

The American
Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing



WINTER 2021

VOLUME 47 NUMBER 1

Notes from Overseas



Sara Wilcox

A red-footed booby over the Pacific Ocean.

THE AMERICAN FLY FISHER regularly attracts authors from outside the United States, but it's rare that a single issue features so many. In this time of travel restriction, I'm happy to welcome two British authors back to our pages and introduce a new contributor from Australia.

No doubt many of you are familiar with Alfred Ronalds, author of *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* (1836). His groundbreaking book was published when his first child, Maria, was three years old. After the family migrated to Australia, Maria took up the tying trade, designing and selling her own flies, which imitated the Australian insects. Beverley F. Ronalds, in "Maria Ronalds Shanklin: Pioneer Fly Tier in Australia" (page 2), offers a fascinating portrait, observing that "the evidence suggests that her work was well in advance of any other fly tying in the colony and that it helped to popularize fly fishing for Australian bass and other species." (Beverley, it turns out, is Alfred's great-great-granddaughter.)

China grass, Andrew Herd tells us, "qualifies as the most mysterious material in the entire history of angling." It appeared on the market as a potential replacement for silkworm gut, but no one had any idea what it was, not even John Waller Hills, whose account of the stuff inspired Herd to attempt to solve the mystery. Herd shares his research and discoveries in "The Mystery of China Grass," beginning on page 9.

Our friend Keith Harwood is back with an introduction to Sir Alec Douglas-Home, born in London into an aristocratic family with extensive estates in southern Scotland. A talented cricketer and keen angler, Douglas-Home served as Britain's prime minister in the early 1960s. For a brief biography and some fishing stories, turn to "Sir Alec Douglas-Home: The Angling Prime Minister" on page 20.

We're wintering once more and so continue our first-issue-of-the-year tradition: showcasing a painting from the

museum's collection, both on the cover and within these pages. Board of Trustees President Fred Polhemus, who helped us acquire *Rising to the Fly*, profiles the artist in "Mark Susinno: A Sense of Light and Space" (page 6).

The museum's Heritage event, usually held in New York City, turned virtual this year, like most events across the country. We missed being in the room together, but as Assistant Director of Development Samantha Pitcher put it, "without being bound by a geographical anchor, we were able to welcome guests from across the country and beyond." We're all getting used to a new normal as we find fresh and effective ways to stay connected. For Heritage coverage, turn to page 24.

We're pleased to announce that the 2021 Robert Traver Fly-Fishing Writing Award is now open for submissions (page 27). Look for publication of the 2020 winner in our Spring issue.

Finally, we occasionally share pieces from our library that readers may not be able to easily access on their own. There are a couple of birders on staff who particularly enjoyed a chapter in Charles Lose's *The Vanishing Trout: A Study of Trout and Trout Fishing in the Waters of Central Pennsylvania*—a piece that celebrates sights and sounds that surround the angler along the stream. In "The Trout Fisherman's Birds" (page 12), Lose calls the arrival of certain species in spring "a signal to the angler that his favorite sport is soon to begin and that the days will be few before birds and men are meeting again beside pool and riffle." He shares some of his encounters and a testimony or two by others, including one angler who, upon seeing a rare blue grosbeak next to a scarlet tanager in the same tree, "talked as much about this event as he did about the catching of his biggest trout." That's my kind of angler.

Stay hopeful.

KATHLEEN ACHOR
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ON THE COVER: Rising to the Fly, acrylic on panel by Mark Susinno. From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

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Maria Ronalds Shanklin: Pioneer Fly Tier in Australia

by Beverley F. Ronalds

MARIA SHANKLIN (1832–1884) was the daughter of Alfred Ronalds (1802–1860), who wrote *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* (1836). The book was and is revered for its illustrated catalog of insects and their artificial counterparts, which was founded on original entomological and ichthyological observation on Staffordshire's rivers as well as practical angling know-how. After the family migrated from Britain to Australia, where Ronalds died, Maria demonstrated the same skills in designing her own extensive range of artificial flies to mimic Australian insects. Like her father, she also established a successful business making and selling her recommended imitations. The evidence suggests that her work was well in advance of any other fly tying in the colony and that it helped to popularize fly fishing for Australian bass and other species. That Maria had little formal schooling and was still a child when her father stopped fly fishing makes her achievements particularly remarkable.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

The first child of Alfred Ronalds and Margaret (née Bond), Maria Barbara Ronalds was born on 15 December 1832 in Staffordshire, England.¹

Her father published his esteemed book when she was three, and from age seven to age fifteen he was offering for sale the artificial flies he had depicted in it.² It is recorded that she “had the management at a very early age” of this business when they were living in Wales.³ Her mother died when she was fourteen, after which she also cared for her young siblings.⁴

The family set sail for Australia's colony of New South Wales when she was fifteen years old, and she married Robert Shanklin in southern Victoria three years later.⁵ The couple had eight

children and were also the guardians of Maria's thirteen-year-younger sister. They moved around, first traveling 1,500 kilometers up to Queensland, and then to New South Wales, before coming back south to Ballarat in Victoria and in 1863 settling in Sale, 300 kilometers to the east



Maria Ronalds Shanklin. Twentieth-century reproduction of original photograph. Ronalds family papers.

in Gippsland. Maria died on 1 March 1884 at the age of fifty-one and was buried at the Sale Cemetery.⁶

Robert was an adventurous and public-spirited man. Qualifying as a pharmacist, he was a ship's doctor before establishing himself as a consulting chemist and wholesale druggist in the colony.⁷ He prospected for gold with some success in several remote parts of eastern Australia.⁸ He was also active in community affairs, serving on local boards and promoting new business opportunities for the Gippsland region.⁹

Notwithstanding Robert's outgoing personality and diverse interests, he and Maria were equals in their marriage to a degree that was unusual in the period. In addition to her fly-tying business, Maria set up a nursery and seed depot for agricultural and domestic markets,¹⁰ and later she had “taken the reins into her own hands” to find and run a farm to the north of Sale.¹¹ She and Robert were “amateur artists,” according to their daughter Henrietta (who became an esteemed painter),¹² and somehow she also found time to be “a warm, big-hearted mother.”¹³

Of Ronalds's twelve children, Maria perhaps most resembled her father in her interests, abilities, energy, and enterprise. Ronalds's obituary noted him as having “considerable and varied talent, combined with indomitable perseverance.”¹⁴ Maria was described by her daughter Henrietta as “a brainy woman, tireless, competent, and a really wonderful manager.” She had “pluck and endurance”: when the farmhouse caught fire and the family was “exhausted” after spending the night extinguishing it, “we all got round her, and with her arms around us as far as they would go, she said ‘And now, my darlings, we must start to work and tidy up.’ That was a bit of Mother!”¹⁵

EARLY AUSTRALIAN FLY FISHING AND TYING

Europeans would have tried fly fishing in amenable situations soon after arriving in Australia.¹⁶ Success with the so-called mullet fish on the Plenty River in Van Diemen's Land (now Tasmania) using the long-familiar Red Hackle and Fern Fly artificials was described in 1833.¹⁷ That year a Sydney merchant advertised imported hooks for artificial flies¹⁸ and,

two years later, fly rods and artificial flies made by Eaton & Deller in London could be purchased in Launceston.¹⁹

Interest in fly fishing remained muted, however, for several decades. While Alfred Ronalds was living in Australia (1849–1860), he had quite different objectives; he did auction a few fishing rods, lines, and gut but did not offer fly rods or artificial flies.²⁰ Other British fly fishermen wrote home that angling in the Antipodes was “rough and crude” and lamented the lack of tackle providers near good fishing spots.²¹ The fish were “innocent as babes, easily tempted with any kind of bait, and ignorant of the artificial fly,”²² although it was suggested that they would “become more accustomed to the sight and the taste of English flies”²³ over time as they “become more educated.”²⁴ In all, fly fishing in Australia was very different from the pastime to which British gentlemen were accustomed.

The situation began to change when the brown trout was introduced into Australia. The arrival of fertilized ova in 1864 from England and the subsequent hatching, gradual maturing, and assimilation of the fish generated considerable excitement and anticipation.²⁵ Fly fishing for trout started at the end of the decade in Tasmania using common British flies²⁶ and, after some early disappointments, suitable waters on the mainland began to be stocked in the mid-1870s.²⁷

In the meantime, it became known that “Gippsland perch” on the Thomson and La Trobe Rivers near Sale rose freely to the fly.²⁸ The main fish being referred to here is now called the Australian bass (*Macquaria novemaculeata*).²⁹ Because it gave excellent play and was good eating as well, fly fishing became popular in the area. This was aided by Maria quickly establishing a “lucrative factory”³⁰—later called an “industry”³¹—making “imitations of colonial flies.”³² (She had also just given birth to her eighth child.) Anglers used these artificial flies “much more successfully than the imported article.”³³

Her large range of flies mimicked the grasshopper, tree locust, cricket, and varieties of moth, caterpillar, dragon fly, and other flies.³⁴ She charged two shillings for three flies³⁵ or six shillings a dozen,³⁶ which was more than twice the price of her father’s flies in Britain. They were available from her husband’s dispensary in Sale and, after he moved up to Maria’s farm in 1877, Bowen’s general store became the agent.³⁷

She named her “most killing fly of all” the Wennol.³⁸ No example, picture, or pattern has been found, but what do survive are several similar descriptions over a thirty-five-year period. In 1876 the

Wennol was “exhibiting the colours of the tadpole—olive green on the back, and pearl white underneath”;³⁹ it was later “big,” “with black body and white under,”⁴⁰ and in 1911 it had a “fair-sized hook, white body and dark wings.”⁴¹ *Wennol* is Welsh for the swallow, shuttle, or shuttlecock, and many swallows have this coloring. The fly possibly also resembled a traditional shuttlecock in shape. Newspaper articles recorded the success of the Wennol on Sale’s rivers,⁴² and before long it was “celebrated”⁴³ and “famous”⁴⁴ in the region.

Maria’s achievement was as pioneering as her father’s work forty years earlier, because there was so little prior knowledge and experience upon which to draw. Scientific literature was lacking on Australian river-based insect life and the habits of fish, and there was no guide to fly fishing for Gippsland perch.⁴⁵ Maria emulated his skills in angling and entomology as well as in fly design and tying in producing her array of artificial flies.

