I'll show you a contented angler—me! I tucked Quentin's address away for future reference, digging it up later to make arrangements for our Middle Fork visit.

As we watched our mountain of gear grow in preparation for the trip, I saw clearly the need of pack stock for such a family undertaking. As a frequent backpacker I am usually concerned with ounces of pack weight, but now we were dealing with several pounds at a time. And, to make sure that Judie and the boys had the extra clothing and other items they wanted, I didn't cut many corners.

Our supplies included a wide assortment of canned foods and drinks, as well as four steaks for our first meal in the wilderness. We took along a two-burner stove for cooking, and my backpack for hikes away from camp. Especially for Judie's comfort, we also threw in a couple of folding canvas chairs.

Our home away from home would be a large, easily rigged, pop-up-type tent with room for four. And since I expected warm days, even at an elevation of 7,000 feet, we took swim wear. In our general paraphernalia was a first-aid kit complete with snake-bite equipment and insect repellent. Never forget the repellent!

For fishing—my original reason for the trip—we had four complete outfits. I took light spinning and fly rods,

and each boy had a spincast rod and reel. The balance of our angling gear included an ample array of spinners, dry flies, hooks, leader material, and small weights. We took no bait. I felt that the boys could catch bait along the stream.

We finally got under way well before dawn on Saturday, June 17. Our route across the southern desert took us east through Phoenix and Globe, Arizona, via U.S. Highway 70. It was hot, and rest breaks were many, but evening found us in Lordsburg, New Mexico, 660 miles from home. There Judie and I bought five-day nonresident fishing licenses at \$5.25 each. The boys, being younger than 14, didn't need them.

We spent the night in God's Town, as some of the old-timers knew it, and the next morning traveled 50 miles along State Highway 90 to the mining town of Silver City. From there we followed State 25 to our turnoff (State 61) into the Gila National Forest. Route 61—all dirt, winding, rough, and mostly narrow—snakes north for 46 miles before reaching the Beaverhead Ranger Station, where we turned west on another forest route to the Hulse ranch. In all, we traversed 66 miles of graded road in three hours of driving. It was the worst stretch of the trip.

Presently we descended for a half-mile on a steep, switchback offshoot road to the Hulse residence along picturesque Canyon Creek. The stream is aptly named. High bluffs tower over Quentin's home on either side, giving a visitor the feeling of being plunked into a very private world where time doesn't move much. There are other ranches nearby, but if Quentin needed a phone in a hurry he'd have to drive nearly 70 miles. His is the kind of location that breeds independence. He must like it—he's been there since 1934.

Quentin was waiting for us, and after our greetings we loaded three mules and saddled the horses. The trail followed Canyon Creek, a tributary of the Middle Fork, and wound through lush meadowland and along rocky hillsides. Nowhere could it be called rough, but I'll admit I was worried about this part of the trip. Judie, who had horses as a girl, rides well, but the boys had never been out of the corral before. Happily, my concern was unnecessary. They took to riding like seagulls relish sardines.

For two hours we chatted back and forth as we rode down the canyon. Then, a short distance from the Gila, Quentin piped up from behind:

"Stream's just around the next bend," he said with a grin. "Sure hope she ain't dry."

Dry? It was no secret that most of the Southwest was suffering from a severe drought, but a trout stream gone dry?

Actually, I didn't expect to find a large stream. There just isn't that much water in the region. Still, the Middle Gila was a welcome sight after our dusty ride. Gurgling out of the Mogol-



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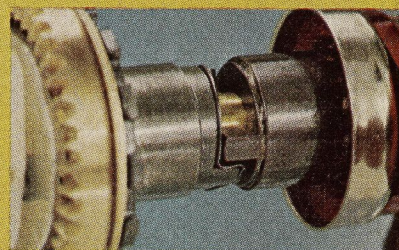
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lon (pronounced muggy-own) Mountains, it slowly traverses the vast Gila Wilderness before joining the main Gila. Quentin had told us of major flooding the previous fall, and the high-water line bore him out. But now the stream was barely ankle-deep to a loaded mule, and clear as the smog-free sky.

The Middle Fork's meandering route is marked by impressive rock formations, sprawling gambel oaks, tall ponderosa pines, and tangles of water birch. It's postcard-pretty all the way. We pitched camp about two miles downstream from Canyon Creek, in a stand of pines on a flat bench above the water. Rising abruptly across the stream was a vertical granite bluff that I guessed to be about 400 feet high. The air was warm and the breeze gentle, and, after Quentin left, the place was our own. There was no sign of other humanity, no proof that the ratrace of big-city life was still in progress. Somehow, in that remote spot, all the frantic rushing seemed a bit futile.

It was already late afternoon, so we spent the rest of the day arranging our camp until everything was in a convenient place. Then I broiled the steaks, which we'd kept fresh under a sack of ice in a beat-up styrofoam cooler stuffed into a pannier. By covering the pannier with a tarp, we had an icebox for three days.

The night cooled pleasantly, but it wasn't chilly. Even when I rolled out at dawn I didn't wear a jacket. Compared to the California Sierras, with which I am very familiar, we were in an oven. Judie loved it.

It would be understatement to say that the boys were anxious to go fishing. Even before breakfast they were practice-casting behind the tent. It wasn't long before I took the hint.

"What are you guys waiting for?" I asked. "Go on and catch some fish. I'll call you when the hotcakes are ready."

"What'll we use for bait?" Mike asked.

"Just catch one of those grasshoppers you've been scaring up," I advised. "Hook it behind the head, and you're all set." With a small cloud of dust marking their departure, they ran for the stream.

Mark, who understands trout streams well, was back in less than five minutes with a fine 12-inch brown.

"Hey, Dad, look at this beauty," he said proudly. "I let the hopper drift under a rock, and *wham!*"

After breakfast Judie, who wanted to relax more than anything else, turned a strip of sand by the stream into a miniature beach while the boys and I hiked downstream to fish and explore.

Along the way the Middle Fork ran shallow some of the time, but at each bend was a long, deep pool. Every pool was loaded with fish, but not all of them were trout. Most of those in plain sight were bonytail minnows or suckers. And that's not unusual. Both species are common in streams of the

Southwest and have been since prehistoric times. Incidentally, bonytails, though not normally eaten, are sporty and fun to catch—especially for kids. They'll hit practically anything you would use for trout, including spinners and dry flies.

We found most of the trout stationed in the deeper runs, just below the riffles, where they could stay hidden. Locating them was only a minor problem for Mark since he knew how and where to drift his bait, but it took Mike a while to get the feeling for them. When he finally did master the proper technique he did just fine.

I spent most of my time helping the boys when they needed assistance, a chore that was easily as much fun as catching fish myself. By lunchtime they had creeled almost enough rainbows and browns for dinner.

Since the canyon was quite hot at midday, there was no hurry to resume fishing after lunch. The boys sought relief in a waist-deep pool below camp, where Mike spotted a water snake and initiated a widespread search for reptiles and frogs, which were plentiful.

That evening I took the time to prowl alone for a while. Armed with a few flies and my fly rod, I headed back downstream to collect three more fish for dinner. That's when I lost my fly at Mournful Cliff, as I described at the beginning of this story.

Wearing an old pair of boots, I waded most of the time, casting ahead as I went. I kept a brown and two rainbows, and easily fooled several others, which I immediately turned loose. None of the trout was bigger than 11 inches, but all fought strongly for their size. One feisty rainbow grabbed my fly in a riffle 30 feet away, then zipped downstream past me before I could control the slack line. Rod held high above my head, I backed out of the water and beached the fish just as it flopped off the hook.

I didn't keep track of my strikes or the number of fish landed, but I'm sure I could have taken the New Mexico limit back to camp. Generally, you are allowed a combination bag of eight rainbows and/or cutthroats—or a total of 14 fish, provided six or more are browns. Kids under 14 are allowed half the adult limit. On our trip we kept only what we could use for two meals. Lip-hooked trout, with an exception or two, were released, but we creeled those that were injured.

We went fishing again the next morning. But this time the boys and I hiked upstream to try some nice holes we'd seen on the ride in. Judie, as usual, went to the beach.

If it is possible, there were even more trout upstream than down. And it wasn't long before all of us chalked up small rainbows from the same hole. About then I looked upstream and saw a beautiful spot that I couldn't resist.

"Boys," I said, "stand back. I'll show you how to get a big one."

