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ROADTRIP ISSUE (BORN TO BE FREE)



The Mystery of Iron Fly
The Goon
Whor-vis Back to Orvis
Yukatan Journal
Let's Adopt the Catawba...

plus...
Copperhead Crab
Gangster Gurgler
The Nor'Easter
Float N' Fly
and more....



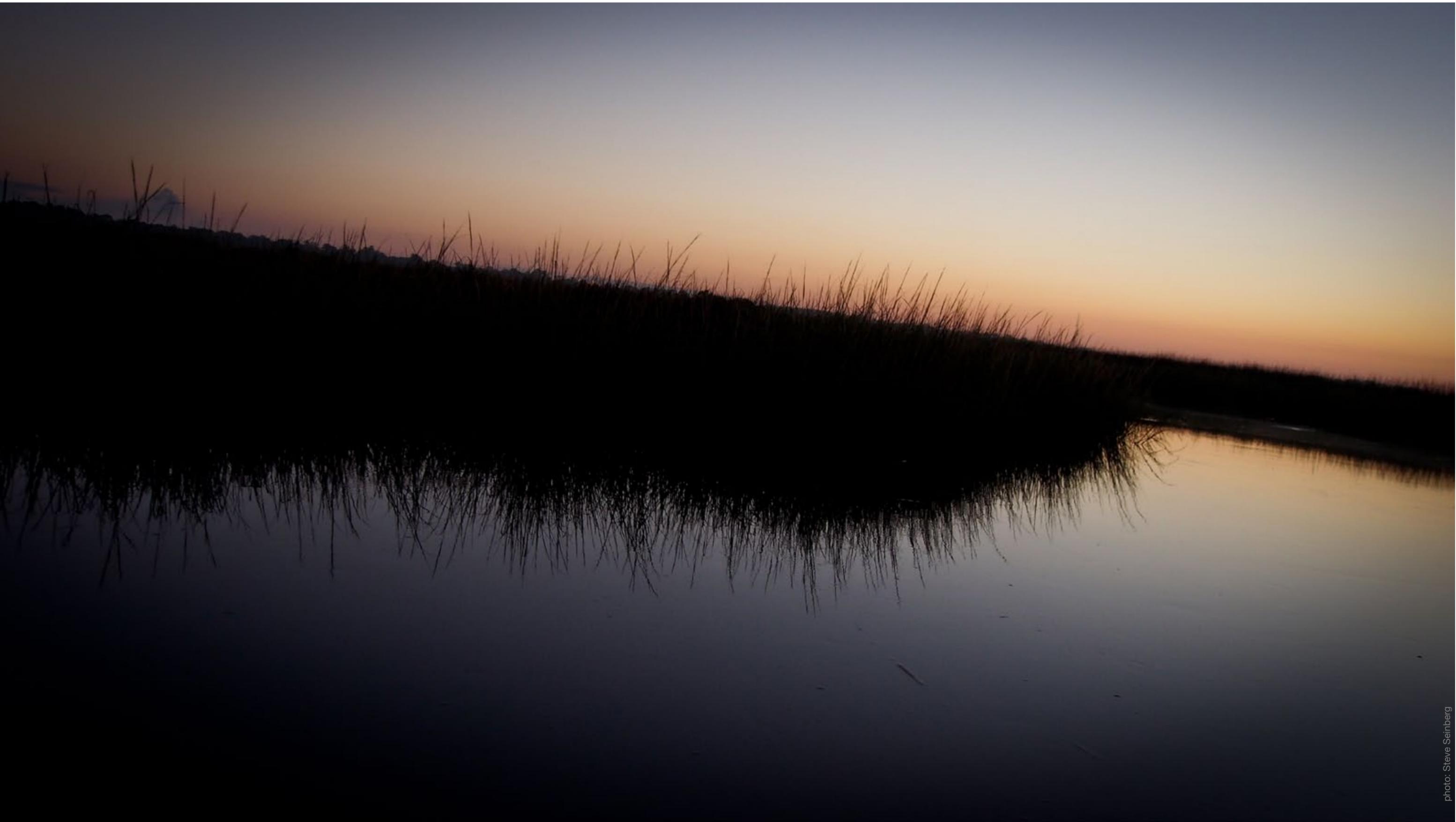
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WINTER 2014

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From the Editor's desk...
to your bathroom

Winter 2014

Winter days are short. The sun doesn't come up till sometime after seven, and when five o'clock rolls around you better be close to the car, the takeout, or at least have a headlamp. Shorter days mean less time to get shit done, and less time to get shit done means being hungover and late to the ramp isn't as boyishly charming as it was in July when the sun didn't set till well past bedtime. It's not that fishing isn't fun during the winter. Hell, in the South, the biggest fish of the year get caught all winter long with a lot less people to witness it then you'd find in the tourist months. It's just that fishing becomes more about fishing and less about hanging out during the downtime of the day. There's no time for grab-ass, horse-play or tomfoolery...there's fishing to be done. I mean, there's no point in being cold and miserable for a scenic float or walk through the winter woods...we're not birdwatchers (not there's anything wrong with that).

