



The Flyline

The Newsletter of the Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association

September, 2020



"The Mill at Motor on the Turkey River"
Third Place Winner HFFA Photo Contest by Mike Schrader



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The President's Hatch

In this challenging time of a world wide pandemic, there is some good news.

The Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association is now in a position to take on a "Signature Project" that would restore a stream, purchase an easement, or partner with others to purchase a property with a stream or river on it. Members of our board are in close contact with the DNR so that if something comes up, we are ready to act.

I now know that the 2020 HFFA show did make a profit of approximately \$4,200.00. It looks like the deer tag sale should net us a little over \$8,000.00 this year. But the great news is that we have received an endowment from the Meyer estate for around \$31,000.00 this year. This should give the HFFA a balance of around \$97,000.00. The board had a virtual meeting earlier this summer and decided that we should keep around half that amount on hand to meet continuing expenses and as a buffer for a year that our show doesn't make a profit or a year that we do not have a show (note: the 2021 show is cancelled).

The board will be discussing if we should host a Virtual Show for 2021, and if so, how we can do that. We will also discuss the possibility of having an on-line auction instead of the show to raise funds for our projects. Let your area representative or any board member know if you have



John Carl Miller

thoughts on either of those projects, and especially if you have the expertise and desire to do either of those projects.

Note that the 2021 show planned for Des Moines has been cancelled, but the 2022 show will be held in Des Moines (assuming the pandemic is over by then). That means the show schedule for all other venues will be bumped back a year.

I received this notice from Dan Peterson a few weeks back. The HFFA Fall Outing is officially cancelled:

"John I was hoping by September things would return to somewhat normal. But it looks like it is going the other way. I think it is best we forget the fall Trout Outing for this year. I would hate to be the cause of someone getting the virus. I guess I will go back to fishing alone. I hope you are well and enjoying the solitude of this new world. Take care."

The Dubuque Fly Fishers (DFF) has cancelled all events until after the start of 2021 at this time. That may have to be extended, but no one knows at this time. I'm sure other clubs have made their own decisions as to how they are going to handle the pandemic.

I hope you are all healthy and enjoying the fishing in your home waters. I hate to say it, but I haven't been out much at all. Just getting some of the chores done at home. I don't want to travel too far from home, and just haven't been motivated. Also, with car-pooling off the table, I don't want to contribute an excess amount of pollution to the greenhouse. This nice weather we are having this week is changing my attitude, so I should start getting out more (close to home, of course).

John

Lisa Davis sent me this photo taken by Rich Vincent, which was sent to her by Larry Thompson. Lisa suggests that it was a strip set with an 8 wt. My thought is that I hope the Bluegill rose to the fly rather than being hit by the fly. I am not sure the rules on mugging a fish with a fly. LOL



**Help Support
Port-a-Potties at N&S Bear Creeks
Go Fund Me**

<https://www.gofundme.com/port-a-potty>

Contacts & Meetings

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dbqflyfisher@mchsi.com

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CR/IC, Director

Vacant

Hank Moeller, Work Day Contact

hankjmoe@gmail.com
319-389-1334

Davis Horton, Conservation Chair

dhorton@hardincountyia.gov
515-577-6619

Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing

Meets 1st & 3rd Tuesday of Month
5:30 pm

VA Central Iowa Health System
Behavioral Health Bldg 6M RM204
Des Moines, IA
Contact: Dale Sanders
iaflyfisher@q.com

Quad Cities Chapter

Meets 1st & 3rd Sunday 6:00 pm
October to May

Meets 1st Sunday 6:00 pm June to
September

Riverdale Fire Station, 110 Manor
Drive, Riverdale, IA

Contact: John Channon
jc.channon@mchsi.com

Dubuque Fly Fishers

Meets 2nd & 4th Monday 7:00 pm
October to May

Swiss Valley Nature Center
13606 Swiss Valley Rd., Dubuque,
IA

Contact: Mike Stallsmith
president@dubuqueflyfishers.org

Central Iowa Fly Fishers

Meets 3rd Saturday 9:00 am Sep-
tember to May

Our Lady's Immaculate Heart
Church

510 East 1st St., Ankeny, IA

Contact: Martin Acerbo
macerbo@iastate.edu

Iowa City Chapter

Contact: Ryan Maas
maas_ryan@yahoo.com

Cedar Rapids Fly Fishers

Contact: Lance Zook
l.a.zook@mchsi.com

TROUT UNLIMITED NORTH BEAR CHAPTER

Meetings held second Thursday
of month

September – May, Starting at
6:30 pm.