Keeping low, I crept toward a riffle that led into a deep rockbound pool. When I was a rod's length from the



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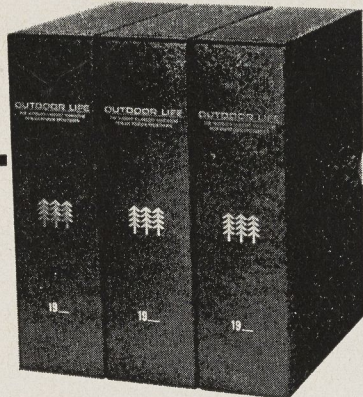
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water I flopped my offering into the current. As the unweighted line followed the whims of the flow I felt a sudden jerk, then a steady pull. I struck the fish, and it bolted through the surface, sending a shower of spray across the otherwise quiet hole. A minute later I held up a vividly colored 13-inch rainbow.

"This is about the biggest fish we've caught," I commented as the boys admired it. "Anyone else want to give that pocket a try?"

"I do!" Mike replied emphatically.

After showing him where to cast so that his grasshopper would be swept beneath a rocky overhang, I stepped back and watched Mike go to work. As his bait traveled slowly through the pool I saw the lightning-quick flash of a turning trout. Then Mike's line zipped upstream, and he got the message.

"Hold your rod up, and sock it to him!" I yelled, losing my normal calm demeanor. "That's the way, Mike. You've got him."

One thing was certain: Mike wasn't going to horse this one in as he had done to several others. The fish churned the water to foam, and all Mike could do was hold on with both hands. Inevitably the well-hooked trout began to tire, and when it reached the shallows Mike grabbed the line and headed for dry ground.

"Dad, look at this one!" he said, beaming. "This is a real whopper."

Mike had reason to be proud of his fine catch. The fish, I guessed, was 16 inches long, and it turned out to be the largest of our stay.

A short distance upstream Mark spied a partly submerged boulder, noted how the ankle-deep current swept around one side, and confidently predicted the doom of another brown—his favorite trout.

After crossing the stream, he carefully waded up behind the rock, climbed onto it, and flipped his hopper in front of it. Presto. His rod bent double, and the surprised trout (it was a brown) did everything but fly in its efforts to dislodge the hook. Its tactics didn't work, and Mark splashed back with another prize.

Judie fished with us during the afternoon, and she landed a rainbow on her first cast. Later, when rapidly approaching clouds thundered into view, she and Mike returned to camp, leaving Mark and me to fish "just one more hole" before heading back ourselves.

Our last couple of days along the Middle Fork were as fine as our first. Everything we did seemed interesting, and the boys added greatly to their knowledge of the outdoors. Clearly we had picked a perfect location for this type of family undertaking. When Quentin came to pack us out on the fourth afternoon, none of us wanted to leave. The Middle Fork was beginning to look like home.

If there was any discomfort during our time along the stream, it was caused by flies. And they were only a

minor nuisance. To sort of even things out, we were not pestered by mosquitoes at all. Weatherwise, we couldn't have asked for more. It was always warm while we were there, but we were told that afternoon thundershowers are daily occurrences during part of July and all of August.

In all, there are approximately 186 miles of fishable trout streams in the Gila Wilderness, including the West and Middle forks of the Gila River and their tributaries. These streams, though not so brawling as those in steeper Western watersheds, are top-notch for fishing and atmosphere.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, there are 22 entrances to the Gila Wilderness. Among these are commercial outfitters that furnish pack stock at Gila Hot Springs, Cliff, Glenwood, Willow Creek, and Canyon Creek. The packers' rates vary but average \$40 to \$50 per person for spot trips. That's when a packer takes you in, leaves you at a predetermined location, and then returns to pack you out. Additional information is available by writing to: Forest Supervisor, Gila National Forest, 310 West College, Silver City, New Mexico 88061.

Incidentally, from the time you enter the forest until the day you leave, you will be virtually on your own. Niceties such as gas stations and grocery stores can be found around the perimeter but not within the forest itself. Take extra water and fuel, and make sure you have a good spare tire.

We spent Thursday night in a forest campground and then headed back toward State 25. Instead of proceeding directly to Silver City, however, we detoured to visit the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. A walk through the still-standing rooms, which date back to the late 1200's, is guaranteed to exercise the imagination vigorously.

A family venture along the same lines as ours can likely be arranged practically anywhere in the West. Just remember that our growing population is causing more and more people to seek a wilderness setting. That demand places a great responsibility on all of us to respect and preserve what we find there for all to enjoy—now and in decades to come.

The Gila Wilderness itself is getting more use, especially by backpackers, but the traffic is much lighter than in areas that are more easily accessible to the population centers of the West Coast. We saw only one other person while we camped, and he was with the Forest Service. In the Gila, adventure still waits around every bend, whether it's an encounter with wildlife, another inviting trout pool, or simply new scenery.

At the outset the boys and I knew we'd like it, but what about Judie, the noncamper? She had one complaint.

"It was the best vacation we ever had," she said as we headed home, "but we should have stayed longer."

I think we have a convert on our hands.

THE END

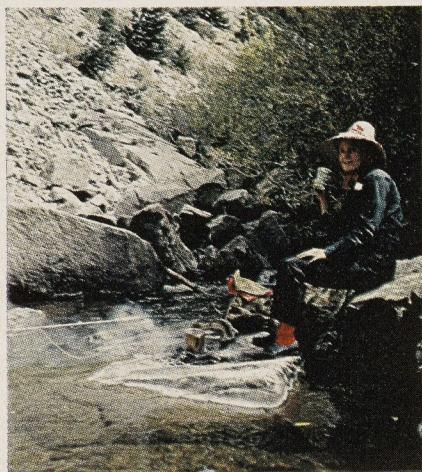
For 22 years, we dreamed of fishing the gorge. We finally risked our necks to make it all come true

By O. A. WASHBURN

WE STOOD on the lip of the granite gorge. We could hear the faintly echoing roar of the cascading stream 2,000 feet below. To our left was a boulder-clogged ravine leading down to the bottom of the gorge.

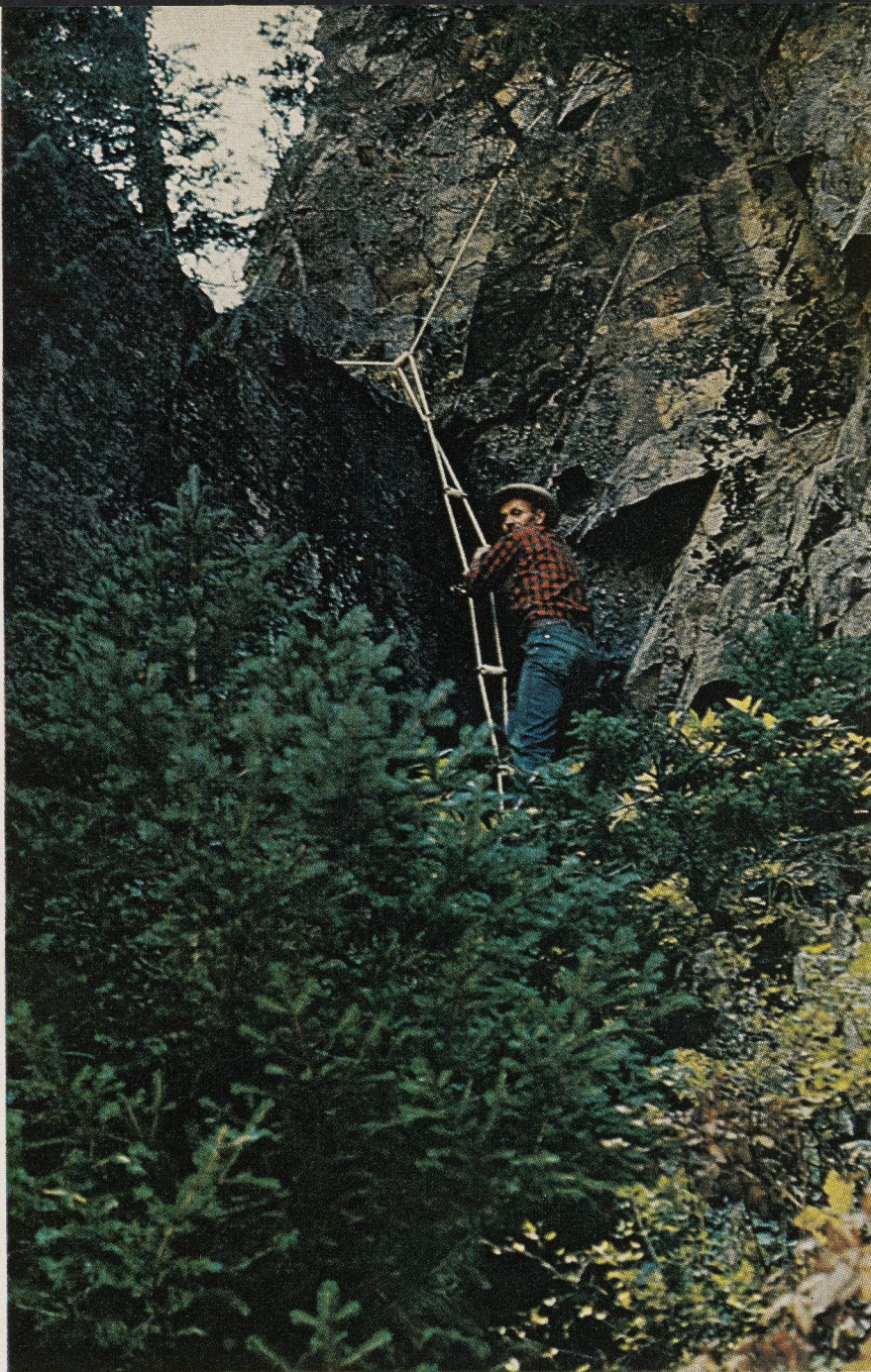
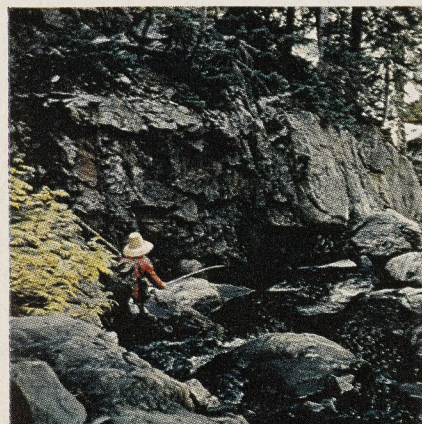
Anyone not familiar with the purpose of our expedition would have considered it downright folly, but this was no spur-of-the-moment fishing trip. My wife and I had been dreaming about and planning it for 22 years. We were well-equipped and eager to take the necessary risks to fish that haunting stream.

