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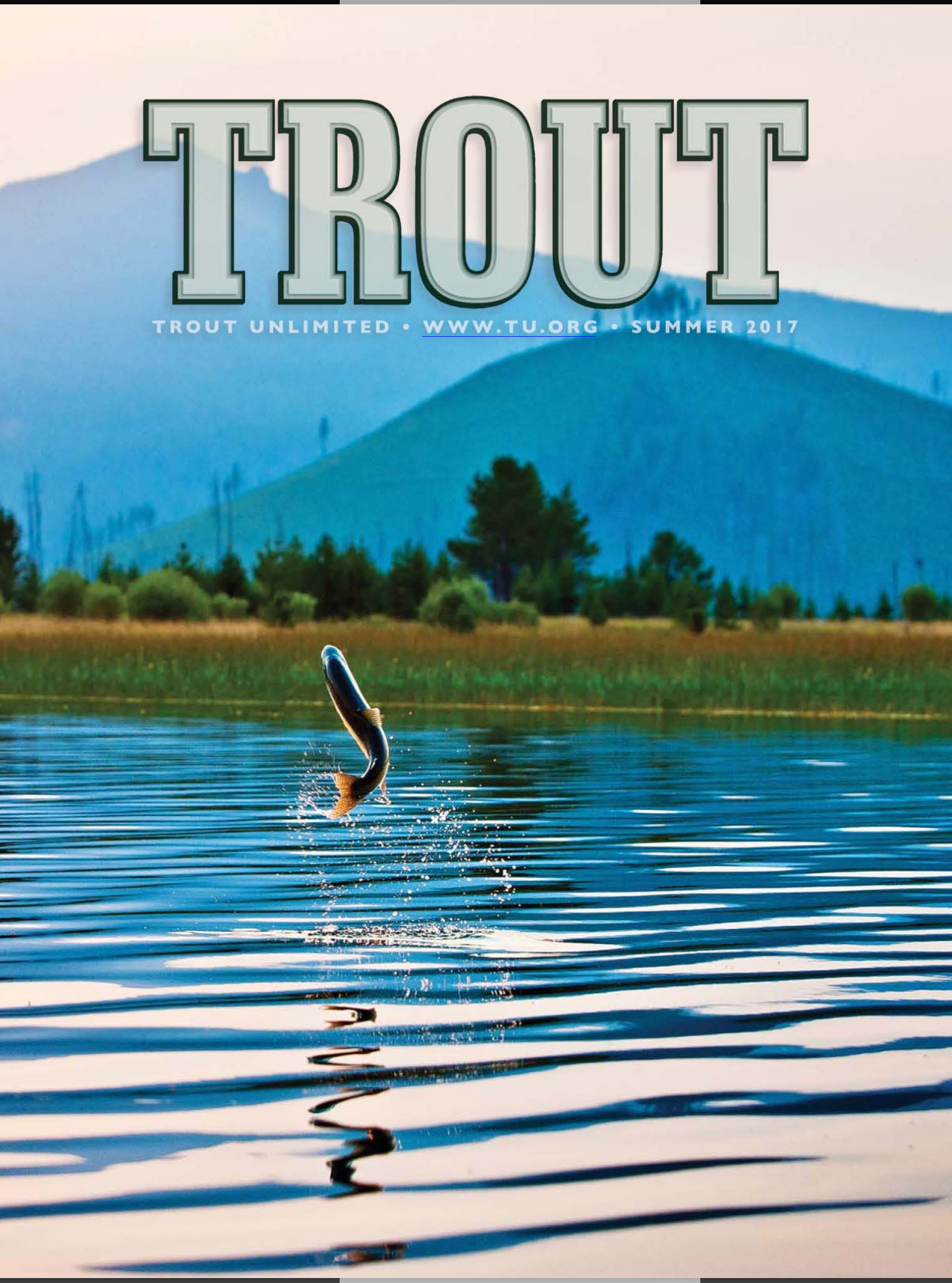

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TROUT
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SUMMER 2017

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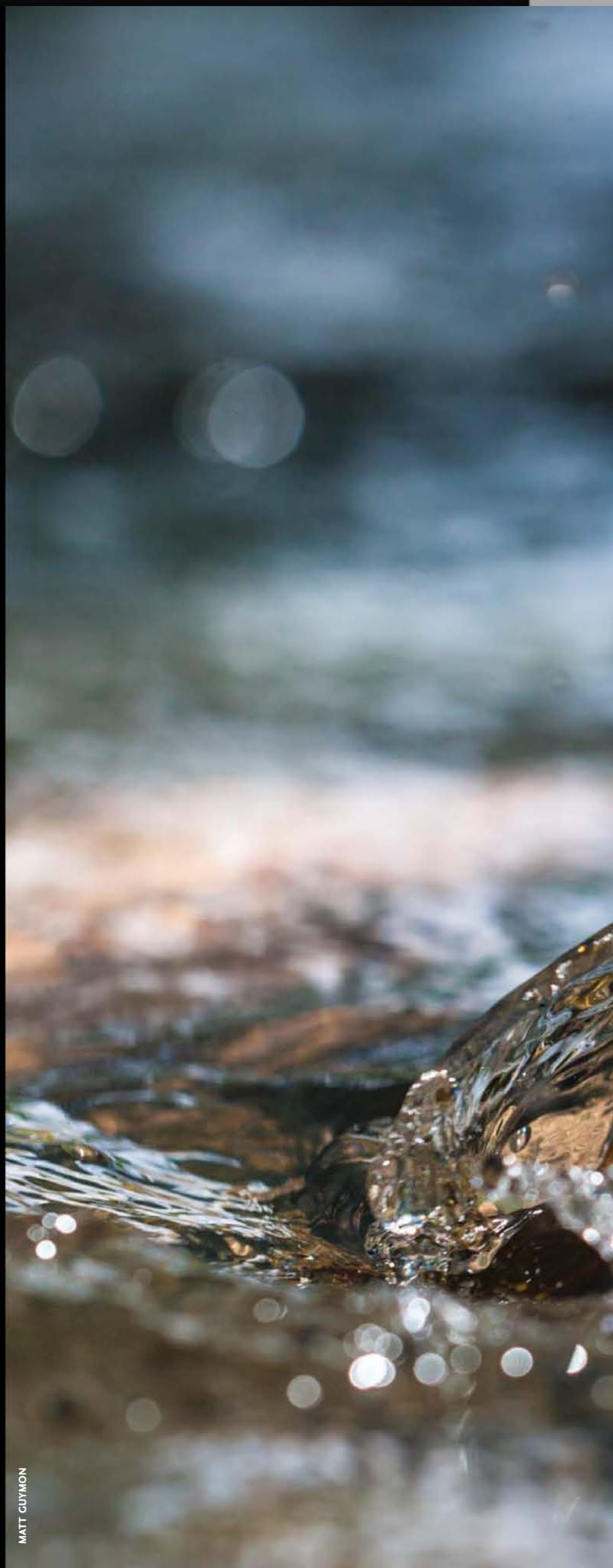

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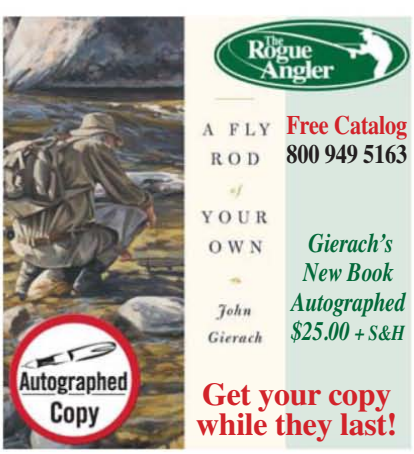

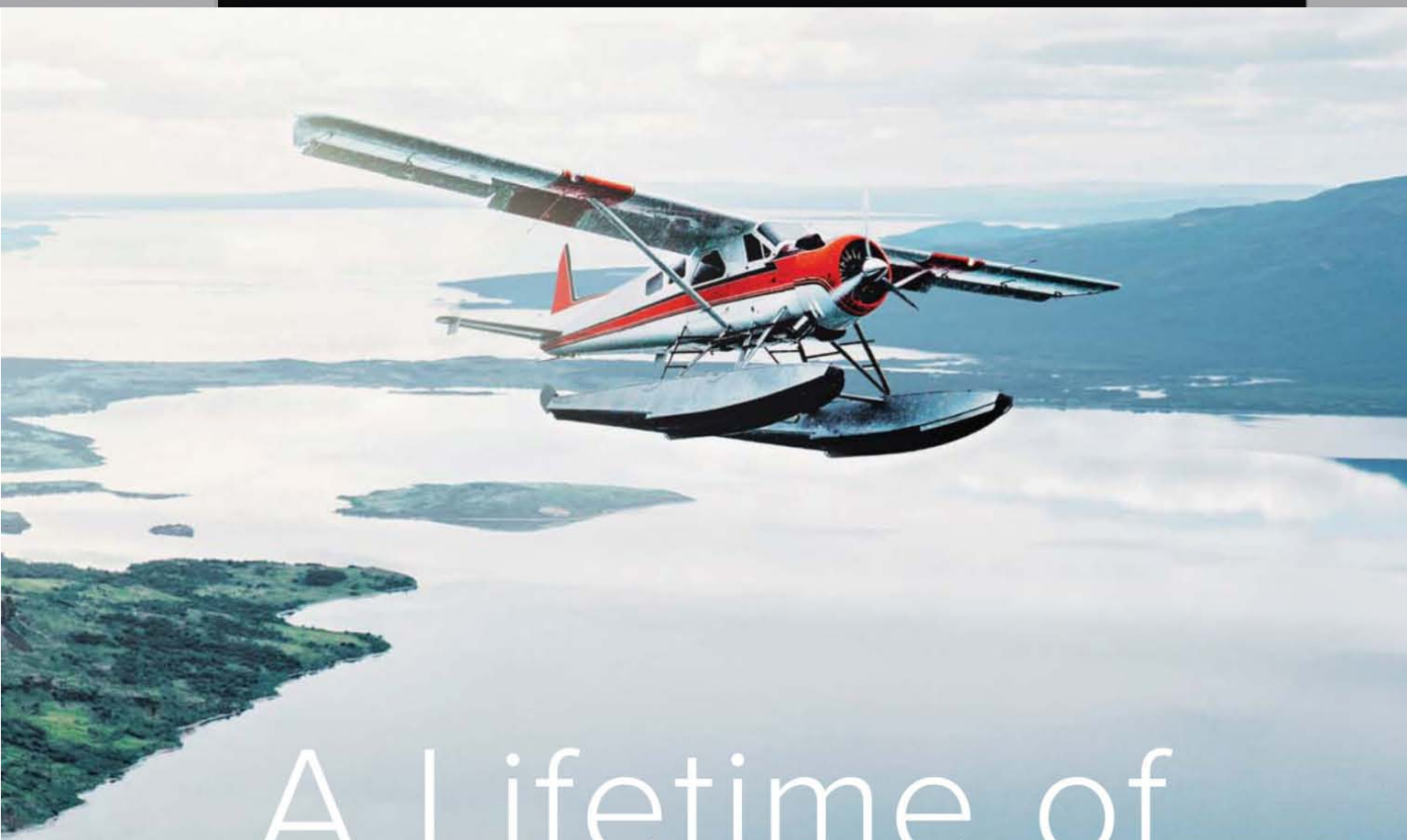

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From the President

[Chris Wood]

Native and Wild: Rules of the River

Trout and salmon allow us broad discretion to "play in the fields of the Lord" when it comes to conservation. Gravity works cheap, and never takes a day off. Everything we do on the land is ultimately reflected by the health of our waters, and so we engage as advocates in issues as varied as hydropower to agriculture, forestry to climate change.

At first glance, Trout Unlimited's vision of ensuring that "robust populations of native and wild coldwater fish once again thrive within their North American range, so that our children can enjoy healthy fisheries in their home waters" seems to provide similar latitude.

Not exactly. Not all native fish are where they belong, and not all wild fish are beneficial.

A few years ago, I had a public disagreement with Douglas Thompson, a professor at Connecticut College, over an opinion piece he ran in *The New York Times* describing how poor hatchery and stocking practices led him to give up trout fishing. In a snarky response, I wrote that Doug "waded in over his head" and that he should stop "carping at anglers" because the real problems facing native trout were habitat loss and climate change.

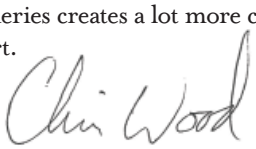
I was wrong. TU's scientists pointed to introduced trout (whether recently stocked or a legacy of earlier stocking), as well as climate change and habitat loss in our seminal "State of the Trout" report as major problems for native trout.

I am getting ready for the fan mail as I write this, but if you are fishing out West in bull trout habitat and catch a beautiful brookie, whack the brookie where regulations permit. Brook trout are native to the East and interbreed with threatened bull trout and outcompete cutthroat. If you are fishing in the Gila Trout wilderness, and come across a rainbow trout in a recovery area for Gila trout, eat the rainbow for dinner. Introduced rainbows compete and hybridize with native Gilas.

Similarly, we should leverage the great relationships we have with state fish and wildlife agencies and help them reconsider stocking non-native fish on top of native trout (and dealing with legacies of trout stocked long ago). The place for stocked fish is generally not in the same waters occupied by reproducing populations of native trout.

Here are a few rules of the river for conservation minded anglers:

1. Know and celebrate your native trout and salmon. Take the opportunity to learn what fish are native to the waters you love to fish and how to identify them accurately.
2. Carefully and quickly release native fish such as brookies in the East; or cutthroat and the many other native trout species in the West; or rainbows along the Pacific Rim.
3. If you want to take a picture of a fish that you don't plan to eat, do so quickly, and without taking it from the water.
4. Discourage your state agencies from stocking non-native trout in waters that possess native trout.
5. Carefully release wild fish from rivers where wild fish persist in the absence of natives or don't pose a threat to natives such as the Henry's Fork, Madison, Beaverkill, and the Savage.
6. Enjoy an occasional non-native wild or stocked trout and salmon for the table if you catch it in waters occupied by native trout such as rainbows in the South Fork of the Snake or salmon from The Great Lakes (regulations permitting, of course!).
7. Don't be sanctimonious. Conservation is a long game. Patiently educating people about ways to protect wild and native trout fisheries creates a lot more converts than showing everyone else that you are pure and smart.



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From the Editor

[Kirk Deeter]

True Trophies

As we built this issue around a theme of "wild and native" I got to thinking about "trophy" fish. Size is the natural benchmark for most anglers. How could it not be? "I caught a fish." "Really? How BIG was it?" I mean, have you ever been asked, "Did it have its adipose fin?" Years ago, the plate was the proof. We'd rush over to grandpa's cabin in the morning to see what he had in the refrigerator after fishing the previous evening's hatch. Now, Facebook has replaced the fridge. I didn't know that many two-foot brown trout lived in the world until Facebook came around. But the interesting thing is that I'm starting to consider those big fish less the "trophies" than I do the equally photogenic natives—*especially* the ones that fit in the palm of my hand. In truth, I've probably caught several dozen browns that weighed five pounds or more (I'm lucky… I travel a lot… and I like catching big browns). But I've only caught a few Gila trout. I've only caught a day's worth of Bonneville cutthroats. I've never caught an Apache trout. A native brook trout on an eastern stream is special. In my mind, catching any native fish, touching it and returning it to the water is nothing short of sacred. There is no greater "trophy" to be had, in my mind, than the simple understanding that I have tricked eons of instinct, especially in a native's place, and kept only the knowledge that that fish is still alive and swimming today. I hope you "like" that, and "share" that too… without pushing any buttons.

The awards, that is.

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Our Contributors

Dr. Rene Henery is an Ecologist and Eco-geographer who holds a joint position as the California Science Director for Trout Unlimited, and part time Research Faculty at the University of Nevada, Reno. Rene completed his B.A. at Reed College in Portland Oregon and his Ph.D. at the University of California, Davis. Rene's current work explores diversity and connectivity as pathways to resilient watersheds, ecosystems and human communities in the U.S. and abroad.

Shauna Stephenson has worked in communications for Trout Unlimited for six years. Prior to that, she was an outdoor writer in Wyoming. She currently lives with her family in Pony, Montana.

Chris Ricardi resides in Maine where he works as an environmental scientist consultant and spends his spare time chasing trout and landlocked salmon on New England waters. His fishing obsession and love of wilderness adventure regularly send him across North America to cast lines into waters where fish can be found. He has written about his fishing exploits, fisheries management and conservation issues in popular magazines including *Alaska*, *Outdoor Life* and *Sports Afield*.

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Brian calls Western Massachusetts home and can be found working the Deerfield river virtually all year round.

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Our Readers Write

Hi,
I consider myself a novice fly fisher. I live near Phoenix, Ariz., so I have to travel a ways to find cold water fishing. I maybe fish 2-3 times a year. I joined TU to support your conservation efforts and perhaps learn some fishing tips. But after the material in the Spring issue I have less incentive to bother with the magazine.

You had a feature with some fishing tips. Many I was already familiar with.. But some were frankly great examples of why some folks see fly fishers as elitists. I am referring to the item at the bottom of page 42, "The Taper is the Key to Presentation." I understand that you learn via practice. But there is so much terminology I am not familiar with.

The first sentence: "Tapered dropper: When you use big, wind resistant foam dries (standard Western style) and long, lighter tippet droppers…" Whoa right there. "Dropper?" I think that is the fly that sinks? A dropper is the fly, how can the fly be tapered? If you mean a tapered line tied to the dropper you should say so. "Wind resistant." What makes a fly wind resistant? How would I know what that looks like?

"Foam dries." What? I guess it is some sort of dry fly. Is it made out of foam? I don't tie flies but I know you can use bits of foam. I don't have any flies that have foam except maybe a grasshopper or ant. But a foam dry? What is that? [Lists other examples…]

… my conclusion is this magazine is for experts and seriously experienced fishers. And not for people like me.

Thanks for listening.

MIKE MACKOWSKI

Editor responds: *We appreciate your being a TU member Mike and are happy to listen. The story you reference was actually an excerpt from the new TU book* Trout Tips, *which includes tips from members throughout the country. The beauty of the book is that it involves all types of tips—from simple, familiar reminders, to more detailed and technical advice. In other words, there's something for everyone, and readers are free to take (or leave) whatever they want. Now, I think you're splitting hairs on some of this. Frankly, if you have trouble connecting the dots between a "foam dry" and a dry fly made of foam material, I don't know what more I can do. For the record, this magazine is for anyone who cares about rivers and fish, regardless of their fishing prowess. –K.D.*

Also, for the record, Trout Tips *was introduced April 4, and is already in its third printing as one of the best-selling fly-fishing books on the market now (thanks to all involved!). All the author royalties go straight to TU, and TU will be featuring this book as a premium in our summer Calendar Campaign. That will be a great opportunity to pick up a copy (or a few) and support the organization and its programs.*

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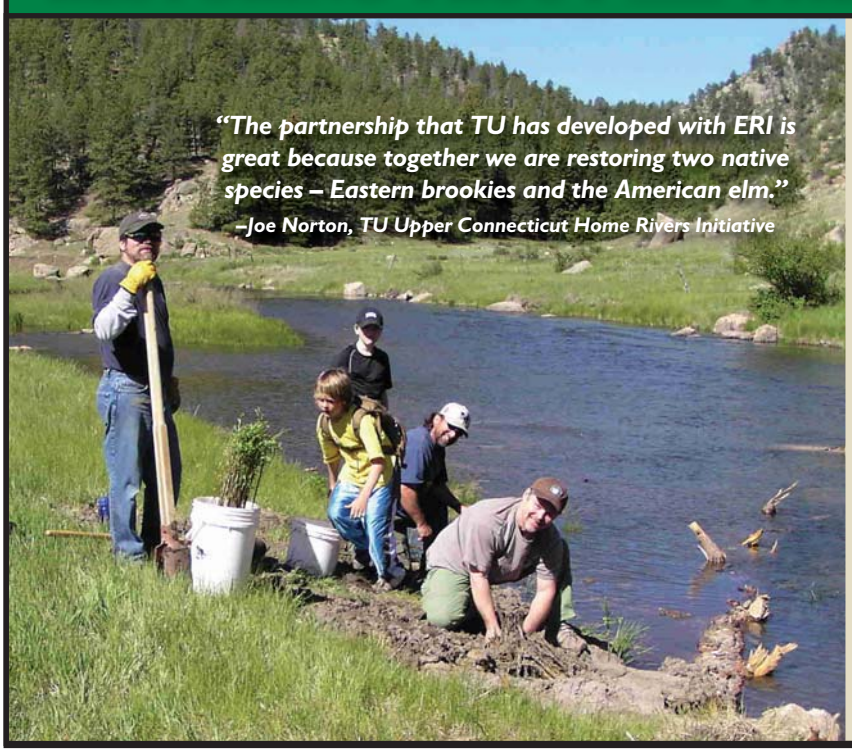

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Pocket Water

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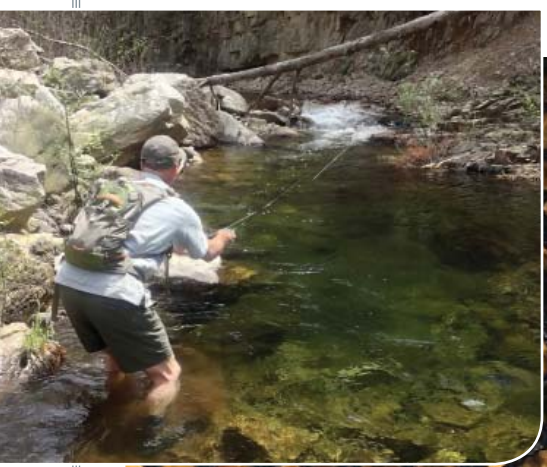


Brook Trout Like Clean *Air*, Too

Through the 1980s, Virginia's St. Mary's River was a mountain jewel, anglers visiting from far and wide to fish pools teaming with wild brook, rainbow and brown trout as the creek tumbled through a rugged canyon in the Blue Ridge Range.

In the 1990s, that changed.

Wracked by acid rain, the creek's pH plummeted. The stream's brown and rainbow trout disappeared. So did its mayflies. Populations of relatively acid-tolerant native brook trout also cratered.

Liming treatment has helped turn things around, a recovery aided by improvements in air quality that reduced acid deposition.

But there is concern that a recent presidential executive order that takes aim at the Clean Power Plan may halt or even reverse progress on the St. Mary's and other waters recovering from acid deposition.

The U.S. Forest Service began treating the St. Mary's River in 1999, using a helicopter to dump 140 tons of ground limestone into the watershed that March.

The stream responded, with pH numbers climbing, brook trout and insect life improving, and anglers returning.

Liming, also being undertaken at several other streams in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest, was not expected to be permanent.

"It's a budget, like balancing a checkbook," says Dawn Kirk, fisheries biologist for the forest. "When the lime is used up you have to replenish it."

But the gap between treatments is growing, and that can be correlated to improvements in air quality.

Monitoring of acid deposition in the Central Appalachians shows a marked decrease in the amount of pollutants falling into the forest over the past two decades.

"If you look at acid deposition, especially sulfates, it's just a fraction of

what it was," Kirk says. "The air quality is so much better."

Acid deposition levels started decreasing after 1990 amendments to the Clean Air Act were enacted to address acid rain.

Since air quality has improved even some acid-impacted streams that have not been treated with limestone are showing improvements in pH levels and in fish populations.

Pat Harmon recently completed his Masters thesis at James Madison University, studying pH levels at 13 streams in Shenandoah National Park.

The streams all showed improvement, though those where geology limited natural buffering showed only a moderate increases in pH.

"There is not a lot of buffering in the first place," Harmon said. "But now that acid deposition has been reduced there is a slow recovery."

Experts worry that trend could turn around if acid deposition levels increase if Clean Air Act provisions are weakened.