The same sense of urgency that follows you around a day on the water will also nag you while you sit around the house not fishing.

"Who the f*&k emptied my boxes?"

"Where did I burn up all my six by?"

"What animal shit/puked/died in the bottom of my boat/cooler/truck (a lot of options here)?"

"Must tie Clousers!"

It's a neverending loop of shit that will really start to "f" with your head if you let it. I know this is the part of the story where you expect me to have answers for how to balance it all. Work, family, Thai orphanage building, fishing, and only so many hours in a shortened day...but prepare to be disappointed. If I knew, my wife wouldn't be pissed off at my juvenile behavior nearly as much as she deservedly is. All I can say is don't be late to the ramp. It's colder than shit out here.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Smith".

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Jay Johnson



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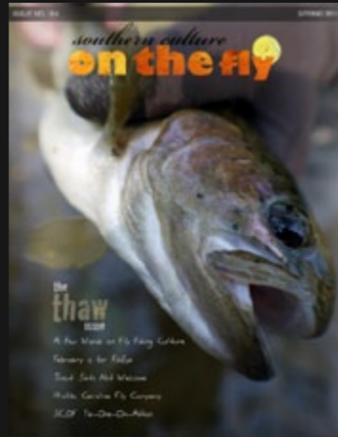


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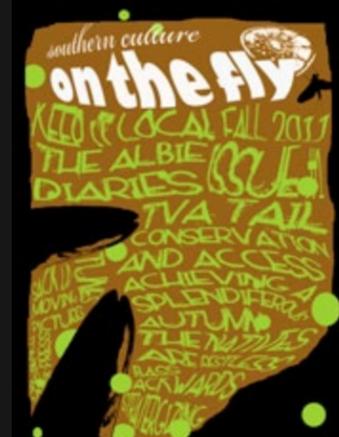
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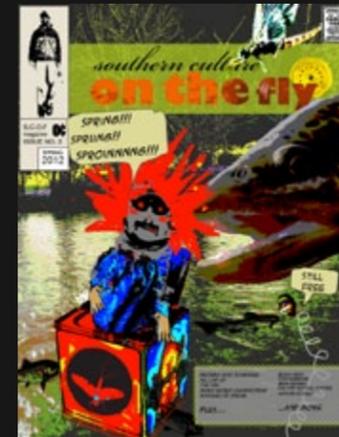
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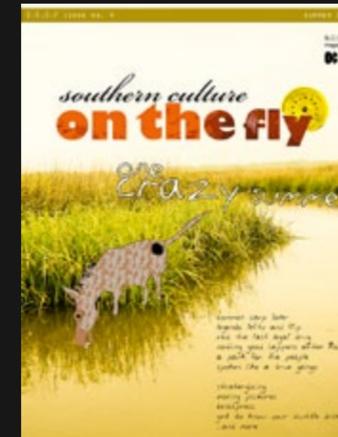
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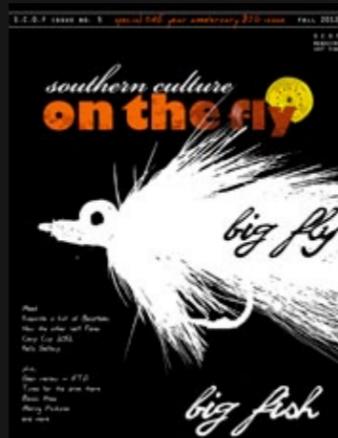
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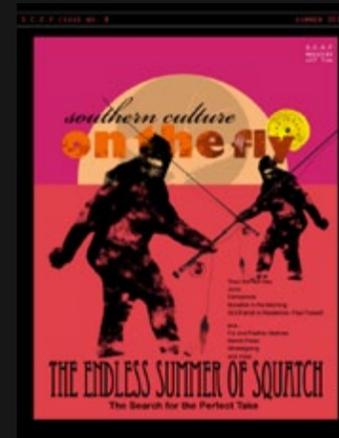
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**ISSUE #9
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still free... whenever you need 'em



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LET'S ADOPT THE **CATAWBA**
YOU APATHETIC ASSHOLES

By David Grossman

Photos: David Grossman and Alan Broyhill



North Carolina has a lot of trout water. Can't swing a dead trout around the mountains without hitting some ditch with trout in it. As much trout water as North Carolina has, the Old North State has a serious lack of floatable tail water. That's why there is never a shortage of North Carolina plates pulling drift boats over the mountain and paying 85 bucks a year in out-of-state licenses to our not-so-volunteer-like Tennessean friends. This paradox is one that has perplexed most of my friends and I for longer than I'd care to admit. Our frustrations generally manifest themselves in drunken discourse that inevitably comes back to the evil oligarch that is Duke Energy, and their piss poor performance in managing our rivers for anything other than profit. It's easy to cuss the power company, the state, hillbilly poachers, and a whole slew of other folks. The hard thing is to get anyone to do anything about it that involves more than agreeing on the fact that it sucks.



