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Marketing Ground Game | Fishing Tasmania | Product Reviews | Uncle Ted's Cutthroats | The Economics of Outdoors | a Few Harrumphs... and More.

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the buzz on the flyfishing biz

Angling

TRADE

Editor

Kirk Deeter
kirk@anglingtrade.com

Managing Editor

Tim Romano
tim@anglingtrade.com

Art Director

Tara Kester
tara@shovelcreative.com
shovelcreative.com

Editors-at-Large

Joel R. Johnson
Geoff Mueller

Copy Editors

Mabon Childs, Sarah Deeter

Contributing Editors

Tom Bie
Ben Romans
Steven B. Schweitzer
Greg Vincent

Photos unless otherwise noted by
Tim Romano

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Advertising Contact: Tim Romano
Telephone: 303-495-3967
tim@anglingtrade.com

Mail Address:
PO Box 17487
Boulder, CO 80308

Street Address:
3055 24th Street
Boulder, CO 80304

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THE FLY-FISHING "SUMMER OF LOVE"



When I was very young, I lived in Toledo, Ohio. I loved baseball. And though Toledo had its AAA franchise (the Mudhens), for big league ball, it was really all about the Cincinnati Reds. The other Ohio team, the Indians, weren't nearly as good as the Reds, (my, how times have changed), but who was? Cincinnati had the "Big Red Machine."

My folks took my brother and me to Florida to visit our grandparents, and we went to a spring training game one day in March. I might have been 10 years old. I stood by the Reds' locker room with my baseball and black-ink pen clutched in both hands. Johnny Bench smiled and signed my ball. Manager Sparky Anderson scuffed my hair and then signed my ball. Awesome. Then came Pete Rose... who literally pushed my ball out of the way. Joe Morgan was next, and he also brushed me aside, and said, "Not now, kid," as he strolled toward the team bus.

Even as a little guy, I remember thinking, "Those guys are jerks!" It crushed me, because their faces were on the posters in my bedroom. I'll never forget it.

Fast-forward 30 years to a climbing outdoors writer and editor on the floor of a fly-fishing trade show in Denver.

Then totally enamored with the sport of fly-fishing, I was rubbing shoulders with the icons of that sport. And by and large, that proved to be a more fulfilling experience. Maybe it's because the money wasn't piled nearly as high, and the spotlight didn't shine nearly as bright as it did in "pro" sports like baseball, but I found great comfort in realizing that the people in this world were generally... well, genuine. And they were truly here for "love of the game." Charlie Meyers became my Sparky Anderson, and I will never forget that either.

Sure, there are some odd ducks in fly fishing. There's in-fighting, and cutthroat—sometimes dirty—competition. But in all my now 20-some years of covering this industry, I've never lost faith, and I've never lost my appreciation that a) fly fishing is a wonderfully beautiful sport on any number of levels, and b) the people involved with this sport are, by and large, very good people.

So it kills me, sometimes, to see the chat room arguments, the ladder climbing at the expense of others, and the circular firing squads that take form when we collectively talk about politics, or conservation, or stream access, or even what flies to use where, and when. Sure, we need to hash things out, and debate, and press for better solutions. We must confront major threats to the resources that make our sport possible in the first place. We must double-down on climate change. We must improve angler access. But we don't have to stab each other in the back as part of that process. We don't have to emulate the ratings-driven cable television political programs, and we don't have to knock someone else down to lift ourselves up. We're better than that.

This is going to be the "Summer of Love" for fly fishing, at least as far as *Angling Trade* is concerned. Henceforth, and heading straight into that wonderful IFTD trade show in Denver, which I think will be a family reunion as much as anything else, we're going to accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative, and ignore Mr. In-Between.


The stakes are too high now, especially in the prevailing political climate. There are too many forces aligned against the voices of conservation, or getting kids in the outdoors, or making this sport more inclusive and diverse, for us to quibble about relatively small matters. Really.

So I no longer want the gossip, or any of that. I don't care if you're an "R" or a "D" or anything else. I care that you're an angler, and a businessperson, and that you want this sport around in 50 years.

It's time to come together. And love each other. And respect fly fishing, and the businesses that support it, for what they're really worth, even if we "harrumph" now and then... read on for a cool diddy by Marshall Bissett, it's meant in good fun.

In this era, none of us are too big, too important, or have too much going on to brush a little kid's baseball—or fishing dreams—to the side.

"Yeah, kid... I got time... now is the perfect time..." *That* should be the answer.

That's the way we need to be thinking now, not only to cultivate generation next, but also to maintain our own credibility, compassion, and identity. I have absolutely no doubt in the potential of the assembled cast, if we'd simply resolve to respect each other, and our sport, just a little bit more. 

-K. Deeter



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TASMANIA... IN THE TROUT-FISHING WORLD, WHAT'S OLD IS NEW.

By Kirk Deeter



You're going to be hearing quite a bit about fly fishing in Tasmania—that beautiful, gritty, wild island that sits across the Bass Strait on the southern underbelly of mainland Australia—in the coming months. Not only will the Fly-Fishing World Championships be held there in December (and the winning team

could very well pull it off with dry flies), but also, Australia is pushing to garner more attention on what is one of the most interesting trout fisheries in the world.

We all know New Zealand is wonderfully alluring, but scant few American anglers go the extra step

to see Tasmania. In fact, the Kiwis issue over 20,000 fishing licenses to foreigners each year, while the grand total for Tasmania last year for all foreigners was around 500. The great irony in all of that is that the New Zealand fishery wouldn't exist today were it not for brown trout being successfully introduced to Australia through the efforts of James Arndell Youl in 1864 (a feat for which he was knighted by the British Empire). Aussie brown trout were taken to New Zealand, and the rest is history.

I went for a two-week visit to Tasmania last December—the same basic timeframe when the Worlds will be held next year—and really didn't know what to expect. My friend Mac Cunningham did the initial coaching. Then I made calls to Jim Bartschi from Scott Fly Rods and Simon Gawesworth of RIO Products, who had preceded me by a few weeks on business/fishing trips, and both of them were sufficiently gobsmacked about the whole scene to get me fired up about it. But even with all of that, what I ultimately found surprised me.

I'm not a big fan of ranking best places anymore, because that's a simple, formulaic trick to sell magazines or get clicks on websites and social media. In all honesty, it's always subjective, and in fishing, conditions and dumb luck can make or break a trip so easily. And what squeaks your duck might not do it for me, and vice versa.

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The AFFTA Fisheries Fund supports fisheries conservation projects to protect wildlife, habitat and access, and also fosters educational initiatives to grow new anglers. Let's move the sport and industry of fishing forward...together.



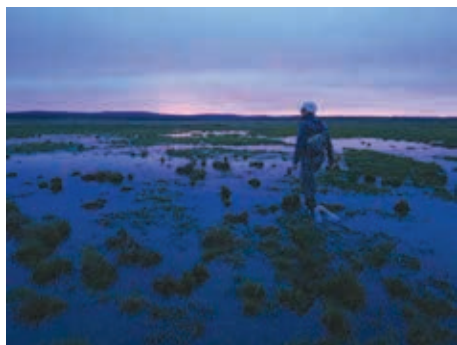
In the past year, the Fisheries Fund supported:

- Keepemwet Fishing's Angler Education Campaign
- St. Bernard's Parish Black Mangrove Project
- American Rivers' Upper Yellowstone River Restoration
- Montana TU's Save Montana's Smith River Campaign



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But I will say this: Of all my travels all over the world throughout the past 20 years, Tasmania seemed on par with the best attributes of my favorite places (e.g. I like stalking big browns in New Zealand... you can do that in Tassie too; my favorite part of fishing in Ireland is the culture and the people... the people in Tasmania were wonderful also; Iceland has stunning scenery... so does Tasmania; the food and

diversity of fishing in Patagonia is a huge draw... same can be said in Tasmania, etc.)

I had what I consider one of the greatest sight-fishing experiences I've had anywhere in my fishing life, saltwater or freshwater. In the Central Highlands of Tasmania, you can hike to thousands of unspoiled ponds and lagoons, most of them no more than knee-deep. Many are connected by spring creeks, and in those shallow lakes swim brown trout up to eight pounds in size. I watched them push wakes into the grasses on the shorelines as they crushed small frogs. They tail like bonefish to root stuff off the bottom. They'll cruise a circuit and sip black dun dry flies. It's incredibly technical and difficult to

make a good cast and presentation without spooking them, but it's clearly top of the game. Imagine your best bonefish day on an expansive flat of clear water, with seven-pound bonefish circling all around. Only instead of eating a shrimp and peeling off, the fish eat dry flies (because they're trout!), and then fight with that trademark brown trout bulldog style. Gorgeous, wild, unscarred fish, all of them.

I also caught fat browns in trickling streams no wider than a bathtub. And I experienced a snowflake caddis hatch that made the river scene look like a snowstorm on a bright 70-degree F afternoon. The diversity of landscape is remarkable—look out one side of the car and you'd swear you were in the Napa Valley, and out the other side seems like County Kerry. Fish the Meander River and you'll think you're in Wisconsin's Driftless Area, yet drive upstream 10 minutes and you'd swear you were on the North Umpqua in Oregon.

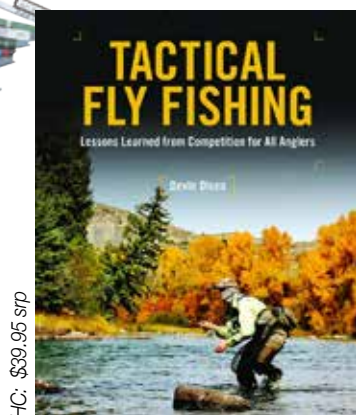
Oh, yeah, and while you're hiking around the rivers and lakes, there are wallabies jumping all over the place, wombats waddling around, kookaburras mocking you from the branches of the eucalyptus trees—more "other-worldly" wildlife than you will ever see, anywhere else on a fly-fishing trip, outside of Africa.