I moved down through the slough-



Eleanor sips coffee on a flat rock . . .

. . . and fishes one of countless pools



On precarious rock chute, I descend the rope ladder that my wife Eleanor made

ing granite several yards ahead of Eleanor, carefully feeling out each step and keeping an eye and ear out for a misstep or a loose boulder above me. Except where we had to work together with our rope ladder to get down a precipice, we were careful to keep our distance from one another.

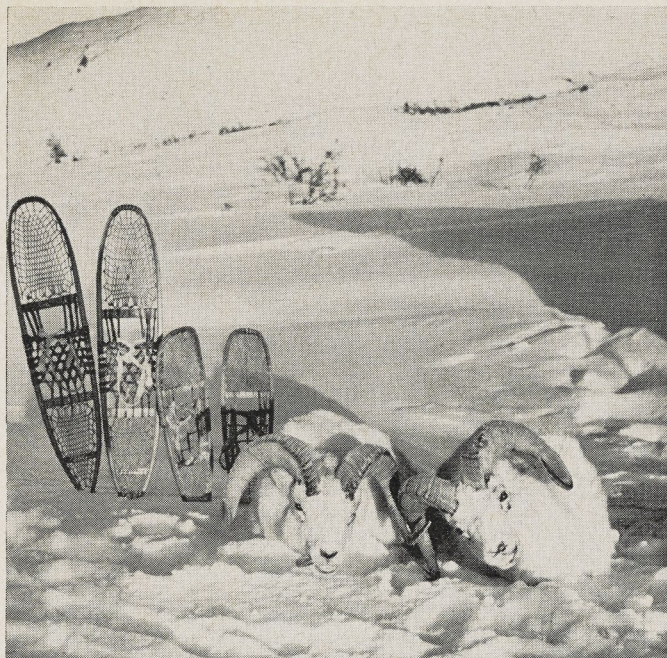
The most treacherous going was among the dense, thorny growths of wild currants, raspberries, and wild roses. There we could not see to select safe footing, and the intertwining branches hobbled every step. When I lost my balance and reached out, my hands closed on thorns. The absence of trails in this tangled mat proved that not even the porcupines

had dared to clamber down the way we were going.

Although sunlight had already tipped the rim above us, we were soon in the deep shadows and chill of a mountain dawn. It would be midafternoon before we would feel the sun again.

An hour and a half of steady descent brought us to the edge of the crashing stream. Our legs were shaky from the sustained exertion, but we scarcely noticed, for this was the moment we had looked forward to so long.

Across the stream, a sheer wall of granite seemed to touch the sky. One hundred yards downstream, the wall crowded in and left only a narrow



Snowshoes flank heavy-horned Dalls at the end of a cold day



I pose with my ram, left, and Louis's in woodshed at ranch

foot. Louis kept pointing down. The closer we came to the creek, the more bear tracks we saw.

I stopped to glass the area and finally located the tree cache, but no meat was hanging there.

By this time Louis was crossing the creek, which appeared to be about 20 feet wide and six or eight inches deep. Halfway across, he stopped. I knew he had seen something. I moved my glasses ahead just in time to pick up a big grizzly as it rose out of some willows. It appeared to be daring Louis to come closer.

I held my breath. It was a cold day, and Louis was caught with his mitts on and his gun in the moose-skin scabbard slung over his shoulders. I watched, on pins and needles, as my husband slowly took off his mitts and scabbard and slid out the rifle. He clasped the mitts and scabbard between his knees. He told me later that he didn't throw his mitts to shore or make any other quick movement for fear of startling the grizzly into a charge before he was ready for it.

Then Louis took careful aim at the base of an ear and fired a 130-grain bullet. The grizzly went down flat and never moved.

We searched for the meat and found that the bear had pulled it all down from the tree and covered it with sticks and snow. He had lain and sat on it, and it was pretty well ruined.

Now that we were without meat, I decided to be less particular about the size of my ram. We went back up the valley, about five miles farther than we had gone before, and found

an old trapper's cabin partly dug into a hillside. It stood at the foot of a mountain where rams came to battle and mate.

Louis went to scout around while I made the cabin livable. He soon returned and suggested that we walk up to a basin in which we had seen sheep sign earlier.

We hadn't gone far when we began to see tracks. After climbing to the top of a ridge, we started to glass around, and Louis spotted a nice ram feeding alone down low in another little basin.

We were in a big jumble of boulders. A sheep trail ran past, about 10 feet in front of the boulders, and followed the ridgeline up into the peaks. The ram was still pawing the snow and feeding.

"You stay here," Louis said, "and I'll go down and scare him up from the other side. I'll betcha a dollar he'll come right up along this old sheep trail, headed for the higher mountain."

Louis circled down to the bottom of the basin and came out below the ram. It stopped feeding, looked at Louis, and then bounded up the basin toward the ridge I was on.

After about 100 yards it stopped and again looked at Louis. My husband waved his hat and yelled, and the ram took off up the trail. Then I lost sight of it.

I waited and waited, growing more tense by the second. Finally I could stand it no longer and decided to peek around the boulder. The rattling of rocks made me jerk back just as a blur of white shot past within 10 feet.

I simply stuck my gun out and fired, and the ram tumbled head over heels in the snow. I had never been so surprised in my life—I didn't even remember aiming!

Louis came sweating up the trail, shook his head, and said, "I heard only one shot. So he got away on you, eh?"

I was so exhilarated over my good luck that I could only point. Finally I blurted out, "Over there behind that boulder."

Louis took one look and said happily, "Darned if you didn't get him!"

We rolled and pulled the ram down the mountain, loaded him onto the snowmobile, and headed for camp.

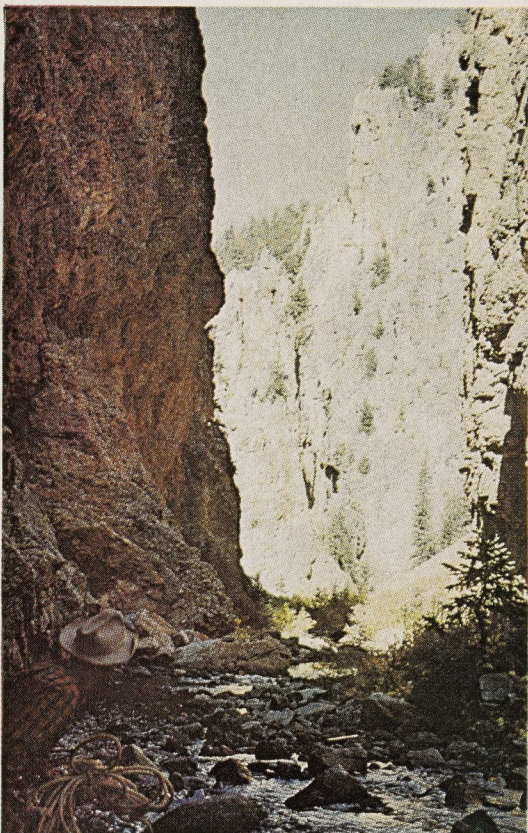
Next morning we spotted seven rams on a mountain across the valley. Banks of drifting fog made it look as if the rams were walking through space. Louis and I watched, fascinated, through our 9 x 35 binoculars.