Well folks, the time for bitching is over, and the time to act is upon us: The Catawba River wants you. The tailwater below Lake James flows through mostly undeveloped Carolina bottomlands before making a long journey past Charlotte and into South Carolina. For years the dedicated few floated and fished the Catawba, negotiating bone dry minimum flows, unpredictable dam releases, and predictable mud releases, slaying few but far between brown trout that called the river home. It was a float that was always on my list but not high enough on that list to



keep me out of Tennessee. In the late 90's, things started to change. Members of TU, Squeak Smith, and a host of others could no longer see the potential of the Catawba wasted on misregulation and the apathy of silty landowners. Riparian zones were rebuilt, minimum flows were increased and one of the most massive brown trout stocking efforts the state has ever undertaken left the Catawba fishing and functioning better than the Old Girl had in decades. Even through all these efforts, the Catawba is not nearly as good as it should be.



The Catawba should and could be the best brown trout fishery in North Carolina if not the region. The water is cold, the habitat plentiful, and forage base adequate. Sadly, the Catawba will never become this without a little (if not a lot) of help from her friends. More riparian work has to be done to keep the river from turning to a brown mess for four days after a big rain. Duke Energy has to be brow-beaten into understanding that there is a middle ground between profit and the recreational users of a natural resource that belongs to all of us. Finally, in my opinion, the State has to be pushed even further into giving at least a section of the tailwater regulations that promote healthy, holdover populations of trout that have the opportunity to grow to dragon-like proportions. None of these things will happen on autopilot. The parties involved don't have our best interest at heart. The only way anything will change for the better is if we take our best interests to their front door...and shove it down their throats.







Yes, old retired people have more time for river cleanups, governmental hearings, and whatever else the over-60 crowd does that we all benefit from and give them no credit for. But, you can only ride the coattails of the elderly for so long... they don't move very fast...so it's kind of hard to get anywhere. The Catawba river sits in the Foothills of North Carolina just waiting for one of us to come by and give a shit. In the end, it comes down to, "Is it worth giving a shit to build a fishery?" I hope so....



How to "give a shit...."

US

- Trout Unlimited
- Catawba River Keeper
- Foothills Conservancy Of North Carolina

THEM

- Duke-Energy
- NC Wildlife Resources Commission

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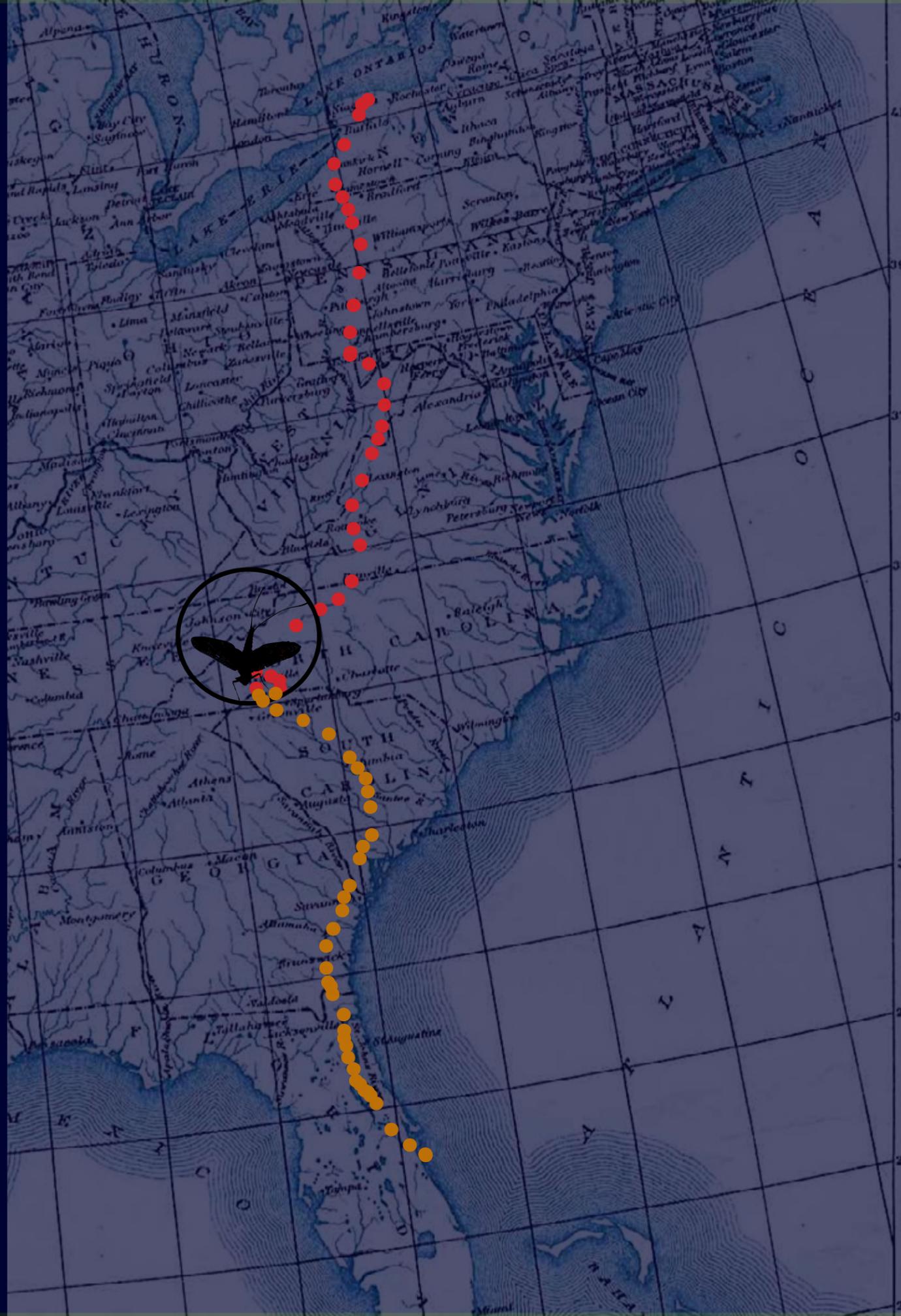
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roads diverge