The Tavern Pizza & Pasta Grill
1755 50th St.

West Des Moines, IA

Website: tu-northbear.org

Jason Hochstetler - President
president@tu-northbear.org

TROUT UNLIMITED DRIFTLESS CHAPTER

Meets the first Thursday of the
month October through May @
7:00 pm in the basement of

T-Bocks Sports Bar and Grill,
206 Water St. Decorah

www.iadriftless.org

Iowa Women Fly Fishers

Beginner or Skilled

Meet other Women Fly Fishers

Des Moines or North Liberty

katelodge25@gmail.com

willacamp@gmail.com

Trout Unlimited Spring Creeks Chapter

Ryan Maas – President

Check Their Web Site

www.tu-springcreeks.org

Iowa's Coldwater

Conservancy

Tom Murray

jandtmurray@gmail.com

Event Calendar

**All Events Could be In Doubt Or
Cancelled Due To Coronavirus
Contact Local Representative**

September 2020

September 12

6th Annual Brule River Spey Day

Lake Superior Steelhead Assn.
Brule River @ McNeil House
Brule, WI
www.Steelheaders.org

September ?

Driftless TU Meet and Greet Potluck Details unclear at this time

Theresa Shay
tashay1966@gmail.com
563-379-6103

September ?

Driftless TU Cleanup Day Details unclear at this time

Steve Perry
steve.perry1267@gmail.com
641-583-1604

September ?

HFFA – Iowa DNR Work Day

Manchester Trout Hatchery
22693 205th Ave., Manchester, IA
Hank Moeller
hankjmoe@gmail.com

October 2020

October 2 - 4

4th Annual Driftless Flyathon

Yellow River State Forest
Registration April 11th
65 positions available
flyathon@driftlessonthefly.com

October 2 - 4 **Cancelled**

2020 Casting for Recovery IA

Camp Ewalu's Stone Retreat Center
Strawberry Point, IA 52076
norrisk@ihonline.org
Apply by July 24th

November 2020

December 2020

January 2021

January ?

Southern Wisconsin TU Icebreaker

American Family Insurance
Madison, WI
www.swtu.org

February 2021

February ?

Badger Fly Fishers Fly Fishing Spring Opener

American Family Insurance
Madison, WI
www.badgerflyfishers.com

February 6

Wisconsin TU Council Banquet

Oshkosh, WI
Scott Allen
jscottallen12@gmail.com

March 2021

March 12 - 14

HFFA Annual Fly Fishing Show Cancelled

Moved to 2022

Martin Acerbo
macerbo@iastate.edu

March 19 - 21

Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo

Hamline University
St. Paul, MN
info@greatwatersflyexpo.com

Attention Please Read !!

**Any Calendar Item Should Be
Confirmed With Contact Noted
The Same Goes For The Normal
Meetings Date and Time Listed
On Page 3
Hopefully 2021 Will Be Better**

Don

The Flyline is the official publication of the Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association. It is published in April, June, September, and December. The HFFA is a chapter of the Fly Fishers International. Articles may be submitted as MS Word or as a text file. Typed, printed or clearly handwritten documents are also accepted. Photos can be submitted digitally. Send original jpeg. Deadline is one month before publication.

Send all materials to:

Don Otto, The Flyline Editor
hawkeyeflyfisher@gmail.com
641-230-1468

Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association Membership Application

☐ New ☐ Renewal ☐ Change of Address Information

Check Membership Category:

- ☐ \$25 Member
- ☐ \$10 Youth Member (18 and under)
- ☐ \$15 Senior Member (65 or older)
- ☐ \$45 Family Membership
- ☐ \$300 Life Member

Conservation Contribution:

- ☐ \$10 (Glass)
- ☐ \$20 (Graphite)
- ☐ \$30 (Boron)
- ☐ \$_____ (Cane, over \$50)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

Make checks payable to & mail to:
Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association
P.O. Box 8145
Cedar Rapids, IA 52408

HFFA Business Report

Minutes of HFFA Virtual Board of Directors Meeting

June 9, 2020

Meeting called to order by President John Miller at 7:00 PM

Attendees: John Miller, Ron Stahlberg, Kate Lodge, John Channon, Willa Campbell, Dave Jones and Martin Acerbo