The fisheries management in Tasmania is about the smartest, most resourceful I've seen anywhere in the world. And the professionals at Inland Fisheries are, well, about the "fishiest" anglers I've met and they get the value of catch-and-release wild

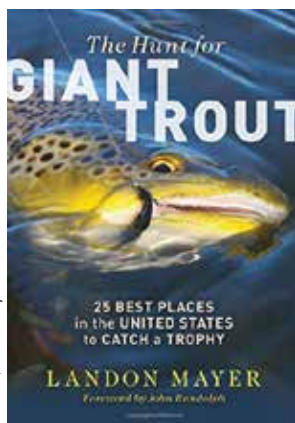
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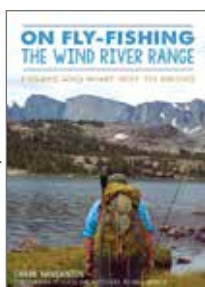
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trophy trout fishing. (How I wish my “table fare” promoting Parks & Wildlife friends saw that light a bit brighter.) In Tassie, they don’t “hatch and stock” fingerlings. They let wild fish reproduce, and when they reach a certain size naturally (around three pounds) they corral them into specially designed diversions off of spawning streams, where they can collect them and move them to waters where natural recruitment does not occur (but the fish can sustain themselves). That means a lot of big, healthy trout in a lot of places—balanced out for optimal angling opportunity. Over 40 percent of the island is forever preserved as part of the national park system, and access is generally quite good. There are many lessons that many countries, including our own, could learn from Australia, and Tasmania in particular, when it comes to trout fishing.

Of course, we have learned through history from Tasmania, whether many of us today realize that or not. It took many years and several unsuccessful attempts to bring brown trout from England to Australia. The real goal was to introduce Atlantic salmon, but that failed. Brown trout eggs carefully packed in ventilated wooden crates were almost an afterthought but they made it, hatched, and thrived, and as such, changed the future of fly fishing. It’s worth exploring the Salmon Ponds, and museums dedicated to fly fishing for all of this history.

It’s a long trip to get there, no doubt. But all the other factors line up. It’s safe. It’s an English-speaking country. The guides are incredibly talented.



The food is great. You’ll find some of the best wines and whiskies in the world, literally. Launceston and Hobart are awesome cities to explore. There’s more cool non-fishing stuff to do in Tasmania than there is anywhere else in the world where the fishing is this good.

I’m fired up about it and I think it is worth sharing with your clients. I feel the same way about this as I felt about writing about a funky new dorado fishery in the jungle in Bolivia back in 2008, and once people tuned into that, look where that went.

If you do plan to visit or refer people to visit Tasmania, you definitely want some local expertise on your side. Contacts:

Driftwater B&B and Fly Fishing Guiding:

<https://www.driftwater.com.au/>

Peter and Karen Brooks

Karen Brooks 0408 427 767

Peter Brooks 0412 815 802

driftwater.tas@bigpond.com

Daniel Hackett. Guide service, RiverFly 1864:

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GEAR REVIEWS

Nine Tested on Christmas Island... Five Tested in Tasmania... Five Wildcards

CHRISTMAS ISLAND PICKS

By Tim Romano

A few weeks ago, I was lucky enough to host a trip in conjunction with my local Fly Shop (Front Range Anglers out of Boulder, Colo.) to Christmas Island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It was an incredible trip with outstanding fishing (I was lucky enough to stick a sizable giant trevally and added 14 completely new species to my life list). I also had plenty of opportunity to test new saltwater fly-fishing and travel gear. Here's some of what I liked best...

The program on Christmas Island is fairly simple. You grab a fishing buddy for the day, get on the boat, meet your guide and get dropped off on some of the most expansive flats you've ever seen, wandering around with two rods and casting at many different species. GT's are on the menu, but you're really picking off other crazy looking fish (e.g. triggerfish) until that most coveted quarry slides up onto the flats.

My fly rods of choice were an 8-wt and 11-wt, both were **Scott Meridian** rods and both were a total pleasure to cast all week. I feel like the Meridian held up amazingly well component wise, sometimes being submerged half the day in salt.



This was just the tool for the job with its quick blank recovery, which translates to accuracy. On Christmas Island accurately delivering a fly on target in an environment where speed was essential, was priority number one.

My reels on this trip were relative newcomers in the fly world and ICAST 2018 winner for best fly reel, **Seigler Reels**. I paired their BF model with my 11 weight and MF model with the 8 wt. I must say I was intrigued by Seigler's design



philosophy with utilizes a drag knob and a lever that is best described as what is used in the off-shore conventional world. Basically you set your drag on the knob and then can adjust in single clicks with the lever to a pre-set level, very quickly. What I wasn't prepared for what how absolutely game-changing this

continued on next page...



Every inch counts. They say most fish are caught at less than 40 feet... we say less than 480 inches.

You took care to plan your stalk, ease into position, and perfectly time your cast to that hypercritical fish. Put the fly on target - and it's game on. Miss by a couple inches - and it's game over. That's why Scott has been designing and crafting rods for pin-point precision for over 40 years. When you arm yourself with the right fishing tool, you'll hit the mark more - and that means less cursing and more high-fiving.

Scott's new G Series rods bring feel to those short- to mid-range casts with the stability to track true and the accuracy to place the fly on target. They have great control for tricky mends and technical presentations, and they bend deeply and evenly to protect the lightest tippets.

So next time you plan to get up close and personal with a wary fish, take a G Series, because it's only a matter of inches.



is for large, fast and strong fish. Besides being one of the easiest and quickest reels I've ever been able to adjust the drag on, the real advantage in my eyes was how quickly I could switch back to a drag setting where stripping was efficient. What I mean by this is that if I was casting for GT's my drag was set damn tight, so tight that stripping excess line off the reel for longer shots was tough if you needed to do it quickly. With the Seigler though, you simply flick that lever to the top and BAM you're back to trout-strength drag and ripping off twenty extra feet of line quickly was no problem. One flick to the lever (a 1/4th second motion) and you're back at GT strength. Bad ass, if I do say so myself. The start-up

inertia and drag is butter smooth and dead silent and these things look drop dead gorgeous. The reel knob is WAY oversized, which was kind of a head slapper for me. All salt water knobs should be this big. The reels are 100% made in the USA and took a pretty healthy beating from me with no signs of wear. The only drawbacks I would mention if I HAD to pick something is A. they are mucho expensive, but what'd you expect? And B. the tolerances of space between spool and cage seemed large. That'd said I never had a problem with line slipping through, not once. I was using big lines though... All in all one of the more exceptional reels I've had the pleasure of using in a long time. Major overkill for trout, but

absolutely game changing for big open water fish.

Both reels were loaded up with that fancy braided **Hatch Outdoors**



backing. That stuff is expensive, but dang is it nice and especially good for this type of fishing. It's got the feel of Dacron and is as thin and strong as Gel Spun in an 8 braid line. It's stronger and lighter than almost everyone else's offerings. I even brought a large conventional reel spooled up with the stuff as "braid." It worked like a charm.

Speaking of lines, I paired my 11weight with a **RIO Tropical GT line** in a 400GR and 475GR weights



and both were fantastic. These things are built with insanely strong cores and aggressive tapers that

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make throwing big flies quickly, much easier. I stupidly got one wrapped around a boat prop (like 20 feet) and while it did slice the hard outer coating, it did not cut the core. These things are tough!

Not being totally adept at walking around with two fairly large rods all day I randomly grabbed **Vedavoo's Rod Holster** that was sitting a pile



of swag at my house hours before I left... and I did that on a whim. Admittedly I had never used it before. It worked as advertised, even with that big ol' Seigler reel and 11wt. strapped in. I even put both my rods in it multiple times to pull out the camera and take photos. You need to position it close to your pant pocket to utilize a little extra gripping power, but dang this thing worked well. I'm now thinking about all the possibilities at home in Colorado walk/wading with much smaller rods. It's gonna be a fun summer...

While I'll never leave my tried and true Smith Guides Choice Chroma Pop Glass shades at home and



these were on my face most of the time - I also brought a pair of **Mako Polarized** aptly named GT frames in a glass lens with me. Let me tell you folks this company is legit. As a photographer I'm pretty bitchy about what sits in front of my eyes and these are some of the nicest glass lenses I've used in a while. Easily holding up to Smith or Costa in terms of quality. I'm wearing these around quite a bit at home now and have taken them on two trips with great success and no scratching. My only beef would be that they need to add hinges on the ear stems. Oh and retailers did I mention they are looking to expand that footprint? Look em up.

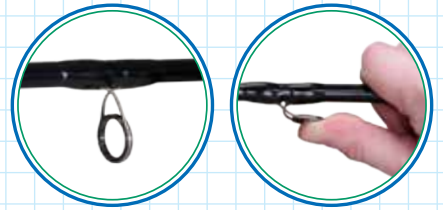
As you can imagine, connecting to home via phone or email was somewhat tricky on Christmas Island. While I had a SAT phone for emergencies I also used a new satellite hot spot from **Somewhere Labs** for bluetooth texting from my



phone. It was easy-peasy to set up with a downloadable app and very

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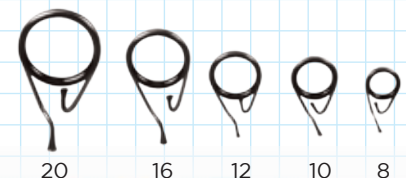
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straightforward directions. It's small, lightweight and waterproof and utilizes all your contacts already in your phone. I actually set it out on a chair on the beach one night before a downpour and sat like 30 feet away dry as a bone texting my wife. The unit functions as a standalone SOS beacon and still drops location pins (after programmed to do so) without cell phone pairing. It also has the most affordable data package on the market at \$450 for unit + 1yr data.

I hate sunscreen and have vacillated back and forth with oversized sun hoodies and other face protection for a long time. This was my first extended use of the **Simms Solarflex SunGaiter**. The thing is money! It's UPF 50, is cut ergonomically to fit



your face and head (rather than just a tube), has laser cut breathing holes which for me was a HUGE bonus and feels cooler when wet. Simms claims a 30% lower surface temperature. It also works well with hats and dries very fast.

