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September/October 2011

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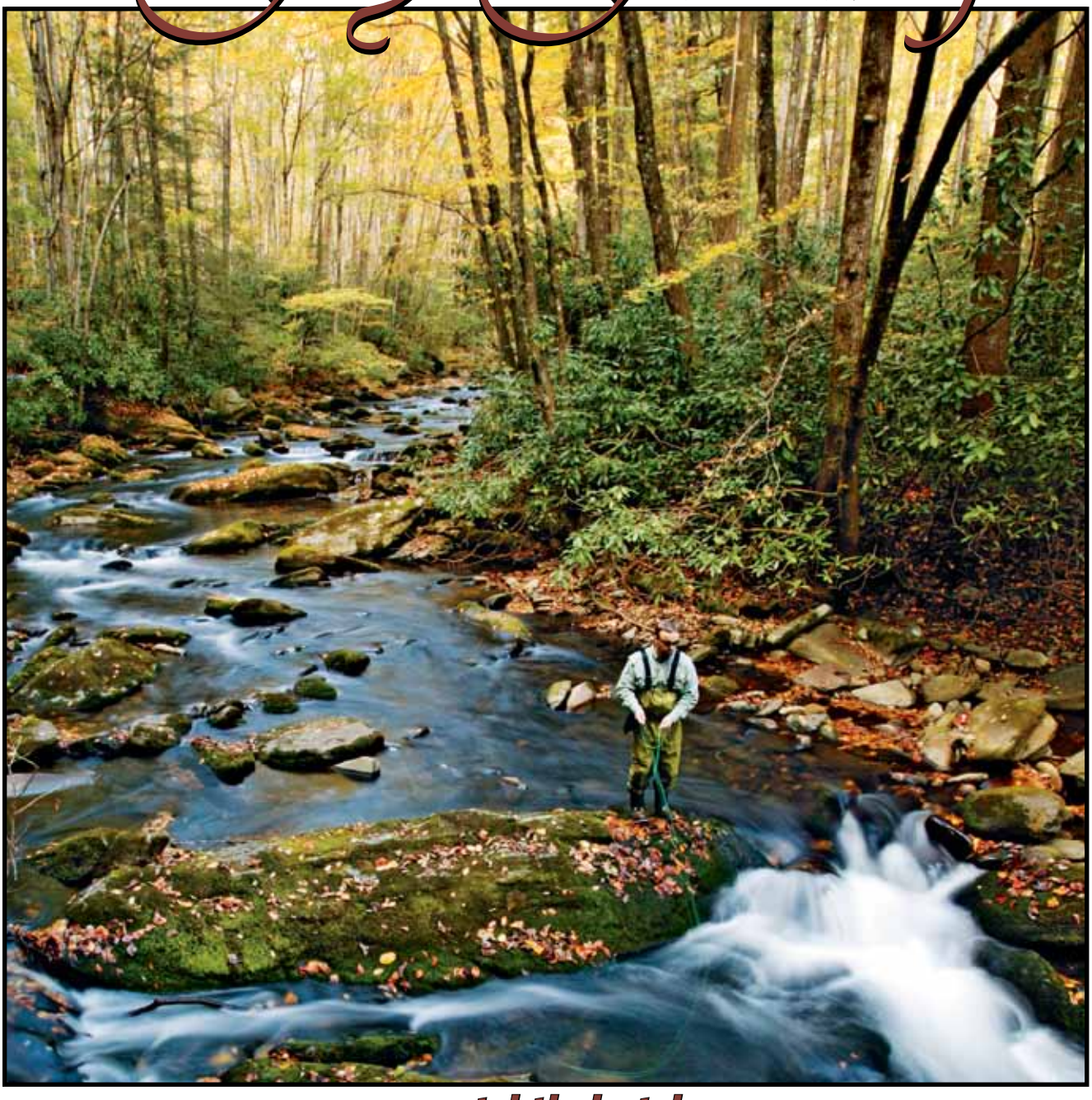

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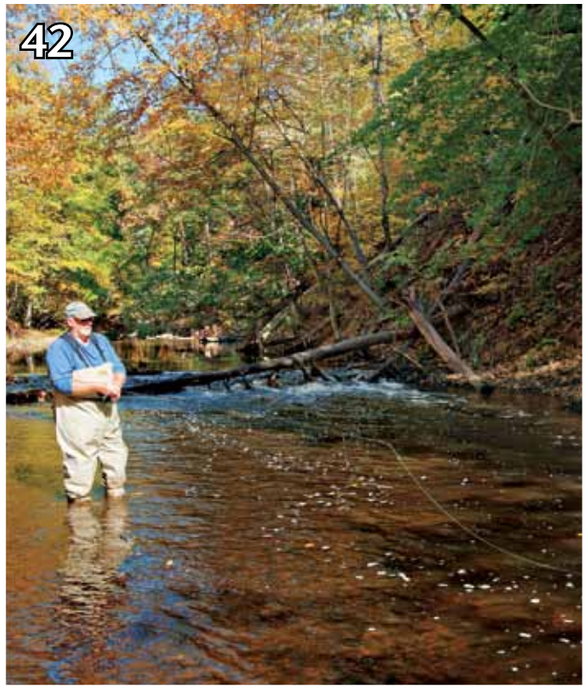

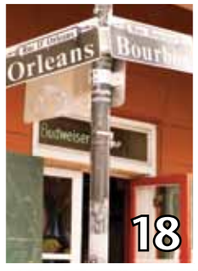

EASTERN Fly Fishing

Volume 7, Number 5 • September/October 2011

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Cover: *An angler plies the waters of Straight Fork in Great Smoky Mountain National Park.*

Photo by: Harrison Shull
Aurora Photos

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From the Editor

Transitions

I remember well the day in late 2004 when Steve Probasco—the original and longtime editor in chief of *Northwest Fly Fishing* and *Southwest Fly Fishing*—called me and said, "Shewey, we have a plan, and it involves you."

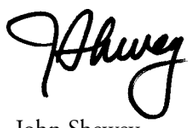
At the time, I was a full-time freelance writer and photographer and had been for many years; I was a regular contributor to Steve's magazines. But he and the other two *Fly Fishing* founders had hatched a grandiose scheme: why not deliver the same kind of beautiful, richly detailed, destination-specific publication for the eastern half of the country they had been producing for years for the western half? However, full editorial responsibility for three magazines was too much to ask of one man, so Steve brought me into the fold as managing editor. Under his learned tutelage, my transition from freelancer to editor could not have been smoother or more routinely entertaining.

I've learned a lot about the publishing game from Steve, and now I'm putting all those lessons to use as the new editor in chief of *Eastern Fly Fishing* and also *Southwest Fly Fishing*. Not to worry: Steve is still here, steering our flagship magazine, *Northwest Fly Fishing*. This new division of labor is aimed at making both of us a bit less harried and a bit more focused on the task of giving you the best fly-fishing magazines on the planet.

Even before we launched *Eastern Fly Fishing* in 2005, we planned to seek out and use the best expert anglers, authors, and photographers in the eastern half of the country to report on the waters they know best; after all, you, our readers, expect the inside dope on the fisheries we cover, whether you are heading for adventure in eastern Canada or the Caribbean, or getting your fish fix on waters closer to home in the Northeast, Midwest, or South. And that continues to be our mission.

In fact, for me, it's more than a mission: it's a personal mandate to seek out great contributors, both well-known veteran writers and photographers, and amazingly talented newcomers, who know their local waters—*your* local waters—like nobody else and who can report on those waters in captivating detail through their words and photos.

But back to that new division of labor: this transition, if both Steve and I play our cards right, means more time on the water for both of us—an important consideration with summer waning and autumn on the way.



John Shewey
Editor in Chief

Fall colors regale the banks of the Connecticut River in New Hampshire. Photo by John Shewey

EASTERN *fly fishing*

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Cast a Caption

September/October 2011 Contest

Each issue we present a Gene Trump cartoon in need of a caption. In return, we ask that you, the readers, submit captions online from which we choose finalists. Caption submissions for this issue's contest must be received online by September 15, 2011. Below are the finalists from the July/August 2011 contest; please go online to vote for your favorite. The winner will be announced in the next issue and will receive a T-shirt displaying the cartoon and the winning caption. The May/June 2011 winner appears below. Please be sure to cast us your captions and vote for your favorite online at www.matchthehatch.com/cartoons.

July/August 2011 Finalists:

1. **"I wanted it on the rocks."**
   Aline McKenna, Lexington, Virginia

2. **"Sure I'm attracted to you, but only if there are no strings attached."**
   Bill Burtch, Powell, Ohio

3. **"There are worse things to be hooked on ..."**
   Don Shaw, Sharon, Vermont

CAST a CAPTION WINNER!

May/June 2011

"With these new, high-end rods, you really have to watch your line speed."
Jim Williams, Colorado Springs, Colorado

To cast your caption, go to
www.matchthehatch.com/cartoons

PHOTO BY BILL R. CHILES

East Fork of the French Broad River, NC

By Bill R. Chiles

When fly fishers think of southern Appalachian trout streams, they generally conjure up visions of tiny, high-gradient trickles tumbling through tight tunnels of mountain laurel and rhododendron. Indeed, the typical southern Appalachian trout stream frequently lives up to this stereotype, creating challenging wading and casting conditions for even the most experienced fly fisher. The East Fork of the French Broad River, commonly called simply the East Fork, provides a pleasing exception to this rule.

After draining the mountainous terrain west of South Carolina's Caesars Head State Park near the South Carolina–North Carolina border, the East Fork flows gently through a bucolic valley, surrounded by fields, farms, and quaint homes. Visitors in spring are surrounded by brilliant displays of wildflowers and vivid green fields. Autumn is a golden wonderland of transforming leaves and spent cornstalks. It is a storybook setting in which to pursue trout.

The East Fork is managed by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) as a delayed-harvest stream. The stream is stocked from October through the May. From October 1 through the first Saturday in June, all trout must be released unharmed. Fishing is allowed only with a single hook, artificial lures, or flies. After the first Saturday in June the East Fork reverts back to standard hatchery regulations. Of note, on the first Saturday in June only anglers age 16 years and younger are allowed to fish.

PHOTO BY BILL R. CHILES

An abundance of uneducated hatchery trout means that the action can be fast and furious. The cooperative trout make the East Fork a great place for beginners; the gentle gradient and easy roadside access also make it a perfect destination for kids and those who are physically challenged. The East Fork supports a population of wild rainbows and browns too. The favorable conditions for wild fish mean that some of the hatchery fish survive and achieve significant size. Many anglers visiting the East Fork enjoy big numbers of hatchery trout highlighted by a few quality wild trout or holdovers. Whether you prefer floating dry flies, dredging the bottom with nymphs, or stripping big streamers, chances are high that your favored technique will produce on any given day.

Unless fish are rising, subsurface flies probably produce trout most consistently. The East Fork enjoys a reputation as a streamer fishery. Stripping a streamer through a pod of fish will frequently trigger a strike even when other techniques are not producing. Swinging streamers downstream through riffles can also be very productive. Woolly Buggers are probably the single most popular flies on the East Fork. Locals tie them in all conceivable colors, but basic patterns are fine. Other proven streamer patterns include Bunny Leeches and Barr's Meat Whistle.

Nymphs, whether fished as a dropper under a dry or with a strike indicator, are also consistent producers. Try pairing two nymphs in tandem, such as a big ugly stonefly pattern with a more delicate mayfly nymph. Proven patterns include bead-head Hare's Ear, bead-head Pheasant Tail, Copper John, Kaufmann's Stonefly Nymph, Rainbow Warrior, egg patterns, San Juan Worm, and caddisfly pupa imitations.

Hatch activity can offer fast surface action. Precise imitations are rarely needed. A selection of parachute-style dries in a variety of sizes and colors will usually suffice. Include some Elk Hair Caddises and Stimulators to imitate caddisflies and stoneflies. If you live for the sight of trout rising to dries, consider working holding water with attractors, even in the absence of rising fish.

To reach the East Fork, take East Fork Road east off U.S. Highway 178 near the town of Rosman, North Carolina. Delayed-harvest water is marked with placards. Beware of private property, which is abundant and also well marked. This fishery exists only because of cooperation between the NCWRC and private landowners.

Spruce Creek, PA

By Eric Stroup

In the early 1950s, Milton Eisenhower, president of Penn State University, had access to one of the great minds of fly fishing, George Harvey. In Harvey's words, Eisenhower would incessantly pester him to go fishing, and while Harvey was working for Penn State as an instructor, he was often ordered to take Eisenhower fishing. Though it made Harvey mad, he said, "I had to do it."

Eisenhower's favorite place to fish was at Bob Harpster's farm on Spruce Creek, because there were lots of fish with very little angling pressure. Eisenhower would skim a few fish from the university's allotment of fish that it stocked in another local stream, and put them at Harpster's to bolster the population. When Eisenhower asked Harvey to tie some flies for his brother, a lasting relationship was formed between the president of the United States and a little-known stream named Spruce Creek.

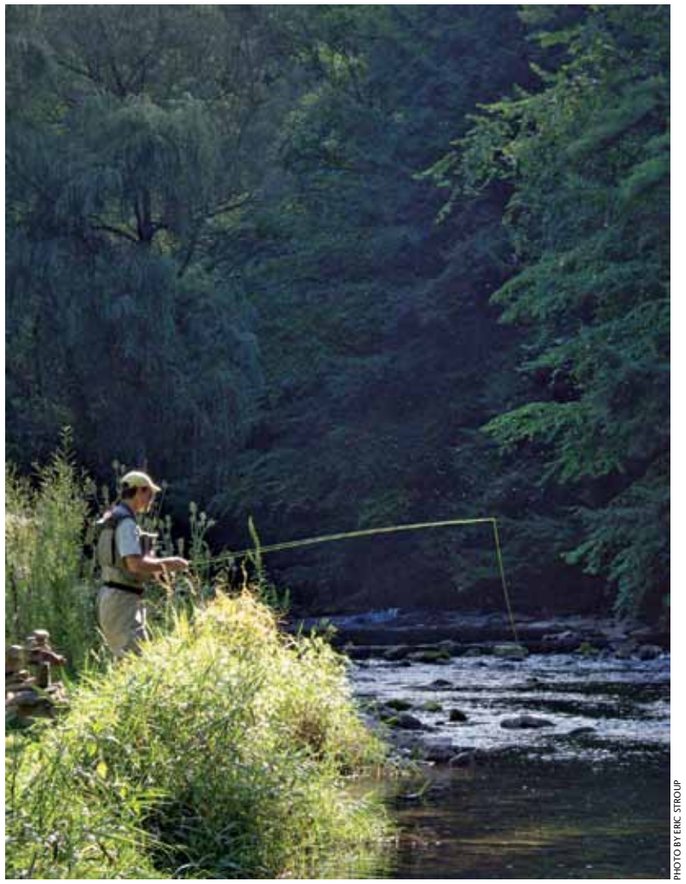


PHOTO BY ERIC STROUP

A trip was planned for Ike, and a deal was cut with a local federal hatchery to supply an entire truckload of trout for the president. A few days before his arrival, the stream was stocked full of large trout for Ike's angling pleasure. According to Harvey, the U.S. president was a good angler and an even better caster, taking plenty of trout on dry flies. He would not be the last president to fish this small stream, and the practice of stocking it for pleasure continues to this day. Remarkably, this water retains a healthy population of wild fish, great hatches, and stunning beauty.

Spruce Creek is approximately 14 miles long and is entirely privately owned. Public access is permitted in only one location, which is owned by Penn State University, and is designated as the George W. Harvey Experimental Fisheries Area. This stretch is nearly 0.5 mile long and a joy to fish. I live within a mile of the parking area of this stretch, and there are few days in the year when there is not at least one vehicle there. The rest of Spruce Creek is divided into small stretches that are controlled by private clubs, homeowners, and outfitters, but anglers can pay to access many parts of the stream.

The private setting makes Spruce Creek well worth the money. Hatches can be incredible, and in many sections a 3- or 4-pound trout is a realistic possibility on a dry fly. Some of the best Green Drake hatches I have ever witnessed occur on Spruce Creek, and the fish take the Drakes with a vengeance. Other productive hatches include Blue-Winged Olives, Sulphurs, Cahills, March Browns, Tricos, and myriad varieties of caddisflies.

Spruce Creek fishes well throughout the year. In fact, my favorite time to fish Spruce is in the winter. The public-access area is beautiful in the snow, and it is a rare occasion that I can't pull at least a few fish out in the dead of winter. Plan to fish this gem in the off-season; you won't be sorry.

Tweed River, VT

By Lisa Densmore

The Tweed River in central Vermont holds a special place among my fly-fishing memories. In 1987, two friends asked me if I liked fly fishing. I replied, "Yes," though at the time I had never waded a river. I had less than a year of fly-fishing experience at that point, and only on a single pond from a rowboat.

So they took me to the Tweed, where, in borrowed waders, I mimicked my fellow anglers, casting, mending, watching my tiny orange indicator float through a riffle, then casting again. After every half-dozen casts, I took a few carefully placed steps downstream and tried again. Within a few minutes, a modest 12-inch rainbow trout twitched my rod, then another, and another. The trout in the Tweed were not big, but they were plentiful. And they were my first in moving water.

Twenty-four years later, I returned to the Tweed River. This 7-mile-long waterway parallels Vermont Route 100, a well-traveled mountain road that winds past many of the state's ski areas. The Tweed is a tributary of the well-known White River, one of Vermont's most productive and famous fisheries.

The main branch of the Tweed begins near Hadley Mountain, where a confluence of spring-fed brooks drains off the northeastern side of the Killington-Pico mountains, and ends at the White River in Stockbridge. When Pico's ski trails come into view, you know you're near the top of the river, which is more brook-like until the West Branch Tweed River joins it in Pittsfield. You can fish the riffles and pockets of the West Branch as well, from two good access points on Lower Michigan Road: the Old Mill site (a public park) and the bridge at Crossover Road, 1.2 miles upriver from the turn onto Lower Michigan Road.

A number of bridges span the main stem of the Tweed, each with a turnout and a well-trodden trail to the water.

My favorite is just above the covered bridge at appropriately named Tweed River Drive. I've a soft spot for covered bridges, those iconic New England landmarks from a bygone era. The scenery along this rural Vermont trout stream hasn't changed much over time either. Its sparkling water flows over a clear gravel bottom, passing small rural farms with neat red barns and hilly pastures. Generations of Vermonters have milked their cows and tapped their maple trees here since before the Revolutionary War.

The Tweed River attracts anglers for its brook, brown, and rainbow trout, all of which reproduce in this clear mountain stream. They are tougher to find now, but can be enticed by a Woolly Bugger or a black Hare's Ear Nymph in mid-May, which is prime time for fly fishing in Vermont. The season opens in mid-April and closes at the end of October. Midges and caddisflies hatch on warmer afternoons, and you'll find black stonefly larvae squirming under the river rocks. Some anglers argue that autumn is the best season on the Tweed River, especially if you're looking for brookies and browns, which are fall spawners. "I go upstream with a light line in the

fall," says Greg Russ, who guides on the Tweed River through Hanover Outdoors, (603) 643-1263, www.hanoveroutdoors.com. "The Tweed gets cold quickly. I've seen its tributaries drop to 40 degrees in September, because the water comes out of Green Mountain National Forest, which is heavily treed."

Autumn anglers will see more surface action too, with fish going for beetlelike terrestrials, caddisfly patterns, and Klinkhåmer Specials.

You can explore the entire Tweed River in a day by using the obvious turnouts along Route 100, or contact Cold River Outfitters, (802) 282-5131, www.coldriveroutfitters.com, which specializes in fly fishing in the Killington area, or Vermont Angler in Ludlow, (802) 885-3062, www.vermontangler.com. Vermont Angler's website has a most helpful fishing report for all of the central Vermont trout streams.

Noontootla Creek, GA

By Nick Carter

Ask a local about the fishing on north Georgia's Noontootla Creek and you're likely to receive a stern warning about rattlesnakes and bears. Push for a little more information and you might even hear about the panthers rumored to roam the area. What you won't hear much about is easy access to public water on a gorgeous mountain trout stream.

You see, that's just the kind of place it is. Plunging from its headwaters on Springer Mountain, almost 3,000 feet in elevation, near the southern end of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the "Toot" is one of those places the locals would rather you not know about—which is interesting, because it's hardly a secret. In fact, the Noontootla has been called the most publicized secret trout stream in the state.

The Noontootla forms high in Cherokee National Forest at a place called Three Forks, where trickling Stover, Chester, and Long Creeks meet near a crossing of the Appalachian Trail. The creek runs off the mountain in a series of cold, clear plunge pools, heading toward the Toccoa River to the northwest. The Toot looks like a typical north Georgia blue-line stream—meaning it should be full of small but brightly colored wild rainbows and browns, guarded by a close cover of fly-gobbling rhododendrons and accessible by lots of walking. Well, the Toot has the fly-gobbling rhododendrons, but absent is the long hike. Forest Service Road 58 parallels the stream for its entire run through public property. For most of its 12-mile course, Noontootla Creek flows through Blue Ridge Wildlife Management Area.

Easy access isn't the main draw for this creek, though. Instead, Noontootla is managed as a wild trout fishery, where only flies and artificial lures are allowed, and that is what raises it a notch above other small streams in the area. And it has the potential to produce fish larger than you'd expect for such a small stream. Rules allow anglers to kill just one trout longer than 16 inches, so in essence—because 16-inch-plus trout are uncommon—Noontootla is a catch-and-release fishery. That means the catch-and-cook crowd is relegated to hatchery-supported creeks in the area.

The regulations and good habitat are also responsible for larger-than-typical trout, especially considering the Toot's diminutive size and the fact that—with the exception of private trophy-managed water in pastureland downstream—it hasn't received any stockings since the 1960s. While they are certainly not the norm, fish, particularly the browns that run up the feeder creeks each fall to spawn, can grow 16 inches and longer. Such trout are serious handfuls on a fly rod; to fool them in the clear water, anglers need light tippets, along with short, light rods to effectively cast amid the overhanging undergrowth.

But talk of tussling with a trout that spans more than half the length of the run it's holding in assumes the angler will be able to draw a strike in the first place. A side effect of the regulations is that pretty much any fish longer than half a foot has fallen for a bug with a hook in it before. The fish in Noontootla are wary and spook easily. The fishing is technical. On my first trip to the creek years ago, my rattling old hand-me-down station wagon, with a tattered copy of Jimmy Jacobs's *Trout Fishing in North Georgia* on the dashboard, rolled smoking into a creek-side turnout as Waylon Jennings bellowed through the static of blown speakers. My buddies and I piled out into a cloud of dust kicked up on the dirt road and stretched our legs from a long drive.

Even the guidebooks are hesitant to give up this creek's exact location, and we had been driving in ever-widening circles for the better part of an hour just trying to find the creek. But there it was, looking just as cool and inviting as we had imagined. A gaggle of amateurs schooled in the joys of dumb, hungry stockers, we had no idea what we were getting into. We spent a frustrating day bumbling up the creek, pulling flies out of glossy rhododendrons while terrified trout scattered before us.

It took years for me to build the courage for a return trip. And more years passed as I learned that stealthy wading, drab clothing, subtle presentation, and perfect drifts could reveal a fantastic, sometimes challenging fishery. Doubtless the Toot will reveal her secrets to anyone with tact, a little patience, and a gentle hand.