The broader adoption of Maria’s flies was due in part to one of her husband’s contacts in Ballarat, where trout and other fish species were being introduced. James William King, who was president of the Fish Acclimatisation Society and the Anglers’ Association in the town, acquired and showed a collection of Maria’s work in Ballarat in 1875.⁴⁶ The consensus was that “the imitations are very perfect indeed, even to the most minute detail,”⁴⁷ and that they are “most enticing as well as the neatest specimens.”⁴⁸ They were found to be “very effective” as well.⁴⁹

As trout fishing began to take off, Maria enlarged her catalog to include local flies suited to trout in Victorian and Tasmanian waters, and she also made traditional British patterns.⁵⁰ All were “spoken very highly of by the best judges.”⁵¹ To extend her market further, she would also apparently replicate any insect sent to her.⁵² There was no other comparable business in Australia.

With this success there was, of course, a little negative press. One sporting editor thought that the imitations were “too large compared with the originals, especially in early flies” and “the colors Mrs Shanklin uses are a little too bright.”⁵³ He was presumably using traditional British trout flies as his benchmark, whereas Maria found that some larger, showy flies attracted Gippsland perch and even trout in Australian waters. In another incident, a Mr. Thomas, who had publicized his ongoing success with the Wennol in the newspapers,⁵⁴ later apparently implied to an angling novice from Melbourne that he was its inventor.⁵⁵

A little of Maria’s work has been preserved by descendants. Each insect was painted from two perspectives, one showing it alighted on the water and other illustrating its belly. The insects depicted are a mayfly, midge, and stonefly (or possibly caddisfly). On top lie corresponding artificial flies, although these have been flattened and damaged over time. The hooks, as expected for the period, are blind, and their tips have been removed for safety.

During this era, considerable excitement was generated by the large-scale



Example of Maria’s insect paintings and artificial flies.
Courtesy of Jenny Techow-Coleman and Ric Techow.



*Maria's medal awarded at the 1880–1881 International Exhibition.
Courtesy of Jenny Techow-Coleman and Ric Techow.*

exhibitions organized periodically around the world. The International Exhibition was held in the southern hemisphere for the first time in 1880–1881 in Melbourne. Maria's followers encouraged her to enter, and her display of "artificial trout and other flies" won a medal.⁵⁶ It appears to have been the only medal awarded for artificial flies, even though renowned British fishing tackle firms had entered.⁵⁷ Her bronze medallion is 76 mm in diameter and features Queen Victoria's head in profile. Around the edge are the words MRS SHANKLIN, GIPPSLAND – [?] FLIES. The medal was partially melted in a house fire.

At the end of the International Exhibition, Maria donated her exhibit of 108 artificial flies to the Industrial and Technological Museum in Melbourne (now part of Museums Victoria), where it remained on display for many years.⁵⁸ She was unable to capitalize fully on this further renown, as she died just three years later. Unfortunately, her exhibit cannot now be located in the museum.

Other firms gradually began to offer a range of artificials tailored to Australian insects. The well-respected Eastway's store in Sydney was an example, which had been selling fishing accessories for

several decades. In the new century, the firm arranged for insect specimens upon which trout fed to be collected and sent to fishing tackle makers in England, with their imitations duly shipped back for sale.⁵⁹ Local designs by early Australian angling author Howard Joseland were also made in Britain.⁶⁰ An Australian fly-tying industry only again came into its own during the first half of the twentieth century.⁶¹

Regarding Gippsland perch, the fish began to disappear from around Sale in the 1920s. Local environmental conditions were changing after a permanent opening from the river to the sea was dredged and other riverine modifications were made.⁶² The Wennol appears to have met its demise in the same period. These rivers are being restocked with Australian bass in the twenty-first century, and it is possible that a modern interpretation of the Wennol might again become a killing fly. It would be a fitting tribute to the early enterprise of Maria Shanklin, who applied her artistic, practical, and scientific skills to create a successful fly-tying industry in Australia nearly 150 years ago.

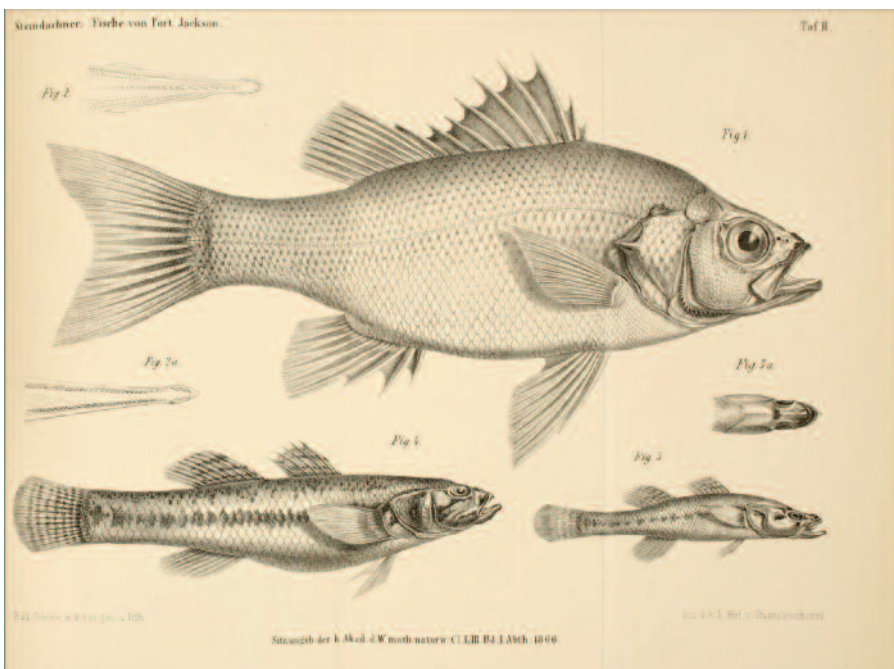
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The author thanks her distant cousins for allowing their cherished family possessions to be photographed and published. She also acknowledges the assistance of Dr. Alice Wells and Dr. Keith Bayless at the Australian National Insect Collection.

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A line drawing of *Macquaria novemaculeata* (now called Australian bass) by noted Austrian ichthyologist Franz Steindachner, who named the species in 1866. From *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftliche Classe* (vol. 53, 1866), following page 480.

Mark Susinno: A Sense of Light and Space

Roxanne Kamin



Mark Susinno painting in his studio.

MARK SUSINNO STANDS before his easel, contemplating. He's not contemplating what to paint or how to execute it. Decades of experience as a classically trained artist and a life-long passion for angling afford him great confidence and conviction. Rather, he considers how to paint a unique image: a perspective, composition, and design different from his previous works that will be visually and compositionally interesting. Even on cold, late-fall days when he's not chasing fish, Susinno's muscle memory—both physical and mental—is ready to apply paint to canvas to produce works for which he has achieved international recognition and acclaim. It's not the raw material itself, but its emotional and creative effect that has his attention. Each canvas is a new journey into his own emotions and creativity, fueled by his pursuit of fish and the beautiful surroundings—both above water and below—in which he finds them.

Born in 1957 in Washington, D.C., Mark Susinno grew up in the Maryland suburbs of the nation's capital. His first

experiences with fishing were in his grandfather's boat in the Chesapeake Bay, where he fished for bluefish and the occasional rockfish, but mostly for spot, croaker, blue crabs, and sometimes the endearingly hideous oyster toadfish. Susinno enjoyed fishing, but mostly he loved being out on the water with his grandfather and whichever of his parents, siblings, uncles, or cousins was along for the trip that day.

He moved to Brooklyn to attend Pratt Institute on a four-year, full-tuition merit scholarship. Upon graduation in 1979 with highest honors and a bachelor of fine arts degree in painting, Susinno went to work as a torch cutter and truck driver for a scrap metal and dismantling firm in Brooklyn. In his free time, he was primarily creating abstract forged and welded ironwork sculpture and painted-wood wall constructions. He continued to make art in a variety of media and styles for the next several years, but didn't settle back into a realistic representational style until the mid-1980s, right about the time he began to tire of a disparaging boss at a bulletproof-door fabrication shop. Seek-

ing a change in direction, he began to enter waterfowl and trout stamp contests.

Susinno won the 1986 Maryland Trout Stamp competition and decided to concentrate on art professionally. He quit his job to become a fish artist, despite the fact that he had only recently gotten back into fishing under the guidance of his younger brother, Byron. "My first fish painting was a side view of a brown trout, which I did for my brother," he says. "When I began to enter trout stamp contests, it became necessary to paint some sort of underwater scene around the fish, which I viewed as mostly a chore. But over years of accumulating underwater photos I had taken primarily of habitat, I came to enjoy painting the background as much as or more than painting the fish."

Susinno's early career received a significant boost when he provided some of his first prints to the Trout Unlimited national office in Northern Virginia for their banquet program. Not long after Susinno met Dave Kolbert, his contact at TU, Kolbert moved to Minnesota to work



Original painting for the 1991 Pennsylvania Trout/Salmon Stamp, acrylic on rag watercolor paper (8 x 12 inches) and one of the stamps (inset). Images provided by Mark Susinno.



The End of Winter, acrylic on linen on panel (20 x 16 inches). Image provided by Fred Polhemus.

for a wildlife art publishing company called Wild Wings. He convinced the company to publish some of Susinno's images as prints; thus began an affiliation with Wild Wings that continues to this day. Back in the late 1980s and through the 1990s, the wildlife print market was in its heyday, and Susinno concentrated heavily on warm-water species like bass, walleye, pike, and muskies. When the public's appetite for wildlife reproductions began to cool in the early 2000s, he

realized he would need to focus more on selling originals. Consequently, he began to favor cold-water species like trout and salmon, as well as saltwater flats species like bonefish, tarpon, and permit.

Susinno has since specialized in painting underwater depictions of freshwater and saltwater game fish and scenes of fly fishers pursuing their obsession. Along the way, he has added twenty-one more fishing stamps to his list of credits, including the 1991 First-of-State Pennsylvania

Trout/Salmon Stamp and the 2004 First-of-State Texas Freshwater Stamp.

Of his own approach to painting, Susinno offers this in his artist's statement:

I'm a fisherman and that fact affects how I approach making paintings of game fish. I enjoy suggesting the sense of light and space of the shallow-water aquatic environment, but I also feel the need to present the fish themselves such that they are recognizable to the average fisherman, who is most familiar with

how a fish looks when it is out of water. When painting fish (whether in oil or acrylic), my main focus is on creating an interesting abstract arrangement of shapes, colors, textures, and patterns, which I hope will also convey a more or less convincing impression of an underwater scene.

One of the highlights of Susinno's career was the opportunity to get to know Lefty Kreh. Susinno was introduced to Kreh early on, and because they lived less than an hour apart, Kreh asked him to provide illustrations for some of his national magazine articles and books. Their geographic proximity meant that Kreh could demonstrate whatever technique he wanted Susinno to illustrate at

the local pond where he gave fly-casting lessons. As a result, Susinno became a much better caster. He relished the times they got to fish together, most often in Lefty's boat on either the Potomac or the Susquehanna, where they would sometimes run into Bob and Bobby Clouser guiding on the river. Susinno told me, "Everyone knows where he or she was during the attacks of September 11, 2001. I was fishing the Susquehanna with Lefty in the boat of my buddy and local fishing guide Jesse Stoner."

