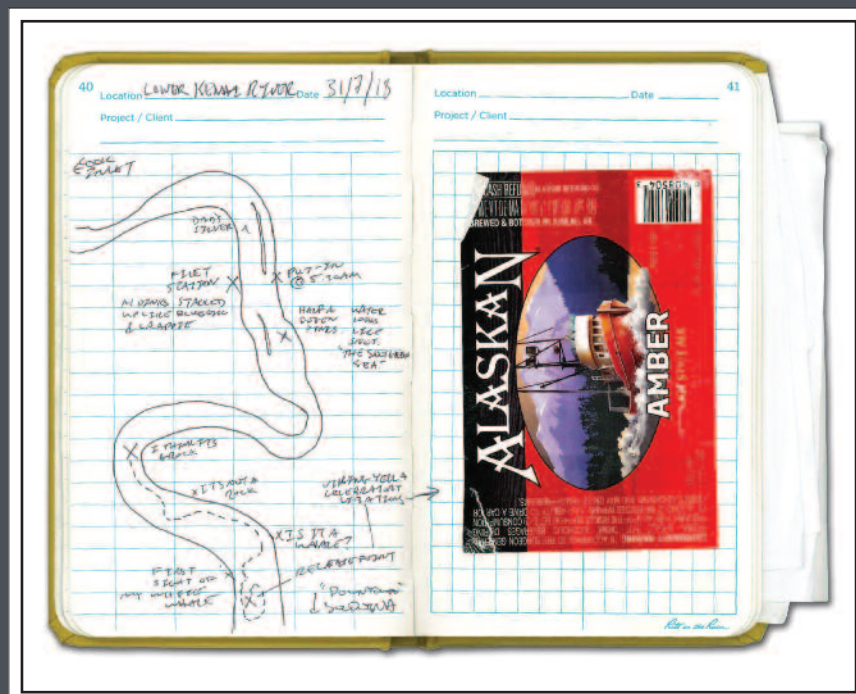


# The American Fly Fisher

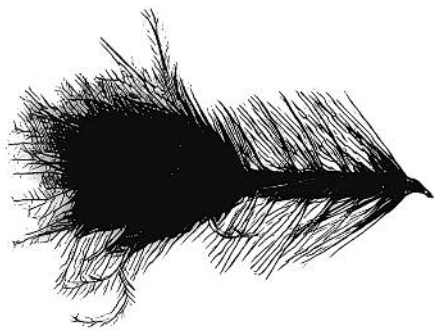
*Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing*



SPRING 2021

VOLUME 47 NUMBER 2

# Signs of Spring



*A Woolly Bugger,  
as photographed  
and artistically  
interpreted by  
Sara Wilcox.*

AT LAST, SPRING HAS ARRIVED, and with it the long-awaited publication of the winning entry to the 2020 Robert Traver Fly-Fishing Writing Award. When the museum partnered with the Voelker Foundation in 2019 to reinstate this award—which encourages and recognizes “distinguished original stories or essays that embody the implicit love of fly fishing, respect for the sport, and the natural world in which it takes place”—the *American Fly Fisher* became its publishing home. This time the award goes to “Blue Lines” by Alexander Benoît (page 2). Two stories receiving honorable mention can be read online ([www.amff.org/traver-winner-2020](http://www.amff.org/traver-winner-2020)), and the list of finalists can be found on page 7. Interested in competing for the 2021 prize? The deadline for submissions is fast approaching (again, see page 7).

Spring also brings our annual thank-you note to friends who have supported us by donating money, resources, and time (page 22). We wouldn't be here without you.

And speaking of being here, do you, dear member, know someone who might like to join us? Help the museum double its membership by year's end! All it takes is for each member to recruit one more. Turn to the inside back cover, where Executive Director Sarah Foster will tell you more about this campaign.

Among the many reasons to join AMFF is our commitment to devote more resources to film. This year we partnered with Shannon Vandivier and Cold Collaborative to tell the story of Ansil Saunders, a legendary Bimini bonefish guide. *Mighty Waters* was part of the 2021 F3T film tour and has potential to reach an audience beyond the fly-fishing industry. Vandivier talks about the film and his relationship with Saunders, beginning on page 19.

As we try new things, we keep traditions as well, most recently in recognizing excellence. Early this year, Alan R. Diodore was named the journal's 2020

Austin Hogan Award recipient (page 27), and saltwater guide Paul Dixon received the 2021 Izaak Walton Award during a virtual event in March (page 26).

Now, on to some fish and a fly.

Although seemingly ubiquitous, rainbow trout aren't native to most regions of the United States; only the Northwest can claim them. Still, today they can be found in nearly every one of the forty-eight contiguous states. R. W. Hafer wants to tell us how this came to be, and there are enough moving parts to this story to warrant the rare three-parter. His series is called “How Rainbow Trout Came to Missouri (and Your State Too).” Hafer will eventually end up in his home state of Missouri, but he assures readers that the story isn't too different from state to state.

“Part I: The Beginnings” sets the historical stage with a brief overview of the conservation movement during the mid-nineteenth century and features three individuals who played key roles in the early fish culturist movement: Seth Green, Livingston Stone, and Robert Barnwell Roosevelt. It also explains the passage of Joint Resolution No. 22, which created the position of U.S. fish commissioner, the first of whom was Spencer Baird. To begin at the beginnings, turn to page 8.

I didn't start hanging out with anglers until my late teens, and when I did, they were Harrisburg anglers. No doubt it was from one of them that I first heard the words *Woolly Bugger*. Angler or not, those words will stick with you—they bear repeating for the mere fun of saying them. In a Notes and Comment piece, Pennsylvanian John Capowski offers up a brief history of the fly, its name, and its originator, Russell Blessing. “The Woolly Bugger Story” begins on page 16.

It's spring! Join us in using some feverish spring energy to invite others to join us too.

Woolly Bugger.

KATHLEEN ACHOR  
EDITOR



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The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing

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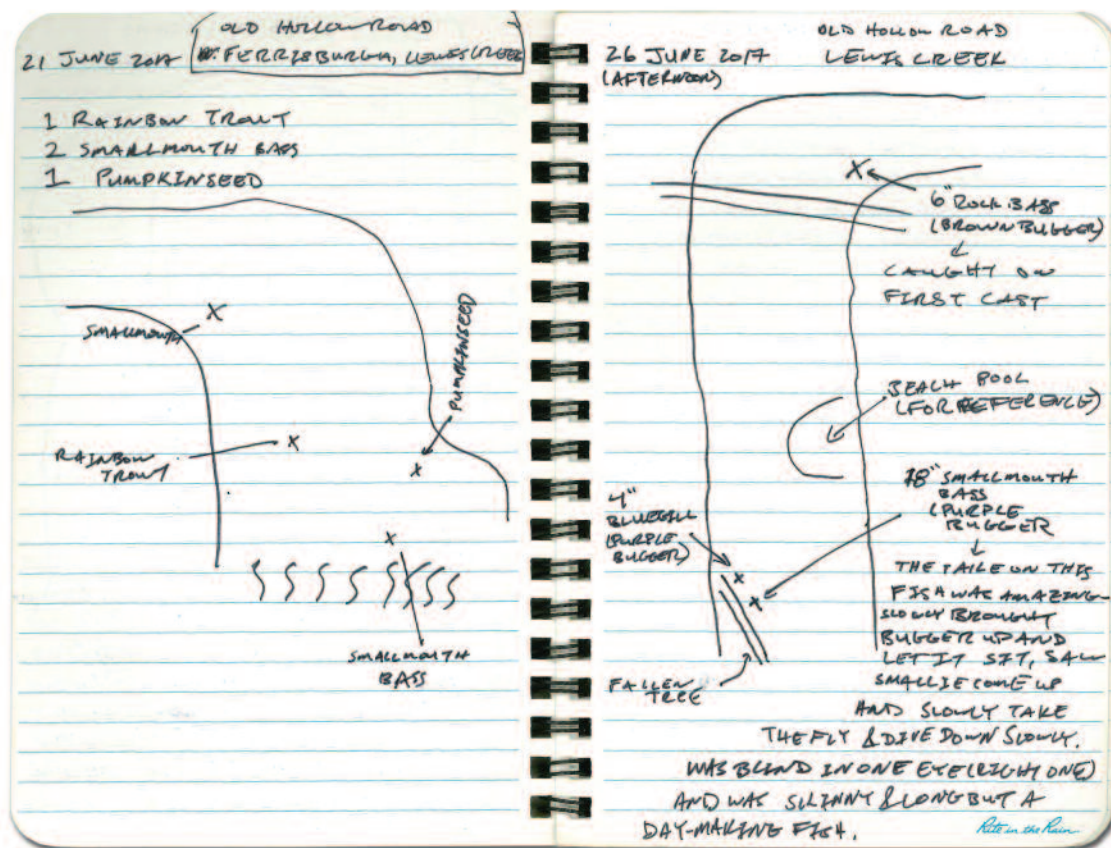
ON THE COVER: Alexander Benoit's map of the Kenai River from 31 July 2018, created after catching his first Chinook, with accompanying celebratory beer label.

The American Fly Fisher (ISSN 0884-3562) is published four times a year by the museum at P.O. Box 42, Manchester, Vermont 05254. Publication dates are winter, spring, summer, and fall. Membership dues include the cost of the journal (\$50) and are tax deductible as provided for by law. Membership rates are listed in the back of each issue. All letters, manuscripts, photographs, and materials intended for publication in the journal should be sent to the museum. The museum and journal are not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, drawings, photographic material, or memorabilia. The museum cannot accept responsibility for statements and interpretations that are wholly the author's. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned unless postage is provided. Contributions to The American Fly Fisher are to be considered gratuitous and the property of the museum unless otherwise requested by the contributor. Copyright © 2021, The American Museum of Fly Fishing, Manchester, Vermont 05254. Original material appearing may not be reprinted without prior permission. Periodical postage paid at Manchester, Vermont 05254; Manchester, Vermont 05255; and additional offices (USPS 057410). The American Fly Fisher (ISSN 0884-3562) EMAIL: amff@amff.org WEBSITE: www.amff.org

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
The American Fly Fisher
P.O. Box 42
Manchester, Vermont 05254

# Blue Lines

by Alexander Benoit



Lewis Creek map, 21–26 June 2017.

The John D. Voelker Foundation and the American Museum of Fly Fishing are pleased to present the 2020 Robert Traver Fly-Fishing Writing Award to Alexander Benoit of Chapel Hill, North Carolina. This is his winning entry.

THE FIRST MAP I MADE was of my grandfather’s garden, which I kept crumpled in my pocket. If he asked me to pick a rutabaga for dinner, I’d pull out my map and run into the garden to search for one. For suburban New Britain, his garden was rather large—maybe 20 yards wide by 60 yards long. Here, he and his wife, Florence, were able to recreate the culinary delicacies of Old World Poland and integrate them into New World New Britain, with meals such as *gołąbki* (*gumum-ki*) and *borscht*. Their garden and their food told a story that is one part immigrant narrative and one part treatise on nature: work hard, work with the land and space you are given, and you will survive.

I was young when I realized that every map tells, at best, a partial story. My map of the garden didn’t capture what I felt when I walked into the house my grandfather built, or how I remember sticky August afternoons in the garden, picking raspberries. I learned these experiences evaporated quickly if I didn’t somehow record them, and I became captivated with how places were remembered. How was I, or anyone, to convey attachment to landscape?

Everyone has a fish story; I tell mine through maps. They are informal and, more often than not, scaled to a dimension that only Lewis Carroll’s Alice would appreciate. When I draw maps of places I am tethered to, like Lewis Creek (above), some spaces are more distorted than others. Some areas are compressed while some are expanded exponentially. In my map of Lewis Creek, for instance, there is no sense of scale; to anyone besides me, this sketch is useless.

I grew up around various forms of maps, both imagined and tangible. My grandfather had visited Alaska in the late 1980s to celebrate his retirement. Over homemade strawberry-rhubarb pie and ice cream, he’d tell me about the Inside Passage, Mount Saint Elias, and the hordes of salmon he never fished for—his wife didn’t care for the blood and guts, preferring the root vegetables and leafy greens of their suburban garden. I’d lay awake at night in their house, walking through the mental landscapes he had planted in my mind, pining for the solitude of a glacial river I’d never known.

In the ensuing fifteen years, my cartographic impulse was fueled by the north woods of Maine. While fishing with my dad and grandfather, I’d create maps of places I fished. In my map of the Kennebec River, I marked fishing holes where landlocked Atlantic salmon and brook trout stacked up when the water was low, or where my cousin fell in and filled his waders one Memorial Day weekend. These markings created what I



*Dziadzi (grandfather) Henry holding me as a young child, sometime in 1996 at his home in New Britain, Connecticut. The photo was taken by my Babci Florence.*



*Mountains on the western side of Cook Inlet, near Lake Crescent Fork River.*

now know as a deep map, a type of map that strives to capture elements beyond what is two-dimensional. Usually deep maps are created with modern GIS tools to create a layered appearance; I used just pen and paper. Inspired by the literary deep-mapping projects of William Least Heat-Moon and Tim Robinson, I strove to capture not just the moments of revelation or epiphany on the river—of which there are, admittedly, few—but also the ordinary.

My grandfather is now in his mid-nineties. Like other nonagenarians, he has his good days and his bad days. He's losing his memory slowly; he doesn't remember Alaska anymore, and there are days he forgets that he was married for nearly seventy years. When I visit him in his nursing home in Rhode Island, I wheel him down the hall to the fish tank filled with African cichlids and pictus catfish. We sit for an hour and talk. I tell him about my own trip to Alaska, and I show him photos and the maps I made so he can feel how I felt two decades ago when he shared his story with me.