Kirk planned the first liming of the St. Mary's cobbling together more than $40,000 in grants, including financial support from Trout Unlimited, to pay for a helicopter to dump 140 tons of lime into the watershed.

The next treatment, in 2005, cost more than $50,000. The most recent treatment, in 2013, cost more than $100,000.

Based on recent trends, Kirk thinks that another treatment of the St. Mary's watershed might not be needed until 2023 or 2024.

But if acid deposition levels begin increasing, that could change. The improvements in streams not being treated may also see a reverse in their fortunes.

"Recovery takes a long time," Harmon said.

— By Mark Taylor

Wild and Native… Angler Scientists to the Rescue

"Apathy is Our Enemy."

–Chris Wood, TU CEO

In the past decade, the Southwest's three native trout species—Gila, Apache, and Rio Grande cutthroat—have been devastated by the impacts of climate change, including warming water, mega-wildfires and reduced stream flows.

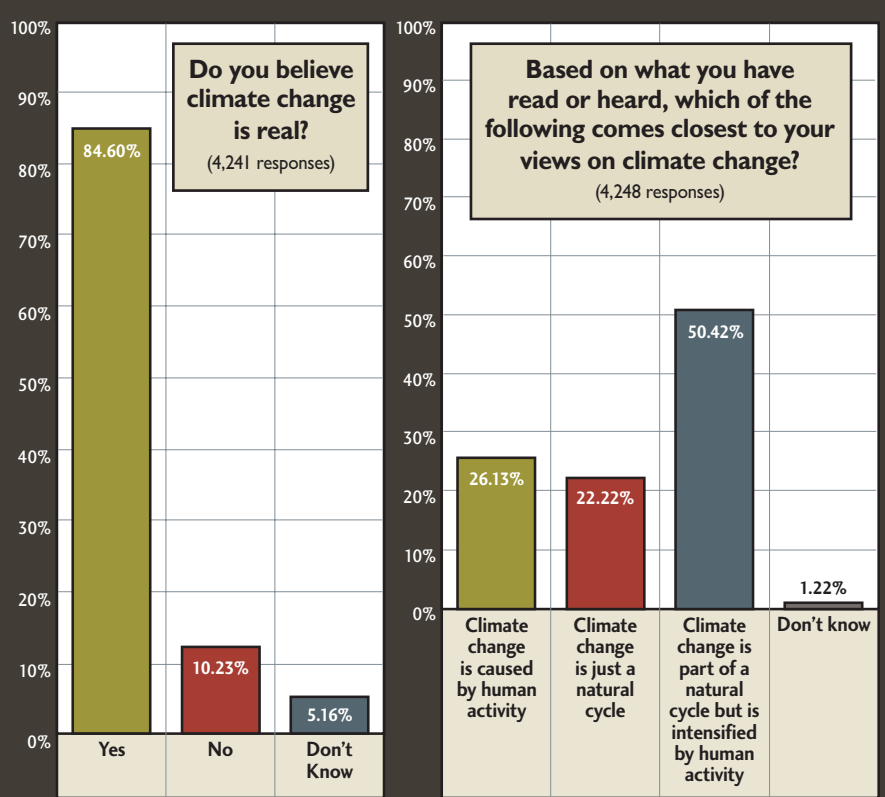
To better understand changing conditions, TU, in collaboration with the University of Arizona, will enlist student volunteers and TU chapter members in 2017 to install temperature monitoring devices in native trout streams across Arizona.

TU senior scientist Jack Williams announced the "angler science" effort in April at the annual Southwest Native and Wild Conference in Phoenix. The collected data, he said, will be used to guide restoration strategies for the rare Apache and Gila trout.

"We need better data on stream temperatures in areas of potential reintroduction for Gila trout," Williams said. "We're looking for things like which stream stretches are spring-fed or have cooler environments for trout habitat."

"Citizen science gives rank-and-file members the opportunity to take samples and monitor stream temperatures and become part of the solution," TU CEO Chris Wood told the conference. "We know we can take concrete steps to combat the impacts of climate change—and that gives hope and is hugely significant. Apathy is our enemy."

—By Randy Scholfield



Pocket Water

Blue Lines and Yellow Trout

The Apache trout has gone from anonymity to the state fish of Arizona

Blue meandering lines on maps of eastern Arizona tell a story about the shape of the land and the interactions people have with it. They symbolize the streams that vein off the White Mountains and pour downhill to their inevitable juncture with something larger that may sport another colorful name.

The streams form patterns on the maps that please the eye. Their names enliven the imagination. There's no poverty of spirit in some of the labels: Hurricane, Moon, Sun, Stinky, Firebox, Paradise, Soldier, Crooked, Peasoup. Two silver rills that spill into Little Bonito Creek remain unnamed by map makers. And that has perhaps the greatest charm of all; it could be that the artifices of mankind have yet to reach this remote place on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation where threatened Apache trout persist. All of these waters harbor some of the last remaining populations of a pretty trout found nowhere else but in streams that rim the White Mountains of Arizona.

The Apache trout is named for the people and the place that are intertwined with one another. The yellow trout ornamented with black spots, white-tipped fins, and a raccoon-like eye mask lives naturally only in the headwaters of the White, Black, and Little Colorado rivers near the New Mexico border.

The fish has been well known to anglers for some time. Local farmers and ranchers made forays into the high country in summer to catch them. One correspondent, simply "J.H." from Show Low, Arizona, wrote in a July 1886 issue of the St. John's Herald: "I speak truly when I say it was the most enjoyable period of my life." He recounted how he and his pals caught scads of Apache trout from the White River during a prolonged summer outing. The sport fishery was renowned.

The Apache trout had become known to science a few years earlier in 1873, when it was collected by members of the U.S. Geographical Survey, though it was wrongly identified as a Colorado River cutthroat trout. Other scientists collected the yellow trout from the White Mountains from time to time, but it wasn't until a century later in 1972 that the fish was properly recognized as a unique species and assigned its current scientific and common name. A year later it was placed on the endangered species list.

That recent scientific description doesn't mean that others had not already known that the trout was something significant. The White Mountain Apache Tribe was prescient, the first to conserve the fish, closing Apache trout streams to angling in the 1940s. By that time, the trout had been reduced to a mere 30 miles of streams all within the confines of their Fort Apache Indian Reservation.

AARON OTTO

Places everywhere have their scars, and the White Mountains were no exception. The loss of habitat from excessive timbering and grazing and the introduction of non-native trout

species were detrimental to the native Apache trout. Over-stocked cattle trampled stream banks and reduced shrubs that would cool trout waters in their shade. Abusive land uses accelerated topsoil erosion into Apache trout streams. High sedimentation during the spring run-off affected trout reproduction; fine sediments clogged porous gravel beds where oxygen-rich water should percolate over incubating Apache trout eggs. To make matters worse, non-native brown trout, brook trout and rainbow trout were planted in Apache trout streams. All three species out-compete the native fish for food and spaces to live, and rainbow trout hybridize with Apache trout.

Over the last 75 years, through the actions of the White Mountain Apache Tribe, followed by work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), U.S. Forest Service, and Arizona Game and Fish Department, Apache trout populations have rallied. The future looks sunny for the species; it could be the first sport fish to be recovered and removed from federal threatened or endangered species protection.

Conservation work continues. Cattle have been fenced out of select Apache trout streams within the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest and along streams within the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. Non-native sport fishes are no longer stocked near Apache trout waters. Alchesay-Williams Creek National Fish Hatchery, located on the reservation, continues to raise Apache trout for sport fishing. Apache trout from the federal fisheries facility are stocked on the reservation and they are shared with the Arizona Game and Fish Department to be stocked in neighboring national forest waters. Many streams are open to anglers.

The Service's Arizona Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) biologists remain shin-deep in Apache trout work, striving toward that goal of recovering the threatened species. They expend a great deal of energy removing non-native brown trout and brook trout from Apache trout waters. They accomplish this with backpack-mounted electrofishing gear where the unwanted fish are stunned and netted from high mountain streams.

A new technology known as environmental DNA guides their work. Fish shed skin cells and of course eliminate bodily waste in the water which contains the animal's DNA. That DNA can be detected in the water. Biologists from the FWCO and tribe collect stream water from several sites over long reaches. Water passes through a filter and the filter analyzed by U.S. Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Research Station. The lab results then specify which stream sections contain the unwanted non-native trout.

Periodic population monitoring continues, as does barrier monitoring. Where unwanted non-native fishes occur downstream, constructed barriers keep them at bay below and the pure Apache trout populations protected above. Constructed barriers exist on 23 creeks.

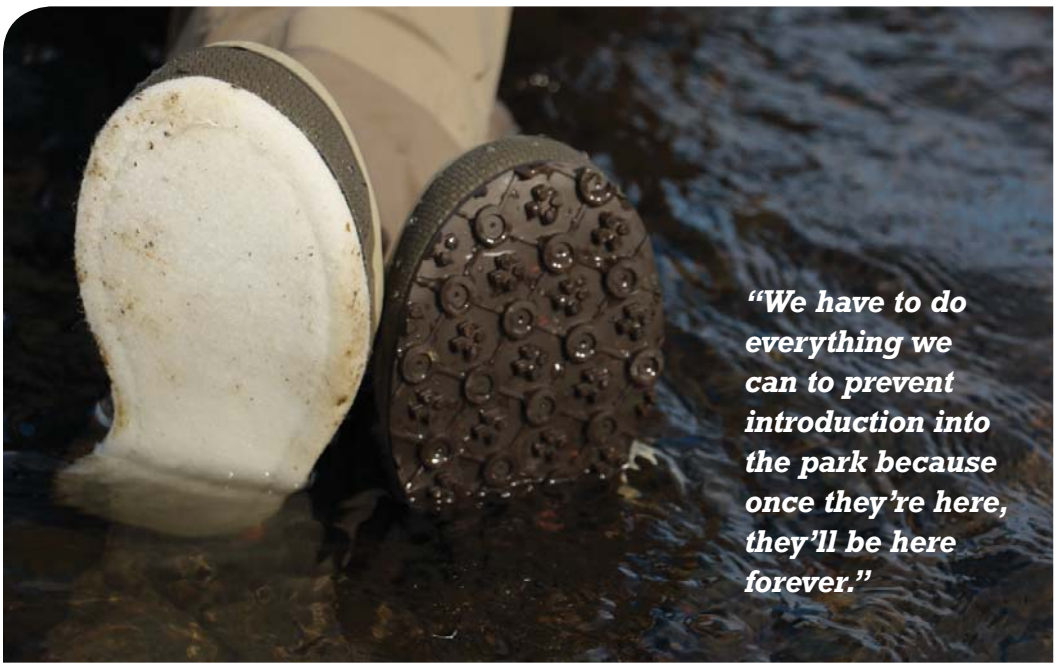
Conservation is a laborious affair, but nothing worthwhile ever comes easy. "Make haste slowly," the adage goes; being deliberate delivers success. Toward that end, the Apache trout lies within the Service's Mogollon Emphasis Area where it focuses conservation work.

At present, Apache trout exist in 28 populations and swim in 170 miles of stream. The lot of Apache trout has changed significantly over time. In what is really only a brief period, the species has transcended from anonymity and mistaken identity since the time of the happy letter-writer, J.H., to the point when the White Mountain Apache Tribe stepped up to protect their trout. It's now the official state fish of Arizona and a favorite for anglers.

—By Craig Springer

Trout Unlimited CEO Chris Wood spoke at the dedication of a memorial to Art Neumann, a TU founder who coined the phrase, "Take care of the fish and the fishing will take care of itself." The dedication, appropriately, took place near the holy waters of the AuSable on the Saturday of the Michigan trout opener. Thanks to all Michigan anglers who continue to carry the torch.

Pocket Water



Jumping on the "Ban" Wagon

Yellowstone considers dumping felt-soled wading boots

The iconic image of a fly fisher wading in Yellowstone National Park could look different soon. That fisher won't be wearing felt-soled wading boots. Yellowstone is considering a felt ban. The change is open for public comment this spring. The ban would take effect next season.

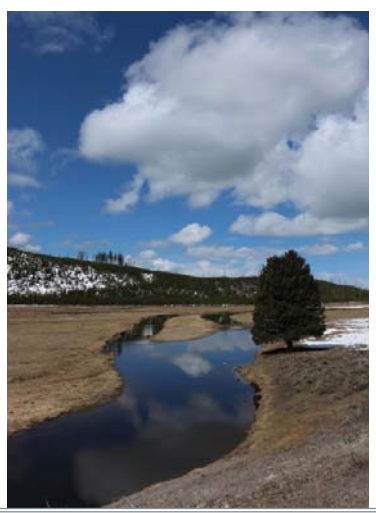
"We wouldn't want to ban a boot style if there wasn't an alternative, but now there are alternatives," says Todd Koel, Yellowstone National Park native fish conservation program leader. "That's why, as a part of bolstering our overall aquatic invasive species prevention in Yellowstone, the park will probably be going to a ban on felt soles in 2018."

Seven states already ban felt. Maryland was first in 2011 then Alaska, Missouri, Nebraska, Rhode Island, South Dakota and Vermont. Vermont reversed its ban in summer 2016, but the other bans are still in effect.

"Rubber gained popularity in 2008 to 2010 because of invasive species talk," says Josh Prestin, Redington brand manager. "Before that, felt was the way to go and time, energy and thought wasn't put into rubber."

When invasive species invaded waterways, rubber started sliding into rivers because, in theory, it grabs less contamination than felt. But felt grips and rubber slips so the industry started producing cleats and spikes for rubber soles. Rubber started sticking, and selling, better.

"It took me a while to warm up to it, but now I like rubber better than felt," says Jimmy Gabettas, Jimmy's All Seasons Angler owner. "Especially Vibram rubber soles. When you step out of water onto mud or grass, it's better than felt."



Gabettas wears rubber-soled wading boots, but sells both in his fly shop in Idaho Falls, Idaho. Felt and rubber are selling 50-50, but rubber is gaining traction.

Two hours west of Jimmy's is Picabo Angler. It's the shop near Sun Valley, Idaho where outfitter John Huber goes one step further. He doesn't give customers a choice anymore. He stopped selling felt in 2014.

"Our living is dependent on the health of our ecosystem," Huber says. "Why put that at risk if you can prevent with something as simple as switching the soles of your boot?"

For invasives, the reason for rubberizing a fishing trip in the first place, the debate isn't as simple as changing soles. Slipping rubber and gripping felt both attach to boots with laces. Those laced boots wrap around waders skirted in gravel guards. Higher up the body, there's a net dipping into home waters and far-from-home waters. The invasive argument goes beyond soles. Yellowstone knows this, but still sees the ban as a step in the right direction.

"The threat of aquatic invasive species is never going to go away," Koel says. "We have to do everything we can to prevent introduction into the park because once they're here, they'll be here forever."

— By Kris Millgate. Outdoor journalist Kris Millgate is based in Idaho Falls, Idaho. See more of her work at www.tightlinemedia.com

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WOMEN IN TU

BRANDON MILLER

Fly Fishing Shows Host Seminars for Women Anglers

In conjunction with the Fly Fishing Shows in Denver and Somerset, each hosted a three-day event showcasing women. We thank all those that came out to support the event at each location and hope to see more Women's Showcases at other shows. *DUN* Magazine Editor Jen Ripple coordinated the showcases this year and with gratitude, those that attended enjoyed the events.

Highlights from Denver included a breakfast discussion on "The Reflection Pool: Women in the Angling Community" which offered commentary on how fly fishing has touched so many women's lives. The question posed to the group "How has fly fishing made a positive impact on your life?" engendered stories that touched many of the participants. From Casting For Recovery experiences, to tales of courage to go out and explore, and forging friendships, the stories of impact were positive and energizing. Joining in the talk were the founders and leaders of Sisters on the Fly, along with Jackie Kutzer, Secretary of the NLC DI workgroup and Jen Ripple.

Highlights from Somerset: Seminars and presentations that ranged from destination trips, photography and gear; the Showcase Social with over 80 people in attendance; a meet & greet with industry representatives from Orvis & Patagonia; and, a Women's Roundtable breakfast discussion "Sharing Our Passion With Others" sponsored by NJTU State Council. This annual tradition brought together over 45 people to share their success stories and ideas for future events and programs. Participants shared in conversation that ranged from industry experience to first time adventures. Others talked about the need to find some tranquility in the world as well as the competition of the sport. Jeff Yates, Vice-President of Volunteer Operations, attended along with Kelly E. Buchta, Vice Chair of the NLC DI Workgroup and NJTU Diversity Coordinator, Jen Ripple, and Jackie Kutzer.

Overall, both Women's Showcases brought up similar themes: networking, support structures of social media and newsletters to inform; and, the power of volunteering that extends beyond giving back and feeling good to learning new things and sharing ideas with others. The widely-shared outcome: there are opportunities for us all that present a chance to share passion, increase awareness and promote the mission of TU.

—Kelly E. Buchta

JEFFREY YATES

— WALT'S —
"REAL DEAL"
SPOTLIGHT
BY WALT GASSON

R&M Welding of Wyoming

For those of us who live here, it's an inconvenient truth: Wyoming's economy is prone to boom and bust cycles. It's a great place to live, a perfect place to raise a family and an awesome place to fish. But the fact is that Wyoming rides the energy wave. Most recently, we've seen booms and busts in oil, gas, coal, and wind energy. It's the Wyoming way, it's what we do.

The latest bust hit Wyoming a few years back, and we all felt it. Many people lost their jobs. Companies moved out. Families relocated, and communities suffered. One Wyoming energy services company, R&M Welding, was hard hit by the downturn in natural gas prices and was forced to close its eastern Wyoming shop.

But in western Wyoming, R&M teamed up with conservation groups to weather the economic storm. Seedskadee Chapter of Trout Unlimited and Muley Fanatic Foundation needed a way to protect important riparian areas and aspen stands for a few years to give the woody plants a chance to grow and become established. They needed a way to protect sensitive riparian areas along a headwaters stream for pure Colorado River cutthroat.

The groups approached R&M Welding in Rock Springs with this fencing challenge: The fence had to be nearly maintenance free, no postholes, easily put up and taken down in the field, and be 6 feet tall. They knew this was no small task, but they also knew R&M was the perfect partner. R&M immediately got to work and designed a bomb proof fence that has exceeded all expectations. Using old pipe donated from local oil and gas operators; Breitburn Operating, Wexpro, Southland and Royalty Company.

They may have created their own niche market. Conservation fencing has become an important product for R&M. They have built 18,700 linear feet of fence out of 770,440 feet of pipe. Word has gotten out; a fence project from Oregon is in the works this winter. Moreover, it's become a great example of cooperation between the energy services company and local conservation groups. Billy Black the general manager for R&M Welding said. "The fence projects helped keep the shop in Rock Springs open. Becoming a TU Business member was an easy decision."

"The fence projects helped keep the shop in Rock Springs open. Becoming a TU Business member was an easy decision."
— Billy Black, general manager R&M Welding

Some may think this is an unlikely marriage, a company that relies on the oil and gas industry and conservation organizations. In Wyoming there is a saying….that "good fences make good neighbors". That's never been truer than it is in this case. As project leader Nick Walrath says, "We look forward to working with R&M for a long time to come. They're the real deal."

THE BEST

Peacock Bass fishing on earth

THE RIO MARIÉ *has been proven to have more trophy peacock bass than any other river in the Amazon. In fact, at least twice as many monster peacock bass as any other river in Brazil! But until the fall of 2014, the giant speckled and butterfly peacock bass of the Marié had seldom, if ever, seen a lure. Then, for the first time, the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources joined with progressive native Indians to open the 500-mile long Marié River as Brazil's first catch-and-release fishery and dedicated every inch of the river as fly-fishing-only.*

In the three seasons since, incredible numbers of huge peacock bass have been landed, the most luxurious mothership in the Amazon has been added, travel logistics are refined, a superb guide staff has developed, and the river's reputation for spectacular fly fishing has been firmly established.

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The Marié angling season begins in September and ends in early December. All-inclusive packages start each week in Manaus with a scenic, non-stop, float plane flight above the Amazon rainforest to the remote headwaters of the Rio Marié. A huge portion of the package cost, float planes are the only sensible way to rendezvous with the on-the-move mothership, Untamed Amazon. This rare combination of space, mobility, and solitude ensures we can find good water conditions and great fishing every day of the season, regardless of water conditions.
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▲ 7-day package *September-November* **$7,325**

Not included is a required $670 Marié Native Association trespass fee which supports the local tribal community.

This and all trips to the Marié are coordinated with The Fly Shop, their exclusive United States representative. Please contact us for reservations or more information on other dates that might better suit your schedule.

Make your plans now to join TU's Kirk Deeter October 26 to November 2, 2017.
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JOSHUA DUPLECHIAN

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TROUT UNLIMITED

SHOPS WE LIKE *BY WALT GASSON*

Sky Blue Outfitters

I lived in a neighboring state for a while, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was practically in our back yard. I loved the place the first time I saw it. Dense timber, ridge and valley after ridge and valley, and in the bottom of every valley—a stream or a river. There were rivers with names that came right out of the pages of American history—the Allegheny, the Susquehanna, the Delaware and the Schuylkill. There were rivers that I wasn't real sure how to pronounce—like the Youghiogheny. And there were fish—there were even trout!

vil wish I had known Rick Nyles back then. I wish I had known about Sky Blue Outfitters. SBO is one of the most experienced and comprehensive fly-fishing guide services in Pennsylvania. Rick started guiding in 1999 and started SBO in 2002. It was a great move. Rick has fished for over forty years all over PA and all over the USA. Like all the guides at SBO, Rick is a Pennsylvania native and a lifelong resident of the state. He knows these waters like no one else I know. That knowledge came in handy in the early days, as SBO started running day trips and packaged trips to Penns, Pine, Spring, Little Juniata, Big Fishing Creek, Bald Eagle, Slate, Cedar and Little Pine Creek—just to name a few. Rick was happy, the clients were happy and the business grew.

As it grew, Nick Raftas and Taylor Helbig came on to support and expand the business, bringing 35 years of additional experience in fly fishing these great waters. Their expertise made things even better, and SBO established itself as a leading guide service in PA. They branched out into fishing for bass, pike and muskies. When carp fishing became a thing, they began offering fly-fishing guide service to target the "poor man's bonefish". They began to lead trips farther afield—trout in Montana…redfish, sea trout and stripers off the Outer Banks of North Carolina, and more. Rick placed 3rd in the Orvis fly-tying contest in 2015. They were named as one of the top 90 guide services in the U.S. by *Field and Stream* magazine in 2016. Nick became an Orvis Endorsed Fly-Fishing Guide this spring. Their reputation is outstanding, and you never know what they're going to be up to next!

But don't take my word for it. Go. Give Pennsylvania a shot. Fish for trout, fish for smallmouth, fish for carp—but whatever you do, fish with SBO. TU is proud to have Sky Blue Outfitters as a Gold Level TU Business member.

TROUT UNLIMITED BUSINESS GOLD LEVEL

Sky Blue Outfitters
Rick Nyles
Fleetwood, PA 19522
(610) 987-0073
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www.skyblueoutfitters.com

TU TESTED

PRODUCT REVIEWS BY TU ANGLERS, FOR TU ANGLERS

Smartwool PhD Light Crew Socks

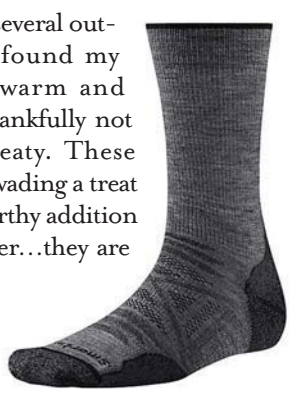
$21.95; smartwhool.com.com

REVIEWED BY KELLY BUCHTA

The Smartwool PhD Light Crew socks are a class act. Though socks might not be an important part of one's wardrobe, these socks provide style, comfort and practicability all in one. The seamless toe and sleek fit are styled to a fit without adding bulk in the heel or toe area.