Lastly, I've been testing out the new **Patagonia River Salt boot** collaboration with Danner. I took them for a week last fall to Russia to break them in and fell in love with



them on the flats of Christmas Island. They are bomber, very lightweight and incredibly comfortable. Plus for some reason they seem to elicit compliments whenever I put them on for looks. If you're into that kinda thing. We'll keep you apprised of long term use as the year goes on, but I can't say that I've ever fished the same boots for trout in Russia, and bonefish on Christmas Island before, have you?

TASMANIA GEAR REVIEWS

By Kirk Deeter

Scott Split Cane, 7'7", 4-wt.

(scottflyrod.com, \$3600). I've never



owned a bamboo fly rod in my life, but a couple years ago, I hit an important birthday so I got myself a present. And seeing how a trip to Tasmania for wild brown trout was more than a bucket-list adventure, it was also a mission to connect

continued on next page...



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with tradition, I decided to take this rod along. I figured I'd fish it once or twice, but ended up fishing it 80 percent of the time—only when I was out on the windy lakes or targeting really large browns (that I thought could break any rod) did I revert to graphite, and in those cases, I fished a T&T Avantt 5-weight, a Scott Radian 5-weight, or a Sage X 6-weight (one afternoon each). I wasn't necessarily going for style points with the bamboo, it just cast and fished as smooth as silk. Designed and manufactured in collaboration with Naoki Hashimoto of Hokkaido, Japan, this rod actually has a medium-fast action. It's a delight to load in short quarters, and was dialed-accurate at 40 feet. I only fished dries with it. Of course, bamboo is expensive, and it's not an everyday rod. But for someone who wants an heirloom that legitimately performs on the water, as well as being an artistic artifact, I wholeheartedly believe in these rods and recommend them highly. It literally opened a new chapter for me.



Simms G3 Guide River Camo Waders (simmsfishing.com, \$599.95). I'm starting to drink the Kool-Aid when it comes to the whole "fish in camo" thing... at least I believe that it cannot hurt your chances.

Among my favorite experiences in Tasmania were sight-fishing for massive wild browns on knee-deep, ultra-clear ponds in the Central Highlands. While these fish don't see a lot of human pressure, they aren't several pounds because

they're stupid. A splash, noise or vibration will put a feeding fish off and it won't matter if you're wearing neon clown pants. But all things being equal, I do think the broken pattern of the camo on the waders, paired with a muted blue, green or gray jacket or shirt helps. Either way, I have come to trust the G3s enough to travel around the world with them. These never leaked, and they were quite comfortable to hike in for long treks through the bush. If they could only make them snake-proof from the knees down, I wouldn't have spent so much time looking for tiger snakes as I walked.

Korker's Devil's Canyon Wading Boots (korkers.com; \$199.99).



Korkers boss Brian Chaney actually sent me an email warning me about the possibility of throwing a sole while bushwalking in the muck (as most of you know, Korkers soles are interchangeable, but because they detach, they could come off at the wrong time). I took that as a reflection of Chaney's stand-up character and integrity. I also took it as a challenge, so I brought them along anyway... with an extra set of studded, non-felt soles. Good news, Brian—I never lost a sole. Better news, I grew to like these boots even more than before.


They're very light, which matters when you're trying to pack under an airline weight allowance. They're also rugged enough to stand up to the rigors of backcountry walking. In all, a perfect balance of comfort and durability. I never so much as popped a stitch, and the BOA closure system was reliable. I'm not inclined to tempt fate too often, and everyone has their own experiences, but I have confidence in these boots.

Tacky Flydrophobic SD Fly Box (tackyflyfishing.com, \$35). Anyone who has ever fished with me knows



I am just as likely to use an old snuff can I can tuck into my shirt pocket to hold dry flies as I am a fancy fly box, but this box is worth buying to keep the bugs you really care about in good shape. It uses eVent fabric and a waterproof seal to create the desired effect of high-dollar waders—being breathable and waterproof. The box deservedly won top honors at IFTD's New Product Showcase, but it really shined on my trip down under. I did accidentally submerge it several times. And I did switch flies often, leaving wet hackles in the mix, but they dried out as advertised. The silicone base is great for sticking flies without the material tearing or pilling. In all, it's a very smartly-

continued on next page...



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ATLANTA, GA
JANUARY 31 & FEBRUARY 1

LYNNWOOD, WA
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PLEASANTON, CA
FEBRUARY 21, 22 & 23

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engineered, well-produced system, and serious anglers should have at least one in the boat bag, vest, or pack where you keep the "A Team" of patterns for a given season or river.

Hemo Holster by Sweetwater Saddlery (sweetwatersaddlery.com, \$60). Sweetwater's real business is making pistol holsters for concealed carry purposes, but



they've branched into a cool little niche of producing stylish genuine leather holsters to hold hemostats on the river. A new and updated version of which features an important modification—they hang at a 45-degree angle and the

hemos go in and out from the top, rather than the bottom. In other words, you won't lose your hemos to gravity. They're designed to fit right on your wader straps, or in my case, the strap of a Filson Foul Weather vest. Do you need a leather holster for your hemos? Of course not. But they sure do look sharp and are a nifty gift idea for the angler who pretty much has it all.

WILDCARDS

By Tim Romano

This next set of items are things we've only just started playing with... Items that were sent to us in the dead of winter. Now that the ice is starting to thaw and snow starting to melt will see some more time out on the road, river and in our boats. These are our first impressions, and we will follow up with more detailed info on them as the fishing season progresses. -TR

Blue Sky Furled Leaders. I'll be honest; I've never really understood why anyone would want a furled leader. I used to think it was simply a nostalgic look back at a technology that had been surpassed many years ago. Basically, leaders for folks in the tweed and pipe crowd to throw at trout eating dry flies. Well, I was wrong. The past few months have allowed me some travel and I've used these leaders for big bass in Mexico, and triggerfish on the flats of Christmas Island. Even a little streamer action here in Colorado. See the pattern here? No dry flies. You know what? These things are fantastic to throw the bigger stuff on. They roll out perfectly and are very easy to throw. The energy



transfer is surprisingly effective, and the built-in shock protection is pretty handy for larger fish also. They also have the added benefit of loops at both ends for less waste of tippet and leader material over time for that matter. Simply snip a piece of tippet, throw a loop on and boom... you're ready to go. I've found my waste of leader material has gone down when using furled leaders to be an added bonus. Less plastic is something all of us should be able to get behind. Blue Sky has leaders come in many sizes. MSRP \$11.95 - \$14.95 www.blueskyfly.com

Dometic CFX 35W Electric Cooler.

Electric Cooler you say? Why? You ask. I'll tell you. It's got 60% more storage capacity than a standard cooler of the same size! That's roughly 47 cans of

beer. It can deep freeze to -7, uses very little power and can use AC/DC or solar power to keep things chilly. It also is controllable from an app on your phone, should you want to dial it up or down from the front of the truck as it chills your beers in the back. Oh, and did I mention it has lights inside? Something tells me your other cooler doesn't light up. It runs very quietly and while we've yet to put it through



the paces in 95-degree heat, I can already tell you I'm mighty impressed. Over Christmas we were hosting a party and we ran out of refrigerator space. I simply plugged in the Dometic CFX 35 and squeezed in multiple six packs, an entire turkey, a gallon of milk, and still had room to spare. It was weird how much stuff you could fit in this thing. More to come throughout the summer, but so far I'm loving it. MSRP \$899.99 www.dometic.com

Rod Runner Mounts. Again, this is just something I've started using in the garage, bass pond and local creek, but I'm digging it so far. When I first got the box of stuff from



Rod-Runner I was like, ugh... yeah. What is this stuff? The thing is, as weird as the multi-rod carrier looks, it functions damn well. I've been loading up two or three bass spinning rods, a fly rod for carp and one for bass for quick jaunts to the local pond. Instead of a pile of rods in one hand and lines getting caught every time I move to a new spot I simply pick up the Rod Runner Pro 5 and everything is right there. The carrier protects my rods in the back of my truck and if

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you're a salty angler it makes rinses a very easy affair. The holders are all customizable for different styles of rods or reels and switching them is stupid easy. Rod runner is also making mall mounts from basically the same exact tubing. It's easy to install, can be used vertically or horizontally; so far for me it is very effective. This company makes a pile of stuff that is certain to simplify your rod storage needs. Prices vary depending on product. www.Rod-runner.com

Yakima HD Crossbars and Slim Shady Awning. The old round rusty



crossbars that used to be on my roof rack were with me for a long time. So long they had opened up and rusted out enough at the ends that I had to literally cut them off. I had no idea there was actual technology in roof rack crossbars, but after using the Yakima HD Crossbars for the last couple months I gotta say, bravo! Why so nice? First, they're beefy and much larger than my old round bars, but lighter. They are constructed with aluminum (non-rusting), but powder coated for durability. They have integrated and recessed tie-downs at the ends. This feature rocks! Super handy for securing loads, drying wet clothes (think clothesline), or hanging lanterns at night. They also have what Yakima calls "T-slots" for easy Yakima accessory attaching. I just plopped a hardshell Roofnest Rooftop tent on mine and they've been bomber so far. I've also just attached their "Slim Shady" Awning on said bars and while the use so far has been low, I'm excited to pull out the 42 square feet of sun and rain protection this summer when I need it. More on that later. Set of HD bars \$249.99, Slim Shady Awning \$299.00 www.yakima.com

Patagonia Men's Tropic Comfort Hoody II & Men's Capilene Cool Daily Hoody. When I'm out fishing



I like to cover up from the sun and lightweight hoodies are my preferred method to do this. I'll wear sunblock or a Buff, but prefer an very lightweight shirt with an oversized hood and ballcap. Sometimes that plus a Buff. I recently took the Patagonia Men's Tropic Comfort Hoody II and Men's Capilene Cool Daily Hoody with me to Christmas Island for a week and basically lived in them. The first is a true fishing hoody is absurdly soft and comfortable. It's got an oversized hood for hat usage and a brilliant single button that blocks your neck when closed and gives you more air when needed, plus thumb holes for rowing all day or casting on the flats when you need a touch more protection on the tops of your hands. It's 50% recycled polyester jersey and UPF 50. The second shirt is perhaps the most comfortable sun hoody I've ever worn with miDori bioSoft for added wicking and softness, odor control and 50+ UPF protection. It's cut a bit slimmer and has no thumb holes. Patagonia Men's Tropic Comfort Hoody II MSRP \$59 & Men's Capilene Cool Daily Hoody MSRP \$55 www.patagonia.com

Editor's note: Look for more extensive, consumer-facing fly-fishing product reviews on anglingtrade.com and on social media from AT, particularly as we work through the summer and toward the IFTD show in Denver.