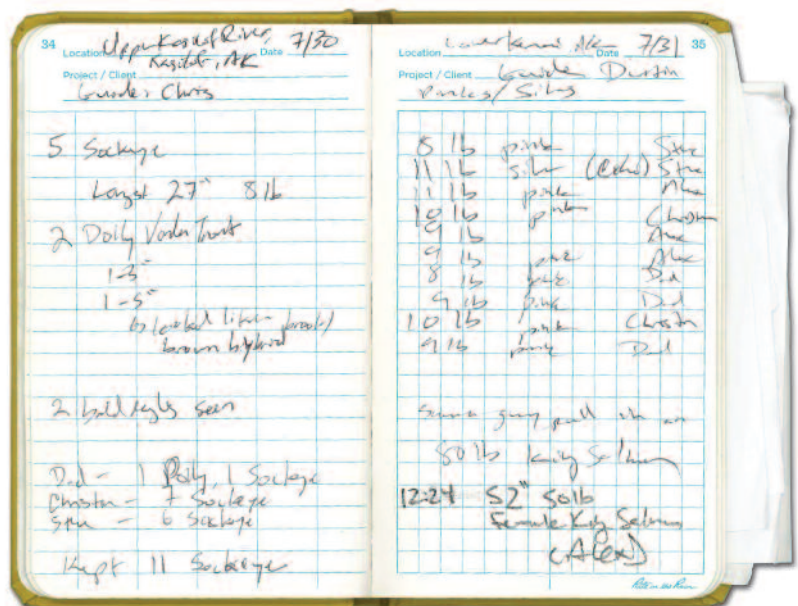
In the summer of 2018 I was armed with not just rods and flies, but notebooks and pens. I was not alone on my journey to Alaska; my father, his friend Steve, and Steve's son Christian joined me. Christian and I were greenhorns; we had never set foot on the West Coast, and our understanding of Alaska was limited to reading Jack London and watching *Brother Bear*. I figured I had to map these places I was going to, if only to counteract being overwhelmed. More than anything, I wanted to remember—experiences like this often go unrecorded, and details that seem memorable at the time vanish in a matter of months.

My maps of Alaska look more like distortions of reality than anything else. They seemed more appropriate in a landscape where it was necessary to warp reality in order to put it to paper. Like Borges's Ireneo Funes, I struggled to capture the spirit and memory of the place and to create maps that held personal meaning. I

was trying to understand the gaps between the realities that maps display and the ones we live in.

An hour into the drive from Anchorage to Soldotna, I looked down for the first time. In the seat-back pocket was a *DeLorme Atlas & Gazetteer* of Alaska. When we stopped for dinner at a joint on Turnagain Arm that sold salmon pizza, I pulled it out and scanned for where we were. Instead of being preoccupied with the mountains that wreathed the Arm, I was drawn to nearby rivers, and three in particular: the Lake Fork Crescent, the Kenai, and the Russian. These three are the holy trinity of salmon fishing in south-central Alaska.

Our first day fishing was spent on the Lake Crescent Fork, catching sockeye and avoiding grizzlies. That night, as I cooked some of the sockeye salmon for dinner, I drew in the notebook I had been keeping in a ziplock bag in the pocket of my waders.



*Pages in my notebook detailing catches from 7/30/18 and 7/31/18. These pages immediately precede the map located on the final page of this article.*



Benoit Group  
Guests Name

Group size: 4P

DATE: 07/27 - K-Foley UNIT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

COMPANY NAME: D's Fishing Guide

Guide Name: Dustin Cell # \_\_\_\_\_ Boat # 288 ✓  
Please don't hesitate to call guide or charter if you have a problem with road directions.

Leave SCL: 5:30 AM Check-in: 5:45 AM Floating Dock

NOTE: call by \_\_\_\_\_ am for Weather Condition: YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

DIRECTION: "Pinegum" Floating Dock - Chichanski

**Pack your own lunch, sunglasses, raingear, camera & cooler, Hips waders, Fishing license (King stamp)**

**PLEASE NOTE:**

- > You will need to purchase fishing licenses & King Salmon Stamps prior to fishing with our guides & remember; **"Don't leave home without it!"**
- > Please let us know your lodge departure time so your fish will be ready when you are!
- > Please be on time, as the captains, guides or planes will leave without you when necessary!
- > Reservations for activities not taken by guests are non-refundable.

Salmon Catcher Lodge call sheet. Each evening, a sheet like this was dropped off at the cabin. We lived in a bite-sized version of time, only given a glimpse at what the next day would bring.



Alexander Benoit

A Dolly Varden char I caught at the tail end of a deep pool on the Russian River.

A former state crappie and walleye champion from Illinois, Dustin caught the same Alaskan bug that drove John McPhee to write *Coming into the Country*. Dustin sported a mullet like Kenny Powers and had a handlebar mustache that I would have been comfortable holding onto in class IV white-water rapids. He was in his mid-twenties and supported his family by fishing during the short summers and leading hunting trips for moose and bear on Kodiak Island during the winter.

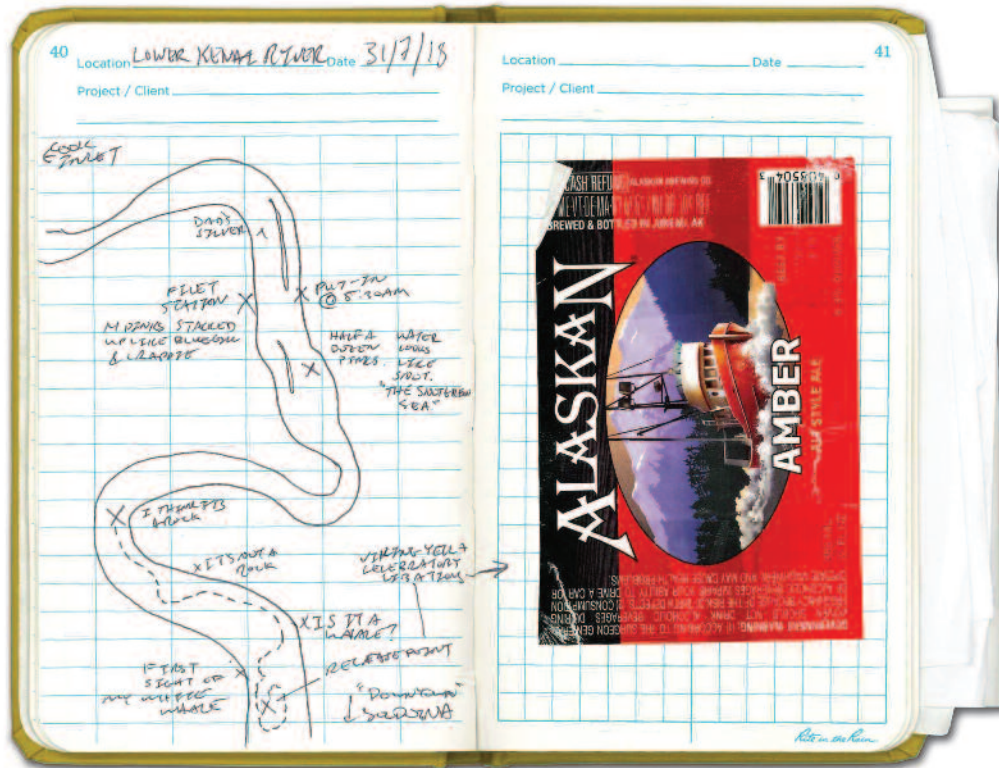
In the breast pocket of his canvas overshirt, which was stained with roe, mud, and blood, he kept a notebook that held his own hand-drawn maps of the bends and eddies of the Kenai, where resting salmon were likely to stack up before moving upriver to their spawning redds. Different species would congregate in different parts of the river, and at different times as well. In between spitting rockets of tobacco juice into the river, Dustin noted that notebook-keeping was common practice among the guides. Each of them came to give their own names to their favorite troughs and runs. It was crucial to update these maps on a tidal river like the Kenai, which changed not only year to year, but between tidal cycles. McPhee echoes this, too: "A stream course in Alaska, writhing like a firehose, can rapidly put a map out of date."

With Dustin at the helm of his aluminum craft, we fished for pink and coho salmon. I'd forgive you if you couldn't tell the difference between them, but if you hook into a coho and a pink, you'll immediately be able to tell one from the other. A coho will make you feel like a 90-pound high school freshman being body-slammed by a senior who plays defensive line. Pinks, by comparison, will make you feel like you are doing curls with 2-pound weights. Cohos are prized for their rich, fatty filets sold to restaurants and grocers in New York and Chicago. Pinks will be smoked or canned by locals and discarded like offal by New Yorkers.

We limited out on pinks by 8:00 and went to Dustin's dock to clean them. Pinks run in Alaskan rivers on even years only, and while I felt privileged to check another species off my bucket list, Dustin and the others treated them more as a nuisance—their sheer numbers in the river were preventing anglers from catching other, more desirable species. As Dustin filleted the fish, I took out my notebook and began to sketch where we'd been on the river. As I looked down into the water from the dock, I noticed a conglomerate mass sitting on the river bottom, rolling slowly like a tumbleweed with the current.

This is something you don't see on a satellite image of the Kenai—the hordes of decaying and drifting salmon carcasses. This half-eaten, filleted, discarded carrion flows past you as you stand waist-deep in glacial flow or look over the side of your Mackenzie boat. Maps typically do injustice to this mass death, and it's difficult for us to understand it in human terms except in comparison to the bubonic plague, the 1918 Spanish flu, or smallpox. Even this comparison is insufficient. In rivers all around the Pacific Rim where salmon run, this mass death happens every year, not to just one but to four to five species of salmon (this is unique to Pacific salmonids, which die soon after they spawn). We're talking about numbers in the millions. There isn't a more concrete and sobering example of the death drive than salmon, especially the king of kings.

The Chinook, or king, salmon is the largest of the family *Salmonidae* and the one most prized by anglers. You can easily pick them out in the river—their size



Map of the Kenai River from 31 July 2018, with accompanying celebratory beer label.

alone prevents you from mistaking them for another. If they accidentally swim into you as you stand in the water fishing for them, you'd think a tree that had fallen into the water upstream had rammed into you. While other rivers in Alaska and the northern Pacific seaboard have larger Chinook runs, the Kenai harbors some of the largest Chinooks in the world, including the record 97-pound one caught by Les Anderson in 1985. They are the lifeblood of the Kenai Peninsula's ecology and genius loci.

My first Chinook was a love affair. After forty-five minutes, I brought it to net, and Dustin calmly netted it. I knelt down and grabbed its tail and cradled it for a moment. I fell in love with its color, a palette running from chrome to red. This hen was recently in from the sea; Dustin pointed out the sea lice behind the gill plates. It had probably entered on the previous high tide. We had been told earlier that there was a moratorium on keeping any Chinook caught on the Kenai, so it had to be returned to the river.



Video still taken by my father of my first Chinook.

After letting it slowly slip back into the current, I thought of how it would soon die the same death millions of other salmon were dying that summer. That night, the memory of my previous hours kept me up as the others slept, and so I sat on the cabin floor looking at the gazetteer that I'd taken from the car. I thought to myself, how are you supposed to capture this death on a map? Do you shade in areas that have a higher quantity of the dead, or do you account for the raised height of the riverbed as the carcasses collect? Can you do anything at all?

When we left three days later, my map of that day was incomplete, and it still is. Though I had journaled about catching my Chinook, I hadn't found a way to figure this fish's life into my map. I tipped my sun-bleached hat over my eyes in the airport terminal, and my mind drifted back to my grandfather's garden and his Alaskan tales. He doesn't remember much about living in New Britain and having a garden, but when I show him the map I made more than a decade ago, he starts talking about how the neighbor kept cutting down his raspberry bushes on their shared fence. Odds are that he won't remember this trip after I tell him the first time, but I can leave him my maps and he can retrace my steps and feel what I felt as I held the 54-pound Chinook in my quivering hands.

I got on the plane and reached into my pen case and pulled a black pen out halfway before dropping it and grabbing for a blue one. I thought for a while, looking out the window at Mount Saint Elias. I began to sketch the blue lines showing the migration of my Chinook across the Pacific to where we met, and I put a small vermilion dot on that spot. Maggie Nelson brought me back to this map a year later, describing my precise cartographic impulse: "I am writing all this down in blue ink, so as to remember that all words, not just some, are written in water."

By the time we touched down in Boston, I was content with remembering the Kenai and this Chinook imperfectly. Because when this landscape is gone and the salmon no longer swim upstream, someone must remember.





## THE 2020 ROBERT TRAVER FLY-FISHING WRITING AWARD: FINALISTS

The 2020 competition drew a field of sixty entries. Entries were judged anonymously to narrow the pool to seven finalists. In addition to the winner, judges bestowed honorable mention on two other entries, which can be found on the museum website at [www.amff.org/traver-winners-2020](http://www.amff.org/traver-winners-2020).

David Gray-Clough of North Yorkshire, United Kingdom, for  
“The Best Fish I Ever Caught”

Michael Thane of Hingham, Massachusetts, for “Grace Note”

The other four finalists were:

Trigg White of Allenspark, Colorado, for “Caddis Flats”

Robert H. Miller of Louisville, Kentucky, for “Homecoming”

Jon Tobey of Duvall, Washington, for “The Mertrout”

Anthony Lavers of Oxford, United Kingdom, for  
“A Small Act of Reverence”



## THE 2021 ROBERT TRAVER FLY-FISHING WRITING AWARD: A CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The John D. Voelker Foundation and the American Museum of Fly Fishing are pleased to announce the 2021 Robert Traver Fly-Fishing Writing Award (the Traver Award). The award is named after Robert Traver, pen name for the late John Voelker, author of *Trout Madness*, *Trout Magic*, *Anatomy of a Fisherman*, the 1958 best seller *Anatomy of a Murder*, and the historical novel *Laughing Whitefish*.

The Traver Award, which includes a \$2,500 prize, was created in 1994 to encourage and recognize “distinguished original stories or essays that embody the implicit love of fly fishing, respect for the sport, and the natural world in which it takes place.” The Traver stories and essays must demonstrate high literary values in one or more of these three categories:

- The joy of fly-fishing: personal and philosophic experience
- Ecology: knowledge and protection of the natural world
- Humor: piscatorial friendships and fun on the water

The 2021 Traver Award will be granted for the winning short work of fiction or nonfiction essay in the English language not previously published commercially in print or digital media. “Short work” means 3,000 words or less. An entry fee of \$25 will offset the administrative costs of the award program. Previous Traver Award winners are not eligible.

The deadline for submissions is midnight on 31 May 2021. The submission form and additional instructions can be found on the Voelker Foundation website: [www.voelkerfoundation.com](http://www.voelkerfoundation.com).