His passion for fishing and need to gather reference material have led Susinno to Alaska after Pacific salmon, trout, char, sheefish, grayling, and pike; Florida for tarpon, bonefish, snook, sea trout, redfish,

and barracuda; Labrador for big brook trout; Scotland and many North American locales for browns and rainbows; the East Coast for stripers, bluefish, and dolphin; Texas for big largemouth bass; and too many places to mention for his beloved smallmouth bass. Susinno is an avid fly fisher in both fresh and salt water. His wife Roxanne, also an avid fly fisher, accompanies him on many reference-gathering excursions. His fascinating experiences, travels to diverse locations and fisheries, and love for both painting and angling are Susinno's greatest inspirations for his art.

FRED POLHEMUS
AMFF PRESIDENT



Rising to the Fly, acrylic on panel (16 x 20 inches).
From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.



Shallow Water Hunters, oil on linen (24 x 36 inches).
Image provided by Fred Polhemus.

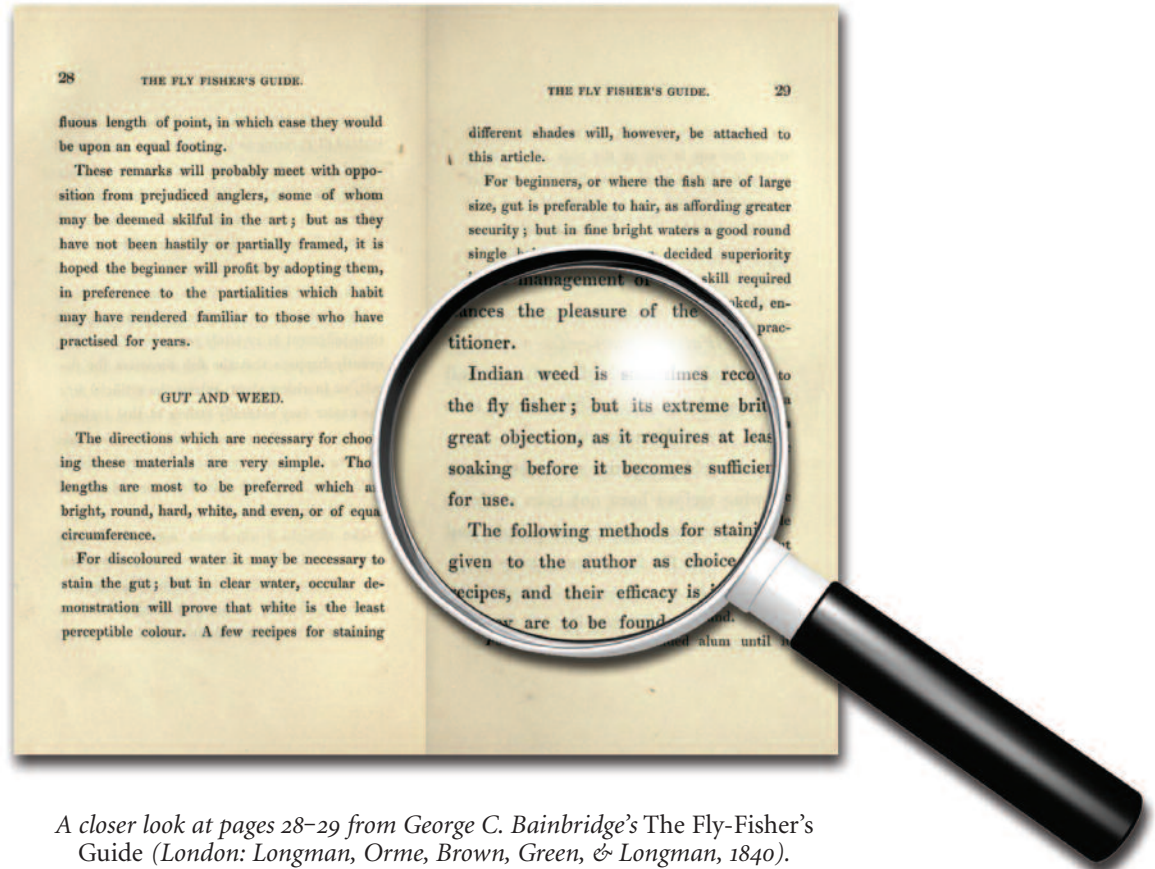


The artist on the water at
Cape Lookout, North Carolina.

Roxanne Kamin

The Mystery of China Grass

by Andrew Herd



A closer look at pages 28–29 from George C. Bainbridge's *The Fly-Fisher's Guide* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longman, 1840).

SILKWORM GUT—familiarily known as *gut*—dominated the world of our angling ancestors to a quite distressing extent. For much of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, it was the material of choice for leaders, having replaced horsehair, which suffered from having a much lower breaking strength. Gut was a natural extract made from the silk gland of domesticated silk moths belonging to the family *Bombycidae*, and making it involved killing the caterpillar. The process was messy, supplies were variable, and production was highly seasonal. The story of silkworm gut deserves an article of its own, but if you wish to know more, there is a lengthy summary of it in *The History of Fly Fishing*, now in its fourth edition, from which some of the text here is derived, as well as several articles previously published in this journal.¹

Portugal, Italy, and Sicily all had their own industries, but most was produced in the Spanish province of Murcia, from where gut was exported in hanks of a hundred pieces. Roundness, thinness, and transparency were regarded as the hallmark of good gut, but this ideal combination was far less common than our forebears wished, sparking a never-ending search for a replacement. The major challenge that European-sourced gut posed was that the maximum length of an individual strand was in the order of 22 inches, with many only 14 or 15 inches long and a few as short as 11. The consequence was that while we take single-piece, extruded, 9-foot leaders for granted today, our grandfathers could not have built a similar setup without introducing up to half a dozen knots. In this respect, gut represented a step back from horsehair, and if a replacement could be found

that was available in longer lengths, then it was up for serious consideration.

Our focus today is on one of those rivals, a substance that was called China grass—or, less commonly, Indian weed—so I will refer to it as the former throughout, except where appropriate. China grass qualifies as the most mysterious material in the entire history of angling. Such references to it as do exist tend to be short on detail, but apart from the fact that the strands were much longer than those of gut, it seems that its characteristics were otherwise broadly similar. Various adverts offered this exotic substance for sale, the earliest in an advertisement in 1689,² and it was recommended by Howlett in 1706,³ Ustonson in 1770,⁴ and Bainbridge in 1816.⁵ Brown still hadn't seen fit to delete his reference to it (as India grass) as late as 1857, so some must have been exported to America.⁶

Enough references to the material survive to deduce that a trickle of exports made their way to the West but that supplies were never quite good enough for it to become commonplace.

The trouble with China grass was that no one had the faintest idea what it was, and just about the only statement we can make with confidence is that nobody smoked it. Even the astute John Waller Hills, onetime president of the Flyfishers' Club and the author of *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout*, was unable to clear up the mystery, and it was reading his account of China grass thirty years ago that left me with an ambition to solve it.⁷ According to contemporary accounts, grass had the advantage of being as fine as gut, and it was said to be harder to see under water than either horsehair or silk, but it was also brittle, with some holding that it required even more soaking in water than gut did to make it supple. But what was it?

Although the terms used for this mysterious material point to it being vegetable in origin, it cannot simultaneously have been a grass and a seaweed, so my assumption has always been that the names were bestowed at the European end of the supply chain. The importers knew little about it, but the product had to be called something, and because its origin lay somewhere in what they knew as the Far East, then China grass or Indian weed it became. The most complete of the older references is found in Brookes:

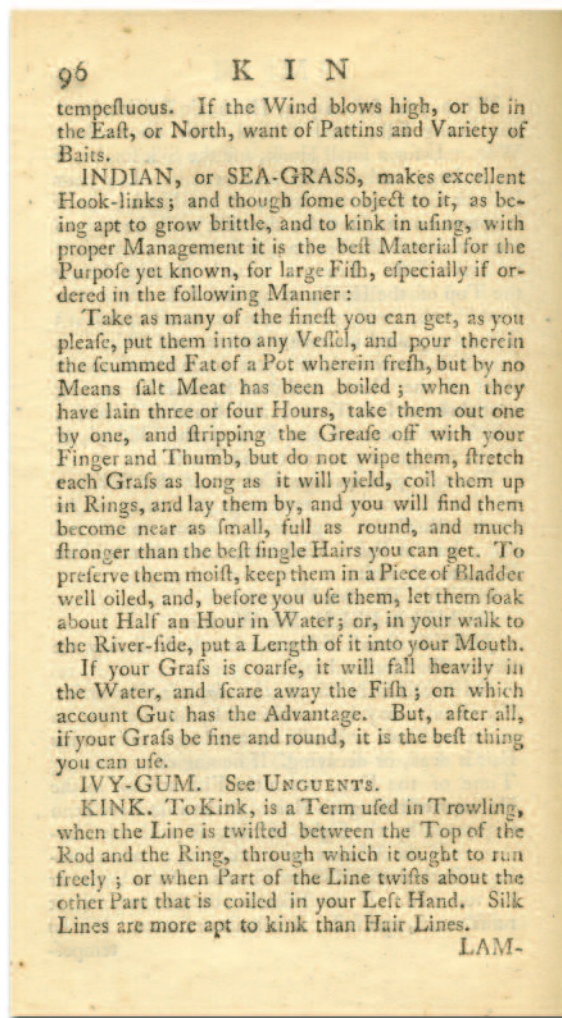
INDIAN, or SEA-GRASS, makes excellent Hook-links; and though some object to it, as being apt to grow brittle, and to kink in using, with proper Management it is the best Material for the Purpose yet known, for large Fish, especially if ordered in the following Manner:

Take as many of the finest you can get, as you please, put them into any Vessel, and pour therein the scummed Fat of a Pot wherein fresh, but by no means Salt Meat has been boiled; when they have lain three or four Hours, take them out one by one, and stripping the Grease off with your Finger and Thumb, but do not wipe them, stretch each Grass as long as it will yield, coil them up in Rings and lay them by, and you will find them become near as small, full as round, and much stronger than the best single Hairs you can get. To preserve them

moist, keep them in a Piece of Bladder well oiled, and, before you use them, let them soak about Half an Hour in Water; or, in your walk to the Riverside, put a length of it into your Mouth.