Driftwood River, IN

By Brandon Butler

Indiana's Driftwood River is a classic example of the adage "Dynamite comes in small packages." At only 16 miles long, the Driftwood offers anglers diverse, fish-filled water in an attractive natural setting. Located just east of Interstate 65 at Columbus, the Driftwood is an easy hour's drive from both Indianapolis and Louisville.

Formed by the confluence of the Big Blue River and Sugar Creek, and terminating at its own confluence with the Flatrock River, where the two join to form the East Fork of the White River, the Driftwood essentially operates as the neck of an hourglass connecting two larger courses of water. It is home to a number of fish species, including various bass, sunfish, catfish, and carp, but smallmouth bass are the most common quarry of fly anglers.

"If you consider the whole system coming together—Driftwood, Flatrock, Sugar, Big Blue, and East Fork—it's right up there with the top smallmouth fisheries in the state," says Brian Schoenung, Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) southern fisheries supervisor.

PHOTO BY BRANDON BUTLER

Along most its short, north-to-south course, the Driftwood's banks are lined with hardwoods. As its name implies, the Driftwood River filters a significant amount of fallen timber. Wade-fishing is possible at a few public access points, such as Lowell Bridge and Mill Race Park, but most of the river's edge is private land. Don't be discouraged, though. If you politely ask for permission to access the river through someone's yard or land, and add a simple assurance of leaving no trace, the chances of permission being granted by a down-to-earth local are fairly high.

"Because it's so short, and usually blows out a couple of times each spring, the Driftwood just isn't one of those rivers you hear people talking about. That doesn't mean it's not an outstanding fishery, though," insists Derrick Filkins of FlyMasters of Indianapolis, (317) 570-9811, www.flymasters.com. "The Driftwood is actually a great river to float, because there are some really deep holes that hold numbers of fish. When the river blows out, a lot of the wood structure washes away, leaving the deep holes as the best holding spots."

Schoenung adds, "You don't see a lot of fisherman, by and large, on Indiana streams, so you could say they aren't used nearly as much as they could be."

There's no question of the Driftwood's scenic appeal or productivity, but a measured answer to the quality of the fishery is not available. Schoenung says, "As far as I know, we haven't conducted an official fisheries survey on the Driftwood. What I do know is there are largemouth bass and Kentucky spotted bass in there, along with a healthy population of smallmouth. There is a proposal on the table right now to create a protected 12- to 15-inch slot limit on smallmouth bass statewide. The Driftwood is one of the rivers we plan to run a pilot program on to test the effectiveness of the slot, so fairly soon we will have actual data on the river's fish."

One rumor surrounding the fishery is that muskies are swimming in the river. The DNR stocks them in old gravel pits turned public fishing holes at the Driftwood State Fishing Area. "A few years back, a levee broke, opening up a channel between the pits and the river, so it's highly possible muskies escaped into the system," Schoenung explains. "Are they still there? No one really knows, but there are rumors."

Tactics for fly fishing Driftwood River smallmouth vary by angler. You can catch them on streamers, and at certain times of the year top-water flies can produce exciting days. The experts at FlyMasters of Indianapolis recommend a few tactics that require pulling out all the stops.

"Streamers often don't get down to the bottom where the fish are holding. The way I like to fish the Driftwood is with a fly like the Meat Whistle or a weighted Woolly Bugger, on a long leader drifted under a strike indicator," Filkins says. "When you do find brush, it's often piled together, so it's hard to fish with a fly. We actually use a 3-inch, weedless-rigged rubber worm drifted under a indicator."

The Driftwood River may just be the best smallmouth stream in Indiana you've never heard of. With a central location, easy access, and quality fish, the Driftwood should be on your short list of must-fish Indiana waters.

Dowagiac River, MI

By Brent T. Wheat

Michigan's Dowagiac River is a hidden jewel for steelhead anglers, but it is much like the first wildflower of spring: a beauty of nature that won't withstand much human contact.

Flowing through the southern Michigan farmland, the Dowagiac is a gravel-bottom ditch for much of its length until it reaches the antiquated Pucker Street dam in historic Niles, Michigan. There, in the short 4 miles from the dam to its terminus at the Saint Joseph River, the Dowagiac is transformed into a winding, forested, natural stream that is stacked with steelhead for nine months of the year, along with salmon in fall, and a resident population of broad-shouldered brown trout.

The river is 90 percent spring water that tumbles over a perfect bed of glacial gravel, and it is widely believed significant natural reproduction of both steelhead and trout occurs in the stretch below the dam. This makes the lower Dowagiac a unique and productive cold-water fishery within 70 miles of downtown Chicago.

The downside to the list of positives is that all the action takes place in a segment of waterway that is a serious exaggeration of the term "river." When you take an undersized stream and add heavy fishing pressure despite little public access, you end up with a river that could quite easily be loved to death.

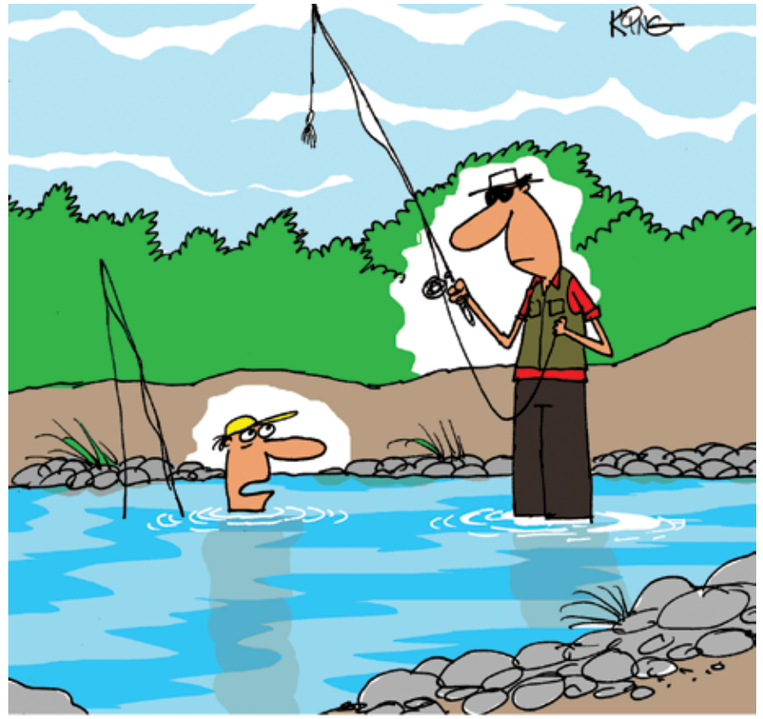
PHOTO BY BRENT T. WHEAT

Despite the caveats, the fragile Dowagiac is still absolutely worthy of a visit from the inveterate steelhead junkie. The river offers both summer- and winter-strain fish. The season starts late in July as the Skamania-strain summer fish return from Lake Michigan, and continues until they return to their open-water haunts in late September. As these fish are transiting downstream, fresh winter-run steelhead begin their run, which lasts until early April. Splitting the difference is the salmon run that takes place in September and October.

The easiest way to fish the Dowagiac is via drift boat or other small craft that can easily navigate the fast, log-filled waters. Boats can be backed down a rough dirt ramp at Losensky Park, below the dam, but hand-launching is usually much easier and safer for the boat. There is no public take-out downstream, though many people use the right-of-way at old U.S. Highway 31 or continue to the Saint Joseph River and its numerous ramps. As there is no public land along the river aside from Losensky Park, the only option for walking anglers is to transit the entire stretch downstream to old Highway 31—no easy feat. An alternative is to gain permission from a private landowner along the way, but this can be difficult because of ongoing trespassing problems.

There is nothing exotic about fishing for steelhead on the Dowagiac. A standard 9-foot, 7- or 8-weight steelhead/salmon rod, with an 8-foot leader ending in a 6- to 8-pound tippet, is the norm. One fly book with a few green caddisfly and blue stonefly nymphs, along with a good selection of egg flies, suffices. A container of assorted split shot and a few small bobbers round out the tackle selection.

The river is a series of long gravel runs interspersed by deep pools, so fish can be found throughout the stream, depending on their mood. The actual



"My vast fly fishing experience tells me that there's a drop off right about here."

EASTERN NEWS

By Terry W. Sheely

PHOTO COURTESY OF SANDY BOGDAN

Tribute to Stanley Bogdan

Six months after catching a 32-pound salmon on Quebec's Grand Cascapédia River, Stanley Bogdan, iconic creator of the coveted Bogdan fly reel, died at the age of 92 in Nashua, New Hampshire. A trained machinist, Bogdan began producing reels in 1955 for Abercrombie & Fitch, and later for Orvis, and almost immediately created an enthusiastic following. Anglers waited up to four years to pay between $1,500 and $2,400 for a Bogdan reel. The finely tuned reel's strength is in the adjustable drag system that Bogdan developed primarily to control his beloved Atlantic salmon; it provides extraordinarily smooth and strong braking control. Fewer than 100 reels are made each year in the New Hampshire shop. Stephen Bogdan, who began working with his father in 1973, became company owner in 1996. He continues the tradition.

Permit Me, Please

COURTESY FLORIDA WILDLIFE COMMISION

Florida is looking for a few good fishers with swabs and tags—sort of. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) wants anglers to assist with Project Permit by dart tagging and fin clipping to sample DNA from permit they catch and release. The resulting info will provide clues to permit movement and distribution. Biologists have already documented a tagged permit that traveled 40 miles along the East Coast. The FWC has also tightened protections for permit, including creation of a Special Permit Zone covering all state and federal waters south of Cape Romano, where commercial harvest is banned and the minimum size limit is 22 inches fork length.

Boom Goes Hereford Manor

The clock is winding down on the 53-year-old dams impounding Pennsylvania's popular Upper and Lower Hereford Manor Lakes. The dams were built in conjunction with strip-mining operations and were acquired by the state in 1973. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Dam Safety declared both dams unsafe, and ordered the lakes drained and the dams demolished. The project is expected to last into November. And, with the end of the lakes in sight, Pennsylvania lifted all season, size, and creel limits, then closed the Beaver County lakes in March for the beginning of the end.

Banned in Baltimore

PHOTO BY TERRY W. SHEELY

And in the rest of Maryland, too. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has joined the growing list of states banning felt soles on hip boots and waders to protect and preserve native wildlife and habitats. Felt can remain damp for weeks, says the DNR, hosting and transplanting harmful organisms such as *Didymo*, an invasive alga commonly known as rock snot, which in large quantities can make stream fishing virtually impossible. Several manufacturers are marketing nonporous soft-sole replacements.

fishing is standard nymphing technique—drifting the fly near the bottom in likely locations, then repeating ad nauseam until you detect the faint pause of a strike. Once the fish has announced its presence, it is time to brace yourself for the haywire-locomotive fight of a steely Dowagiac missile.

At that moment, neither the fish nor the river will seem especially delicate.

Book Review

By Terry W. Sheely

Flyfisher's Guide to the Northeast Coast

By Phil Shook
Wilderness Adventures Press
512 pages, $28.95

Writing and researching with a mantra of no cove too small, no island too urbanized, Phil Shook has painstakingly created a detailed where-to-throw-a-fly directory of beach, boat, pier, and jetty opportunities for Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey. His research is strengthened with significant expert contributions from local guides, charter captains, and top anglers who share their insights, insider know-how of where-to and how-to, and illuminating glimpses of their fly boxes.

Shook covers the Northeast waterfront of game fish availability and concentrates extensively on stripers, bluefish, and tuna, with overtures to marlin, sharks, dolphins, and mackerel. He opens with a listing of the dominant baitfish of the Northeast coast and then provides the fly patterns designed to simulate or imitate them.

The book begins with an overview of Connecticut fly fishing and popular game fish, state regulations, seasons, and seasonal movements of the most prized fish, along with a calendar of when it's hot and when it's not, and descriptions of coastal features and facts, including the important notice that all beaches are open to the public below the mean high tide mark. The overview ends with a contact list of fly-fishing guides and clubs. Shook follows this format through all three states. Statewide overviews are broken into manageable regions, and each region is broken into specific smaller fishing areas, such as Catumb Reef, Mystic Bay, and Niantic Bay. The specific sites are then detailed as to what species to fish for, when to fish, and what fly and line to use, with appropriate local phone numbers and driving directions. Some of the described spots are famous, others are unknown unless you live there, and almost all can be located on the excruciatingly detailed maps that accompany each regional division.

I've never been to East Rockaway Inlet on the south shore of Long Island, but I can see it on the map on page 248 and have every confidence that I could follow that map straight there in early December, throw a size-4/0 white hair streamer with a 350-grain shooting-head, and hook schoolie stripers until my wrist screams, "*No mas.*"

The book is not overly laden with photos, and all are black and white; the ones selected appear to have been judiciously picked not as hero shots but because they contribute useful information about the topography, representative fish sizes, and landmarks.

In addition to the fly-fishing nitty-gritty, Shook includes with each region a summation of hub cities, including listings for accommodations, casinos, restaurants, fly shops, marine supply stores, airports, trains, bus services, and, in the case of New York City, subways.

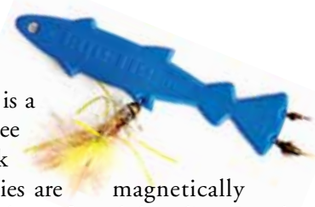
Unless your boots are rooted in one beach and your boat to one marina, this stout volume will provide days and even weeks of adventurous road trips to productive water. It will put you in the right place, at the right time, throwing the right fly with the comfort of knowing where you can book a guide, replenish the fly box, and eat and sleep. Shook may have missed a spot or two, but if he did, I couldn't find it.

Nautilus FWX Reels

The new ultra-light Nautilus FWX series reels are almost a half ounce lighter than their FW predecessors, thanks to a new spool design and internal changes, making them the lightest machined aluminum disc-drag fly reels on the market. Like the NVG reels, the FWX models feature the Nautilus Giga arbor spool design, which promotes faster line pickup and backing drying; a new stainless steel one-way clutch is housed in a proprietary TORQ-X clutch drive, ensuring instant drag engagement with no slack. The reels are easy to switch from left- to right-hand retrieve, and the spools are easy to change, with a new push-on and click-off release. Finally, one of the newest creations from Nautilus is an industry-first LaserID line-identification system: a white spot is laser-etched on the back of each FWX spool so you can use a permanent marker to write the line type and weight that you are using and wipe it off with alcohol when you change lines: no more washed-out or lost line stickers. Safe for saltwater, the FWX series includes three models: FWX 3/4 ($240), 5/6 ($250), and 7/8 ($280), each available in black or titanium anodizing, with custom colors available. To order, contact your local Nautilus dealer or visit www.nautilusreels.com.

Orvis Superfine Touch Rods

The new Orvis Superfine Touch rods, despite their retro unsanded finish, are built from the latest in graphite raw materials, resins, and scrims, and feature entirely new tapers specifically engineered for super-smooth casting like the original Orvis Superfines, but with more precision and accuracy. Whereas most fly rods are optimized for casting 35 feet and beyond, Superfine Touch rods ($475) were designed and tested to make perfect casts at distances less than 30 feet, though with an adjustment in casting style they can reach out to 60 feet. The rods combine standard- and intermediate-modulus graphite throughout their length, with carbon scrim for added strength and weight reduction. They are perfect for small streams; on larger rivers, they are ideal for pinpoint casting to rising fish or sight-fishing with nymphs, where accuracy is critical. Because they load so well at short distances they are also terrific tools for throwing nymphs with indicators or dry/dropper combinations—the reason for the 9-foot models. The 15 models range from 6-foot 1- and 2-weights to 9-foot 5- and 6-weights. For more information, visit www.orvis.com.



EyeTie Fly Threading Tool

The innovative new EyeTie Fly Threading Tool is a durable, lightweight, easy-to-use tool with three different magnetized slots that accommodate hook sizes 4 through 22 and various tippet sizes. Flies are magnetically aligned in the appropriate slot to enable quick and easy funnel threading. Just 4 inches long and weighing only 16 grams, the tool is made from tough, heavy-duty plastic by injection molding, and attaches to any lanyard or zinger. Look for the EyeTie tool ($24.95) at your favorite fly shop, and online at www.orvis.com or www.dan-bailey.com. For more information, visit www.eyetietool.com.

Innovative Fly Tier

Dave Hise/By Steve Schweitzer

As career paths go, Dave Hise didn't exactly carve a direct route to being a fly shop owner and Orvis signature fly designer, but it was in his heart and soul at an early age. To set the stage, take the Dave Hise quiz below and guess what events in his life helped bring him to fly fishing. Hise grew up on the streets of inner-city Los Angeles, where his grandfather and father owned a small business. Which one of these is also true about him?

- He competed as a weightlifter in the Junior Olympics three times.
- Despite going to *Playboy*'s top-rated party school, he graduated summa cum laude with a degree in physical anthropology.
- He worked in a morgue performing forensic work.
- His frequent babysitter was "The Big Russian": two-time Olympic gold medalist weightlifter Vasili Alexeyev.
- He was a redshirt freshman on the University of California, Santa Barbara men's basketball team.
- His father was an alternate for the USA weightlifting team in the 1968 Olympics.

Trick question—they all are correct. Hise's family owned a weightlifting business in Southern California, and he recalls, "Weightlifting was expected of me. I competed in Olympic weightlifting programs my whole juvenile life. When my father competed, someone had to babysit me. . . . I've got pictures of me on Vasili Alexeyev's shoulder as he babysat me while my dad competed."

It seems that pedigree was needed to grow up in inner L.A. safely. "There's lots of trouble that could be found there. I am convinced if it wasn't for fly fishing, I don't know where I'd be today," Hise reflects. So how did he get from weightlifting to fly fishing? Connecting the dots required a sidecar ride along the physical anthropology route.

Hise graduated summa cum laude from UC Santa Barbara, with a degree in physical anthropology and a specialty in human anatomy. After he completed his undergrad studies, he moved to Michigan to enter grad school at Michigan State University. This is where fly fishing and forensic work collided. During his graduate days, Hise worked for a professor doing forensic work for the local police. "I saw a few things in a morgue that made me realize I wasn't cut out for that work," he says. "That time was just prior to the technique of using DNA testing. What I did was more . . . [Hise pauses] old-school."

After graduate school and a six-year stint in Montana, his fly-fishing passion began to set in. He moved back to Michigan, where he worked for Dick Pobst, local fly shop owner and author of several classic guides to trout stream insects. Pobst became his mentor. So it seems Hise's transition from education to fly fishing was destiny, really. He says, "My parents told me to always do my best at whatever I do . . . and you will do your best at what you love. I guess I just loved fly fishing."

No one in Hise's immediate family was a fly fisher, but he did have a friend whose father fly fished and tied flies, and had gear for Hise to play with. Hise caught his first fish on a small Elk Hair Caddis, and that moment hooked him. He promptly went to his grandparents that afternoon and scared up enough money to purchase his first fly rod: a Fenwick Eagle. That same year he received a simple fly-tying kit with the ubiquitous Jack Dennis book, *Western Fly Tying Manual*. With the book and the kit, Hise began teaching himself how to tie flies, and was also influenced by the well-regarded *Selective Trout* by Doug Swisher and Carl Richards. "I kinda like to do things my own way," reflects Hise, "particularly when it comes to tying."

PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVE HISE

Creative fly tier Dave Hise, a man of many talents throughout his life, owns Casters Fly Shop in Hickory, North Carolina.

According to Hise, many people get into the fly business for the wrong reasons—primarily to make money. "I got into it knowing that I probably would make a meager living, but I got into it because it is what I love," he says proudly. Today he runs his own shop, Casters, located in Hickory, North Carolina, (828) 304-2400, www.castersflyshop.com, thanks to the lessons learned while working for Pobst, and most certainly from his parents. "When I go into my shop each day, I try to share what I've learned from the folks that influenced me the most," he says. "However, it's difficult to share and connect with the younger generation today."

He explains that he won't "drive it in to them [but instead will] let the kids decide if they want to do it or not."

Hise, with two young daughters himself, finds it's difficult to compete for kids' attention, particularly with video games and social media on the computer. He says, "I am finding that teaching [fly fishing to] younger generations is the responsibility of friends and family first, not of the fly shop. I'll help the families get there."

Hise has been a noted Orvis signature fly designer for the past 15 years. He prefers to tie impressionistic patterns that don't really represent one thing, but instead represent a wide spectrum of food for fish. Many of his patterns use his favorite material, Australian opossum, in a dubbing loop, which he states is one of the most versatile dubbing methods. He notes, "When I first started, it was more difficult to sit down and design new patterns; now it seems easier to me. I get my inspiration by looking at what's on the water and then look in my fly box. If I see I don't have some pattern I think I need, the [creative] wheels start turning."

Just maybe Hise's forensic background helps him break down what he is trying to imitate at the vise. He offers some sage advice to the beginning fly tier: invest in decent basic tools and buy just the materials you need to tie the flies you like and want to tie. Over time your material collection will grow and you will have tied patterns that are most useful to you.

Adam Stielstra, a close friend and fly-fishing buddy, points out that "Dave is one of those orderly sorts. . . . Everything must be perfect and in its right place. The hook boxes and bags of dubbing in his store are perfectly aligned. All his knots are perfectly tied and neatly trimmed. His flies are color-coordinated in his fly box. When he buys a car, he makes sure the length of the car's interior will fit an assembled fly rod. I could go on."

A longtime friend and fellow employee at Pobst's shop, Nick Garlock, chimes in with a chuckle, "Dave sees life in a grid. He can tell if something is out of place [that forensic tendency pops up again]. We used to mess with Dave by slightly rearranging hook boxes in the store. He would sigh and promptly walk over to straighten things out—every time. It never got old!"

Joking aside, both Stielstra and Garlock readily attribute their fly-fishing success to how Hise taught them to look at streams and notice the details.

Aside from the unusual career path into fly fishing, Hise's fishing and tying habits don't seem too abnormal—I think we all know a fly fisher like Hise, present company included. Without his orderly and inherently forensic approach to fly tying and fly fishing, we wouldn't have his innovative patterns in the Orvis catalog today. Nor would we have someone with his experience and expertise to help families pass on the legacy of fly fishing from generation to generation.

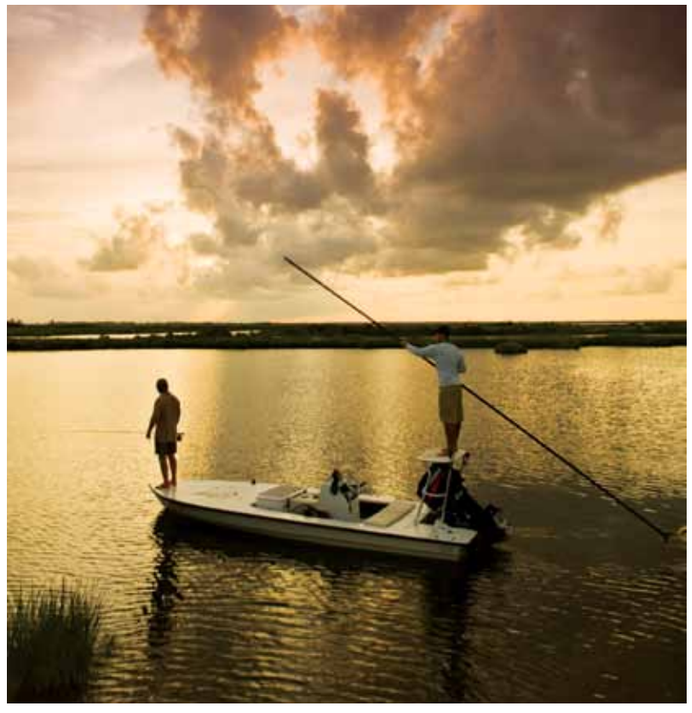
Steve Schweitzer, author of A Fly Fishing Guide to Rocky Mountain National Park, *is a freelance writer and photographer who lives in Colorado.*

Exposure

Louisiana Redfish/By Jim Klug

A small drum comes to hand in the waters of Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana.