The only thing these two roadtrips had in common were that we left at the same time from the same place....



MOVING PICTURES

Murphy Kane



The
Nor' Easter



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the GOON

By Scott Davis

oak chillin'

Photos: Steve Seinberg and Scott Davis

There is nowhere like the Goon. You can see it, hell, you'll feel it. It might hit you as soon as the skiff glides onto plane or it might be the sight of your first tail, but its here and it will find you and grab you like a religion. It's a Sacred place, and something we have to fight fiercely to protect. It's an area so pure that almost 5000 different species call it home, with some species that aren't found anywhere else in the world.





Find your inner ninja -- plan an attack and stay as calm as possible. Haste will get you killed.



The fish of the Indian River Lagoon System, and more specifically Mosquito Lagoon (aka the Goon), have been on the top of fly anglers' bucket lists for decades, and with good reason. The combination of salinity levels, abundant food, and strict regulations grow redfish and seatrout of mythological proportions. Yet, they are pressured fish and act like it. A boat motor a half-mile away can put them on edge, and they have zero patience for bad casts and overzealous approaches. Find your inner ninja -- plan an attack and stay as calm as possible. Haste will get you killed.





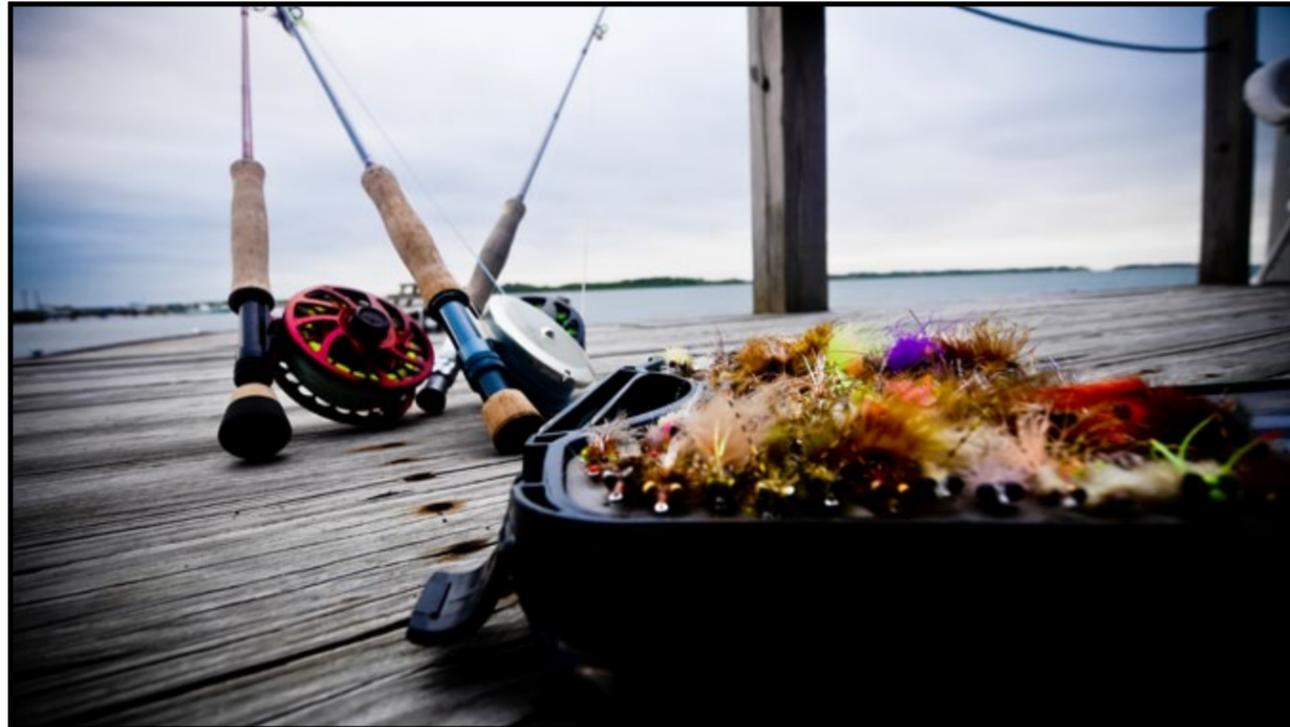


You don't come to the Goon to catch boatloads of fish (although you can). You come here to become a better angler. Everything comes into play here, and it's not a level playing field. In fact, it's a stacked deck...and not in your favor. The fish can see you approaching, so leave your orange Tommy Bahama shirt in the car and wear light colors that will blend you into a white or blue cloudy background. Use fluorocarbon leaders and buy the best hooks you've ever heard of.