If the Grass is coarse, it will fall heavily on the water, and scare away the Fish; on which account Gut has the advantage. But, after all, if your Grass be fine and round, it is the best thing you can use.⁸

There is a clue here, because the treatment that Brookes described as could easily have been used to condition silkworm gut, so the two materials must have had broadly similar properties. However, if Indian weed was as good as Brookes



Richard Brookes's description of Indian grass in his *The Art of Angling* (London: T. Lowndes, 1766), 96.

says it was, then it is mighty peculiar that it didn't remain on sale for longer than it did. A trawl of the literature reveals few accounts of China grass in Europe after the 1850s, which is when the supply of Spanish silkworm gut at last began to keep pace with the expanding market. This suggests that Brookes's favorite wasn't every-

thing it was cracked up to be, because a leader material with the combination of attributes he was suggesting should have wiped out gut overnight, had only supplies been adequate.

The paragraph that set me off on the final leg of my quest to find out which grass (or weed) it might have been is hidden away in R. M. Clarke's little-known *Angler's Desideratum*:

It is not more than fifty years since it was known in Europe what gut was. In general it was conceived to be an Indian weed, till a gentleman named Oliver, a Scotchman, found it out to be the guts of the silk worm. Most all were sceptic and incredulous; in order to convince, he gave them ocular demonstration, by making some in their presence.⁹

Despite this confident declaration, a decade after the *Desideratum* was published, many anglers were none the wiser, and so, for example, G. P. R. Pulman believed that Indian weed came from a grass "peculiar to the shores of the Mediterranean."¹⁰ At that time, even the origins of the ubiquitous silkworm gut were lost on many, and the *Fishing Gazette* featured letters inquiring what it might be as late as 1901.¹¹ The question for us today, then, is whether China grass was a distinct material from gut or whether the two were the same thing taking advantage of end-user ignorance to masquerade under different names.

Speculation about the true identity of China grass surfaced often enough in the angling press that in 1894, Robert Marston, the editor of the *Fishing Gazette*, was prompted to inquire if readers knew of any surviving samples.¹² His short note drew several replies, including one from William Brown, the Aberdeen tackle dealer,¹³ and another from H. J. Chaytor, who provided a sample that he believed to date to about 1714. This Marston sent to the curator of museums at the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew, who answered that he had

"no doubt that it was Chinese silkworm gut, proving that the Chinese have a large silkworm from which they obtain much greater lengths of gut than we get from Spain, but of much inferior quality we should say."¹⁴ There was a suggestion in the lengthy article that Marston printed in the *Gazette* about which species of

moth might be involved, but no firm conclusion was reached about what China grass might be.

There the matter lay until 1910, when L. J. Graham Clarke sent another sample to Marston. At that time Marston—a towering figure in British angling—was serving his second term as president of the Flyfishers' Club, a coincidence whose relevance will become apparent in a moment. The availability of a second sample of this by then mythical material presented a golden opportunity, and Marston forwarded it to the director of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, only for the latter to reply that the sample agreed "closely in external appearance and structure with a sample of 'silkworm gut' from China."¹⁵

Game, set, and match, thought I, so R. M. Clarke was right all along. However, there was a twist in the tale. According to a Royal Botanic Garden publication from the early 1890s (which was cited in part in the 1894 *Fishing Gazette* correspondence), it seems probable that Graham Clarke's specimen came from a different species of moth than the heavily domesticated one that was used to produce silkworm gut in Spain. The insect concerned may very possibly have been one of the tussar moths, which are found in the wild right across southern Asia, including India. As evidence for this, apart from spinning an entirely different type of cocoon, the Chinese gut-producing caterpillars fed on oak leaves—rather than the mulberry that the Spanish *Bombyx* silk moths required. These Chinese moths produced extraordinary lengths of thick gut, as much as 30 feet if Kew's report is to be believed, although 5-foot lengths were more normal. So at last we have a material that was visually similar to Spanish gut and yet possessed markedly different qualities.¹⁶ This gut was extracted using more or less exactly the same process as was used for the Spanish product, and although the Chinese fished with it, it had the disadvantages of being only about a quarter of the strength of similar-diameter gut produced in Europe and of becoming brittle with storage. This fits well enough with the description of China grass to be the answer to our riddle.

A similar product could be bought in Japan, which explains why John James Hardy had been motivated to send a sample of "the latest make of Japanese gut" to Marston in 1903 without having made any connection to China.¹⁷ However, it was confirmed by F. M. Jonas, a long-term resident of Osaka, that the Japanese did not manufacture any fishing gut, but instead imported the raw product from China.¹⁸ It is more than possible

that exports were made to India as well, but whatever the case may be, Hardy's material was China grass under another name.¹⁹

Just to add to the fun of the chase, from time to time I have encountered references to unreasonably long specimens of "Spanish" gut—for example, the 42-inch lengths exhibited by Allcock at the Paris exhibition of 1900—and these may also have been the material formerly known as China grass.²⁰ By coincidence, the Paris report cited here was the work of Charles Payton, who was the president of the Flyfishers' Club in 1905—quite how three senior figures from the institution managed to become entangled in this obscure story I know not.

China grass must have had its attractions, but Spanish gut was stronger, and if properly stored would remain serviceable for years, which outweighed the disadvantage of its lack of length. So China grass, Indian weed, or whatever you may be pleased to call it, faded into obscurity before making its way into angling legend. Unless a third sample turns up, then this article is probably as close as we will ever get to solving the mystery.

ENDNOTES

1. Andrew Herd, *The History of Fly Fishing*, 4th ed. (Ellesmere: Medlar Press, 2019), 180–91. See also Lothar H. H. Martin's "The History of Silkworm Gut," John Mundt's "Silk Fly Line Manufacturing: A Brief History," and David R. Klausmeyer's "Smooth as Silk," all in the Fall 1991 issue of the *American Fly Fisher* (vol. 17, no. 3, 3–7, 8–13, 12–13) and Paul Schullery's "Fly Fishing's Three-Century Saga of Silkworm Gut" in the Summer 2006 issue (vol. 32, no. 3, 2–9).

2. In James Chetham, *The Angler's Vade Mecum* (London: Printed for T[homas] Basset, at the George near St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet-street; and W[illiam] Brown, at the Fish in Black Horse Alley end in Fleet-street, 1689). The advertisement can be found on the last text page (no number) of the book.

3. Robert Howlett, *The Angler's Sure Guide* (London: Printed by J. H. for G. Conyers at the Ring, and T. Ballard at the Rising Sun, in Little-Brittain, 1706), 13.

4. Advertisement in *The Compleat Fisher* (London: Printed for Onesimus Ustonson, 1770).

5. George C. Bainbridge, *The Fly-Fisher's Guide* (Liverpool: Published by the author, 1816), 34.

6. John J. Brown, *The American Angler's Guide* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1857), 32.

7. John Waller Hills, *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout* (London: Philip Allan & Co., 1921), 70 and footnote on 81.

8. Richard Brookes, *The Art of Angling* (London: T. Lowndes, 1766), 96.

9. R. M. Clarke, *The Angler's Desideratum* (Edinburgh: Printed by M. Anderson, 1839), 11.

10. G. P. R. Pulman, *The Vade-Mecum of Fly-Fishing for Trout* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1851), 87.

11. G.T., "Gut" [letter], *The Fishing Gazette* (vol. XLII, 20 April 1901), 279.

12. Robert Marston, "Indian Grass," *The Fishing Gazette* (vol. XXIX, 10 November 1894), 474.

13. William Brown, "Indian Grass" [letter], *The Fishing Gazette* (vol. XXIX, 17 November 1894), 496.

14. Quoted in Robert Marston, "Indian Grass, Indian Weed, and Silkworm Gut," *The Fishing Gazette* (vol. XXIX, 1 December 1894), 528–29.

15. Robert Marston, "China Grass, Indian Weed, etc." *The Fishing Gazette* (vol. LXI, 10 November 1910), 459–60.

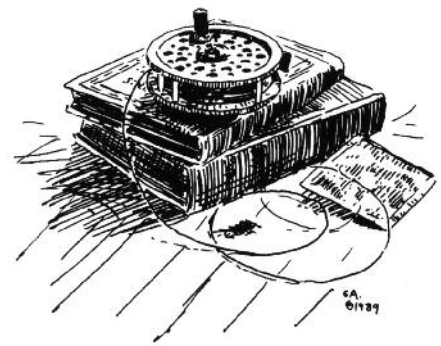
16. "Chinese Silkworm Gut," *Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information* (No. 70, Royal Botanic Gardens, 1892), 222–27. Had John Hills been aware of this reference and the *Fishing Gazette* articles above and below, he would almost certainly have been able to solve the problem, but computers hadn't been invented in his day.

17. Robert Marston, "Strands of Gut Nearly 5ft. in Length," *The Fishing Gazette* (vol. XLVII, 28 November 1903), 331.

18. F. M. Jonas, "Long Fishing Gut from the Far East," *The Fishing Gazette* (vol. XLVI-II, 7 May 1904), 297.

19. To add to the confusion, there was an unrelated material based on twisted silk that was marketed from just before World War I under the name Japanese gut and as various brands, including Jagut and Subgut. This was manufactured in tremendous lengths, but it has nothing to do with either China grass or European silkworm gut, and it too is no longer available, having vanished after the outbreak of World War II. Japanese gut may or may not have been the same thing as China twist, which was made of strands of silk twisted together and coated in what may have been a type of varnish.

20. Charles Payton, "British Juror in Class 53: Fishing Appliances," in *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners for the Paris International Exhibition, Volume II* (London: HMSO, 1900), 133.



The Trout Fisherman's Birds

by Charles Lose

ALWAYS WHEN I have tried to decide which one of half a dozen or more birds is most definitely associated in my mind with my trout fishing trips, I have finally come back to the whip-poor-will. Why this is, I cannot explain fully even to myself. Probably it is because so many times at dusk of a May or a June evening the loud complaint of the whip-poor-will on the mountainside, or at the edge of the road, has been the accompaniment of my fishing. I can still remember how greatly the cries of the whip-poor-will impressed me on my first fishing trip into the mountains with my father. One night we slept, or tried to sleep, on the floor of the covered porch of a little house that stood close to the road. Again and again a whip-poor-will came to a fence post a few feet away and began its sharp, ringing call. The air fairly pulsed with the noise. We were so close that the cluck, which followed the whistle, could be distinctly heard. Sometimes another bird, not far away, would join the clamor until I would wonder how any one could sleep as my father did in such a deafening noise. Usually however, the bird is farther away from the fisherman and at such times its lonely, plaintive cry coming to him from the deep woods seems to be the very spirit of the mountains.