Welcome to the original Sin City—the heart of Bourbon Street in New Orleans.



Anglers make an early-morning start on the flats to beat the afternoon thunderstorms of midsummer.

Tools of the trade for a commercial fisherman on the coast of Louisiana

Captain Alec Griffin of Louisiana Flywater rigs up for a morning on the water.

Tim Borski fights a redfish in the Louisiana marsh country during autumn.

Shucking oysters Louisiana-style at Woodland Plantation

A Louisiana alligator—one of the pond mascots at Woodland Plantation—looks for an afternoon snack.

Captain Brian Carter puts his client on a redfish in skinny water.

Captain Alec Griffin with a medium-size Plaquemines Parish redfish

Tom Bie, Alec Griffin, and Kirby Lacour pole skinny water in search of tailing redfish.

A local crabber hauls out a bucket of Louisiana blue crab.

Jim Klug, www.klugphotos.com, is a professional photographer and founder of Yellow Dog Flyfishing, an adventure travel service for anglers.

ALL PHOTOS BY LANCE R. WILT

Slate Run, PA

Look Before You Leap

By Lance R. Wilt

In the world of trout streams, if looks could kill, unsuspecting trout anglers would make only one trip to fish Slate Run, a major tributary of Pine Creek, aka Big Pine Creek, that flows through the heart of north-central Pennsylvania. They'd arrive already infatuated with more famous waters in the state, and then might well take a beating from the difficult casting on this forested stream.

Blessed with beautiful ruggedness in a remote setting, this freestone stream is born in Tioga County, specifically in the Tioga State Forest, where the Francis and Cushman Branches meet to form the upper reaches of the stream. Shortly after this merger, Slate Run crosses the Tioga–Lycoming county line, then flows another 6.5 miles, picking up tributary feeds from Red Run, Morris Run, and the Manor Fork, before merging with Big Pine, a large and well-respected fishery in its own right.

Slate Run is a fast-flowing stream, with an enticing mix of shallow riffles, deep runs, pocket-water reaches, and seemingly bottomless pools ranging in size from a bathtub to an Olympic-size swimming pool. Dense overhanging canopy, mostly coniferous trees, swallows most available light before it can penetrate the stream bottom. Numerous logjams serve as reminders of past high-water events and provide shelter for trout.

That same dense riparian foliage that provides vital summer shade for trout also assures innumerable obstacles ready to snag flies from even the most accurate casters.

In keeping with the pristine setting, beauty is far from skin deep on Slate Run. This little stream supports dense aquatic life, including prodigious quantities of various fish foods, and, in turn, a healthy wild trout population. Both wild brook and brown trout inhabit the creek and feed on fine insect hatches—it's enough to appeal to and entertain even the most discriminating small-stream enthusiast.

Sizable brown trout lurk in Slate Run, but these fish don't come easy and are true trophies for even the most seasoned angler (above). Spring's high flows push most of the trout to the soft seams, making it easier for anglers to target the most productive water (right).

Redemption

The Slate and nearby Cedar Run, another important cold-water tributary of Big Pine Creek, are in the relatively small, select category of freestone streams that offer high stream productivity compared to the usual mountain streams in the region. Such productivity stems largely from the infusion of cool, rich waters from the feeder streams and Slate Run's excellent trout cover. Moreover, shale beds underlying the drainage assure a higher pH level in Slate Run than in streams of surrounding regions, lending a helping hand to the variety of mayflies, caddisflies, and stoneflies that inhabit the creek. Such aquatic diversity promotes consistent hatches, supporting reliable and predictable match-the-hatch fishing on Slate Run nine months out of the year, and affording dry-fly enthusiasts the opportunity to target surface-feeding fish that are well versed in the art of selective feeding.

Often overshadowed by the limestone streams to the south, Slate Run wasn't always a second-choice fishery for anglers fishing the waters of greater central Pennsylvania. The freestone streams of northern Pennsylvania are among the most storied brook trout waters in North America. In his "Early Days" essay about the history of the region, included in the Slate Run Sportsmen's Club's book, *Slate Run Sportsmen's Club Story: The First Fifty Years*, by Robert L. Clarke, Dr. Luther W. Fetter, recalling a conversation with Orney Campbell about fishing the stream in the early 1900s, says, "It was easy to catch twenty-five brookies from twelve to sixteen inches in the Francis Branch of Slate Run." But by 1953, says Fetter, it was difficult to catch a trout more than 7 inches in length.

Logging practices that didn't consider watershed health and seem greedy in retrospect, combined with an absence of fishing regulations, led to the demise of many of the region's streams. Some of these streams have made a partial recovery, Slate Run being one of the more fortunate.

In an attempt to make up for the area's decreasing brook trout populations, in the early 1900s German brown trout were introduced to a number of waterways. Compared to the native brookies, brown trout were better able to tolerate the higher average water temperatures and degraded stream conditions caused by logging. What seemed like a wise idea at the time, however, only further reduced the remaining brook trout's ability to thrive in the Slate Run watershed, a drainage that once supported a dense population of sizable brookies.

Through the efforts of several conservation-minded organizations, most notably the Slate Run Sportsmen's Club, special regulations have been permanently instated on Slate Run, beginning in the 1950s. Slate Run is now included in Pennsylvania's catch-and-release, fly-fishing-only program. The Slate Run Sportsmen's Club and other conservation-minded organizations have worked with various state agencies to forge angling regulations that halted the deterioration of the fishery. The last stream survey conducted by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, in 2004, demonstrated that Slate Run continues to support a healthy biomass; the agency classifies the fishery as one of the state's premier "Class A" wild trout streams.

Through the Seasons

Slate Run's storied past and unique characteristics make it an anomaly among most freestone streams in the area. However, its freestone characteristics become increasingly evident when the area is plagued with high water during spring runoff or when the stream is starved from lack of precipitation during the dog days of summer. Such fluctuating water levels, combined with a well-nourished fish population, make angling scenarios increasingly demanding as fishing conditions become difficult.

Because its watershed is densely forested, Slate Run flows extremely clear for the majority of the year, dirtying only after a significant amount of rain or snowmelt. Gin-clear water and excellent habitat structure stack the odds in the fish's favor. Timing an angling outing shortly after a significant rainfall can be good strategy because the fish are far less wary when the water is slightly turbid.

Fly presentation on Slate Run often involves careful planning and preparation. The bow-and-arrow cast is highly effective for delivering flies under low-hanging obstacles (above). Wild brook trout are plentiful in Slate Run and its tributaries (below).

As a general rule, early-season angling, between March and early May, is productive, providing cold water doesn't suppressing feeding activity by trout, which is especially likely in early spring during periods of wintry weather, including cold rain. During periods of high, stained water, large stonefly nymphs and baitfish imitations fished slow and near the stream bottom can convince the active feeders to succumb to temptation. When the water is cold (below 40 degrees), most fish seek refuge in the slow side currents adjacent to heavy runs or in the stream's large pools. Concentrating your early-season angling efforts in the "soft water" areas will ensure that you are fishing over most of the trout in Slate Run. Because of the heavy flows and the need to fish big flies, a stout 5-weight rod is a good choice for spring fishing.

As early as March, as the days grow longer, slender stoneflies (both black and brown), along with Blue-Winged Olives, can bring fish to the surface. Hatch season comes into full swing in April, when Blue Quills, Quill Gordons, Hendricksons, and Dark Caddisflies appear. Various species of caddisflies and stoneflies, along with March Browns, Gray Foxes, Sulphurs, Brown Drakes, Green Drakes, Slate Drakes, Cahills, and Olives, make up the majority of May's and June's hatch activity, making mid-April through early June the best window of opportunity to enjoy surface action on Slate Run. After a brief summertime lull, several of these hatches, especially Slate Drakes, Olives, and various caddisflies, reappear in the fall, providing surface activity through the flaming foliage season. Tricos and terrestrials become important summertime food sources as larger insects become scarce. Summer on Slate Run typically means low water, calling for long leaders and gossamer tippets.

The low summer flows usually persist through the end of September barring any major rainstorms. Shorter days in October cause both trout and leaves to undergo an intense color change, making autumn in the Pine Creek Valley a spectacular time to spend a day on the water.

Winters in north-central Pennsylvania can be harsh, causing water temperatures on Slate Run to dip into the 30s. Anchor ice even forms during periods of extended frigid temperatures. Sudden bumps in air temperatures can stimulate feeding activity by trout, but anglers should think twice before embarking on this treacherous voyage. Most of Slate Run is accessed off secondary roads adjacent to Pennsylvania Route 414; the upper stretches of the stream can be accessed off Francis Branch Road. These roads are heavily utilized by snowmobiles in the winter, thus packing the snow on the roads and rendering them slippery and extremely dangerous.

On the Hunt

I equate fishing on Slate Run to a day of hunting, but with a fly rod rather than a firearm. Success is often directly related to the way an angler approaches the stream and to his or her patience and persistence. Simply stated, Slate Run and Cedar Run have perhaps the most intolerant fish I've ever encountered, especially during periods of low flow, when the stream's trout become increasingly vulnerable to avian predators, which in their world includes fly lines zinging overhead and the anglers doing the zinging. These trout are wary and spooky in the extreme. Oftentimes, when the creek is low and clear, spooking a lone fish in the tailout of a large pool can send every fish in the vicinity racing for cover. During such conditions, the likelihood of success through ambling along and blind-casting is dramatically diminished. One misplaced cast can spoil the entire pool. Sight-fishing to individual trout is a better strategy.

"Noninvasive" might be the word that best encapsulates the approach you need to consistently catch Slate Run trout under difficult conditions. Be ever mindful of concealing your approach to the stream; move slowly and carefully; study the water and plan your casts. Once the high water of spring subsides, downsize your weaponry; a long rod, a 2- or 3-weight spring-creek-style rod at least 9.5 feet in length, helps in delivering precise casts with a longer leader while keeping most of the actual fly line off the water. The soft tip on such specialized rods cushions the hook set, helping to protect light tippets.

For subsurface fishing, leave the conventional bobber-style strike indicators at home, as they provide little utility, and in fact can spook educated fish, on the crystalline waters of Slate Run. Such strike-detection systems also severely handicap your ability to pinpoint your casting. Instead, pinch on Palsa-style floats, or use a dry fly, well dressed with floatant, with a nymph suspended underneath; both systems are less invasive in nature and offer minimal air resistance during casting. I opt for these two systems when longer casts and the need for a prolonged drift make a tight-line nymphing approach impractical.

Fly and tackle aside, keep in mind that a stealthy approach is just as important as the business end of your cast; in fact, often approach and presentation are far more important than fly pattern. (A case in point stands out in my mind: the time a self-proclaimed "small-stream specialist" hired me as his guide and companion for a day on Slate. It was the end of May and I was excited to spend a day on the water with someone proficient in casting and well versed in small-stream tactics. As we drove to Slate Run, I outlined what I expected to see and explained my suggestions for a preliminary plan of attack. At the first pool we decided to fish, a few trout were rising consistently well within range; with careful planning and approach, I knew, my guest would soon be netting his first Slate Run wild trout. We were both excited by the prospects, not to mention the always welcome discovery of consistent risers. Perhaps we were too excited. My client quickly plunged into the stream and started ripping line off his reel. I was rendered completely speechless at first, but soon recovered enough to gently suggest that he might be better off making a cast to the closest fish, next to the bank, rather than trying to reach out to the farther risers and unnecessarily dropping line on the pool over the nearer trout. To my dismay, he firmly insisted that he could make a better cast from his current position. A half-dozen false casts and one 30-foot cast later, and the pool appeared completely devoid of life, let alone rising fish. Shaking his head, he slogged back to the bank like a water buffalo and asked if we should make a fly change.)

Except during periods of intense but isolated insect activity, when hatch-matching patterns are important, most generic fly patterns that resemble common trout foods produce their fair share of fish on Slate Run. Almost always the challenge lies in presentation, not imitation—a concept that when well practiced probably applies to selective trout in far more waters than you might realize.

Something for Everyone

Slate Run and the surrounding waterways in the Pine Creek Valley offer a unique change of pace from other destinations in the area. Cedar Run, flowing into Big Pine Creek a short distance away, offers a fishing experience similar to Slate Run and provides nearly 11 miles of regulated wild trout water. Should water conditions and/or the trout not cooperate on the runs (Slate and Cedar), nearby Big Pine and Little Pine Creeks offer miles of stocked trout water to explore.

Numerous warm-water species, including bass and carp, are also common, and provide exciting fishing through the summer months on Big Pine and Little Pine. Both of these creeks are large enough to navigate with a small watercraft, granting anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts the opportunity to enjoy a significant stretch of water during a day trip. In addition, Big Pine Creek flows through the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania, a short distance away. The canyon provides breathtaking scenery and great trout fishing in a unique setting. An extensive Rails-to-Trails system parallels Big Pine Creek throughout its length, making travel by foot or bicycle an enjoyable option for those who choose to spend their day sightseeing rather than fishing. Regardless of your passion, this beautiful area offers something for everyone to enjoy—so bring a camera along with a fly rod.

Lance R. Wilt, a guide with Spruce Creek Fly Company, is a freelance writer, photographer, and travel agent who lives in Lamar, Pennsylvania.

CDC Stimulator

By Lance Wilt

PHOTO BY EASTERN FLY FISHING

Hook:	Dohiku dry fly, size 10
Thread:	Gray or brown Gordon Griffiths Sheer 14/0
Body:	Peacock quill
Rib:	Pearl DK Fly Quill
Wing:	3 paired CDC feathers (color of choice)
Indicator:	Bright-colored CDC feather over wing
Thorax:	3 strands of peacock herl
Hackle:	Grizzly
Note:	After rib is applied, coat body with Super Glue and allow a few minutes to dry.

Slate Run NOTEBOOK

Where: Special-regulations water from confluence of Francis and Cushman Branches, downstream 7 mi. to confluence with Pine Creek.

When: Year-round.

Headquarters: Slate Run, PA. *Information:* Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy, (570) 323-6222, www.npcweb.org; Central Pennsylvania Convention & Visitors Bureau, (800) 358-5466, www.visitpennstate.org. *Lodging:* Hotel Manor on Slate Run, (570) 753-8414, www.hotel-manor.com; Cedar Run Inn, (570) 353-6241, www.pavisnet.com/cedarruninn; Black Forest Motel, (570) 769-7060; Babbs Creek Inn & Pub, (570) 353-6881; Bit of Heaven Campground, (570) 753-8555; Pettecoat Junction Campground, (570) 353-7183

Appropriate gear: 9- to 11-ft., 2- to 5-wt. rods; floating line.

Useful fly patterns: Hare's Ear Nymph, Pheasant Tail Nymph, caddisfly larva patterns, cranefly patterns, midge pupa patterns, Prince Nymph, Golden and Black Stonefly nymph patterns, soft hackles, streamers, insect-specific nymphs/larvae and dries to match Blue-Winged Olives, caddisflies, Hendricksons, Quill Gordon, March Browns, Gray Foxes, Sulphurs, Green Drakes, Brown Drakes, Blue Quills, Cahills, Slate Drakes, Tricos, terrestrials, midges.

Necessary accessories: Polarized sunglasses, lightweight rain gear.

Nonresident license: $26.70/3 days, $34.70/7 days, $52.70/annual, plus $9.70 trout/salmon stamp.

Fly shops/guides: *Slate Run:* Slate Run Tackle Shop, (570) 753-8551, www.slaterun.com. *South Williamsport:* E. Hille Company, (570) 323-7564, www.anglersupplyhouse.com. *Waterville:* McConnell's Country Store & Fly Shop, (570) 753-8241, www.mcconnellscountrystore.com. SalmoTrutta Enterprises (Dave Rothrock), (570) 745-3861, www.salmo-trutta.com; Spruce Creek Fly Company (Lance Wilt), (814) 632-6129, www.sprucecreekflyco.com, www.fishcentralpa.com; An Irish Angler (Mike O'Brien), (570) 220-0391, www.flyfish-pa.com.

Book/maps: *Trout Streams of Pennsylvania: An Angler's Guide* by Dwight Landis; *Trout Streams and Hatches of Pennsylvania* by Charles R. Meck; *Pocketguide to Pennsylvania Hatches* by Charles Meck and Paul Weamer; *George Harvey: Memories, Patterns, and Tactics* by Daniel L. Shields; *Joe Humphreys's Trout Tactics* by Joseph B. Humphreys; *Common-Sense Fly Fishing* by Eric Stroup; *Slate Run Sportsmen's Club Story: The First Fifty Years* by Robert L. Clarke. *Pennsylvania Atlas and Gazetteer* by DeLorme Mapping.

ALL PHOTOS BY BO BRINES

Tittabawassee River, MI

Character and Familiarity

By Bo Brines

Todd backed the trailered jet sled into the water as I noted a vicious swirl about 30 feet upstream from the boat launch. Early on this steamy, overcast July morning, the day ahead seemed ripe with promise. We had just arrived at the Imerman Memorial Park boat launch on the lower Tittabawassee River near Freeland, Michigan, and already the fish were making their presence known.

Tendrils of mist wafted off the surface, adding to the serene, placid scene. We had the river to ourselves; not another boat or angler was in sight. Todd opened the door and stepped out of his white pickup as another fish broke the surface, this time 40 yards downstream and on the far side of the river.

"This solid cloud cover looks promising. Hopefully we'll have some good action on top this morning," he said as he looked at the spreading circles left behind on the river's glassy surface. He guided the jet sled off the trailer and dropped its anchor.

Todd Zwetzig works with special-needs students in his job as a teacher, which frees up his summers to operate a guide service.

"How about I give them a look at a Dahlberg Diver?" I suggested. I walked out on the wooden dock projecting from the boat launch. I watched a third fish break the surface. My anticipation mounting, I quickly tied on the bulky fly. I made several quick false casts, feeding out fly line, as the first fish rose again. I dropped the fly on the water a couple of feet past the center of the large, spreading, concentric circles and gave a short, quick strip of line. The Dahlberg Diver made a satisfying *gloomph*. I waited for several seconds before stripping again. Nothing. I picked up and cast a little farther upstream, stripping again. Same lack of response. *Hmm.* Zwetzig jumped behind the wheel of his truck and pulled the now empty trailer from the launch.

As I waited for him to return from parking his rig, I put on polarized sunglasses and carefully studied the surface of the river. For fish in the Tittabawassee, the potential menu includes not only insects, baitfish, and crustaceans, but also seeds and berries; this section of the river is home to large numbers of carp that will feed on items from the plant kingdom when the opportunity arises. And since the river system is open to Saginaw Bay and Lake Huron, at various times of year well over 100 different species of fish make their way upstream in search of food and spawning habitat. Several of these species are highly accessible to fly fishers.

Today Zwetzig and I were targeting the incredible numbers of healthy smallmouth bass in the lower section of the river, but in the process of bringing dozens of smallmouth to hand, we would also catch rock bass, bluegills, and the fish that were taunting us from the launch: walleyes. The Tittabawassee supports a huge walleye spawning run in the early spring, and some of the fish remain in this section all year. These marauders turned out to be chasing shiners just below the surface, and an unweighted Hot Flash Minnow fished on a floating line solved the mystery for us.

Resident Trout and Migrants

The dams on the upper reaches of the Tittabawassee River and its tributaries have seriously diminished the cold-water opportunities for fly anglers. They were generally built on the steepest stretches of the streams; consequently, what was once the best trout and aquatic insect habitat is now impounded. Branches of the Tobacco, and its tributary the Cedar, still flow free and have water cold enough to support trout populations. These small streams demand accurate, concise casting, but can reward you with a surprisingly nice trout. Access is mostly at road crossings. Brook trout inhabit the upper reaches, with browns becoming dominant as you move downstream.

Far below the trouty headwaters, the farthest-downstream major hydro dam is at Sanford, and the water from Sanford all the way to the confluence with the Saginaw River is excellent for fly anglers. Sanford Dam marks the upstream limit of modest runs of steelhead and salmon. While most of these fish head up the Chippewa River at Midland (the Michigan Department of Natural Resources stocks thousands of rainbows in the Chippewa west of Mount Pleasant each year), some are caught below Sanford Dam. There is good access in Sanford Village Park at the dam. To protect spawning walleyes, the Tittabawassee River is closed to fishing from March 16 to the last Saturday in April from below Sanford Dam downstream to the mouth of the Salt River, and from below the low-head Dow Dam in Midland downstream to the gordonville bridge.

The smaller bass on the Tittabawassee will aggressively eat small baitfish imitations like this Hot Flash Minnow (above). Guide Todd Zwetzig covers a rock-strewn pocket on the lower Tittabawassee (left).

The walleyes can sometimes be targeted by fly anglers with streamers; in late October they start coming in to eat young gizzard shad, and their numbers increase throughout the winter until the spawning run peaks in late March or early April. A flashy streamer such as Burk's Hot Flash Minnow retrieved long and slow will sometimes take these fish, although the ample supply of natural food present can make them a less than easy fly-rod quarry.

Beautiful Float for Smallmouth

From Sanford Dam to the town of Midland (about 10 miles), the river flows mostly through large holdings

of private property. By canoe or kayak, this stretch presents a beautiful float through mature forests. Very little development is visible from the river. You can fish as you float on the usually sedate current, stopping to wade the more promising-looking pools. Water levels fluctuate for power generation at Sanford Dam; you can see the regular rise and fall of the river flows by looking at the USGS website for Michigan, http://waterdata.usgs.gov/mi/nwis/rt. Wading anglers must monitor water fluctuations. Some weekends the flow drops to very low levels and stays there, putting the fish in a funk. Motorized boats or even drift boats may have a difficult time clearing a few of the wide, shallow sections in extreme low flows.

The water below Sanford and upstream from the Chippewa's inflow at Midland is the most reliable bet for wading anglers, but rainfall in the headwaters will bring the river up and make wading difficult or impossible. When the rainfall is significant, the river may take days to clear. While some of this water is sand-choked and unproductive, there are also excellent pools here. A bit of depth and a gravel bottom, preferably with some submerged logs, aquatic grasses, or a few boulders, will reliably hold aggressive smallmouth bass eager to ambush flies.

This stretch also holds carp and rock bass, and you will rarely need anything other than a floating line on the river above Midland. Clouser Minnows, bead-head Woolly Buggers, crayfish patterns, and poppers are all productive here.

The Chippewa River makes its entrance at Chippewassee Park in downtown Midland, where the confluence is spanned by the unique three-legged "Tridge." The increased flows of the combined Chippewa and Tittabawassee greatly reduce wading opportunities for anglers from here to the Saginaw River, approximately 25 more miles. Midland provides very good access to the river, with the Golfside boat launch on the west side of the river just off the Currie Parkway bridge (upstream from the Tridge), a canoe/kayak-appropriate launching area at the Tridge, and the Caldwell boat launch at the Gordonville bridge, located a couple of miles downstream from Midland.