They have a mesh panel across the top foot area which provides ventilation for long hikes or weekend adventures. In addition, the socks' padded heel and toe area offer cushioned support for all day wear and tear and include light compression in the arch area, a comfortable added bonus.

The Indastructawool fabric stood up through several outings and I found my feet to be warm and cozy, and thankfully not hot and sweaty. These socks made wading a treat and are a worthy addition for any angler…they are an A+.



Cabela's Chest and Waist Pack

$29.99 and $39.99; cabelas.com

REVIEWED BY BILL THORNE

Fly-fishing gear, like everything else, is constantly affected by trends and fashion. For years fly fishers were identified by their big floppy hats and their smartly adorned vest. Every gadget under the sun had a place in a vest pocket, or attached to the vest's exterior.

Sometime in the last ten years, however, vests began being replaced by waist, chest or sling packs. Even waders are now designed with a built in chest pack true minimalists can use to haul all they need except maybe lunch and a rain coat.

The smartly styled Cabela's chest pack (earth brown with orange accents) that I reviewed is a pack any minimalist would be proud to use. It is designed with just enough space for a medium-sized fly box, spare leaders, a pack of indicators, and a cell phone. In addition, it features multiple attachment points on its exterior for nippers, floatant holder and a small fly patch to dry delicate dries and midges.

The matching waist pack is also smartly styled and not overdone. It has just enough room inside for essentials with appropriately sized pouches for fly boxes leaders tippet and floatant. As with the chest pack, the exterior is well designed with a quick entry zippered pouch on top and with diagonal attachment strips on both sides of the front. These compartments were perfect for holding often used tools such as nippers and forceps. Water bottle pouches sit on both ends.

Two of favorite design features are the pack's waist belt (which can be tucked inside a hidden compartment, allowing the pack to be used as a sling pack), and its two bottom loop straps (which provide storage of a light rain jacket).

Both of these packs are intelligently designed and reasonably priced, featuring just enough room for everything an angler needs without the bulk and weight of many other packs.

YETI Rambler 1-Gallon Jug

$130; yeti.com

REVIEWED BY KIRK DEETER

It's hard to keep up with all the new widgets for keeping stuff cool (or hot) YETI is cranking out these days, but this one really caught my eye, and it's probably already my favorite of anything YETI has ever made. A simple one-gallon jug, but it has amazing temperature-holding power. I filled it with ice and sent my son off to his high school baseball game. Five days later, after riding around on the back seat of his car, what was left inside was still a slushy mix of ice and water. I take it on my drift boat, and I don't need to carry any more little plastic bottles, and I don't need to stick my water supply on ice in a cooler (so I can carry a smaller cooler, and balance my boat better). It isn't cheap, but it works better than advertised. I'd buy this for the eco-friendliness factor alone, as I am strong behind the "Kick Plastic" effort. One other neat thing to mention: You can unscrew the cap to fill it (naturally) but to drink (or pour) right from it, you can also unscrew a small spout, and the cap for that sits on a special magnetic holder, which is pretty slick. This is a really smart, effective product that anglers will love.

Gerber US Assist US30V Knife

$119.00; gerbergear.com

REVIEWED BY JON CHRISTIANSEN

Any time a trout fisher heads into the woods for a couple of days or loads gear into a raft for an extended float, you need two things in addition fishing stuff. You need a multi-tool and a good knife. I've had a Gerber multi-tool for many years and it has been completely reliable. I've carried a small pocket knife in the strap of my sling pack, but it's been replaced by the new Gerber US Assist US30V assisted opening knife. It has a three inch blade of SV30 steel, which the people who know about these things say is near the top of the line for hardness and ability to keep an edge. The handle is glass-filled nylon, which contributes to lighter weight without affecting balance.

The spring assist opening is facilitated by thumb studs on both sides of the blade and the ball bearing guts in the frame cause the blade to fly out to lock position I don't expect to use this knife as a weapon (unless, of course, I have to rescue Deeter from another bar fight), but in normal every day use, single hand opening is a nice feature. The knife also features a spring steel clip with a wide opening, so one can easily clip the knife into a pocket or vest. For additional safety, there is a bolt lock, which when activated, prevents the knife from being opened or closed.

You can buy a much cheaper knife than this one, which comes a tad under a hundred bucks, but I expect that one of my grandkids will be using this knife someday and it will likely look and feel like it does now.

Capital Sportsman Hemingway Fishing Shirt

$39.00; capitalsportsman.com

REVIEWED BY BILL THORNE

The Ocean Blue Hemingway shirt is a classic fishing shirt. It comes in 100% cotton poplin for comfort on the boat, and is stylish enough for post-fishing cocktails. Two button, bellowed pockets expand well, and easily accommodated fly boxes.

This shirt was clearly designed by fishermen, for fishermen. It has all the features one looks for in a top brand technical shirt. Wood tone button placket, rear hook and loop cape back with polyester mesh for ventilation, utility loop sunshade collar, roll up sleeve tabs and adjustable cuffs on the long sleeve model. This great shirt comes in three colors and a wide size selection (S-3XL). I have a closet full of fishing shirts but my "Hemingway" has become one of my favorites.

TU TESTED

Orvis Tacky Deluxe Fly Box

$35.00; orvis.com

REVIEWED BY SCOTT CRIQUI

Minimalist. Alpine-style. Ultra-light. Many anglers today subscribe to the less is more mindset, and I am no different. Keeping with that theme, the Orvis Tacky Deluxe fly box fits seamlessly with my efforts to ditch my vest, pack, and sling.

I loved the design and simplicity of Tacky boxes when they first arrived at my local fly shop, and Orvis has taken the classic version to a higher level. The classic gray coloring is timelessly stylish, and the magnetic closure is simple and effective. Most impressive are the box's silicone mats which hold flies exceptionally well, and are durable enough to withstand the rigors of repeatedly removing and replacing flies.

Chasing brookies and browns around local spring creeks, this box helped me stow my flies and tools in just the pockets of my waders. Slim enough to slide into a shirt pocket, yet large enough to carry a solid assortment of nymphs, dries and streamers, the Tacky Deluxe box allowed me to store two boxes of worth of flies in one place. This versatility allows for an entire water column's worth of flies to be kept in one handy location; perfect for a quick and simple weekend trout adventure.

In short, whether you embrace a minimalist approach to your time on the water, or simply appreciate a high-quality, sleek design, the Orvis Tacky fly box is a must have.

FisheWear Leggings

$110.00; fishewear.com

REVIEWED BY BEVERLY SMITH

When I first moved out west 12 years ago, a friend of mine stuck a bumper sticker on my car that read, "I ski in jeans!" That car proudly displayed that sticker along with my old South Carolina plates and my complete lack of understanding for how to dress appropriately for sports in the Rocky Mountains. Same could have been said of my fishing attire under waders—often jeans bunched into my wool socks.

As a result, when I saw that a company had just recently launched with the goal of creating comfortable, functioning clothing for women anglers, I was quick to grab a pair of leggings. FisheWear has a number of different patterns available—from funky arctic char to groovy grayling—that you certainly aren't going to find in your typical athletic department store. I've been pleased with the quick-drying, breathable and—yes—fashionable leggings for getting me on the water in style this spring.

The 066—Guadalupe River chapter (GRTU)

has committed ongoing support for the TU Tomorrow Fund, a newly created opportunity that will benefit TU's Headwaters Youth Program. GRTU's annual $10,000 donation will serve as match for other TU councils and chapters who want to show similar commitment to getting the next generation involved in TU's important conservation mission.

Funds will sustain TU Headwaters staff's efforts to develop new and strengthen existing programs and projects designed to involve young people from kindergarten through college with TU—programs like the Youth Leadership Council, the TU Teen Summit, and the TU Costa 5 Rivers college network. GRTU's Council Chair Phil Dopson emphasized there is a critical need for the TU Tomorrow Fund, adding: "There is no more important business of TU than educating our youth."

When the 522—Rabun chapter contributed $1,000 to the Headwaters program earlier this year, GRTU's TU Tomorrow Fund matched it. Help us not leave this money on the table and ensure it is put towards the next generation. To find out more about how your chapter or council contribution to the Headwaters Youth Program can be doubled, contact Headwaters Director Franklin Tate ftate@tu.org

Notice of Annual Meeting

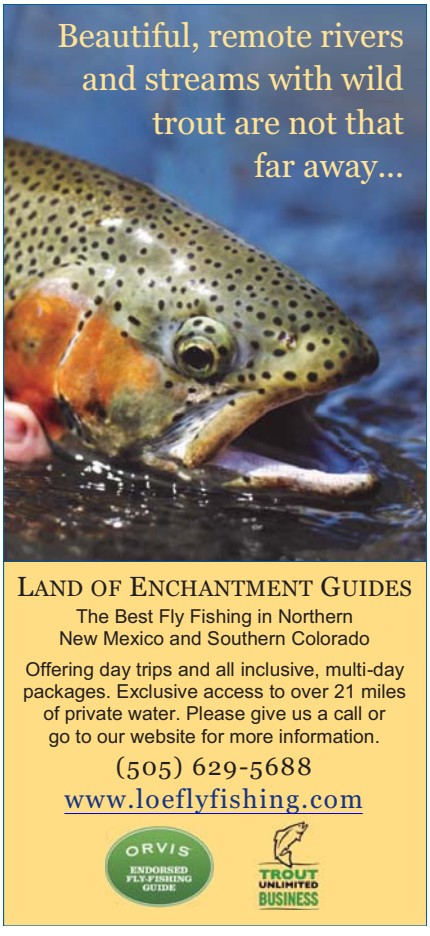
Sat., Sept. 30, 2017
9:00 a.m. The Hotel Roanoke
Roanoke, Virginia

Notice is hereby given to the members of Trout Unlimited, a Michigan non-profit corporation, that, pursuant to the provisions of the bylaws, the 58th Annual Meeting of members will be held to elect trustees and to take up any other business that comes up properly before the meeting. Members can obtain the 2017 proxy at tu.org/annualmeeting or through the mail by calling (703) 522-0200.

Full Event Details

On Wed., Sept. 27, local TU members will host fishing trips in the Roanoke area. On Thurs., Sept. 28 staff and volunteers will feature a tour of TU's restoration and other conservation work around in the region, and host a special film showing that evening. On Fri., Sept. 29 the National Leadership Council will host its 15th annual meeting, with workshops open to all TU members in the morning and a business meeting in the afternoon. That evening will feature our annual awards banquet. Sat., Sept. 30., will feature a State of TU presentation by TU's senior leaders, the Annual Meeting of members, as well as additional workshops and presentations. That evening's fundraising banquet will benefit the Virginia Council of TU.

For an agenda and registration information, see www.tu.org/annualmeeting.



Watersheds

[BY CHRISTOPHER CAMUTO]

The Exception that Proves the Rule

ODD THE WAY ANGLING NEVER FAILS US.

We may be crashing at work or wobbling along an uncertain career path, but in the nearest good river fish rise out of difficult lies to prove our self-worth every time we show up. On the river, we can't miss. We shed our clumsiness at the riverbank, wade effortlessly, observe with patience, cast well and a cocky fly we tied at the end of a frustrating day turns a discriminating fish. For one long, delicious moment, we are treated to the lively weight of getting everything right. *Yeah*. Fishing well doesn't change anything, of course, but the muscle memory of a good outing carries over, suggesting we muddle forward in our non-river life.

Or we may be ripping it up in the world, life suspiciously turning our way, the gods dropping rewards at our feet at every corner. But we're getting stuffed on our home water, trout refusing our shining, successful selves with all sorts of devious lessons in humility. We're incompetent hacks on familiar water. Or we make a trip to good, distant water but the trout don't know golden boy—or golden girl—has arrived and are unimpressed with our efforts while others casually clean up all around us. Angling failure, too, has its role in keeping us moving along with a little more wisdom that we otherwise would have had.

The odd thing is, whatever happens on the river works, the outcome of any angling will find a place in our lives, rivers being both a tangible embodiment and a mirror of the way things are—in nature, in the world, in us.

Unless we are some kind of angling professional, fishing is the exception, not the rule of our lives. Of course many of us do a tour of duty living as if life was about angling. I spent a feckless decade in my 30s fishing as much as I could, giving myself over to the obsessive illusion that one could fish one's way through life. Having an aversion to crowds and famous waters, my venture was pretty small-timey. I devoured the streams of the Blue Ridge Mountains and assayed nearly every watershed in the southern Appalachians before I was done, and traveled as far as Russia and Oregon following angling as a way of life. All that fishing—all those days and nights on all those rivers—served other goals, of course, but I didn't quite know that then. Rivers and trout worked on me without comment or complaint, working patiently with whatever conscious and subconscious ambitions I brought to them.

Once I understood what all the fishing was about, I could fish much less with equal pleasure and get back to the demands of life. Memories of that obsessive decade settled into sedimentary deposits rich with fossil memories, a valuable resource to quarry. Those years lead me to other obsessions, each a 10-year affair (which seems to be my limit) firmly rooted in the feckless wisdom of that fishing decade. Nothing else would have served the angling and non-angling aspects of my life as well. As the acerbic Scot W.C. Stewart put it in his 1857 *The Practical Angler*, "If, however, on the one hand, angling is looked upon with little favour by an unenlightened multitude, on the other hand, there is no amusement which those who practice it become so much attached… Angling, when once embarked in by any person of soul and brains, becomes a passion, and like other passions will grow and feed upon the smallest possible encouragement." As the title of Stewart's worthy old book suggests, this is not a Romantic idea, it is a practical one.

As Izaak Walton discovered centuries ago, angling works whether we need it because we need to take something seriously—to put a sense of definable purpose back in our lives—or as a careless diversion—to get away from the seriousness life can dole out in heavy doses. (And Walton, of course, lived in troubled times.) Somehow angling can just as easily be a way to focus as a way to relax, or perhaps it is a way of connecting those two needs, revealing their interdependency. When we need to work at it, the demands of angling are there—being serious about good gear, knowing the value of preparation, getting to good water at the right time. There is the hidden athleticism

Somehow angling can just as easily be a way to focus as a way to relax, or perhaps it is a way of connecting those two needs, revealing their interdependency.

ARIAN STEVENS

of wading and casting, the fitness and patience they require. Mostly there is the deeply satisfying challenge of finding and enticing wild trout to a fly on a long and light enough tippet. That staring at a stretch of river and that staring into ranks of well-tied flies in a fly box—that can be a moment of satisfying pressure or a total release from pressure. Hard to say whether when fishing seriously we are drawn further into the seriousness of life or are released from it long before we release any trout. Angling—and trout fishing especially—seems to fit the case whatever the case may be.

As an angler, I resent the popular view of fishing as a folksy, sentimental diversion—the freckled kid with the cane pole, the old man with the floppy hat. Such Norman Rockwell depictions have not been to the point for a long time, if they ever were. And angling as source of poetic reverie has also been misconceived—much maudlin sentimentality has been penned about fishing but strong poetry has also come from some anglers' days on rivers. Think of James Dickey or Ted Hughes or Jim Harrison. Angling in our time has become an existential assertion, a form of engagement and self-definition, a simultaneous enlargement of knowledge and imagination. Whether we fish seriously or not, often or not, angling has become for many a creative space where some things about life are understood—in miniature or in essence—as they are nowhere else. That's why we're in the river, or thinking about getting back there when we have the time.

It never fails.

Wit's End
Wolftree Farm

BLUE LINES

Seeking

I walk a river of stone. Spellbound. It clacks at my tread, crunches under weight. But it is not the sound of rock beneath muscle and bone that enamors. Not the auditory.

Nor is it forest or mountain or crackling blue sky.

It is the river. It is the river that expands iris, narrows pupil. There is nothing else. No woods, no hills, no sky. Only stone river. I cannot look away.

Colors. Blues. Greens. Aqua. Reds. Maroon. White. Magnified and clarified. Enhanced. Popped. Some rocks shaped like hearts. Some as big as a crew cab four-by-four. Some small enough to rattle in a shaken palm. All dazzling.

Water is the lens through which I see this rainbow world, as if a polarizing filter has been placed over everything. I imagine dunking my head into this rock river, imagine the ice-cream ache of that coldness, imagine opening my trout eyes and being able to see all the way across the riffles to the far bank. Seeing the blue depth of the deepest holes where sunlight dances in shafts like beams coming through an old barn door. Being able to see a salmon fly land on the water 20 yards away. Being able to see prey. I imagine a fish up from somewhere far downstream, a big fish. A fish spangled like the river, a fish of stone.

In this dense land of larch and fir, a man of the sagebrush ocean feels a bit squeezed in. As if the forest itself is one of those humans who has no space bubble, a close-talker up on you with his halitosis. A space invader. But this is forest, not human. It is just thick and the far horizon is a near hill, so I walk this cobble and boulder and I cannot take my eyes away. The creator did not make rivers like this in sagebrush country.

There is a fly rod in my hand, a 7-weight 9 ½ feet in length. It balances right, a good big arbor reel spun up with

Bull

BY TOM REED

MATT GUYMON

Water magnifies. Subtracting, say two-x power, he was every bit of three feet in length, head to tail. Perhaps 20 feet out and 10 feet deep in the blue-black. He did not move for anything. Not the big whitefish every bit of 20 inches that swam in his wake like a bicyclist in the Tour. Not the hapless four-inch cutthroat dangerously within range of gullet. Not the bigger trout or even some of his own kind. Or any of my streamers.

Venus appeared and gathered more company and the sky went black. Venus: love, beauty, desire, sex, fertility, prosperity. And victory.

In the morning, he was gone. So I walked. That day. Every day.

Nights I dream of deep space and clear water and a large unknown out there that makes me sit up in my sleeping bag. Afraid or perhaps just startled.

I walk the river in summer morning fleece and I cast blindly but mostly, I just walk. Upstream and down and back again. Balance on obelisks that tribute a mountain shedding away to ocean.

I sit on big boulders and switch out. Colors and sizes. Going from big to small and then back again. Casting the big uglies with a clumsiness that decries my fancy equipment. Doing much better with the smaller ones, the little rabbit fur sculpins.

Sometimes, I see a fish colored like stones from the river out in the deep water. See the white-edge first. As a pre-dawn deer materializes from tail to rump to wither to antler in growing light, so is a fish born from fin edge to belly to tooth to dorsal. That white is not twig or fragment or sand. It is char.

He was colored like the river, all blues and reds and greens and blacks. Fins edged white.

sinking line. Strung to a leader with a thick tippet and tied to a streamer, the barb smashed flat, but sharp enough to draw blood from an inquisitive clumsy finger.

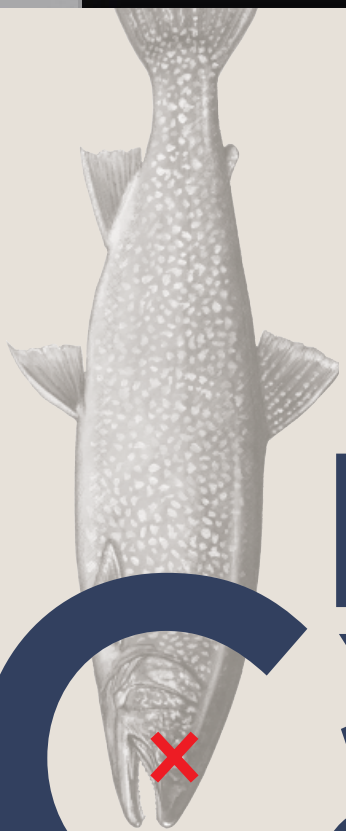
In the mornings, I am out on this river, coffeed up, stomach acrid from pre-breakfast caffeine and steam coming off the river. The cup. There is a deep hole across from camp where the river bends and folds and the current, if I could see it, somersaults all over itself on its way to the Pacific. In this depth, on the first night, miles back in, I saw my stone fish.

He was colored like the river, all blues and reds and greens and blacks. Fins edged white.

Sometimes, when my fingers long to touch the smooth slickness of scales shaped by mountain water, I switch to big fat dry flies and catch a good Westslope. Touch it briefly, as if I have touched a bird in flight without changing its path. But mostly, I walk my cobblestone road and sometimes I cast. Once, I felt a tug.

This is my drug.

Tom Reed is the author of several books. He works for TU from his ranch outside Pony, Mont.



Keeping Your Catch:

A Benefit to Certain Trout Species?

BY DAN GARREN
Regional Fisheries Manager,
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Upper Snake Regional Office

One of the greatest aspects of fishing is the freedom to make your own choices. These choices often directly affect your personal level of fishing success and satisfaction. Whether choosing a place to fish or fly pattern, your options matter! If you choose wisely, you might just land a fish, and that invariably leads to another choice—possibly the most important and potentially difficult one for the modern day angler.

Should the trout be released, or are there other conservation alternatives to consider? For decades, many anglers have defaulted to catch and release as the best, if not only, option of preserving the quality of our fisheries. But in some cases, releasing a wild trout is not the best way to conserve our valuable coldwater resources, and that may actually run counter to the conservation needs on specific waters.

Although catch and release is not specifically defined, it is the practice of letting fish go after they're landed… in a manner that minimizes mortality, to conserve a valuable and finite resource. The century-old concept has origins in Europe, where it was used to prevent overharvest of fish. In the U.S., the discussion of catch and release started as early as the 1930s, when esteemed fly angler and conservationist Lee Wulff was credited with saying, "Game fish are too valuable to be caught only once." Michigan was the first state to implement catch and release rules back in the 1950s, although proponents of the concept had been discussing the strategy for a couple decades prior.

During the first half of the 20th century, fishing was viewed primarily as a means of obtaining protein (fish were *food*, foremost). With limited free time, many anglers focused on local waters, but as the U.S. developed economically and citizens had more mobility, angling effort increased across the country. Increased effort combined with a "harvest" mindset put new stresses on resources that were once lightly fished. Anglers and biologists recognized that fish populations could decline if harvest numbers continued to increase.

For trout in particular, this realization resulted in more restrictive fishing rules, including widespread use of catch and release regulations. At the time these rules were being implemented, many trout fisheries were already being supported by hatchery trout. Hatchery production constraints and costs meant hatchery trout were a finite resource, which limited the amount of harvest that could be sustained with stocking programs. The combination of the static availability of hatchery trout combined with mounting pressure on wild trout

JAMES NELSON

set the stage for catch and release to become ingrained in the modern angling ethic.

Today's anglers embrace the concept with nearly religious zeal, believing it is the best practice to help ensure the future of our fisheries. Looking back through time, catch and release certainly filled a biologically necessary management need.

But times have changed for many wild trout waters in the U.S. Today's most pressing conservation need is rarely a reduction of harvest, particularly for trout, and particularly in rivers and streams. Rather, fisheries management and conservation efforts now often focus on restoring degraded habitat, dealing with a changing environment and managing a legacy of introduced fish species.

In some systems, large scale habitat alterations (think dam creation, flow alteration and warming water temperatures) have changed physical characteristics of natural systems. These changes then favor "new" fish species, which establish wild or feral populations and compete with native fish or with historically dominant species that once thrived in these waters. The root issues affecting our fisheries are perhaps more complex than in the past, making the solutions necessary to remedy the issues equally complex, and varied by river. In some cases, one of the best conservation tools available to managers may be selective harvest—a concept where anglers target a certain species or size of fish for removal to help meet conservation goals.

The future of conservation requires cooperative efforts between anglers and managers. The South Fork Snake River in eastern Idaho is an example of a river in need of angler participation in conservation. The South Fork is home to one of the strongest populations of native Yellowstone cutthroat trout remaining across their diminished range, and also supports a burgeoning population of anglers from across the country. While the South Fork fishery is impacted by flow management and irrigation withdrawals, the biggest threat to cutthroat comes from introduced rainbow trout that crossbreed with cutthroat, thereby polluting their genetic purity. Of note, the offspring from these pairings are fertile, and can continue to dilute the cutthroat gene pool.