Occasionally when I have lingered too long at a pool far back in the mountains and have been compelled to feel with my feet the uncertain road along the stream

The following is Chapter XIX in Charles Lose's book, *The Vanishing Trout: A Study of Trout and Trout Fishing in the Waters of Central Pennsylvania* (Altoona, Pa.: The Times Tribune Co., 1931). Charles Lose was chair of the Nature Study Committee of the Pennsylvania Alpine Club, as well as an educator, naturalist, and conservationist.

Watercolors by John James Audubon in *Birds of America*, first published as a series between 1827 and 1838 in Edinburgh and London. High-resolution files of all 435 Audubon prints from the book are available for free online, courtesy of the John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove in Audubon, Pennsylvania, and the Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, Audubon Collection, at <http://www.audubon.org/birds-of-america>.



Whip-poor-will (Plate LXXXII).

back to camp, a pair of whip-poor-wills would accompany me. They would sit in the path until I was quite close to them, then up they would go with a flutter of wings and loud clucks that might have startled me if I had not been expecting them. They were probably conducting me past and some distance away from a fallen tree trunk on top of which among some decayed wood they had their eggs

or their downy little ones. Not infrequently I have had the company of a pair of these birds for some distance along the road as I was driving homeward after a long day with the trout. I could seldom see them and knew that they were there only by the flutter and cluck they made as they rose almost under my horse's feet. I always liked their companionship on the lonely mountain roads.



Clockwise from above right: Bank Swallow (Plate CCCLXXXV), Eastern Phoebe (listed by Audubon as Pewit Flycatcher, Plate CXX), and Night Hawk (Plate CXLVII).

The bank swallow, the phoebe bird, and the night hawk, three other fly catchers, have also endeared themselves to the trout fisherman by meeting him frequently along his streams. Where the stream is broad and open the swallows race and wheel about throughout the entire day. The most persistent fisherman is hardly so early or so late at the stream as they are. Sometimes they hawk so close to the water for insects that they break the surface here and there and fool the angler into believing that trout are rising. But their arrival in the spring is always a signal to the angler that his favorite sport is soon to begin and that

the days will be few before birds and men are meeting again beside pool and riffle. Under the bridge or a projecting ledge of rocks near the stream, the angler looks for the phoebe bird's moss covered nest. He is seldom disappointed for the phoebe bird loves the sound of running water nearly as much as the angler does. On a little twig near its nest it will sit for hours uttering at intervals its plaintive little cry and darting out now and then to take an insect on the wing. When its nest is crowded with young birds the phoebe bird watches the angler sharply as he passes close by under the arches of the bridge but the bird may trust him to

do no harm. For the sight of the little brown bird and its gray nest and the sound of its wild sweet song are pleasant features of his trip along the stream. When the swallow and the phoebe bird are ending their long day, the night hawk is just beginning its hunt for food, sometimes high in the air and sometimes down near the stream. Once in awhile the angler stops in the twilight to watch the maneuvers of one of the birds. It will rise high in the air by short ascents and with sharp cries, then comes swooping straight down to turn at the end of its head-on-dive with a deep booming sound that has probably given it its other



Osprey (Plate LXXXI).

name of bull bat. When a number of these birds are flying back and forth, high overhead, in a mountain valley, it is a sight worth watching. When dusk has come, the birds in their chase after insects may come quite close to the angler. Once after night fall, a night hawk took one of my flies while I was making a back cast. I was standing in mid-stream and casting upstream over the lower end of a pool. The stream at this point was narrow and trees stood close on both banks. For several minutes the night hawk had been going up and down the stream not far above my head. When the bird first took the fly I thought I had caught on a branch of a tree. Then I felt the line carried up into the air and heard a great fluttering, I reeled in but before I could get hold of the bird it tore itself loose. It was a unique experience and must have surprised the bird as much as it did me.

The angler whose trout stream is one of considerable size is likely to know more or less intimately the osprey and the great blue heron. These two large birds are too shy and wary to permit the near approach of the angler but as he rounds the bend of the stream the angler may surprise the one perched on a dead branch high above the stream or the other standing on one leg in the edge of the water. When alarmed, the big hawk starts away with a shrill cry that is repeated every minute or two until it is out of sight. At rare intervals the angler, while eating his lunch in some secluded spot on the bank, may be lucky enough to see the osprey poise itself over a pool not far away, then drop into the water with a great splash and bear away a fish, carrying it always head first in true fisherman's style. The blue heron while apparently always asleep is never to be caught napping. At the first



Great Blue Heron (Plate CCXI).

glimpse of the angler it stretches its long neck, puts down its second leg, and then goes flapping away as if greatly put out at being disturbed. If disturbed several times by the angler it will finally make a wide detour far up the mountainside and return to the place from which it was first driven. It is a quiet bird and expresses disapproval of the angler, who would interrupt its meditation, only by its disconsolate attitude. For ten or twelve years a pair of bald eagles nested on top of a high cliff close beside my favorite trout stream. I always wanted to see one of these birds rob the osprey of its prey but I never succeeded. Occasionally one of the eagles would make a threatening demonstration as the osprey went slowly up or down the valley, but this was as far as it went. I was so fortunate, however, as to see one evening an eagle sailing in the sky above the valley, a heron passing around me far up along the mountainside, and an osprey returning to its nest down the stream. The three big birds were in sight at one time, the eagle high above, the big fish hawk down just above the tree tops, and the blue heron between. For me it was the event of that particular fishing trip.

The belted kingfisher and the little green heron, being somewhat less alert than their larger kindred, the osprey and the great blue heron, are more familiar to the angler of the trout streams. If it were not for the kingfisher's reprehensible habit of spearing little trout in the brooks the angler would almost be willing to look on it as a fellow fisherman when he sees it poised with beating wings just above the surface of the stream or hears it wind its reel as it starts from a bough hanging over the water. But the kingfisher will follow the course of the most remote trout streams and its loud whirring cry is generally very welcome to the solitary angler on such a stream. Its nest, at the end of a five foot tunnel in the bank, is often not far away from the little green heron's nest of sticks and twigs on the branch of a tree close to the creek. The little heron fishes in the margin of the stream and seldom disturbs the trout. If it had a gay tune instead of a dismal croak it would be in every way acceptable to the angler. But then its hoarse note of protest when disturbed in its nap on the limb of a tree or at its fishing along the shore has the redeeming feature of being merely amusing. To come unobserved close to one of these birds and then watch it



Above: Belted Kingfisher (Plate LXXVII).

Right: Green Heron (Plate CCCXXXIII).



Ruffed Grouse (Plate XLI).

stretch itself to its full length and go slowly flapping across the stream hoarsely calling its complaints is a joy to the angler. I have known quick footed anglers to try to overtake the little green heron before it got fully under way but I never knew one to succeed. Despite the ridicule cast upon it, the little green heron is dear to the angler. He would miss it from the stream as greatly as he would miss the little sandpiper that stands on a stone surrounded by water and bobs its head frantically to him as he goes up or down the stream.

One of the birds well known to the angler of our mountain trout streams is the ruffed grouse. In April he hears the cock drumming on his log in the thicket and in June and July he surprises the hen conveying her brood of downy chicks across the path. He may have seen her nest of a dozen or more eggs a few weeks before in the leaves under a log or beside a stump. Sometimes he flushes a grouse from its dust bath in an old road or from the edge of the water where it has come to drink. One spring I was fishing a stream that, at one place, ran past a long, high, bare cliff standing a hundred yards back from the stream. A cleared field lay between the stream and the base of the cliff. Each evening as I passed this place, two grouse rose from the bushes on the bank and beat their way on their short, strong wings to the top of the cliff. It was a hard climb for them and they were in sight for two or three minutes. I came to expect them on my way to camp in the evening. It was on the same trip, I think, that I one afternoon witnessed part of the performance of a drummer on his log. I was in the stream when I heard his

first roll beat. The bank at that point was six or seven feet high and offered a complete screen to my careful approach. When I peered cautiously over the top of the bank I saw him standing on a big log among some little hemlocks and just raising his wings to beat his drum again.

But he made only two or three thumps then slipped off the log and sneaked away. In some way he had discovered my presence. I should have been very glad to see him finish his drumming and then strut back and forth with tail spread and ruff erect.

But a good many times I have had the pleasure of seeing the hen and her brood, and I learned in time not to be enticed away by her queer cries and her tumbling around in the road. I learned to stand quite still and scan closely every stick and leaf until I had finally located two or three of the little birds sitting as motionless as the sticks and stones. When I picked one up and held it in the palm of my open hand it continued to sit motionless as if well hidden. While still only a day or two old, and little larger than a thimble, it already had developed the hiding instinct. Occasionally I have flushed a brood late in the season when the young birds were nearly as large as my fist. These birds would take to the lower limbs of a small tree where they would stand perfectly still with necks stretched and heads erect. I know of nothing that has a more wild and alert look. Only once have I seen a wild turkey and her brood of half a dozen little ones along a trout stream. But the old bird had seen me



Wild Turkey (Plate I).

first. All of them disappeared among the bushes before I could draw breath. Grouse and wild turkeys are game birds that the angler may enjoy to the full since he is under no necessity to shoot them.

Fifty or sixty years ago the angler on our mountain trout streams was diverted at times by the sight of a flock of wild passenger pigeons feeding in the woods along the stream. These birds were so handsome in form and coloration and so interesting in their habits that the angler could not have helped enjoying his meeting with them. An old angler once told me that one day, while he was ascending a trout stream that ran for a long distance through a thick forest of hemlock and beech, he suddenly found himself in the midst of a large nesting place of the wild pigeons. Every tree had its share of nests in some of which there were still young birds living on the partly digested food forced into them from the crops of the parent birds. On the ground beneath the trees were young birds already feathered. These were hunting their own food in flocks that seemed to roll through the woods as the rear birds rose continuously to fly to the front. The old man said that he spent most of the day with the

pigeons and went home with a very slim basket of trout.

My father once pointed out to me a barn near a big mill pond in a trout stream, a barn whose owner had used it to trap wild pigeons one spring. A snow of seven or eight inches had followed the arrival of the pigeons in the beech woods. It lay for several days on the ground and the pigeons grew desperately hungry. Every pond and water course had its blue fringe of pigeons along the shores where the snow melted first. Around the mill pond there were hundreds of them that entered the barn whenever they found an open door. The owner would close the door when he thought the barn contained enough birds, then proceed to kill or capture the imprisoned pigeons. I suspect that both the pigeons and the sport were very poor.