A Mixed Bag

The Tridge area can produce some interesting fishing. There are a couple of weeks each summer when carp (and there are lots of carp here) can be caught on mulberry flies. A few mulberry trees line the riverbank in this area, and a good berry crop will result in dozens of carp (as well as turtles) stacking up below these trees, waiting for the wind or feeding birds to knock the ripe berries into the river. The first few days the berries fall, carp aggressively take every berry as soon as it hits the water. Delicate delivery is not an issue, as some of the berries fall from the tops of the trees. Once you splat the berry down, however, make sure it floats drag free; these carp are very observant.

Local angling guru John Van Dalen ties a simple but effective berry pattern composed of a small bit of black closed-cell foam (for floatation) wrapped with black plastic bead-chain eyes. A black hook helps, as a few days into the berry hatch the carp become very selective, and they have excellent eyesight. Most years the window of opportunity for the "berry hatch" closes by July 4. I'm sure there are plenty of spots where this occurs; any area that has mulberry trees on the banks and carp in the area will produce this scenario, so make note of the location of mulberry trees.

Todd's Lunchbucket

PHOTO BY EASTERN FLY FISHING

Hook: Orvis 8808, size 2
Eyes: Medium white dumbbell
Body: Pearl Estaz
Overwrap: Blue Estaz
Tail: White marabou and pearl Flashabou
Throat: Pearl Flashabou

Below Midland the river runs through the Dow Chemical plant, and the low-head Dow Dam in the midst of the plant prevents powerboats from accessing the river above it. While the moderate numbers of chinook salmon and steelhead can easily negotiate this barrier, it prevents most fish species from passing, except in high water. Fish stack up below this dam, and consequently it receives a lot of attention from anglers who motor up from the Caldwell boat launch. There is no access from land.

Below the dam are shallow shelves lined with boulders that drop off into deeper cuts; these areas hold lots of fish. Zwetzig developed a fly, the Lunchbucket, for exactly this situation. Its upturned hook point allows you to fish the shallow shelf without hanging up, and its weighted eyes make it dive quickly over the edge into the deeper pockets. In normal flows, a sinking-tip line, such as RIO's OutBound or Scientific Anglers' Streamer Express, is ideal here. Short, stout leaders (5 feet, tapering to a 10-pound tippet) are necessary to turn over heavily weighted flies such as the Lunchbucket. As is true anywhere on the lower Tittabawassee, you can catch a mixed bag of species here, and the exact mix varies greatly with the seasons. A recent July evening produced smallmouth bass, white bass, rock bass, and northern pike. There is a large spring run of white bass, and these freshwater relatives of the striped bass are very receptive to Clousers, Deceivers, and other baitfish flies.

Big-Water Access

Downstream from the Gordonville bridge access site, the river passes into Saginaw County. The lower river is accessible via boat launches at Imerman Park (about 12 miles below the Gordonville bridge) and the South Center Road boat launch (about 10 miles below Imerman Park) near the confluence with the Saginaw River. You can also access the river at the West Michigan Township Park off Michigan Avenue near Saginaw. Use care if you are motoring about in a boat, as there are lots of submerged logs, and the river can be tricky to navigate owing to fluctuating water levels from the dam at Sanford.

There are literally miles of excellent smallmouth habitat to explore, as generally at least one bank will have a little deeper cut that provides the cover these fish prefer. Mature trees line the banks, providing shade and protection from above. Focus your efforts on areas with rocks, a darker bottom, and submerged wood, and you will find large numbers of eager smallmouth.

When you find active fish, work the hole thoroughly. When you stir one fish to action, several can become aggressive. Often upon hooking a fish you will see one or two other smallmouth try to steal the fly from the fish you are fighting. A second angler stands a good chance of hooking up if he or she gets a fly in front of these competitive fish. Most of these smallies are a healthy 14 to 16 inches, with a few bruisers reaching 20 inches or so.

When fishing the lower Tittabawassee anglers should be aware of the environmental issues in the watershed. Downstream from Midland there are pollutants buried in the river sediments. These were emitted by industrial processes years ago, and there is ongoing debate about the significance of the threat they pose and how best to address the issue. The smallmouth bass population certainly seems robust and healthy. For catch-and-release fly anglers, the fish-consumption advisories may be beneficial in some ways. For now, there is very little fly-angling pressure on the Tittabawassee. Perhaps anglers who might normally keep fish put them back when fishing here, enhancing fish numbers and average sizes. Perhaps this is why you can still find solitude on this amazingly prolific and diverse fishery.

Rivers are as distinctly different from one another as people. The character of the Tittabawassee holds up well in the light of familiarity. Its quiet beauty can calm you one moment with a serene landscape, and then provide heart-stopping excitement with a savage take from a big smallmouth bass. Those who come to explore its charms will not be disappointed.

Bo Brines is a freelance writer and photographer and the owner of Little Fork Outfitters in Midland, Michigan.

Titabawassee River NOTEBOOK

Where: Lower Peninsula, MI.

When: Summer to mid-autumn for prime smallmouth action.

Headquarters: Sanford, Midland, and Freeland, MI. *Information:* Sanford Area Chamber of Commerce, www.sanfordmi.com; Midland Area Chamber of Commerce, (989) 839-9901, www.macc.org, Freeland Chamber of Commerce, (989) 695-2929, www.freelandchamber.com/links.htm. *Canoe rentals:* City of Midland Parks and Recreation (reservations required for weekday rental), (989) 837-6930; Imerman Memorial Park (Saginaw County) (989) 790-5280.

Appropriate gear: 9-ft. 6- to 8-wt. rod, floating line, spare spool with sink tip line, 0X leader and tippet.

Useful fly patterns: Burk's Hot Flash Minnow, Todd's Lunchbucket, poppers, Dahlberg Divers, Clouser Deep Minnows, Sparkle Grubs, Matukas.

Necessary accessories: Polarized sunglasses, kayak or boat, dry bag for gear when canoeing or kayaking, wading sandals or waders, insect repellent, drinking water, wide-brimmed hat, sunscreen.

Nonresident license: $7/1 day, $34/annual (no trout/salmon), $42/annual (if trout are targeted).

Fly shops/guides: *Essexville:* AuSable Troutfitters, (989) 225-2478 www.ausabletroutfitters.com. *Midland:* Little Forks Outfitters, (989) 832-4100, www.littleforks.com.

Books/maps: *Fish Michigan: 50 Rivers* by Tom Huggler. *Michigan Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme Mapping; *Southern Michigan All-Outdoors Atlas and Field Guide* by Sportsman's Connection.

PHOTO BY JON LUKE

Chesapeake Bay, VA

Marine Nursery to the East Coast

By Beau Beasley

"Hey, Beasley, you're eating like we're leaving shore for a month," complained Steve Probasco, associate editor of *Eastern Fly Fishing*. "Put the fork down and grab your gear so we can get into some stripers."

Before I could put down my steaming mug of coffee and defend myself, Jon Luke, the magazine's art director, piled on: "Yeah, man—come on already! Let's get into some of these East Coast linesiders you keep bragging about."

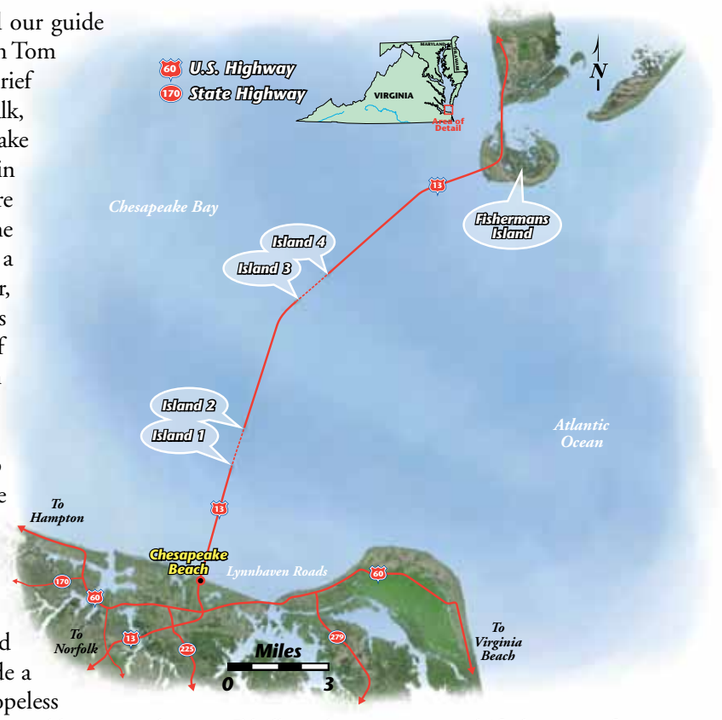
We'd had a restful evening at the Magnolia House B&B in Hampton, Virginia, which was built in 1889 by a Virginia harbor pilot with an obvious flair for architectural design; it still boasts its original wood columns sculpted in the Greek fashion, wood floors, and handsome fireplaces. Though this grand old building has seen a few years, it has been transformed by innkeepers Joyce and Lankford Blair, who bought the place in 2004 and spent two years giving Magnolia House a facelift before opening to the public.

After a sound night's sleep in our well-appointed rooms, we were treated to the fisherman's breakfast the next morning: hotcakes, fresh biscuits and gravy, fruit, piping hot coffee, and orange juice. I was as eager as my companions to lay into some stripers, but, hey—a guy's got to eat! Joyce Blair came to my defense like a den mother accustomed to mediating among squabbling boys at the breakfast table: "You fellas are going to have a fine day fishing, so enjoy your breakfast. I've packed you a nice lunch, so you should be able to keep up your strength while you fight the locals," she said with a smile. "If you get into some nice ones, I wouldn't mind you bringing me back a fillet."

"Don't worry, Joyce," I responded. "I'm sure that I'll be able to bring you back a few fish despite my poor company today."

Hampton is teeming with things to do, including a cruise tour aboard the *Miss Hampton*, the Hampton History Museum, and the Virginia Air & Space Center. Yes, there's a space center on the Virginia coast—not that surprising, really, because Hampton was the birthplace of NASA. And the area is steeped in history: Hampton claims to be the oldest continuous English-speaking settlement in North America. Some people visit the area for its art galleries and the like, but the seafood festivals and the beaches also attract plenty of folks. Ultimately, though, I come to Hampton for one reason: stripers. And I am by no means their only groupie.

A few hundred yards from Magnolia House is the Sunset Boating Center, stomping grounds of Captain Tom Mattioli, a fixture on these waters and our guide for the day. I can attest to the fact that Captain Tom can find fish in nearly any weather. After a brief introduction and Mattioli's mandatory safety talk, we headed to open water in pursuit of Chesapeake Bay's plentiful game fish. Stripers are the main attraction in the bay, to be sure—but they're certainly not the only game in town: the last time my kids fished with Mattioli, my son earned a Junior Angler Award by landing spot, croaker, black sea bass, pig fish, flounder, and stripers on the same day using squid. (Of course, all of that paled in comparison to "helping" Captain Tom pilot the boat. The man has the patience of a saint. But I digress.)



"OK, fellas," said Mattioli as we pulled up to the first island. "These fish often hold close to the structure, so cast as close to the rocks as you can, and then let your fly sink for just a moment before bringing it in. If you wait too long you're apt to get hung up."

Probasco made a few casts and even had a bump, but connected with nothing. I made a few snide remarks suggesting that he was hopeless because there weren't any steelhead in the bay, and began casting to the island myself.

Before too long I got a nice strike. "That's my boy!" I shouted and set the hook on what I knew would be a good fish. The line held taut and I reset the hook again just to be sure. All eyes were on me and I smiled proudly—until I realized that my fish wasn't running. I was indeed hooked up, but it was the drag of the boat I was feeling as we drifted by, not a fish. I'd waited too long and was caught on a rock because I'd allowed my pattern to drift down too far.

Probasco and Luke erupted into laughter, and even Mattioli had to work hard to contain himself. "Easy, Beau. We're after rockfish, not *rock* fish," he deadpanned. Probasco and Luke were merciless, and I was tempted to swim back to the marina.

Stripers like structure, which Chesapeake Bay has in spades. Topping the list are the islands that support the expansive Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel. The bridge itself is a modern marvel that spans about 17 miles and connects Virginia Beach to the eastern shore of Virginia. Its developers had to secure safe travel for tens of thousands of vehicles a day over—and under—the busy port of Norfolk, home to a host of military ships. Indeed, much of the bridge is actually a tunnel shuttling cars beneath the port.

PHOTO BY DAVID SKOK

Nearly any structure on Chesapeake Bay attracts predatory fish (above). Stripers prefer menhaden, which is why they respond so well to baitfish patterns, such as the ubiquitous Clouser Minnow (left).

Four large man-made "islands" support the enormous bridge-tunnel, and it's here that you often find lots of stripers. All of these rock islands have about 5 acres of surface 30 feet above the water, and all are made out of sheer granite rubble. Some of the rocks are larger than subcompact cars and weigh several tons. Each day the stripers—and bluefish and cobia and flounder and drum—play cat-and-mouse with baitfish around these islands as the tide rises and falls.

But the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel are hardly the only game

in town. Fish also congregate around the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel and the Monitor-Merrimac Memorial Bridge-Tunnel. The latter is named after two Civil War ironclads that duked it out for nearly four hours at point-blank range before more or less calling it a draw. After the firefight of the *Monitor* and *Merrimac*, the age of wooden battleships was essentially over. Appropriately enough, Norfolk Naval Base is nearby, so it's quite common to see present-day warships in the area while you're fishing here. Mattioli even had a submarine surface by him one morning, only to have the captain open the sub's hatch and ask how the fishing was.

PHOTO BY JON LURE

The author hooked up near one of the islands that support the Chesapeake Bay bridge tunnel.

Chesapeake Bay is more or less a giant seafood nursery. Nearly any saltwater table fare you can name in the Mid-Atlantic migrates and spawns here, which explains why the sportfishing can be so good. Blue crabs, shrimp, clams, and oysters, as well as a slew of game fish, all call Chesapeake Bay their home. One species that's in steep decline, however, is menhaden, a crucially important baitfish. Nearly everything in the ocean, from stripers to seagulls, eats menhaden. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the federal regulatory board that manages saltwater fish, recently released a study demonstrating that the menhaden population is a scant 14 percent of what it was only 30 years ago. This is a historic low. Recreational anglers are waking to the threat and turning to the Virginia General Assembly, which is responsible for managing menhaden—and only menhaden—in the Commonwealth, to do something about the decline.

Virginia law currently allows Omega Protein, the largest commercial harvester of menhaden in the country, to harvest 240 million tons of menhaden a year; Reedville, Virginia, is home to the company's processing plant. Conservation groups question whether such a large menhaden harvest is sustainable. Some legislators and company officials argue that harvesting cutbacks could result in the loss of local jobs; anglers counter that those job losses are insignificant compared to the larger effect on the recreational saltwater fishing industry and, by extension, Virginia's economy should the menhaden population collapse. They fear a domino effect: as the menhaden go, they argue, so go the game fish, such as stripers and drum, that depend on the menhaden for food.

A study is currently under way to determine the financial impact of the two opposing fishing interests. A move is also afoot to transfer management of menhaden to the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, which currently manages all saltwater species for the Commonwealth except menhaden. Check for updates from your local Coastal Conservation Association chapter, and see www.savemenhaden.org.

You can catch fish in the bay nearly all year, but things really heat up in late May. By June, thick flocks of birds darken the skies as they dive-bomb schools of baitfish pushed to the surface by merciless blues and stripers. You'd think that casting a line into this melee would guarantee you a hookup—and you'd be right often enough to make it worth your while. Sometimes the action is so fast and furious, however, that between the leaping baitfish and the foaming whitecaps and the crazed stripers, even the best of anglers fails to connect. "If I find a school of working fish," says Mattioli, "I try never to get in the middle of them."

Instead, he suggests you let the fish come to you, advising, "Position your boat in front of or beside the school, and let them approach you. This almost always works."

He also suggests that anglers use sinking lines and coaches them to let their pattern sink to separate it from the tightly packed school. Larger fish often wait at the bottom for stunned fish. Subsurface patterns are winners when you're fishing the bay. Clouser Minnows and Lefty's Deceivers perform, but don't forget strong regional patterns such as Cowen's Baitfish and Dubiel's Red-Ducer. Tommy's American Eel, which Mattioli created to mimic a favorite food of Chesapeake Bay stripers, is frequently a hit. Surface patterns can be highly effective and, frankly, loads of fun because you get to watch your target chasing your fly. When I need a surface pattern, I frequently turn to Bob's Bangers and Blado's Crease Fly. Finally, I've been a popping bug fan for many years; consider casting large saltwater-style Walt's Poppers.

Stripers are the big men on campus in the bay, but they are hardly the only prey worth pursuing. Captain Ed Lawrence of Speckulater Charters of Gloucester, Virginia, prefers to go after speckled trout. "Each and every striper thinks he's the meanest kid on the block and will strike out at nearly anything that moves. I like specks because they are much more cautious and therefore much harder to catch. These fish won't tolerate loud noise of any kind. And although they're attracted to structure, they're harder to find than stripers."

Lawrence seems to find them, though: last year, which he tells me was a slow season, he tagged and released more than 400 trout. The last time I fished with him we capped the perfect day by landing a beautiful "citation" speck, which he dutifully tagged and released (anglers can earn a citation from the state for catching and releasing a speck at least 24 inches long).

Cory Routh, author of *Kayak Fishing: The Complete Guide*, says that more and more anglers are tackling Chesapeake Bay by personal watercraft. "Fishing the bay in a kayak is a great alternative to a boat. You can go out all alone or with a few friends and hit selected areas you want to focus on. This allows anglers to fish in shallow water next to docks and oyster bars that may not be accessible to larger boats, especially at low tide," he says.

Routh, who works at Wild River Outfitters in Virginia Beach, believes that "another advantage kayaks have over traditional boats is silence. They're also good on the environment since they can run on Snickers bars and Gatorade."

"There he is," I said with a smirk as I cast my eye to Probasco. We'd taken turns landing fish off and on throughout the day, and now my rod was dancing with the tug of a nice schoolie striper. "That's swell, Beau," he said with a laugh. "Nice to see that you managed not to get caught up on the rocks this time."

I'll admit that we were all successful in the end, though I did have the honor of bringing home a lunker for Joyce Blair to serve up for dinner at Magnolia House. It was an honest-to-goodness rockfish, too: all fish, no rocks.

Beau Beasley is the Mid-Atlantic field editor for Eastern Fly Fishing *and the author of* Fly Fishing the Mid-Atlantic: A No Nonsense Guide to Top Waters.

Tommy's American Eel

PHOTO BY EASTERN FLY FISHING

Hook: Orvis 9034, size 3/0
Eyes: 7/32-inch stick-on eyes
Thread: Flat waxed nylon
Tail: Microfiber
Body: E-Z Body Braid coated with 5-minute epoxy

Chesapeake Bay NOTEBOOK

When: Late March–early January.

Where: Hampton, VA.

Headquarters: Hampton, VA. *Information:* City of Hampton Visitors Center, (866) 484-4722, www.hamptoncvb.com. *Lodging:* Magnolia House, (757) 722-2888, www.maghousehampton.com.

Appropriate gear: 9- to 9.5-ft., 8- to 10-wt. rods; large-arbor reels; intermediate and 200- to 400-grain sinking lines; 3- to 5-ft., 10- to 30-lb. leaders; wire tippets for bluefish.

Useful fly patterns: Bruce's Bay Anchovy, Bob's Banger, Cowen's Baitfish, Cowen's Magnum Baitfish, Clouser Minnow, Dubiel's Lil'haden, Dubiel's Red-Ducer, Lefty's Deceiver, Lefty's Half and Half, Russell's Mussel, Tommy's Crease Fly, Tommy's American Eel Fly, Walt's Saltwater Popper.

Necessary accessories: Polarized sunglasses, hat, water bottle, sunscreen.

Nonresident license: $30/annual.

Fly shops/guides: Bass Pro Shops, (757) 262-5200, www.basspro.com; Wild River Outfitters, (877) 431-8566, www.wildriveroutfitters.com. Latitudes Charters, (540) 582-6396, www.flyfishtidalva.com; Matty J Charter Service, (804) 314-2672, www.matty-j.com; Addictive Fly Fishing, (757) 561-4258; Ruthless Fishing, (757) 403-0734, www.ruthlessfishing.com; Bay Fly Fishing, (804) 815-4895, www.bayflyfishing.com; Speckulater Charters, (804) 693-5673, www.speckulatercharters.com.

Books/maps: *Fly Fishing Virginia: A No Nonsense Guide to Top Waters* and *Fly Fishing the Mid-Atlantic: A No Nonsense Guide to Top Waters* by Beau Beasley; *Flyfisher's Guide to Chesapeake Bay* by Ed Russell and Bill May. *Virginia Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme Mapping.

Sebasticook River, ME

A Breath of Fresh Air

By King Montgomery

I like smallmouth rivers that aren't too big. The Sebasticook has become my favorite Maine smallie river. It has everything I like: deep pools, fast runs, boulders and ledges, and great bottom vegetation that all can hold big bass.—Lefty Kreh

Lefty Kreh fights a Sebasticook smallmouth bass as Mac McKeever, at the oars, and fisheries biologist/guide Scott Davis look on. The Sebasticook is one of Kreh's favorite bronzeback waters (right). Lefty Kreh prepares to release another smallmouth bass that took a Crippled Stripper, a lively streamer tied by Pennsylvania smallmouth specialist Scott Loughner (below).

ALL PHOTOS BY KING MONTGOMERY

Central Maine's Sebasticook River is the largest tributary of the storied Kennebec River. Last summer, Lefty Kreh and I enjoyed floating part of the stretch that flows out of Sebasticook Lake at Newport, meanders along a low-gradient course for almost 30 miles, and enters the Kennebec at Winslow, just below Waterville. The Abenaki Indian word *sebasticook*, probably corrupted from *sebesteguk*, is said to mean "the almost through river." This could be a reference to using parts of the river system to travel between the Kennebec and Penobscot Rivers by canoe and foot. The oldest known fish weir in North America, a submerged wooden contraption, was found in the Sebasticook. It predates the Egyptian pyramids.

Another interesting historical side note is that the Virginia Company of Plymouth established English settlements in Jamestown (in what would become Virginia), and Popham (in the future state of Maine), in 1607. The southern colony survived, while the northern settlement was abandoned after a year. At the time the Popham Colony was founded, near the mouth of the Kennebec, the settlers could not have caught smallmouth bass anywhere in New England because there weren't any. Black bass, bluegills, black crappie, and northern pike are actually invasive species in Maine, illegally introduced over the past century to many of the state's rivers, lakes, and ponds. The problem persists to this day, and "bucket biologists" continue to wreak havoc on some Maine fisheries.

Before dams were built on the river, alewives, blueback herring, rainbow smelt, striped bass, American eels, sturgeon, Atlantic salmon, and other anadromous species would ascend the river to spawn.