The Traver Award winner will be notified in the fall of 2021. The winning entry will be published in the Spring 2022 edition of the *American Fly Fisher*, the journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

Since 1994, twenty-one awards have been given for the winning entry. Two anthologies of the Traver Award-winning essays were published in two volumes: *In Hemingway’s Meadow* (2009) and *Love Story of the Trout* (2010).

For more information, see [www.voelkerfoundation.com](http://www.voelkerfoundation.com) and [www.amff.org](http://www.amff.org).

Al Pellicane

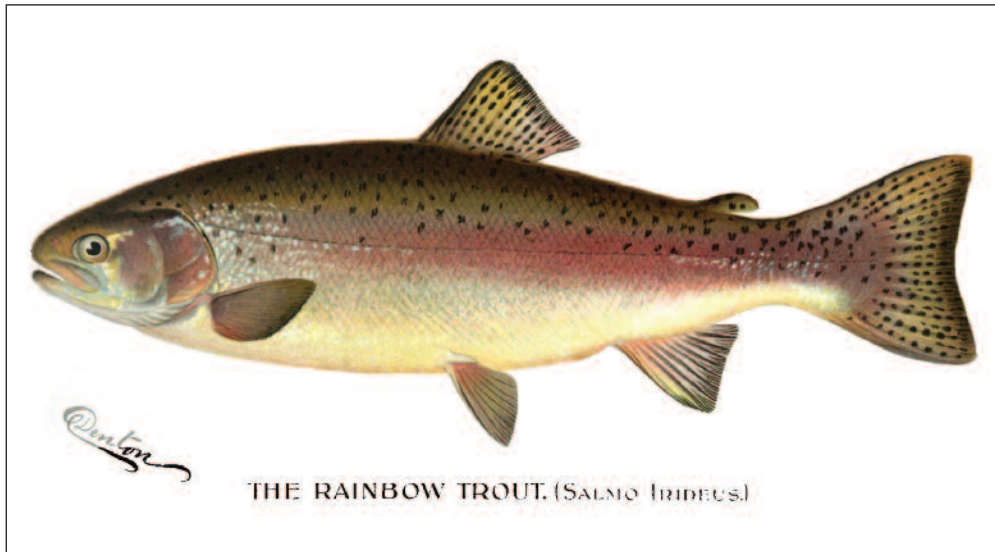


John Voelker at Frenchman’s Pond in 1980. From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

# How Rainbow Trout Came to Missouri (and Your State Too)

## Part I: The Beginnings

by R. W. Hafer



*Sherman Foote Denton's painting of a rainbow trout. From First Annual Report of the Commissioners of Fisheries, Game and Forests of the State of New York (New York and Albany: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co., Printers, 1896), facing page 136.*

*This article is the first in a three-part series that explores how rainbow trout found their way from Northern California to nearly every one of the contiguous forty-eight states.*

**R**AINBOW TROUT ARE NOT native to any region of the country except the Northwest, and by that I mean Northern California, Oregon, Washington, and parts of Idaho. Of course, such a broad statement depends on which kind of rainbow trout we are talking about: ocean-run rainbow (steelhead) or those that never leave their cold and clear home waters for the sea. Leaving aside those finer details for later, of more concern for this article (and the two that will follow) is why rainbow are found in nearly every one of the other forty-eight of the contiguous United States, even Florida and Louisiana.

This article is the first of three that explore how trout found their way from

the Northwest—specifically Northern California—to these other locales. I hope that you've gotten this far, past the title that suggests Missouri's experience is all I care about. I will provide information and anecdotes about Missouri's specific experience in Part III. But you could probably substitute your state's name for Missouri and the story isn't too different. The first two installments cover ground for most all other states' experience as well. Part I sets the stage by presenting events leading up to the onset of what I call the Great Experiment, which is dealt with in Part II.

The Great Experiment was the government's attempt to replenish the dwindling population of Atlantic salmon along the East Coast with salmon from Northern California. That goal made some sense, but it quickly morphed into what may sound like strange science. Those in charge of the government's new, scientifically based approach to

managing the nation's fish stock decided to plant some of these same salmon into streams and rivers in interior states, such as Missouri, to see if they would make a spawning run to the Gulf of Mexico. But that is getting ahead of the story.

Here I will provide a brief overview of the conservation movement during the mid-nineteenth century, which pitted those who viewed fish and game as free for the taking against those who believed a little restraint would be in everyone's best interest. Try as they might, governments (mostly state) tried to impose daily or possession limits of fish and game. Such regulations were not popular during the mid-1800s (if they ever have been), often seen as an infringement on individuals' rights to catch or shoot whatever they wanted. Many of the brightest minds thought the problem of a diminishing fish stock could be remedied by "scientifically" determining which species could be transplanted

around the country to rebuild rapidly shrinking fish populations. Through trial and error, that approach to fisheries management, in one form or another, continues. It perhaps became more scientifically based as the years progressed, but to this day one reads stories about non-native species being planted here and there with sometimes dire consequences. One need only think of grass carp migrating toward the Great Lakes to realize that science, even in modern times, doesn't always get it right.

I am not going to delve deeply into the issues and personalities of the time, but instead provide a backdrop. My purpose is to give you a taste of the debate; there are more academic versions if you need details. I will focus on three individuals who, in my opinion, are central to getting the government into fish management. Surely there are others, and you might think that someone omitted is central, but for me, these three are key players.

Part I ends with the passage of Joint Resolution No. 22. If you've never heard of it, it's the legislation passed in 1871 that marks a critical event in the story of how rainbow trout became so popular across the country. You see, passage of the resolution created the United States Fish Commission, which would eventually become the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. And it was the nation's first fish commissioner who led the charge to try, on a nationwide scope, transplanting a variety of fish into far-off locations.

## THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT

Many Americans 150 years ago (or even today) would probably disparage the elitist approach to wildlife management in which access to fishing and hunting is determined by birth, social connections, or a large bank account. Although this may describe the English version of wildlife management that Americans had in mind in the mid-1800s, the "American" approach would be different, decidedly more egalitarian. Those advocating a more democratic approach argued that the nation's stock of fish and game were owned by all. This, of course, created a problem: with no personal share in the resource—no property rights—individuals had no qualms about harvesting huge strings of fish in a single day or shooting large numbers of whatever game they were pursuing. Such unchecked harvest of what once were multitudes of wildlife led to the near extinction of multiple species, notably the American bison and the Atlantic salmon, the latter being central to this story.

A popular and influential expositor of this "classless" view was George Perkins Marsh, who hailed from the state of Vermont. By the mid-nineteenth century, Marsh's popular argument was that regulating the common man's right to hunt and fish as he saw fit not only would but must fail. And there was much public support for this position. Trying to regulate fishing and hunting would fail, Marsh argued, because "the habits of our people are so adverse to the restraints of game laws."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the tenor of this argument permeated the debate over Missouri's attempts to institute fishing and hunting regulations well into the twentieth century.

A prolonged adherence to this view faced a formidable obstacle, however. The population of the country was growing, and growing rapidly. Between the 1850 and 1870 censuses, the population of the United States increased by two-thirds, from slightly more than 23 million people to more than 38 million. Westward expansion quickly stressed fish and game populations that were not growing nearly as fast. In the wake of the population's growth, game and fish stocks everywhere, not just in the East, were decreasing because of overharvesting.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to Marsh's views, by the middle of the 1800s and especially after the Civil War, there also was a growing countermovement to rein in wasteful harvests of wildlife. It was one thing to allow individuals to harvest fish and game for personal consumption; indeed, fish were considered by many to be a staple in the diet of poorer households. And there was a need for commercial fishing to satisfy market demand. But what upset many was the all-too-frequent behavior observed by George Jerome, Michigan's fisheries superintendent (1873–1879):

Anglers from abroad, and home bearers of the rod visit the haunts of the Trout and Grayling, succeed in large takes, eat a few, bag a few—and the great balance are left to rot on the beach in the summer's sun. Shame on the man, who will thus abuse the State's hospitality, and a shame of crimson sting and hue mantle the cheek of him who esteems thus lightly home and citizenship.<sup>3</sup>

If regulations were not feasible, how to reduce such malevolent behavior? One approach was the sportsmen's club. First popular in the East and later in western states as the population and its subset of anglers migrated westward, these clubs often were as exclusive as the English versions their members publicly disdained. But sportsmen's clubs served an important role in the fish culture that

was spreading across the country. Through such clubs, the often economically and politically influential members spearheaded efforts to protect the natural resources they enjoyed. This is not to say that sportsmen's clubs were dens of conservationist enthusiasm; most clubs arose to limit access to rivers and streams so that only its exclusive membership could catch their fill of fish. Still, many of the clubs were active in the discussions concerning game laws and helped push for another approach: that of using science to solve the age-old problem of demand and supply.<sup>4</sup>

The "scientific approach" to managing fish stocks was taking hold among fish culturists. One strand amounted to determining how to raise enough fish in captivity to satisfy the public's demand and thereby relieve the pressure on natural stocks. Another constituency thought that fish raised in hatcheries could be released back into the wild to replenish or augment the natural population. As mentioned earlier, a prominent issue on the East Coast—and, therefore, at the center of concern—was the rapid depletion of Atlantic salmon. If regulating catches was proving to be unworkable, perhaps fish culturists could produce enough replacement salmon. And if that didn't work, why not bring in some non-native species to replace it?

Although there were others, I provide brief vignettes of three individuals who, in my opinion, played key roles in the early fish culturist movement: Seth Green, Livingston Stone, and Robert Barnwell (aka Barnhill) Roosevelt. And as you will see, Stone's part expands as the story unfolds.

### *Seth Green*

Born in Genesee County, New York, in the spring of 1817, Seth Green was the quintessential frontiersman.<sup>5</sup> Growing up in the simple surroundings of a log cabin in the woods, as a young boy Green learned the ways of the frontier: hunting and fishing to provide protein, and farming techniques that produced wheat and corn.

Early in Green's life, his father moved the family to Carthage, a few miles south of Rochester. It was here that Green attended school through the sixth grade. With his formal education behind him, Green developed his skills as an outdoorsman. He became so adept at catching fish that he made it his livelihood, eventually opening his own commercial fish market in Rochester at the age of thirty-one.

While running his business, Green actively experimented in the rapidly advancing field of fish propagation. His

interest in fish culture grew, and in 1864 he bought property near Caledonia, about 17 miles outside of Rochester. At this site Green built a fish hatchery on Caledonia Creek, where he raised Atlantic salmon and brook trout for sale in the fish market. He also engaged in a variety of experiments, crossbreeding species in an attempt to achieve a fish that grew fast, could be marketed, and could be planted in rivers and streams for the sportsman. His work and his discoveries became something of legend, with stories running in New York City newspapers and elsewhere, even rural Missouri, about his work at the Caledonia hatchery. One example is the article "The Father of Fish Culture: Seth Green's Ideas about the Finny Tribe and Some of His Varied Experiments," which I found in, of all places, the *Clinton Advocate*, the local newspaper for the western Missouri town of Clinton. Published in 1883, readers were given the inside scoop when Green described his experiments in detail.

"We cross the female salmon trout with the male brook trout, and thus produce a hybrid. Then we cross the hybrid with the brook trout, which gives us three-quarter brook trout and one quarter

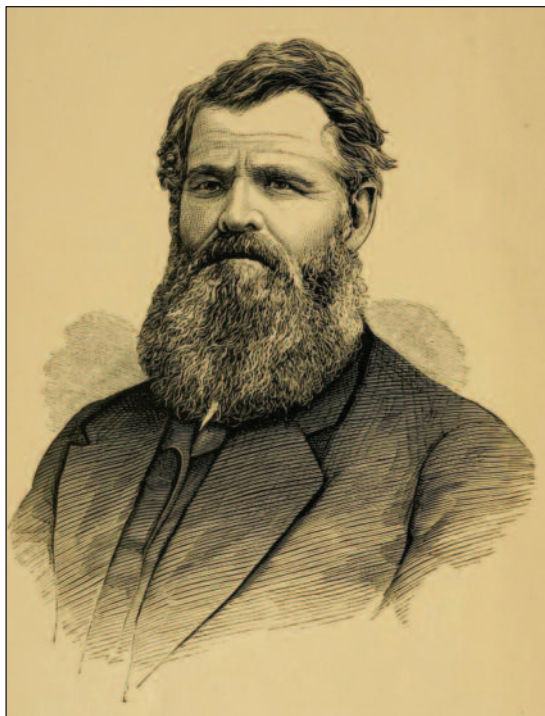
salmon trout." Why do all of this? Because, says Green, the resulting fish "has all the habits of the brook trout, lives in both streams and lakes . . . rises readily to a fly, is far more vigorous and fully one-third larger than ordinary brook trout of the same age."<sup>6</sup>

Green was highly influential in the budding fish culture movement. His work was important to the conservation movement, as was his early association and lasting friendship with Robert Roosevelt. Roosevelt (who will be introduced shortly) not only was an avid angler and outdoorsman, but an early advocate of raising fish in hatcheries for stocking into public waters. As one of the first commissioners of the New York Fish Commission, Roosevelt's position and Green's abilities made them valuable partners (and, as it turns out, good friends), not only in the endeavor to stave off the depletion of fish stocks in area streams and lakes of New York, but also in addressing the more general problem of a declining Atlantic salmon population. Green's influence among fish culturists expanded over time, partly because of the 1870 publication of his book *Trout Culture*.<sup>7</sup> The book was an

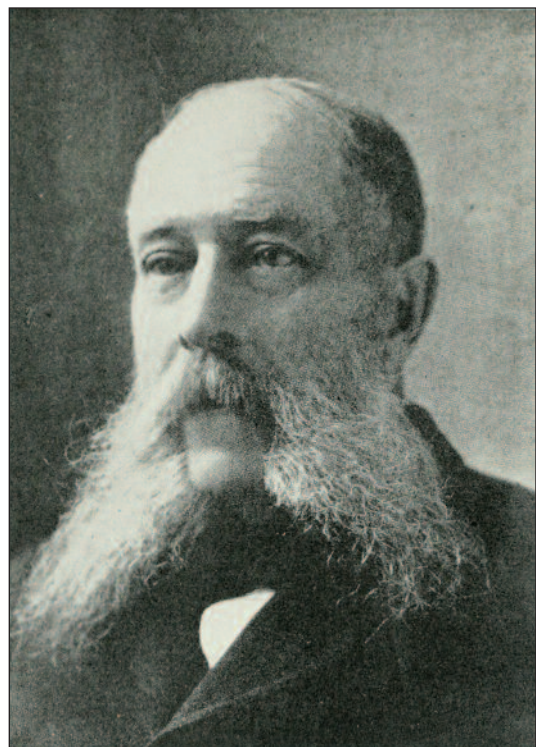
early entry in the do-it-yourself genre for new and experienced fish culturists. Green's reputation and influence extended far and wide, and he won national and international awards for his pioneering work.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, there is ample reason why Green is often referred to the father of fish culture in the United States.<sup>9</sup>

### *Livingston Stone*

Unlike Green, Livingstone Stone entered the world firmly ensconced in the upper echelon of society.<sup>10</sup> Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in October 1836, Stone's paternal ancestors were early settlers of Plymouth Colony; maternally he was kin to the Winships, also one of New England's most established families. Stone followed a common path of similarly positioned gentlemen of his time: matriculating at Harvard, graduating with honors in 1857, and then off to the Meadville Theological School. After completing his theological studies, Stone entered the ministry upon graduation and in 1864 was ordained as pastor of the Unitarian Church in Charlestown, New Hampshire. His religious career was brief, however. After only two years of tending his flock, he resigned from his pastoral



Seth Green. From *Seth Green, Trout Culture* (Caledonia, N.Y.: Seth Green and A. S. Collins, 1870), facing title page.