While on a trout fishing trip with four companions my father once stopped at the house of a man whose supply of food had run rather low. There was no meat for the first supper or breakfast, but the man assured the party that there would be plenty for the second supper. When they came from their fishing on the second evening they found on the table an

enormous pigeon pie and beside it a great plate heaped with broiled squabs. They found the old pigeons in the pie somewhat tough but the fat young squabs were delicious. The man had gone to a nesting place of the pigeons and returned with a two bushel bag full of birds. The squabs he had knocked out of the nest with a long pole. During the remainder of their stay the party had pigeons for supper and breakfast and carried some with them each day for lunch.

Only once in my life have I seen wild pigeons near a trout stream. This was more than forty years ago. The pigeons, a flock of some forty or fifty, were feeding on the buds of the leatherwood in a little bottom close to the creek I was fishing. They were so busy at their feeding that I was able to get quite near them and watch them for several minutes. They were male birds with burnished breasts. With their shapely heads, their long tails, and their harmonizing colors of gray and brown, I thought them as beautiful as any birds I had ever seen. From time to time as they fluttered here and there among the bushes they uttered a wild cooing note, a sound that no angler will ever hear again on the North American continent.



Passenger Pigeon (Plate LXII).



Every angler will think of some birds, missing from my list, that he has learned to look and listen for along the trout streams, birds that for some reason or another, are associated with some of his own fishing trips. A man, with whom I am well acquainted, once while fishing saw a blue grosbeak, a rare bird in the northern Alleghenies, and he has been hoping ever since to see another. The man saw a scarlet tanager at the same time, the two birds being actually near each other in the same tree. He always talked as much about this event as he did about the catching of his biggest trout. Another angler of my acquaintance was always listening for the song of the rose breasted grosbeak. He had been thrilled by the song of this bird one evening as he was sitting by his campfire. This man also loved to hear the loud cry of the pileated woodpecker on some dead tree on the mountainside. This wild cry ringing across the valley was music to him.



Pileated Woodpecker (Plate CXI).



Wood Thrush (Plate LXXIII).

Among the musicians that gather by the trout stream, the wood thrushes have always taken the highest rank with me. A concert of these birds in the early morning or on a still June evening in the mountains is worth going far to hear. They appear to trill and pipe on silver flutes. Once on a week's fishing trip I made my headquarters with three companions in a little deserted house that stood a few rods back from a trout stream. The house lacked doors and windows but had a tight roof and held a big wood stove on which our trout were fried. Bushes and small trees had grown all about close to the little house and in them the wood thrushes held high revel each morning. They began very early

and kept it up for an hour or more, each bird doing its best to be the loudest and the sweetest singer of the company. More than once some little brown singer perched so close to an open window that I could easily have counted the spots on its breast and throat if it had not been for the way these throbbed when the music poured out.

Again, I was encamped with several companions on a trout stream. It was a secluded spot some miles back from the traveled road. One afternoon a thunder shower of a half hour's duration made the woods delightfully cool and fragrant. The wood thrushes were evidently stimulated by the quiet of the woods and the beauty of the evening to put on a master

concert. There must have been a score or more of them around our camp and every one was a professional singer. The performance was almost continuous. Before one stopped another began to sing. Several times when the birds close by had stopped to rest, a distant bird would take up the strain and this one would be answered by a bird so far away that only the longer notes could be heard. This part of the concert was indescribably sweet. It has never been my good fortune to hear again just such bird music as I heard from the thrushes that evening. I doubt that it could have been surpassed anywhere in the world.



Sir Alec Douglas-Home: The Angling Prime Minister

by Keith Harwood

IN OCTOBER 1962 I WAS only ten years old, but I still vividly remember the Cuban missile crisis and my parents talking in hushed tones about the possibility of a nuclear war. Fortunately, after several days of tense negotiations, an agreement was reached between U.S. President John F. Kennedy and the Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. The threat of nuclear war was averted, and the world breathed a collective sigh of relief.

The British foreign secretary at the time was Sir Alec Douglas-Home (later Baron Home of the Hirsel). Home was a strong supporter of President Kennedy and strengthened the resolve of then British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to back up Kennedy's defiance of Soviet nuclear threats.¹

A year later, Home was chosen to succeed Macmillan as prime minister following the latter's resignation due to ill health, but Home's tenure (19 October 1963–16 October 1964) was brief. A bronze statue of Sir Alec Douglas-Home recognizing his time as prime minister stands proudly at the entrance to the Hirsel Estate in the Scottish Borders.

Sir Alec Douglas-Home (pronounced *Hume*) was born on 2 July 1903 in Mayfair, London, into an aristocratic family with extensive estates in southern Scotland. He was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, where he gained a third-class honors degree in modern history. He was a talented cricketer and was unique among British prime ministers in having played first-class cricket for Oxford University, Middlesex County Cricket Club, and the Marylebone Cricket Club (the MCC). Following the death of his father, the thirteenth Earl of Home, in 1951, he entered the Lords as the fourteenth Earl of Home. On becoming prime minister, he renounced his hereditary peerage but became a life peer in 1974 until his death on 9 October 1995.

As well as serving in Britain's highest office and being a talented cricketer, throughout his long life Douglas-Home was a keen angler. In fact, during the 1964 general election campaign, he was told by

fellow Conservative politician John Selwyn Lloyd not to describe himself as a "fisherman" but as an "angler," because there were only 50,000 fishermen with a vote compared with 3,000,000 anglers.²

In his early years Douglas-Home was an all-round angler equally at home fishing for perch, carp, and trout.³ It is hardly surprising that Douglas-Home became an angler given that he spent a great deal of his time on the family estates at Douglas and the Hirsel. Indeed, the Hirsel Estate is bounded along its southern edge

by the River Tweed, the most prolific salmon river in the United Kingdom, and has the salmon-fishing rights on 2 miles upstream of Coldstream, including the famous Birgham Dub, which accounts for approximately 350 fish annually. In addition, a trout stream, the Leet Water (a tributary of the Tweed) runs through the estate's grounds, and its 27-acre artificial lake, created in 1786, provides excellent coarse fishing. It is one of the few waters in Scotland to be termed a *lake* rather than a *loch*. The lake is well stocked with

Photos by Keith Harwood, except where noted



Statue of Sir Alec Douglas-Home on the grounds of the Hirsel Estate.



The lake at the Hirsal Estate.



The Leet Water as it runs through the Hirsal Estate.

pike, and fish of up to 32 pounds have been caught there.⁴ The Douglas Estate in south Lanarkshire has trout fishing on the Douglas Water and coarse fishing on Stable Lake.⁵

It was on the lakes at the Hirsal and Douglas Estates that Douglas-Home began his angling career by fishing for perch. In his book *Border Reflections*, which recalls his sporting adventures with rod and gun, he tells us that maggots were not popular in the house, nor were worms, and, as a result, the Douglas-Home children resorted to catching perch with a length of red wool wound over the hook. Not only did red wool prove to be a deadly bait that attracted numerous perch up to 2 pounds in weight, it also restored domestic harmony by eliminating the need to store maggots or worms in the house.⁶ At Ludgrove School, Douglas-Home and his classmates fished for carp between patches of water lilies in a local lake. The lake was reputed to contain a 20-pounder caught by his maths teacher. However, neither he nor his fellow pupils ever spotted the fish, and their efforts at catching carp appear not to have been very successful.⁷

Like many anglers before and since, Douglas-Home graduated from coarse fishing to trout fishing when he was taught to fly fish by his father, a keen trout and salmon angler. However, his introduction to fly fishing was delayed

until his father returned from World War I.⁸ It was almost certainly on the Leet Water, which runs through the grounds of the Hirsal, that Douglas-Home's father "would demonstrate how to cast a line as straight as an arrow into the wind."⁹ The Leet Water was renowned for the quality of its brown trout, and fish as large as 3 pounds were not uncommon. Thomas Tod Stoddart, one of the most important figures in early Scottish angling literature, recalled the first occasion when he fished the Leet and captured twenty-six trout, weighing upward of 29 pounds total, five of which were 2-pounders.¹⁰ Sadly, because of intensive agricultural practices and drainage works, the fishing declined during the 1970s. Remedial work carried out by the Tweed Foundation, the Douglas & Angus Estates, and the Coldstream Angling Association is helping to restore the river to its former glory.

Initially, Douglas-Home started out as a wet-fly fisherman before being introduced to the delights of the dry fly by his father. His practice was to cast the wet fly upstream and across while holding the rod high. In this way, the fly was fished just below the surface, and it was sometimes possible to see the movement of the trout and time the strike accordingly. He found this method most productive in early spring, when the water was cold and the wind sometimes blustery. Once he was introduced to the dry fly, however,

this became his preferred method. His favorite flies for fishing the Tweed and its tributaries (including the Leet) were the March Brown, Greenwell's Glory, Dark Olive, Light Olive, Blue Dun, Red Spinner, and Black Gnat. He believed that patience was the key to successful trout fishing and that the trout fisher in a hurry will ruin his or her chances. He recommended that the trout fisher take a lesson from the heron, which stands completely still for long periods waiting for the trout to come within reach.¹¹

Inevitably, as a politician, Douglas-Home spent a lot of time in London, where he received frequent invites to fish the Test. On one occasion, he recalled a large brown trout feeding regularly an inch or two below the tip of a dock leaf on the far bank of the river. By a stroke of luck, a gust of wind aided his cast and enabled his fly to strike the leaf, slide down, and fall as light as thistledown onto the water, where it was instantly seized by a 4-pound trout.¹²

At home in the Borders, he was less of a purist and sometimes indulged in the upstream minnow to remove cannibal trout from the pools. For this purpose, he used the smallest and lightest of celluloid minnows, which he cast upstream with a fly rod. As soon as the minnow touched the water, he would pull it sharply downstream—a technique that proved irresistible to the greedy, hooked-jawed trout.¹³

The Tweed, which forms the southern boundary of the Hirsle Estate, is approximately 20 miles from its mouth at Berwick-upon-Tweed and provides a convenient resting place for fresh fish to lie on their way upstream. Records of salmon fishing on the estate date back to 1743 when William, the eighth Earl of Home, landed a salmon of 69¾ pounds on rather primitive equipment, which included a rod of 22 feet and a horse-hair line. The fish was reputedly taken on a fly. The eighth Earl also owned a Newfoundland dog that became notorious for catching salmon. On a Monday morning, the dog was accustomed to go to the mill-dam opposite Wark Castle, where it took its station by the opening in the dam, which allowed the salmon to pass through. In a morning's fishing it would catch and land from ten to twenty salmon and lay them at his owner's feet. Lord Tankerville, the owner of the fishing rights on the opposite bank, became so incensed that he took out legal proceedings against the dog. The case was brought before the Court of Session and, much to the joy of the Scottish side, judgment was given in favor of the dog.¹⁴