1. Welcome from John Miller
2. **Financial history review:** Dave Jones reviewed the financial history for HFFA since October 1, 2014. The current balance of \$89,464 has increased \$68,729 since October 1, 2014. 45% of the increase in cash balances can be attributed to the recent proceeds of \$31,014 from the estate of David Meyer. Deer tag profits of \$29,860, for the last 5 years, account for 43% of the cash balance increases. Membership dues, plus annual show profits, less club expenses account for the balance of the cash balance increases of \$7,855 since October 1, 2014.
3. **Website and social media development:** Willa Campbell led a discussion regarding website and social media development for the club. Fly Fishers International (FFI) is developing a set of templates to assist clubs with website and social media development. FFI has invited HFFA to participate in a pilot development of the templates. After some discussion, it was agreed that the club will solicit membership input regarding website and social media development, before committing to FFI.
4. **Cash reserve requirement:** Because of the recent accumulation of club cash balances, the board discussed the appropriate level of cash reserve balances that should be maintained before any considerations to fund a potential easement acquisition for public fishing access were discussed. After much discussion, a unanimous roll call vote approved the establishment of a cash reserve balance requirement of \$45,000.
5. **Easement acquisition:** After additional discussion of financial conditions and appropriate cash reserve balances, a unanimous roll call vote by the board approved committing to a signature project to fund a potential easement acquisition for public fishing access, with the understanding, that the amount spent on such a project will not reduce the club cash balance below the cash reserve level of \$45,000.
6. **Easement acquisition project committee:** John Miller reported, that Dave Jones and Ron Stahlberg have agreed to form a project committee to a) work with the Iowa DNR to identify prospective properties for easement acquisitions, b) raise additional funds from other angling groups to support the total cost of the easement acquisition and c) submit site recommendations and funding plans to the board for final project approval.
7. **2021 Annual show:** A brief discussion was had regarding potential contingency plans for the next annual meeting, in light of COVID 19 pandemic developments.
8. Meeting adjourned

Submitted by Dave Jones, June 9, 2020



Editor's Notes

1. Davis Horton answered my call for essays in an email to the Board of Directors. Davis is our new Conservation Chair. He is a graduate of Drake University in Environmental Science. He is currently a Interpretive Program Assistant for Hardin County Conservation. Thanks Davis!!
2. The calendar is a disaster!! One would think we are in the middle of a world wide pandemic. I did not delete it out of this issue as it takes a little time to set it up. Mark me down as lazy. At this time, I would call the contacts for anything listed.
3. I am really going to need some material for the December issue. Photos and stories are appreciated. The December issue is usually devoted to the upcoming show. **There is no up coming 2021 show.**

*Waiting for a Tug
Don*

The Quest for 40

by Davis Horton

Scantly spun whistlers and clouser minnows, which I crudely tied myself, were the only predator flies I had on my first Iowa pike trip. My leader material was 30 pounds too weak. I also brought a 5 weight rod and fly line rather than the 8 weight I should have had on hand. We live and learn from mistakes, I suppose, and in the world of fishing, the journey always has to start somewhere. Often, it takes a butt whipping on the water before you learn the do's and don'ts of the fish you target. Now looking back as a certified pike junkie, my journey started with one memorable bite which led to a near decade's long search for a 40" Iowa pike on the fly.

The first pike I ever caught was a 20" fish from the Wapsipinicon River in August of 2013. It was an absolute trophy, but only in the eyes of the beholder. What surprised me was the way the fish ate my fly. An all-out, guts and glory, pulverization of the fly would be the best way to describe the take. The explosion in the water and instant headshakes caused my adrenaline to spike. In that moment, I knew both the fish and I were hooked forever. How could a fish hit a fly with such force? I'd never seen anything like it. This fish was flat out scary when it ate; it was total nightmare fuel, and the experience made me want to come back for more.

Whistlers and clousers were my partners for the better part of five years as they'd always been consistent producers. When I tangled with my first fish over 30" in the Wapsi, something in me changed. "Catch fish" evolved into "find monster fish." I was committed to finding a true giant that was over 40". It took some time to get the gear upgraded. Rather than 8 weight rods, 10 and 12 weights became the sticks of choice. Extended butts for figure 8's and long roll casts were a necessity. Floating lines evolved into full intermediates and sink tips. Hours and hours of time were spent tying heinously huge pike flies on my little peak rotary vise. 12" to 18" streamers seemed absurd, but they attracted only the largest predators. That was the game I wanted to play.