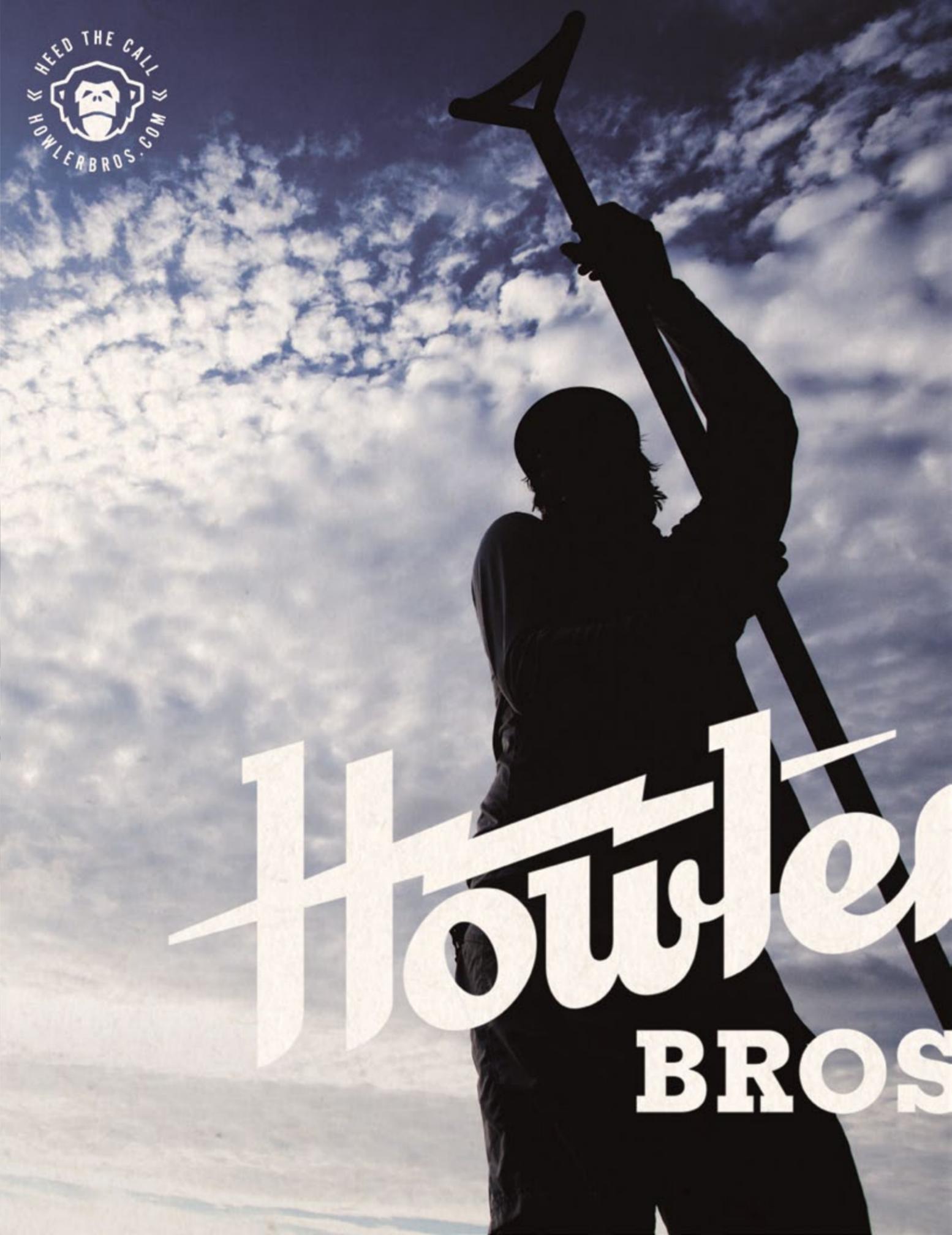


We've found the perfect recipe. Gather a few friends, a few skiffs, a shallow attitude and prepare to live the high life. *Capt. Brian Clancey's* place in Oak Hill, FL, serves as home base. Start with oyster stew and a crab sandwich at *JB's Fish Camp*, wash down with several cold beers, sight fish until dark, then head to *Goodrich Seafood and Oyster House* for fish dip and a table full of steamed oysters. Wash down with several more boat sodas and putt towards the nearest dock light.

Less exposed and free to ambush in the cover of darkness, the trout are on patrol. If you planned for this, pull out the flies with the glow-in-the-dark flash or add *Loon's Bio-Glow*. It might not help, but it certainly doesn't hurt...these fish are here to eat. The northern part of the lagoon from Oak Hill to New Smyrna has plenty of lights and it pays to stay up late.







Howler BROS

This part of Florida doesn't seem to have changed much, at least not compared to places like Little Havana in Miami, or the high rises of Jacksonville. It's an area that was hit hard during the recession, and the fishery has also experienced its problems with algae blooms, habitat loss, and freshwater discharges. But the fish and the people here are resilient and adaptive. They are badasses.