In the early 1990s, rainbow trout were just five percent of the South Fork's trout population while cutthroat made up 85 percent, with brown trout comprising the remaining 10 percent. That ratio has slowly shifted, and both cutthroat and rainbows are now found in equal abundance. Without intervention, biologists expect this ratio to shift even more, with rainbow ultimately outcompeting cutthroat.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game prioritizes cutthroat trout in the South Fork, and actively manages this issue by working with water managers to shape flows to benefit cutthroat, and by operating weirs to ensure tributary spawners have rainbow-free spawning refuges. While these actions are beneficial, they aren't enough to ensure cutthroat remain the dominant species in the South Fork. To meet this goal, rainbow trout abundance has to be substantially reduced, and reductions will have to occur annually.

Enter anglers as an important partner in the conservation strategy. Angling rules have allowed unlimited rainbow trout harvest since 2005, but recent creel surveys show that relatively few anglers are taking advantage of the opportunity. Anglers handle well over half of the rainbow trout in the South Fork each year, but release around 70 percent of these fish. As such, anglers can reduce rainbow populations substantially if more practiced conservation-minded

In some cases, one of the best conservation tools available to managers may be selective harvest—a concept where anglers target a certain species or size of fish for removal to help meet conservation goals.

JAMES NELSON

selective harvest. Contrary to what some anglers might think, the quality of the fishery would not be degraded by rainbow harvest, as research has shown that cutthroat will fill in the void at a better than 1:1 ratio. This means the river could support slightly higher overall densities of trout (native trout to boot), with a species thought to be more willing to rise to a dry fly, if the total catch and release mentality can be thoughtfully set aside in the interest of conservation.

The issue of selective harvest is not entirely limited to debates about native vs. nonnative species either, as highlighted on the nearby Henrys Fork. Many fly anglers know the famed river as a mecca for self-sustaining (or wild) populations of rainbow trout, which were first stocked in the late 1800s. Starting in the 1980s, brown trout (also stocked) began to make an appearance in the lower half of the river, from Mesa Falls downstream. From the 1980s to the early 2000s, brown trout made up five percent of the trout abundance, with rainbows making up the remaining 95 percent.

Over the past decade, brown trout have been steadily increasing at the rate of one to two percent annually. While that return rate would be considered low for an investment account, it's resulted in a steady increase of brown trout. Depending on the specific section of river, brown trout now make up 25 to 35 percent of the trout population. This increasing trend in brown trout has been observed in the South Fork Snake and Silver Creek as well. It's certainly worth noting that the increase in brown trout in the Henrys Fork is not in addition to the rainbows that have been there for decades—it has been at the expense of those rainbows. This is a situation where the choices anglers make after catching a trout may help determine the fate of a fishery. Harvesting brown trout may help slow or even reverse the trend, while continuing a no-harvest practice may result in further declines in rainbows and replacement by brown trout.

Since neither species in question is native, the decision on which species thrives will largely be left in the hands of anglers, with little intervention from fisheries managers. Who wins and who loses in this interaction will depend on how anglers choose to engage on the Henrys Fork.

In neighboring Yellowstone National Park, fisheries biologists have implemented some aggressive pro-native trout fishing rules in recent years. Recognizing the reluctance of anglers to voluntarily harvest trout, managers in the park have applied a mandatory kill for rainbow, brook, brown and lake trout (all nonnative species in the Park) in designated Native Trout Conservation Areas to help meet management and conservation goals. Mandatory kill rules are symptomatic of both the reluctance of anglers to voluntarily remove fish, and the critical need to have those same anglers actively participate in management. Managers across the country recognize that without anglers applying lethal pressure to select segments of our fish populations, meaningful change to those resources will either be incredibly expensive, or outright unachievable.

Adoption of selective harvest appears to be mired in concerns that increased harvest will deplete fish populations, ruin the fishing experience and ultimately return us to decades past, where overharvest degraded our resources. These concerns often directly conflict with direction produced from today's science-based management programs. Today's fisheries management programs are built on the accumulated research and knowledge of the past several decades, and techniques and management practices have been refined and improved over the past 40 years. Our knowledge of how populations react to change (including the effects of increased levels of harvest) has greatly increased. As a profession, managers recognize the critical need to keep healthy, vibrant fish populations in our rivers and streams. Jeopardizing those populations with improper management techniques is rare, and oversight from other fisheries professionals serves as a safety mechanism, ensuring management actions are appropriate for given waters.

Granted, conservation needs are not easily addressed by a single philosophy or action, and the wholesale implementation of catch and release may be counterproductive to the conservation needs of some specific waters. Catch and release has been and will always be a valuable fisheries management tool, particularly when applied thoughtfully. But with the challenges facing some fisheries today, selective harvest will be vital in determining what species maintain dominance into the future. As such, it will be crucial for anglers to engage in alternate conservation strategies, and embrace a new conservation paradigm that includes selective harvest if we are to ensure that the species we collectively prioritize persist in healthy numbers for future anglers.

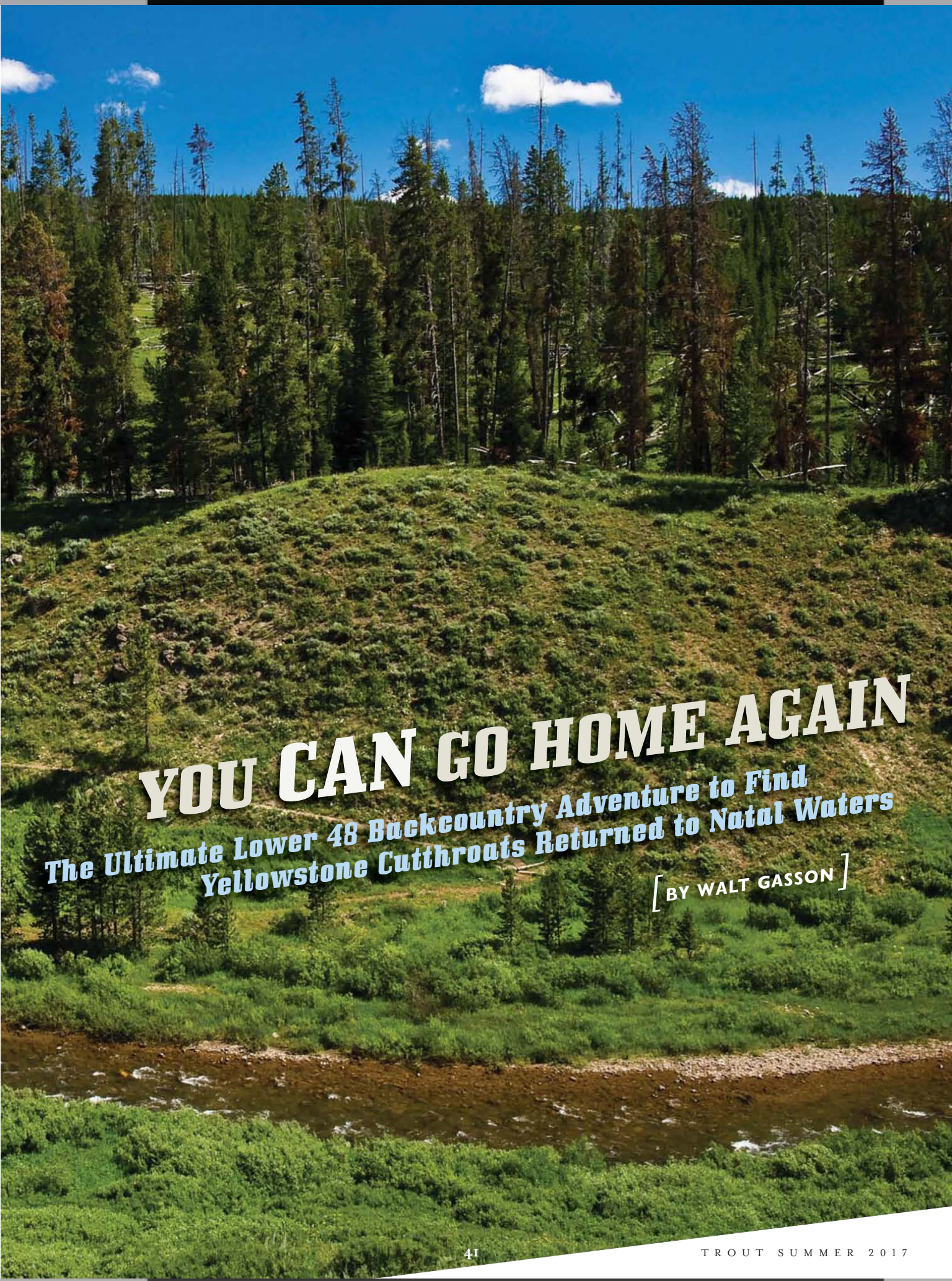
The future of how our fisheries will look depends heavily on the conservation actions anglers choose to engage in when fishing our shared waters.

Mandatory kill rules are symptomatic of both the reluctance of anglers to voluntarily remove fish, and the critical need to have those same anglers actively participate in management.

PAUL VECSEI/ENGBRETSON UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY

JIM KLUG

Yellowstone backcountry



YOU CAN GO HOME AGAIN

The Ultimate Lower 48 Backcountry Adventure to Find Yellowstone Cutthroats Returned to Natal Waters

[BY WALT GASSON]

There are images seared forever in my memory. Pictures going back six decades come to me unannounced, like the unexpected sight of an old friend. So will it be with first cutthroat I saw on the upper Yellowstone. The light was almost gone as we rode the trail on the north side of the river just above Hawk's Rest. We spooked the fish from under an overhanging bank, and it shot diagonally upstream in water just deep enough to hide it. No sound, not even a whisper in the summer twilight. And then, in less time than it takes to tell the story, the fish was gone and darkness closed softly around us as we rode into camp behind Dave Hettinger.

Dave runs Dave Hettinger Outfitting in Pavillion, Wyo., and he's a TU Business member. I'd never met him—sort of an amazing thing in a state like ours that's best described as "a small town with really long streets." He called me one bitter winter day and told me how much he appreciated the work that TU was doing at Yellowstone Lake. He said he had an admiration for TU because of what he'd been seeing from his backcountry camp in the Teton Wilderness. He offered to take one of us in there so we could witness this miracle first hand. It was a princely offer—no matter what route you take, a packtrip into Yellowstone Meadows is a big affair. It's the farthest point from a road in the Lower 48—the wildest country in Wyoming. There was only one person for this job, and it wasn't me… it was Dave Sweet.

Dave Sweet is the indomitable force behind TU's work at Yellowstone Lake. For the last 40 years, his life and the fate of Yellowstone cutthroats in their namesake water have been intertwined. Originally from Illinois, Sweet first came to the Yellowstone country in the 1970s—the heyday of cutthroats in these waters. You could stand at Fishing Bridge and see them by the thousands below. You could catch them from horseback at Yellowstone Meadows. He was living in Colorado at the time, but made the pilgrimage to Yellowstone National Park to fish for these fabled natives. He was instantly captivated, not just by the fish, but also by their keystone place in the ecosystem. The wild country and the wild fish entranced him, and in 1988 Dave and his family relocated. They bought a guest ranch just outside the park's east entrance and immersed themselves in their last best place. They fished, they hunted and they became as steeped in the magic as anyone born to the Absaroka high country. He became involved with TU's East Yellowstone Chapter in Cody, and became a driving force in their work. "I liked the conservation ethic of the group, the trying to give back to the resource," he said. "They weren't just takers. They were givers. They wanted to make things better."

In an eerie turn of fate, lake trout came to Yellowstone Lake in about 1988 as well. No one knows precisely how, but at least one illegal introduction of these fish is thought to have taken place in the late 1980s. Maybe someone thought they'd be great additions to the park's fishing scene. It's been my experience in 40+ years as a conservation professional that nearly all of our most egregious sins against wild things and wild places come under the heading of "…it seemed like a good idea at the time."

So it was with the genesis of this deep-water, top-of- the-food-chain predator. They went through the cutthroat population in Yellowstone Lake like wildfire. By 2007, there were alarm bells ringing for fisheries managers—lake trout were well on the way to eradicating Yellowstone cutthroats in the lake. Efforts to reduce lake trout numbers were beginning. Sweet says, "It was very personal to me because I had a long history with those fish," he said. "I just couldn't sit on the sidelines and let that decline happen."

I'm not absolutely certain Dave ever sat—on the sidelines or anywhere else—once he started the "Save the Yellowstone Cutthroat Project". I'm not sure he ever slept. It became his passion. He and his chapter raised over

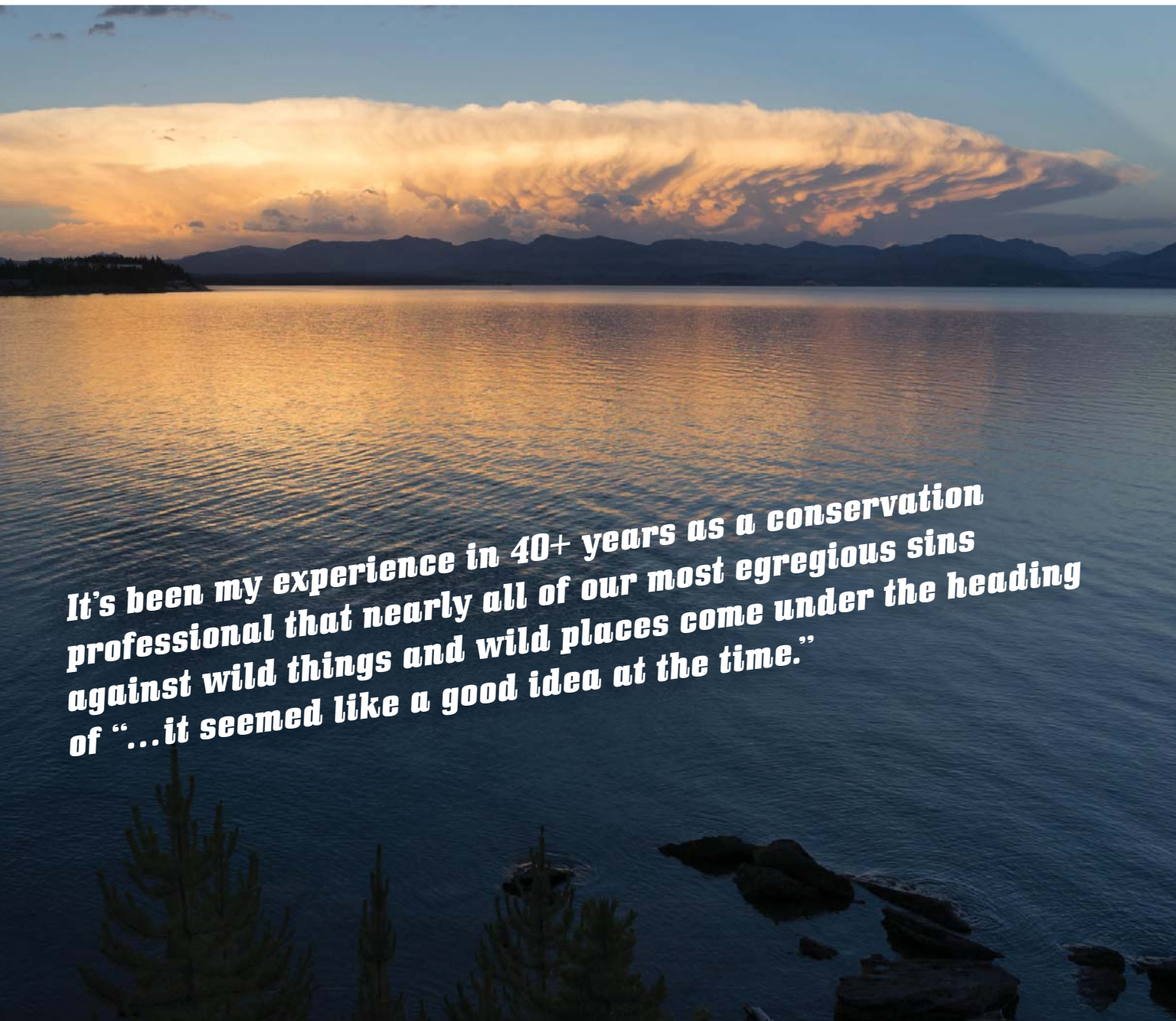
TETRA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

CHRIS BOSWELL / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Yellowstone Lake. Above: Lake trout (Salvelinus namaycush)

$1 million over the next few years to help reduce lake trout in Yellowstone Lake. Other partners included the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, the National Parks Conservation Association, and TU chapters and councils across the country. Their work included getting the message out, bucking the criticism as the lake trout population continued to grow unchecked. In time, their work grew more sophisticated, working with the National Park Service, Yellowstone Park Foundation and United States Geological Service researchers to find techniques that worked. They contracted commercial fishermen from the upper Midwest to harvest hundreds of thousands of lake trout in gill nets. They put transmitters in lake trout and receivers in the lake to locate spawning areas with the goal of killing eggs and young fish. It took a lot of work, but in 2014 they began to see real results. Lake trout numbers began to decline, and cutthroat numbers were up. And recently, there were rumors of spawning runs in the Yellowstone River above the lake.

I called Dave immediately to tell him about Hettinger's offer to take one of us into the upper Yellowstone to see the first major cutthroat spawning runs in years. Naturally, he was excited. It was an opportunity to document first-hand the beginnings of the recovery of these cutthroats. But like many retirees, he's busier now than he was when he had a day job. And when I contacted him about Hettinger's offer, he couldn't make the dates available. He could go earlier… no good, because we couldn't get through the snowdrifts in the high country. He could go later… no good, because the fish would be done spawning and move back into the lake. Someone else would have to go. With a crushing load



Yellowstone cutthroat (Oncorhynchus clarki bouvieri)

of regret and an overwhelming sense of self-sacrifice, I volunteered…

And so it was that I came with Dave Hettinger and his two packers, Bob and Nate, to ride the 30 miles from the Turpin Meadows trailhead north of Jackson into Yellowstone Meadows in late June 2016. As darkness closed around us, we ate a very late and very hasty dinner and simply threw our cots and sleeping bags out on the ground and slept the sleep of straight-up exhaustion. I threw a pack tarp over my bag to keep off the dew, and thought "If grizzly bears had invented the burrito, this is what one would look like." I was too tired to care.

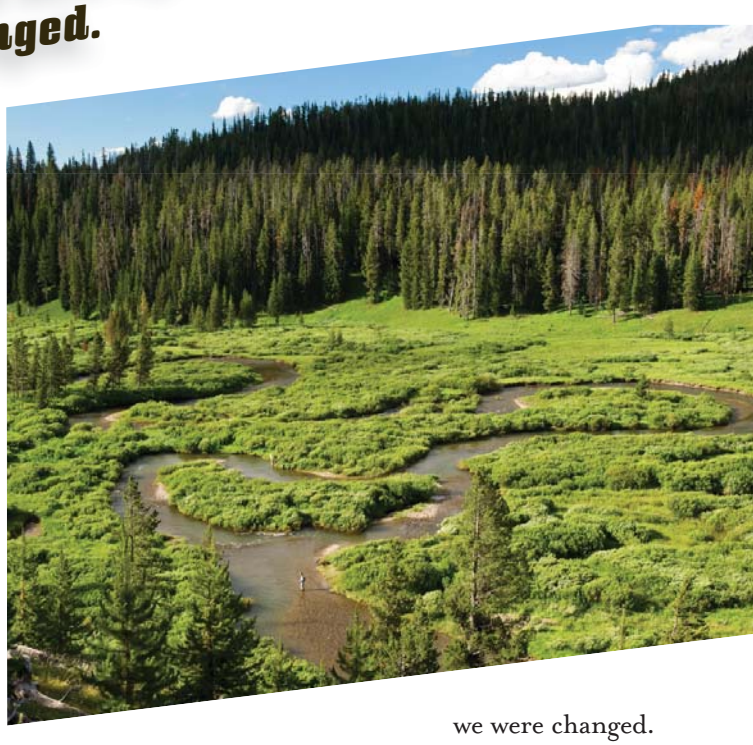
Still, to an angler, every day dawns with new possibilities. Awaking to find myself not inside a bear, I set about putting as much of a Dave Hettinger backcountry breakfast inside me as I could. I could offer that tired old line about the effect of long hours in the saddle and fresh air reigniting my jaded appetite, but the fact is that even if I had just eaten an entire moose, I would still eat three helpings of Dave's eggs and sausage and fried potatoes. I would ride 30 miles for a breakfast like that, even if there were no fish waiting for me. But there were. Oh, there were...

It took almost no time at all to find them. That's not to say that they were there by the thousands. But they were there. For the first time in years, they were there. Every pool held a pair or maybe a small pod of adult cutthroats – spawners, the survivors of the lake trout holocaust and the ancestors of future generations of Yellowstone cutthroats. We caught them gently, brought them to hand as quickly as possible and kept them wet. Then, as a friend says, since they belong to the river, we returned them unharmed. Big, strong, healthy fish – the males showing the bright red sidewalls of spawning time – in big, strong, healthy water. Just before we quit at sundown, I took some private time in the willows to thank God for this place and these fish. It was a crowning moment in a day I will never forget.

The next two days were the same. Rise in the cool, green dawn to the sound of horse bells. Eat my weight in Dave's backcountry cuisine. Then fish. Sandhill cranes in the trail. Elk in the willows. Bear tracks on the sandbar. Bald eagle roost tree. The thought of a grizzly around the next bend, coupled with the comforting weight of bear spray on my wader belt and the sincere hope that I would never have to use it. The timeless thrill of a good mountain horse between my knees. We fished the river and caught fish. We fished the tributaries and caught fish. We wallowed like bull elk in the sheer wild beauty of it all. And we slept deep as the stars turned above us and the dews of creation lie still upon the Yellowstone.

We rode out the way we rode in. Single file, with Dave at the point leading a string of mules. Then Bob with another string of mules, then me and finally Nate riding drag. We were the same people who had ridden in on Monday, I guess. But I think we were different, too. As we rode through the headwaters of the nation's longest undammed river, as we fished for the survivors of an ecological disaster and the progenitors of a new age for Yellowstone cutthroats, I think we were changed.

As we rode through the headwaters of the nation's longest undammed river, as we fished for the survivors of an ecological disaster and the progenitors of a new age for Yellowstone cutthroats, I think we were changed.



They say that you can't fish a river in the same place twice—that the second time the river has changed and so have you. I hope that's true. I hope that when my grandchildren ride into the Yellowstone decades from now, that they can catch the descendants of the Yellowstone cutthroats that I caught. And when they do, I hope they too thank God for the wonder of it all. Maybe we all should.

PHOTOS BY JIM KLUG

Friend of the Wild:

SCOTT STOUDER

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHAUNA STEPHENSON

The dinging of the seat belt alarm is insistent. Loud and metallic.

It's been dinging all day.

"Scott."

Scott is oblivious. He's on a roll, talking about the landscape in front of us, telling this story or that, heading down one rabbit trail and then another and then another before bringing seemingly disparate pieces back to one clean and crystallized point, a point that most might have made by just saying "No," or "Oh, yesterday." This a Stouder speciality.

"Scott."