By 2019, I figured out that the water in which I was targeting pike was not often the most likely place to hold 40" fish. Real giants prefer dead water, require constant fly changes, and can often be fussy for days at a time. April of 2019 brought a dozen fish over 34". Then on May 11th of 2019, the 40" fish became more of a reality. I moved a giant on five consecutive days in mid-May and she absolutely refused to eat anything. The lack of interest was totally weather-related. John Danos just happened to text me the evening of day five looking for his first Iowa pike on the fly. On day six, John arrived when the weather was right.

On John's third cast in the second spot, the behemoth appeared. She didn't eat, but looked more interested than usual on the initial follow. We looked at each other and I could tell both of us were thinking the same thing: that fish is HUGE. After not moving the big girl again on smaller patterns, John switched back to the fly that initially moved the monster. She ate immediately. Her preferred forage was a 12" pink and white tube fly that had been hot that spring. John cranked down on the fish and got her to the reel. On the first swing past the bank I grabbed the fish perfectly under the chin. She was ours, but not before she gave a huge shake and head butted me square in the mouth. When the head of a pike looks too big for the body, you know you've got a biggn'. I thought 40" for sure, but she was short.

After watching John's fish eat, I knew my flies had to be bigger and more tooth proof than ever. Each fly took over a day to finish, primarily because I had to wait for the epoxy to set. When spring of 2020 arrived, extended winter temperatures kept the bite slow in April, but plenty of good fish were still brought to the net. No giants, just good numbers of fish between 25" and 33". The month of May was much better. On consecutive weekends, I landed a 37" post-spawn fish and another pike of 38". A week later the bite went cold. There were no follows, no bites, absolutely nothing. It was heart breaking when I thought about the hours spent on the vise, and the "reward" for fishing my tail off was falling short of the 40 mark again in yet another month of pursuit.

It was time for a break. The 10 and 12 weight rods sat in their cases for about two months as I re-learned local smallmouth waters. My strained arms needed a rest from casting heavy tackle, and there was something fun about targeting a different species for a while. July 9th, 2020, something in my brain told me to bring the big rods along on an outing I was considering. The day's plan started with smallmouth and a 7 weight fly rod. Smallmouth, largemouth, crappies, and all other species of "common" sport fish were nowhere to be found. That struck me as odd as I'd caught plenty of them over the past few months in this particular location. I whipped a 6-inch long baitfish fly out into the water with a terribly placed roll cast. Strip, strip, strip, pause... BOOSH on the water's surface behind the fly. A gigantic pike had made her way into the slack water pocket. It was a good thing I packed the big guns, as with a 7 weight I was unquestionably under-gunned.

A 15-minute walk back to the truck for the 12 weight was a necessity. I replaced the lighter tackle I was using the first go-round with a 60-pound bite tippet and a foot-long fly I nicknamed, "Copper Dreamsicle". Half an hour or so retooling and clearing my head allowed the fish to settle down and bought enough time to potentially attract the pike again. I was leery as it was almost 100 degrees outside and the metabolism of pike slows down immensely as temperatures rise. If there was a shot at the fish, it had to happen on the first cast. There was no way she'd give it a go a third time.

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A comfortable roll cast shot the fly perfectly across the current. Strip, strip, strip, pause... WHAM. The rod loaded and the drag started screaming as the fish ran down stream. Since the fish ate subsurface in stained water, I didn't get a great look at the size or how it was hooked. To pull drag out of a locked Orvis Hydros and to fold a 12 weight TFO Esox meant that whatever I had hooked was monstrous. 10 minutes of pulling and turning the fish's head finally got her into view. With the width of the head alone, I was sure it was a giant. 40" though? Maybe. Maybe not. One last head turn and the fish cruised right into a pocket of still water where I could tail her. My hand didn't fit around the tail. That was a good sign. Setting the rod in the water carefully, I scooped the fish up with my other hand and slid it under her belly. She was mine. Three measurements with separate measuring devices made the results more than conclusive: 40 1/8" on the nose. The Iowa fish of my dreams was in hand.