We'll also be featuring another season of "Jack-in-the-Bob" reviews by Jack Nickens from the Bob Marshall Wilderness this summer. If you want products reviewed, contact tim@anglingtrade.com.

RECOMMENDED READING

(Reviews by Kirk Deeter)

SOME STORIES (Lessons from the Edge of Business and Sport)

By Yvon Chouinard

(Patagonia Works, \$45)



I'm certainly familiar with the old adage that "you can't judge a book by its cover" but I have to admit that *Some Stories* is a stunner when you pick it up and hold it... leaf through it. It's an absolutely beautifully-produced book—the images, the binding, the design and layout—are all reminiscent of the "artifact" quality books that publishers used to have the desire to produce. And for \$45 list, on 100 percent postconsumer recycled paper, it's quite obvious that this book is meant to serve a higher purpose. So kudos to the design, edit and production team off the bat for creating a vessel that's deserving of the quality of insights and experiences contained within.

Say what you will about Yvon Chouinard. Some think he's a visionary or a prophet, while others would label him a radical or a heretic. I came away after reading this book, (and I did read it, cover-to-cover in a weekend) thinking that Chouinard is a real guy, with a genuine affinity for wild places and outdoor sports. There is no doubt in my mind that he has guts. And he does things for love of the game. One of my favorite call-out quotes from early in the book: "We liked the fact that climbing rocks and icefalls had no economic value for society."

The book has its fair share of opinions (when's the last time you read anything by, or about Chouinard or his company, without an opinion attached?)... many you'll agree with and a few you might not. But what makes it appealing and engaging are the anecdotes. He's very honest, very candid throughout,

and that's endearing. He also has an eloquent writer's voice, and he is a good storyteller. The best stories are rooted in substance, and it would be hard to argue that any living entrepreneur/naturalist/author has more compelling "been there, done that" content to work with than Chouinard. From falconry (yes, falconry) to climbing, surfing and fly fishing you're going to find interesting stories that keep you turning pages, many collected from earlier works.

I think at the end of the day (and why you should read it as a person who makes a living in the outdoor sports world) is that the book ultimately prompts you to wonder about the stories you are writing, at least figuratively, with your own life. What really motivates you, and why? This is definitely a book about legacy. Chouinard has laid out clearly what his

will be, and it's as beautiful as the book it's wrapped up inside.

WILD AT HEART

America's Turbulent Relationship with Nature, from Exploitation to Redemption *By Alice Outwater*

(St. Martin's Press, \$28.99)



continued on next page...



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Another book that kind of hit me out of the blue recently is *Wild at Heart* by Alice Outwater. I'm not a big fan of introspective essays on the wonders of fishing and nature, because I get so many "Grandpa took me fishing" stories sent to me as editor of *TROUT* magazine—most of them not very well-written—that I can't wade through them easily anymore. I need something to track along with... something with not only the what, but also the so what?

Which is why I really like Outwater's approach with this book, treating nature as an entity, and then exploring in good detail how that entity as been both revered and abused, manipulated and recovered in its various relationships with humans. For example, the book starts with nature as valued by native Americans. She looks at nature and health... how humans collect, sell, erase, poison, rearrange, and eventually conserve, protect and embrace nature. All in different designs, for different reasons, with significant impact, artfully—credibly—explained.

The book details the balance of nature, which is often fragile. Do you know what happens when a whale dies (of natural causes) in the open ocean? How about how the great philanthropists of the industrial age affected conservation? And did you know that President Nixon created the Environmental Protection Agency, not so much because he was a closet tree-hugger (truth is, he loathed environmentalists), rather he wanted to rob his political opponents of the moral and ethical high ground after a catastrophic California oil spill?

It's not all as wonky as it sounds. It's really a book about relationships. And

again, as someone who makes a living, at least in part based on a relationship with nature, you should consider reading *Wild at Heart*.

CURRENTS

Orvis Rocks Missoula with Another Successful Guide Rendezvous

Guides, lodge owners, and outfitters from around the world gathered in Missoula, Montana, last month for the 2019 Orvis Guide Rendezvous. The Orvis Company has been hosting this event for the past 33 years in celebration of the finest professionals in the fly-fishing and wingshooting space. The three-day event consists of presentations, seminars, and panels that serve to illuminate best practices in conservation efforts, recruitment, customer service, and marketing measures pertinent to outdoor businesses. OGR (as the event is commonly known) has become a singular forum within which fly-fishing and wingshooting professionals can exchange ideas with industry peers.

The Orvis Guide Rendezvous culminates in the annual Orvis-Endorsed Awards ceremony. These awards commend the very best fly-fishing and wingshooting experiences and operators within the Orvis-Endorsed program. "These awards are dictated by our customers and their experiences," said Scott McEnaney, Director of Orvis Adventures. "Through surveys, unsolicited feedback, and peer respect within the industry, Orvis is able to identify the best guides, shops and lodges each year. Commitment to conservation is also a key factor in the award criteria."

The 34th Orvis Guide Rendezvous will be held in Roanoke, Virginia on March 19-21, 2020.

RepYourWater Releases 2018 Sustainability Report

RepYourWater has released its 2nd annual Sustainability Report and the company continues to reduce its environmental impact. For the second year in a row RepYourWater has diverted over 95% of the waste from its office and warehouse in Colorado from the landfill, which is an accomplishment in its own right. However, in 2018 RepYourWater took another big step in reducing its carbon footprint from its office and warehouse through Renewable Energy Credits, and staffers continue to volunteer their time to conservation as well as donating at 3% of their sales to their 17 nonprofit conservation partners. RepYourWater also continues to demonstrate their leadership by taking a strong stance on climate change, public lands and other policy issues that negatively impact our fisheries as is demonstrated in their 2018 Sustainability Report.

In 2018, RepYourWater donated over \$50,000 to its nonprofit conservation partners and in an effort to reduce their carbon footprint, they offset 100% of their office and warehouses greenhouse gas emissions with Renewable Energy Credits (RECs). RepYourWater co-founders, Corinne and Garrison Doctor had this to say about addressing climate change is so important for their company and they stated: "We know climate change is the greatest threat to fisheries and the planet, so we made a decision to tread as lightly as possible as a company and are very proud of our 2018 social and environmental performance. We started with our own internal operations and in the near future you can expect to see us begin tackling the social and environmental impact of our supply chain and products, and just getting started!"

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RepYourWater started working with sustainability and marketing consulting firm, Emerger Strategies, in 2016 because they wanted to further authenticate their brand by improving the environmental performance of their operations and products. Emerger Strategies President, Rick Crawford, had this to say about RepYourWater, "Corinne and Garrison are the real deal, and they truly care about the impact their company is having on the environment. RepYourWater is the definition of a purpose-driven brand that is using its business to solve environmental problems."

RepYourWater is thrilled to share their 2018 Sustainability Report with you upon request.

JOB OPENING

Operations Manager, Trident Fly Fishing

Job Location:

Windham, Maine (just a short commute from Portland)

The OM position is a hands-on operational role that will provide a great entry into the outdoor industry with a lot of exposure to many facets of the business. It's ideal for someone with 2-8 years of work experience who is looking to transition to a new industry or see the fly fishing industry from a retailer's perspective. You **MUST** be willing to relocate to the greater Portland, Maine area.

Company Profile:

Founded in 2012, Trident Fly Fishing has established itself as a leading e-commerce retailer in the fly fishing industry. We are dedicated to providing an exceptional customer service experience for its customers

and using new media and SEO to drive aggressive growth.

Trident is a multi-channel retailer and sells products directly to consumers directly through our website as well as on Amazon.com, eBay, as well as through our retail store. The Company is operated by a small team, including the OM. Our company culture values a professional and responsible "work hard, play hard" mentality and a relentless passion for business growth.

For more information on Trident Fly Fishing, please visit us at www.tridentflyfishing.com.

Job Description:

Trident Fly Fishing is seeking an Operations Manager assume a leadership role in the company and assist the CEO in managing day-to-day business operations. This position is ideal for individuals who are seeking a position in the outdoors industry and who thrive in a fast-paced, entrepreneurial work environment. The OM position is demanding and provides an opportunity to learn about fly tackle from the inside-out as well as develop business and retail skills.

A strong applicant would flourish in an entrepreneurial and retail setting, and will have exceptional problem solving skills as well as the ability to manage and tackle multiple projects simultaneously and independently. It is critical that the individual has an extreme attention to detail and is excited and interested by fly fishing gear.

The OM will be exposed to and will lead efforts in a wide variety of business functions including marketing, sales, operations, distribution and customer service. While the OM will work with the CEO daily and receive feedback and guidance, the CEO will rely on the OM to run many day-to-day activities independently.

On average, the OM position requires 40-50 hours per week, but the right candidate will be willing to put the time in necessary to get the job done, including some nights and weekends. Some travel will also be required, particularly relating to fishing/outdoors events and trade shows.

Job Responsibilities:

The OM and the CEO will work together regularly to drive business growth and development. Together, they will manage all day-to-day business operations as well as higher level strategy and vision for the business.

The OM will spend approximately 75-85% of their time on responsibilities that arise in the daily course of business, which includes customer service, sales, fulfillment, and managing inventory to things as trivial as a trip to the post office. The right candidate will be ready to roll up their sleeves and tackle the daily tasks of a small business.