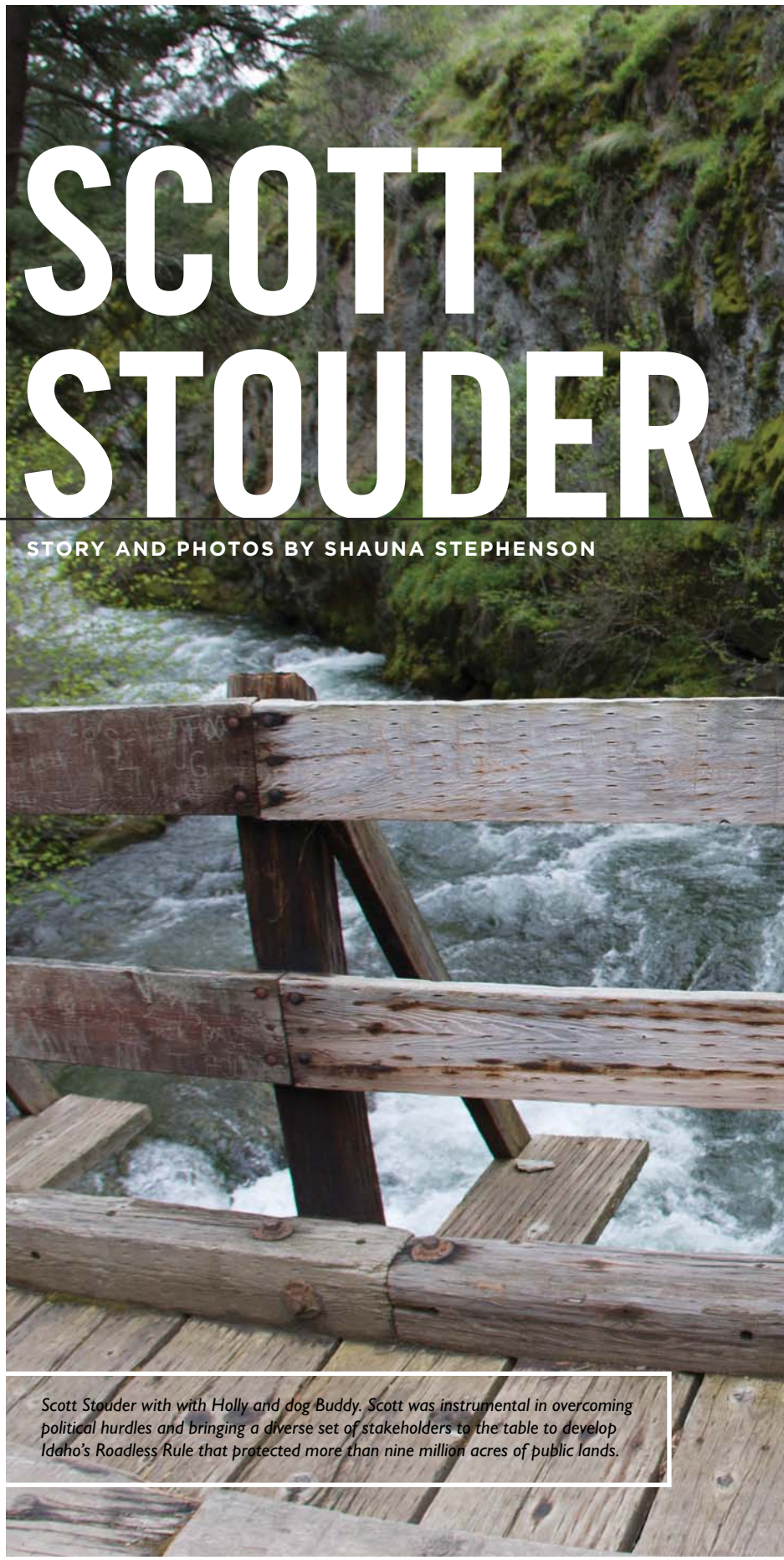
Holly, his wife and partner in adventure—because there is no way to describe Holly without using the word adventure—sits in the back with Buddy, a sweet little black and tan dog. Buddy is curled up in the middle of the backseat, his glossy feathered tail neatly curled beneath him. He tilts one perfectly round tan eyebrow to Holly as if to say "Mom. He's doing it again."

Outside, the Clearwater River rolls by August-dried grasses, yellow mixing with brown mixing with green. And then the cold froth of the river as it cuts through this winding corridor that is lined with giant vertical timber.

Cars pass. The dinging continues.

But Scott can't hear it. Too many days running a chainsaw. Shooting a rifle. Living a loud and crazy-full life.

"SCOTT!"



Scott Stouder with with Holly and dog Buddy. Scott was instrumental in overcoming political hurdles and bringing a diverse set of stakeholders to the table to develop Idaho's Roadless Rule that protected more than nine million acres of public lands.

Legendary is word we use too liberally these days. And just ask Scott. Words matter. But the stories about Scott Stouder and his evolving relationship with this world sure flirt with the edges of that definition.

There's the time he spent in the woods, logging old growth on the west coast of Oregon. High climbing, chainsawing. The time he had a midlife career change and decided to leave the family business to become a starving outdoor writer. The time he untied his horse from a tree, only to have it come crashing down seconds later. Then the time he had a second midlife career change when he came to work for TU and spent a decade and a half protecting millions of acres of wild lands. The time he got whiskey drunk in Reno and locked himself out of his hotel room in nothing but his underpants.

This guy? This guy might be crazy.

Yeah... crazy like a fox.

There's a fire blazing in the stove. Wood is split—perfectly uniform—and stacked between two pieces of polished granite that are cut to mimic the skyline of the Seven Devils. Those mountains turn pink before fading to early-morning blue on the horizon.

Game mounts hang sparingly from the walls. Scott's caribou. Holly's caribou. A mule deer. An elk. A mountain goat.

The two sit quietly by the fire, scrolling through their phones.

"Things are changing so rapidly in this world," he says.

He talks about a social media training session he and Holly went to at a recent rendezvous.

"What was that thing they were talking about?" he asks. "Mammogram? No... that's not right…"

"Instagram," Holly says.

"Instagram."

He lets out a snort.

In recent years, Scott has taken to replacing phrases like "Can you believe that?" or "Here's something ironic," with this single porcine utterance. This, it turns out, is a highly versatile part of speech, capable of being both shorthand and punctuation, judgment and resignation in one neatly nasal blurt.

"What the hell's a hashtag?" he snorts. "And how do you get one? Do you just get stamped with one?"

Holly ignores him.

Outside, the sun has topped the ridge in the east and spills down into the canyon off their porch. They are surrounded by a landscape they helped protect. Yards, literally, from where they sit is the boundary of the Rapid River Inventoried Roadless Area, a place now apart from the pervasive change that scrolls in the reflection of Scott's black-rimmed readers.

Tens of thousands of acres of that will remain as they are: Wild, open, free.

I heard once that rivers do not carve great masterpieces because of their power or speed. It is not power which made the steep canyons that dot Scott's memories. It was not force. It was time and persistence. The moving of matter, grain by grain.

This landscape is Scott's masterpiece. And like the river, the lifetime it took him to arrive at this place was not put together through force. It came, piece by piece.

As a child, Scott was logging before he was old enough to tie his shoes. It was part of how he was raised. His grandfather, his father, his brothers: all loggers.

After leaving the Marines, Scott started his own logging business. While his father made his living with cross-cut saws, he made it with large chainsaws, specializing in big trees in steep environments. It was dangerous work. But honest.

Even still, there was something about it that nagged at Scott.

"I can't point to an epiphany," he says. "I didn't wake up and say I'll be an environmentalist."

He started seeing the impact of timber harvest and road building. The things that he took for granted growing up hunting and fishing were disappearing.

"Everything that was wild became unwild. [I didn't] fully realize the impact on the things I love."

Scott does not use the term "wild" theoretically. It's not a state of mind, or a frame of reference. It's a tangible thing for him, earned and explored.

In the early '90s Scott left the timber business and started building a life as an outdoor writer. He started advocating for the places he loved. It was through his writing that he came to TU in the early

Stouder has been a leading advocate for overcoming entrenched mistrust between historically opposed groups and building strong partnerships through collaboration. He says true collaboration means fully understanding, embracing and advocating for another's position as way to understand and implement the best solution to a problem.

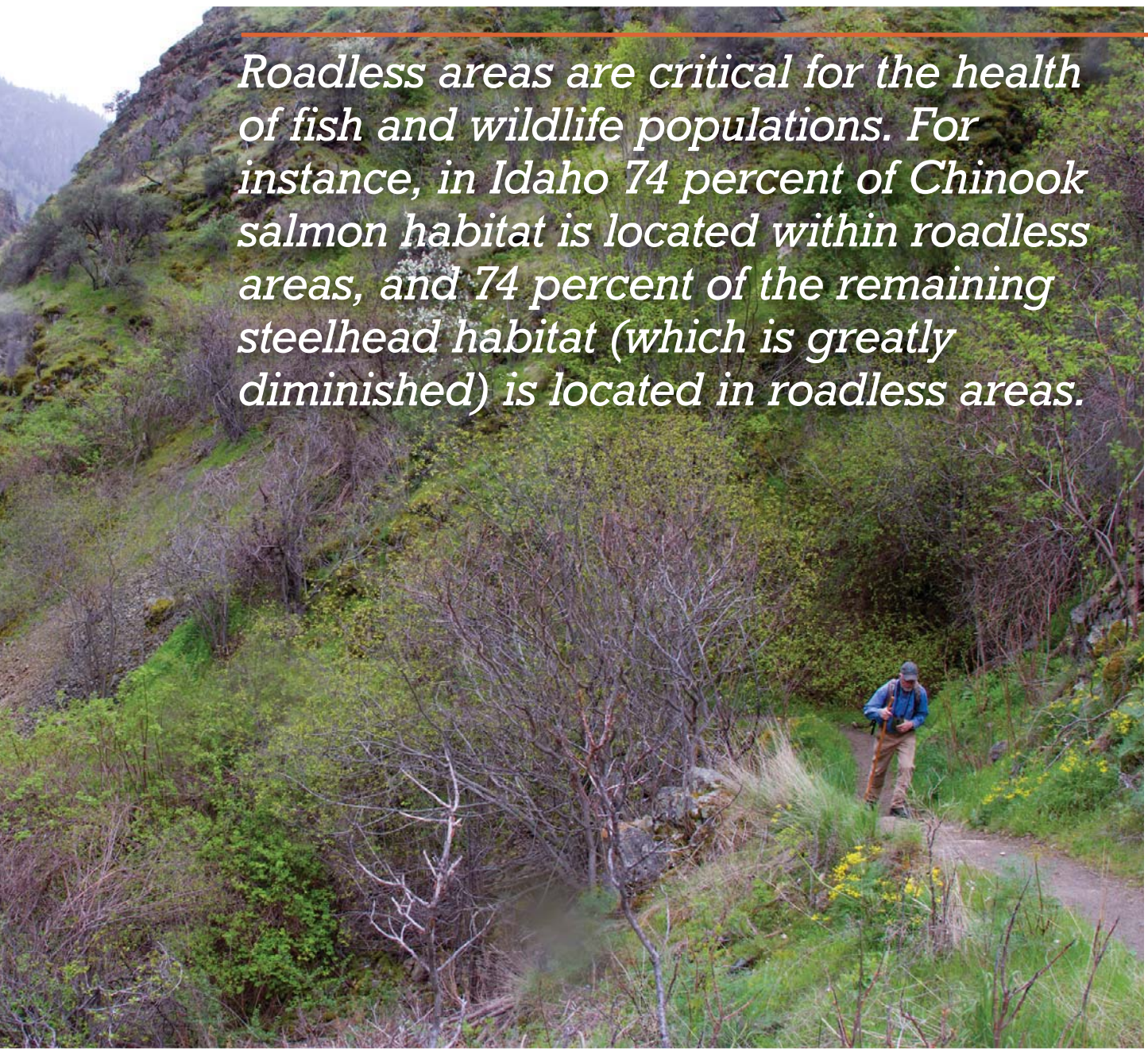
2000s, taking on the task of organizing hunters in support of the roadless rule, which would ultimately be one of the greatest pieces of land and water protection for sportsmen and women.

In 2001, President Clinton's Roadless Rule protected 58 million acres of inventoried roadless areas across the country. Roadless areas were, and remain to this day, some of the best tracts of undeveloped public land left, providing critical habitat for fish and wildlife.

But no sooner than the rule went into place, as is the habit, a new administration came in and started mucking about, seeking to allow states to develop their own plans for roadless area protection.

For Scott the prospect of each state coming up with their own plan to manage these wild areas was overwhelming. He says there were times he'd call up colleagues and ask, "What are we doing?" Historically, sportsmen and women had not been prominent voices in the fight for public lands. So organizing them to advocate for their hunting and fishing in a challenging political landscape? There wasn't really a roadmap for that.

"It's like we were in a sealed room with no light. We heard things bumping around outside. But we had no sense of direction. Well, except gravity."



Roadless areas are critical for the health of fish and wildlife populations. For instance, in Idaho 74 percent of Chinook salmon habitat is located within roadless areas, and 74 percent of the remaining steelhead habitat (which is greatly diminished) is located in roadless areas.

As a small staff came on board to work on public lands, known then as TU's Public Lands Initiative, now the Sportsmen's Conservation Project, Scott turned his attention to Idaho, his home and a place he felt he could make a difference.

He, and many others, began to push Idaho to develop their own rule—a rule that was as good or better than the 2001 rule, which was at the time being strung out in the courts.

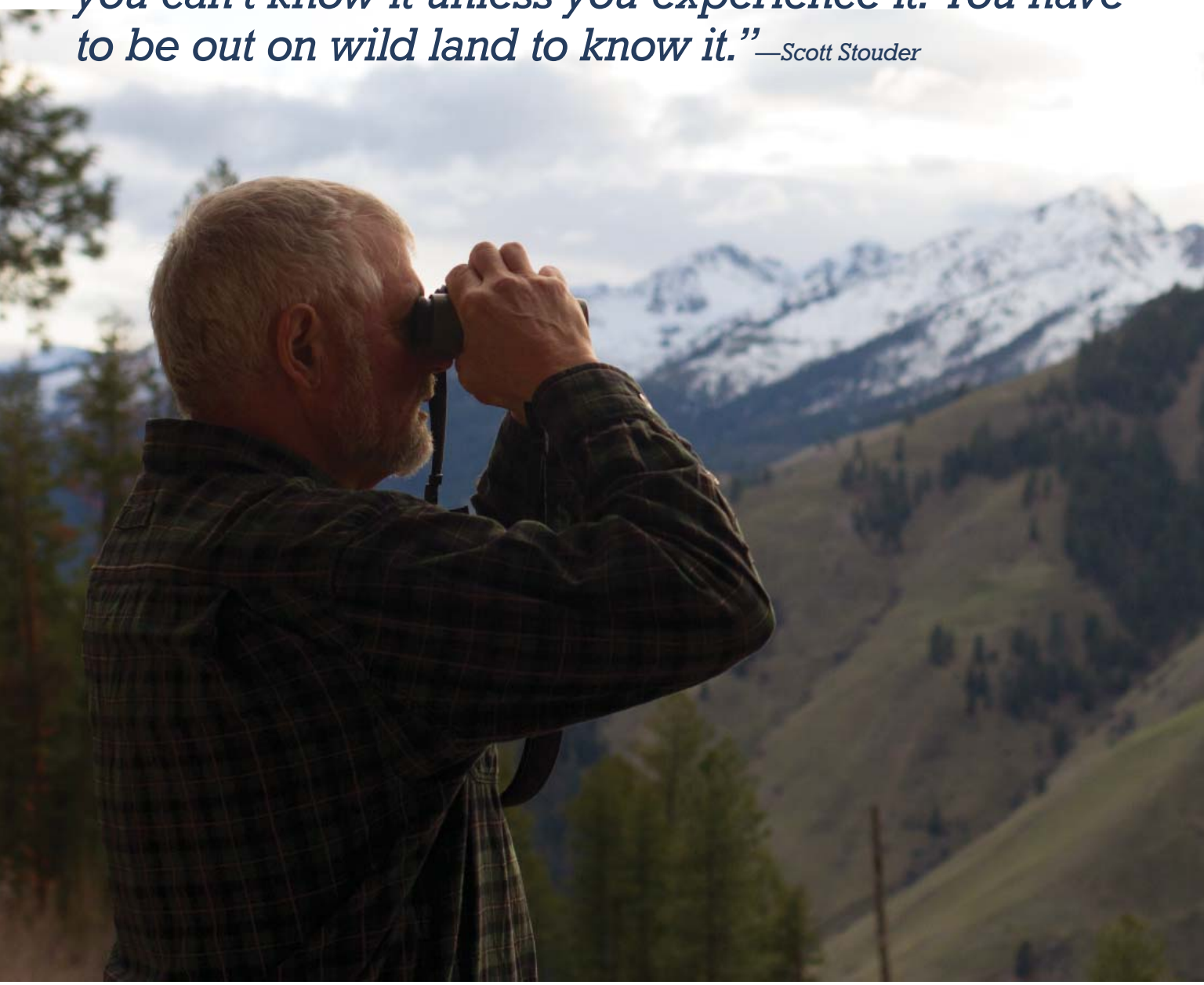
Taking that cue from gravity, he and Holly, who was working for Backcountry Hunters and Anglers at the time, put people firmly on the ground, packing, hiking, touring through these places they had come to love.

"You can't love something unless you know it. And you can't know it unless you experience it. You have to be out on wild land to know it."

Nearly 10 years after they started, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals announced it would uphold a rule protecting more than nine millions acres of lands in the state of Idaho. In the end, it was one of only two states to develop state-based plans.

"When it first started, we couldn't

"You can't love something unless you know it. And you can't know it unless you experience it. You have to be out on wild land to know it."—Scott Stouder



So this is where they start. On the ground. And they've formed a new group. They call themselves "Friends of the Rapid River."

For Scott and Holly, I suspect this extension of profession is not something they thought long and hard about, weighing the lure of retirement on one side and the added burden of responsibility on the other. Instead, I suspect it was something that came as naturally as the landscape they look out onto each morning.

Years ago, before TU, before the roadless rule, before becoming a solid figure in the conservation arena, Scott wrote a piece called "Open Space."

"As a species we evolved with the freedom to move uninhibited across the earth. However we've traded moccasins for work boots and plowed the hunting-gathering life of our ancestors beneath generations of urban lifestyles. Mountain ranges, deserts and rivers have been condensed to section lines, reservoirs and property boundaries. But even though our social technology and demands of population have outdistanced our evolution we still need the spiritual nourishment—the freedom—of open land."

While we still struggle to explain our need for wildness and scramble to freeze "what's left" in time and rule, even as time has so drastically changed what "what's left," means, there are some connections that are far more simple.

In this world, there are symbiotic relationships whose benefit spread far beyond the connection of two entities. Wind works on land. Water wears away rock. Those connections ripple outward, touching all those who bear witness to the waves.

Such is the case for Scott Stouder and the wild places in this world. It is no understatement to say Scott Stouder would not be the same without the wild.

More important, the wild would not be the same without him.

have predicted that this protection status would be this strong and this well supported by the diverse groups in the states," he said at the time. "Once you've focused on conflict, that's all you see. If you can unfocus on the conflict and focus on the solutions, then you start to make progress."

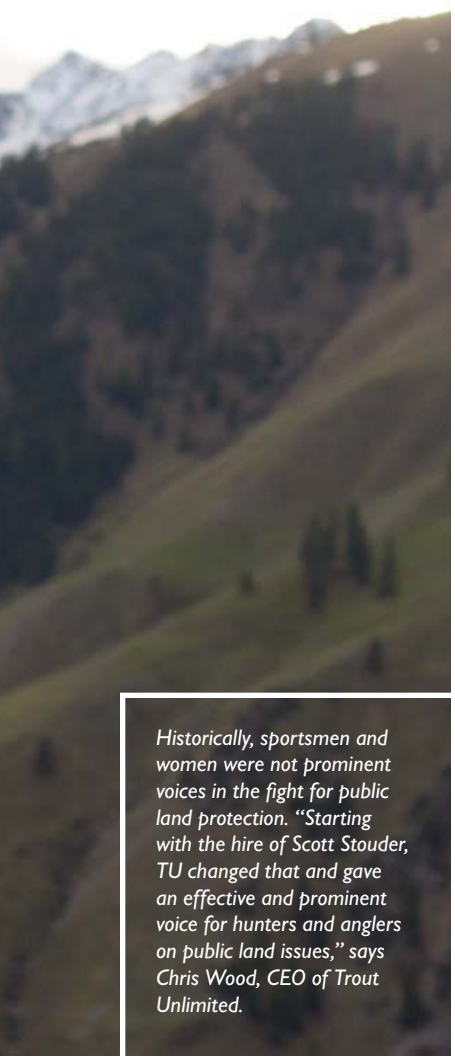
Since those early days the SCP has grown from a couple of guys calling each other up saying "what do we do?" to a multi-state staff of conservation professionals, protecting tens of millions of acres of public land.

And in 2016, after looking around and finding peace with their work, Scott and Holly retired.

If you look across the valley there's the vague indentation of a road. A timber sale. Well, the modern version.

"We used to call it logging. Now they call it treatment. Don't say harvest timber. Say reduce fuel loads. It's not a chainsaw. It's a handheld power tool."

But Scott and Holly worry about the impact to the local elk population that use the area for thermal cover. They worry that the awkward management boundaries (three different national forests in three different districts) in such a small area means someone is going to drop the ball.



Historically, sportsmen and women were not prominent voices in the fight for public land protection. "Starting with the hire of Scott Stouder, TU changed that and gave an effective and prominent voice for hunters and anglers on public land issues," says Chris Wood, CEO of Trout Unlimited.

WHERE THE (REALLY) WILD THINGS ARE...

TU's California Science Director Rene Henery reflects on an expedition to Mongolia's Eg River

COURTESY OF SWEETWATER TRAVEL

JIM KLUG

By the time we climbed out of the jet boat into the steel gray water, my toes had started to go numb in my wading boots and I was happy to be moving. Ganzo gestured toward a location several meters off the right bank where a side channel trickled over colorful gravels into the main stem. I nodded and made an ugly, if functional, cast. My fly, patterned after a squirrel and colored with some pink and blue flair, skipped once before landing and splashed against the water surface as the current swung it around. Without warning, the water beneath it boiled, my eye caught a faint glint of red and the fly submerged. Adrenalin coursing, I tugged overzealously on the line and my fly rocketed out of the water back towards my face. Ganzo's expression twisted into a grimace. I made another cast and ducked as the heavy fly whistled by my head, its tarpon-sized hook narrowly missing my ear. He walked over, careful not to splash as he entered the river, lifted the rod from my hands and demonstrated, easily sending the huge fly half way across the river with my 10-foot 7-weight. "You need more practice," he said, as if that wasn't obvious.

I had come to Mongolia along with six other salmonid ecologists as part an ongoing effort spearheaded by the University of Nevada Reno and the National Geographic Society to study the fish fauna of the Eg River. The trip was planned as a nine-day field work blitz with a primary goal of collecting data on the largest and most mythical member of the Eg's fish community, the Siberian "River Shark," the Taimen (*Hucho taimne*). In addition to the exotic destination, an enigmatic species and the increasingly rare opportunity for extended field work with colleagues, our mission to Mongolia came with an especially appealing caveat: fishing.

The trip was planned as a nine-day field work blitz with a primary goal of collecting data on the largest and most mythical member of the Eg's fish community, the Siberian "River Shark," the Taimen (Hucho taimne).

At home in California's Central Valley landscape, fish monitoring programs employ a diverse suite of tools including a variety of lethal and non-lethal nets, traps and trawls, not to mention underwater photography, video and even sonar. But the Eg was in a remote location; its fish assemblage was entirely native, and its Taimen population was already compromised from a recent spike in poaching. The Taimen of the Eg were now protected and the focus of a growing conservation movement. As a result, our standard quiver of fish sampling tools was reduced to one instrument: the single barbless hook.

One of the great lessons I have learned in my career is that being a fish scientist does not make you a great fisherman. Some of the most devoted and effective scientists in the world of salmon conservation are mediocre anglers by almost all accounts. Despite having fished my whole life, I am no exception to this pattern, perpetually outgunned by other TU staff who spend more of their time on the river fishing, and less in the lab or windowless conference rooms where the future of our fish populations and the landscapes necessary to ensure their persistence are negotiated in the abstract and encumbered space of policy and bureaucracy. Now, as a group of fish scientists we found ourselves in a remote part of Mongolia with both our science and conservation mission hinging, in part, on the effectiveness of our angling skills.