One of the rams looked darker than his companions. Either he had rolled in some mud or he had some Stone-sheep blood in him. We doubted he was partly Stone, however, since only Dall sheep are found in this area. So we nicknamed him the dirty ram.

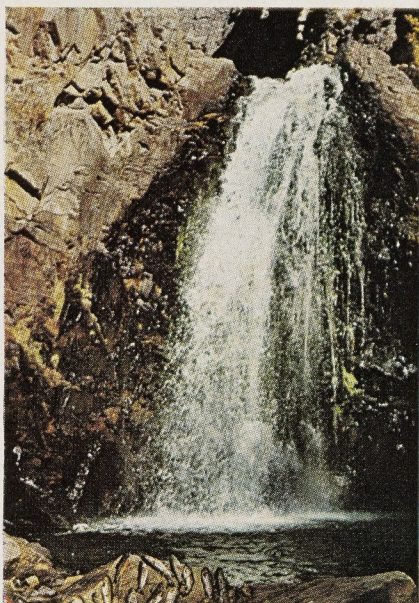
"Nothing like a November sheep hunt," Louis said, grinning. "All the rams come out of hiding, and you can get a good look at them. That dirty fellow has the horns for my fireplace. Let's go."

It took us until noon to reach the place where the rams had been, and they seemed to have vanished. We sat down near a frozen creek and ate frozen (continued on page 129)

We Fish The Box At Last



After reaching bottom of upper gorge, I carry ladder downstream toward falls



Sixty-foot main falls plunge into pool



Our catch of rainbows and cutthroats just before we took last two for 24-fish limit

crevasse for the stream bed. Only a slit of blue sky showed above us. We had to speak loudly to be heard above the echoing roar of the water as it plunged over huge boulders into picture-book pools.

Glancing at Eleanor, I saw that she was already putting her rod together. Her cheeks were rosy from the exercise and the nippy air. Her eyes sparkled as she worked with rod and line, oblivious to all else. I suspected that it was her love for the outdoors—the birds, flowers, and fishing—that had kept her young.

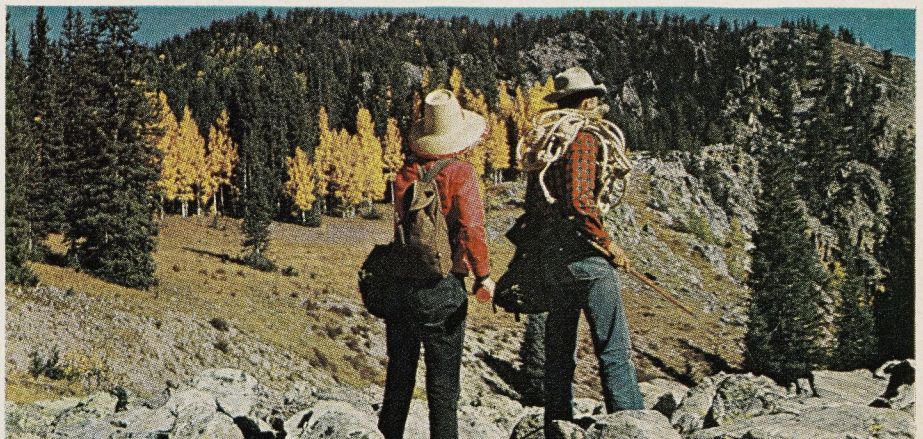
For 22 years we had worked to develop and operate our ranch seven miles south of Chama, New Mexico, somehow never finding the time to fish the box. We had seldom failed

to take our limits farther downstream, and we knew fishing would be even better high in the box where only a few rugged souls dared to venture.

At last, all things seemed to connect to make our dream come true. Our daughter had finished school, had married, and had moved away. We had sold the working part of the ranch and retired to a small, wooded acreage. This was the perfect season and day—clear and blue-skied, golden with September's colors.

Driving from our home, we'd climbed steadily for 15 miles from 8,000 to 9,500 feet to the crest of the San Juan Mountains on the Bill Mundy ranch. It was right there during 1963 (*continued on page 100*)

At outset of our long-delayed trip, we look down into the awesome gorge from the rim



Everyone in our clan of deer hunters, from first-timer to old-timer, was counting on . . .

THE LUCK OF THE WILLEYS

By HAROLD WILLEY JR.

DAWN OF NOVEMBER 12, 1966, opening day of the Vermont deer season, found me hiking up the wooded side of Bigelow Mountain in northern Lamoille County. The usual anticipation and excitement of this red-letter day were fizzing around inside me but, as it turned out, what was in store for my companions and me was beyond my wildest hopes.

Deer hunting, among the Willey clan, is a family affair, and there are enough of us so that we had Bigelow Mountain pretty well surrounded that morning. My brother Don and my brother-in-law Bill Curtis Jr., along with his father, Bill Curtis Sr., were with me near Eden Lake. My father, Harold Willey Sr., and my brothers Dave and Dale were strung out to the south toward Wolcott.

To add a little background to our group, I'm 35 and married, and I have five children. I work on construction wherever there's a bridge or a road to be built, so much of the time I'm only home on weekends to hunt and fish. My father, Harold Sr., 63, was a dairy farmer for many years. He's retired now, but he works part-time at the fire tower on Belvidere Mountain.

My brother Dale, 27, drives a truck for the American Oil Company. He has two youngsters.

Brother Dave drives a truck for Redi-Mix Cement. He's 24 and has one daughter. Don, 22, is unmarried. He works for United Aircraft in Hartford, Connecticut. Roger, my youngest brother, is 14 and a freshman at Newport High School.

Bill Curtis Sr., 63, is a mason, and Bill Curtis Jr., 31, is an electrician. Bill Jr. has a son and lives in Newport, Vermont. Dave lives in Hyde Park, Don lives in Newport, and Dale lives in St. Johnsbury. The rest of us call Lowell, Vermont, home.

On this opening morning of deer season, Don and the Curtises came to my house for breakfast. The rest of them met at my father's place. Soon *(continued on page 132)*

Don froze as he came upon two bucks furiously battling for a doe that was watching demurely from the edge of the clearing



the bonefish is a bit more spectacular.

And yet bonefish don't always try to outrun express trains. Once, for instance, I spotted dim flashes of a school of fish as I was loafing with my pipe on the deck of a cruiser anchored off Andros Island, Bahamas. I couldn't tell what they were, because the water was still cloudy after a three-day blow, but they were silver-scaled fish of some kind. I picked up a spinning rod, flipped a bucktail jig over the side, and let it drop 18 or 20 feet to the bottom. I then retrieved it, using the drop-down pause every yard or two.

The jig was within a few feet of the surface when it was walloped. It was a strong fish and tugged hard as it ran back and forth 35 to 50 feet. The fish bored for bottom with such power that the tip of my rod nearly bent double. I was certain that it was some kind of jack until a swipe of my long-handled net revealed a bonefish of about nine pounds.

Continuing to fish with the drop-down pause, I caught bonefish until it was time for dinner about three hours later.

The drop-down pause isn't always the best method of catching fish, but it very often is.—*George Heinold.*

FISH THE BOX AT LAST

(continued from page 55)

that Joe Garcia killed the best non-typical mule deer ever taken in the United States. Within a distance of six miles, this range is knifed by four granite gorges, each with a stream in the bottom. There's Big Chavez Creek, Little Chavez Creek, Rio Brazos, and (our favorite) Canones Creek, whose upper canyon we call the Canones Box. We'd had a two-mile walk from the pickup to the Canones rim.

When we stepped from the pickup truck at the spot where we intended to leave it on top of the mountain, we had a good omen. A pair of blue grouse flushed at our feet. Grouse season being open, I used my .22 pistol and soon had them in hand.

We got off to a good start, but I still could not be as ecstatic as my wife was when we reached the water. From the few determined fishermen who had traversed the canyon, we had learned about the sheer waterfall somewhere downstream. Estimates of its height ranged from 60 to 80 feet. We were told that there was a way down over the cliff to the left of the falls where only 25 or 30 feet of rope would be needed.

Eleanor had spent so much time worrying and talking about a rope ladder that a friend in Albuquerque had sent her a pamphlet on ship's ladders. After studying the pamphlet, she went to work. A 30-foot rope ladder seemed a safe bet, and Eleanor figured she'd need three times that length of rope to make it plus 15 feet on each runner for ties. The week before, she had come home with 120 feet of half-inch rope

and had spent most of that night making the ladder.