The remaining 15-25% of the OM's time will be spent learning about fly tackle as well as higher level projects related to marketing/events, sales, content development, and industry relations. The role may be adapted to a particular candidate's strengths; specific responsibilities include but are not limited to:

Sales

- Recommending tackle via e-mail and over the phone to meet the needs of customers traveling the world to fly fish.
- Taking orders over the phone
- Answering questions via live chat

Customer Service

- Daily email communication with customers, including management of the company's helpdesk
- Daily phone communication with customers

- Professionally and knowledgeably representing the company at events

General Operations

- Inventory forecasting and product/supply management
- Warehouse management, including shipping and fulfillment
- Return management

Marketing

- Developing marketing and website content and other promotional/advertising materials
- Managing social media and brand messaging through a variety of platforms
- Working with guides, industry influencers and other industry

members to proactively expose Trident to a broader audience

Qualifications and Experience:

While the OM position is challenging and requires a passion for business and fly fishing, we do not expect candidates to have prior experience in every area listed above. The OM position is an opportunity to develop and learn new skills with the mentorship of seasoned entrepreneurs who have graduate business degrees from the world's leading universities.


Other experience/requirements include but are not limited to:

- Relevant work experience in an analytical or entrepreneurial role
- A passion for gear and helping people

achieve angling success

- Strong attention to detail
- Strong leadership skills and uncompromising ethics
- Highly motivated self-starter with an ability to roll up sleeves and "get stuff done"
- Motivated by success in an entrepreneurial environment
- Exceptional interpersonal and written communication skills
- Strategic thinker and team player
- Design, photo, and/or film experience is a plus, but not required

Application Instructions:

Please submit both a resume and cover letter to ben@tridentflyfishing.com as soon as possible. All applicants will be reviewed by Trident Fly Fishing immediately and interviews will take place on a rolling basis. 



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The image shows a fisherman in a green jacket and cap casting a fly line into a pond surrounded by trees. In the foreground, there is a box of Snowbee XS-Plus Thistledown² #2-5wt fly line and a coil of the fly line. The box features a picture of a brown trout and the text 'Snowbee XS-Plus Thistledown² #2-5wt'.



FEATURE

DOLLARS AND SENSE

States are making a stronger case for outdoors sports—like fishing—as key economic drivers.

Written by T. Edward Nickens



Not your typical outdoor recreational office space

The meeting room was well-lit and well-appointed. The conference table held a sheen like a pond in the sunlight. Glass vases tinkled with ice water. Voices pinged around the room and crackled from a conference-call speaker. There were snacks. There were administrative assistants. Think big-time law office, and that's the scene.

But the conversation, lively and animated, was about the business of fishing, not court strategy. David Knight, director of North Carolina's Outdoor Recreation Industry Office, moderated the discussion: How to get more anglers in particular, and more outdoor travelers in general, to the Uwharrie Mountains of North Carolina. The region has massive

lakes, wild rivers, and thousands of acres of public lands. But it's an underutilized resource, lamented a county economic development officer. There are not enough hotel rooms in the region, figured a local chamber of commerce representative. Others weighed in from around the table: The CEO of a boat manufacturing business.

The owner of a rod manufacturing company. An economic advisor for the state legislature. All talking bass and catfish and tourism infrastructure.

This scene was just a part of the first meeting of the advisory council to the newly minted North Carolina office dedicated to supporting and growing the state's burgeoning outdoor recreation industry, and thankfully, more of these meetings and conversations are taking place in more conference rooms around the country. An increasing number of states are opening such offices, with staff dedicated to connecting gear manufacturers, guides, outfitters, and green tourism advocates with state officials tasked with economic growth. Last July, representatives from eight states gathered on a Denver hotel rooftop to sign the Confluence Accords, a document outlining priorities and best practices for state efforts to bolster and harness the economic power of the outdoor industry within their borders. Initial signatories were the states of Colorado, Montana, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming. Michigan and Maryland are expected to sign in the next few months. Arkansas, Kansas, New Mexico, Tennessee and South Carolina are also exploring the concept of official support of the outdoor recreation industry.

"This is not a trend," says Knight, "because these issues and this energy aren't going to fade. This is

a movement, and it's transforming the ways the outdoor recreation industry will operate in the future."

And the recreational fishing business has as much to gain as any other entity.

generated \$887 billion dollars in annual consumer spending. It created 7.6 million jobs—more than the computer technology industry or the country's entire construction workforce—and brought in more than \$100 billion in federal, state and local tax revenue.



A view of the Uwharrie region of North Carolina. Photo credit, Three Rivers Land Trust

STATISTICS TEST

Outdoor pursuits have never been about the numbers. There are exceptions, of course, but most of us don't measure fish and keep a running tally of the day's catch.

But last year, when the Outdoor Industry Association released its 2018 National Recreation Economy Report, the size of its numbers, and their impacts on local communities, made headlines. According to the report, the outdoor industry

In North Carolina, the outdoor industry punched in at \$28 billion in consumer spending, and supported 260,000 direct jobs. "That number blew me away, but what really got my attention was comparing the outdoor industry to other industries," say Knight. "You can't open up a magazine or turn on the television without hearing about the next pharmaceutical breakthrough. But consumer spending on that entire industry is only about half the size of the outdoor recreation industry. That's crazy."

continued on next page...



Representatives from eight states gather on a Denver hotel rooftop to sign the Confluence Accords. Photo Credit: Kurt Barclay for GearJunkie.com

More states are recognizing the opportunities for economic growth suggested by such number. Jobs and taxes are significant aspects of the language used to talk about economic vitality, but the outdoor industry was never very adept at speaking in those terms. That's all changing with the new movement to put outdoor recreation on par with more traditional industries, and states are lining up to sharpen the point on what they offer manufacturers and business.

"These states are being very clear with establishing offices within their economic development structures,"

Knight says. "They are saying that we recognize and prioritize the outdoor recreation industry and we will bring that long history and that economic development perspective to conversations about natural resource issues, tourism services, and even public lands management."

So what do business like fly shops, outfitters, guides, and gear manufacturers get out of an embrace of the outdoor recreation economy? In these early phases of the state offices, it's true that ramping up involves putting bureaucratic processes into place,

and defining the siderails to what is and isn't outdoor economy development. But already, real-world benefits have accrued.

In Montana, Rachel VandeVoort stepped into the newly created role of director of the Montana governor's office of outdoor recreation in early 2017. A former executive with a firearms manufacturing company, and armed with stints as a board member of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, she brings to the job a history of making things happen, not just making policy. Already VandeVoort has involved local fishing guides

"You can't open up a magazine or turn on the television without hearing about the next pharmaceutical breakthrough. But consumer spending on that entire industry is only about half the size of the outdoor recreation industry. That's crazy."

and shops in communicating with state wildlife and lands managers in devising and implementing management plans for local waters. And since VandeVoort's position is housed within the state's economic development agency, she's in a great position to help educate the outdoor industry about opportunities for job development grants within the Montana Department of Commerce and Big Sky Fund, plus support for activities such as continuing education for employees. The move towards opening offices of outdoor economic development, VandeVoort says, "will give us as an industry better access to the system that is defining policy. Now we're a player. That's exciting to think about."

And while the playing field will include traditional economic development activities such as attracting new jobs and dealing with the intricacies of import and export

regulations, the new state outdoor recreation offices can shift the ways we help explain this industry and what we care about. Unlike many industries, the outdoor recreation industry is as much a way of life as a way of making a living, and growing this new economy can involve a different way of thinking about what economic growth entails.

In North Carolina, Knight grappled with just such a situation recently. In the Uwharrie region of North Carolina, for example, large rivers such as the Yadkin and Pee Dee flow from dams erected more than a half-century ago. Knight recently met with officials from the large utilities that own and operate the massive dams, to discuss issues such as dam release patterns and water flow rates that impact not only fish populations, but the ability of people to paddle and camp and fish along hundreds of miles of shoreline. "Discussions at this

level, with the involvement of state government in conversations about outdoor industry input and needs, have never happened before," says Knight.

Which is indicative of the transformative nature of looking at the outdoor industry through an economic lens. State outdoor recreation offices are tasked with working with straight-up business issues, such as taxes and tariffs, transportation needs, and an educated work force. But this added layer of a conservation ethic that makes these initiatives so exciting. "We're helping people understand that the infrastructure of this industry involves trails, campgrounds, viewsheds, wildlife habitat, and access," says VandeVoort. "Conservation is the term we use for the maintenance of this industry's infrastructure. That's a very new way of thinking and talking about resource issues." 



TRIFECTA OF HARUMPHS

Imagining a world where reels reeled, hooks hooked and nets landed...

Written by By Marshall Bissett



The above and aptly named Knuckle Heads cushioned fly reel handles shown in the photo are available from <http://www.burfish.com>

Editor's note: Our resident fly-grump has a few beefs, so we thought we'd give him the microphone, all in the name of good-natured fun and self-reflection...

GRIPE NUMBER ONE FLY REEL DESIGN

I think of fly reels as I do Lady Gaga's costumes – great to look at, but often quite impractical. A triumph of form over function, trout reels by Ari Hart have found their way into the Museum of Modern Art, often sport cute graphics and are usually enshrined in lockable glass cabinets at your

local fly shop. In many cases, that is where they should stay. They are substantially more expensive than their counterparts in the bait casting and spinning section of a big box store yet offer a fraction of the functionality. Perhaps they have a better press agent. Their basic design has not changed in nearly a

I think of fly reels as I do Lady Gaga's costumes – great to look at, but often quite impractical. A triumph of form over function, trout reels by Ari Hart have found their way into the Museum of Modern Art, often sport cute graphics and are usually enshrined in lockable glass cabinets at your local fly shop. In many cases, that is where they should stay.

hundred years. With small changes in arbor size and drag components, the modern fly reel would not look too shocking to Isaac Walton. I keep a couple of Ari Harts around to wow my non-fishing friends – long ago I stopped fishing with them – unless my need to look ultra-cool overtakes my common sense.