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Nick Davis

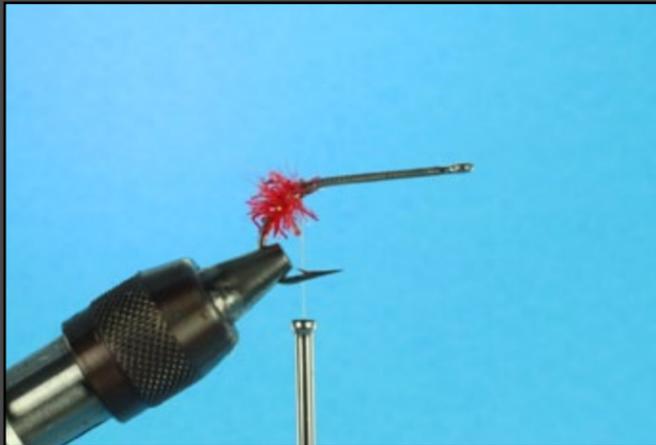


Gangster Gurgler

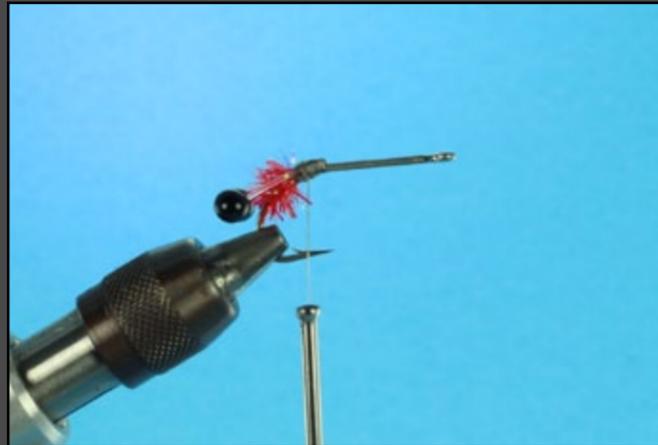
Materials List:

Daiichi 2546 size 1/0 hook
Grey Danville flat wax 210 denier thread
Prismacolor marker (tan)
Prismacolor marker (brown)
Red or orange medium cactus chenille
239 Flies crustacean eyes
Cream craft fur
Sand craft fur
Root Beer medium palmer chenille
Green grizzly hackle
239 Flies white/tan foam strip
Tan EP tarantula brush (1/2 inch)

Nick Davis
Gangster Gurgler
Tying the 239 Flies gurgler variation



1. Start your thread at the eye of the hook and advance it back to 1/3 the way down the bend of the hook. Tie in your cactus chenille and palmer to the point where the hook begins to straighten on the shank.



2. At a 45 degree angle, tie in your 239 Flies Crustacean eyes right above where your chenille ends. You may need to wrap several times in and around each eye to space the stem from the hook. The end result should place both eyes about a 1/4 of an inch away from the hook.