As a lifelong trout and salmon guy, it took some convincing for me to cast for bass. It took an opportunity to float my two dear friends, Lefty and King, in my drift boat to get me to actually go and do it. How misguided I was! "Bass" may be a four-letter word to a die-hard trout guy, but I would argue that a good day on the Sebasticook would make a convert out of the most devout of the cold-water faithful.—Bill Pierce

More than five years ago, Bill Pierce, director for development with the Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust, invited Kreh and me to fish in Maine. He probably had visions of taking us to prime brook trout and landlocked salmon waters. What he may not have realized was that we're both smallmouth bass addicts and, given a choice, usually take bronzebacks over salmonids. We now visit Maine at least once a year to fish and spend time with old and new friends.

Pierce's sentiments about bass reflect the attitudes of many Maine and New England fly anglers. To some, smallmouth bass are trash fish, and mostly people from "away," like Kreh and me, come to Maine to hook bass. However, the Sebasticook has become one of our favorite rivers for pursuing these fish that are so revered for their sporting qualities in other parts of the country.

The past two years, in addition to Pierce, we've been joined on the water by Mac McKeever, senior public relations representative for L.L. Bean; Farmington guide and fly-shop owner Bob Dionne; regional state fisheries biologist and guide Scott Davis; and our old friends Bonnie and Blaine Holding. Blaine is a retired Maine game warden and Bonnie is an accomplished fishing guide. All are superb fly anglers.

Our flotilla usually consists of two or three ClackaCraft drift boats loaded with more gear than a fly shop, and coolers containing drinks, snacks, and the fixings for the inevitable shore lunch, a fine Maine tradition.

The Sebasticook River flows through forests, farmlands, and small villages, and its warm, slow-moving waters are prime habitat for smallmouth and largemouth bass, white perch, chain pickerel, and redbreast and other sunfishes. Dams in Newport, Pittsfield, Benton, and Burnham further impede flow, but most are equipped with fish ladders, so some anadromous fishes do get by.

The Fort Halifax Dam at Winslow, near the junction of the Sebasticook and Kennebec Rivers, was removed in 2008, opening up miles of habitat for the first time in more than a century. As a result there should be at least several more years where habitat is not stable, and both the fish and their habitat will remain in transition until a natural equilibrium is reached. Meanwhile, the lower Sebasticook ecosystem will see an increase in more seasonally abundant anadromous species, as well as more colonization by invasive nonnative species currently not in the river, but inhabiting nearby reaches of the Kennebec. On our most recent adventure we fished the river between the Burnham and Benton dams, and we plan to do other reaches in the future. We haven't fished in the newly liberated waters below the Benton dam, but I suspect the prospects are good for recreational anglers of all kinds.

The Sebasticook River is one of the fishiest smallmouth rivers I've ever seen. It has everything a bass angler could wish for: clear water, boulders, stumps, blowdowns, drop-offs, ledges, points, and much more. Here you don't hope to catch fish . . . you expect to. It just looks so fishy. And catch fish you do. A good angler fishing one day on the river can easily catch dozens of fish, many in the 3- to 4-pound class, with some 5-pounders lurking just around the next bend.—Mac McKeever

When we fished the Sebasticook in August 2009, the water in the river was at normal pool, and we were treated to relatively clear, slow, but steadily moving flows. Scenic riffles glinted invitingly in the warm sunlight, lazy glides gave up a fish now and then, and on some stretches our rowers had to work the oars to make sufficient progress. Aquatic vegetation of various types provided current breaks and places for fish to both hide and feed, and added to the bucolic beauty of this peaceful and scenic river.

On our return for a late-August-through-early-September trip in 2010, the first day revealed a river so low we couldn't fish from the drift boats. Fortunately, a frog-strangling rain moved in and persisted throughout the next day, bringing the Sebasticook up to a fishable level without turning it turbid. One boat sported a kicker outboard motor, and, with the other Clacka in tow, we chugged slowly upstream, staying in the channel until, after several miles, we could go no farther. We stopped and began a slow drift back to our launch site, fishing the skinny water toward the banks and hitting the deeper water in the channel as well.

The Sebasticook has it all: rock ledges, boulders, fast water, slow pools, aquatic vegetation, blowdowns, bridge pilings, drop-offs, and everything else a smallmouth bass could want.

Water level is a perennial problem on the Sebasticook, and sometimes a drift boat can't cut it. Davis takes clients fishing in canoes and kayaks, and sometimes it's still necessary to get out and drag the boats over the shallowest areas. He is considering acquiring a rubber raft rigged for fly fishing.

At low water, the fish are more concentrated and, if the water is especially clear, easily spooked by boats and by fly lines zipping though the air. If the water level is down too low to fish, there's always wading, and the nearby Kennebec River has some wonderful smallmouth bass—and it remains navigable and fishable even when flows are very low.

The Sebasticook at higher water levels is a moderate-size stream with a defined channel and shallower water tapering up to the tree-lined banks. Undercut trees and blowdowns, grass beds, small and medium-size boulders, and bridge pilings all have potential to hold fish. And if the obvious spots aren't producing fish, cast to the middle of the river, where fish also seem to hold.

In the hot weather of summer Davis, who lives near the river, concentrates his fishing efforts in the shade created by the abundant riparian trees. "Having a lot of canopy there is a big help," he says. "You know there's going to be plenty of cover at noon, one o'clock."

The smallmouth in the Sebasticook River are the least discriminating I have found anywhere. It doesn't matter the time of day or the conditions, they'll readily hit anything you throw at them—poppers, streamers, it doesn't really matter. If it moves, chances are they'll eat it.—Mac McKeever

Conventional bass anglers always are talking about what pattern or patterns the fish are in. Are they in the fallen wood, or in the grass, or on the rock ledges or boulders, or in moving water, or in the tailouts of riffles and runs? The answer on the Sebasticook during fairly normal water levels is yes. That's right: the fish in this relatively fertile river seem to be everywhere, do not seem to be stressed or spooked, and readily attack surface and subsurface offerings. If it looks bassy, it probably is.

On the final day of our 2009 visit to the Sebasticook, a young hooky player joined us on a float from Burnham Junction to just above Clinton. Bill Pierce took his 10-year-old daughter, Nathalie, out of school for the day, figuring she'd get more education on a bass river than she would in class. Kreh fished and worked with her in the morning, and in the afternoon she came aboard my boat. I put Bill up front and took the oars; my mission was to put her on some fish. A good caster—she had, after all, been tutored that morning by Lefty—Nathalie placed her fly in all the prime spots I pointed out to her. By day's end she'd caught some fine fish and was

Lefty Kreh plays a smallmouth bass. With a boatload of help and encouragement, Kreh battles a feisty Sebasticook smallmouth bass. Blaine Holding, a retired Maine game warden, rows, while Mac McKeever, from L.L. Bean, clears fly line from the water.

having the time of her life. Most important, I believe, she became hooked on fly fishing. On my return home I sent her a complete fly-fishing outfit, and I look forward to watching her use it on our next trip to Maine.

Smallmouth bass tend to be, well, small: 10- to 13-inch fish are common, with the occasional bruiser thrown in. So a 5- or 6-weight rod generally suffices, particularly if you cast a relatively small fly, if there's little or no wind, and if you want to consistently catch smaller fish. However, as a general rule, big fish like groceries, not hors d'oeuvres. Try accurately and effortlessly casting a bulky, 4- or 5-inch-long weighted fly on the lighter rod, and in a stiff wind. That's where the trusty 8-weight rods that Kreh and I prefer really shine. They have power to spare for casting large flies to big fish, in the wind, and they handle strong fish effectively, so you can land them quickly and release them without undue stress on the bass. Factor in arthritis in the fingers, elbow, and shoulder—remember, Kreh is ancient and I'm merely old—and, in my book, the larger rods are better all the way around. I can cast easier, farther, more accurately, and with less effort than with the lighter rods.

I like the new generation of bass-fishing specialty rods, usually 8 feet or shorter in length, and stout enough to cast a 330-grain weight-forward floating line, not to mention a standard 8-weight bass taper floating line. In fact, a floating line works best most of the time. I always carry a spare spool with a Teeny mini-tip sinking-tip line, and if the water and fish are really deep, a line with a 20-foot-long sinking head comes in handy. Use knotless leaders tapering to at least 10-pound-test tippet, though 12- to 15-pound tippets are better, particularly when you fish heavy cover, such as grass beds and fallen tree tops. Add tippet material as you wear it down with fly changes and fish teeth. A 5- to 7-foot section of 20-pound-test monofilament or fluorocarbon is all you need for leader when casting heavily weighted flies in stained water. Or use what I call Lefty Leaders: start with 4.5 feet of 50-pound-test mono, then taper the leader down with 1-foot sections of 40-, 30-, and 20-pound-test mono, respectively, and tie a perfection or surgeon's loop at the end. Then loop on an 18- or 24-inch section of 12- or 15-pound tippet. This formula makes a leader of about 9 feet, but such leaders can be tied in a variety of lengths and they really turn flies over nicely.

For flies, carry a selection that allows you to fish the river at all depths, from the bottom to the surface. Bob Clouser patterns are sure things; in fact, he designed most of his patterns specifically to catch smallmouth bass. Of course, you could do plenty of catching on Clouser patterns and basic poppers, but our experiences on the Sebasticook suggest a slightly more diverse fly box can't hurt. Last year, while I steadily caught bass on olive/yellow/white Clouser Deep Minnows and both white and yellow Lefty's Poppers, Kreh's own 8-weight rod bent deeply on several occasions, straining under the weight of hefty bass. In the slow-moving current he was casting down and across, and letting the current carry the fly downstream on a dead drift. The gaudy, unweighted fly undulated seductively just below the surface, and the smallmouth were attacking it with abandon, Kreh chuckling all the while when a fish took.

The fly he was using, according to its designer—guide and fly-fishing instructor Scott Loughner—is a cross between a Clouser Crippled Minnow and a pattern of Pennsylvania origin called the Lazy Stripper. He calls it a Crippled Stripper, and originally designed it for smallies on Pennsylvania's Youghiogheny River near his home. I've found this pattern to be effective on largemouth bass and northern pike too, although pike, with their sharp teeth, can tear it up. The Crippled Stripper is generally fished on a floating or slow-sinking line.

Loughner's Crippled Stripper

By Scott Loughner

Hook: Mustad C52SBLN or other 4XL hook, sizes 2/0–4

Tail: 2 marabou blood quills with longest fibers available, topped with 20–30 strands of Flashabou

Body: Metallic Estaz

Collar: Deer body hair

Head: Deer body hair, spun and clipped to shape

The Sebasticook River affords some of the best small-river bass fishing in the state of Maine. The lower 25 to 30 miles of this river are fishable with small boats or canoes; [the river] is very wadable in many spots, and is open to year-round open-water fishing. Don't let this small river fool you; it yields some of the highest-quality smallmouth fishing in the state.—John Boland, director of fisheries, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Unfortunately, the boat ramps and small-craft launch sites on the Sebasticook River are not well marked, and there exists no good map that details access to and from the river. (The map accompanying this article includes local details provided by Mike Holt of Waterville, Maine.) However, there are plenty of places to launch drift boats, rafts, and particularly canoes and kayaks. For the most part, you need to do reconnaissance before you fish, and plot out your route. You might need to portage around dams. The *Maine Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme Mapping can help. As you explore and scout for access, check out where roads cut near or over the river, and you can find official and unofficial sites.

Mainers are some of the friendliest folks I know, and if you politely ask a riverside landowner permission to launch or take out, I'll bet he or she says yes. Pierce reminds anglers, "The Sebasticook will only be a great bass-fishing experience as long as the people that enjoy it care for the resource and respect the rights and property of the private landowners that inhabit its shorelines."

Kreh and I love fishing in Maine for smallmouth bass. No, the bass aren't any bigger than we can catch back home on the Susquehanna, the Potomac, the Rappahannock, or the James Rivers, but the wildness of it all draws us back. Maine smallie waters are gorgeous and relatively wild. And best of all, the rivers are not crowded—you won't see powerboats and Jet Skis, or wall-to-wall anglers. What you will see is pretty country and unpolluted skies, and you can breathe plenty of fresh air.

King Montgomery is a freelance writer and photographer, and a former Potomac River bass guide, who lives in Burke, Virginia.

Sebasticook River NOTEBOOK

When: May–September and into October if the weather holds.

Where: Sebasticook River below Pittsfield in south-central ME.

Headquarters: Waterville, ME.

Appropriate gear: 8- to 9-ft., 7- and 8-wt. rods; floating and mini-tip sinking-tip lines; 12- to 15-lb. tippets.

Useful fly patterns: Loughner's Crippled Stripper, Lefty's Potomac River Poppers (black, chartreuse, yellow), large hopper and dragonfly patterns, sliders and divers, Clouser Deep Minnows (chartreuse/white, olive-green/yellow/white, brown/white, tan/white), bead-head Woolly Buggers (black, olive, purple), Clouser Crayfish (brown, olive).

Necessary accessories: Polarized sunglasses, hat, water bottles, sunscreen–insect repellent combo.

Nonresident license: $11/1 day, $23/3 days, $43/7 days, $47/15 days, $63/annual.

Fly shops/guides: *Albion:* Fish N' Fowl Guide Service (Scott Davis), (207) 453-8051. *Brunswick:* Merrymeeting Flies, (207) 373-8090, www.mflies.com. *Farmington:* Aardvark Outfitters (Bob Dionne), (207) 778-3330, www.aardvarkoutfitters.com. *Freeport:* L.L. Bean, (877) 755-2326, www.llbean.com/llb/shop/1000001708. *Madison:* Kennebec River Outfitters, (207) 474-2500, www.kennebecriveroutfitters.com.

Map: *Maine Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme Mapping.

Passaic River, NJ

Agent Orange, Dead Bodies, and Great Fishing

By Chris Roslan

"**Are you joking?**" asked my father, after I suggested that we hit the Passaic River in New Jersey for some wild trout.

I wasn't.

For anyone even vaguely familiar with New Jersey, the mere mention of the Passaic immediately brings about certain imagery: murky water, rusting iron drawbridges, graffiti-covered abandoned factories, oil-storage tanks, the Newark skyline, massive floods, pollution, dead bodies floating in the river.

And while these things are all true, they are true about only a small stretch of the river, the final few miles before it empties into Newark Bay. Yet, somehow, people have come to believe these offenses represent the entire river, all 90 miles of it. For local anglers, even the cane-bobber-and-bucket crowd, the concept of the Passaic as a "fishing destination" is just off-the-charts absurd. Its name is not mentioned at the local tackle shops. It does not come up on local fishing Internet chat rooms. Its only TV coverage has been not *Fly Fish TV*, but, rather, *America's Most Wanted*. Heads of anglers do not turn toward the Passaic when they drive past.

Despite its bad reputation, the Passaic River sports wild, reproducing populations of brown trout, such as this specimen, as well as rainbow trout and possibly—in the upper reaches—brook trout. But there's no need to keep this a secret, because your friends won't believe you anyway (above). Steve Roslan swings a fly through the Millington Gorge, a scenic stretch of the Passaic between the Great Swamp and the Watchung Mountains. The gorge is stocked with trout each spring, making for a great seasonal fishery (left). Photo by Chris Roslan

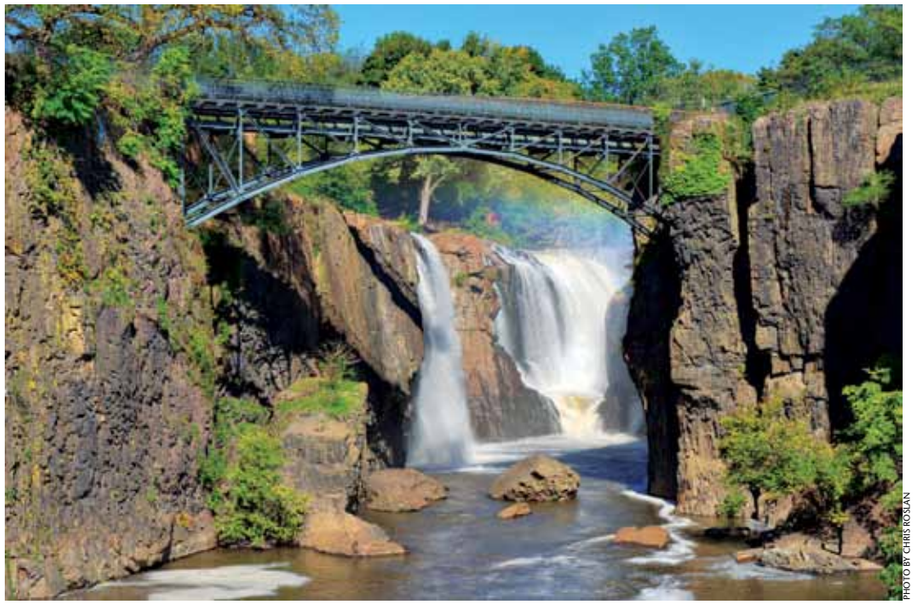


PHOTO BY CHRIS KOSLAN

The Great Falls of the Passaic River is the second-largest waterfall by volume east of the Mississippi. At 77 feet high, it is a spectacular sight and marks the beginning of the industrial section of the river.

Suggest fly fishing the Passaic to anyone other than close family and the reaction is understandably extreme, ranging from fear—"Don't get carjacked or shot"—to the sarcastic—"Are you going to fish the dead body hatch?"—to long periods of stunned silence. I am not aware of a single one of my fly-fishing friends who has ever fished any portion of this river.

Up until recently, I was in the same boat. I have lived within sight of the river for the past 19 years. My commute to work follows the river for more than 20 miles. I cross it at several locations every day. I never once considered fishing it. That is, until last year, when I accidentally Web-surfed onto a grip-and-grin photo of a spin fisherman holding a truly massive northern pike from the Passaic. The surprised look on the fisherman's face, and the corresponding comments underneath the photo, all mirrored my own disbelief: everyone was surprised that the river could be home to such a fish.

It was one of those light-bulb moments for me, the kind of illumination where you suddenly find something new, yet something that has been right in front of your eyes the whole time. Like discovering a fantastic new restaurant in your town—the restaurant has, in reality, been there for years, but you've just gotten around to trying it. Or maybe, back in school, you suddenly noticed the girl whose braces came off six months ago is now smoking hot. It's human nature: sometimes we don't notice things until they smack us in the face.

But even as I contemplated the possibility of fishing the Passaic, I still needed considerable time to overcome the decades-long preconceptions I had of the river (or at least part of the river). It also took time to muster the courage to ask someone to go along for an exploratory fishing trip. But once I waded into those murky waters, what I discovered was truly wonderful: the Passaic is a graceful river offering terrific fly fishing for myriad species of fish in a historic and scenic setting.

Peaceful Valley

The Passaic, whose name means "valley" or "peaceful valley," is the longest river within the state of New Jersey, flowing some 90 miles in the northern region of the state. It begins as a tiny stream in the affluent community of Mendham in Morris County, where it skirts the Jockey Hollow unit of Morristown National Historical Park, the location where the Continental Army spent the worst winter of the Revolutionary War, in 1779.

The stream continues past the Basking Ridge Country Club and then Lord Stirling Park, an environmental education center and large equestrian center named after the Revolutionary War major general whose estate remains on the property. Here, the Passaic also forms the western boundary of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, a huge marsh and wooded floodplain spanning 7,768 acres. Despite being only 25 miles from Manhattan, the swamp is home to more than 244 species of birds, 29 kinds of fish, 18 varieties of amphibians, 21 different reptiles, and 33 types of mammals.

After emerging from the swamp, the Passaic flows south through the Millington Gorge, a deep, forested ravine on the western slope of the Watchung Mountains that is incredibly scenic and surprisingly remote. After the gorge, the river turns northeast, a straight-as-the-crow-flies stretch of some 20 miles between the southern boundary of the swamp and the Watchung Mountains, through Gillette, Chatham, and Summit. Here, the river enters another large wetlands area, where it permanently takes on the character that most people associate with this river: large, slow, and murky.

The Passaic merges with the Rockaway River near Pine Brook, flows north through yet another large marshland alongside Interstate 80, and then merges with the Pompton River at Two Bridges, the site of another Revolutionary War encampment and former Native American village. From here, the Passaic, now a massive river, flows east through Fairfield, Little Falls, West Paterson, and then into the city of Paterson, where it plummets over the 77-foot-high Great Falls, one of the most spectacular sights in all of New Jersey.

Aside from its striking beauty, the Great Falls has tremendous historical value, for the Passaic River here was the focus of our nation's manufacturing industry in the late 1700s. Alexander Hamilton recognized the industrial potential of the falls and created one of largest industrial projects at this time in American history. The French architect and engineer Pierre Charles L'Enfant, who also designed the nation's capital, was hired to design a series of raceways to divert water from the river to power the many mills lining the river. According to Friends of the Great Falls, the Passaic waterpower system "fostered many technological advances in industry, such as the first cotton duck cloth for sails, the first continuous sheet paper, the first revolver by Samuel Colt, and the first practical submarine. . . . Paterson became the world's center for the production of cotton, silk and locomotives."

The Passaic was also central in the Silk Strike of 1913, which resulted in the advent of the eight-hour workday.

Unfortunately, this industrialization of the river also had grave consequences that Hamilton either did not foresee or did not care about; the river became one of the most polluted in America. Profits, not conservation, were the only concern. For more than 150 years, dumping waste in the river was perfectly acceptable and commonplace. It wasn't until the Clean Water Act went into effect in 1972 that the government started regulating industrial pollution. But, by that time, the Passaic River below Paterson had been decimated by more than a century of pollution.

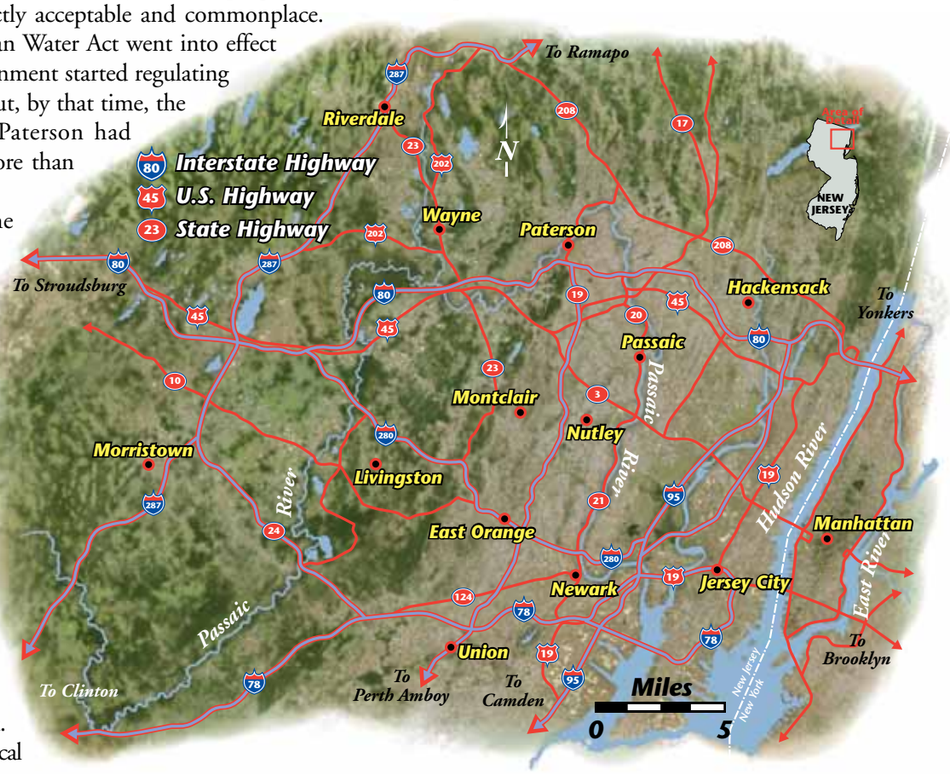
From Paterson, the river turns south and flows over Dundee Dam in Garfield, a natural 7-foot-high waterfall that was expanded in 1845 to 20 feet high and 450 feet across, forming a lakelike section of the river. This dam marks the upstream terminus of the tidal portion of the river, and also the dividing line between the "less polluted" section and the "heavily polluted" section. A recent study of geological core samples from the riverbed at Dundee indicated pollution including PCBs, heavy metals, petroleum compounds, hydrocarbons, and even two kinds of radioactive waste.