I didn't give her much help, because I wasn't in favor of a rope ladder to begin with. I felt it would be too bulky to carry and that we could slide down a length of knotted rope. Eleanor insisted, however, and I had to admit her ladder was a work of art. She tied it to the balcony outside my studio and climbed up and down for practice. I came around the corner of the house as she was swinging and twisting in space and trembling like a leaf.

"Boy," she said, "it took all my courage to climb off the balcony. This swinging scares me silly! I don't know if I'll be able to step off that cliff or not." Next morning she was so muscle-sore, I thought she'd cancel out, but 22 years of dreaming doesn't go glimmering that easily.

As I jointed my rod, I was worried. Will the ladder be long enough? What if one of us slips? If we fail to get down the cliff beside the waterfall, will we be able to climb back out where we entered the box? I knew my worries would cease only when we put our feet on solid ground or rock below the falls, but I was determined not to dampen Eleanor's spirits with my apprehensions.

A water ouzel surfaced at our feet, bowed several times in its deferential way, and flew upstream with a startled quirk.

"How nice to be so cordially welcomed!" Eleanor said.

"I'd like to make a suggestion," I told her as I tied on a Royal Coachman.

"Fire away," Eleanor replied without raising her head.

"The limit is 12. Don't fill out before we get to the falls or you won't be able to fish below it."

"As though I hadn't thought of that, too!" Eleanor replied.

As we had known it would be, the stream was alive with fish that became flashes of lightning when they caught a glimpse of us. Fishing while moving downstream would make it harder to take them, but that would add to the sport.

Eleanor took a 10-inch rainbow on her second cast. Fishing behind her, I noticed that she was soon releasing most of the fish she caught.

Then Eleanor hooked a huge cut-throat. I heard her shout happily and looked up to see flashes of bright red against the canyon wall. She was poised precariously on a midstream boulder. She teetered, and trying to regain her balance, slapped her rod against the granite wall. The fish flipped off and splashed back into the stream.

With an expression of real woe, Eleanor sat down on the boulder and examined her rod. Then she stood up, shouted, and pointed to the tip. The line hung limply from the second guide. The tip guide was gone.

What a catastrophe! All that preparation, the climb down, and now her rod was out of commission. Then Eleanor's face brightened and she began

rummaging in her knapsack. A few minutes later, she was smiling. She had taped a safety pin to the end of her pole, using an adhesive bandage.

"Your turn to fish the lead," she said, "while I finish my rigging."

All care and concern left me suddenly. I had noticed the fish were not hitting in the riffles, but in the pools and deeper eddies below boulders. In such places I could select just the right spot, place a fly on it, and set the hook without even watching for the telltale flash.

I became so engrossed that I didn't notice when Eleanor came up behind me.

"Now, who won't be able to fish below the falls?" she asked.

Whether we moved slower than we had expected, or the distance was greater, I do not know, but it was after 2 o'clock when we rounded a sharp bend in the canyon and heard the loud roar of water dropping off a ledge. We crossed the stream and stood on the water-slicked boulders where the stream disappeared. Leaning over, we could see the falls. The water dropped 60 feet or more, straight down, and turned to foam as it plunged into a large pool. Cold mist blew into our faces as a brisk breeze coursed upstream. The canyon widened into a small basin below the pool, and then about 200 yards farther down, the stream disappeared where the gorge suddenly narrowed and angled south. I had never seen a more primitive or beautiful spot.

"It's magnificent," Eleanor said. And then, after a long pause: "Think the ladder is long enough?"

"It will be nip and tuck—good thing you left plenty of rope on the ends. We're going to need it to tie to those little spruces."

I tied one side of the rope ladder to the twisted roots of a spruce growing out of the rocks, and I stretched the other side about 10 feet over to another small tree. Then I dropped the ladder over the edge.

Though it didn't reach the bottom, its last rung did touch the tops of some tall monkshood plants on a slope down below. Monkshood never grows taller than a man with his arms raised. I swung onto the top rung, swinging breathlessly though briefly across the face of the dripping cliff. When I swung back, I found I could control the swinging by pressing my toes against the granite. It seemed a long way down, but one steady step after another soon brought me to the bottom rung.

Hanging by my hands, I was able to plant my feet on loose rocks. I called to Eleanor and told her to lower our rods, creels, knapsack, and camera on the nylon cord she carried.

Then she climbed off the ledge onto the ladder as though she had been doing it every day of her life. But when I guided her feet onto the rocks beside me, she was shaking.

"I thought we were separated for good," she gasped. "I had to force my-

ing me a thumb still sore from a deep cut. "I was trying to reel in fast, but my thumb is still so sore that I just couldn't start as soon as you fellows."

The drop-down pause has often taken fish for me when other methods including the use of natural bait and even chumming have failed. Though I still think it works best on weakfish, both the Northern and Southern varieties, the method has also triggered strikes from many other kinds of fish.

How long you should pause and how deep the lure should go depends mostly on how deep the fish are feeding, the nature of the bottom, the water's depth, and how clear the water is. Many fish remain deep when the water is badly roiled, especially after strong winds. After a storm I've seen times when it was necessary to drop a lure all the way to the bottom before bringing it in or lifting it.

Surprising things sometimes happen when you drop a vivid yellow or white lure deep in silted water and then lift it. I've even caught large eels on small artificials with this method. Expect almost anything with the drop-down pause.

One of the finest summer flounders (fluke) I've ever caught struck the second time I lifted an artificial in the estuary of one of my favorite tidal rivers in Rhode Island. The water was so cloudy that at first I thought artificials would be useless. I had been baiting one hook with a gob of bloodworms and the other with a piece of fresh squid. I waited nearly two hours without so much as a nibble.

Tired of sitting, I decided to keep in form with some practice casting. I walked back to my station wagon and selected a light bait-casting outfit I hadn't yet tried out. Catching a fish with that rod was the last thing on my mind, but the second time I tested its leverage by lifting the lure off bottom, I had such a hard strike that I was sure I'd tangled with a bull-size striped bass.

It turned out to be a 16-pound summer flounder. That old lunker gave the outfit all the testing it needed. Not long afterward I hooked another flounder about half the size. Not a thing touched my natural baits.

As experienced surf casters know, stopping a lure briefly during the retrieve often hooks short-striking striped bass. Stripers don't hit with the slashing speed of a wahoo, king mackerel, or bluefish. If blues are in the same hole with stripers, they'll beat them to the punch about seven times out of 10.

A striper's assault on a lure is like the bite of a determined but not-so-nimble bulldog rather than the lightning-swift slash of a wolf. Bass have often lunged at my top-swimming plug only to miss it three or four times, but I have often hooked them with a pause. With a metal squid, a drop-down pause almost invariably hangs short-striking bass.

The drop-down murders stripers and other fish when they're feeding deep, especially in holes, sloughs between

sandbars, and pockets near rocks or ledges in the backwash of the waves. Sinking or diving plugs and rigged eels are very potent under these conditions. The technique entails quite a bit of extra effort, of course, but it's well worth it.

There are two time-proven ways of fishing streamer flies for stripers and other salt-water gamefish: 1) You can use rugged conventional fly-rodging tackle. 2) You can use spinning outfits with the streamers weighted just enough so they'll cast.

Weather and water conditions permitting, I find it more challenging and sporting to use conventional fly tackle. If winds and currents are too strong, I resort to spinning.

Either way, I've had my best results with streamers by retrieving them with two or three short, snappy jerks followed by a pause of a couple seconds and then a slow pull, a yard or so. Stripers will nearly always strike during either the drop-down pause or the slow pull.

This system had also worked for me when fly fishing for weakfish, pollock, Florida redfish (channel bass), snook, mackerel, some of the jacks, and the coho salmon of the Pacific. Once, when fishing for sea trout in a quiet surf at Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, I caught several pompano on streamers with this technique. This both pleased and surprised me because I had never before had any luck fishing for pompano with flies in Florida waters.

Tarpon sometimes spurn lures fished in other ways but go for the drop-down pause as though starving. I found that out one June morning while fishing Florida's scenic St. Lucie River from an outboard-powered skiff. I lucked into a huge school of tarpon in the 30 to 40-pound class. The fish were all on top and leaping in and out of the water almost as porpoises do. Reasoning that they'd take top-water plugs, I showed them four different models and colors, fished at every pace. I might as well have sat on my hands, for the fish showed no interest in any of the lures.

I still don't know how I happened to think of it, but I snapped on a deep-diving plug, cast it in front of the school, and let it sink, pausing after it had submerged about five feet. It was like showing a beefsteak to a starving tiger.