Looking back at the journey, it seems appropriate now that I was so excited about a 20" pike back in August of 2013. Sometimes it seems as though the trophy can overshadow the adventure that gets you to "the one", if you let it. I think about that 20" fish regularly and remember how excited I was to have it in my hands. That fish opened up the possibility of one twice its size, my 40" fish of a lifetime. Now that the 40 adventure is a memory, it's time to set new goals, something I always strive to do to keep moving forward as a fisherman. I am not very good at settling, even though that might be easier. The adventure and pursuit are what make fishing fun for me. It's not necessarily trophy-sized fish, or the fish of a lifetime. Some days it's the weather, the scenery, and the fact that you get to do what you love as an angler. I don't ever want to take those things for granted.

Davis



Irresistible Kelly Creek

by Mike Jacobs

From the top of the house-sized boulder that dropped down into the depths of Kelly Creek I spotted colorful cutthroat trout lazily swimming around, occasionally rising to the surface to intercept a drifting mayfly. Water filling the pool was nearly 25 feet deep yet I could see big Bull Trout resting near the bottom in water that was as clear as an aquarium. The crystal clear waters of Kelly Creek are home to an outstanding population of Westslope Cutthroat trout, a population that was almost wiped out by overharvest in the late 1960's. In 1970, the state of Idaho wisely declared Kelly Creek a catch- and- release stream and the rest, as they say, is history.

Today, Kelly Creek has recovered from the brink and is widely regarded as the premier Westslope Cutthroat trout stream in the Rocky Mountain west. Its' gin clear water flows through a rugged canyon in the Bitterroot mountains of Idaho, over boulders and cobblestone that sparkles with fool's gold. The fish inhabiting Kelly Creek- Westslope Cutthroat, Rainbow, and Bull trout are fat, healthy fish, but they do not get that way by being selective in what they eat. The coldwater stream is low in nutrients and does not produce great hatches of insects. As a result, the fish must eat whatever is available to them or they will perish. The Westslope Cutts inhabiting Kelly Creek eat a diet entirely made up of insects and their preference is floating insects such as adult mayflies, caddis, midges and grasshoppers.

It is this feeding preference of the Westslope Cutthroat trout that first attracted me to Kelly Creek. As I was researching places to fish in Idaho every book or magazine article I read about Idaho fishing noted that the native cutthroat of Kelly Creek feed regularly at the surface of the stream. I love to fly fish for native trout in beautiful surroundings and if you add into the equation that the native trout have an affinity for dry flies, you can definitely count me in.

A friend and I planned three days of fishing, on three different streams, while we were in North Central Idaho. We had already fished the North Fork of the Clearwater River, Kelly Creeks' sister stream, and had found it to be a beautiful and productive fishery. Even though these two streams course through adjacent canyons, the Westslope Cutthroat of the North Fork of the Clearwater ignored our dry flies and showed an overwhelming preference for subsurface flies.

The following day, as I pulled the car into a narrow pull off close to one of Kelly Creeks' sparkling runs and emerald pools, I wasn't sure what to expect. Would we enjoy a glorious day catching Idaho's colorful, native cutts on our dry flies, or would we need to entice them with our nymphs and leeches as we did on the North Fork of the Clearwater? I leaned my rod into a nearby bush as I tied an extra section of 5X tippet onto the end of my leader. I was planning to offer them an assortment of dry flies unless the response of the trout forced me to switch to subsurface flies. I cautiously made my way across the colorful cobblestone bottom of the swiftly flowing creek and positioned myself close to a midstream boulder upstream from the pool. The main flow of the stream entered the middle of the pool and fanned out into soft water on both sides where rings left behind by feeding fish covered the surface. I could not tell exactly what the fish were feeding on so I selected a dry fly that was easy for me to see, a Lochsa Special. This fly was originated for fishing on the Lochsa River but I was confident that the Westslope Cutts of Kelly Creek would also find the fly irresistible.

From my position in the creek I had to make a downstream cast with a parachute mend to allow the fly to alight in a fish's feeding lane. Then what was required was to feed slack line out of the end of the rod to allow the fly to drift downstream to the fish. Using this presentation I was able to catch and release three 10"-12" Cutts, and I also saw some larger fish that came charging after the fly only to make a last second refusal. After witnessing several of these refusals, I was finally able to get the fly into the feeding lane of a good fish and he took it without hesitation. The sizable fish pounced on the Lochsa Special and the battle was on. Westslope Cutthroat trout have a reputation as strong fighters immediately after hookup, but they will then tire out quickly. This fish was not aware of that reputation and put up a tremendous fight right up to the point where I was able to guide him into quiet water and slide him into my waiting landing net. With the fly firmly lodged in the corner of the fish's jaw I gently laid him on top of the landing net, in water just deep enough for him to continue to draw life sustaining water through his gills. As the fish lay calmly next to my net I had a chance to admire his beauty as I opened my shirt pocket to get my camera.