Mongolia's Eg River traverses the Khövsgöl and Bulgan provinces of northern Mongolia. It is the only outflow of Lake Khövsgöl, and a tributary of the Selenge River that terminates in Lake Baikal, the oldest and deepest lake in the world. In 2005, scientists including Drs. Sudeep Chandra and Zeb Hogan now at the University of Nevada Reno (UNR), established a scientific partnership with nongovernmental organizations (the Mongolian Taimen Conservation Fund and its American counterpart The Tributary Fund) and private fly-fishing tour operators (Sweeterwater

JIM KLUG. INSET COURTESY OF SWEETWATER TRAVEL

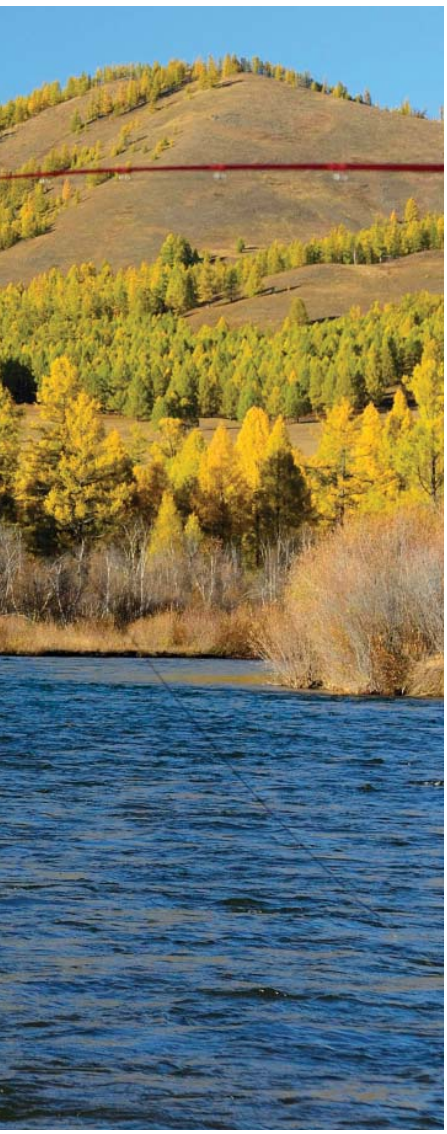
BARRY AND CATHY BECK

Travel and Mongolian River Outfitters) to conserve Taimen and the unique shaman-Buddhist cultures of Mongolia. Mongolia was undergoing a dramatic change as it transitioned from Soviet influence to an emerging democracy, and the scientists and conservation partners understood the changes that could occur as a result of the natural resource development of its mineral rich landscape. Around the same time that Sudeep and Zeb began their research on the Eg's Taimen population, Sweetwater Travel established a lodge downstream from where Zeb and Sudeep would base their Mongolian field operations. After 10 years of research and collaboration between Sweetwater, UNR and the National Geographic Society, the Eg had become a prized fly-fishing destination, and a new body of information on the life history and behavior of the Taimen living in the river began to emerge.

Taimen and its related salmonid cousins (*H. hucho* and *H. perryi*) extend from eastern Europe to the far reaches of northwestern Siberia and Japan. Some are anadromous while others are adfluvial. The Taimen in the Eg are resident, reaching lengths in excess of 60 inches. The fish tend to stay local with migration limited to 23 kilometers, but some individuals have been recorded moving as much as 120 kilometers.

Given the size of the species and their expansive ranges, it likely comes as no surprise that Taimen are also voracious predators seeking large prey. Also called the "river wolf" for reasons that include their sometimes hunting in packs, the Taimen's prey ranges from other fish (including their own kind) to terrestrial mammals and even good-sized birds.

As research and destination fishing advanced conservation of the Eg and its fish fauna, it also created new avenues for the local rural communities, most of whom were herders, deeply connected to the landscape and river that supported their livestock and livelihoods. Ganzo was among those who immersed himself in these new opportunities. Bright eyed, enthusiastic and rich with regional knowledge, he began working with the UNR research program as a field technician and guide shortly after its inception. Now, almost a decade later, he is a competent field biologist, a skilled angler and a fishing guide for Sweetwater—a case study in the way the river and its fish fauna continue to be both an economic and cultural resource for the Mongolian people.



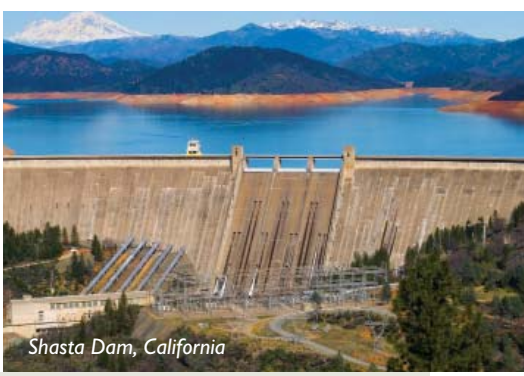
Many of the rivers that vascularize the vast Mongolian steppe remain wild and free-flowing, unconfined by dams or levees. The Eg is no exception. For river ecologists working primarily in California's heavily altered and managed landscape, the site was captivating—a living river.

Unfortunately, Mongolia's wild landscape is not immune to the human pressures under which California's rivers have already succumbed. Though still dominated by agriculture, Mongolia also has extensive mineral deposits, and the mining of copper, coal, molybdenum, tin, tungsten and gold account for a large part of the nation's industrial production, itself a near third of the national GDP. Advances in mining technology and a rapid rise in global interest in Mongolia has expanded the pace and scale of mining operations, leveling entire mountain tops and driving rapid change in the landscape. Also problematic is that the energy production necessary to fuel this growing industry has not progressed and adapted at a commensurate rate. As a result, a new dam has been proposed to power the mines surrounding the city of Erdenet, which lies adjacent to the Eg

The proposal to dam the Eg bared a disquieting resemblance to some of the most problematic dam projects from California's history. The valley where the dam is proposed is broad and low gradient, foretelling a vast shallow reservoir with a low head that would likely only generate limited power. Additionally, the Eg moves a massive amount of sediment each spring during the melt and runoff period, hinting at a likely near-term loss in reservoir capacity, diminished power generation potential and the likely need to build additional dams to make up the difference. Finally, there is the prospect of a massive concrete barrier bisecting the range of the Taimen, inhibiting gene flow between populations isolated on either side. For our California-based research team, the picture couldn't help but evoke the gold rush and reclamation eras in our state's past, the massive Central Valley Dam complex and the decimation of salmon, steelhead and other migratory fish populations that ensued as a result. This analogue was animated further by rumors of preliminary discussions about the possibility of mitigating the impacts of the Eg's proposed dam with a Taimen hatchery.

The looming prospect of a severe and potentially irreparable impact to the wild Eg and the charismatic fish we had come to study gave the trip an ominous undertone that dampened our excitement about the adventure—would this end up being an effort to catalog a vanishing population?

As our trip and research began to unfold, the disconnect between the experience of a wild river, the awe-inspiring Taimen and the looming potential for significant harm to both took on a poignant melancholy that bridged the realm of the scientific and of the personal. We learned about the family histories of Ganzo and some of the other Mongolian guides and support staff, their history in the region and the central role the river held in their sense of home and place. Their dedication to its conservation wasn't just personal, it was communal, intertwined with the well-being of other local communities and the health of the vast floodplains where they grazed their livestock and erected their seasonal homes before moving to new pastures. The river was the life-blood of the seasonal cycles of one of the world's oldest and most well established nomadic cultures still in existence. In a sense, conservation of the river protected a way of life and, imbedded in that, the history of a people.



Shasta Dam, California

The proposal to dam the Eg bared a disquieting resemblance to some of the most problematic dam projects from California's history.

While all fish ecologists are not great anglers, I have yet to meet one who does not have a deep passion for fish, rivers

and natural places, often sown during profound childhood experiences of wilderness. As days on the Eg passed and my fishing skills improved with practice (and from necessity), my own nature began to reveal itself, resurrected from beneath my internal shifted baselines. Wading the Eg, its clear cold waters swirling by my legs, my standard inner chatter: California water politics, challenging land use policies, questions about how to bring science to bear on the restoration of our heavily managed watersheds, gave way to the memories of my first fish caught on a fly, a golden trout in the upper reaches of King's Canyon National Park. Moments from my summers in graduate school living and working at a field station in the Sacramento River headwaters came rushing back, along with the feeling of science not as an end, but an inroad to a deeper connection with the landscape and waters of my home state.

COURTESY OF SWEETWATER TRAVEL

The looming prospect of a severe and potentially irreparable impact to the wild Eg and the charismatic fish we had come to study gave the trip an ominous undertone that dampened our excitement about the adventure—would this end up being an effort to catalog a vanishing population?

With three days of field work left, I woke early to an unusual chill in the normally sweltering confines of the felt Yurt or "Ger." After loading the woodstove I poked my head out the door to see that the first snow of the year had fallen overnight. The yellow birch on the far bank was now shrouded in white and the sprig of wild Mongolian hemp growing out from underneath the doormat was covered in frost. Though beautiful, the new snow didn't bode well for our work. While some of the more skilled anglers among our group had been successful, fishing had been slow overall with only about 26 total Taimen caught, and of those only a handful large enough to host our Radio Tags. We still had more than half of our tags left and we were running out of time. In addition, we were nearing the end of the fishable season.

At breakfast, the feel of the group had shifted; an awareness of the need for a new level of focus hung in the air, unspoken but palpable.

A few hours later I was again alone in the Eg, thick white flakes whirling around me. On the far bank, spindrift raced along a gravel bar and an eagle of a species I didn't recognize stood perched on a stump, its feathers puffed to their maximum against the cold. In the distance I could just make out the silhouette of our empty jet boat anchored a quarter mile or so downstream, and beyond it almost lost from view in the snow, Sudeep was casting a spay rod near a pool tail-out. Slowly, I worked my way along a deep run. Though some of us had switched to streamers, I had opted to continue fishing on the surface, having finally cultivated some technique and loathe to forgo the drama of the take on a dry. I worked systematically, skating my fly, jigging it slowly as it swung. I hadn't raised or seen a fish all morning.

About midway through the run, I was ripped from my hypnosis as a pewter side and red tail shattered the water surface. The strike was so aggressive that it sent my heart racing, though it missed the fly by feet, soaking it in a wave as it disappeared. I stepped slowly upstream and cast again, knowing that my chances of another rise from the same fish were slim. The cast was on point; the fly skated slowly… nothing. I took another small step and cast again… jig… jig… jig… then just as the swing reached its end, CRASH! This time the deep red tail came fully extended from the water as the fish took the fly under in its jaws. I strip set and instantly it ran towards me. A southpaw fishing with a right-handed rod, I stripped line in by hand to keep tension before switching hands and smacking the reel repeatedly to take up the slack as our guides had taught me. The rod craned over as the fish bolted back out into the current. It rolled and thrashed, giving me another glimpse of its subtle color through snowflakes, but did not spit the hook. Then it ran, peeling off line. It was then that I remembered how far away the boat and net were. I yelled "FISH ON!" over the sound of the river and wind, through the hush of the snow. At last I saw Sudeep's silhouette turn; then another silhouette joined him and the two shapes moved toward the boat. Alarmed by my yelling the eagle took flight just as the fish turned again and headed back toward me. I reeled as fast as I could. Somewhere, seemingly far off, I could hear the sound of the jetboat, the boat crossing the water, boots on gravel

BARRY AND CATHY BECK

running up the bank toward me. But all of it seemed miles away. I was transfixed. The fish kept changing direction, running back and forth, I managed line and slowly backed towards the bank trying to avoid getting tangled in the shoreline vegetation. I breathed hard. I didn't blink. All I saw was my craning rod and the water surface where the line entered; all I felt was the fish on the other end and our precarious connection.

By the time Ganzo entered my field of vision with the net, I had worked the fish closer in and we caught a glimpse of it. "It's Taimen!!" he exclaimed, with an unmistakable, if slight, tone of surprise. At the sight of him, the fish turned abruptly, but before it could run again Ganzo leapt forward and extended the net into its path, at last—success!

As quickly as we could, we readied the holding tank with the anesthetic and prepared to work up the fish. We took out the tags and surgery kit, as well as a measuring board we had fashioned out of a split log. It measured 37 Inches; nowhere near the biggest fish caught, but plenty large to tag. Once anesthetized, I kept the fish stable while Ganzo performed the surgery. I have performed quite a few surgeries to implement transmitters over the years in species including bull trout, rainbow trout, Chinook salmon and white sturgeon, but have never been as fast and efficient at it as Ganzo. When completed, while the fish was still under the anesthesia, we weighed it and photographed its head in profile at close range. This last step was to support new technology that allows facial recognition of salmonids based on their spotting patterns. That this is possible sometimes comes as a shock to people who think of fish of a given species as all looking fairly similar. In fact, after years staring at them, I would argue that they look as different from one another as humans do, and a component of this difference is unique facial spotting that salmonids carry with them throughout their adult lives. Once the fish awoke, we gently returned it to the Eg, adorned with a new antenna, to begin sharing its story with us digitally.

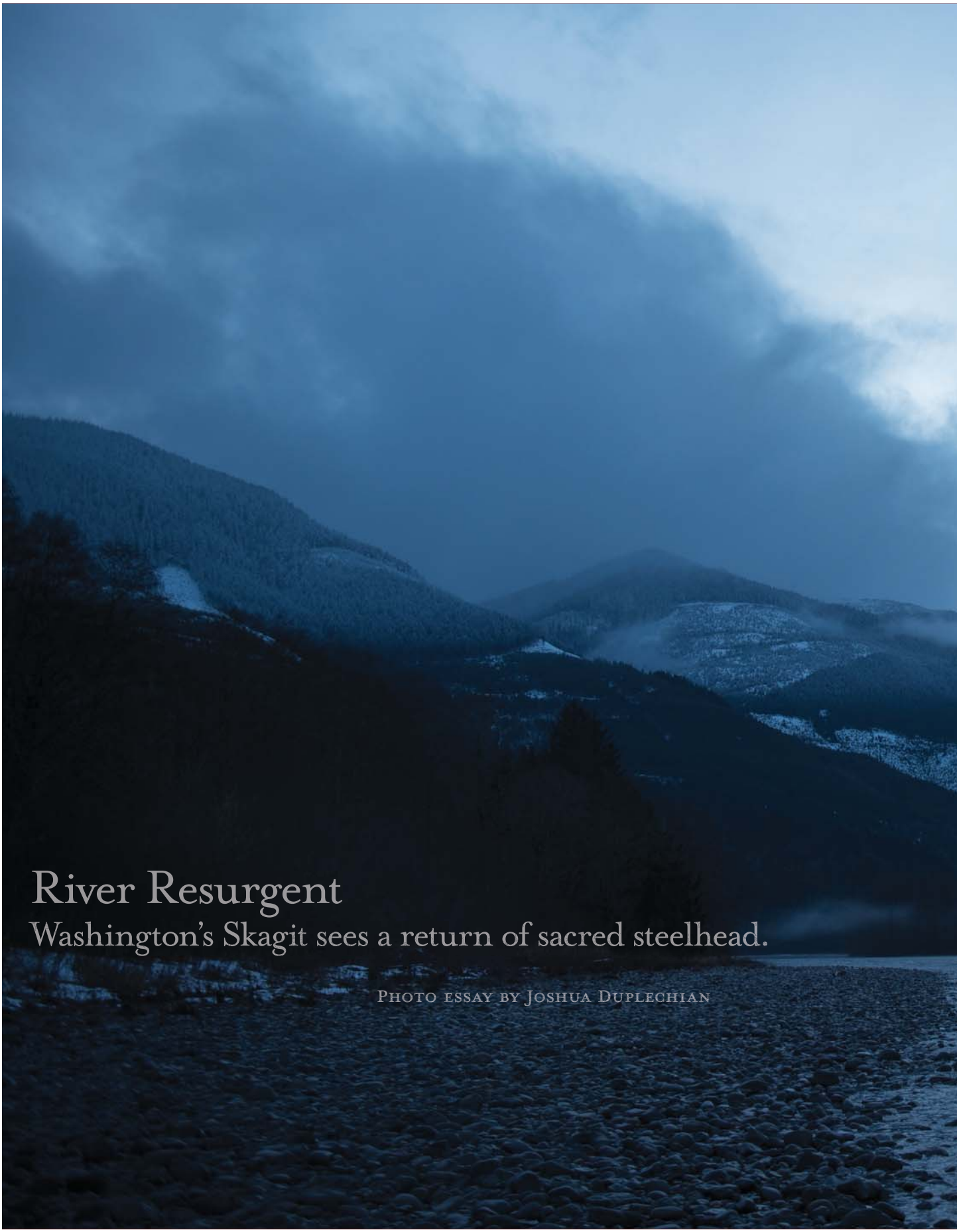
Once the fish awoke, we gently returned it to the Eg, adorned with a new antenna, to begin sharing its story with us digitally.

For the remainder of our trip, we continued progressing along this trajectory. The team had gelled and our productivity reflected it. The U.S. based science staff had all lifted our fishing games and our conversion rate on the fish we rose skyrocketed. Our guides, accustomed to playing a supporting role had finally succumb to our requests that they join the angling effort and were now leading a coordinated push to maximize the data-set in our remaining time. We worked the river as a pack, positioning ourselves to maximize area, covering water, strategizing, supporting each other. Our last day, we collectively landed eight Taimen. Four of these were large enough to radio tag, exhausting our tag supply—mission accomplished. On the boat ride back to camp the clouds broke, exposing blue sky and distant white

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SWEETWATER TRAVEL

mountain tops. Light from a low angle sun spilled from the cloud break and cast the river banks in golden tones. One of our American guides, having just assisted in his first surgery, commented that it might have been his all-time favorite day from a career spent on rivers. Smiles and nods reflected back similar sentiments from around the jet boat.

Plans to Dam the Eg continue to advance. With support from TU and the other organizations in our research team, Sudeep and Zeb are stepping up UNR's efforts to bring increased funding and awareness to the resource poised for impact, as well as to a range of alternative energy approaches that could allow mining to move forward while preserving the river and its fish community for Mongolia and its people. Still, it may be that the data we collected will prove the chronicles of another salmonid population gnashed in the teeth of industry. At the outset of the trip, that prognosis might have felt terminal. But back in California's altered landscape the picture feels less bleak. Collectively, however slowly, we are learning about the value of our rivers and fish not only as resources to be managed and conserved, but for the reflection they provide us about our own history, condition and potential. In Mongolia and the world's other remaining wild places, that reflection may preserve aspects of human nature and culture maintained through time, continuing to inspire and support new generations. In California, my experience of the Eg lives in me as a reminder of who I am, of what's possible for our world and of how it looks and feels when fish conservation and management leaves the conference room, puts on waders and returns to the river.



River Resurgent

Washington's Skagit sees a return of sacred steelhead.

Photo essay by Joshua Duplechian

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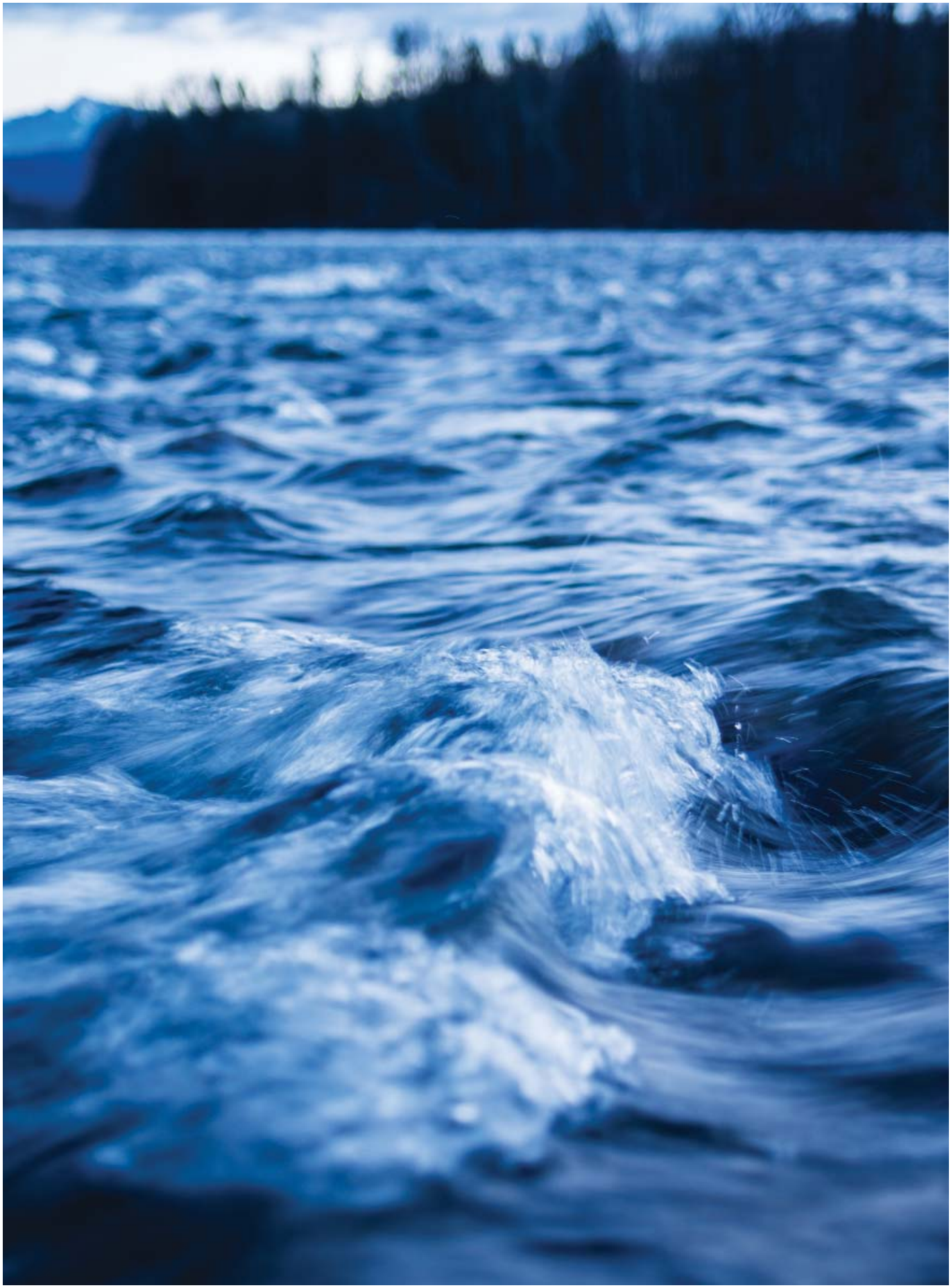