An acrobatic 35-pounder latched onto the plug during the pause and treated me to half a dozen gill-rattling leaps before he threw the lure. Every cast with the diver after that resulted in a strike. Before the school submerged and disappeared I tangled with seven and brought three of them alongside.

Most of us regard the bonefish as one of the swiftest sprinters, and rightly so. When you hook a bonefish on shallow flats such as those in the Florida Keys, it instantly streaks 500 or more feet in an effort to reach deeper water. A number of other fish hooked under similar circumstances do the same, but



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BERLIN WISCONSIN

self to swing over the cliff and take that first step."

"Take it easy," I cautioned. "We'll have to ease down through these loose rocks and trees to the bottom."

"Let's make some coffee and eat our lunch when we get down. I'm so weak my legs are rubbery," Eleanor said.

I broke off some dry, dead twigs and kindled a fire on a large flat rock in midstream below the falls. Two large boulders made good seats. Eleanor had packed our lunch in a small aluminum coffeepot. In no time at all we were drinking coffee and eating our sandwiches while we marveled at the beauty of the falls. The sun had reached a break in the canyon rim, and the sunlight suddenly flooded the basin. Rainbows sprang to life in the mist.

"Get your camera," I said, for the hundredth time. Through my mind flashed Gray's lines, "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen and waste its fragrance on the desert air."

We counted our fish—two to go. We'd take them out of the big pool, pack up, and head for home. It was already midafternoon, and we had at least four miles of the tortuous canyon bottom to cover. If we didn't get out before dark, we'd have to spend the night.

A large rainbow snapped up my fly on the first cast. He was a beauty. I was even happier when Eleanor pulled out a cutthroat—a twin to the one she'd lost.

"Too bad we didn't bring bedrolls," Eleanor said as I packed the last fish into the creel. "It's a shame we can't spend more time just looking at the waterfall, and I'm so stiff I can hardly move."

"The first slip off a wet rock into that icy water will limber you up," I replied, joshing her.

About a quarter of a mile below the big pool, we came upon twin falls that were about half as high as the main waterfall. There was a natural staircase in the rock wall at one side. I doubted there was enough light for a picture, but Eleanor snapped one.

Then we came to beaver ponds where the willows were so thick we had to crawl on our hands and knees to get through. Eleanor stared into water that teemed with fish larger than any we'd caught, and she groaned.

We were then forced to jump from rock to rock in the stream bed because the canyon narrowed and rockslides on both sides had poured down to the stream.

In the thickening dusk we finally saw the widening light at the canyon's mouth. Through the foliage there, we saw the last tints of rose where the sun had set.

"If I had it to do over again, I'd save part of my limit for those beaver ponds," Eleanor said. "And you know what? It's a shame to leave that good ladder up there to rot."

"What can we do about it?" I asked.

"We could use it again."

"I was just wondering about that. There may be a lot of Indian summer left."

THE END

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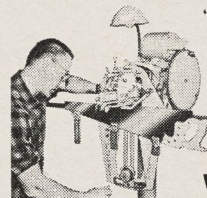
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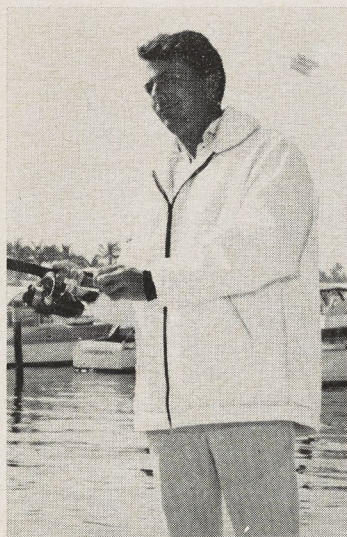
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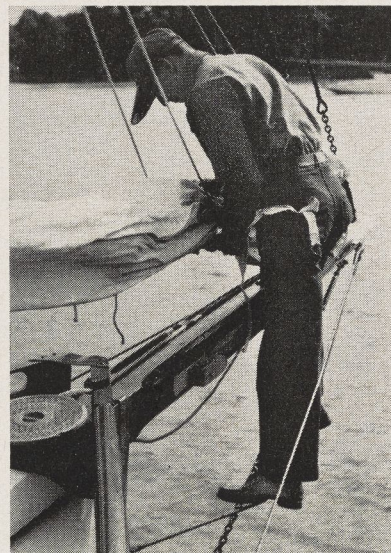
Duck hunters find their clothing's also good for fall boating



Flotation jacket weighing 30 oz. is said to float a 300-lb. man



Good foul-weather gear is a must for fishermen, and on a breezy day it will help break the wind



Here I combine outdoor clothing with boating gear for safety and comfort: swordfisherman's cap with long brim, summer woolen shirt, moccasins with nonslip soles, blue denim pants

Clothing for Boatmen

OUTDOORSMEN ARE generally canny shoppers when it comes to buying clothing and footgear for boating. So if you're shopping for Christmas presents for someone whose boating is done while hunting, fishing, or camping, remember that the serious outdoorsman's requirements differ from those of the average pleasure-boat owner.

You'll find a great array of boating wear on the market. The bulk of it, however, is made to appeal to people who use their boats strictly for pleasure, mostly on short runs when the weather is fine. The use that hunters, fishermen, and campers make of boats is more demanding. In fact, our requirements closely approach those of the commercial waterman.

Compared with the ordinary outboarder, we use our boats more. Rain isn't so apt to keep us in, especially if there's a chance that the fish will bite.

And we use our boats earlier in the spring and later in the fall. Also, we tend to be more conscious of safety factors, for we move around in our boats, frequently standing to cast or shoot.

There's yet another difference: even in our summer use, we're more likely



These anglers may not be Beau Brummels, but they know tricks to keep warm, dry

to encounter the conditions for sunburn, insects, and sun glare.

Fortunately we have an advantage over many a boat owner in our knowledge of how to keep dry and comfortably warm under adverse conditions. We acquired this knowledge in our outdoor activities ashore.

Most outdoor clothing can save us money because it can serve a double purpose—it's satisfactory for the type

of boating we do as well as suitable for our outdoor sports on shore.

Even so, it's easy to be confused by the variety of sportsmen's wearing apparel now available. And more especially it's easy to be confused by the wide choice and price ranges in clothing, raingear, and footwear offered primarily for boating use.

One comforting aspect, however, is that offerings of this general nature

Angel in the Canyon

ANDY HOWARD

HIDDEN WITHIN THE GRAND CANYON lies one of the best trout streams in the southwest. The fishing is challenging and access is difficult, but good fishing should not be confused with easy fishing. For those who attempt it, the rewards are trophy rainbows within a geologic marvel.

I was ignorant of the fishing possibilities of the Grand Canyon until a winter backpacking trip in 1973 when I met a spin fisherman on the trail with a fat 22-inch rainbow on a stringer. Since then my winters have not been the same.

The best spot is Bright Angel Creek, a clear and cold stream which feeds into the mighty Colorado River at the Canyon's bottom. The creek is narrow and shallow and doesn't seem capable of holding even a decent population of catchable trout, much less what Charles Brooks would call "good fish."

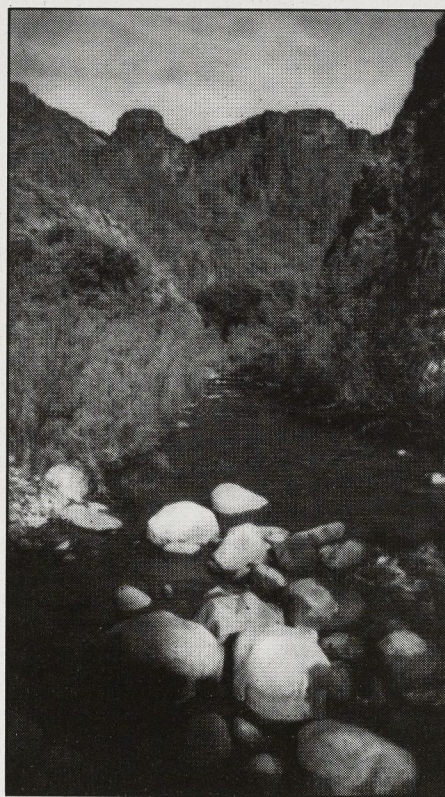
The secret of Bright Angel Creek is its relationship to the Colorado. The river's flow through the park is regulated by the gates of the Glen Canyon Dam. Water comes from the bottom of Lake Powell, which provides a constantly cold flow in the river even in the height of summer when the temperature at the very bottom of the canyon may climb to 120-degrees. From Lake Powell also comes a steady supply of rainbow trout searching for suitable streams in which to spawn. Because there are relatively few feeder streams into the Colorado inside the park, Bright Angel Creek gets an almost unbelievable number of large spawners.