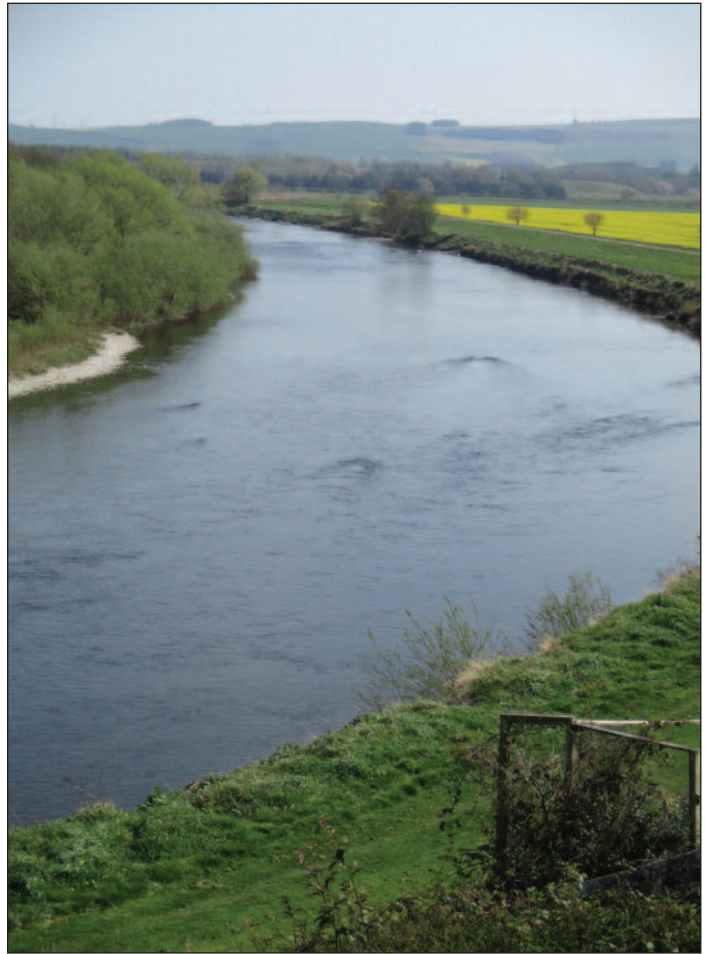
In the Homestead Museum on the Hirsle Estate, there is a room devoted to fishing on the Tweed that contains a carved fish trophy of a 51½-pound salmon caught by Colonel the Honorable W. Home in 1892. The fish was caught on the Tweed at Birgham Dub on a Jock Scott fly. Ten years after catching his first 51½-pound Tweed salmon, Colonel Home, now promoted to the rank of general, caught a second fish of identical weight on the same beat and on the same fly: a Jock Scott.¹⁵

Not surprisingly, as he followed in the footsteps of his ancestors, Sir Alec Douglas-Home became a noted salmon fisherman. He was much taken by fully dressed classic salmon flies and thought their names evocative and romantic: Jock Scott, Green Highlander, Mar Lodge, Durham Ranger. He was much less captivated by modern hairwing salmon flies, which he considered unimaginative: "A Stoa's Tail is a killer, but is not the same thing as those masterpieces of deception which added so much glamour to the fisherman's day."¹⁶

Although he was a great admirer of the classic salmon fly, Douglas-Home was not always a purist when it came to salmon fishing. In high, colored water he was not averse to using an artificial sprat or minnow. On one occasion, after cycling 2 miles to the river with his spinning rod—trace and treble hook assembled for fishing—he emptied his pockets only to find he had left his baits behind. All he had was a bottle of iodine (with which he had treated a cut), a knife, and some string. Rather than give up and cycle all the way back, he improvised and carved a small piece of driftwood into the shape of a fish and painted its top half with iodine to resemble an artificial Black and Gold lure. He hooked a salmon on his second cast and after two hours he had six fresh fish on the bank. However, the experience taught him a salutary lesson, and ever afterward he checked his tackle before leaving home.¹⁷

During the summer, when the sun was bright and the water low, he sometimes resorted to using the prawn, which he regarded as better than early-season spinning because it could be done with light tackle. He sometimes found that the fish would go mad for it, but other times they became so scared by its repeated use that they dashed out of the tail of the pool.¹⁸

Douglas-Home was a great admirer of A. H. E. Wood's method of angling with the greased or floating



The Tweed at Coldstream.

Helen Harwood



The carved trophy of the 51½-pound salmon in the Hirsle & Homestead Museum in Coldstream.

line. Proof of its efficacy came to him one day when he was anchored in a boat in a gentle flow. He dangled a fly on a short length of gut on the surface and watched as it came floating down. Before the fly could drag, a salmon came slowly up and took the fly virtually out of his hand. On another occasion he was fishing with a young gillie and changed from fishing a sunken fly to the smallest of floaters. The young gillie was aghast, but Douglas-Home persisted and chose a pool that was like glass, on which the sun was beating down. He cast the fly to a spot where the water glided over a point of rock, and his fly was promptly taken—much to the incredulity of the gillie—by a lively 19-pounder.¹⁹

In Douglas-Home's autobiography, *The Way the Wind Blows*, he recalls that his most exciting day salmon fishing on the Tweed occurred on 13 November 1926. The river was at a good height, and he realized that conditions were perfect. He was at the river by 7:00 a.m., just as it was becoming light, and by noon he had caught nine salmon averaging just less than 20 pounds each. On another occasion, a February day in the 1950s, he and two fellow anglers landed sixty-four fresh salmon in a day, many of which were landed by his retriever, which gripped them across the gills and delivered them to hand.²⁰

Sir Alec Douglas-Home passed away in 1995, but the family interest in the Tweed carries on. Andrew Douglas-Home, the

grandson of the thirteenth Earl of Home, was honored with an OBE (officer of the Order of the British Empire) in the 2013 New Years Honours List for his services to fishing and Scottish heritage. Not only is he a keen salmon angler, but he has served on the River Tweed Commission for more than thirty years, eight of them as chair. The Tweed commissioners are responsible for the preservation of salmon, sea trout, brown trout, and other freshwater fish in the River Tweed and its tributaries. This includes regulation of fisheries, removal of nuisances and obstructions, and the prevention of illegal fishing. They are also concerned with the promotion of salmon and trout stocks throughout the Tweed system through biological research, stock monitoring, and habitat enhancement. Sir Alec would have been proud of his nephew's achievements in the interests of salmon conservation.²¹

ENDNOTES

1. Details of Sir Alec Douglas-Home's life and the Cuban missile crisis can be found in his autobiography, *The Way the Wind Blows* (London: Collins, 1976), and on a number of Internet sites such as Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alec_Douglas-Home) or Encyclopædia Britannica (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alec-Douglas-Home>) (both accessed 29 July 2019).

2. Lord Home, *Border Reflections: Chiefly on the Arts of Shooting and Fishing* (London: Collins, 1979), 93.

3. *Ibid.*, 94.

4. Antony Chessell, *Leet Water from Source to Tweed* (Farnham, U.K.: Lulu Enterprises, 2012), 112.

5. Douglas & Angus Estates, www.dandaestates.co.uk/fishing/douglas-fishing.php (accessed 2 June 2019).

6. Home, *Border Reflections*, 94.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, 18.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Thomas Tod Stoddart, *The Angler's Companion to the Rivers and Lochs of Scotland* (Glasgow: Thomas D. Morrison, 1892), 33–34.

11. Home, *Border Reflections*, 105–06.

12. *Ibid.*, 106–07.

13. *Ibid.*, 108.

14. For details of the eighth Earl's salmon and his Newfoundland dog, see Fred Buller's *The Domesday Book of Giant Salmon* (London: Constable, 2007), 196–201.

15. *Ibid.*, 100–01.

16. Home, *Border Reflections*, 96–97.

17. *Ibid.*, 96.

18. *Ibid.*, 95–96.

19. *Ibid.*, 98–99.

20. Home, *The Way the Wind Blows*, 41–42.

21. "Andrew Douglas-Home," The Douglas Archives, www.douglashistory.co.uk/history/andrew_douglas-home.htm#.XRyuJXt7k6g (accessed 2 June 2019).

A previous version of this article appeared in the July/August 2019 edition of Classic Angling magazine.



Hirsell House, the ancestral home of the Douglas-Home family.



The Tweed upstream of Coldstream.

AMFF 2020 Virtual Heritage Event



A conceptual illustration of AMFF's forthcoming nature trail created by Collections Manager Ava Freeman.

“WHAT A DIVERSE AND HAPPY LOT we are. How far this museum has come and can still go,” mused author, former publisher, and oft-chosen AMFF guest speaker Nick Lyons in a keynote address more than a quarter of a century ago. His sentiment nicely sums up the museum’s October 15 Virtual Heritage Event and Auction.

Although held online, there was an extraordinary sense of community this year. Leadership Circle participants and those who made gifts in support of the museum got the event off to a great start in the preceding weeks, a selection of AMFF ambassadors and honorees shared their thoughts and fondest memories of the sport in a video presentation, and donors and bidders brought a new vibrancy to the museum’s largest fundraiser of the year.

What was the most successful auction item of the night? At the suggestion of Trustee Nancy Zakon, the naming opportunity for the museum’s forthcoming nature trail was on the block. In an exciting bidding match, an anonymous donor emerged the winner, and the new trail will be named in honor of Deputy Director Yoshi Akiyama.

We truly missed the in-person connection that we enjoy in New York City, but without being bound by a geographical anchor, we were able to welcome guests from across the country and beyond. AMFF would like to sincerely thank all of our auction bidders and the following supporters.

Leadership Circle (Royal Coachman): Foster Bam and Sallie Baldwin, Mark and Arlene Comora, M. Briggs Forelli, Grant Family Foundation, Karen Kaplan, Mr. and Mrs. William Michaelcheck, Pheasant Hill Foundation, Tyler Thompson, Wonders of Wildlife/Bass Pro Shops/Cabela’s, and Steve and Sarah Zoric.

Leadership Circle (Quill Gordon): Fitz Coker and Dotty Ballantyne, Michael S. Cooperman and Anne J. Archer, Jace and

Jacko Day, Charles P. Durkin Jr., Frances Louise Wolfson Family Foundation, Diana Kalman, Lee W. Mather Jr., Fred and Cassie Polhemus, the Rev. Canon Mark K. J. Robinson, Matthew R. Scott, Richard and Marye Tisch, Turner Foundation, Inc., Nancy W. and James R. Utaski, and Patricia Watson.

Donations in support of AMFF: William Casazza, Jason Coleman, Robert T. Cornell, James Hofrichter, Myles Jen Kin, Jim Klug, Jonathan Juhase, Nick Lyons, Barry R. Meinert, William H. Moore III, John J. Moritz, Steve O’Brien, Wright Palmer, George Ann Peters, Susan and Harry Rein, Jo Specter, and Jamie Woods.