Mature Westslope Cutts are golden bronze in color with a heavy black spotting pattern, soft crimson color belly, and bright red throat slash and gill plates. They are truly camera candy. I centered the fish and the landing net in the view screen of my digital camera and took a couple quick pictures, checked to make sure the pictures had turned out well, and then tucked the camera back into my shirt pocket.

I grasped the bend of the barbless hook with my hemostats and easily backed the Lochsa Special out of the fish's jaw. Gently supporting the fifteen inch Cutt, I faced him into the slight current that was circulating along the edge of the riffles in front of me. In less than a minute the beautiful Westslope bolted from my loose grip and disappeared into shaded depths of the pool.

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Fishing Kelly Creek for the first time left a lasting impression on both of us. In a few short hours we caught good numbers of cut-throat trout, all on dry flies. We fished less than a mile of this remote stream that flows through a heavily forested canyon, and at every step along the way we were surrounded by unsurpassed natural splendor. Fishing Kelly Creek's sparkling clear water was everything I had hoped for and more, and the native fish are both abundant and beautiful.

As we left the stream at the end of our fishing day and began the long drive back to the lodge, I was already thinking about when I might be able to return to Kelly Creek to do more exploring. More than ten miles of this exceptional trout stream is paralleled by Forest Service Road 255 which provides easy access to numerous trout filled runs and deep pools. Or, if you prefer, you can tighten up the laces on your hiking boots and explore the upper section of the stream that is accessible only by trail. Either way you choose to access Kelly Creek you will find the wild country and the wild trout to be irresistible and, just as I did, you will be planning your return to this wonderful stream as soon as possible.

Mike



Doug Nauman on left nets nice Westslope Cutthroat

The Lochsa River: A Wild and Scenic Treasure

by Mike Jacobs

For thousands of years the exquisite beauty of the Lochsa River was known only by the Native Americans who roamed the rugged western slopes of the Bitterroot Mountains of Idaho. Then, in September of 1805, the Lewis and Clark Expedition discovered the river and its existence was revealed to the world for the first time when Capt. William Clarks' journal entries of the expedition were published.

Today, anglers wishing to visit this beautiful river have virtually unlimited and easy public access from Highway 12, which was completed in 1962. The highway parallels the river for 60 miles and provides convenient access for travelers, fishermen, hikers and others who plan to explore this wild and scenic area.

The Lochsa, which in the Salish Indian language means "rough water", definitely lives up to its name as it carves its way through the plush, narrow mountain canyon. On the western slopes of Idaho's Bitterroot Mountains, the river begins as a mere trickle at 6,000 feet and then flows for 65 miles before it joins the Selway River at Lowell, forming the Middle Fork of the Clearwater River. By the time the Lochsa has dropped from the heights of the Bitterroots into the canyon where it parallels Highway 12 it has transformed from a series of small mountain rivulets into a pristine river. The river is characterized by cold and crystalline waters flowing through a succession of cobblestone runs, deep glides and emerald pools.

Of particular interest to fly fisher's, who are looking for a high quality fishery, 22 miles of the Lochsa River above the Wilderness Gateway Campground were designated as catch and release waters in 1988. Today, the numbers of Westslope Cutthroat in this section of the river are astounding. The lower river, downstream from the Wilderness Gateway Campground all the way to the confluence of the Lochsa and Selway, is managed as wild trout water (artificial lures only, with a two trout limit, none under 14 inches.) Both of these sections of the river have amazing trout habitat and populations of trout, but with only one day left on our trip, the catch and release section is where we decided to concentrate our fishing efforts.

We left our rooms at the lodge just as daylight was beginning to fill the Lochsa River canyon. The catch-and-release section of the river, which begins thirty-six miles upriver from Lowell, was our destination for the day. The entire canyon was enveloped by a low, thick cloud ceiling that I hoped would stay in place for most of the day. I liked the fact that we had the cloud cover over us because it would set the stage for a good hatch of aquatic insects and, if a good hatch did occur, they would be available to the fish for a longer time on the surface of the river.