3. Cut 4-5 clumps of both sand and tan craft fur off the hide and place on a table separately. Pull the "long and shorts" out of each clump so you have clean and tapered clumps. Stack the sand clump on top of the cream clump matching the tips and trim the butt section off so that you are left with 1 piece that is approximately 2 1/2 inches in length. Tie your craft fur just behind the eyes and bar them with the fat end of the tan marker and slim end of the brown marker.



4. On the bump created where you tied in the craft fur, tie in a 2 inch piece of rootbeer palmer chenille and palmer forward 5 wraps.



5. Tie in a green grizzly hackle and palmer forward 6-8 wraps. Break off the excess and wrap you thread backwards (away from the hook eye) pressing the last wraps or two of hackle fibers down.



6. Advance your thread to ¼ of inch behind the eye and tie in your 239 Flies foam strip. You should tie very firmly back to where the hackle ends. Your thread should be hanging nearly touching the green hackle.



7. Tie in your tan EP tarantula brush and palmer forward to ¼ of an inch behind the eye of the hook.



8. Fold your foam strip back and down and tie onto the hook shank ⅛ of an inch behind the eye of the hook. Whip finish 2 times in front of the foam strip and cut the foam to length.

As I pole through the flats of the no motor zone
I take a look at my life and realize there's nothin' left
Cause I've been draftin' skinny and castin' so long
That even my mama thinks my mind is gone
But I ain't never caught a fish that didn't deserve it
Me trout set, you know that's unheard of
You betta watch how you're talking and where you castin'
Or you and your homies might be lined in chalk
I really hate to trip but I gotta loc
As they croak, I see myself in the pistol smoke, fool
I'm the kinda G the little homies wanna be
At my bench in the night tying gurglers in the street light

Been spending most their lives, fishing in the gangsta's paradise
Been spending most their lives, fishing in the gansta's paradise
Keep spending most our lives, fishing in the gansta's paradise
Keep spending most our lives, fishing in the gansta's paradise

Gangstas carry sawed off 8wts. and wet wade in Air Jordans - no laces. Gangstas never blind cast; straight sight fish homie. Gangstas ghost ride the skiff. Damn it feels good to be a gangsta. **Nick Davis** should know. He lives in a gangsta's paradise.

Thomas Harvey



Photo: Luke Williams



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WHOR-VIS BACK TO ORVIS

By David Grossman
Photos: Steve Seiberg



Talk about an article I never thought I'd write. Let's start at the beginning. Hi, my name is Dave, and I was an Orvis hater. I don't know when my hatred of Orvis started. It definitely started though. Everyone who worked at Orvis shops kind of seemed like pricks to me. I played off Orvis endorsed guides as dudes who could afford the sticker. The term "whore-vis" was an old favorite in my lexicon. I guess everybody has to hate somebody and for me, Orvis was a hate dumpster. Anything wrong with the industry, well Orvis must be involved. If my waders leaked it was only because an Orvis-led conspiracy was sabotaging wader plants all over southeast Asia in what can only be described as a Mussolini-type power play. Well, fellow haters, I stand before you today as a ticket holder on the Orvis train (which I found out means something much different than it does in prison). This transformation wasn't an easy one, you don't go from hating to love-fest in a day...it takes a week.

When an invitation from Orvis shows up at your door, the internal conflict goes something like this:

-Wow, an Invitation to spend a week at Orvis all expenses paid!

-But, I hate Orvis

-But it's free!

-You're right I am a whore

-Let's go to Orvis







What I found out in Vermont was an eye-opener to say the least. Mistakes were admitted to, complaints were aired, and I am neither able to deny or confirm that Phil Monahan broke down into tears and uncomfortably bared his soul (really disturbing stuff there Phil... you might want to talk to someone about that). It also turns out that they know what we've been saying about them all these years. It was kind of like sitting in the principal's office and being read a list of shitty things you've said about another kid in your class. Anyone with half a conscience feels pretty, well, shitty. I'm not going to go through everything said that day, but let's just say it was all laid out for everyone to see. This cathartic exercise was painful, but seems to be Orvis' acceptance of the way things have been and a starting place for the way things should be.



The way things should be, is that when it comes to gear, you should try to bring only the highest quality product to the marketplace. You should also only put the best people you can find in charge of developing and crafting your wares. Settling on either of these points should not be an option. Outside of the marketplace, you should do everything within your considerable power and influence to make the sport better for those who participate, and those just finding it. Last but not least, the people in charge of the whole deal should probably fish more than as a casual hobby to impress cocktail party guests.







I'm not saying that Orvis will be this company they envision this year, next year, or even the year after. What I am saying is that at least they finally see it. The facts of the matter are that Orvis donates more to water and wildlife conservation than almost all the other big players in the game. Orvis has started a free intro to fly fishing classes at all their stores to bring more people into the sport, which if we don't want to go the way of the abacus, is a good thing. The Orvis H2 is a sweet stick as far as I'm concerned, and one of the better ones I've flung in a really long time. Also, just so everybody knows, Orvis is the only major family company left. Most major manufacturers have been swapped and acquired by elite last names of industry more times than a misguided couple at a key party.