Livingston Stone. From *California Fish and Game* (July 1941, vol. 27, no. 3), 142.

position and followed his true calling. He built a fish hatchery in Charlestown, calling it Cold Springs Trout Ponds.

Stone quickly achieved notoriety among fish culturists, being one of the first to propagate Atlantic salmon in the United States.<sup>11</sup> Successfully raising Atlantic salmon in hatchery conditions could achieve two important purposes. First, if they could be raised as livestock, like cattle or chickens, this would help meet market demand, which was growing, and reduce pressure on natural populations. Second, Stone was thinking about a more experimental and exciting notion than business: perhaps hatchery-propagated salmon could be released in eastern streams and rivers to restore the dwindling population of wild salmon.

Stone and his fellow fish culturists in the East relied on Canadian sources of Atlantic salmon eggs to conduct their experiments. The problem was that eggs from Canada were expensive, and because only a small percentage of the eggs actually survived to stocking size, experimenting with salmon propagation was quite costly.<sup>12</sup> Into the breach, the state fish commissions of New Hampshire and Massachusetts reached a joint agreement to purchase and share salmon eggs purchased from suppliers in New Brunswick, Canada. Stone was considered enough of an expert in the field that he was chosen to be the U.S. representative. His close involvement in the venture gave him a head start, transporting salmon eggs from Canada back to his Cold Springs hatchery for distribution. It was the first operation of its kind in North America. It also positioned him to take a central role in the experiment to restore Atlantic salmon populations with transplanted Pacific salmon. More on that in Part II of this story.

By 1870, Stone was preparing to expand the operations of his Charlestown hatchery. He, like Green, was writing his own how-to book, *Domesticated Trout*, which was published in 1873.<sup>13</sup> And like Green's text, Stone's became a standard reference on the subject. But unbeknownst to Stone, his plans would soon be put on hold.

### **Robert Barnwell Roosevelt**

Robert Roosevelt is the third character who plays an important, although sometimes overlooked, part in this story.<sup>14</sup> Uncle to the now more famous Theodore

Roosevelt, Robert was born in 1829 into wealth and social status. His father, Cornelius Van Schaack Roosevelt, was a highly successful New York City businessman; his mother, Margaret Barnhill, descended from a prominent East Coast family. Robert was destined for the social and economic success that often accompanied such immediate privilege. After his formal education, Roosevelt was



*Robert Barnwell Roosevelt, ca. 1860–75. From the Brady-Handy photograph collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-BH83-2593.*

admitted to the New York bar in 1850 at age twenty-one, whereupon he began his long-standing legal practice in New York City.

Roosevelt was a lawyer, a political aspirant, a noted writer, and apparently something of a social rascal. But he also was an avid outdoorsman and conservationist. Some suggest that his contributions to these areas place him alongside Thaddeus Norris, often considered the father of American fly fishing.<sup>15</sup> As mentioned earlier, Roosevelt and Seth Green became good friends and, through his own efforts and those with Green, he became known to other important New England fish culturists.<sup>16</sup> Roosevelt was a prolific writer, including topics regarding the outdoors. In 1865 he published the book *Superior Fishing; or, the Striped Bass, Trout, and Black Bass of the Northern States*, which was hailed by some as one of the best books on angling then available.<sup>17</sup> One respected critic even opined that the book was so good

that it and a handful of others would “be envied in England.”<sup>18</sup> In *Superior Fishing*, Roosevelt articulated his view of the “true sportsman” as one with “higher aspirations and nobler gifts.” He compared this noble creature (probably with himself in mind) to the more common and lowly “game hog” who often resorted to an “unfair trick or mean advantage . . . to fill a vacant creel or empty pocket.”<sup>19</sup>

While he reviled those looking only to fill stringers and ignoring the thrill of the stalk, the catch, and the release, Roosevelt was not oblivious to the fact that there were many families—especially those living in the rural areas of an expanding country—for whom fish served as a main source of protein. “Fish must always,” Roosevelt observed, “constitute a considerable portion of the diet of the poor.”<sup>20</sup> And while he bemoaned the loss of access to quality fishing—he was an upper-class fly-fishing aficionado, after all—Roosevelt was deeply moved over the plight of the U.S. fishery. If overfishing continued at its current pace, he warned, the United States would be reduced “to the condition of France,”<sup>21</sup> where the lack of regulation had greatly depleted fishing stocks available to many who relied on it the most as a source of protein.

Roosevelt thought that without some action, the United States would be “forced to repopulate our deserted streams and lakes and furnish to the people, with great labor and at high price, one of their chief articles of food.”<sup>22</sup> That warning reflects an idea that was gaining traction among others in the fish culturist movement: that the federal government should “manage” fish populations not only through continued calls for uniform and enforced regulation, but also through the use of new scientific discoveries in the field of fish culture. If game laws were not being followed by imperfect humans and lacked enforcement by budget-stretched states, then another approach must be tried. Led by the likes of Seth Green and Livingston Stone, fish culturists and contemporary scientists felt that repopulating streams and lakes across the country would be more effective than regulations to protect the future of the fishery.<sup>23</sup> Part of the plan was to improve fishing conditions for the sportsman. Another—and this aspect was used to convince skeptical politicians—was that this approach would safeguard a staple source of protein in the diet of the populace, especially the voters.

## MOVING TOWARD FISH MANAGEMENT

Following the Civil War, there occurred efforts to raise awareness of key fish culture issues. State-level fish commissions were being established, mostly in north-eastern states. As I have already noted, Roosevelt helped establish the New York State Fishery Commission. He served on the commission from 1868 until 1888, when he was appointed the U.S. minister to The Hague.<sup>24</sup> The other members of the three-person, unpaid commission were Seth Green and ex-governor Horatio Seymour. Together the commissioners sponsored and implemented a restocking program in the state's rivers and streams, often using the fish propagated at Green's hatchery. The movement in New York was matched by other states in the Northeast, and it spread as the country moved westward.

By 1870, fish culturists and those in the conservation movement realized that their efforts could be better coordinated. So it was that in November 1870, an ad was placed in New York City papers announcing a coordinating meeting of like-minded individuals the following month. The initial meeting of what would become the American Fish Culturists' Association took place on December 20 in New York City. The meeting was attended by only a handful of people that frigid morning, but most were influential fish culturists. By that afternoon, the new organization had drafted a constitution and installed its officers. The Rev. William Clift of Mystic Bridge, Connecticut, was elected as the association's first president; B. F. Bowles from Springfield, Massachusetts, its treasurer. Livingston Stone agreed to serve as the secretary of the association. Other attendees included A. S. Collins of Caledonia, New York; Dr. J. F. Slack from New

Jersey; Fred Mather from Honeoye Falls, New York; Dr. M. C. Edmunds of the Vermont Fish Commission; and Dr. J. P. Huntington of New York. From that point on, some of these names appear again and again in the early history of U.S. fish culture.<sup>25</sup>

The agenda of the association was to establish a forum to exchange new ideas about the propagation of fish, especially trout and salmon.<sup>26</sup> The association also began to actively lobby government officials for policy actions to solve the imminent loss of fish as a reliable food source, not only on the East Coast but around the country. Not surprisingly, because many in the association were hatchery owners, it also acted as something of a trade association. Soon a subcommittee was formed to lobby government officials at the federal level for funds to build several salmon hatcheries in the Northeast. The idea was to use these hatcheries to continue Stone's earlier efforts at propa-

### PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN FISH CULTURISTS' ASSOCIATION

#### REPORT OF THE MEETING OF ORGANIZATION.

NEW YORK CITY, December 20, 1870.

A meeting of practical fish culturists was held in this city to-day, in compliance with a call issued November 1st by W. Clift, A. S. Collins, J. H. Slack, F. Mather and L. Stone.

The original place of meeting was subsequently changed to the rooms of the New York Poultry Society, to which society the delegates are much indebted, both for the use of the rooms and for various other courtesies extended to them during the day.

The delegates having assembled, a temporary organization was formed, with Rev. W. Clift as chairman and Mr. L. Stone as secretary. It was then unanimously resolved to form a permanent organization of fish culturists, and Dr. Edmunds and Mr. Stone were appointed a committee to draft a constitution for such an organization, to report when ready. On the presentation of their report, the following constitution was adopted, viz.:

#### CONSTITUTION.

**ART. I. Name and Objects**—The name of this society shall be "The American Fish Culturists' Association." Its objects shall be to promote the cause of fish culture; to gather and diffuse information bearing upon its practical success; the interchange of friendly feeling and intercourse among the members of the association; the uniting and encouraging of the individual interests of fish culturists.

**ART. II. Members**—All fish culturists shall, upon a two-thirds vote of the society and a payment of three dollars, be considered members of the association, after signing the constitution. The commissioners

of the various States shall be honorary members of the association, *ex officio*.

**ART. III. Officers**—The officers of the association shall be a president, a secretary and a treasurer, and shall be elected annually by a majority vote. Vacancies occurring during the year may be filled by the president.

**ART. IV. Meetings**—The regular meetings of the association shall be held once a year, the time and place being decided upon at the previous meeting.

**ART. V. Changing the Constitution**—The constitution of the society may be amended, altered or repealed by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any regular meeting.

The constitution having been adopted, the following officers were chosen for the ensuing year: W. Clift, Mystic Bridge, Ct., president; L. Stone, Charlestown, N. H., secretary; B. F. Bowles, Springfield, Mass., treasurer.

It was then resolved that an effort be made to secure an exhibition of live fish at the next meeting, and that the following gentlemen be requested to prepare papers, to be read at the next meeting, on the subjects annexed to their names:

A. S. Collins—On "Spawning Races and the Impregnation of Eggs."

J. H. Slack—On "The Culture of Black Bass."

W. Clift—On "The Culture of Shad."

Dr. Edmunds—On "The Introduction of Salmon into American Rivers."

B. F. Bowles—On "Land-locked Salmon."

Dr. Huntington—On "Fish in the North Woods of New York."

L. Stone—On "The Culture of Trout."

It was decided to hold the next meeting and exhibition in connection with the New York Poultry Show next year. It was voted to send a report of the meeting for publication to the New York Citizen and Round Table, the New York Tribune, the Springfield Republican, the New York Poultry Bulletin and other papers at discretion; and the secretary was instructed to mail the published reports of the meeting to fish culturists generally.

#### CIRCULATION OF LAST YEAR'S REPORT.

In order that this movement of the fish culturists, the first in the way of organization in this country, might be generally known, a copy of the report of the meeting, which was just read, was sent to

*Notes describing the initial meeting of the American Fish Culturists' Association on 20 December 1870. From Proceedings of the American Fish Culturists' Association. First published in 1872; reprinted with the permission of the American Fisheries Society from a copy in the New York Public Library by Johnson Reprint Corporation (New York, N.Y.) in 1965. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015034379530>. Accessed 21 December 2020.*

gating Atlantic salmon to replenish the declining native population.

Roosevelt was well aware of and sympathetic to the association's mission. Recall that as a founding member of the New York Fish Commission, he initiated early experiments with propagating and stocking fish into the state's lakes and rivers. As an active and influential individual in many circles, Roosevelt used his political and social connections to promote the association's causes in New York State and, more importantly, in Washington, D.C. Roosevelt championed the association's agenda, especially after he was elected to Congress as a Democratic representative for the state of New York. Using this even more public and wide-reaching pulpit to spread the word, Roosevelt lobbied for legislation to create the position of commissioner of fish for the United States.<sup>27</sup> Once enacted, it would set off a chain of events whereby salmon and trout from California were released into rivers and streams throughout the United States. Even in Missouri.

## JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 22

Washington, D.C., was in the throes of some nasty winter weather in early 1871. With the temperature outside struggling to reach the freezing point, inside the halls of Congress representatives were hotly debating a resolution sponsored by Roosevelt to create the position of U.S. fish commissioner. The oftentimes contentious debate lasted for several weeks. Because of its nature, the resolution was objected to by politicians from interior states because it seemed to focus solely on "coastal" problems. Some suggested during the debate that if Congress was concerning itself about coastal fishes, why not study grasshoppers and potato bugs? Opposition by representatives from interior states led to a compromise that changed the original language so that the newly created fish commissioner would be charged with expanding his investigations to include "the lakes of the United States." This minor change in wording was critical, because it gave politicians throughout the country the ability to boast that *their* vote for passage indicated *their* concern that the resolution benefit *their* constituents. On 22 January 1871, the final version of the resolution was voted on. It passed with 137 yeas, 47 nays, and 54 abstentions.