But this is nothing compared to the damage below the dam, where the Passaic continues past the city of Passaic, through Newark, and into Newark Bay. This entire lower stretch, 17 miles long, is where the river is most heavily polluted. Many abandoned factories line its banks. Just downstream of the Ironbound section of Newark is a Superfund site that is heavily contaminated with dioxin, among the most poisonous chemicals made by man. The chemical is from a facility that made millions of gallons of DDT and Agent Orange, a defoliant herbicide that destroys all vegetation on contact, which was deployed during the Vietnam War. The dioxin made its way into the river, where it remains buried underneath the silt (but above a layer of mercury and lead allegedly left by paint companies).

And if that isn't enough to make fishing in this section unappealing, *Time* magazine recently rated Newark as "the most dangerous city in the nation." As of this writing, Newark has seen a 70 percent increase in carjackings, a 13 percent increase in shootings, and a 4 percent increase in murders in the last year.

The Good Side

Given all this, people are shocked to learn that the Passaic sports a reproducing wild trout population. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP)



classifies the river's upper reaches as a "Wild Trout Stream," from its source to U.S. Highway 202 in Bernardsville. According to Mark Boriek, principal fisheries biologist for the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Freshwater Fisheries Bureau, the upper Passaic and its tributaries have a reproducing population of both brown and rainbow trout, and quite possibly brook trout in the uppermost section. A recent electro-fishing study confirmed "substantial" numbers of reproducing wild trout.

In this upper section, the Passaic is barely three steps across. The wild trout spook easily and the fly angler must approach with caution. Zero- to 2-weight rods should be employed, with floating line, ultra-lightweight leaders, and tiny flies. Hatches are sparse and mostly irrelevant; attractor patterns work well here, with a typical selection including Hare's Ear Nymphs, Elk Hair Caddises, midge patterns, and small streamers.

Where the Passaic enters the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, fishing access becomes tricky. Fishing is not allowed in the refuge itself, but anglers can fish the river from boats, provided they do not anchor or get out on the refuge side of the river. Being swampy, the river here is best for warm-water fish, including bass, pickerel, and carp. Weedless frog patterns work well for bass, when cast among the weeds that line the shore and along fallen logs and tree stumps. Six-weight rods are fine here and can make great sport in landing feisty bass.

Cohen's Got Thumb

By Pat Cohen

PHOTO BY CHRIS ROSLAN

Hook: Mustad 34011, size 3/0

Tail: White saddle hackle and Krystal Flash

Body: Stacked deer belly hair, colors to match human flesh

Below the swamp, the river starts moving again and looks more like the freestone river that it is. Each spring, the state of New Jersey stocks the river below the refuge for miles with about 6,800 trout. Stocking begins at the White Bridge at the southern end of the swamp and continues to New Jersey Route 24 near Summit. Popular public access points include the bridge at South Maple, the Millington Gorge, Passaic River County Park, and Shepard Kollock Park in Chatham. Four- and 5-weight rods are best for stocked trout.

Below Chatham and extending through Paterson, the river is mostly a slow-moving, murky behemoth that offers excellent angling for smallmouth bass and northern pike. Given the marshy nature of this entire stretch, which goes on for many miles, shore fishing is not feasible and the river should be floated. However, despite miles of river with tremendous fishing possibilities, fishing pressure is nonexistent.

In Little Falls, 15 miles from Manhattan, an excellent wade-fishing spot is located in the park behind Main Street and runs all the way to the U.S. Highway 46 bridge. Having just gone over the town's namesake little falls, the river enters a mini-gorge with fast-moving water and great fishing for smallmouth bass. Seven-weight rods are best, given the size of the river here and the volume of water.

This entire midriver stretch of the Passaic, from the Pine Brook area to above Dundee Fallsin Garfield, sports perhaps the best northern pike fishery in New Jersey. According to Boriek, pike were initially stocked in a lake upriver and escaped into the Passaic. The fish thrived and the decision was made to begin stocking them in the Passaic. In 2009, the state stocked some 11,500 pike in the river. And while the public has not caught on to this fishery yet, there are reports of pike more than 40 inches long being caught by spin fishers.

Fly anglers should take note of this completely untapped pike fishery. Boat launches at Two Bridges and Elmwood Park provide easy access, and the river has excellent conditions for kayaks, canoes, drift boats, and johnboats (be sure to take a map with the locations of both Little Falls and Great Falls marked—you do not want to go over them!). Seven-weight rods work best with floating lines in warmer weather and sinking-tip lines in winter. Flies resembling shiners or other minnows work well, cast near shorelines, below obstructions, or even floated on the bottom during the winter to resemble dead minnows. My favorite way to fish for them is to cast top-water flies in the shallows, especially Pat Cohen's Got Thumb, which was specially designed to fish the Passaic's "dead-body hatch." Pike are highly aggressive, and it is incredibly exciting to see the wake of a large fish approaching the fly. Fishing for pike is excellent year-round, especially after ice-out in the spring when the pike prepare to spawn.

Allegedly, striped bass and shad can be found in the tidal section of the river below Dundee Dam. Historically, 26 different species of fish lived in this tidal section, including salmon and sturgeon. The presence of an ancient Native American fishing weir a short distance below the dam, still in plain sight, attests to a great fishery from centuries ago. But today, since this section is so heavily polluted, anglers do not come here anymore. The NJDEP has also posted strict "do not eat" consumption advisories for all fish and shellfish from this section; the crime-ridden image of Newark does not help either. It's debatable as to how much of an actual risk is posed to catch-and-release anglers, given that the contaminants are buried under 40-some years of silt and river bottom. A number of collegiate and high school rowing teams use this section of the river every day, so how bad can it be? I have seen some large fish swirling on the surface of the river in the summer, which I am guessing are shad (I have not yet fished this section.)

This stretch of the Passaic is now being studied by a coalition of government agencies, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Jersey Department of Transportation, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. The Lower Passaic River Restoration Project aims to capitalize on the authority of the Superfund program, the Water Resources Development Act, the Clean Water Act, and other laws to improve the health of the river, including remediating contaminated sediments, improving water quality, restoring degraded shorelines, restoring and creating new habitats, and enhancing human use.

Leap of Faith

It goes without saying that a good part of the enjoyment of fishing new waters is not having any idea what to expect. I had already been surprised, if not impressed, by the quality of the pike, smallmouth bass, and stocked-trout fishing I'd encountered elsewhere on this river. But wild trout are different; they represent beauty and pristine waters. Their presence in a river automatically elevates that river in the angler's eye to something special, the pinnacle of things piscatorial. But this was, after all, the Passaic. So on this chilly October day, my father and I set out with absolutely zero expectation of seeing a wild trout.

We pulled into the parking area off U.S. Highway 202 and startled several deer; they were surely wondering what these two guys were doing there. A short walk through the woods and the tea-stained stream revealed itself. It was small but definitely had the look of a wild trout stream, with high banks, rocks, waist-deep pools, twists and turns, swift current, and plenty of shade.

My father chose a spot on the larger pool at a bend in the stream and tied on his go-to fly, a small olive Woolly Bugger. He had a fish on in minutes, although it turned out to be a chub. A few casts later and he was playing another fish, a gorgeous wild brown trout about 8 inches long and in excellent condition. We were stunned.

"No one is going to believe that I caught a wild trout in the Passaic," he said, knowing he was absolutely correct in making that statement.

Perhaps at some point in the future, as word gets out about the "other" Passaic—the wild-trout-stream Passaic, the Great Swamp Passaic with its incredible wildlife and excellent bass fishing, the beautiful Millington Gorge Passaic, or the incredible northern pike Passaic—the idea of wetting a line in this river won't be so absurd after all. But there's no hurry; at least for now, I've got the whole river to myself. Except for the dead guy that just floated past.

Chris Roslan is the president and managing partner of Dera, Roslan & Campion Inc., Public Relations in New York City.

Passaic River NOTEBOOK

PHOTO BY CHRIS ROSLAN

When: *Wild trout:* Year-round. *Stocked trout:* April–June. *Bass:* best May–August. *Pike:* March–June and September–December.

Where: Northern NJ.

Headquarters: *Upper river trout:* Basking Ridge, NJ. *Bass and pike:* Fairfield, NJ.

Appropriate gear: *Wild trout section:* 0- to 3-wt. rods, floating line, 9-ft. 7X leaders. *Stocked trout section:* 4- to 5-wt. rods, floating line, 7-ft. 5X leaders. *Smallmouth bass:* 6-wt. rods, floating line, 6-ft. 3X leader. *Pike:* 7-wt. rods, floating and sinking-tip lines, 7-ft. leader with 12 in. of wire tippet.

Useful fly patterns: *Trout:* Elk Hair Caddis, Woolly Bugger, Hare's Ear Nymph, small terrestrials. *Bass/pike:* Pat Cohen's Got Thumb, Clouser Minnow, Enrico's Sunfish, crawfish patterns.

Necessary accessories: Pliers or fish grip for pike, tick repellent.

Nonresident license: $9/2 days, $19.50/7 days, $34/annual.

Fly shops/guides: *Califon:* Shannon's Fly & Tackle, (908) 832-5736, www.shannonsflytackle.com. *Pine Brook:* Tight Lines Fly Fishing, (973) 244-5990, www.tightlinesflyfishing.com. *Succasunna:* Ramsey Outdoor, (973) 584-7798, www.ramseyoutdoor.com. *Upper Saddle River:* Streams of Dreams, (201) 934-1138, www.streamsofdreams.com.

Books/maps/information: *Nightshade on the Passaic* by Wheeler Antabanez; *Paterson (Images of America)* by Philip M. Read; *Alexander Hamilton* by Ron Chernow; *A Guide to New Jersey's Revolutionary War Trail* by Mark Di Ionno. *New Jersey Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme Mapping. Friends of the Great Falls, www.patersongreatfalls.org; Lower Passaic Restoration Project, www.ourpassaic.org.

ALL PHOTOS BY JERRY DARKES

Water Trails, OH

Access and Adventure for Anglers

By Jerry Darkes

Ohio and fly fishing are not terms that generally go together, at least not in the minds of most anglers. Of course, a notable exception to the state's general dearth of excellent fly fishing is so-called "Steelhead Alley," which comprises the Lake Erie tributaries, but is a relatively recent fly-rod phenomenon; other than that, Ohio is hardly known for great fly water.

However, as an Ohioan myself, I'm happy to report that fly fishing is alive and well—and growing—in the Buckeye State. Certainly numerous small lakes and countless farm ponds are available to fly fishers across the state; inland rivers, meanwhile, are largely overlooked, yet they provide opportunities for fly fishers to pursue an interesting assortment of fish species.

One of the more populous states, Ohio presents plenty of river and recreation-land access for outdoor activities. The concept of water trails, which link hiking, bicycling, rail, and water transport systems, has been around for a number of years. To make water trails a reality, several state agencies work with county and local agencies to create defined access areas for paddlers and anglers.

Currently the state boasts five designated water trails. They are designed to maintain the natural character of the waterway, limit road access, and promote low-impact use. The recreational benefits reach anglers, canoeists, kayakers, bird- and wildlife watchers, and hunters. In addition, they increase the property value for adjacent landowners.

The two water trails of interest here—the Kokosing River Water Trail and the Mad River Water Trail—are in central Ohio, easy to reach from various metropolitan areas. The two rivers, however, are completely different.

Kokosing River

The Kokosing River winds through the rolling hills of rural central Ohio. The Kokosing was already designated a state scenic river when 28 miles of the stream were designated as Ohio's first water trail in 2005. The Kokosing Gap Trail, a paved byway for walking and biking, follows the river for 9 miles, providing an unusual way for anglers to reach the water—by pedaling instead of paddling.

Smallmouth bass are the most abundant game fish in the Ohio Water Trail stretches of the Mad and Kokosing Rivers. In fact, the Kokosing is one of the top smallmouth fisheries in the state (above). Deeper water along a rocky shoreline is prime habitat for Kokosing River smallmouth that cruise these areas to feed on crayfish. A kayak allows this angler to quietly and effectively work this stretch of water (right).

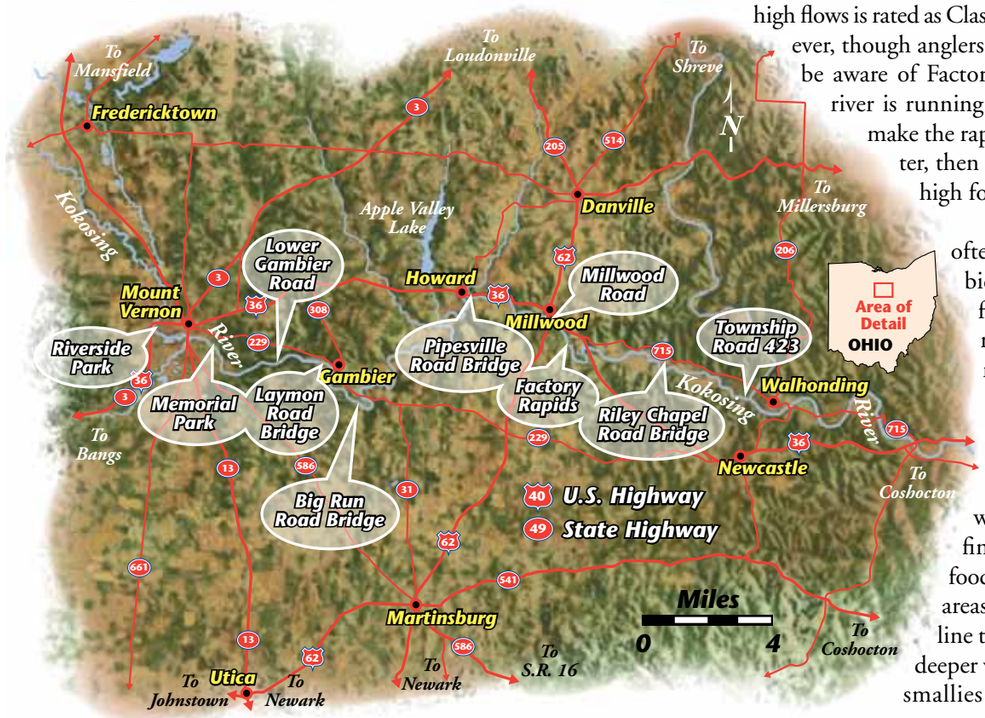
An angler plays a smallmouth hooked in a deep pocket under an overhanging tree. During low-water periods, fish move into areas offering the most cover and protection.

The Kokosing is one of the most biologically diverse rivers in the state and is recognized as an exceptional smallmouth bass fishery. In addition, rock bass, sunfish, and carp are all targets for fly anglers on this fertile stream. Most smallies range from 10 to 14 inches, but there are fish pushing 20 inches in the river. Anglers consider any bass longer than 16 inches a trophy in the Kokosing. Channel catfish, saugers, saugeyes (a sauger-walleye hybrid), and even muskies have been known to turn up in the Kokosing on occasion, so any given day on that water might yield an appealing variety of fish species.

Although wade-fishing can be productive and done from any of the access points, floating remains the best way to cover this picturesque river, allowing anglers to fish a lot of prime water that is difficult to reach without a boat. Marginal water can be covered quickly or even eliminated, and prime water fished thoroughly before moving to other productive areas. Of course, anglers can also park the boat, get out, and wade to spend more time fishing the better locations.

The Kokosing Water Trail begins just outside the town of Mount Vernon, where the river flows easterly. Paddling anglers will find nine easily recognized launch areas. Most of the water is designated as Class I+ to Class II, so it is easily handled by inexperienced boaters. The river consists of a series of riffles and pools that transition into long, slow stretches. At a stretch known as Factory Rapids below the Millwood Road access, the river squeezes between steep sandstone walls, and during high flows is rated as Class III water. However, though anglers certainly should be aware of Factory Rapids, if the river is running high enough to make the rapids Class III water, then the flows are too high for good fishing.

The Kokosing often runs a bit turbid, but is easy to fish under normal flows. Smallmouth and rock bass prefer rocky ledges and broken-rock hard-bottom areas where they can find their favorite food: crayfish. Rocky areas along the shoreline that plunge off to deeper water also attract smallies and rock bass.



Soft-bottom areas, meanwhile, harbor carp, sunfish, and even the odd channel catfish that will eat a fly.

Fly fishing on the Kokosing is fairly simple. A 5- or 6-weight rod and floating line are suitable for nearly all areas, although a sinking-tip line comes in handy in the deeper flows; carrying two rods, one rigged with a floating line and the other with a sinking-tip, line is certainly pragmatic. A leader tapered to 2X or 3X tippet is perfect for casting a variety of both surface and sinking flies.

The ubiquitous Woolly Bugger gets the nod as the best all-around fly—anglers carrying a wide range of shades, sizes, and weights can effectively imitate just about every fish food in the river. A white Woolly Bugger imitates baitfish; olive imitates crayfish, as well as damselfly and dragonfly nymphs; brown passes for hellgrammites and also crayfish. Woolly Buggers can be fished on the swing, strip-retrieved, or dead-drifted. Of course, life is bigger than mere Woolly Buggers, so I like other patterns just as well, including the Deep Creeper, along with all-white, gray/white, and chartreuse/white size-4 Clouser-style Deep Minnows, which are especially effective early and late in the year when crayfish activity is minimal. These Deep Minnows imitate most of the baitfish in the river. If the water is off-color because of recent rain, slightly larger flies can be more productive. Smallmouth are rarely shy about fly size and need to see a fly in order to hit it.

Surface patterns can also be very effective. Both deer-hair and hard-body poppers and divers, as well as slider-style flies such as the Sneaky Pete, are good choices. Foam-body patterns such as the Todd's Wiggle Minnow are also deadly as well as versatile: they can be fished as a crippled baitfish on the surface or retrieved steadily so they stay under water—the fly angler's version of a crankbait. For surface flies, the old adage "Bright day, bright fly, and dark day, dark fly" generally holds true for color selection. If damselflies and dragonflies are noticeably active, a blue popper is often productive. To minimize sunfish problems—and by problems I mean little sunfish making such a nuisance of themselves by attacking your flies that you can't get a presentation down to the bass—larger bugs (size 4 and larger) are best. If you want to play with the little guys, too, and handle more fish, just use smaller flies and you will be plenty busy with colorful sunfish. Besides, a big smallie can still inhale a small popper and the smaller fish will get hooked more often.

An interesting technique is to dead-drift crayfish and hellgrammite patterns under an indicator when floating between wading areas. The indicator should be set so the fly drifts a bit above the bottom, and needs to be large enough to suspend the fly. Cast upstream and simply dead-drift the fly; if the line passes too far downstream of the boat, pick up and cast again, and work the fly along any visible structure.

The Kokosing River eventually joins the Mohican River to form the Walhonding River, both of which also provide good angling opportunities. The Kokosing is centrally located between Columbus and Cleveland, yet it receives relatively little angling pressure. It is a great place to enjoy a leisurely afternoon, combine several recreational activities, and catch a few fish. A downloadable map of the Kokosing Water Trail is available at www.dnr.state.oh.us/Portals/4/pdfs/access/kokosingrwt.pdf.

Mad River

The Mad River is an anomaly in several ways. First, it is a cold-water stream located in the middle of Ohio—a place where warm-water fisheries are the usual. Second, it was created by straightening an existing streambed, usually the death knell for any free-flowing stream. Finally, it supports trout year-round, some of which grow to surprising size.

The Mad rises from a series of springs close to the highest point in the state, near the town of Bellefontaine. It was called the "mad river" by early settlers because the local natives told them that anyone trying to follow the river's winding course through bogs and swamps would lose his mind. In the 1880s the river was straightened and channelized to reduce flooding. As a result, flows increased and water temperatures remained lower. It is likely this work also fractured the limestone bedrock in some places, creating an additional influx of cold spring water.

Trout were first planted in 1884. Although records of any significant trout survival are scant, trout have been in the system since then. The state of Ohio began stocking rainbows in 1931, and the Mad was treated as a put-and-take fishery for decades. The Ohio Division of Wildlife switched to stocking the river with brown trout fingerlings in 1983. Since 1985, approximately 15,000 4- to 7-inch browns have been planted each year. Survival and growth rates have been exceptional, and there is some evidence of natural reproduction.

Most trout caught in the Mad range from 10 to 14 inches. Anglers are allowed to keep two fish longer than 12 inches, but creel surveys have shown that the vast majority of fish caught are released. Browns longer than 20 inches are caught each year, but they are hard to come by. Realistically, any fish more than 15 inches long is a good catch.

The best trout water on the Mad is in Champaign County. U.S. Highway 68 parallels much of the river between Springfield and West Liberty. Various side roads lead to bridges where anglers can get to the water. The river received water trail designation recently: in August 2010. Owing to that designation, access to the river will improve in the future.

Because it was straightened, the Mad has few bends and turns. Fallen logs in the water provide cover, as do numerous stream-improvement structures that have been constructed by several fishing clubs. The river is floatable, but in some sections boaters must get out and walk their craft through shallows. The Mad is characterized by high, steep banks with a thick cover of brush and trees in many places, so wading anglers will spend most of their time in the water.

The tunnel-like canopy of trees over the river provides trout-friendly shade, and a number of springs feed cold water into the system. Water temperatures remain relatively constant, even in the heat of the summer. The Mad is basically a "365 stream," fishable most any day of the year, rarely freezing over in the winter unless there is extreme cold or heavy snow.

Limestone based and very fertile, the Mad resembles a spring creek in many ways. Even after heavy rains it normally discolors for only a day or so. The major Eastern hatches are well represented on the river; they include Hendricksons, Sulphurs, and Green Drakes. The river also produces hatches of well-known Midwest mayflies, such as Brown Drakes and *Hexagenia*. Caddisflies, stoneflies, and midges are common, with the latter hatching every day, especially in low light, and even providing dry-fly action in winter. The river is also rich in scuds and cress bugs, along with baitfish, sculpins, and crawfish. Mix in summertime terrestrial activity and it becomes apparent that Mad River trout are well fed.

Most anglers use 8- to 9-foot, 4- or 5-weight rods with floating lines to fish the Mad. Fly selection is based on expected or observed insect activity, but generic patterns such as Hare's Ear and Pheasant Tail nymphs, along with Adamses and Elk Hair Caddises, will produce fish. During the summer, a cricket, black beetle, or ant pattern can generate lots of action because these land-born insects drop onto the water from overhanging trees and trout are quick to take notice. In fact, this summertime action is overlooked by most anglers.