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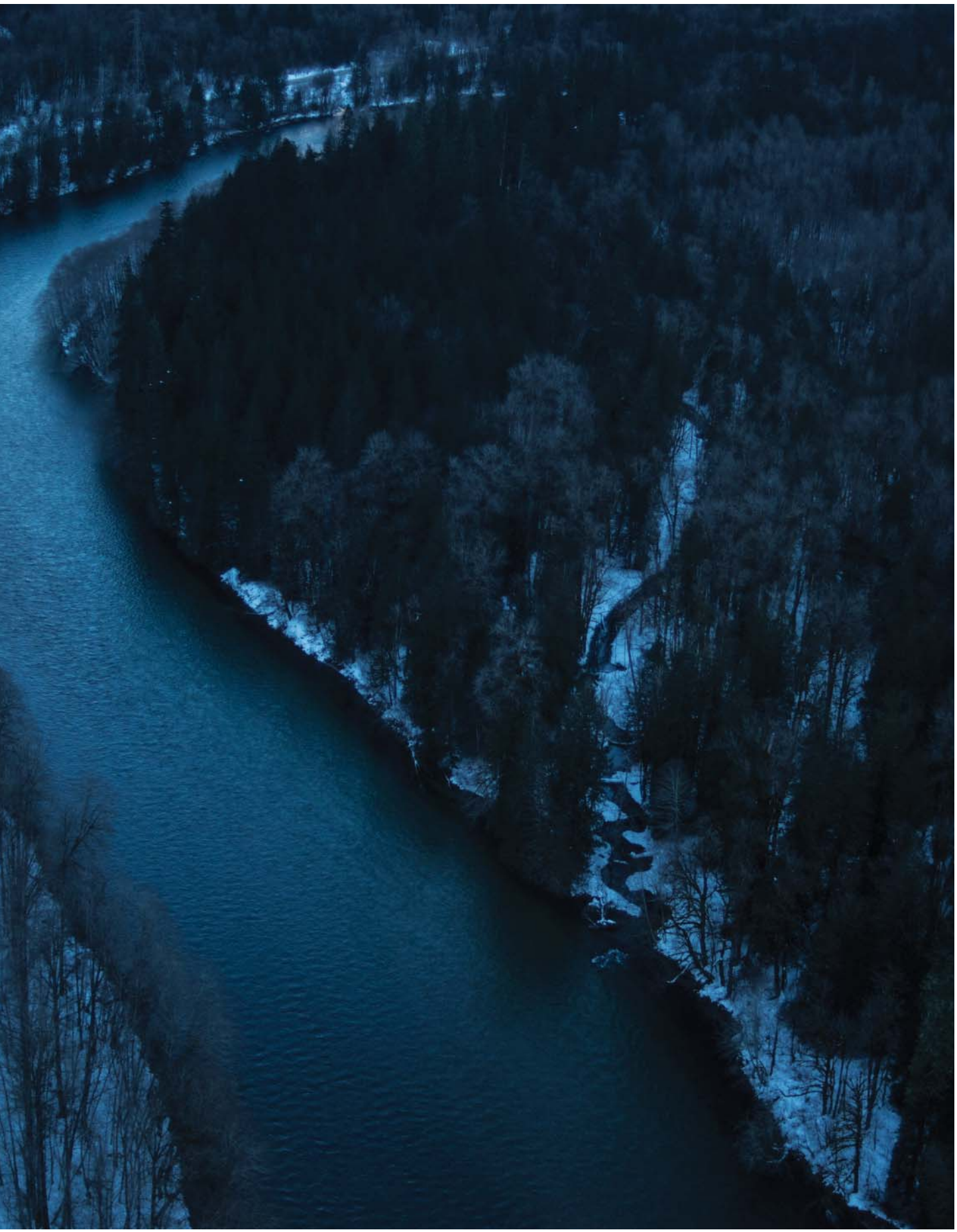

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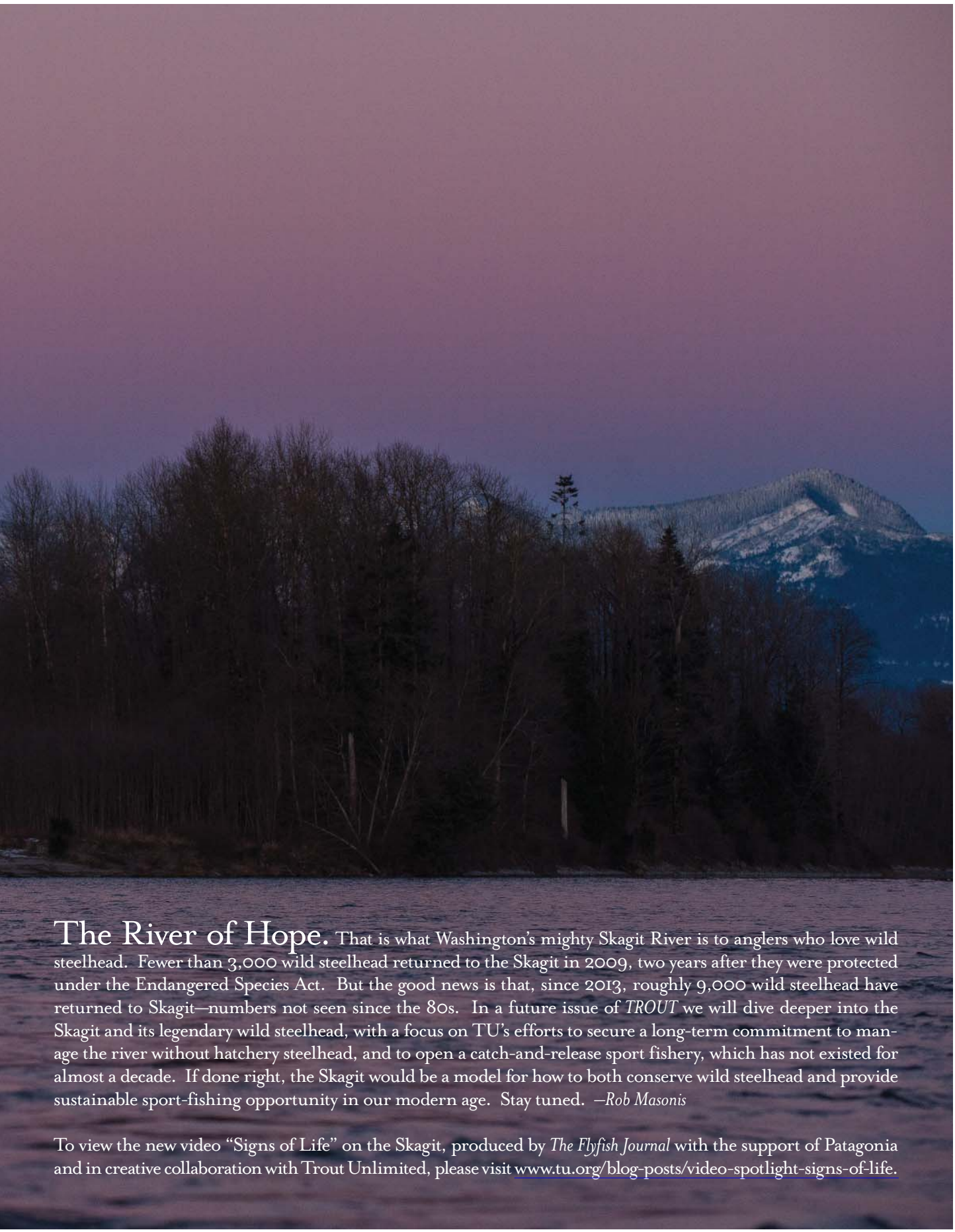
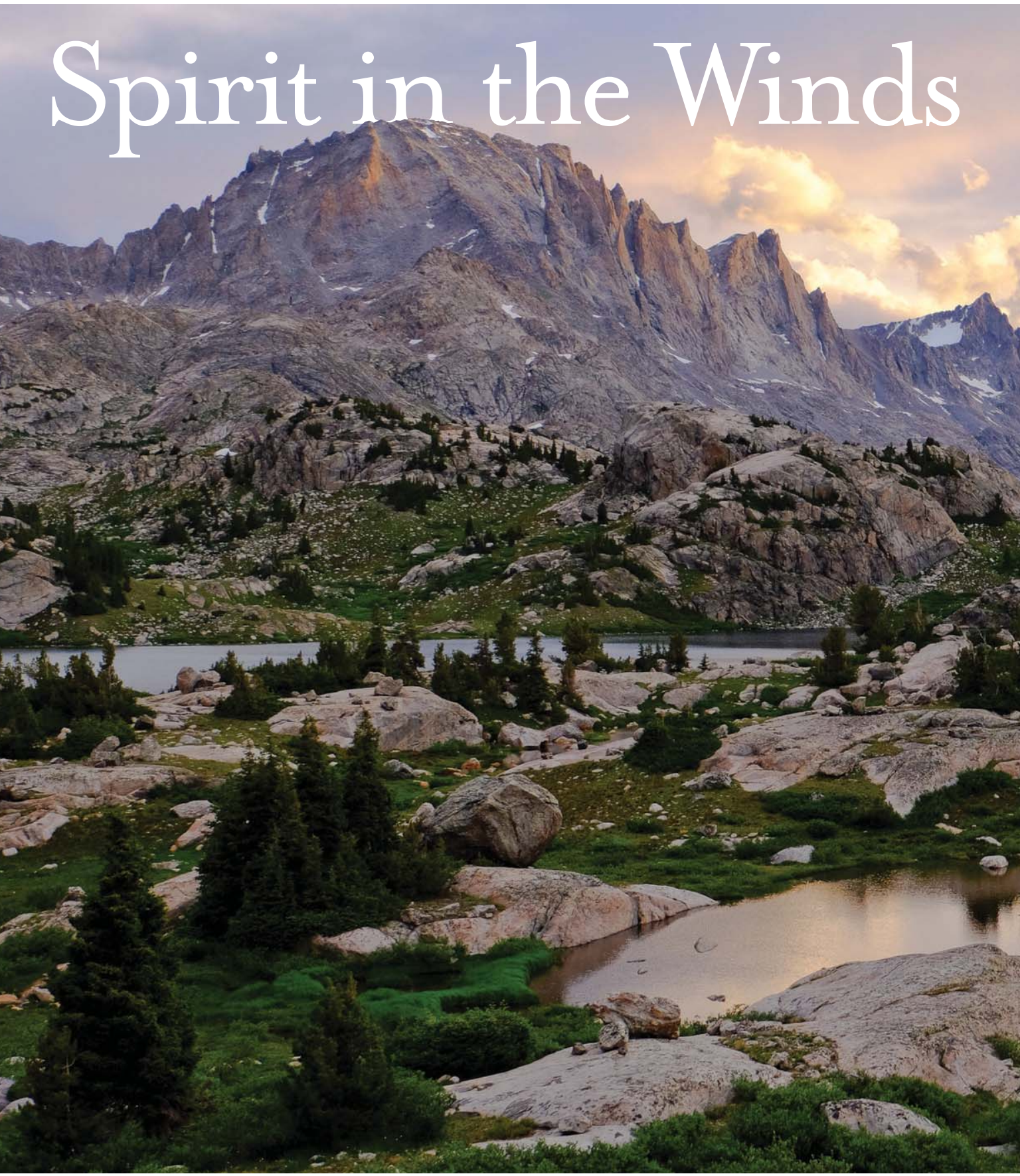


The River of Hope. That is what Washington's mighty Skagit River is to anglers who love wild steelhead. Fewer than 3,000 wild steelhead returned to the Skagit in 2009, two years after they were protected under the Endangered Species Act. But the good news is that, since 2013, roughly 9,000 wild steelhead have returned to Skagit—numbers not seen since the 80s. In a future issue of *TROUT* we will dive deeper into the Skagit and its legendary wild steelhead, with a focus on TU's efforts to secure a long-term commitment to manage the river without hatchery steelhead, and to open a catch-and-release sport fishery, which has not existed for almost a decade. If done right, the Skagit would be a model for how to both conserve wild steelhead and provide sustainable sport-fishing opportunity in our modern age. Stay tuned. *—Rob Masonis*

To view the new video "Signs of Life" on the Skagit, produced by *The Flyfish Journal* with the support of Patagonia and in creative collaboration with Trout Unlimited, please visit www.tu.org/blog-posts/video-spotlight-signs-of-life.

Spirit in the Winds



VOICES — FROM THE RIVER

BY CHRISTIAN RICARDI

Hiking and fishing in Wyoming's Wind River Range had long been on my list of things to do. When I first opened up a map of this wilderness, I was amazed at the expanse of land and water. Blue lines, circles and ovals were spread like a collage through green forests and contours of rock and talus. Although it could take a lifetime to hike and fish all this water, I was thrilled to finally have about two weeks. I had recruited my two sons, Aaron and Jesse, who had grown up in New England, and this would be their first chance to backpack a Rocky Mountain wilderness, catch cutthroat trout, and maybe see a grizzly bear. Joining us would be Uncle John. Decades ago, John had worked as an instructor for the National Outdoor Leadership School in Lander. He led classes across the Winds teaching wilderness survival, hiking, rock climbing and mountaineering, seeking out low-use areas and catching fish. He still has stacks of USGS topographic maps covered with pencil notes depicting cutoff trails, camp locations and fishing experiences from his courses. We spent hours looking at the maps trying to decipher the old script and figuring out where we might go.

Lying within the Shoshone and Bridger-Teton national forests, the Wind River Range mountains protrude like a massive peninsula southeastward from the Rocky Mountain mainstem into the Wyoming high plains. Jagged peaks form the Continental Divide through the three contiguous wilderness areas including the Popo Agie, Fitzpatrick and Bridger. Thousands of lakes and ponds, and rivers draining remote mountain valleys, provide infinite options for fishing ventures. Except for trails etched into the ground by packhorses and hiking boots, these mountains still look much the same as when native Shoshone and Crow were there setting teepees in meadows, hunting deer and elk, and praying to the Great Spirit who watched over the majestic landscape. Excluding Grand Teton, the 20 highest mountains in Wyoming are in the Winds. John talked regularly about the explorer Finis Mitchell who spent his life hiking and climbing in the range. In his book, Wind River Trails, Mitchell describes routes up hundreds of peaks, and we looked forward to standing on the summit of at least one of them during our trip.

But it was the lure of remote backcountry, spectacular scenery and trout finning in mountain lakes that drew us there. Watersheds filled with wild trout are what make this place so fantastic. Wild, yes, but not necessarily indigenous. Prior to the 20th century, most of the high elevation watersheds and lakes were void of fish. No shadows cruising the shorelines, no circles in the evening light and no spawning migrations into sandy inlets. But that changed during a colossal trout transplanting event that swept this part of the West during the past century. In 1907, cutthroat were first carried into the Bridger Wilderness and stocked into North Fork Lake. Over the next few decades, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Wyoming Game & Fish and eager volunteers carried trout in buckets and horse packs into many watersheds. Finis Mitchell is alleged to have released over two million trout into 300 lakes. The itinerant fish included west coast rainbows, brook trout and European brown trout from eastern states hatcheries, golden trout from California, lake trout from the Great Lakes and Canada and even grayling which likely came from Alaska or Canada. The origins of many of these fish stocks are no longer known; lineage is vague. And there's a menagerie of cutthroat subspecies including the Yellowstone, Colorado River and Snake River. Although not originally found in the high lakes, these fish are

the indigenous trout of the region. The Yellowstone are native to Yellowstone River headwaters, the Bighorn River and Wind River, which flows east from the Winds. Colorado River cutthroats are native to the Green River, which drains the west slope. Snake River cutthroats were imported from nearby waters to the north. Yellowstone and Snake River are now the most common cutthroats in this wilderness. In some drainages, cutthroat subspecies have interbred, and they carry evolutionary markers from multiple watersheds in their genes. In others, cutthroats have shared redds with

BARRY AND CATHY BECK

rainbows and goldens. Fishermen refer to these hybrids as cut-bows or cut-goldens. Brook trout are everywhere. (John says he has caught them in puddles.) Some lakes harbor healthy populations, but in others there is over-population. Regulations allow anglers to keep 16 brookies per day, so many end up in frying pans. Pure goldens are the "holy grail" of the Winds. Guides and writers gladly talk brookies and cutthroat, but intelligence on the elusive golden is classified. Secret golden lairs are sacred. Recently, however, the Lander and Pinedale WG&F offices made lists of lakes with goldens, and some are listed in wilderness pamphlets. But within the enigmatic glacier carved basins and unnamed lakes of the Winds, there are many more to be discovered.

After pouring over maps and getting some advice from local fishing contacts, we chose a route. At the trailhead, we assembled gear: tent, sleeping bags, stoves and fuel, bear-resistant food canisters, pepper spray, fishing rods, maps and other requisites. Although hiring horse packers to carry gear is common practice in the Winds, we chose to carry it on our backs, every item assessed, every pound vetted. Of most importance was the fly box: a concoction of big and small dries, emergers, nymphs and wets in different colors, shapes and sizes, which we hoped contained some fish magic. The weight of the fly box was fully justified.

After two days and about 15 miles, we set a base camp within striking range of a canyon with an abandoned trail leading to unnamed lakes that we would target. We were close. The gray granite walls of the Divide where the cirque lakes lay were within view of our campsite. John and I decided to investigate access to the canyon. The boys chose to stay and fish a nearby lake. When we returned, they were celebrating catching their first cutthroats fully documented on smart phone videos.

The next day, above treeline, in turquoise lakes tucked in mountain rock, we found more fish. I made my first cast in an outlet. The brown beadhead nymph sank for a moment, and when retrieved, I saw a bronze shape appear, follow and turn away. They were there. I searched the fly box for a different offering. The large deer hair dry floated for a minute and then disappeared in a swirl of yellow and fins. As we moved to the drop-offs we could see targets swimming the shoreline. Cast the big brown in their path and watch them take. John and the boys were catching them too. Aaron got so excited he fell partway into the lake when playing one. Jesse was keeping count and reported back, "Number 12, Dad." These cutthroat showed a lot of color variation. All had the red slash under their gills. Some were yellow with big spots stacked toward the tail like a Colorado or Yellowstone. Others had smaller spots spread throughout like a Snake River. Some were silver with a light red lateral band. Which cut? Cut-bows? At that moment, it didn't really matter. I looked around at the mountains, saw my sons playing fish, felt the alpine breeze and knew we were in the Winds.

We had planned to cross the divide and travel another 10 miles, but my feet turned against me. Facing the threat of infection far from the trailhead, we changed plans. We scanned the maps for new destinations. We detoured to North Fork Lake, the site of the first cutthroat stocking, and caught their prodigy. Two days later we ascended a steep ravine which opened to a panorama of meadows, lakes and rock towers. We knew nothing about the fishing, but the setting was magnificent. We fished several lakes that evening and caught all the nine- to 12-inch brookies we could stand. As they fried that evening, we stashed our rods and schemed hiking routes up a big pinnacle that towered above our campsite.

Which cut? Cut-bows? At that moment, it didn't really matter. I looked around at the mountains, saw my sons playing fish, felt the alpine breeze, and knew we were in the Winds.

By the time the sun broke the horizon the next morning, we were traversing a rocky ridge high above the valley. We looked down on hundreds of trout rising in the ponds we had fished the day before. I no longer felt any guilt for taking 10 for dinner. Still, Aaron lamented that he did not have his rod for just a couple casts into the swirling mass. Three hours later on the summit, we gazed north and south along the Continental Divide and a huge expanse of the Wind River Wilderness. Looking down on this stunning view of forest, meadow, blue water and earth rising out of the plains into the sky was heavenly. It was easy to understand why the Shoshone believed that a Great Spirit was here in these mountains.

Actionline

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HOW I CAME TO TU:
Troy Young

This story starts approximately 11 years ago. I come home from work daydreaming of bass fishing. One of my sons meets me at the door, "Hey, Dad, look. I tied a fly." A piece of pipe cleaner tied to a fish hook with some of Mom's sewing thread. Ironically a longtime fishing buddy mentioned that TU was sponsoring a beginner's fly-tying class. It is the middle of winter and there is not much to do but keep the fire going and drill holes in ice to catch fish, so we decided to take the class. I have met a lot of "outdoorsmen" over the years, on the water and in the woods, but none have come close to showing the kindness and generosity that the fly-fishing community has shown my son. Encouraging him.

Moving forward a few years, we learned that TU was sponsoring a fly-fishing camp in Pittsburg, N.H. My son, now a young teenager, wanted to go. He had to write an essay on why he would like to attend camp and get letters of recommendation. Needless to say it was a very happy day when my son received his acceptance letter from TU. At camp the kids learned about the fish, plant life and creatures both in and around the water, as well as how to take care of our waters. He learned fly-tying skills to "match the hatch," casting skills and boot and gear cleaning. He also made some friends and helped out around the camp. Four days after dropping off my son I picked up a new kid who was now educating me and his siblings on fly fishing and conservation. "Dad we really should try and come up here and fish again."

Fast forward a few years, and what better way to celebrate my sons' high school and college graduations than to go on a long weekend fishing trip to Pittsburg. The first few days we saw more fish than we had in the past, landing some fingerling salmon and brookies. A ton of fun but, human nature being what it is, I was looking for something bigger. On a bend in the First Connecticut River with a little ripple to the water, my oldest hooked into his first salmon and the largest of the weekend, so far. The three of us fishing the same area he landed his salmon, a quick photo and a clean release, "That's what it's all about" I thought to myself. Moving upstream through the woods, I spied a little pool that looked promising. My boys are just down river when he hit. "It's a big one," I say. Somehow after six or seven jumps and dives, I get the fish close enough to shore to get it into my son's waiting net. I was taking the photo before the fish was even landed. Fish in the net, one flip, fish out of the net and gone. At this point I am not getting any younger, having just lost the largest fish I ever hooked on a fly rod. You can't rush Mother Nature. I sat on a nearby rock to contemplate how cruel she could be when you don't play right, and how blessed we are when it all comes together.

The last day we loaded up and decided to fish a bit before heading home. We hit a few spots but inside I just wanted to go back to "the spot." The boys yielded to the old man and the hunt was on. No one home in the area. Tie on a different fly, and another and another. Going back in the rolodex of my mind I recall something Tom mentioned at one of the TU classes. "If nothing's working throw something they have never seen." Into the fly box I go and tie on the smallest, ugliest thing that has never been in the water before. A rise.

A good drift, good line management, the turn, the rise. It was as if it was all in slow motion, with the flow of the river. Then the salmon started jumping, and diving. He cleared the water at least four times. I wasn't counting anymore. Not this time. Both my boys assist "the old man" in landing his 22-inch salmon, my largest to date.

Thank you to my boys for graduating school, taking the time to fish with the old man, and thank you to Tom and George and TU for setting the foundation blocks for making this "fish story" possible. Please keep up the great work.

Willow Planting in the Fraser Flats

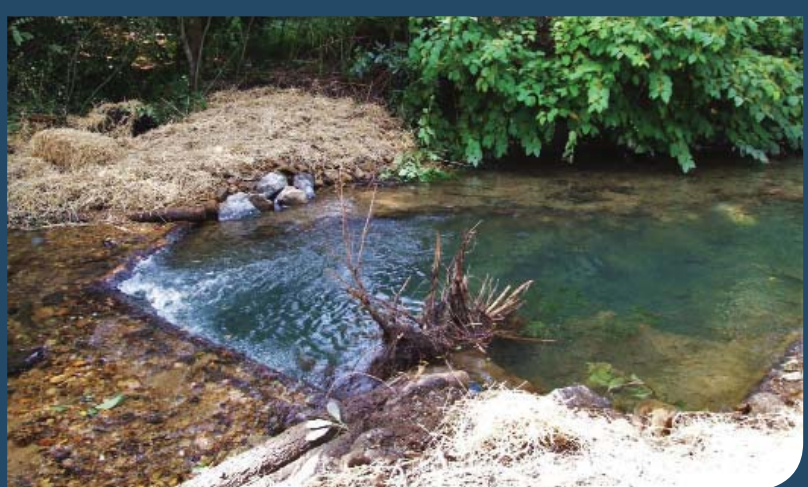
COLORADO

On a recent May morning, 50 volunteers from Grand County and the Front Range of Colorado gathered to harvest and replant willows along nearly a mile of the Fraser River. For years, there was wrangling and outright hostility among water users of the river, with TU fighting Denver Water over its diversion plan to take additional water to the Front Range. But in 2014, TU helped broker an agreement coined Learning by Doing, which pledged the parties to work together to protect and restore the watershed of the Upper Colorado River. After years of coordination and planning, the Fraser Flats Habitat Project, the first boots-on-the-ground project of LBD, took place in May when volunteers planted willows along the Fraser River. The project was conducted in conjunction with the Colorado Headwaters Chapter of TU. The willows will help stabilize the stream bank, provide shade and offer sustainable trout habitat. The project will also open public access to roughly a half-mile of the Fraser for fishing opportunities.