The resolution then moved on to the Senate for more debate. Spencer Baird—at the time the assistant secretary of the Smithsonian Institution—was actively pigeonholing senators he knew to encourage the resolution's passage.<sup>28</sup> Baird

wished the resolution to pass, largely because he wanted the government to fund investigations of the coastal fisheries. To this end, he pressed many political contacts he'd made while at the Smithsonian, one key ally being Henry L. Dawes from Massachusetts, chair of the House Appropriations Committee. Baird's desire for a governmental agency that focused its attention mostly on problems in the East turned out to be a political nonstarter, however. The reason? By ignoring problems faced in the rest of the country, the political interests simply were too narrowly defined to garner widespread support.

The resolution was sent to the Commerce Committee for more deliberation and wordsmithing. After a few days of wrangling, a version was sent to the Senate floor for a vote. George F. Edmunds, an influential senator from Vermont, was a prominent supporter and argued for its passage. He was well informed as to how the resolution fit into the plans of the American Fish Culturists' Association. He was the cousin of Dr. M. C. Edmunds, who was not only a member of the Vermont Fish Commission but, as you may recall, a founding member of the association. After some debate, the resolution passed on 9 February 1871. The allocated budget for this new federal institution was \$5,000, less than the annual salary for a Congressman.<sup>29</sup>

After the hurdles of House and Senate debate, Joint Resolution No. 22—or, as it is officially known, Joint Resolution for the Protection and Preservation of the Food Fishes of the Coast of the United States—landed on the desk of President Ulysses S. Grant for his signature. Think of it: just a few years earlier, *General* Grant was accepting Robert E. Lee's surrender of the Confederate States of America at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. Now, by a stroke of his pen, *President* Grant created the position of United States commissioner of fish and fisheries, laying the groundwork for what would eventually become the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. By signing the resolution, Grant would be responsible for one of the more encompassing and enduring experiments in fish culture ever carried out. He even unknowingly ensured that salmon and trout from California would end up in many states, including Missouri, the state that he and his family at times called home.<sup>30</sup>

The resolution created the position of the U.S. fish commissioner. This person would be someone who already was a "civil officer" or employee of the government, possessed "proved scientific and practical acquaintance with the fishes of the coast," and would "serve without additional salary."<sup>31</sup> Influenced by his

politically powerful friend Senator George Edmunds, Grant met with and offered the position of fish commissioner to Spencer Baird. Baird's background and the requirements of the job melded together perfectly.<sup>32</sup> Grant's nomination went to the Senate and, without significant opposition, Baird was appointed fish commissioner of the United States on 8 March 1871.

## SPENCER BAIRD AND THE U.S. FISH COMMISSION

Spencer Fullerton Baird was born in Reading, Pennsylvania, in 1823. He grew up with a lifelong curiosity in the natural world around him. Baird earned a bachelor's and master's degree from Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and, after a brief stint working in New York City, returned to his alma mater in 1845 to teach natural history. In 1846 he became the librarian and curator of the college's natural history collection.

Baird's interest in natural history grew, as did his reputation for his fieldwork collecting flora and fauna. One person who took interest in his work was Joseph Henry, the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. A friendship soon arose between them, and in 1850 Baird was enticed to leave academia to become the Smithsonian's first curator of natural history. He remained on the Smithsonian's staff until his death in 1887.

Like other scientists of his day, Baird was well aware of and chagrined by the significant scientific gap between zoologists in the United States and Europe.<sup>33</sup> The Europeans had quite a head start on the Americans, and their natural history museums boasted extensive collections that dwarfed any in the United States.<sup>34</sup> The Smithsonian's natural history collection was almost nonexistent when Baird joined the staff, amounting to a small stock of minerals and plants. Baird contributed his own considerably larger personal collection, amounting to hundreds of glass jars, barrels, and other storage containers that held various plants and animals. He actively encouraged private collectors to donate their specimens to the Smithsonian for proper identification and cataloging. One of Baird's more ingenious ideas to identify the distribution of different species of fish—both those known and as yet unknown across the nation—was to piggyback off the various expeditions funded by the U.S. government to explore and map the western United States.<sup>35</sup> When Grant's offer to become the fish commissioner arose, Baird already was actively expanding the Smithsonian's collection of American plants and animals, especially its fishes.<sup>36</sup>

Naming Baird as fish commissioner is important because of how his background, views, and scientific interests aligned with a key element in the resolution. The resolution states in Section 2 that:

[I]t shall be the duty of said commissioner to prosecute investigations and inquiries on the subject, with the view of ascertaining whether any and what diminution in the number of food fishes of the coast and the lakes of the United States has taken place; and, if so, to what causes the same is due; and also whether any and what protective, prohibitory, or precautionary measures should be adopted in the premises; and to report upon the same to Congress.<sup>37</sup>

As fish commissioner, Baird now had the authority to marshal government funds—subject to Congressional approval, of course—to engage in the kind of extended scientific research of the country’s fishery that would enable U.S. scientists to rise to the level of their European counterparts. The canvas was, as it were, largely blank: much of America in 1870, after all, was still unsettled wilderness.

Joint Resolution No. 22 also gave Baird and his fellow fish culturists the government’s financial backing, which would enable them to undertake one of the most exciting experiments yet attempted in fish management: transplanting salmon from the Pacific Coast to the East Coast and points in between. I refer to this as the Great Experiment.

The Great Experiment would fail: transplanted Pacific salmon did not replace nor replenish the dwindling

Atlantic salmon populations. Nor would Pacific salmon inhabit the waters of the inland states (like Missouri) in which they were planted. (The success with coho salmon occurred many, many years later.) But one thing the experiment did was to increase our knowledge of how to catch salmon, harvest their eggs, and transport fertilized eggs thousands of miles from one side of the country to the other. This discovery was a key component to other successful attempts at transplanting various fish species long distances.

The Great Experiment and what came out of it is discussed in Part II of this series. It warrants separate treatment because it laid the groundwork for the transplanting of another cold-water fish from the West Coast to the East Coast and points in between. What was learned accelerated the introduction of rainbow trout from Northern California to a multitude of other states and countries.



#### ENDNOTES

1. G. P. Marsh, “Report, Made Under Authority of the Legislature of Vermont, on the Artificial Propagation of Fish,” 1857. Reprinted in Stephen C. Trombulak, ed., *So Great a Vision: The Conservation Writings of George Perkins Marsh* (Hanover, N.H.: Middlebury College Press, 2001). Quoted in Anders Halverson, *An Entirely Synthetic Fish: How Rainbow Trout Beguiled America and Overran the World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010), 7.

2. So-called pot hunters and bombers—those who used dynamite—were the constant bane of sport fishers and authorities alike. The technique of bombing was not only successful in harvesting massive numbers of desired fish, but other species were often left on the banks as collateral damage.

3. Jerome’s quote is on display in the Platte River Hatchery in Michigan, home of the first successful release of coho salmon into the Platte River in 1966, and hence into Lake Michigan. It originally appeared in State of Michigan, *Third Report of the Superintendent of the Michigan State Fisheries for 1877–8* (Lansing: W. S. George & Co., State Printers and Binders, 1879), 53.

4. For more on fishing clubs, see Paul Schullery, “Angling Society,” Chapter 12 in *American Fly Fishing: A History* (New York: Nick Lyons Books, 1987), 122–32.

5. The information about Seth Green relies heavily on Sylvia R. Black, “Seth Green: Father of Fish Culture,” *Rochester History* (July 1944, vol. VI, no. 3), 1–24, and Joel W. Hedgpeth, “Founders of Fish Culture,” *The Progressive Fish-Culturist* (1941, vol. 5, no. 55), 11–14.

6. “The Father of Fish Culture: Seth Green’s Ideas about the Finny Tribe and Some of His Varied Experiments,” *The Clinton (Missouri) Advocate* (11 October 1883).

7. Seth Green, *Trout Culture* (Rochester, N.Y.: Green and Collins, 1870). Although Green is given authorship, it is published with A. S. Collins, his partner at the Caledonia Fish Hatchery. Green sold the hatchery to Collins, and in 1875 it was acquired by the state of New York. Collins’s name will reappear later in this discussion.

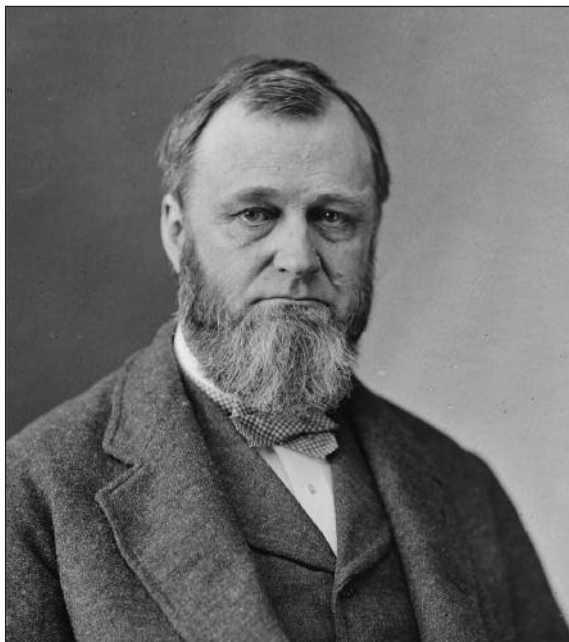
8. Green’s awards include gold medals in 1872 and 1875 from the Imperiale d’Acclimatation of France, a certificate of award from the U.S. Centennial Commission at the International Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, and a gold medal from the German Fishing Society in 1880.

9. Green is widely acknowledged as an early leader in fish culture, but he was by no means the first. Anders Halverson suggests that one of the earliest practitioners was an Ohio doctor named Theodatus Garlick. After reading about experiments with fish propagation taking place in France, Garlick acquired brook trout eggs and began artificially propagating them in his ponds outside of Cleveland. The year was 1853. He even published a how-to book on the subject. See Halverson, *An Entirely Synthetic Fish*, 11. For more, see J. T. Bowen, “A History of Fish Culture as Related to the Development of Fishery Programs,” in N. G. Benson, ed., *A Century of Fisheries in North America* (Bethesda, Md.: American Fisheries Society, 1970), 71–93.

10. For an overview of Stone’s early life, I have relied on Joel W. Hedgpeth, “Livingston Stone and Fish Culture in California,” *California Fish and Game* (July 1941, vol. 27, no. 8), 1–22, and his “Livingston Stone,” part of the series published under the heading “Founders of Fish Culture” in *The Progressive Fish-Culturist* (1941, vol. 8, no. 55), 11–14. In the former article, Hedgpeth cites as a key source R. A. Oakes, *Genealogical and Family History of the County of Jefferson, New York, Vol. 1* (New York and Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1905). See also Halverson, *An Entirely Synthetic Fish*, 21–24.

11. Stone recounts his early experience and provides a brief history on the topic in his article “The Artificial Propagation of Salmon on the Pacific Coast of the United States, with Notes on the Natural History of the Quinnet Salmon,” *Bulletin of the United States Fish Commission for 1896*, Vol. XVI (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1897), 205–35.

12. The cost was about \$40 (about \$900 in modern terms) per 1,000 eggs. To put this in perspective, the average female Atlantic salmon lays 600 to 800 eggs per pound of body weight. If the average female weighed 10 pounds, she would produce nearly 7,000 eggs. At those prices, it would cost Stone



Spencer Baird, ca. 1870–80. From the Brady-Handy photograph collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-BH826-1069.



more than \$280 (about \$6,300 in modern terms) for the eggs of just one female. (Approximate price equivalencies in this article are based on Robert J. Gordon and Stanley G. Harris, "The Annual Consumer Price Index for the United States, 1774 to Present," *MeasuringWorth.com*, [www.measuringworth.com/datasets/uscpil/](http://www.measuringworth.com/datasets/uscpil/). Accessed 28 October 2020.)

13. Livingston Stone, *Domesticated Trout: How to Breed and Grow Them* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1873).

14. Pertinent sources on the life of Roosevelt include his entry in the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress* (<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=R000428>, accessed 24 September 2018), and Daniel C. Gilman, Harry T. Peck, and Frank M. Colby, eds., *The New International Encyclopedia*, vol. 17 (New York: Dodd, Meade and Company, 1905), 280 (<http://archive.org/details/newinternational7glim/page/280/mode/2up?q=Roosevelt>). Accessed 15 December 2019. Those familiar with Roosevelt will notice that I use *Barnwell* as his middle name, although at times he used *Barnhill*, his mother's maiden name. His official biography at [bioguide.congress.gov](http://bioguide.congress.gov) uses the former, which is official enough for me.

15. See Will Ryan, "The Roosevelt Nobody Knows," *American Angler* (May/June 2020, vol. 43, no. 3) and <https://americanangler.com/Roosevelt-nobody-knows/>. Accessed 24 June 2020.

16. It is likely that Roosevelt and Green hatched plans to conserve fishing stocks in the East on the many fishing trips they took together. Their friendship and mutual interests led them to publish *Fish Hatching and Fish Catching* (Rochester, N.Y.: Union and Advertiser Co., 1879). One can only assume that this friendship was instrumental in helping to mold the legislation that would lead the government into managing the country's fisheries. Roosevelt's reputation extended beyond New York, exemplified by his serving as president of the American Fisheries Society.

17. Robert B. Roosevelt, *Superior Fishing; or, the Striped Bass, Trout, and Black Bass of the Northern States* (New York: Carleton Publisher, 1865); reprinted, The Project Gutenberg, 2017.

18. David Gamut, "Books on Angling," *New York Times* (24 June 1888), 14. The short list of influential American angling authors includes Frank Forester, Alfred M. Mayer, Charles Dudley Warner, and Maurice Thompson.

19. Roosevelt, *Superior Fishing*, 20–21.

20. *Ibid.*, 183–84.

21. *Ibid.*, 183.

22. *Ibid.*

23. It wasn't that regulations weren't needed, just that they were often ignored. A representative example of the failure of game laws is Roosevelt's observation that "the laws, however, are not so much to blame as the neglect of their enforcement; perfect statutes will not answer if they are not carried out, and the first duty of sportsmen's clubs and of individual sportsmen, a duty to humanity, to themselves, and to their fellow creatures, is to enforce the game laws" (*Ibid.*, 190).

24. Roosevelt stepped down from the Fish Commission in 1888. *Biographical Directory of*

*the United States Congress*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=R000428>. Accessed 4 September 2018.