Video participants: Nick Dawes, Rachel Finn, Karen Kaplan, Jim Klug, Pete Kutzer, Nick Lyons, Flip Pallot, Robert Rubin, and April Vokey.

Auction donors: Yoshi Akiyama, Alert Stamping, Scott Biron, Monte Burke, Drew Chicone, Nick Dawes, Deerfield Fly Rods, Claudia Lively Devito, Liz Devito, E & J Gallo, M. Dozier Grant, JH Becker Rodworks, John D. Voelker Foundation, Lester S. Morse Jr., Richard P. Morse, George Havard, James Heckman, Fred Kretchman, Richard Landerman, Darrell Lee, Carmine Lisella, Anne Lively, Walter Matia, Robert Miller, Mud Dog Saltwater Flies, John Mundt, Wendy O’Neil, Orvis Flagship Manchester, Rhey Plumley, Fred Polhemus, the Porcupine’s Quill, REC Components, Reel Women Fly Fishing, Restigouche River Lodge, Susan Richards, Rio Products, Rolf Glass, Royal Wulff Products, Tish Russell, Sage, Scientific Anglers, Taf Schaeffer, Paul Schullery, the Shilstone Family, Three Forks Ranch, Dave Tibbetts, Tin Boat Productions, Richard Tisch, Vermont Country Store, Jess Westbrook, Wonders of Wildlife/Bass Pro Shops/Cabela’s, Wyoming Whiskey, Yellow Dog Fly Fishing Adventures, and Nancy and Alan Zakon.





Heritage event video participants (clockwise from top left) Nick Dawes, Rachel Finn, Karen Kaplan, Jim Klug, Pete Kutzer, Nick Lyons, Flip Pallot, Robert Rubin, and April Vokey.





Museum News

Maureen Chaffee



Freyja, Landon, and Will take notes in the museum's art gallery.

Museum Welcomes Local Visitors

Maple Street School's third grade spent a lot of time outdoors this fall learning about rivers through hands-on explorations on the school's grounds. Teacher Maureen Chaffee was therefore delighted to be able to arrange a visit to the nearby American Museum of Fly Fishing. Walking to the museum on a rainy day did not dampen her class's excitement at being able to take a field trip during these unusual times. This very artistic group was thrilled with our new exhibit, *Reflections: The Angler and Nature in Art*.

Landon observed that "seeing the artwork displayed from oldest to newest was interesting; I enjoyed seeing oils, pastels, and watercolors." Ellie Lou said, "this was a very talented group of artists. So many of their pieces told a story."

After a visit to the fly-tying display, Will, Freyja, and Luc, who were fascinated with the equipment, discussed how small and colorful flies could be. The third graders also identified which flies were constructed to look like the macroinvertebrates that they had found in Munson Brook.

After a brief stop at the Orvis pond to feed the fish, the class headed back to school. "It was the perfect culmination to our river study," reflected Chaffee. "I am so appreciative of the generosity of the American Museum of Fly Fishing and their staff in giving us a safe place to visit, providing the students

with mementos from the gift shop, and sharing a curriculum guide that will further enhance my unit."

Recent Donations to the Collection

Artist **David B. Tibbetts** of New London, New Hampshire, donated his original watercolor, *Fishing Again*. **Margie Kaat** of Manchester, Vermont, gave us a black-and-white photograph of Zane Grey fishing in New Zealand with his guide, Hoka Downs.

Jim Heckman of Manchester, Vermont, brought us a vintage 1933 edition of *Motor, The Automotive Business Magazine*, featuring the painting *Fly Fishing* by Robert Robinson, which is represented in the museum's Trophy Art Collection. **Joseph Carabello** of Arlington, Vermont, donated a vintage 1948 issue of *Fortune* magazine (June, vol. 37, no. 6), featuring a tribute to the Atlantic salmon by John McDonald with illustrations and personal accounts.

Robert DeMott of Athens, Ohio, donated a packet of correspondence regarding his book, *Angling Days: A Fly Fisher's Journals* (Skyhorse, 2016), which includes a number of e-mails between DeMott and Nick Lyons. **Rhey Plumley** of Burlington, Vermont, brought us a collection of books on the subject of angling. And **Edward Havard** of Charlotte, Vermont, donated a vintage Abercrombie & Fitch 9-foot salmon rod and a Pflueger Medalist reel, model no. 1498, that had belonged to his father.



Conceptual rendering of the entry space for the new AMFF gallery at Wonders of Wildlife. For more information, visit www.amff.org/wow.

Upcoming Events

As a result of the ongoing pandemic, events will take place virtually on amff.org unless otherwise noted.

February

Facebook Live fly tying throughout the month

March 11

Izaak Walton Award honoring Paul Dixon

April 1

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

Always check our website (www.amff.org) for additions, updates, and more information or contact (802) 362-3300 or 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.

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*, and the 1958 best seller, *Anatomy of a Murder*.

The Traver Award was created in 1994 by Nick Lyons and the Voelker Foundation 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:

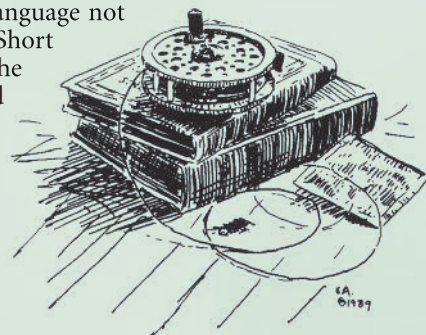
- The joy of fly fishing: personal and philosophic experience
- Ecology: knowledge and protection of the natural world
- Humor: piscatorial friendships and fun on the water

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).

The 2021 Traver Award, which includes a \$2,500 prize, 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.

Please submit an entry form, a PDF of your entry, and entry fee to www.voelkerfoundation.com by May 31, 2021. The form and additional submission requirements can be found on the Voelker Foundation website.

The 2021 Traver Award winner will be notified in the fall of 2021 and receive \$2,500. 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.



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

Jon Ward-Allen



Before his retirement eight years ago, **Keith Harwood** taught Latin and Greek for almost forty years at Clitheroe Royal Grammar School, an institution founded in 1554. He is a keen angler and fly dresser and is very much interested in the history of angling. Nowadays, he fishes mainly for trout on the River Wharfe, a beautiful stream that runs through the Yorkshire Dales National Park. He has written numerous articles for a variety of magazines and is the author of several books. His most recent books include *Angling Books: A Collector's Guide* (Coch-y-Bonddu Books, 2016), *John Buchan on Angling* (Medlar Press, 2016), *The Trout Angler in Shetland, Past and Present* (Medlar Press, 2017), and *Sir Walter Scott on Angling* (Medlar Press, 2019). *The Fish and Fishermen of Malham Tarn* is slated for publication by the Medlar Press this year. He lives with his wife in the beautiful Ribbles Valley, and when he is not fishing or writing, he helps to look after their four grandchildren.

Barbara Herd, MD, FRCP



Andrew Herd trained to become a fishing bum, but made a mess of his career path and had to become a physician instead, qualifying at the Middlesex Hospital, London, in 1982 at the age of twenty-two. After a varied career in medicine, which included a spell as the McIndoe Research Fellow at the Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead, he took one of the best decisions he ever made, which was to marry Dr. Barbara Holder and settle in County Durham, where he was a family practitioner until his retirement.

Herd has published many books, including his *History of Fly Fishing* trilogy (available from the Medlar Press), and was the executive editor of *Waterlog* magazine. His most recently published work is *The Flyfishers*, a history of the Flyfishers' Club of London, which appeared in 2019, and he is working on *The Story of the Salmon Fly*, an illustrated history of the salmon fly up to 1867, which will be published by the Medlar Press this year.

Beverley F. Ronalds is a fellow of the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering and adjunct professor at the University of Western Australia. Her engineering career combined academia and industry practice, most recently as group executive at Australia's national science laboratory CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation). Now retired, she is drafting a biography of her great-great-grandfather Alfred Ronalds and has published on other family members, including Alfred's brother Sir Francis Ronalds, who helped research and write *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* (1836).

Tony Bowers



The Next Chapter



Outgoing AMFF President Karen W. Kaplan.

THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF Fly Fishing is a member organization governed by a board of trustees. Trustees provide financial support, expertise, experience, and guidance. Our board, which consists of fifty seats, is a diverse group of professionals, philanthropists, and volunteers connected by the sport. Their ideas and opinions—many unique and creative—are the foundation on which AMFF is built. It is this collaborative effort that has propelled AMFF into a strong and successful niche museum. All of this, however, is dependent on strong leadership. That is precisely what we've experienced with Karen Kaplan, who recently finished her term as president.

Karen certainly provided the financial support, expertise, experience, and guidance necessary to drive this museum, but most importantly, she brought passion. Thanks to this passion, we can celebrate significant accomplishments from the past five years:

- AMFF was invited to partner with the Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium. The groundwork has been laid, and we are excited for a 2021 opening.
- For the first time in our museum's history, our endowment surpassed one million dollars. This is a sign of sustainability and supporter investment.
- We are honored to house the largest public collection of sporting art, thanks in great part to the donation of more than 200 original paintings that form the Trophy Art Collection.
- After many years of research and curating, *On Fly in the Salt: American Saltwater Fly Fishing from the Surf to the Flats*, our traveling exhibit, made its way across the country.

- Our journal became the publishing home of the Robert Traver Fly-Fishing Writing Award, and our film *TIME* was selected for the 2020 Fly Fishing Film Tour (F3T).
- AMFF celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, bringing together luminaries to reflect on this great sport and the importance of a museum dedicated to its preservation.

In fifty-two years, we have developed into a museum with a collection like none other. We are a stable institution prepared to weather any storm and provide a safe home for the history of fly fishing. As we continue to be a resource for the angling community during COVID-19, we have swiftly pivoted events and programs to a digital platform and promise to stay connected when physical togetherness isn't an option.

On October 23, after a unanimous vote, Fred Polhemus began his term as president of the board and will surely build on this solid foundation. I am thrilled to welcome Jason Scott, who has been instrumental in leading our Anglers' Circle while developing strategies to engage a younger demographic. Walt Matia, who joined the board in 1995, has been appointed a lifetime honorary position as trustee emeritus. And we say goodbye to John Hadden and Woods King III as they finish up their first and tenth terms, respectively.

As we embark on the next chapter, I carry with me a feeling of gratitude for the dedication of all of our board members: past, present, and future.

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 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 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 fund-raising purposes, or place an advertisement in this journal, contact Sarah Foster at 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

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.

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