Unfortunately, a conspiracy of reel designers has condemned the fly reel to be a handy way to store line and backing. We see a lot of what the tech industry calls creeping featurism – a marketing trick where incremental changes are passed off as design breakthroughs. The wake-up call should have come with the popularity of salt water fly fishing. It certainly did for the conventional angler who suddenly had reels with multi-speed gearing, ergonomic handles and centrifugal anti-backlash technology to land huge tuna, marlin and roosterfish.

Fly reels by comparison just got bigger and heavier, finally adopting the large arbor as their answer to landing a monster with as few hand cranks as possible, albeit with hand-slicing skinny backing material as reel filler. This had the same effect on fly reel performance as adding racing stripes to a Model T Ford. Undeterred, the manufacturers started using terms like “train stopping drag” when they could have been re-imagining the product for its new purpose of landing large species with maximum efficiency.

Recently I had the great fortune to fight and mostly land huge fish in the Sea of Cortez. During these prolonged battles, a couple as long as 50 minutes, I had plenty of time to think about the equipment I was using. I knew my 12- weight rod would not explode and my 30-pound tippet would hold. I thought about what I would change to make

this fight less painful for me and the fish, when I realized I had brought a knife to a gun fight. I glanced over at the spinning rod my captain had been using to cast hookless teasers to dorado (dolphin for you Easterners) and it came to me that his reel had a huge handle and my handle was just TOO DAMNED SMALL! As my sweaty fingers struggled to grip the ¼” diameter beautifully machined piece of metal (it could just as well be wood or plastic), I stared longingly at the nearly two- inch diameter, finger-friendly spinning rod counterpart. Adding insult to finger blisters, I am sure he bought that reel in Wal-Mart for less than the cost of backing on my fly reel. Now, without re-opening the whole small hands debate, I will admit to having hands in proportion to my compact body size. But even my tiny metacarpals struggled

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FEATURE

to stay latched to the even tinier rotating handle that manufacturers have decided is all we deserve. How much more could it cost to install a graspable handle? How about a “big fish” optional large handle that you can rotate without causing acute hand cramp?

The picture shows my temporary solutions to this design fault – yes, I use the term advisedly. This is a 1” diameter chunk of yellow foam which comes in two sizes. It will never win an award for industrial design and was definitely not made by Italians, but it works and is almost comfortable to use. It is a \$2 fix for an \$800 problem. It’s like putting a foam seat pad in an Aston Martin, or duct tape on

a Leica. Manufacturers – look on this as a beta test – we know you can improve on a chunk of foam. Help us all look forward to hooking large fish without a trip to the hand doctor.

GRIPE NUMBER TWO BARBED FLIES

A friend of mine was helping a student cast a dry fly on a California Sierra river. He was using the student’s rod for demonstration when a DFW agent came upon the scene and checked the #18 Parachute Adams on the student’s line and found that it had a tiny barb. This resulted in the teacher receiving a fine of around \$450 and a severe and expensive

reminder that no good deed does go unpunished. The fine fell into the same violation class as using a barbed treble hook or fishing live bait in fly only water. The devastated student was heard to say, “But that was the fly they sold me at the fly shop down the road.” It is well known that agents will test for barbs using the “snag” test on microfiber materials. Often crimped down barbs will fail this test – the fine is the same – there is no discount for good intentions. Does the fly shop share any liability? Is the liquor store that sells booze to the DUI driver liable? These legal points are outside our scope but prompt me to assert that fly shops should mainly sell barbless



flies, especially in areas where the law mandates their use. Not as a matter of liability but of customer service. They should explain to their customers the pros and cons of barbs and demand their suppliers offer more flies tied on barbless hooks. These are:

PROS

Better hook penetration

Kinder to the fish

Will not get stuck in your flesh, clothes, nets

Easier to release fish

CONS

You might lose a fish or two (but you can never prove it was through lack of barb)

Accidentally breaking the law (see cautionary tale)

Harder to secure to the bend of the hook for dropper rigs

Of course, I'm not suggesting that retailers stock all flies in barbed and barbless – that would be an expensive inventory nightmare. But surely it wouldn't hurt to hold parallel stock of locally popular patterns.

HOOK POINTS AND PRICE POINTS

Author, guide and retired tournament angler George Daniel

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adds fly preservation to the list of barbless benefits: "Just about all my hooks now are tied on barbless flies. Not only is removing the fly so much easier on the fish (the most important point), but I also believe it adds to the longevity of the fly. This is especially true with small barb flies (midges) where most normal sized hands cannot get a good enough grip on the fly to pull it out. Instead, we are forced to use forceps to grab the fly, but most of the time end up destroying or ripping the small fly trying to retrieve it from the fish. Because of how easy barbless flies are to pull out of a fish's mouth, we not only return the fish unharmed to the river, but we also do less damage to the fly. I think the hook companies need to do a better job with the

barbless hook price points. Create a better price point, and I think you'll have more anglers subscribing to using barbless hooks."

FULLING MILL, a relative newcomer to the US fly market, offers an impressive range of barbless flies and hooks. Company President Nick Yardley attributes this to their roots in the UK market where competition style flies are more in demand. They overcome the "hopper dropper dilemma" by adding a tiny tippet ring to the bend of their larger dry flies. "I expect we will see more innovation of this kind," says Yardley. Eric Kelley, their Technical Manager, confirmed that, because of the need for special tooling, it costs more to produce a barbless

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Once an exotic innovation, the rubberized net is widely accepted as kinder to fish and less likely to turn barbed flies, split shot and indicators into a hellish streamside tangle. A quick check of my local fly shop found old school knotted nets for \$34.95 and rubberized for \$45, leaving little room for retailers and customers not to “do the right thing.”

hook. Let’s hope that in time the savings of amortization will be passed on. Yardley adds, “For trout and small fish, barbless flies make complete sense, but there are those who fear losing “the fish of a lifetime” to a barbless hook - that being said, barbless is now the legal standard in British Columbia.”


UMPQUA, one of the leading players, sells barbed and barbless flies because the market still demands both. Dave Student, their Fly Specialist says, “You can take things off a fly – be it flash or a barb – but you can’t add to it.” Admitting that the industry uses “fairly nebulous data,” he foresees push back from anglers who are convinced that barbless flies lose

fish. “Once a barbless hook is associated with losing fish it’s hard to shake that notion,” he says, “I think we would see resistance if we went all barbless.” Regional variations are also a big factor. “In my home state of Colorado, the trout guys in the South might go barbless but the streamer fishermen up North would want their barbs,” he added. Student did admit to going barbless for tarpon where “it’s not about losing the fish – it’s about sticking it in the first place.” Pasadena based SOLITUDE FLY COMPANY has not seen an increase in the sale of barbless flies. “Catch and release is increasingly popular, but the shops still rely on the fisherman to de-barb their flies,” says President Ray Chang.

GRIPE NUMBER THREE KNOTTED STRING NETS

Once an exotic innovation, the rubberized net is widely accepted as kinder to fish and less likely to turn barbed flies, split shot and indicators into a hellish streamside tangle. A quick check of my local fly shop found old school knotted nets for \$34.95 and rubberized for \$45, leaving little room for retailers and customers not to “do the right thing.”

I guess one out of three answered gripes is not bad.

By the way, the aptly named Knuckle Heads cushioned fly reel handles shown in the photo are available from <http://www.burfish.com> 

TED TURNER AND THE TROUT

Written by Jonathan Lee Wright



Casting for cutthroat on Vermejo Park Ranch. Credit: Jonathan Lee Wright

Ted Turner bought the Vermejo Park Ranch because Yellowstone and Yosemite were already taken. The comparison is a fair one, as it is an achingly beautiful landscape, with sprawling forests of Lodgepole Pine and Ponderosa giving way to grassy natural parks at the higher elevations. Above it all, far above the tree line, stand snowy alpine peaks tearing against the thin clouds that skate over the southern Rockies.

Vermejo Park Ranch is the largest contiguous parcel of private land in the continental United States, bigger than both Grand Teton and Rocky Mountain national parks combined. Covering over 590,000 acres that straddle the boundaries New Mexico and Colorado -- and the crest of the 13,000' Sangre de Cristo mountain range above Taos -- the ranch encompasses not only a broad swath of property, but also biology. From high desert range to

alpine tundra, Vermejo represents a unique and irreplaceable gene bank. Recognizing this, Turner purchased the ranch in 1996 with an intent of restoring the ecology of the property to act as a preserve for native species, a concept to which he is deeply committed—his work in rebuilding populations of North American Bison on his numerous real estate holdings across the West is widely recognized, and in 2012, Turner

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FEATURE



A chunky Rio Grande cutthroat on Turner's property. Credit Jonathan Lee Wright

was awarded the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Champion Award for conservation.

Paralleling the efforts of government agencies and partnering with them at the project execution level, the privately funded Turner organization has largely been able to sidestep the bureaucratic boondoggles that can hamstring the use of public moneys. In an era where public lands and native species are losing ground under withering legislative assaults, the partnership between state and federal agencies and the Turner organization has proven to be a win for all involved. The upshot of this provides a clear—and likely unpopular—conclusion for traditional conservationists: large private inholdings managed as sustainable commercial enterprises are a key component in the protection of the last remaining wildlands in this country. It could very well be that the Ted Turners and other global scale philanthropists of the world will be the saviors of critically endangered species.

The Rio Grande cutthroat trout is a native fish of the southern Rocky

Mountains, and is considered an indicator for environmental health, living in only the most pristine and remote waters. In addition to being the state fish of New Mexico, it also represents a classic example of what can happen when man extends his influence over nature, as until recently they were a candidate for Threatened Status with the EPA. Cutthroats as a species are closely related to the widely distributed Rainbow Trout, a fish endemic to the coastal northern pacific, with a historical range extending from California to Siberia. For many, landlocked cutthroat in their various forms are seen as emblematic of the Rocky Mountains, especially for fly anglers.

The problem for the cutthroats began when enthusiastic Fish and Game departments, along with private landowners, contracted hatcheries on either coast to introduce other favorite sport and table fish to the West in the late 19th century. The advent of railroads meant that heavy barrel loads of trout held in ice water could be brought across state borders in a matter of days, then dumped into

rivers and lakes in close proximity to rail lines. Rainbows and other unrelated fish like Brook Trout from the eastern U. S. and European Brown Trout—both originating from entirely separate genera, and unable to crossbreed with cutthroat—nonetheless assumed their niches in various habitats.