25. The group would change its name to the American Fisheries Association in 1878 to reflect the broadening scope of its interests and membership and later become the American Fisheries Society, as it is known today. For more detail on this inaugural meeting and those in attendance, see Brian Murphy, "AFS Roots: The Founding Five," *Fisheries* (January 2020, vol. 45, no.1), 6–19.

26. As an interesting side note, like many associations that bring together individuals in one industry, the association advocated fixing the price of trout and salmon eggs. In an account by Fred Mather, he noted that creating the association did not help hatchery owners sell their eggs, and so they sought government action to create an effective monopoly over salmon and trout egg production. See Joel W. Hedgpeth, "Livingston Stone and Fish Culture in California," *California Fish and Game* (July 1941, vol. 27, no. 8), 1–22, especially footnote 4.

27. In the preface to the 1884 edition of his *The Game Fish of the Northern States and British Provinces* (New York: Orange Judd Company), Roosevelt stakes out, none too bashfully, his role in advancing fish culture in the United States, stating that "I have a right to claim that in aiding the cultivation and protection of the objects of the sportsman's pursuit, and the means of his pleasure, in protesting against their unreasonable and improper slaughter, and in describing the most legitimate and scientific methods, and taking them, I have conferred some advantage upon mankind as well as amused some idle hours" (5).

28. For an excellent discussion of Baird's role in the negotiations and eventual passage of the resolution, see Dean Conrad Allard Jr., *Spencer Fullerton Baird and the U.S. Fish Commission* (New York: Arno Press, 1978).

29. Congressmen were paid \$7,500 per year. In modern terms, the appropriation was the equivalent to a little more than \$115,000.

30. Grant and his family lived in the St. Louis area off and on between 1850 and his death in 1885. The Grant property, known as White Haven, today is a popular National Historic site in St. Louis. Missouri was also one of Grant's first postings after graduating from West Point.

31. Forty-First Congress, Sess. III, Res. 18–22, Vol. XVI, 1871, 593–94. It is accessible at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website, at <https://nctc.fws.gov/history/HistoricDocuments.html>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

32. For more on Baird's life and background see Allard, *Spencer Fullerton Baird*, and sources cited therein. See also Ben Schley, "A Century of Fish Conservation (1871–1971)"; the article was originally written to celebrate the centennial of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, which would become the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service within the U.S. Department of the Interior. <http://nctc.fws.gov/History/Articles/FisheriesHistory.html>. Accessed 15 September 2019. A chronology of Baird's life also can be found at the

Smithsonian's archives at [siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris\\_arc\\_217202](http://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris_arc_217202). Accessed 14 October 2020.

33. Europe was the home to some of the world's leading zoologists. France's Georges Cuvier is often referred to as the father of modern paleontology. His student Achille Valenciennes was known internationally for his pioneering work in parasitology. Pieter Bellker, a medical doctor from Holland, gained fame for his *Atlas Ichthyologique des Indes Orientales Néerlandaises*, an illustrated compilation of the native fishes of East Asia that Bellker collected and studied while stationed in Indonesia with the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army. Joint Resolution No. 22, together with Baird's influence and scientific curiosity, pushed the scientific community in the United States to become an equal in the modern study of fish (ichthyology).

34. Private individuals most often held American collections, and their contents often were the work of conscientious but self-taught amateurs. The major natural history collections in the United States were in eastern cities. The Boston Society of Natural History and the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia are examples. The federal government maintained a collection in, of all places, the U.S. Patent Office in Washington, D.C.

35. These expeditions, which were highly successful, included the U.S.–Mexico Boundary Survey (1848–1855), the Pacific Railroad Surveys (1853–1855), the North Pacific Exploring Expedition (1853–1856), and the Northwest Boundary Survey (1857–1861). Baird and the Smithsonian supplied needed equipment and instructions to the crews in the field and, upon their return to Washington, collected the geological and biological samples.

36. The Smithsonian's catalog of fishes held 5,000 entries in 1862. This was quite an achievement, considering that six years earlier the "collection" consisted of only a few entries, one being a sucker (*Catostomus catostomus*) that Baird personally collected from Lake George in New York State in his first year at the museum. The catalog expanded rapidly under Baird's leadership, increasing to about 10,000 entries in 1871, a number that would triple within the next decade. It continued to expand as Baird's commission funded scientific expeditions to catalog the fishes of the United States. The Smithsonian's activities and those of the fish commissioner were so intertwined that Tarleton H. Bean, the museum's curator of fishes, had his title changed to honorary curator because he spent so much time working for Baird and the commission.

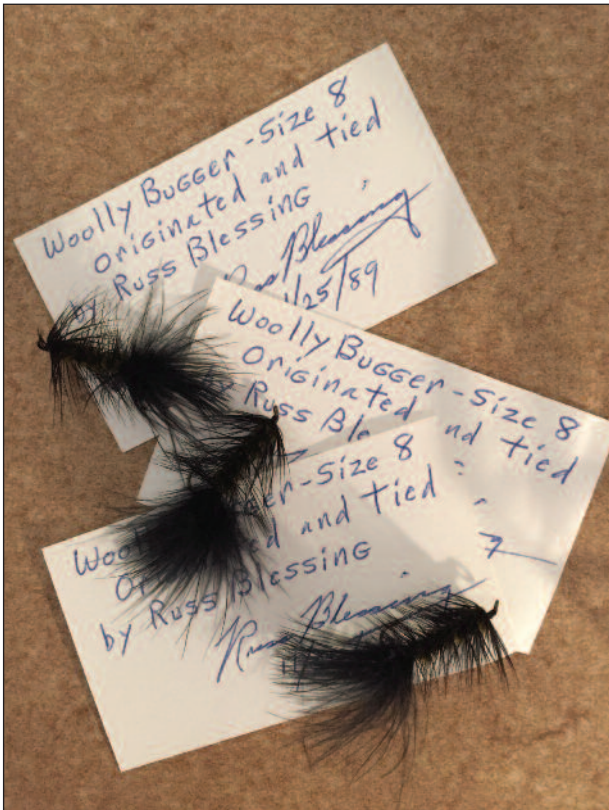
37. Joint Resolution for the Protection and Preservation of the Food Fishes of the Coast of the United States, Forty-First Congress, Sess. III, Res. 18–22, Vol. XVI, 1871, 594.



# The Woolly Bugger Story

by John Capowski

John Capowski



Russell Blessing—tied Woolly Buggers with signature cards. From the author's collection.



One of three photographs Blessing included when fulfilling a request for Woolly Buggers. The back of this one was inscribed "Bernie, Thanks for the interest in the Woolly Bugger. Best wishes, Russ Blessing 12/11/89." From the author's collection.

IF YOU FISH STREAMERS, you've likely fished a Woolly Bugger or one of its variations and have some in a fly box. Created in 1967,<sup>1</sup> the Bugger was initially invented as a smallmouth fly,<sup>2</sup> and the inventor's son views the archetypal Bugger as having a green chenille body.<sup>3</sup> Woolly Buggers are now tied in a wide range of colors and styles<sup>4</sup> and used for species from brown trout to bonefish and permit.<sup>5</sup>

The Woolly Bugger is a popular and almost ubiquitous fly for several reasons. First, it is extraordinarily effective. Some suggest that it's simply "a Woolly Worm with a tail,"<sup>6</sup> but that long tail adds movement to the fly, and that movement adds effectiveness; the Woolly Worm seems a pattern of the past.<sup>7</sup> The Woolly Bugger is also effective because it's both an attractor pattern (taken by many species because it looks like some undetermined

food or provokes an attacking response) and an imitative pattern. To many fly fishers, it imitates a leech or hellgrammite.<sup>8</sup> The fish still aren't talking, but when they take the fly in environments where leeches and hellgrammites exist, they make their preferences known.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to its effectiveness, the Woolly Bugger's descriptive and somewhat amusing name likely adds to its popularity. More on that later.

The fly is known by virtually all fly fishers, but—based on my own informal survey—few know its origins and, unlike many of his contemporaries, that may be how its inventor, Russ Blessing, wanted it.

Russell Blessing was a true South Central Pennsylvanian. He was born in Harrisburg and died there approximately seventy-four years later. He graduated from John Harris High School and worked

for the former AMP, Inc., an electronics company then based in Harrisburg. He retired as an administrative manager.<sup>10</sup>

Some stories about Russ, as friends and family called him, tell a great deal about the man and his character. I had the pleasure of meeting him on Manada Creek, a favorite of Russ's near Harrisburg.

An example of Russ's character is a letter he wrote following a request for Woolly Buggers with signature cards. In his response, Russ included six Woolly Buggers in size 8, one each in sizes 16 through 4, signature cards for the size-6 flies, and three photographs of himself at his tying desk.<sup>11</sup> Rather than asking for payment, Russ wrote, "If you care to send a donation, please send it to Contact Harrisburg."<sup>12</sup> Russ provided the address of the group, explained that it was a referral and emotional support helpline, and,

to give the request context, wrote he was a volunteer there.

To the degree that fly fishers know of Russ, it is for inventing one fly. They may think of him as a streamer fisher, but Russ was an innovator in many ways and loved fishing dries. On a humid summer day—the kind that brings out mosquitoes and gnats—a friend of Russ’s, Bob Pennell, saw Russ on that stream he fished so often, Manada Creek. From where he stood, Bob noticed something strange about Russ’s hat, which was usually an olive floppy-brimmed New Zealand type. As Bob approached Russ, who must have noticed Bob’s quizzical look, Russ simply said, “Fly paper.”<sup>13</sup>

Manada Creek was Russ’s home water, but in April and May he would travel to North Central Pennsylvania to fish Pine Creek and its tributaries, Cedar Run and Slate Run. He stayed at the cabin owned by a fishing friend, Warren “Dutch” Fetter. On one of those trips, Russ and

Dutch were fishing for brook trout on a small feeder stream when another fly fisher approached them. The fisherman, whom Dutch described to me as a “blow-hard,” bragged about the wonderful flies he had designed. By then the Woolly Bugger was well known, but Russ never mentioned the fly. Dutch told me that Russ was laid back; he had no need to compete.<sup>14</sup>

In an interview for *Fly Life*, Russ’s son Fred summed up his father’s character. “First, that he was a dedicated family man, a man of strong faith, someone who was generous, honest . . . I could go on and on. . . . Second, that he was a pretty good fisherman.”<sup>15</sup>

In addition to being a pretty good fisherman, Russ was a fly designer, and in 1967 he created the Woolly Bugger at his tying desk at home in Harrisburg. Russ had modified a smallmouth bass fly he had designed to imitate the dobsonfly, prevalent in the Susquehanna River, by

adding the marabou tail.<sup>16</sup> Russ’s daughter Julie was seven years old when he created the fly, and when she saw it said, “It looks like a Woolly Bugger.” The fly was then both created and named.<sup>17</sup>

Because of his humility, were it up to Russ, the fly likely would never have achieved its current status. In August 1967 Russ was fishing the Little Lehigh and catching while others were not. Barry Beck was fishing nearby, became curious about the fly Russ was using, approached him, and asked. Russ gave Barry a Bugger, and Barry started catching fish too.<sup>18</sup> Barry and Russ later became friends, and Barry wrote an article on the Bugger in *Scientific Anglers Fly Fishing Quarterly*.<sup>19</sup> The fly was slow to catch on in the East, but when Beck introduced the fly to Doug Swisher, he popularized the fly in the West.<sup>20</sup> A later article by Beck in *Fly Fisherman* was the springboard for the fly becoming especially well known.<sup>21</sup>

John Capowski

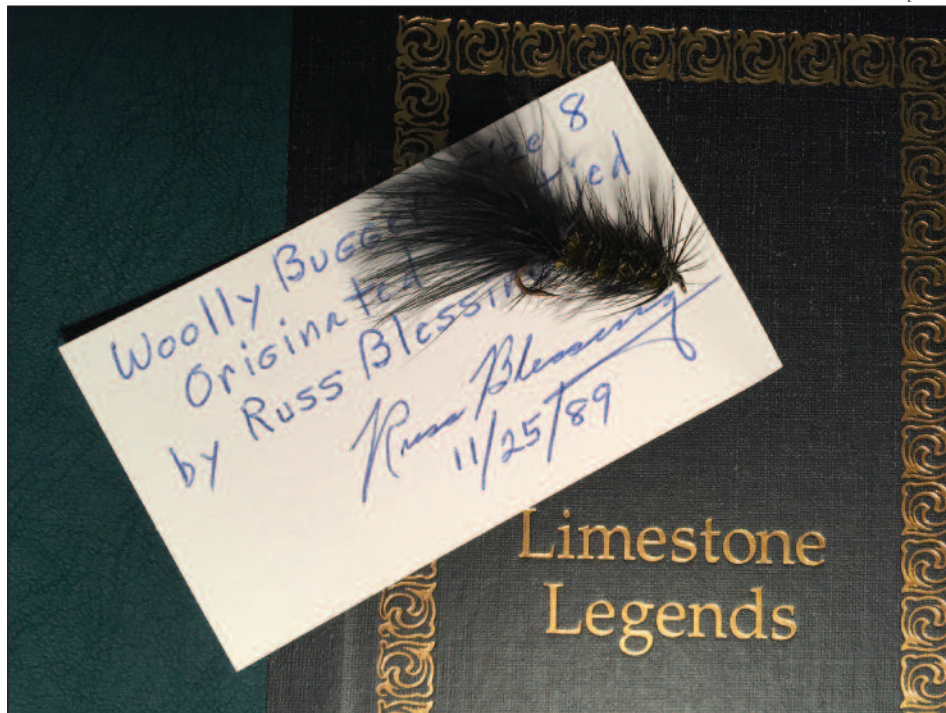


Manada Creek, Russ Blessing’s home waters and where the author first met him.

John Capowski



Russell Blessing—tied Woolly Buggers with Barry Beck article from *Fly Fisherman* magazine (May 1984, vol. 13, no. 3). From the author’s collection.



Russell Blessing–tied Woolly Bugger with signature card. From the author’s collection.

Russell Blessing “never wanted recognition for inventing the Woolly Bugger—he was just happy he created something that could give a fly fisherman an opportunity to catch some fish.”<sup>22</sup> The Woolly Bugger has a place in fly fishing’s history. Its inventor deserves that too.