If the water rises and discolors, larger trout will move out of their hiding places and go on the prowl—prime time to fish big, flashy, wiggly weighted streamers, especially along the banks and near cover. Also, deer-hair mice and other large floating bugs swum on the surface at night can tempt night-feeding browns that rarely come out during the day.

Several Mad River tributaries also present angling opportunities. Cedar Run emerges from the Cedar Bog State Nature Preserve, a remnant glacial fen that is worth visiting. A section of this picturesque little creek has benefited handsomely from significant stream-enhancement work and is open to guided fee fishing (www.cedarrunclub.com). Interestingly, when Cedar Run was first surveyed back in 1927, it was shown to support wild brook trout, likely descendants of inaugural fish plantings.

The Mad is easy to reach, so angling pressure is highest on weekends, especially in the spring and early summer. Canoe traffic, primarily in the summer, is minimal on the upper river. Between Urbana and Springfield, the Mad begins to warm and smallmouth bass numbers increase as trout numbers decrease. Additional warmwater species also become part of the mix. The Mad joins the Great Miami River just north of Dayton and is part of the Miami Conservancy District. A downloadable map of the Mad River is available at www.miamiconservancy.org/recreation/documents/MADRiver_1WEB.pdf.

Jerry Darkes is a freelance writer and photographer who lives in Strongsville, Ohio.

Deep Creeper

PHOTO BY EASTERN FLY FISHING

Hook: Daiichi 2461, sizes 1–4, or Gamakatsu B10S stinger, size 2

Tail: Marabou or arctic fox tail

Body: Estaz

Legs: Rubber hackle (tied in behind and/or in front of the body)

Back/wing: Magnum Zonker strip (push hook point through and then tie down in front)

Eyes: Bead chain or barbell eyes.

Colors: Various, but olive/brown combinations are typical

Deer-Hair Beetle

PHOTO BY EASTERN FLY FISHING

Hook: Daiichi 1310, sizes 12–16

Body: Black deer body hair, tied in by tips and pulled forward, coated with head cement for strength

Legs: A few of the black deer hairs used for the body

Ohio Water Trails NOTEBOOK

When: *Kokosing River:* April–October. *Mad River:* year-round.

Where: Central OH.

Headquarters: *Kokosing River:* Mount Vernon and Gambier, OH. Mount Vernon–Knox County Chamber of Commerce, (740) 393-1111, www.knoxchamber.com; Knox County Park District, www.knoxcountyparks.org. *Mad River:* Springfield and Urbana, OH. Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, (937) 325-7621, www.greaterspringfield.com; Champaign County Chamber and Visitors Bureau, (937) 653-5764, www.champaignohio.com; Miami Conservancy District, www.miamiconservancy.org.

Appropriate gear: 4- to 6-wt. rods, floating and sinking-tip lines.

Useful fly patterns: Woolly Buggers in baitfish and crayfish colors, JD's Crawpin, sculpin patterns, Zonkers, Deep Creeper. *Kokosing River:* Deer-hair and hard-body poppers, Todd's Wiggle Minnow, Sneaky Petes, Clouser Deep Minnows. *Mad River:* Hatch-matching dry and nymph patterns, midge dries, crickets, deer-hair beetle patterns.

Necessary accessories: Rain jacket, polarized sunglasses, life jacket for floating, camera, weather-appropriate clothing, sunscreen, insect repellent.

Nonresident license: $11/1 day, $19/3 days, $40/annual.

Fly shops/guides: *Cincinnati:* Delamere & Hopkins (information on the Mad River), (513) 871-3474, www.bestgear.com/cincinnati. *Columbus:* Mad River Outfitters (information and guided trips on both rivers), (614) 451-0363, (888) 451-0363, www.madriveroutfitters.com. *Dayton:* Orvis Dayton (information on the Mad River), (937) 435-4485, www.orvis.com/dayton.

Books/maps/information: *Canoeing and Kayaking Ohio's Rivers and Streams: An Access Guide for Anglers and Paddlers* by Rick Combs and Steve Gillen; *The Fly Fisher's Guide to the Mad River* by Brian Flechsig; *Fishing Ohio: An Angler's Guide to Over 200 Fishing Spots in the Buckeye State* by Tom Cross; *Fly Fishing Warm Water Rivers: Lessons Learned on Ohio's Great Miami* by Joseph D. Cornwall. *Ohio Atlas & Gazetteer* by DeLorme Publishing. Ohio Water Trails, www.dnr.state.oh.us/tabid/2897/default.aspx; Ohio Kayak Fishing (floating details), www.ohio-kayak-fishing.com; Buckeye United Fly Fishers, www.buckeyeflyfishers.com; Mad Men Chapter of Trout Unlimited, www.tumadmen.org; Miami Valley Fly Fishers, mvff.tripod.com.

Experiencing the Big Easy/By Mark B. Hatter

New Orleans, Louisiana

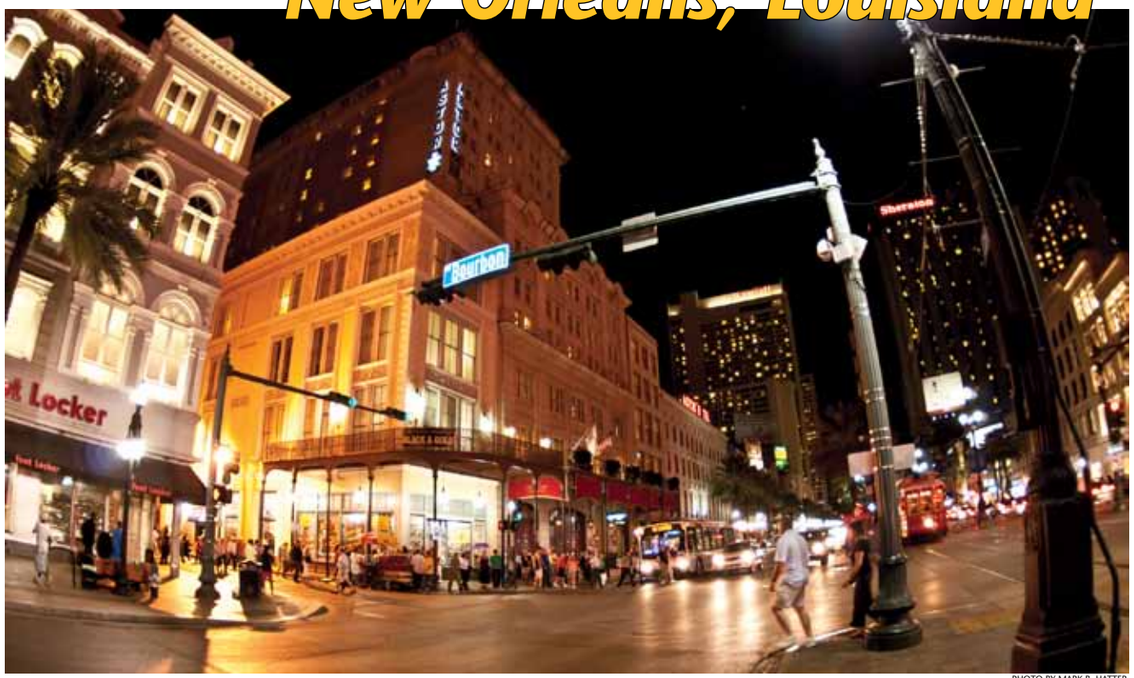
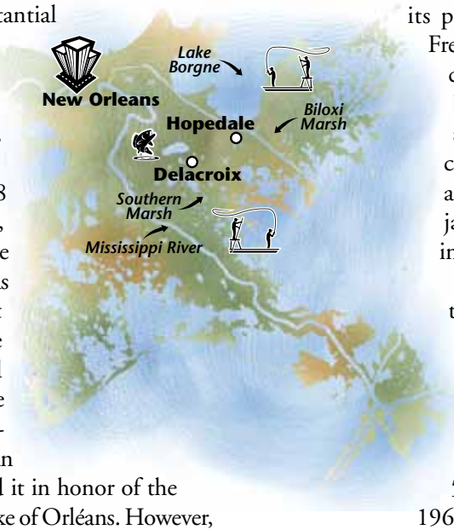


PHOTO BY MARK B. HATTER

Not far from the Gulf of Mexico, a port city, more inland than not, of rich history and eclectic character, precariously sits on a crescent-shaped foundation of subsiding earth flanking the mighty Mississippi River. Nearly 300 years old, this city is a gateway to substantial United States commerce, exhibits cultural variety, and offers some of the best fly fishing for a plethora of saltwater species. I'm referring, of course, to New Orleans.

The city was founded in 1718 by the French as Nouvelle-Orléans, under the direction of Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville; the site was selected because of its relative height above ground along the flood-prone banks of the lower Mississippi and its adjacency to trading and portage routes in the region. From its founding, the French intended it to be an important colonial city and named it in honor of the then regent of France, Philip II, Duke of Orléans. However, the priest-chronicler Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix described it in 1721 as "a place of a hundred wretched hovels in a malarious wet thicket of willows and dwarf palmettos, infested by serpents and alligators." Nevertheless, he was likely the first to predict for it an imperial future.



Diverse, artistic, multicultural, vulnerable, modern-day New Orleans is an oxymoron. On one hand, with its polyglot population blended from French, Caribbean, Creole, and American cultures, New Orleans, aka "the Big Easy," has created iconic music and cuisine over the course of three centuries. Rich reserves of petroleum and gas in the "lower boot" and adjacent waters fuel its economy and importance to U.S. energy needs.

On the other hand, much of the city now lies several feet below sea level, a risky liability during hurricane season. Indeed, three of the western hemisphere's most devastating cyclones have pounded New Orleans in the last 50 years: Betsy in 1965, Camille in 1969, and, of course, Katrina in 2005. In short, New Orleans's broad range of characteristics—from swamps and serpents to cultural diversity and economic influence to atmospheric vulnerability—all crystallize to personify the city as a tough kid that can take a punch.

I fell in love with New Orleans in February 2008. It began with a phone call from a good fishing friend of mine, Greg Dini, who had left Florida the previous summer to take a job coaching baseball at his alma mater, Tulane, in downtown New Orleans. In the course of a rapid series of events, Dini decided his office should be on the water instead of a ball field; he became a fly-fishing guide for the vast stretch of marshes along the Mississippi River. In a few short months he earned stream cred as an accomplished professional, under the tutelage of Captain Gregg Arnold (who holds multiple world records for redfish and black drum on fly tackle). But before we delve into the smorgasbord of piscatorial opportunities, let's talk about what New Orleans offers the savvy traveler.

PHOTO BY MARK B. HATTER

If letting your hair down, getting crazy (perhaps even naked), and imbibing mass quantities of alcoholic beverages is your bag, you can't go wrong booking a trip to fish during the peak of party season: Mardi Gras.

If letting your hair down, getting crazy (perhaps even naked), and imbibing mass quantities of alcoholic beverages is your bag, you can't go wrong booking a trip to fish during the peak of party season: Mardi Gras. Mardi Gras refers to Carnival celebrations, beginning on or after Epiphany and ending on the day before Ash Wednesday. Mardi Gras is French for "fat Tuesday," referring to the practice of the last night of eating richer, fatty foods before the ritual fasting of the Lenten season, which starts on Ash Wednesday. Popular practices include wearing masks and costumes, overturning social conventions, dancing, and holding flamboyant parades. New Orleans's Mardi Gras celebrations are part of the basis of the local slogan "*Laissez les bons temps rouler*," ("Let the good times roll") and the nickname Big Easy. The epicenter of Mardi Gras is Bourbon Street in the famous French Quarter, where the line between great fun and complete moral collapse can be blurred. Like all great party destinations, the city can keep a secret: what happens in New Orleans stays in New Orleans.

PHOTO BY MARK B. HATTER

Sweet pastries are popular during Mardi Gras, and Café Du Monde, a coffee shop on Decatur Street in the French Quarter, is one of the best, known for its café au lait and its beignets, deep-fried pastries liberally sprinkled with confectioner's sugar. In the New Orleans style, the coffee is blended with chicory. The historic location at the upper end of the French Market was established in 1862. It is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except for Christmas Day and days when the occasional hurricane passes too close.

Speaking of coffee and pastries, a favorite breakfast spot of mine is La Madeleine Bakery Café & Bistro. Dini lives a few short blocks from this superb restaurant, and we've made a pilgrimage there every trip I've made to the Big Easy. While you might think that breakfast is breakfast, you have not lived until you've enjoyed a potato galette and freshly baked croissant as part of their Country French Breakfast plate.

The Big Easy is well known for its cuisine, but I have two dinner favorites that Dini and I hit during my trips. The first is Mikimoto Japanese Restaurant. I am a dyed-in-the-wool sushi fan, and

PHOTO BY MARK B. HATTER

Mikimoto offers an excellent selection of rolls, sashimi, and sushi options. I can't think of anything better after a long day on the marsh than cooling my jets with a Kirin Ichiban and their signature lobster roll with a few slices of salmon sashimi. Bourbon House offers more upscale and closer-to-home dining selections of authentic New Orleans–style seafood and Cajun cuisine. The fried calamari is exceptional, and the bar offers a variety of draft brews to accent a dinner platter of fried or broiled sea fare. You can't beat the location; the entertainment and temptations of Bourbon Street lie just beyond the door. The last time I was there, Dini, his wife, and I slipped into a jazz bar and sampled some of the city's finest musicians playing a brand of funked-up jazz that surely originated locally.

Enough about the city, though; time to elaborate on what the coastal waters have to offer the fly fisher. And, with regard to fishing opportunities, there's good news and bad news. The good news is that you'll find a wide variety of places and species to tackle on the saltwater side. The bad news is that you must hire a professional guide to get to where you need to go; with all the water, the complexities of the marsh, and the distances that must be traveled to get to where the fishing is good, you cannot possibly do this solo.

Redfish Mud Minnow

Biloxi Marsh–Hopedale

The launch point into the Biloxi Marsh is the small hamlet of Hopedale at the end of Saint Bernard Parish, about an hour's drive from New Orleans. Hopedale sits at the intersection of the Hopedale Canal and the Mississippi River–Gulf Outlet Canal (aka MRGO, pronounced "Mister Go"), dredged in 1965 to connect the Intracoastal Waterway with the Gulf of Mexico. The MRGO was expected to be an economic boon that would eventually lead to the replacement of the Mississippi riverfront as the metro area's main commercial harbor. It failed to live up to commercial expectations, and is blamed for freshwater-marsh-killing saltwater intrusion and erosion, which has increased the area's risk of hurricane storm surge. The MRGO is now filled in at Hopedale, an effort to prevent further erosion and intrusion.

Roughly everything east-northeast of the MRGO, from Lake Borgne south to the mouth of the canal's Gulf access, is known as the Biloxi Marsh. There are hundreds of square miles of shallow saltwater bays and "lakes," connected by both natural and man-made channels and sloughs. In general terms, the farther north, east, and south you travel, the more open the marsh becomes and the more likely you'll encounter larger redfish and black drum. From Hopedale to the outer edge of the marsh bordering the Gulf in all directions, travel time by boat is about an hour. In visual terms, if Louisiana is shaped like a boot, the Biloxi Marsh occupies the toe of the boot.

PHOTO BY MARK B. HATTER

PHOTO BY MARK B. HATTER

Water clarity is a function of the time of year, with cleaner water being found during the cooler months from October through April. At times, the water visibility in the marsh can exceed 5 feet, making for some extraordinary sight-fishing for reds approaching 40 pounds. But don't worry about the lack of visibility if the marsh is turbid; both reds and blacks are still readily visible, even in dirty water, as they push water or tail. Peak season for jumbo redfish is typically mid-October through the middle of February. While large black drum can be found year-round, they tend to school and are more prevalent during the cooler months.

If you are on your way to Hopedale for a day's fishing in the Biloxi Marsh, your guide will undoubtedly take you to Penny's Café for a hearty breakfast of eggs, grits, and toast. You will likely also order lunch; if you do, I highly recommend getting the hot sausage po' boy, "fully dressed."

Southern Marsh–Delacroix

On the western side of the MRGO, the town of Delacroix (also about an hour's drive from New Orleans) is the point of departure for fishing the southern marsh. This region is also vast, and, because of its prolific number of smaller lakes and sloughs, a great alternative if weather conditions are too difficult for fishing larger water bodies to the east. In fact, one of the great things about the marsh in general, and this area in particular, is that one can always find clean water because of the protection afforded by high marsh grass on lee shorelines.

The Delacroix area is particularly special because this part of the marsh grows luxuriant aquatic grasses, which tend to filter the water, improving visibility and thereby providing anglers excellent sight-fishing for redfish. The redfish around

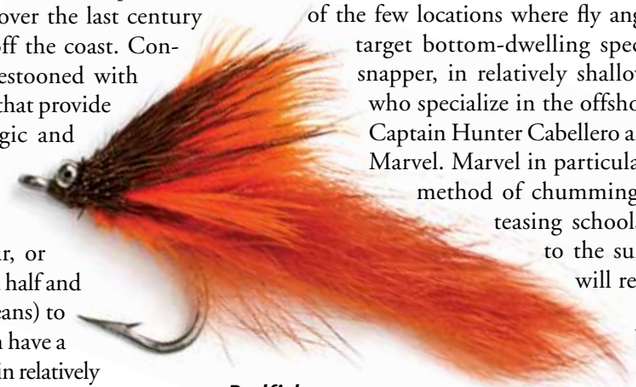
Delacroix have particularly intense shading; they glow bright orange, likely because of the higher influx of fresh water in this part of the marsh. Because the water is so clear in and around Delacroix, sight-fishing with poppers is the preferred method for taking reds on flies. In fact, the water is sweet enough to hold largemouth bass, which are commonly caught along with the redfish. As you might imagine, the sweet water also plays host to a healthy population of alligators. Unlike Hopedale, Delacroix has a few places to stay if you don't want to commute from New Orleans. Captain Charlie Thomason's fish camp is an excellent choice.

PHOTO BY MARK B. HATTER

Offshore

Because Louisiana is blessed with high concentrations of natural gas and crude oil beneath its crust, the petroleum industry has plumbed extensively over the last century in both shallow and deep waters off the coast. Consequently, the coastal waters are festooned with mostly retired oil and gas platforms that provide havens for a wide variety of pelagic and coastal species.

Bigger boats and longer runs are often required, but departing out of Pointe à la Hache, Port Sulphur, or Venice (which are between one and a half and two and a half hours from New Orleans) to leapfrog retired coastal platforms can have a huge payoff for fly fishers. Platforms in relatively shallow "green" water are excellent targets for finding coastal species such as cobia and crevalle jack. Both species often free-swim around the structures or, when seemingly not present, can be chummed up from depths to take a fly. While you can get away with using light tackle for large fish in the marsh, here stout gear is required to keep even modestly sized fish from dragging you deep within the structure.



Redfish Mini-Mouse

Farther offshore, additional targets include bottom-dwelling species as well as pelagic fish. Louisiana is one of the few locations where fly anglers can actually target bottom-dwelling species, such as red snapper, in relatively shallow water. Guides who specialize in the offshore realm include Captain Hunter Cabellero and Captain Peace Marvel. Marvel in particular has perfected a method of chumming near platforms, teasing schools of red snapper to the surface where they will readily take flies.

Yellowfin and blackfin tuna often frequent the blue-water platforms in deeper water. For these species, chumming is essential to work schools of fish to the surface. Really heavy tackle (14-weight and heavier rods) is the required gear for the tunas.

In addition to the man-made structures virtually everywhere off the coast, a natural reef structure called "the Lumps," approximately 18 miles out off the southwest main river channel, is a mid-winter hot spot for large yellowfin tuna. I've been there only once, and while the weather during my trip was horrific (we turned around and returned to port after we discovered we could not anchor in the rough conditions in a 56-foot Hatteras), in the 30 minutes we worked the reef trying to find purchase with the anchor, I saw yellowfin tuna crashing bait pods in all directions. Although I never even got to cast, when conditions allow, boats anchored over the hard bottom consistently chum triple-digit-weight tunas to the surface. My guess is that the next fly-tackle world-record yellowfin tuna will come off the Lumps.

PHOTO BY CAPTAIN DAN AYO, SHALLOW MINDED GUIDE SERVICE

Disaster and Recovery

On April 20, 2010, the kid who can take a punch took yet another stunning blow to the head when the exploratory oil-drilling platform Deepwater Horizon blew up, resulting in more than 200 million gallons of crude oil spewing into the gulf off Louisiana for nearly four months. Sadly, parts of lower Louisiana were heavily affected; we all saw the devastation on the news, from oil-covered pelicans to dying sea turtles. Even six months later, some areas, such as Barataria Bay, were still being affected.

On the other hand, the doomsday predictions of the total collapse of the marsh never manifested. I fished the Biloxi Marsh in early October 2010, and over the course of several days did not find any evidence whatsoever of oil or even sheen intrusion. At least the Biloxi Marsh, it seems, has dodged a bullet. During the spill, Hopedale changed from a sleepy backwater launch point to a small industrial city bristling with new oil-containment boats and British Petroleum–employed watermen from local parishes. By October, no oil had been found in the Biloxi Marsh and operations were winding down.

During my days fishing the marsh with both Dini and Arnold, the wildlife was abundant, from birds to bait pods, and we hammered the redfish and black drum. Arnold even took a 46-pound black drum on a fly on the second day. I don't want to minimize the destruction or downplay any potential long-term effects caused by this man-induced disaster, but I've seen for myself that at least the Biloxi Marsh is alive and well and loaded with fish.

A week after I returned home my email buzzed while I was online; Dini had sent me a note. I opened the email to an image of a 27-pound redfish taken just that day in the Chandeleur Islands, with the following words: "One of 8 taken today on fly over 25 pounds, would have had more if my angler could cast . . . wish you were here. . . ."

It seems the kid really can take a punch.

PHOTO BY MARK B. HATTER

New Orleans INSIDER

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Fly shop: Uptown Angler, (504) 529-3597, www.uptownangler.com.

Local guides: Capt. Greg Dini, (407) 538-0770, www.flywaterexpeditions.com; Capt. Gregg Arnold, (504) 237-6742, www.fishinthelandofgiants.com; Capt. Hunter Cabellero, (504) 610-1686, www.paradise-outfitters.com; Capt. Peace Marvel, (504) 481-1327, www.reelpeace.com; Capt. Charlie Thomason, (504) 278-3474, www.captaincharlie.com; Shallow Minded Guide Service, (985) 855-1381, www.flyfishlouisiana.com; Yellow Dog Flyfishing Adventures, (888) 777-5060, www.yellowdogflyfishing.com.