The cutthroat was not able to compete under the onslaught of the invasive species. With few developed immunological defenses against introduced disease, and no previous competitors for space, cutthroats were pushed out of their native ranges. Brook Trout would wildly overpopulate small stream spawning grounds, and large, predatory Browns would take up residence in slower side eddies where they could pounce on juvenile fish. Worse, the close genetic ties of Rainbow trout allowed them to effortlessly interbreed with cutthroat, creating millions of cross-lineage “cuttbows” that now populate the rivers of the Rockies. At this writing, various subspecies of aboriginal native cutthroat in almost all watersheds outside of the greater Yellowstone have taken refuge in the highest elevation reaches of headwater creeks and lakes approaching tree line, taking advantage of their inherent tolerance of the coldest water that millennia of evolution in an intermountain climate provides.

All this puts the Rio Grande cutthroat subspecies squarely in the area of concern for the Turner effort and their public partner agency, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

Carter Kruse is the Director of Conservation for Turner Enterprises, and explained their philosophy. “I think where we might differ from other private organizations in particular is our

willingness to engage. We don't avoid difficult projects or issues. For example, the threat of an Endangered Species Act listing doesn't deter us as it does many, in fact it probably pushes us to get involved" .

Kruse clarified this further, saying, "Not only are we willing to cost share a project, and lots of groups will do this, but we are willing to conduct research to improve our understanding of an issue or impacts. We are willing to help write environmental documents, we assist with project oversight and implementation, we provide bodies to do the work, and so forth. We have ownership. We are consistent with our overall philosophy and specific objectives. I think that makes us pretty transparent. Mostly for us it's about conservation gain on the ground."

Acknowledged as the southernmost occurring variant of the trout—which includes Westslope, Yellowstone, Snake River, Colorado River and Greenback strains, among others scattered across the West -- the Rio Grande strain historically had a protected stronghold in the headwater creeks of the Vermejo Park Ranch, and it is in the Sangre de Cristo mountains that the trout have the bulk of their remaining numbers. Over one hundred years of stocking of invasive fish, both in the overall region and on the ranch proper prior to Turner ownership created an overly stressful environment for the cutthroat, and in the late 1990's the decision was made to restore the native fish of the Vermejo to their original state. This required the eradication of invasive trout within sixty miles of small streams that run both east and west off the crest of the mountains, and in a good sized, state-managed reservoir providing water which flows off the property to public lands as the

Costilla River. The method of eradication was the same as that used for decades by Fish and Wildlife departments across the country, where the quickly degrading organic piscicide Rotenone is applied upstream of the problematic populations. After almost two decades of effort, Turner Enterprises announced that the Rio Grande Trout Restoration project on the Vermejo is complete as of 2017, and that only Rio Grande cutthroat now live in the streams within the confines of the ranch.

New Mexico has had a dedicated interest in the issue for decades, and provided not only the fish to replenish the streams through its hatchery system, but support and oversight of the overall project. Tucker Brauer is a Rio Grande cutthroat Trout Biologist with the state, and offered more insight into the broader effort.

"While stream treatments are finished on Vermejo Park Ranch, the project is still ongoing. We are continuing to restock and monitor waters on the ranch but we still have stream treatments planned for the coming years on waters surrounding the property on Carson National Forest land. The New Mexico Dept. of Game and Fish is the project lead and Turner Conservation has been a fantastic partner in the effort. The Rio Costilla Project is the largest native trout restoration project in the country and it wouldn't have been possible without their cooperation."

...

The extent of scientific interest surrounding the Rio Grande cutthroat extends beyond the geographic boundaries of its home range. 300 miles to the south of the Vermejo, the twin Turner-owned properties of the Ladder

and Armendaris ranches near Truth or Consequences lay across a massive stretch of Northern Chihuahuan desert. Separated by the Rio Grande, but still intimately tied to it, the two parcels provide a showcase and sanctuary for a very different spectrum of flora and fauna from the Northern alpine ranges. Water is scarce outside of the main channel of the big river and its large public impoundments, but what little is there drives entire stream side ecosystems, attracting and supporting subtly complex webs of plants and animals. The canyons that cut from the higher elevation ranges to either side of the Rio provide catchments for winter precipitation and heavy summer rains. Ephemeral creek beds at the bottom of these ravines rarely run with continuous surface water, but dig down a couple feet and you'll find cool wet sand that will fill the hole with water in a matter of minutes. Nonetheless, this subsurface water flows downhill, and protected from evaporation, makes occasional appearances as shallow pools shaded by overhanging Cottonwoods and Ponderosa.

Las Animas Creek (not to be confused with the much larger Animas River in the extreme northwest corner of the state) is the central drainage of the Ladder Ranch. It creates a dense riparian habitat along its otherwise inconsistent channel, and astoundingly, has supported populations of resident fishes -- including cutthroat trout. The Ladder Ranch, today run as an economically self-sustaining business, operates as one of the nation's premier eco-tourism destinations, offering visitors insights into an austere desert landscape that is managed with extreme care in its restoration. Recent visitors have included former President and

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FEATURE

outdoorsman Jimmy Carter and the late UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

In the Southwest, June is the hottest and driest month—the start of fire season—and is typically followed by a summer “monsoon” period of torrential downpours, starting in early July and lasting for about six weeks. Forest fires are notoriously destructive to watersheds, not in the initial conflagration, but rather in the aftermath, where rains wash tons of toxic ash down stream beds. In 2013, Southwest New Mexico suffered a series of wildfires that burned through the Black Range, well west of the Ladder Ranch, but where the headwater catchments of the Las Animas lie on National Forest lands. The resulting ash flows wiped out the trout in the Las Animas, which had unfortunately been subject to the indiscriminate stocking policies of the last century and represented a corruption of native bloodlines.

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and the Turner Foundation were then looking at a clean genetic slate, as a natural phenomenon reset the ecology of the stream more effectively than years of fisheries management intervention could ever do.

In 2017, four years after the initial ash flow had been dissipated by subsequent precipitation, a small test population of trout—48 fish in total, sourced from an isolated native population of pure strain Rio Grande cutthroat in Canones Creek in northern NM—were reintroduced by the NMDGF to the upper stream, just inside the boundary of the National Forest west of the ranch.

Since that time, and encouraged by positive survival rates, 138 more fish were stocked by the Game and Fish Department in the upper headwaters in 2018, with a final stocking planned for spring 2019.

The justification for these efforts relates to the origin of trout in the Las Animas, which has been a matter of ongoing scientific investigation and debate for some time. In his monograph *Native Trout of Western North America*, Robert Behnke, Ph.D. stated that the historical extreme southern limit of the range of Rio Grande Cutthroat trout included Las Animas Creek. This is a considerable outlier to the Northern New Mexican populations of the fish, separated by at least two hundred miles of warm, turbid water in the Rio Grande river—a wholly unsuitable environment for any trout, and the only watercourse of significance in the center of the state.

At the end of the last ice age, climate and precipitation patterns were considerably wetter in the American Southwest, with the progressive desertification of the last 12,000 years leading to shrinking river systems and ecologies, but during the late Pleistocene, large permanent snow fields in the high country of Southern New Mexico would have provided robust watersheds for cold water fish to populate. Officially recorded presence of aboriginal, native trout in the Animas prior to 1900 is sketchy at best, but there exists one tantalizing clue as to their existence: a thousand year-old Native American pictograph pecked into a rock wall of the upper canyon that appears to represent a fish with a second dorsal fin -- the fleshy adipose, an identifying feature

of trout and salmon. Warmwater Catfish also express this trait, but the stream gradient of the Upper Animas does not provide the kind of slow muddy flows that those fishes prefer to support their predatory behaviors. This faint message from the past leads researchers to lines of thought that may have been otherwise dismissed. Rather than representing random graphics or religious iconography, the rock art in the canyon may have been intended to be interpretive signage, signaling the presence of trout in the canyon waters upstream.

The implications of the genetic history of the cutthroats of the Las Animas are profound. Fed by cool snow melt, the Rio Grande river of ancient times would have supported a wide network of tributaries such as the Animas, all potentially teeming with cold water fishes. It is then of scientific importance to understand how some of them survived and adapted to the extreme environmental conditions of a regional climate shift in the desert Southwest over the last few thousand years. Northern, high-country cutthroats thrive in highly oxygenated water that is generally too cold for other competing species, and yet the trout of the relatively warm southern Las Animas seem to have been able to survive. If this indicates that the Animas cutthroats—along with other members of their genus—have an innate ability to adapt to large temperature variances in their environment, this shows a potential significance for understanding how humans and other species could do the same at a genetic level in the face of global climate change. Restoring self-sustaining populations of Rio Grande cutthroat to the most challenging environment they have

been known to inhabit could yield unexpected insights into biological dynamics not yet understood.

These kinds of questions are what make the entire concept of environmental conservation crucially valuable. The deep ecology of the ancient natural world may hold the keys to our own survival.

...

Winter at 8,000' elevation comes early, with skiffs of snow catching


proximity to the gravel bars where their mates had laid the eggs that ensured their progeny. Now, the Rio Grande cutthroat—a spring spawner, like all members of its genus—holds dominion over the waters of the ranch. The final restoration stocking of fish in the one to two-year-old class over the last several years meant that successful maturation and natural reproduction of native fish was one to two seasons away from the time of reintroduction. In many small high country streams, cutthroats top out at a maximum size of under one foot in length, a function

fish. They have chosen flies that imitate the abundant grasshoppers of the surrounding meadow, and methodically investigate the water with short casts, more hunting than fishing.

Suddenly, the water erupts not twenty feet in front of David, and he expertly tightens up on the line, raising the flexible rod above his head. A large fish smashed his Hopper only inches from the overhung grass on the bank. I shout my surprise and encouragement as he expertly prevents it from diving back under cover where roots and rocks could easily part the thin nylon leader. It takes several minutes to tire the trout to the point where it can be handled.