## ENDNOTES

1. Ted Leeson, “The Modern Era: Milestones,” *Fly Fisherman* (October–December 2018, vol. 50, no. 1), 71.
2. Kirk Werner, “Where Did the Best Fly Ever Invented Come From? Russell Blessing Remembered,” *Fly Life* (2 March 2017), <https://flylifemagazine.com/of-interest-where-did-the-best-fly-ever-invented-come-from/>. Accessed 3 March 2020. [Ed. note: The last word in the URL appears to be a typographical error, but it is accurate to the source and connects to the correct web page.]
3. Werner, “Where Did the Best Fly Ever Invented Come From?” and an undated letter in the author’s collection from Russell Blessing to an individual named Bernie referencing the dark-olive-bodied Woolly Buggers that accompanied the letter. Photographs that Blessing included with the letter are dated 11 December 1989.
4. See, for example, page 79 in *The Fly Shop’s 2018 Catalog & Travel Digest*. Examples in the catalog include a Bead Head Crystal Bugger in silver, an Egg Sucking Crystal Bugger in purple, a Chilean Rubber Bugger with legs, and a Bead Head Bugger.
5. Chris Stewart, “Woolly Bugger Tenkara: In Defense of the Woolly Bugger,” <https://www.tenkarabum.com/woolly-bugger-tenkara.html>. Accessed 3 March 2020. I have my own Woolly Bugger variation, the Muddled Bugger. It has both a black deerhair muddler-style head and black marabou wing. In large sizes, the fly has taken some large San Juan River rainbows for me.
6. Fall 2019 telephone conversation with longtime fly-fishing and upland game author Richard L. Henry of Lebanon, Pennsylvania.
7. Reading through the recent catalogs of major fly-fishing companies (e.g., Orvis, Feather-Craft, and the Fly Shop), I didn’t find a single Woolly Worm listed among the offerings.
8. Paul Weamer, *The Bug Book: A Fly Fisher’s Guide to Trout Stream Insects* (Boiling Springs, Pa.: Headwaters Book, 2017), 96–97.
9. Datus Proper, *What the Trout Said About the Design of Trout Flies and Other Mysteries* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1982). Proper suggests that by their behavior, trout are letting us know which flies are the most effective imitations.
10. Russell Blessing was born 14 October 1935 and died 28 October 2009. The cliché “he was dedicated to his family and community” wasn’t cliché when applied to Russ. He was married for nearly fifty-four years and had one daughter, Julie, and two sons, Andrew and Fred. He was a Sunday school teacher and coached both midjet basketball and baseball. In addition to his focus on family and community, Russ (like another fly creator, Chauncy Lively; see John Capowski, “Chauncy Lively: 1919–2000,” *Pennsylvania Fly Fishing Museum Association* newsletter [Summer 2000, vol. 3, issue 1]) played trombone, and he was active in two Harrisburg area bands. Obituary for Russell Blessing, Trefz & Bowser Funeral Home, <https://www.trefzandbowser.com/memorials/russell-blessing/353466/obituary.php>. Accessed 3 March 2020.
11. Letter, flies, and photographs in the author’s collection.
12. Undated letter in the author’s collection from Russ Blessing to an individual named Bernie. Photographs that Blessing included with the letter are dated 11 December 1989. Contact Harrisburg, now Contact Helpline, is a twenty-four-hour service that provides telephone counseling.
13. Quoted in Bob Pennell, “Recollections of Russ Blessing,” *Hatches* (Winter 2020), 2. *Hatches* is the newsletter of the Doc Fritchey Chapter of Trout Unlimited.
14. Telephone conversation with L. Warren “Dutch” Fetter, 23 January 2020.
15. Werner, “Where Did the Best Fly Ever Invented Come From?”
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. Barry Beck, *Scientific Anglers Fly Fishing Quarterly*. I spoke with Cathy and Barry Beck in early 2020 about the article; neither have been able to find a copy, nor has Scientific Anglers.
20. Barry Beck, “The Woolly Bugger,” *Fly Fisherman* (May 1984, vol. 13, no. 3), 44–48.
21. Werner, “Where Did the Best Fly Ever Invented Come From?” In this article, Werner quotes from his interview with Russell Blessing’s son, Fred, who said, “Barry [Beck] did an article on the fly in 1984. It became well known after that.”
22. Werner, “Where Did the Best Fly Ever Invented Come From?”

# Mighty Waters: An Interview with Shannon Vandivier

All images courtesy of Shannon Vandivier



*Legendary Bimini bonefish guide Ansil Saunders in his workshop.*



*Shannon Vandivier and Ansil Saunders in Bimini during production of *Mighty Waters*.*

**T**HE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF Fly Fishing (with Simms and Costa) has partnered with Shannon Vandivier and his team at Cold Collaborative to create a film that tells the extraordinary story of Ansil Saunders, a legendary Bimini bonefish guide. Martin Luther King Jr. found a friend in Saunders. Just four days before his assassination, Dr. King was sitting in Ansil's boat, sharing psalms and working on "I've Been to the Mountaintop"—his final speech. In *Mighty Waters*, Ansil Saunders visits the spot where he'd taken MLK that day and discusses the global change he's seen and hopes to see in the world. *Mighty Waters* was selected for the 2021 F3T film tour and has the potential to have broad impact outside of the fly-fishing industry. Executive Director Sarah Foster spoke with Shannon Vandivier to better understand his connection to fly fishing, his relationship with Ansil Saunders, and his motivation to reach new heights in the outdoor storytelling/film world. For more information about this compelling film, visit [amff.org/mightywaters](http://amff.org/mightywaters).

**Tell us about your connection to fly fishing.**

I was born in 1987 and am one of five siblings. Pretty much every memory from my childhood relates back to five kids and two adults bound westward in a 1990s tin-can Suburban. From a young age, I've wanted to be just like my father. He's a photojournalist and a bit of a wild card. He wasn't scared of anything, and I really liked that. One of his most iconic photographs made the cover of *Life* magazine. It was a capture of a palm tree bent over nearly 90 degrees, with waves crashing all around. He uncovered that moment by driving straight into the strongest hurricane ever to hit the Texas coast: Hurricane Gilbert. Like I said, not scared of anything.

I had a unique childhood. I got to travel a lot with my dad. We always ended up in the mountains. Even if our goal was a beach, somehow my dad managed to find a detour to the mountains. To this day he calls it his mountain therapy. I remember one time I saw an elk crossing a river with a fly angler fishing nearby. The sunlight was at that perfect angle

where everything looks like a scene out of the ending of a movie. Time seemed to stop, and you realize that life is about these small moments.

For me, fly fishing is this snapshot of my perfect memories. It became a pastime for my dad and me, always with cameras within reach. When I hold a fly rod, all those memories come flooding back, even ones that aren't related to fishing—just being outside around wildlife and being around people who make those adventures worth remembering.

### What led you to Ansil's story?

I first heard about Ansil Saunders from my dear friend and former employee, Heather Harkavy. She was in our Austin, Texas, studio one day trying to work, but mostly just talking, because, well, Heather loves talking about everything. I'm sure we were discussing something completely unrelated to Ansil, but something I said must have reminded her of Bimini. She began telling me a story about this guide who was friends with MLK Jr., built boats, and single-handedly started the civil rights movement on his own island of Bimini. She knew all this because her father, Jeff Harkavy, took her to Bimini to fly fish multiple times when she was a young girl, and Ansil was their guide every time. I remember stopping Heather midsentence and asking if she could arrange a phone call. I knew right then his story was too important to not at least ask if I could be the one to try to tell it. I am so grateful he agreed to let us film him.

### Can you tell us a bit about Ansil's role as a community leader in Bimini?

Ansil comes from a long line of boat builders and musicians. Creativity runs in their blood. His family lineage traces back to Scotland. His brother is the island historian, and his other brother was a successful musician. The Saunders are known for being the best at what they do, and the community respects their name. I definitely saw this while documenting his story. There is not a person on the island who doesn't know Ansil.

I think leadership comes very naturally to him. One of my favorite things Ansil said was, "I don't have a bone of inequality in my body." He is very proud of his community and his island. The more he told me, the more it became clear that to try to separate people by color was to say that his community was inferior. So he took it upon his own shoulders to not stand for that. His mission was not about himself; it was about his family, his friends, and his nation.

He first acted on this when he was in his twenties. The Bimini Big Game Club was a whites-only restaurant and hotel on the island. He decided to go there every day, indefinitely, and ask to be served lunch. They denied him for forty-one consecutive days. Ansil would go back to his fishing boat and guide his clients on an empty stomach. No others would go with him. They were too scared, or they would tell him he was wasting his time. He was alone, and he felt very embarrassed.

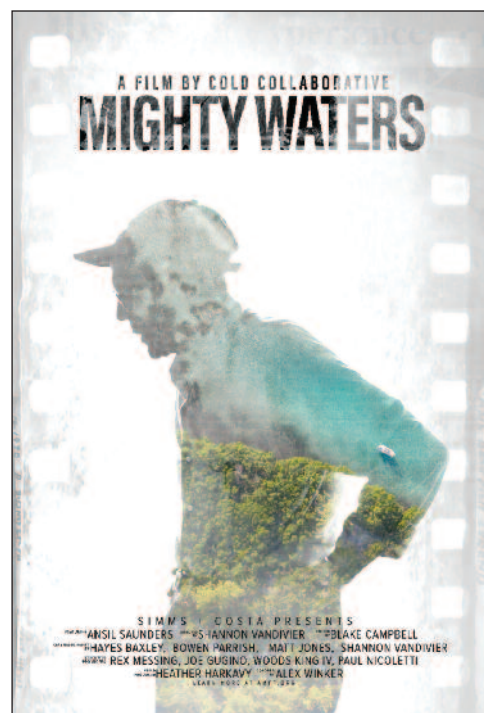
On the forty-second day, he heard some important officials would be there. So he invited his friends to go with him and said he would buy them lunch if they got served. He then got word back to the owner that if they didn't serve them, he was willing to go to jail. When Ansil and his group arrived, they sat them down and served them. And from that day on, any person of any color could eat there. "My only regret was promising to buy them all lunch," he said, then added, chuckling, "That meal was very expensive for me!" When Ansil accomplished this feat, he was celebrated by the community. He became a giant slayer.

Here's another story he told me: "One time, our MP (member of Parliament) went to London, England, and they asked him, 'How come that 15 percent of the people in the Bahamas can rule over the 85 percent?' And the MP told them, 'It's very easy for 15 percent to rule 85 percent. Just keep them uneducated. You keep them uneducated, you rule them forever.'"

Education became Ansil's mission. He wanted to open the eyes of all people, most importantly the youth of Bimini. In 1967, Ansil started a Boys & Girls Club. They worked at build-



*Photographs in Ansil's Bimini workshop.*



*A promotional poster for Mighty Waters.*

ing playgrounds and schools, as well as teaching sports and fishing and about owning one's own business. It was very successful, and dozens of his club students have gone on to do great things with their lives. He is so proud of each and every one of them. He talked as if they were his own children. It was very moving.

This natural course of leadership eventually led to Ansil becoming the right-hand man to Sir Lynden Pindling, the prime minister of the Bahamas. For years, Ansil would write Sir Pindling's speeches, as well as deliver the opening speech introducing the prime minister before he addressed the nation. This was at a time when the Bahamas was still under colonial rule, and it was an uphill battle to raise the Bahamian flag. Ansil was appointed president of the PLP (Progressive Liberal Party) for the island of Bimini. He was partially responsible for and influential in helping the Bahamas declare their independence from England in 1973. This was done without a single drop of bloodshed, thanks to the PLP. Once they declared their independence, Ansil's political role became one of education, helping local business owners transition as a newly free and independent people.



*Ansil Saunders looking out over the island of Bimini.*

**Ansil told some deep stories in the film. Did he have an impact on you personally?**

Going back to my childhood, my father began teaching me how to use a camera to tell a story. Just as a writer has to research, filmmakers and photographers must immerse themselves within the worlds of their subjects. Ansil has been impacting me for the better part of a year. I feel I carry a great responsibility by agreeing to direct and produce *Mighty Waters*. I am bound to tell Ansil's story fully and accurately. I have spent an enormous amount of time researching Ansil's life and the civil rights issue as a whole. Even now I am deeply moved and inspired by Ansil and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a result of making this film.

The one parallel I draw between MLK and Ansil is courage: having the courage to stand up for justice, but more importantly, and even harder, to stand in the face of injustice. When I was younger and had yet to be beaten up by the drags of real life, I was a very fiery college student. But eventually I let my time get reprioritized to start a business and a family. I've let bad clients allow me to become less idealistic and more cynical. Lots of time being a father to three young kids leaves me too tired to find motivation to find ways to help others. As a result, I have to admit that I am left a little incomplete. Ansil's story is a reminder to me to pick a hill to die on. Not any one of us can solve all the world's problems. But we can make a difference with some of them. The real economy isn't money—it's time. Time is the only truly finite thing we are in control of, and how we spend our time can potentially change everything . . . somewhere. Even as little as forty-two days.

**Tell us a little about the shoot (how long you were there, crew size, etc.).**

I am extremely proud of the crew on this project. Credits are hard because everyone on the team wears many hats. Bowen Parrish was a producer with me in pre/post production and was a cinematographer in the field. Hayes Baxley was brought on as the underwater cinematographer, cinematographer, and drone operator. Matt Jones was stills photographer and cinematographer. Heather Harkavy was our field producer. Blake Campbell was principal editor. And that leaves me as the director and co-producer. One person I cannot leave out is my wife, Chaney Vandivier. She never gets an official title, but she is always my co-director, especially on this project.

On the surface, this project was pretty straightforward: five crew members, some camera gear, two flights, and six days on an island. COVID changed things a bit. Just getting there was quite a bit more challenging than I expected. Luckily, the film crew is a group of well-traveled goons who rise to challenges and smile when the sufferfest begins.

Our twenty-five suitcases (1,250 pounds total) were loaded with lots of fun gear. The project was shot entirely in 4K RAW. We filmed this project using two RED Scarlet DSMC2 cameras, one RED Raven, one Canon C500II, and an Inspire 2 with X7. Our lens choice was a full set of Zeiss CP.3 Cinema series. Our specialty shots were captured using a MōVI Pro and Feather Camera Crane.