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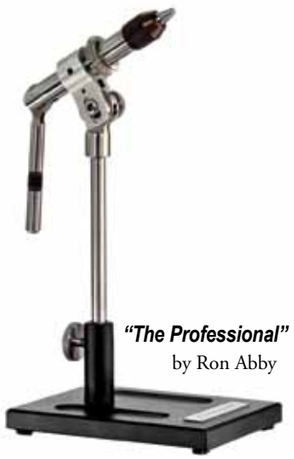

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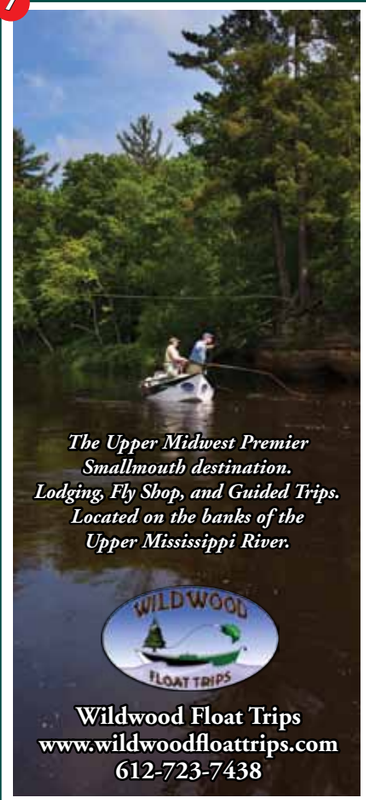

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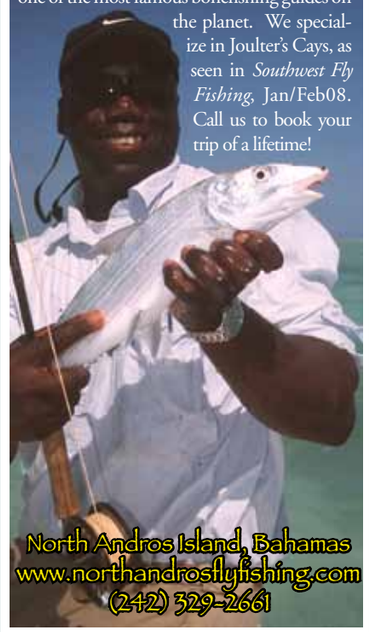

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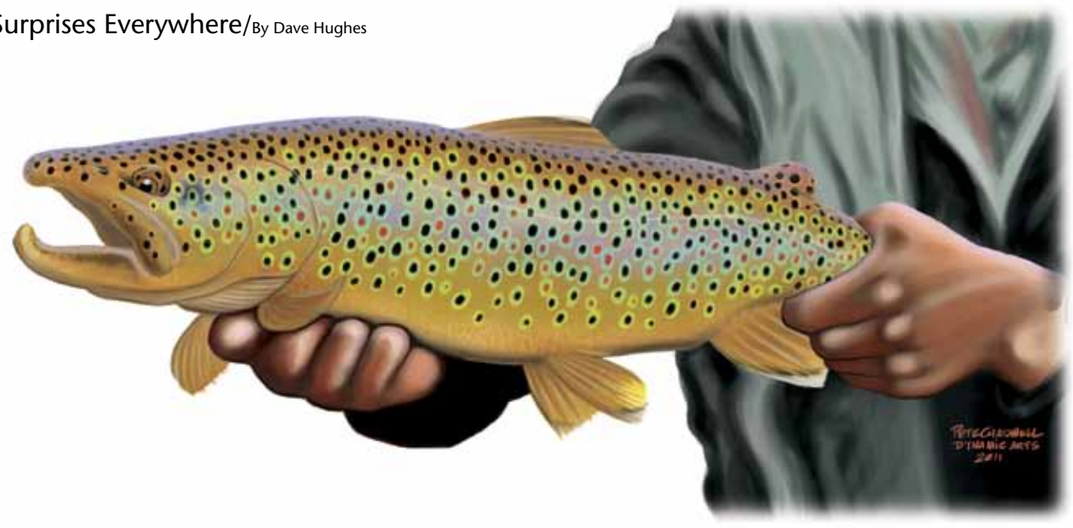
Where Water Leads

Surprises Everywhere/By Dave Hughes



I grew up fishing the wet, dripping, and ferociously fertile Northwest rain-forest country. Our streams, I supposed, were the most beautiful in the world, flowing beneath canopies of tall conifer trees and full of trout and steelhead and salmon. They were always capable of tossing up what Roderick Haig-Brown wrote about so gracefully as the surprise fish: a plump 16-inch sea-run cutthroat when you were focused on 8-inch natives; a swift-striking and high-leaping summer steelhead when the expectation might at most be that same 16-inch sea-run.

The fishing in the Northwest was clearly the opposite, in my mind and in more than geography, of the fishing in what I've since learned is the equally fine Southeast. With the arrogance of distance, I envisioned streams that drained flatland swamps and were overhung by low sycamore limbs, each limb draped with water moccasins that malevolently calculated your passage beneath them, then dropped onto your shoulders.

These faulty imaginings were unfortunately reinforced by a six-month school the Army invited me to attend at Fort Benning, Georgia. Our classrooms were swamps, and the streams that meandered through them were indeed slow, silted, and quickly muddied by columns of marching men. Though jungle survival, not trout fishing, was on my mind at most moments, I couldn't refrain from noticing that these were not streams that would support trout.

It was additionally unfortunate that rumors reached us of a student who had a moccasin drop onto his shoulders and bite him in the neck, with consequences as fatal as those many of us would face when we graduated. It was not a rumor that a fellow in the class behind ours got nipped in the leg by a moccasin that attacked him underwater, while he forded a stream that we had just waded.

I made the mistake of transferring these initial impressions of a few Southeast streams to all of them, so I was somewhat startled when I finally fished them and discovered my visions of them were as misplaced as my arrogance.

I was invited to speak at a North Carolina Trout Unlimited (TU) regional conclave, then was whisked into the Blue Ridge Mountains, the hollows of which I had by then heard hid some great trout streams. I desired to see them. James Fortner and Carl Freeman, members of the Hickory TU club, volunteered to show them to me. But I had only one day, and had to make a choice. One stream I could fish was in the foothills, a medium-size pastoral flow with a low gradient, long lazy pools, and planted brown trout. We had dinner along that stream the night before; I was led out in the dark, instructed to scatter a handful of fish pellets over a pool. I did. The pool exploded. I thought it might be full of alligators, but was assured they were just big browns. Obviously there would be more than a fair chance to catch a few of them.

The alternative, I was told, was to fish a small mountain stream, remote, difficult to navigate, offering nothing bigger than 8- to 10-inch rainbows and brook trout. Wanting to see some nature, I opted for the latter.

In order to not be able to name the stream, and therefore to obviate the need for lying about it later, I asked James and Carl not to tell me where they took me, and they didn't. I only know that the stream was in country much steeper, more rugged, and more heavily forested than I'd expected. It was far more pristine than I ever thought I'd find streams in the Southeast. Those Appalachian forests were logged of old-growth hemlock in the middle 1800s for the tannin in their bark, which was used to cure buffalo hides when those peaceful beasts were shot off the prairies. It can be interesting, though also disturbing, to track these intricate relationships: the native brook trout of many Southeastern streams met their demise because their forests were logged to process the buffalo that were wiped out in the West, so the Indian tribes could be subdued, so residents of the East could safely redistribute themselves westward.

The forests that replaced those early hemlocks were hardwood, with an understory of mountain laurel, all with little commercial value, so they have never been cut since that initial logging. More than a century of natural flows sweeping through undisturbed watersheds has resulted in streambeds with clean stones. The bedrock in the Appalachians is ancient granite; I like to think of those beautiful Blue Ridge streams as flowing directly over the bones of the earth.

Carl and James and I reached the stream after a long hike down the gentle gradient of an old cat road. The stream, though small, carried lots of water, a sign of a healthy watershed. It stair-stepped from pool to deep pool, each set separated by miniature cascades or waterfalls over ledges of granite. We sat on moss-cloaked boulders the size of cars and rigged with dry flies, Royal Wulffs and Elk Hair Caddises and such, suitable to the size of the water and the wild nature of the stream and its trout. I was surprised, when I began wading from rock to submerged rock, that my felts adhered, just as they are supposed to do: just as they used to do before so many of my home Northwest streams became loaded down with logging silt. I had to get used to that all over again; I'd become unused to having my wading felts stick to stones.

They rose to the dry flies, struck swiftly, fought well, the rainbows jumping, the brookies bulldogging deep into the darkness of the pools.

We caught those promised small trout, two or three per pool, as you'd predict, and as you'd expect. They rose to the dry flies, struck swiftly, fought well, the rainbows jumping, the brookies bulldogging deep into the darkness of the pools. They were all beautiful according to their kind, and in their separate ways, one native and the other not.

We got into a modest hatch of slender mayfly duns, large at size 12, with bright green bodies, slate-gray wings, and shining black eyes. In the West I'd have called them Lesser Green Drakes, but they had just two tails, not three, so clearly they were not related. I've never been able to find reference to that hatch in any guidebook to mayflies of the East. I matched them with the same Olive Comparadun I'd have used on one of my home streams, and trout took them just fine. Such combinations of mystery and simplicity keep fly fishing interesting.

We moved up through that mature hardwood forest, grown since the buffalo were gone, through all that beauty, the stair-stepped deep pools etched black against the light-colored granite. We caught lots of pretty trout, all of them small in keeping with the size of their stream. We sat on more moss-covered boulders and had lunch. Part of the pleasure of the place was the graciousness of James and Carl, who allowed me first cast over much of the best water.

The mayfly hatch tapered off while we ate lunch, so I switched to a size-14 Elk Hair Caddis, much easier to see in the lack of light under all those leafy trees. I dangled a size-16 bead-head Hare's Ear off the stern of the dry fly; it's often wise to give small stream trout a choice when you don't know precisely what they might want.

In the first large pool upstream, after lunch, my Elk Hair suddenly disappeared, in the manner that always left me mystified about where it had gone when I first started fishing a dry-and-dropper combination. I'd long since learned that the abrupt absence of the dry fly, when it has a dropper under it, is reason to raise the rod, at least send the question "Is anything out there?"

The answer in that small North Carolina pool was weight outsize to anything I ever expected.

The big trout was reluctant to leave the pool, which was lucky for me, because I'd dropped that Hare's Ear on 5X tippet. All the trout had to do was shoulder downstream 30 feet, flop over the miniature waterfall into the pool where we'd had lunch, keep going down, and it would have been gone, at least to me. But it fought stubbornly up and down the same pool where I'd hooked it. Once it lofted cleanly into the air and smacked awkwardly back. The sight of its size made me play it even more gently.

Carl and James gathered and watched. I finally was able to slip a hand under the trout and hoist it dripping from the water.

It was a brown trout that had somehow migrated from the lower reaches of the stream, probably in its vigorous youth. It had survived, even done very well, and obviously for many years, by eating the 8- to 10-inch rainbows and brookies we'd been catching all day. Clearly it was luck that I hooked it. Carl and James might have been lying politely when they told me they'd fished the stream for more than 20 years and had never caught a trout that weighed more than 2 pounds from it.

We didn't weigh the trout, or measure it, but we began the bid for our lie about its size at about 8 pounds, and eventually eased it down toward a more realistic 6. Even if we were off a couple of pounds, which has been known to happen among excited anglers, and it weighed only 4, it was still twice the size I had any right to expect from the small mountain water from which I caught it.

Surprise fish, like lies about their size, are universal.

Ghost Stone/By Paul C. Marriner

Materials

Hook: Double (Partridge Q) or single salmon, sizes 1/0–10
Thread: Black
Post: Pin bent at 90 degrees after being threaded with a yellow bead
Body: Fluorescent green floss
Wing: Black squirrel tail under white marabou under pearl Krinkle Mirror Flash
Hackle: Grizzly

Although other patterns arguably represent adult stoneflies, Lee Wulff's Surface Stonefly unquestionably was the genesis of today's collection of derivative patterns. Circa 1950, Wulff became interested in creating patterns without thread, using plastic bodies that could be softened with solvent; after natural components were added, the bodies were allowed to harden, holding the components in place. For a variety of reasons the project was unsuccessful, and the original molds were lost in a flood.

Regardless, because of its productivity, Wulff rebuilt enough equipment to continue making the Surface Stonefly. As these were primarily for his own use, few if any were available to others. However, in the late 1990s, the Royal Wulff company began producing them again, only to have them disappear once more a few years later. In truth, the pattern wasn't a good floater, and its originator went to some pains to explain that an expert cast was necessary to keep it on top. Even then it drifted mostly submerged. It's no surprise that, at least by others, the fly was generally fished wet. Nor that many, but not all, of the later designs make no claim to riding the film.

Late in the summer of 2008 I was fishing the Main Southwest Miramichi River with Jacques Gerome, a well-known Quebec salmon angler. Gerome recounted stories of outstanding success with the Ghost Stone, a pattern unknown to me at the time. In 2010 a friend wrote, "The Ghost Stone, size 8 and 10, has done extremely well for me this year. First tried it on the Matapédia in early June and used it through to early September. If the size 8 didn't work, then the size 10 usually would. I've nicknamed it 'the vacuum.' " Others have reported similar experiences, particularly on Gaspé rivers, both clear and colored.

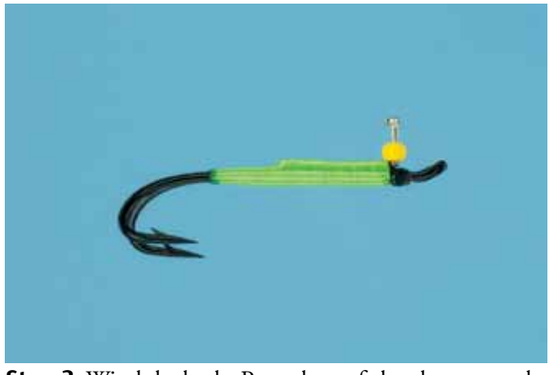
So, after all the buildup, where did the Ghost Stone originate? It's a creation of Todd Cochrane, who toils for Sexton & Sexton, www.sextonandsexton.com, a full-service fly shop a stone's throw from the world-famous Cascapédia River. "I developed the pattern in the mid-1990s," Cochrane told me. It got its first test in the Cochrane family pool on the Petit-Cascapédia River. "I knew it was a keeper when it landed two salmon on its first outing, one a 40-pound fish," he related. He kept it to himself for a few years before starting to sell it in the shop about a decade ago. "Customers tell me it catches in all conditions throughout the season," he added.

True, I've been a bit slow to rise, but I'll certainly be passing a Ghost Stone through a number of salmon pools this season.

Paul C. Marriner is the Canadian field editor for Eastern Fly Fishing*; his latest book is* Modern Atlantic Salmon Flies II.

Step 1: Prepare pin and bead. To leave sufficient space to wind the hackle, make the upright portion about 3/16 inch long. For the size-6 hook shown, the horizontal part was cut to 7/16 inch.

Step 2: Cover the shank of the hook with thread, bind down the pin, and cement.



Step 3: Wind the body. Put a drop of clear lacquer at the back to inhibit floss migration.

Step 4: Add the black squirrel portion of the wing. Once again add a drop of cement.

Step 5: Add the marabou and flash material to the wing.

Step 6: Attach the hackle to the post and take the first turn underneath the pin, then wind the feather down the post. Tie off and cement after four or five turns. Cochrane doubles the hackle and ties it in by the tip. This forces the barbs to "cup" upward. Despite some telephone coaching I couldn't get a satisfactory result and so reverted to my standard method as described.

Cajun Toad/By Honson Lau

Bayou redfish—those reds residing in the waters of the Louisiana marsh—are without a doubt the most aggressive redfish on the planet. This redfish utopia is filled with crabs, shad, and, of course, big white gulf shrimp. Everything in the marsh eats shrimp, from sheepshead to redfish to black drum. Shrimp are the gourmet delicatessen food of the marsh as far as redfish are concerned. With the world's most aggressive redfish and a marsh filled with tasty shrimp, it's obvious that a big white fly that can imitate a shrimp or a shad would rank among the most productive fly designs for the marsh.

Toad-style flies are among the most versatile of patterns, easily modified to fish particular fishing situations. Most of the flies I throw in my home waters are some sort of variation of a Toad. I have hooked bonefish, redfish, snook, sea trout, tarpon, and permit on some variation of the venerable Toad fly. It is a simple yet effective fly that can be tied quickly and customized easily.

Examine a big gulf shrimp and you will see iridescent blue on the tips of its swimmerets and tail, so I use blue thread to add a hint of blue to the Cajun Toad. The white craft fur tail pulsates and breathes in the water with the slightest movement, while the flash and rattles scream "Here I am" in an environment where the water can be murky. The rattles also imitate the snapping sound a large shrimp makes as it darts away from a predator. This fly was designed to grab attention and cause redfish to bite. The wide Merkin Crab–style body adds dimension, making the fly look meaty to a fish seeing it from above or below, and also serves to dampen the landing so fly splash doesn't spook wary reds. When targeting big redfish, I dress the fly big and full, and a big Cajun Toad is best matched to a 9- or 10-weight rod. Though a small redfish will eat a big fly, you can tie smaller Cajun Toads and cast them on 7- and 8-weight rods.

Winter is the most popular time of year to fish for redfish in Louisiana, but unpredictable conditions caused by cold fronts can drop water temperatures dramatically. The redfish in the marsh still feed in what must seem to them an Arctic-like chill, but you will have to modify your presentation to entice a fish to take a fly. Cold water can sometimes drive big redfish deeper in the water column; a heavy fly will more rapidly sink into the strike zone for fish that may not move far to eat. Luckily the Cajun Toad can be modified even after it is tied to your leader. The bead-chain eyes were designed for a slow sink rate, but carry a spool of lead fuse wire so you can wrap a length of it behind the eye of the hook to make the fly sink faster. Once the water warms and fish are floating on the surface or in the middle of the water column, you can remove the lead wire and fish the same fly higher in the water column.

Materials

Hook: Mustad 34007, size 1/0 or 2/0
Thread: Blue Danville 210-denier flat waxed nylon
Tail: White extra-select craft fur
Collar: Gold UV Polar Chenille
Rattle: Mini 3 mm glass rattle
Flash: Pearl Flashabou
Body: White Enrico Puglisi EP Fibers and large gold Mylar tubing
Eyes: Extra-large black bead-chain eyes
Finish: Flex formula Clear Cure Goo and clear Sally Hansen Hard As Nails

Captain Honson Lau, www.purpleisleflyfishing.com, is a freelance writer, photographer, and fly-fishing guide who lives in Miami, Florida.

Step 1: Build a thread base near the bend of the hook. Tie in a fairly dense clump of white craft fur and accent it with Flashabou.

Step 2: Tie in the gold UV Polar Chenille in front of the craft fur and wrap it forward two to three times and tie off. Secure one end of a length of gold Mylar tubing in front of the UV Polar Chenille and pull it back, letting it dangle straight down. Then wrap the thread forward and tie in the bead-chain eyes behind the eye of the hook, leaving only a small gap.

Step 3: Wrap the thread back and begin building the body with the white EP Fibers by tying the fiber strands on one side and then bringing the fibers over the top bend side of the hook while twisting them to eliminate slack, creating a V shape. Attach the EP Fibers to the opposite side of the hook and make a few thread wraps on the V you have created to secure it.

Step 4: Continue to build the body by repeating step 3 until you have reached the bead-chain eyes (usually five to six clumps of EP Fibers). Once the body is done, trim the EP fibers on each side to the desired width.

Step 5: With the body complete, insert a glass rattle into the Mylar tubing and tie down the open end of the cord directly behind the bead-chain eyes.

Step 6: Trim the tag end of the Mylar tubing. Wrap the thread up to the eye of the hook and whip-finish. Finish the fly by applying flex formula Clear Cure Goo to the base of the Mylar tubing where it meets the EP Fibers. Finally, coat the exposed thread with Hard As Nails.

Fish Tales

Call Me MacGyver/By Alan Liere

I had an appointment with my new chiropractor on Saturday morning—the fourth visit in two weeks. Because I continue to complicate my life whenever possible, I also had arranged to meet a friend 20 minutes after the appointment at a grocery store a mile away. There had been a fairly predictable afternoon mayfly hatch on Amber Lake three days in a row, and we were anticipating a good trip.

My old chiropractor, a fly fisherman, had retired, and though the new guy provided essentially the same type of treatment, the quality of the service was deficient. Whereas my treatments had once lasted a half hour with lots of good fishing-related conversation included, they were now silent 10-minute manipulations followed by the new guy's dash to the next cubicle and the next achy back. On the way out, he always called over his shoulder for me to come back in three days. He didn't fish, so I figured he was spending his money foolishly on something. Whatever it was, I resented the fact I was paying for it; I'm not into recreational therapy.

I was stopped at a red light waiting to make the last turn to the chiropractor's office when the engine died. When I tried to restart it, there wasn't even a click. Now here was a complication: I had a chiropractor appointment in five minutes and a date to go fishing right after that.

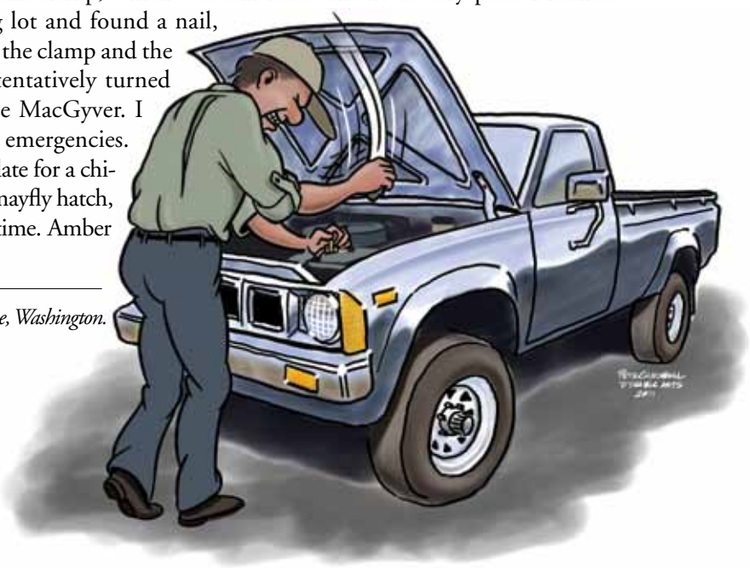
I put my clunker in neutral and pushed it across two lanes of traffic. My target was a bank parking lot on the corner and slightly uphill, and I just barely rolled it in. Now, despite the fact that I am pretty darn good at patching waders and mending my line, I am not the least bit handy with vehicles. I cannot differentiate between a water pump and a spark plug, and even if I were to attempt to make a repair, there is not a single tool in my vehicle. There is no sense in someone with my lack of mechanical aptitude storing tools in space that could accommodate fly-rod cases, stomach pumps, empty Pepsi cans, junk mail, and Fig Newton wrappers.

I raised the hood, which was a major accomplishment for me as I had not done such a thing since purchasing the vehicle; I find motors uninteresting. What goes on under there is best left to extortionists with greasy coveralls.

I did know that for a vehicle to go absolutely dead, there were probably battery problems. I checked the cables, and what do you know—one of them was corroded clear through where it ran into the terminal clamp. (Actually, I don't know if there is such a thing as a "terminal clamp." It just seems to be a logical name.) The wire of the cable was not making a connection with the clamp, which was not making a connection with the battery terminal.

I dug around in my glove box and found a key. Using a rock as a hammer, I pounded it under the wire of the cable, securing it against the clamp, which was still loose on the battery post. I looked around on the ground in the parking lot and found a nail, which I pounded into the gap between the clamp and the post. I crawled back into my truck, tentatively turned the key, and it fired right up! Call me MacGyver. I put the rock in my glove box for future emergencies.

Now I had to decide between being late for a chiropractor appointment or on time for a mayfly hatch, and my daddy told me to always be on time. Amber Lake was awesome.



Alan Liere is a humor writer who lives in Spokane, Washington.

EASTERN
Fly Fishing

Last Cast

By Nick Carter

Even on North Carolina's renowned Chattooga River, northern water snakes don't practice catch and release.