Luckily for fly fishermen, Bright Angel Creek is the most central and easily-reached of all inner canyon destinations. You don't even have to walk to get there—mule trains leave daily from Grand Canyon Village. And a small ranch on the creek provides rooms and excellent meals.

The trout start coming into the creek in large numbers in the fall and continue until early April. The weather during this period is usually quite comfortable. But there are fish in the creek year-around.

The very best time to go is in the spring after a significant rain or snow. When the stream is high and clear the fish are almost always there. Several times I've awakened in my camp alongside the creek and, from the warmth of my down bag, watched three or four fish, all over 20 inches, feeding in the current. Nothing can make a sleepy fly fisherman move faster on a chilly morning.

ANDY HOWARD is a freelance author who lives in Whittier, Calif.



RAY MORRIS PHOTO

There are about seven miles of good fishing in the Bright Angel below Cottonwood Camp. Above Cottonwood there is a healthy population of fish, even a few browns, but I never have caught one there larger than 10 inches. The trophy fish seem to hold in the first few miles of the creek, especially where smaller streams, such as Phantom, Ribbon, or Wall creeks, run into the Bright Angel.

A few miles sounds like a lot of territory to fish, but the creek is small, averaging less than 35 feet wide its entire distance. Besides, you don't have to walk far to fish. Once I spent four days fishing a half-mile stretch within sight of Phantom Ranch and caught fish ranging from 14 to 23 inches.

A short rod for 5- or 6-weight line is best for canyon fishing. A backpacking rod isn't necessary because there are no trees with overhanging branches to snag your rod while

hiking. But there are some spots on the creek with bothersome alder trees which cause casting headaches. A short rod is easier to cast beneath the trees. A floating line will cover almost all of your fishing situations, but pack a sink-tip line too, just to be sure.

I've had luck with a wide variety of flies, but my favorites are simple standards, the Hare's Ear and the Badger Peacock in sizes #10 to #14. You should carry both weighted and unweighted flies.

An effective technique is to fish a wet fly or a streamer with a lot of action. The spawning rainbows get very aggressive and often viciously attack baitfish imitations. This is a very successful strategy especially if you can work your fly beneath the undercut rock banks. Muddlers and marabou streamers are great.

There aren't many hatches during the spawning season, but it's always wise to carry a few "suggestive" patterns such as the Adams, Humpy, or Renegade. And don't forget a few tiny flies. On my last trip, I watched trout eagerly feed on #22 gray midgets.

Waders are heavy to backpack but can be very useful at times to help get a good casting angle. Ultralight waders are the only ones to consider unless you ride the mules. In summer tennis shoes will work.

There are two main trails leading to Bright Angel Creek from the South Rim of Grand Canyon Park. The South Kaibab Trail is seven miles long and the Bright Angel Trail is nine miles. The Kaibab is a tortuous route which is recommended only for descending, except for those in great shape or the excessively masochistic. The longer Bright Angel Trail is much easier for hiking out of the canyon. Besides, if you take the Bright Angel out, it's possible to break the trip into two stretches by staying overnight at the Indian Garden campground about halfway up. During the summer months the North Kaibab Trail, 14 miles long, connects the North Rim of the park with Phantom Ranch. Mule trips are possible on all three routes.

The two campgrounds on the creek are Bright Angel Camp, about a mile from Phantom Ranch, and the smaller Cottonwood Camp upstream. Reservations are mandatory, especially for the peak periods. You can only stay two nights at any one campground, but you may extend your visit by renting a cabin or a dormitory style room at Phantom Ranch. Reservations for the ranch or for mules can be made by contacting the main office of the Fred Harvey Co. at Grand Canyon Village.



The Endless Hatch

East and west, the unique Isonychia mayfly nymph is a trout staple

JIM MERRITT

FALL COMES EARLY to the Adirondack Mountains of upper New York State. By late August the maples along the Ausable river are beginning to show their autumn colors, the air has a bracing sharpness, and the big mayflies that flutter off the water each morning like clockwork seem distinctly out-of-season.

I was fishing the West Branch of the Ausable above Wilmington Notch when the hatch started, as it usually does, at about 11 a.m. I watched as cedar waxwings cut graceful trajectories over the river, intercepting the large dark duns in their clumsy flight. I had been fishing a stonefly pattern and thought now of switching to a slate-colored dry-fly to match the duns. But this early in the hatch I could see no evidence of rising trout, so instead chose a weighted nymph dressed with peacock herl.

The fly was a modified Zug Bug designed to imitate the *Isonychia* mayfly nymphs that are a staple in the late-summer diet of Ausable browns and rainbows. *Isonychias* are unique among mayflies in the way they hatch. Instead of metamorphosing in the surface film, the nymphs crawl onto the rocks of their swift pocket-water habitat and emerge, like stoneflies, an inch or so above the waterline. During the height of the *Isonychia* season on the Ausable I have found up to 30 of the claret-color nymphal shucks clinging to a single rock. At such times it would appear that the river supported no other mayfly.

Their peculiar emergence protects the duns from hungry trout most of the time. An exception is a windy day, when the duns may be blown onto the water in sufficient numbers to trigger surface feeding, and in the later stages of a hatch a dry fly may yield good results. The dry fly is also effective whenever a sudden rise in stream level forces *Isonychias* to hatch in the current. But in general they are more vulnerable as nymphs, particularly when migrating to the quieter side channels preferred for emergence, and in my own experience a nymphal imitation will invariably outfish a dry.

So ignoring the occasional dun batting past me on the breeze, I worked my nymph deep in the pockets and swift runs of the boulder-strewn Ausable. Using the standard technique for pocket-water nymphing, I fished upstream with a short line, probing close to the rocks or quartering a cast up-current for a short drift. It wasn't too long before I was rewarded by a yellow flash near my nymph and the strong tug of a 13-inch native brown, which after a brief fight surrendered to the net and was quickly released. Over the next hour I raised five more fish,

landing and releasing three, a more-than-respectable showing on these hard-fished public waters. Fishing the same pattern during the *Isonychia* hatch on generously stocked private waters, I have caught 20 or more trout in a single outing.

One benefit to fishing an *Isonychia* is that a completely drag-free float isn't critical. Several times, I have noticed, the fish hit the fly after it passes downstream of me and had started to drag in the current. At this point, raising the rod in the well-known Lisenring lift increases drag and seems to make the fly even more enticing. *Isonychias* are strong, active swimmers, and presumably trout are accustomed to preying on them as they dart about among the rocks. They are among the quickest and most agile of mayfly nymphs, and trying to keep one in your hand for observation is like holding on to a Mexican jumping bean.

The Endless Hatch

MORE THAN 25 SPECIES of *Isonychia* inhabit North American streams, although only a few are of major importance to anglers. Common names for the fly include the Gray Dun and the Mahogany or Slate-Wing Drake. In the East and Midwest, three species—*bicolor*, *sadleri* and *harperi*—emerge sequentially from the end of May, continuing well into September. It is a kind of endless hatch lasting long past the season's peak for large mayflies. The hours of emergence vary according to species and weather conditions—hatching may be sporadic throughout the day or concentrated, as usually is the case with *bicolor* and *sadleri*, toward evening. My late-summer Adirondack *Isonychias* (probably *harperi*) come off unfailingly between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Isonychias prefer a fast-water environment and generally inhabit the same well-oxygenated sections of freestone streams as stoneflies. The tumbling canyon sections of the Ausable are classic waters for *Isonychia*, which I have also encountered on the South Branch of the Raritan and the Musconetcong in New Jersey, and the riffle sections of Penn's Creek in Pennsylvania. Preston Jennings and Art Flick include *bicolor* among the major Catskill hatches in their respective books, *A Book of Trout Flies* and *Streamside Guide*. Al Caucci and Bob Nastasi in their valuable work, *Hatches*, discuss the importance of *sadleri* on Midwestern streams like Michigan's Au Sable, where the absence of boulders causes it to perform like a "normal" mayfly by hatching afloat in the current.

Ernest Schwiebert, in *Nymphs*, lists *Isonychia velma* as a major western June hatch on the freestone waters of the Yellowstone area and throughout the Pacific Northwest. The robust *velma* is the largest of the genus,

JIM MERRITT is a freelance writer living in Pennington, New Jersey.