We would love for anyone to reach out to us if they are interested in storytelling, or even just want to pick our brains on how to capture unique imagery. You can follow and message us on Instagram @coldcollaborative and @shannonvandivier or through coldcollab.com.





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*The museum gratefully acknowledges the outstanding support of our 2020 contributors who helped to further the museum's mission. Please accept our apology if any name has been misspelled, placed under the incorrect contribution heading, or inadvertently excluded.*

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*From Genio C. Scott, Fishing in American Waters (New York: The American News Company, 1875), 141.*

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# Paul Dixon Receives the 2021 Izaak Walton Award



*Clockwise from top left: Paul Dixon, Andy Mill, Bob Popovics, and Nick Curcione regaled viewers with their candid, funny, and touching conversations.*



*AMFF President Fred Polhemus (bottom) wrapped up the evening by declaring Paul Dixon an integral part of fly-fishing history.*



Alex Ford

*Paul Dixon proudly displays the 2021 Izaak Walton award.*

AMFF WAS THRILLED TO HONOR the legendary guide and conservation champion Paul Dixon as its 2021 Izaak Walton Award honoree during a live virtual event on March 11. Those who tuned in to Zoom were treated to an extraordinarily candid, funny, and touching conversation hosted by author/podcast host/Olympic medalist Andy Mill, who also holds multiple angling records. Nick Curcione (father of the two-handed overhead cast) and saltwater fly-tying pioneer and luminary Bob Popovics joined Dixon and Mill to complete the star-studded screen.

The power and perseverance of true friendship was certainly the underlying theme of the evening as guests recounted stories from their decades together in the salt. Paul's unwavering dedication to the conservation of fly-fishing waters is well known throughout the angling community, and messages came in throughout the night as well-wishers detailed how Paul had touched their lives through his love and mastery of the sport. AMFF President Fred Polhemus, who presented the award, declared that Paul is truly an integral part of the story of fly-fishing history told every day at AMFF. The full recording is available at [amff.org](http://amff.org).

AMFF would like to thank all the participants, with special thanks to Paul and Andy for their passionate approach to the program and their promotion and fundraising efforts in conjunction with the event. Our deepest appreciation goes to all of

our Leadership Circle supporters and those who made donations in honor of Paul. Team Tarpon: Bass Pro Shops/Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium, Rodney Berens, Salvatore Campofranco, Mark Comora, Robert Constable, Anthony Davino, Charles P. Durkin Jr., Cynthia and Christopher B. Galvin, Gary Grant, Karen Kaplan, Philippe Laffont, Sean McCarthy, Robin McGraw, David and Meg Nichols, Fred Polhemus, Eric Roberts, Matthew Scott, Robert Scott, James Stanis, Warren Stern, Andrew Tucker, and Nancy and Alan Zakon. Striper Circle: David Collier, Edgar Cullman Jr., Robert Ewing, Aaron Kennon, Gerold Klauer, James Lyons, Lee W. Mather Jr., Lexann and Andrew Richter, Jason Scott, Seven Mile Fly Shop, Adelaide Skoglund and Bill Legg, Charles and George VanDercook, and Richard J. Warren. Gifts in honor of Paul: Christopher Barrow, Devin Brandes, Tracey Clarke, Joe Cresta, and Shepard Hurwitz.

The online silent auction was also a great success, and we would like to extend our gratitude to all those who made a purchase as well as our wonderful auction donors: Abel Reels, Stu Apte, Cheeky Fly Fishing, CD Clarke, Paul Dixon and Andy Mill, E & J Gallo, James Heckman, Howler Brothers, Loon Outdoors, Mud Dog Saltwater Flies, Poncho Outdoors, Rise Fly Fishing, the Saltwater Edge, Scott Fly Rods, Yasuji Sugai, Tin Boat Productions, and Urban Angler.





Our February fly-tying lineup brought five top tiers to our Facebook live page. These virtual events allow us to provide instruction (and entertainment!) to people all over the world. Thanks to our tiers Scott Biron, Brita Fordice (who brought in a record number of views, more than 33,000!), Tim Flagler, Dave McKenna, and Mark Dysinger, who tied the Rodeo Clown pictured here.

## Alan R. Diodore Named 2020 Austin Hogan Award Recipient

Alan R. Diodore, author of “A Forty-Year Spat” (Winter 2020, vol. 46, no. 1), has been named the recipient of the museum’s 2020 Austin Hogan Award. The award, which recognizes exemplary contributions to the *American Fly Fisher*, was established in 1985 to honor the memory of Austin Hogan, who founded the museum’s journal in 1974.

Setting the historical stage of early-nineteenth-century Great Britain, “A Forty-Year Spat” introduces us to Scottish authors John Younger (*River Angling for Salmon and Trout*, 1860) and Thomas Tod Stoddart (*The Art of Angling as Practiced in Scotland*, 1835), whose public disagreements spanned decades, thanks to the slowness of book publishing.

Diodore, a past president of the Anglers of the Au Sable and a retired federal administrative law judge, lives in Michigan.

## Recent Donations to the Collection

**Polly Damon** of St. Johnsbury, Vermont, donated an extensive collection of historic material documenting both her contributions to the sport and Herb Welch’s angling career. Included in the donation is a collection of flies tied by Polly Damon and a one-piece 8-foot Palakona Reg’d Hardy Bros. fly rod that belonged to Herb Welch.

**Charles English** of Taftsville, Vermont, dropped off a Rochester Reel Co. side-mount reel, an Edwards Manufacturing Co. aluminum reel, and three angling publications for the museum library. **Michael Boscia** of Henderson,

Nevada, sent us a Sakura tackle-box set and a fly-and-bait combo rod with outfits.

**Robert Miller** of Louisville, Kentucky, gave us a first-edition copy of Norman Maclean’s *A River Runs Through It and Other Stories*, signed and inscribed by the author. **Edward Blair Manson** of Tucson, Arizona, donated a first-edition copy of S. Kip Farrington Jr.’s *A Book of Fishes* (Blakiston Company, 1946). The book is colorfully illustrated by renowned sporting artist Lynn Bogue Hunt. And **Wild Goose Chasers** of Pasadena, California, sent us a copy of Tony Hayter’s *F. M. Halford and the Dry-Fly Revolution* (Robert Hale, 2002).

The **Estate of Richard and Ann Hamilton** of Rutland, Vermont, donated a collection of angling publications, including an edition of Thaddeus Norris’s *American Fish Culture* (Porter & Coates, 1868); *The Oquossoc Angling Association, 1870–1970* (compiled by Samuel W. Lambert Jr. and published by the association in 1970); and an edition of Izaak Walton and Charles Cotton’s *Walton’s Complete Angler* (Little, Brown, and Company, 1867).

**Terry Brykczynski** of Walnut Creek, California, gave us an Abbey & Imbrie trade card with photograph of a fisherman purported to be Theodore Gordon, as hypothesized in his Spring 2016 *Gordon’s Quill* article, “Ephemera of Home Water.” **James J. Ford Jr.** of Woodstock, Vermont, dropped off an original Thomas H. Chubb retail catalog for the year 1890.

And **Mark Susinno and Roxanne Kamin** of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, donated Mark’s original painting, *Rising to the Fly*.

## Upcoming Events

As a result of the ongoing pandemic, events will take place **virtually** on [amff.org](http://amff.org) unless otherwise noted.

### May 1

Opening of Yoshi’s Trail on the grounds of the museum in Manchester, Vermont

### July

Kids Clinic

Packets will be available for pickup at the museum on Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

### August 14

14th Annual Fly-Fishing Festival

### Fall (TBD)

Heritage Award Event honoring Johnny Morris  
The Wonders of Wildlife Museum and Aquarium  
Springfield, Missouri

Always check our website ([www.amff.org](http://www.amff.org)) for additions, updates, and more information or contact (802) 362-3300 or [events@amff.org](mailto:events@amff.org). The museum’s e-mail newsletter offers up-to-date news and event information. To subscribe, look for the link on our website or contact the museum.

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## C O N T R I B U T O R S

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**Alexander Benoît** is a writer and educator living in North Carolina. He was born and grew up in New England, where his father and grandfather taught him to fly fish from an early age. These early fishing trips kindled his love for salmon and trout. While he attended the University of Vermont, he fished for trout, pike, musky, and bass, before moving to Boston to complete his master's degree in Irish literature and culture at Boston College. He currently teaches middle and high school English and writing in North Carolina, and in the summer he fishes Minnesota's north woods for pike and musky.

David Chao



Javier Rivara



**John Capowski** is admitted to practice law in New York and Maryland and is a professor of law emeritus at Widener University Commonwealth Law School in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He began his academic career at the Cornell Law School, where he served as director of the school's clinical program, and also has taught at Maryland, New Mexico, West Virginia, and Denver.

While he has focused his scholarship on evidence law, he has published a number of fly-fishing articles, including "The Letort Hoppers" in the Fall 2018 issue of this journal. Primarily a freshwater trout fly fisher, he has taken bonefish, salmon, and a 120-pound Pacific sail on flies. In addition to being a fly fisher, he is landscape painter and has been juried into a number of plein air painting festivals.

**R. W. Hafer** is an award-winning economist, author, and trout-fishing enthusiast. During his career, he has worked at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, was a distinguished research professor at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, and was most recently the director of the Center for Economics and the Environment at Lindenwood University. He has taught at several universities, including Washington University in St. Louis and St. Louis University; served as a consultant to the Central Bank of the Philippines and a visiting scholar with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta; and written more than one hundred academic articles, numerous books on monetary policy and financial markets, and many opinion pieces in national and regional newspapers. More importantly, Rik's work also has appeared in the *American Fly Fisher*. He resides in St. Louis, Missouri.

Gail Heyne Hafer



# Double Up

Cam Smythe



*Matt Smythe, our new director of membership and outreach, fishing with his son Jonah. Matt has been an AMFF ambassador since 2018.*

**W**E OFTEN ASK OURSELVES what value the museum provides to our members, supporters, and the fly-fishing community as a whole.

The *American Fly Fisher*—now in its forty-seventh year—offers years of research by some of the world’s most respected angling historians, who share their knowledge, uncover mysteries, and tell stories of yesteryear. We care for a first-rate collection of artifacts, photographs, film, books, and ephemera and make it available for researchers and scholars who work tirelessly to raise awareness of how fly fishing has affected the world in which we live. Our carefully curated exhibits showcase the art and artifacts of our sport, our public programs educate and engage, and our dedication to film is resonating with people and expanding our reach.

We are the stewards of the history, traditions, and practices of this great sport. But our constant striving is meaningless if we don’t have people to share it with. We must continue to build a community of anglers and historians and conservationists who respect not only the sport’s past, but its present and future. We seek people who recognize the value of this museum, support its mission and existence, and inspire continued stewardship in the next generation of anglers.

Our members are near and dear to us. So many of you have loyally supported us over the years. You have stayed in touch, donated auction and collection items, called us, written to us, become our friends. We wouldn’t be here today without you.

As you know, many hands make light work, so please join us in sharing the importance of our rich history. Membership is

support we need to thrive, so I’m asking you to be a part of an exciting campaign to double our numbers by the end of the year. Share our message with those you know who you think might benefit from all we have to offer.

To help us reach this goal, Matt Smythe has joined us as director of membership and outreach. Matt has years of experience in the industry and most recently served as the head of communications and member relations for the American Fly Fishing Trade Association (AFFTA). He’s a freelance writer and a passionate outdoorsman, and has been an ambassador for AMFF since 2018. Matt will be developing a calendar of member-only programs (including fishing trips, lectures, fly-tying lessons, and art and writing workshops). He plans to enhance member benefits to include new gifts (Wingo belts and Moleskine streamside notebooks); discounts with fishing brands; an annual membership giveaway (Simms G4 guide jacket and waders is first on the list!); and, partnering with renowned and budding sporting artists, a collectible decal program.

Members can sign up to receive our e-mail newsletters. Explore our website, and check out our Facebook and Instagram posts, which feature collection items, photos, and videos sure to inspire you. Access to the American Museum of Fly Fishing is at your fingertips, now more than ever before.

We are excited for this journey and grateful for your steadfast support. Help us double up!

SARAH FOSTER  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



## Catch and Release the Spirit of Fly Fishing!

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### MISSION

THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF FLY FISHING is the steward of the history, traditions, and practices of the sport of fly fishing and promotes the conservation of its waters. The museum collects, preserves, exhibits, studies, and interprets the artifacts, art, and literature of the sport and, through a variety of outreach platforms, uses these resources to engage, educate, and benefit all.

The museum provides public programs to fulfill its educational mission, including exhibitions, publications, gallery programs, and special events. Research services are available for members, visiting scholars, students, educational organizations, and writers. Contact [amff@amff.org](mailto:amff@amff.org) to schedule a visit.

### VOLUNTEER

Throughout the year, the museum needs volunteers to help with programs, special projects, events, and administrative tasks. You do not have to be an angler to enjoy working with us! Contact Samantha Pitcher at [spitcher@amff.org](mailto:spitcher@amff.org) to tell us how we would benefit from your skills and talents.

### SUPPORT

The American Museum of Fly Fishing relies on the generosity of public-spirited individuals for substantial support. If you wish to contribute funding to a specific program, donate an item for fundraising purposes, or place an advertisement in this journal, contact Sarah Foster at [sfoster@amff.org](mailto:sfoster@amff.org). We encourage you to give the museum consideration when planning for gifts, bequests, and memorials.

### JOIN

Membership Dues (per annum)

Patron	\$1,000
Sustainer	\$500
Contributor	\$250
Benefactor	\$100
Associate	\$50
Supporter	\$35

The museum is an active, member-oriented nonprofit institution. Membership dues include four issues of the *American Fly Fisher*; unlimited visits for your entire family to museum exhibitions, gallery programs, and special events; access by appointment to our 7,000-volume angling reference library; and a discount on all items sold by the museum on its website and inside the museum store, the Brookside Angler. To join, please contact Samantha Pitcher at [spitcher@amff.org](mailto:spitcher@amff.org).

We welcome contributions to the *American Fly Fisher*. Before making a submission, please review our Contributor's Guidelines on our website ([www.amff.org](http://www.amff.org)), or write to request a copy. The museum cannot accept responsibility for statements and interpretations that are wholly the author's.