A male. Heavy-bodied, with breathtaking colors and of about 17" in length, it will easily go over 2 1/2 lbs.—a bucket list specimen for any committed fly fisherman. It comes into the shallows unwillingly, making a few last efforts at escape. Finally, with wet hands, David cradles the fish for a few photographs, and then eases the fish back into the flow after removing the barbless hook. It hesitates, then darts back to its hidden lair, none the worse for wear.

The three of us look at each other grinning, and realize that without question, the native trout of the ranch are back.

Editor's note: We ran this story, not only because it is interesting, but also because in an era when we're all (rightfully) about increasing public access, it's worth discussing how private lands can and do play a role in conservation. And in fact, if a certain species of native trout survives another several generations, we might have landowners to thank for that. 



"Home-base" on the sprawling Vermejo Park Ranch property. Credit: Jonathan Lee Wright

the highest peaks surrounding the Vermejo Park Ranch starting in mid-September. Changing colors in the aspen groves create classic conditions for the limited private hunts which bring sportsmen from all over the world for a chance to take an elk returning from summer grazing grounds for the Fall rut. The streams of the ranch are now in transition. In the past, nonnative Brown trout would be in spawn, with aggressive males killing almost everything in

of the overall abundance of available aquatic prey at altitude.

David Barfield and Mel Johnson are both seasoned fly-fishing guides on the Vermejo, each with a lifetime of experience catching trout in a wide variety of terrain elsewhere in the West. I watch them slowly stalking alongside the banks of Costilla Creek above the reservoir, where they probe the small niches and corners of the stream that typically hold larger and more wary



FEATURE

MARKET TO MAKE LIVES BETTER!

Today, smart marketers look for new ways to relate to customers.

Written by William R. Deeter



Mastery of the fundamentals catches fish... and customers. Photo credit: Tim Romano.

All of you manufacturers, retailers (or both) in the recreational fly-fishing industry may want to tighten your wading belt before reading further. What I am about to tell you may shock some and could very well change the way others think about how they want to manage and market to various target audiences moving forward.

There are people out there today, in just about every industry, who would like us all to believe that because we are living in the “digital age” we should cast aside (pardon the pun) all thoughts of traditional marketing strategies and tactics, pitch any college textbooks and published articles we have lying around on

advertising, public relations and the like, and throw ourselves, our businesses and our budgets at social media influencers and digital experts exclusively. We’re told that if we do that and then rely on the analytics that support these new marketing tools and the wizards behind them, we will see facts and

figures that demonstrate just how much time and talent we have wasted as traditional marketers. Don't buy it.

While social media influencers and digital experts definitely have a place in every marketer's information tackle box, check that, waist pack (second bad pun) and the story telling world we are now working in, they are no more a marketing cure-all than any other tool available to us today. Some 20 or 30 years ago we were told that website development would be the last marketing tool any of us would need to assure industry dominance and unquestioned success. Guess what? That just has not happened. Websites are important, but they are not the only answer.

Weblogs or "blogs" gave the microphone to anyone, and to an extent that was a good thing. Now, when I think of a blog, I think, "that was so 2010." Pop-ups are fine, but there's no substance in just being in someone's face. And in a sport like fly-fishing, it's important to deal on a higher intellectual plane where conscience is as much a factor as simply "being there."

If truth be known, this writer, marketer and communicator is convinced that solid brand building today is still all about creating and maintaining informative story-telling platforms, unique selling

Weblogs or "blogs" gave the microphone to anyone, and to an extent that was a good thing. Now, when I think of a blog, I think, "that was so 2010."

propositions, and integrated programming that bundles everything in today's master marketer's portfolio. Marketing today is still as much a blocking and tackling game as football. We might be running more spread offenses, but the bottom line is you cannot win if you cannot block or tackle.

Successful marketing in the fly-fishing industry is still very much about common sense, creativity, innovation, persistence, message delivery, and pricing. These are the things that impact most on consumers' decisions to purchase, resulting in your business's outcomes.

Even if you have unlimited resources (which, of course, most of you do not have), expensive advertising campaigns are not necessarily

the answer to building strong brand platforms and franchises. Successful product positioning along with crisp, concise message delivery is still key and it resonates best when it is a well-thought-out blend with some advertising, some publicity, some sales promotion, and some social and digital marketing, all working together over an acceptable timeframe. This assumes, of course, that those doing the marketing have established manageable and measurable objectives, direct their efforts at well-defined target audiences, and have meaningful program content to share that target audiences are looking for. The good news is that anyone can do most of these things, even a small fly shop.

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FEATURE



Today's tools of the trade

Today, when you seek an advantage over your competition, you might want to consider the following. After spending many months monitoring brand-driven success stories and thinking long and hard about what one must do to differentiate his or her business from the competition, we have been drawn to the importance of sellers and purchasers having a set of "shared values" that attract them to one another. These fundamental beliefs and guiding principles dictate both behavior and performance. Shared values seem

to drive marketers and their clients or customers to think and talk about their "social responsibility."

Selling is no longer as simple as walking targets from unawareness to awareness to interest, conviction and then sale. While all five steps in the selling process are still important and valuable, today's clients and customers are equally interested in the ethical framework organizations act on for the benefit of society at large.

Stay with me here...

They are really looking behind the curtain for the balance marketers demonstrate in managing their profits with what they are doing to benefit society, or perhaps the natural resources needed to sustain a sport like fly fishing. Smart marketers we talk with have latched onto this fact and are reshaping and balancing their business practices with true social responsibility. They are considering "social purpose" and "brand purpose." They know both are important to helping people, and they know that smart

marketing can help clients and customers live better lives.

Since social purpose guides brand purpose, the new challenge to all marketers is why and how the lives of those people purchasing their goods and services are being impacted and made better through what they (the manufacturer and retailer) do or do not do in the world around them.

So, what are the four take-aways from this stream of marketing consciousness?

There is no one cure-all in marketing today. Social media and digital marketing are two exciting new tools that are excellent and have their place in the marketing mix with other proven tactics. Our challenge is knowing where, when and how to use them.

There are already a lot of excellent tools available to skilled marketers, and how one goes about integrating or bundling them dictates how cost-effective brand building and marketing will be.

The marketing and brand building programs that work best are those that are razor focused on very clear, concise objectives and are directed at well-defined target audiences. Message content is the natural very important next step.

If there is a revelation to be shared here, it is that successful marketers and brand builders today are stepping out and building new bridges. They develop followings based on the values they stand for. Successful businesses acknowledge social responsibilities and state publicly their social purpose because it is that social purpose that guides brand purpose and forces all of us to deal with how we can help people live better lives. This is the new gold standard we all need to live by. We must demonstrate now that what we do as manufacturers and retailers makes lives better. The result is an enduring win-win relationship for businesses and their customers.

Editor's note: William R. (Bill) Deeter has over 50 years of professional marketing and communications expertise, having worked with companies like M&M/Mars, S.C. Johnson, and others. For the past 35 years, he has successfully run Deeter USA, a consulting firm based in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, that works with all sizes of businesses, from the Fortune 500 to local nonprofits. Suffice it to say that he is my most trusted source and mentor on all things related to professional communications. He also happens to be my dad. For more information, call him at 215-348-3890. 🐟

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Photo cred: Stephen Voss

HOPE FOR IDAHO'S SALMON

Written by Chris Wood

"I have concluded that I am going to stay alive long enough to see salmon return to healthy populations in Idaho."

Those words by Congressman Mike Simpson (R-ID) at a salmon and energy conference at the Andrus Center in Boise may do more to project the recovery of the imperiled Snake River salmon and steelhead than multiple lawsuits, five biological opinions, and a whopping \$16 billion spent on a failed effort to recover Columbia and Snake River salmon and steelhead.

Twenty-eight years ago, after learning of the plight of "Lonesome Larry," I dedicated my career to helping

recover Idaho's salmon and steelhead. Larry, a sockeye, managed to swim 800 miles, climbing 6,500 feet in elevation, crossing eight dams, countless predators—never feeding—to return to the lake he was born to have sex one time before he died. That didn't happen—he was the only sockeye to return.

Wild salmon and steelhead in Idaho are on a path to extinction.

Before the construction of the four lower Snake dams, more than a million Snake River spring and summer chinook and more than half-a-million steelhead returned to spawn. Today, those runs are a fraction of their historic abundance. In the 1950s, the Middle Fork of the Salmon was such a prolific fishery that anglers could keep two salmon per day for a five-week season. In 2017, fewer than 500 salmon returned to spawn in the Middle Fork – one percent of the historic runs.

Larry's ancestors that gave Redfish Lake its name, once came in the tens of thousands. Last year, 134 returned.

Congressman Simpson rightly asks, "Why should Idaho bear all the costs of the Snake River dams and reap so few of the benefits?"

The scientific evidence is overwhelming: after almost 30 years and billions of dollars spent on habitat restoration and techno-fixes at the dams, removal of the four lower Snake River dams is essential to salmon and steelhead recovery—adjustments will


also be needed in hatchery, harvest and predator management.

Restoration, however, cannot simply be about fish. This hopeful and complex effort must be about people, too. Restoration of the Snake must ensure that farmers can irrigate and transport their crops. It must ensure that jobs are safe and energy supplies are reliable. It must help meet the social and economic priorities of local communities such as Lewiston. It must create robust, fishable, and harvestable populations of salmon and steelhead for recreational, tribal and commercial fishermen.

The fish are important; but people are, too.

While not himself calling for dam removal, Congressman Simpson's willingness to ask the hard questions should result in an unbiased look at what is needed to bring back Idaho's salmon legacy. Senator Jim Risch (R-ID) demonstrated the same type of leadership in developing the Idaho Roadless Rule which protects nine million acres of incredible fish and wildlife habitat in the Gem State.

For three decades, we have accepted half-measures and lurched from crises to crises – unwilling to address the cause of the decline of Idaho's magnificent salmon and steelhead. These fish are remarkably resilient. If given half a chance, they will return, but they are running out of time.

Chris Wood is the president and CEO of Trout Unlimited 



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