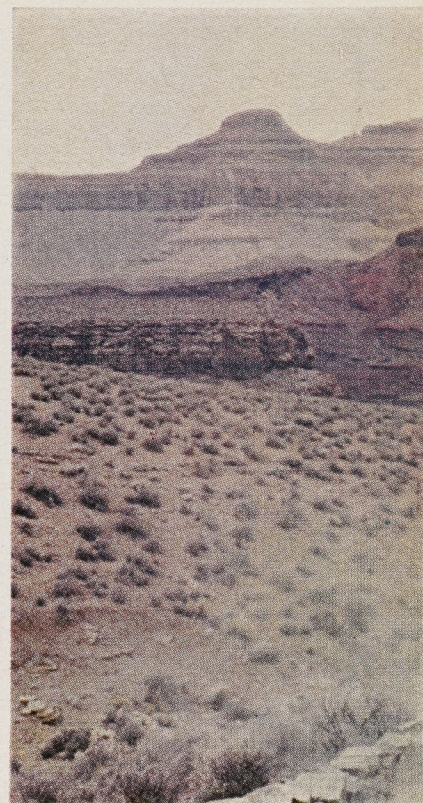
Bright Angel Brownies

By COLIN FLETCHER

You pay a certain toll in sweat and blisters to get there,

but it's worth the price to take a trout from the gin-

clear stream that runs 5,000 feet below Grand Canyon's rim



Dwarfed by an imposing wall of rock, this angler casts upstream in Bright Angel Creek



Phantom Ranch is a true oasis, with swimming pool, air conditioning, trees, and good food



The picture of this little whitetail buck was taken during the open hunting season, so he had reason to be jumpy. Deer are large and feel secure at night, and thus are easy to "shoot"

an Alaska brown bear on Admiralty Island, and failed. Ten years ago I came close and failed again on a black, wet night on Kodiak Island. Both times I was within twenty feet of huge bears, and I make no excuses. One of these magnificent creatures at that range in the dark is truly awesome. Even though I missed the photos, these were without doubt the two most thrilling moments of my life.

Finally, after twenty-five years, I decided to try a shot in the dark. I put out an old Speed Graphic that had served its time and had for years been gathering dust on the shelf, sheltering it in an upside-down shotgun shell box with one end knocked out and using a piece of black fishing line strung across a woods path as a tripper. The idea was too simple to work, I was sure, but I was curious. The camera was useless anyway so there was nothing to lose. As it turned out, there was plenty to gain, and since then I've had a ball!

Never did I get such satisfaction from any camera, new or old. I can't wait to get out in the morning to see if I have "caught" anything; then I can't wait for film to be processed to discover what I got. It's an unsolved mystery every time the camera is tripped. Unless I have made a set for a specific animal, such as a deer, I don't know what I have a picture of, and even then I may be wrong. There seem to be no end of surprises—it's literally shooting in the dark.

Deer are easy, of course. They are large, they feel secure during the night, and they follow distinct patterns of behavior with the seasons; so a crude set can trip them up night after night. The results are amazing.

It's even more interesting to work on smaller animals, simply because they are more difficult. Being the constant prey of other animals as well as man, they keep their wits sharp. Also, a trip line is relatively more evident to a small animal than a large one. A line passed unnoticed by deer probably looks (Continued on page 96)



Mule riders head down into the canyon on the Kaibab Trail, which goes from the south rim to Phantom Ranch. The 7-mile journey takes five hours and descends more than 4,000 feet

WHEN you stand on the rim of the Grand Canyon and look down into that awesome world of rock and heat and silence, the last thing you're likely to think about is fishing. But 5,000 feet below, there is nine miles of the hottest trout fishing you could expect to find.

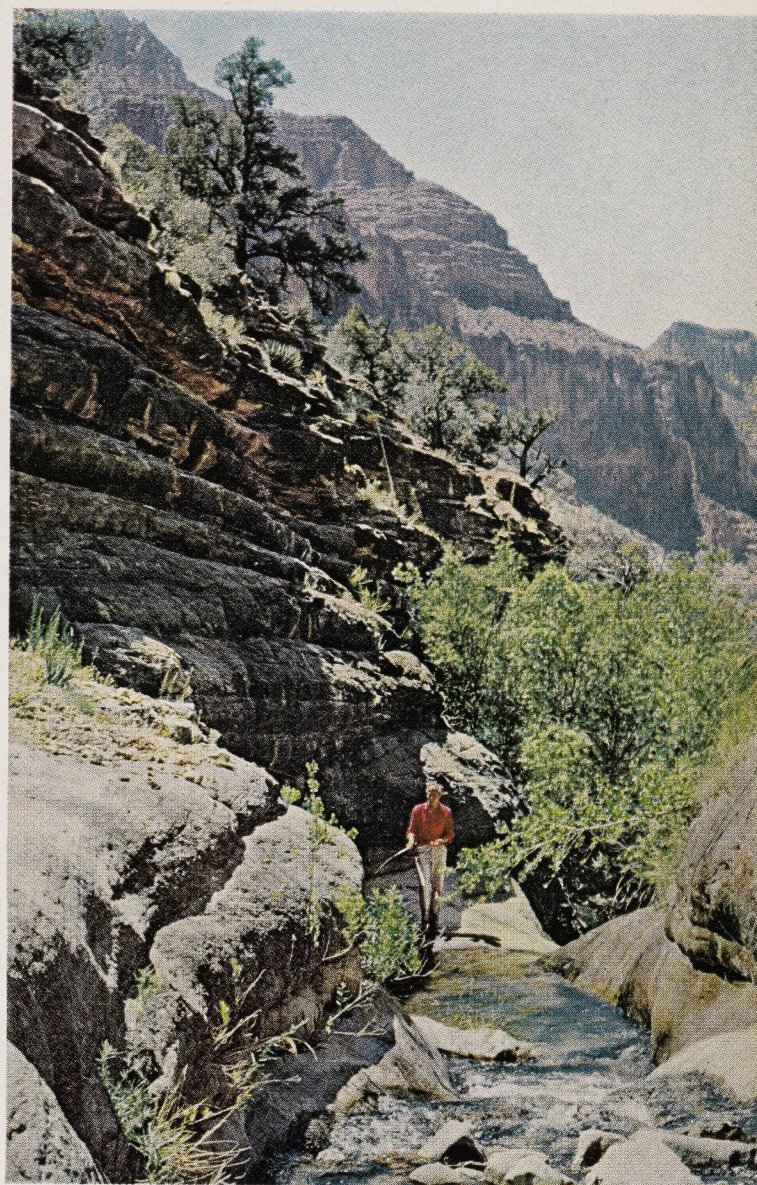
And I mean hot. On most July days the mercury tops 100—the record high is 117. Even in January, when it can get very cold in the canyon, the temperature will sometimes run close to 70. The fishing is also hot—eager brown and rainbow trout average about $\frac{3}{4}$ pound, and not long ago a fly fisherman took a $3\frac{1}{2}$ -pounder.

Success rules for Bright Angel Creek are simple: Wade where you can; cast upstream; fish the pools and deep white water; use flies or live hellgrammites; and wear a hat. There is no closed season here. Remember to buy your fishing license before you go into the canyon.

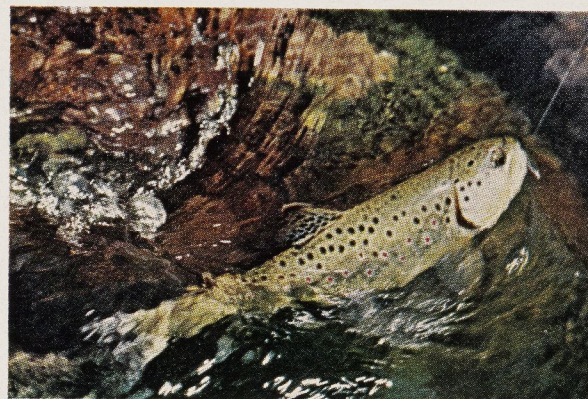
Of course, what really gives the fishing its flavor is the backdrop. Everywhere there is rock—black walls of ancient schist and granite, layered gray defiles, sheer 600-foot cliffs of red limestone. Along the creek there often is lush green vegetation, but elsewhere the sun beats down on true, magnificent desert.

Phantom Ranch is the local Shangri-La. This oasis stands on Bright Angel Creek a half mile above its junction with the Colorado River, where John Wesley Powell camped on his pioneer passage of Grand Canyon in 1869. He named the clear tributary Bright Angel in contrast to Dirty Devil Creek.

No roads lead to Bright Angel. You can hike down from either rim in three to seven hours, depending on your talent and your load. Double that for coming back up. You also can make the trip by muleback.



The cool, sparkling water of Bright Angel flows through juniper-dotted desert in its 9-mile course. Towering in the background is a part of the famous Redwall cliff



This $\frac{3}{4}$ -pound brownie is typical of fish found in the upper reaches of the creek. Rainbows are common lower down. Trout often weigh $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; some are 3 and over