"The Fraser Flats project is what the Fraser Valley has been waiting for," said Anna Drexler-Dreis, Board member of the local TU chapter and Vegetation Coordinator for the project, "Thanks to Learning by Doing and east and west slopes committed to working together we have the opportunity to get out there and heal the Fraser River. "

In the fall of 2017 the Headwaters Chapter will conduct the final stage of the project—constructing an instream channel on the same stretch of river, which will provide faster flow rates and lower temperatures as well as holding pools for trout during low flow periods.

While LBD is still in the fledgling state, the groundbreaking program will lead to more projects like the Fraser Flats, which will conserve and restore the Upper Colorado watershed while working with stakeholders that rely on the West's most precious resource.



Stream Cleanup Makes Big Impact on Schuylkill

PENNSYLVANIA

The New Philadelphia Habitat Project took place Sept. 10-13, 2016, on the Schuylkill River in Schuylkill County Pa.

This was a very unique project as it encompassed several organizations working together on a stretch of stream that was laced with AMD from the local anthracite mines as well as raw sewage just a few years ago.

Schuylkill County TU, Schuylkill Headwaters Association, Schuylkill Conservation District, Borough of New Philadelphia, Blythe Water Authority and Blythe Township all participated in the project. Phil Thomas, TU Habitat Project Coordinator along with Wayne Lehman from SCD designed the project in March 2016. It entailed constructing 17 deflectors and two log framed cross vane devices requiring 72 logs ranging from 10 feet to 25 feet and over 400 tons of stone along 1,200 feet of stream.

The project was funded partially from a $5,000 Embrace-A-Stream grant from TU along with funds raised by the chapter. Most of the equipment used was donated by the township and borough.

STREAM CHAMPION

Chris Johnson

GUADALUPE CHAPTER IN TEXAS

Chris Johnson's film, *Unspoken*, sets out to inspire preservation for the "trout that won the West."

There are many reasons why Chris Johnson seeks out a typically small fish in hard-to-reach places. Partly it is spiritual, since locating Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout involves hiking to high elevation streams nestled within pristine, alpine wilderness.

Mostly it is because he thinks the world would be richer for restoring one of the only trout species native to this neck of the woods.

"My favorite fish on the earth is the Rio Grande Cutthroat—it is THE fish of the South," says Johnson, who owns and operates the only fly-fishing shop in his hometown of Round Rock, Texas. "Rios—which currently occupy only 10 percent of their original range—represent the closest native trout we can get to from Texas. That is, if we want to travel to Colorado or New Mexico."

Johnson, points out that, contrary to common belief, there is not a single native brown, rainbow or brook trout located within this declining fish's two-state range. He notes habitat loss and the introduction of non-native species as primary reasons for the Rio's decline.

That is why he and Nathan Brown, a friend and employee at Living Waters Fly Fishing, set out to produce a video

Donate to Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout through TU: gifts.tumembership.org/rio-grande-cutthroat

Favorite Fly:
Johnson's Fluff Beast (Personal Creation).

Favorite Place(s) to Fish:
Texas Hill Country, New Mexico and Colorado.

Most Memorable Fish:
The last one that got away!

aimed at raising awareness and support for protecting Rio Grande Cutthroat trout. All proceeds from the video, *Unspoken*, are directed toward conserving the species.

In addition to inspiring anglers around the country, the heartfelt video led to a partnership with TU, since the organization is already on the ground conserving habitats key to Rio Grande Cutthroat survival.

"Usually, only fish biologists like myself are aware of these issues and working in remote places to address them," says Kevin Terry, TU's project coordinator in the Rio Grande Basin. "Chris's film brings the perilous situation surrounding Rio Grande Cutthroat trout to life for many beyond the scientific community; it illustrates why the fish is special and how we might help existing populations survive and maybe even thrive."

Johnson also hopes that *Unspoken* will remind anglers of the passion and quest for adventure that attracted them to the sport in the first place. It appears to be working. "Feedback on the film has been phenomenal," he says. "People are getting fired up. They want to go and find the fish and, we hope, support its protection."

When asked about a sequel, Johnson says that more cutthroat installments are likely, adding, "The prettiest places are where you are the most non-native thing out there—the type of places where you find the Rios. I want to find more places like that."

Augusta Creek Beaver Dam Removed

MICHIGAN

On a Saturday, late in October, a small crew from the Kalamazoo Valley Chapter TU removed a major portion of a beaver dam on the Augusta Creek that was impounding several acres of riparian and agricultural land along the creek. Augusta Creek is classified as a marginal coldwater stream, i.e. often too hot in summer months to support coldwater species. There were several good reasons to remove the dam: reports of dead fish in the pond above the dam, accumulation of black silt in shallow water that raises water temperature and decreased streambank vegetation, all potentially contributing to the increase in water temperature. The dam also prevented migration of fish to spawning grounds. The Resource Committee of KVCTU has started to evaluate the geomorphic damage done by the dam and to develop plans for any required restoration work.

Got Big News from Your Chapter? ***We want to hear about it.***
The Actionline section of *TROUT* provides a perfect forum for exchanging information and sharing successes. Do you remember your first TU project? The first TU member who reached out and connected fishing to conservation? How did you come to TU? Let us know. Email Samantha Carmichael at scarmichael@tu.org with a short tale of 200 words or less. Photos are welcome (digital images are preferred).

Tools & Tips...

From the Tackle Box

By Jeff Yates
Director of Volunteer Operations

TU Annual Meeting

Roanoke, Va.
Sept. 27-30

Community, Conservation, Fishing... and Much More!

Details and registration at www.tu.org/annualmeeting

Join fellow conservationists, anglers and TU members and volunteers from across the country as the beauty of fall rolls through the Blue Ridge Mountains of Roanoke, Va., for our 2017 Annual Meeting on Sept. 27-30.

TU's Annual Meeting brings together hundreds of our most dedicated members, volunteers, supporters and staff to celebrate all we have accomplished in the past year and commit ourselves to the important conservation work ahead. It is an inspirational weekend full of fishing, conservation tours and training, important workshops, sessions and business meetings, and a host of evening social activities that connect members from across the country who share their passion for trout and cold, clean water.

Spend a week learning from and talking with some of TU's top staff, scientists and active volunteer leaders. See first-hand how our mission is brought to life in Virginia and across the U.S. Share ideas and tips on protecting your home waters and enjoy presentations on important conservation topics such as advances in conservation and river restoration tactics, engaging the public in angler science to protect local streams, educating the next generation of river stewards and much more.

The annual State of TU presentation by Chris Wood, President & CEO, is an inspiring and educational look at how your support drives our mission forward each year and is not to be missed!

Open to all members—and your friends—the 2017 Annual Meeting is a great way to celebrate our mission, improve your conservation knowledge, accelerate your ability to help your favorite, local trout waters and to build relationships with incredible people who share your passion for fishing and conservation.

Learn more about the 2017 Annual Meeting and register today online at www.tu.org/annualmeeting.

Volunteer Award Nominations Due by July 15

This past year, TU volunteers contributed more than 725,000 hours to our conservation and education work in their local chapters and councils. Honoring that commitment, and recognizing the outstanding achievements of members and partners that embody the values and mission of TU is an important part of our Annual Meeting. Be sure to nominate your local conservation heroes before the July 15 deadline. The nomination form and award descriptions are online at at www.tu.org/awards

Top 5 Volunteer Jobs in Your Local TU Chapter

Have you ever thought about stepping up to volunteer for TU, but worried that you wouldn't have the time or didn't know enough about conservation or fishing to help out? Well your local TU chapter is likely looking for passionate people like you right now to help bring our mission to life in your community. Check out this list of five fun, easy volunteer jobs that every local chapter needs filled and then find your local chapter online at www.tu.org/chaptersearch and step up to make a difference!

❶ **The Grillmaster:** Love the smell of smoke and cooking meat? Offer to serve up the best burgers and bratwurst around to make your chapter's next outing or tree planting project a fun, social affair!

❷ **The Meet & Greeter:** Do you have the gift of gab? Do you enjoy meeting new people? Step up to help your chapter make sure all new members and guests feel welcome when they walk in the door, or that your chapter is represented with a booth at community fairs and festivals. By sharing your beaming smile and hearty handshake you'll help attract and engage more people who can help!

❸ **The Fishing Buddy:** TU chapters have new members and anglers joining all the time. Many of them are new to the area or haven't built that network of fishing friends. Additionally, over half of our chapters are actively running programs to engage local military families through angling. If you like fishing, a lot, and don't mind the company, ask your chapter to make you one of the official "fishing buddies" to take new anglers, veterans and others out on local streams so they can fall in love with the rivers you care about and decide to help protect them too!

❹ **The Lone Ranger:** Don't have time on weekends? Tied up during chapter events? You can be a one-person world-saver and help TU by offering up your time to the chapter to handle important tasks like cutting invasive vines, planting native trees and shrubs along the river, hanging posters and flyers around town, emptying line recycling stations and more on a schedule that fits your busy life but makes life better for the trout!

❺ **The Torch Passer:** The work your chapter does to save local streams never ends and will only be successful if the next generation learns to love trout and rivers as much as you. If your heart is filled at the sound of kids laughing, splashing and squealing with delight, consider becoming a volunteer at chapter youth events to light the fire of conservation in the next generation!

calendar

All web conference trainings are held at 8 p.m. EST. Register online at www.tu.org/training

July 12: Training—New Chapter & Council Leader Orientation

July 15: Annual Meeting Awards Nomination Deadline

July 15: Annual Meeting Early Bird Registration Deadline

Sept. 10: Annual Meeting Hotel Block Reservation Deadline

Sept. 27-30: 2017 Annual Meeting: Roanoke, Va.

Oct. 18: Training—Annual Financial Report and IRS Reporting

Nov. 6-12: Embrace-A-Stream Challenge Online Competition

Nov. 15: Deadline for All Chapters / Councils to File Annual Financial Reports

Feb. 15: Deadline for All Chapters / Councils to File IRS Form 990, Form 990EZ or Form 990N

Protecting Wild & Native Trout with Angler Science

One of TU's greatest strengths is the grassroots army of anglers and advocates we can mobilize to stand up, speak up and take action to protect the wild and native trout in their backyard and across the country.

In this rapidly changing world, perhaps nothing is more valuable to protecting the rivers and trout we cherish than strong science to drive conservation in a strategic and effective fashion.

Our Angler Science tools and resources—found online at www.tu.org/anglerscience—make it easy for our 400+ chapters and councils, and their members, to conduct important monitoring and other hands-on activities to identify problems, raise the alarm and bring to bear conservation or advocacy solutions based on the data they've collected.

From simple, web-based projects such as Trout Blitz or Rivers Calendar, to cutting edge research such as Environmental DNA, the tools online make it easy to bring Angler Science to your local stream.

What's more, these activities are an incredible way to recruit and engage the community at large to come out and invest in taking care of the river—whether they fish or not.

Art of Angling

[By Dave Whitlock]

The Upright Hair-Wing Dry Fly

The classic "upright hair-wing dry fly" is a heavily-dressed, floating fly that suggests a mayfly dun or spinner. It was originated in 1930 by Lee Wulff, mainly to fish the northeastern U.S. and Canadian fast-flowing, freestone rivers, such as the Esopus, Au Sable and the Salmon. In the 87 years since Lee's hair-wing dry fly innovation, the design has become universally popular and easily qualifies as one of our true classic trout flies.

Lee wanted a fly that would float well and hold up to the heavy use of multiple trout catches per day. He chose coarse guard-hair from the tail of the white-tailed deer to make the two thick and bushy upright wings and tail. Prior to Lee's Hair-Wings, most dry flies were tied using feathers for wings. This material choice was so unique that it began an entire new series of dry flies that are both classics and still popular today. Two cock hackles and hair dubbing for a thick body completed his design. Lee's experiences with his first design—the Grey Wulff—came in the spring of 1930 while fly fishing with his friend Dan Bailey. The river was the Esopus and the results were dramatic—with Lee and Dan frequently landing over 50 trout a day on one fly!

Over the following decades, Lee and Dan continued to expand on Lee's incredibly productive hair-wing flies and Dan insisted on calling them "Wulffs." In 1938, Dan moved to Livingston, Mont., and began a fly-tying business. There, he significantly expanded the Wulff pattern choices to take the best advantage of these special dry flies on the big, high-gradient western rivers that were heavily populated with lots of large, unselective (at that time) wild trout. These flies soon became some of the most productive dry flies for fast-flowing western rivers.

A list of these Wulff-Bailey inspired flies includes: White Wulff, Royal Wulff, Black Wulff, Grizzly Wulff, Blonde Wulff, Ausable Wulff and Brown Wulff. Although all of these Wulff patterns were not necessarily tied to be imitations of specific mayfly duns and spinners, several are often used during mayfly hatches with good results, especially the Grey, White and Grizzly Wulffs. Other tiers have since created more Wulff design patterns, good examples being the Humpy and Mike Lawson's Green Drake Wulff.

Lee was a constantly innovating throughout his life. Trout, steelhead, landlocked and anadromous Atlantic salmon, bass and sunfish are all very attracted to what Lee called his "meaty flies." Many Atlantic salmon fly fishers use Royal Wulffs and White Wulffs exclusively when dry fly fishing for Atlantic salmon. Lee's own ties of his Wulffs appear somewhat shaggy, with irregular wings tails and hackle barbs. This may be because Lee tied them without a vise. I once watched Lee tie a size #20 Royal Wulff with just his fingers to hold the miniscule hook! The Wulffs that were tied at Dan Bailey's shop looked much more formal and symmetrical. I've illustrated both 'looks' in the fly plate.

As I've mentioned in other articles of this *TROUT* magazine series, stiff cock-hackle collar barbs that extend horizontally to the hook shank help a dry fly to sit or float in the surface film, while the barbs that extend up and down of the hook shank do very little to help floatation. Because the Wulffs are usually tied with one or two long hackles, there are plenty of horizontal barbs to hold the fly at the surface, even in rough water. The thick, stiff hair of the tail also helps the fly float to a certain extent. Regularly treating these patterns with paste fly floatant and false casting a time or two to shake some of the water off also significantly improves flotation. Lee favored guard hairs from white-tailed deer for most of his patterns. However, when white wings are required calf tail is often used. Moose and elk hair can be

Upright Hair Wing Dry Flies

Top to bottom, left to right

Row 1: Top, side and front views of Lee Wulff's hair-wing dry flies

Row 2: Original three Wulff hair-wing patterns tied by Lee without a vice

Grey Wulff
Royal Wulff
White Wulff

Row 3: Dan Baily's commercially tied versions of Wulff hair-wings

Royal Wulf
White Wulff
Grizzly Wulff
Grey Wulff

Row 4: AuSable Wulff

Black Wulff
Carolina Wulff
Blue Wulff
Adams Wulff

Row 5: Four spin-off hair-wings:

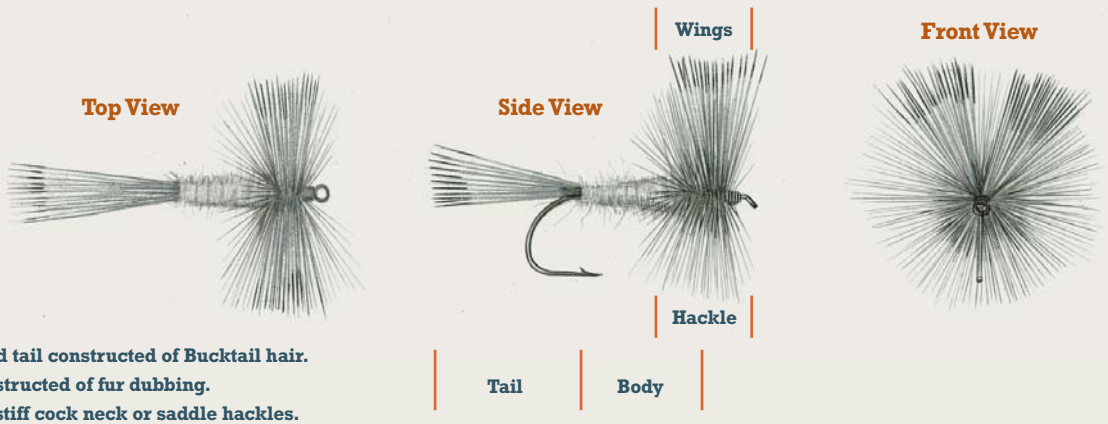
Messinger's Irresistible
Humpy
Lawson's Green Drake
H&L Variant

Row 6: Lee Wulff's Atlantic salmon flies:

White Wulff
Royal Wulff

1
2
3
4
5
6
Dave Whitlock

Classic Lee Wulff Upright Hair Wing Dry Fly



Wings and tail constructed of Bucktail hair.
Body constructed of fur dubbing.
Hackle—stiff cock neck or saddle hackles.

used as good wing and tail substitutes as well as the tail guard hairs of most game animals such as fox, mink, raccoon, squirrel and otter.

It may be that the question of "what in the world does this imitate?" is asked more about the extremely popular Royal Wulff than any other trout fly. The answer seems to be that it imitates nothing natural, but it can easily be seen by trout, as well as fly fishers who then can mend and track it much better than dry flies that are a challenge to follow on the water. When tied in sizes #10-16, it is an ideal "searching fly" for trout. Sizes #8-4 are excellent for salmon, steelhead and bass. I know quite a few experienced fly fishers who use Royal Wulffs almost any time they dry-fly fish, even during hatches, with good enough results to satisfy them.

As with most successful fly designs, other tiers modify the Wulff designs, materials and color schemes in order to have flies more specific for their situations. Some classic examples are the Humpy, Irresistible, H&L Variant, Lawson's Standard Green Drake and Irresistible Wulff. I've added these variations or spinoffs to the color plate included here. As I was practicing my pen and pencil techniques to reproduce these classic patterns I remembered an amusing experience. I wanted desperately to learn how to tie the Wulff patterns that looked like the nicely tied Dan Baily Wulff productions. I got the opportunity in 1961 to talk with Dan and Dan's shop manager Red Monical about the source of the uniquely marked bucktail wings and tails. They handed me a white-tailed deer tail. I didn't believe them until Red showed me how they aligned all the bucktail tips. Suddenly the hair took on the completely neat look that I was after.

While recalling my experiences with Lee I remembered a great example of Lee's awesome knowledge of catching Atlantic salmon on dry flies. At a fly-fishing show in New York, I told him that I was going to the Gaspe Peninsula to fish salmon on the St. John. He handed me a yellow and olive, molded plastic and bucktail stonefly and told me it would work for me there. I was pleased. But I have to admit I wasn't very impressed with how it looked. Later, on the St. John, I cast for two hours over a very large, fresh-run female. She rose to several of my dry flies but simply nosed or tailed them. In desperation I tied on Lee's stonefly. On my first cast over this beautiful salmon, she rose vertically up from seven feet down and engulfed that fly as if she had waited all day for the opportunity! I didn't recover from the shock quite fast enough to deal with this magnificent 20-pounder, and it soon broke me off at the end of a 10-foot leap. Lee knew dry fly salmon fishing!

Lee Wulff was one of my most cherished mentors, role models and friends. His image and contributions in our sport will live forever. I urge you to read the reference materials that I've listed below to get a truly amazing picture of this very special, one-of-a-kind man. Besides his classic flies, he taught something that it was almost unheard of at the time. His belief was that a wild, adult trout or salmon is a treasure that is too valuable to catch and kill because they represent the distillation of hundreds or thousands of their kin's top gene pool for all future survival success. Not only was he 100 percent right in his belief, but he set the stage for one of the most important ethics of fly fishing: catch and release.

I highly recommend that you read about Lee's lifetime story in these books:

The Founding Flies by Mike Valla
Lee Wulff on Flies by Lee Wulff
The Compleat Lee Wulff by Lee Wulff

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Puget Sound Fly Fishers is celebrating its 60 years in South Puget Sound by hosting a fly fishing fair July 29, 2017 at Pierce County's Environmental Services Building in Chambers Creek Regional Park. The objective is two fold; to introduce non-anglers to the sport of fly fishing, and to enhance the skills and knowledge of current fly anglers. Of particular interest to us is providing particular programs, activities and demonstrations to women, children and families so they can see a way to get engaged in the sport.

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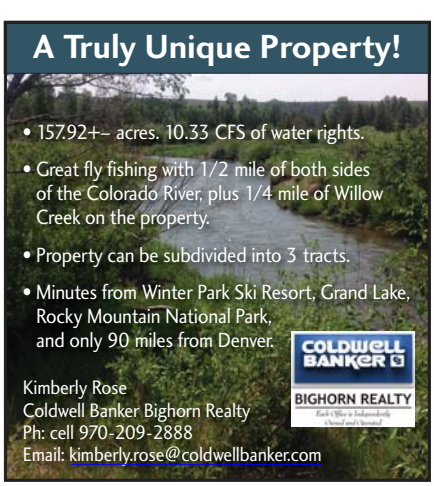

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Classics

CAREY SPECIAL

Western Canada Carey-ies a Special Gift

BY PAUL BRUUN

We Yanks enjoy fond and peaceful relations with our northern neighbor, and cherish not only the infusion of superb Canadian entertainers and NHL stars, but also excellent fishing destinations and heady angling expertise.

Comparatively speaking the Carey Special isn't as talent laden as say, John Candy, Martin Short, Jim Carrey, Mike Meyers, Dan Aykroyd and Michael J. Fox or Hank Snow, Drake, Shania Twain, Gordon Lightfoot, Neil Young, Anne Murray and Paul Anka. But it is a significant fly pattern and enduring contribution from western Canada.

Those not packing an assortment of Careys will probably stumble over ID-ing other authentic Canuck champions the likes of Gretzky, Howe, Richard, Orr, Crosby and Lafleur.

Colonel Thomas Carey of Quesnal, BC, is considered the pattern's namesake and popularizer. Historical fly-tying literature reports this lake fly began life during the late 1920s with the somewhat peculiar material choice of groundhog hair for body, tail and collar. This unusual wet fly tying stuff was requested by Lloyd Day, a Kelowna doctor, who reportedly dragged home a groundhog after a lake fishing trip.

Just between us, after a wee dram or three of Canadian blend, methinks the possibility exists for the rare angling BC'er to experience difficulty differentiating a marmot from a groundhog!

Sober historians continue to agree that Dr. Day's pattern idea was first known as the Monkey-faced Louise, generally thought to imitate lake dwelling dragon fly nymphs and/or emerging sedges.

Examining scores of articles and tying videos convinces me that there is no agreement as to the perfect Carey Special. But a popular rendition begins on a long shank hook (from size #2 to #12) with a hook's length tail of pheasant rump/flank hackle fibers. Some stillwater tiers add lead wire mid-hook. Next is a three- to four-strand twisted peacock herl body with gold wire ribbing and several collar wraps of one or two pheasant rump feathers, tied in tip-first. A true Carey look has these webby hackle tips extending to the end of the hook shank or even slightly beyond.

The Carey remains one of the most popular wet flies in western Canadian stillwaters where it is faithfully trolled on full sink lines or cast and slowly stripped behind lines of various sink rates. Depending on size, many Carey formats with red, black, olive, yellow, orange and even minimal body pheasant rump feather wraps, represent aquatic nymphs as well as leeches and minnows. During a dozen-year-ago visit to the Kamloops, BC, region I discovered that casting a Carey Special is both a legal and moral requirement during the "traveling sedge hatch," which is traditionally celebrated as an official BC angler holiday.

My introduction to this venerable pattern began in Yellowstone by watching long time Jackson Hole fly tier friend, Jay Buchner, Carey-feed lake and brown trout at ice-off on Lewis Lake. The inviting pulsation of the overly long pheasant rump feathers was a trait that Canadian steelheaders had also discovered. This delicious deportment influenced my personal Carey attempts in moving trout home waters later that fall.

Locating this proper but now antique pattern anywhere away from its BC origins remains challenging. My wife, Jean, built our Carey Special collection while prowling dusty and forgotten tackle bins of long established western fly shops.

Swimming size #10 and #12 Carey Specials soon had neighborhood cutthroat and browns saying, "Pretty good there, Eh?" over this great BC oldie.

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