A cool breeze and a few raindrops greeted Doug and me as we got out of the car and began to get our fishing gear ready for the day. We parked in a parking lot for one of the many trailheads, which happened to be conveniently located just across Highway 12 from a magnificent run and pool. While Doug continued his preparations, I hopped over the guardrails that were on each side of the road and made my way to the river.

Diverging currents had created an island in the middle of the river, and at the bottom of the island the Lochsa's swiftly plunging waters had carved a deep pool. I crossed the river on a shallow cobblestone flat as I headed toward the downstream end of the deep water. Easing my way forward, I watched for any rises in the riffles and the surface of the pool that might give away the location of a fish. I noticed a few fish rising sporadically in the pool, and I spotted one good fish that was rising regularly in the riffled water. I knotted a Lochsa Special to the end of my tippet, dabbed a little floatant on the fly, then delivered the fly to the head of the riffle and allowed it to drift through. The fly disappeared into a tiny disturbance on the surface and I lifted the rod tip slightly, softly setting the hook, just in case the fly had disappeared in the mouth of a trout.

My suspicions were confirmed when the line tightened and the cutthroat raced directly away from me, the fly firmly anchored in the corner of his jaw. The bend of my rod slowed the fish and he turned back into the pool, tracing a wide arc through the water with my flyline. The fish wisely chose to fight the battle from the darkened depths of the pool. Soon the pressure from the rod and the current forced the 14 inch Westslope to abandon the fight. Tired, but far from completely spent, the fish rolled to his side revealing spotted flanks and the characteristic red throat slash.

Doug arrived at the pool just as the skirmish was ending. I handed him my camera and he obligingly took a few pictures for me; a couple of different pictures of the fish in the landing net, and a hero shot with me holding the colorful cutthroat.

As soon as the impromptu photo session had ended I lowered the pretty fish into the water, facing him toward the slight current flowing along the edge of the pool. Showing no ill effects from his first encounter with an artificial fly, the fish rested briefly, cradled in my hands. The survival instinct quickly kicked in and the fish, feeling no restraint by my supporting hands, bolted back into the emerald depths of the pool.

continued on next page

Over a period of seven hours we fished a succession of the Lochsa's beautiful glides, riffles and pools. Our game plan was to locate a good spot as we drove along Highway 12 and then we would find a convenient place to park nearby. We had no trouble finding and fishing a number of good runs and pools, all of which we found simply by driving along the highway.

We landed good numbers of Westslope Cutthroat trout from many of these runs and pools, but not from all of them. At a few spots we found that the Lochsa's water was just too swift or too deep, and in a few places, a bit too much of both. Many of the fish we caught were fooled by our dry flies and the others fell for our Conehead Leeches and Buggers. The most successful dry flies for us were the Hot Spot Renegade, Lochsa Special, Elk Hair Caddis, Parachute Adams and small Humpies.

Our fishing day ended on a high note. Each of us caught several, pretty Westslope Cutthroat trout, the majority of them falling for our dry flies. Even though we had experienced just a fraction of what the Lochsa has to offer, we came away with a great appreciation for this river and its fish. Of all the places I've been, and things I've seen, there are few places more deserving of its status as a Wild and Scenic River, than the upper 30 miles of the Lochsa. This scenic river is just waiting to be discovered and explored by more fly fishers'. It is a treasure that is not difficult to find.....it is hidden in plain sight.

At the end of our fishing day on the Lochsa River we made the short drive back to the Three Rivers Resort and started packing the car, preparing for the long, two day drive that lay ahead of us to get back home. As always seems to be the case, the car ended up being packed just as tightly for the return trip home as it had been for the trip heading to Idaho.

A lifetime of preparation and five months of phone calls and planning had gone into making this trip something very special. During our trip I was awed by the rugged scenery and crystalline water that we were surrounded by at each of our fishing stops in Idaho. I gained an appreciation of the wonderful fly fishing opportunities that we were able to experience, and I eagerly look forward to visiting more of the pristine waters of Idaho.

The late Charlie Brooks once wrote, "Man, born of woman, is of short life and small expectations. He fleeth to the shadow and is cut down. But, if he remembers that rivers are eternal and returns to them often, his life will be longer, full of peace and learning, and the years will treat him kindly." If you get the chance to fish them, the streams and rivers of Idaho will treat you kindly and, like me, you will want to return to them often.

As we turned off the light in our room, I knew that I would have a restless night because I couldn't wait to get going. But I wasn't quite ready to leave.

Mike



Mike Jacobs on left shows off a nice Westslope Cutthroat

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