I know those of you who know me think that the week I spent checking out Orvis was more akin to reprogramming than fun. And yes, it is easy to say nice things when people take you fishing (on their dime). But in the end, after meeting the people behind the evil empire, the evil empire just might not be so evil. I mean no man as warm and cuddly as Tom Rosenbauer can be evil, can he?



and Dickie Davis (L-R)





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Mad Mike Benson



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THE MYSTERY
THAT IS
IRON FLY
ASHEVILLE

By David Grossman
Photos: Steve Seinberg





It was dark and cold -- cold, like a doctor's hands requesting a cough. When the door opened, a mass of humanity came stumbling through what was proving to be the much too narrow a door. They immediately identified themselves as Pig Farmers. Their leader stepped forward and hugged me like a bear would treat a gazelle (if they were ever to meet). He stank of hope, good times, and bad decisions. Introductions were directly bypassed for other activities, none of which would prove responsible.



The morning came too quick, like a...well, you know what that's like. The stale stench of bad coffee was like an aphrodisiac to the huddled masses of the fly fishing expo. Penned up like animals on a conveyor belt through the aisles and booths, the desperation in their eyes screamed for freedom. Freedom proved to be a bitchin' bad tattoo in the parking lot. The idea of a bad fishing tattoo that has nothing to do with fishing was too juicy a mind romp to pass up.

Freshly inked and in an alcohol/endorphin frenzy, I found myself in a derelict warehouse amongst a group of foulest fly flingers in the 828 and beyond. The mix of glue, epoxy, detritus, and dyed animal skins was reminiscent of what Rome must have smelt like as it burned. With no warning, the circus was brought to a fevered pitch by the bear man pig farmer from the night before.





What was chaos, was now controlled chaos. One vise. One bag of materials. Many tyers enter. One tyer leaves...victorious. Somehow what was iron was made into lead by an oversized drunken animal that seized victory under a cloud of controversy and an oversized bobber cooler.




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In the harsh light of day our indiscretions lay there before us in a haze of gluttony and sloth. What Iron Fly was is still not clear. But what we became is as clear as a beam of light to the uninitiated.

¡ VIVA EL PIG FARM!



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and post your own at #scot



Quarterly Apologies

Dearest David,

First and foremost let me thank you for your heartfelt apology in the last issue of SCOF. I feel certain that the apology, in conjunction with the check for the broken window, is a start in the right direction to getting your privileges at the East Knoxville Fishing Club reinstated. Unfortunately, at this time, the board still feels that you are too big of a risk to be permitted back on the premises in any capacity, much less unsupervised for overnight stays. You've got to know that if anybody is pulling for you it's me.

Now, having said that, I recently spoke with your ~~handler~~ partner Steve, who brought it to my attention that my own behavior in Asheville has been the subject of some talk amongst Asheville's inner circles (drum?) as well as some of the participants of the Iron Fly contest. I feel strongly that my behavior was misinterpreted and I want to address some of the points Steve mentioned to me as I was inspired by the cathartic nature of your own apology letter.

I'll start by saying that placing me behind the open bar to collect the five dollars from patrons was the right thing to do given that I'm accustomed to handling large sums of cash. However, I suspect the proximity of the bar to the Vedavoo E-Cig Smoker's Lounge (Only in Asheville and pure genius!) may have had an intoxicating effect on me. Well, this and the fact that I was over served by an inattentive bar-keep clearly had the detrimental effect of sending me tripping down the lane towards a meta-physical, transcendental stroll within the much maligned spirit world. It was with this mindset that I asked to see your new "Born to be Free" tattoo which you had received earlier in the day in the parking lot of the WNC Agricultural Center during the WNC Fly Fishing Expo. If it hurt badly when I slapped it as you pulled your sleeve back to reveal the fresh ink and your swollen pink flesh, I am sorry. I suspect that my fatherly instincts rose up at this point because, if one of my kids came back from NC with that on their arm, I would have bitch-slapped them too. And let's be honest, is there any dumber back-story to a tattoo than you got it in the midst of a very small regional fly fishing expo next to a barn typically reserved for livestock during the annual county fair? While I haven't spoken with your wife about this I suspect she would back me up. No?

And finally, I should mention that I owe an apology to the good citizens of Asheville. The parking meter I accosted smelled mightily of a bourgeois bohemian and offended me with it's sense of entitlement. I must have assumed that given the fair city's enumerable Muppet peasants milling about that the utopia would offer parking spaces for free. My assumption, I'm afraid, made an ass of me. Alas, David, we that are true lovers run into strange capers. But as all is mortal in nature, so is all nature in love mortal in folly. I'm sorry if you're still upset.

Sincerely yours,
A.W. Gillespie

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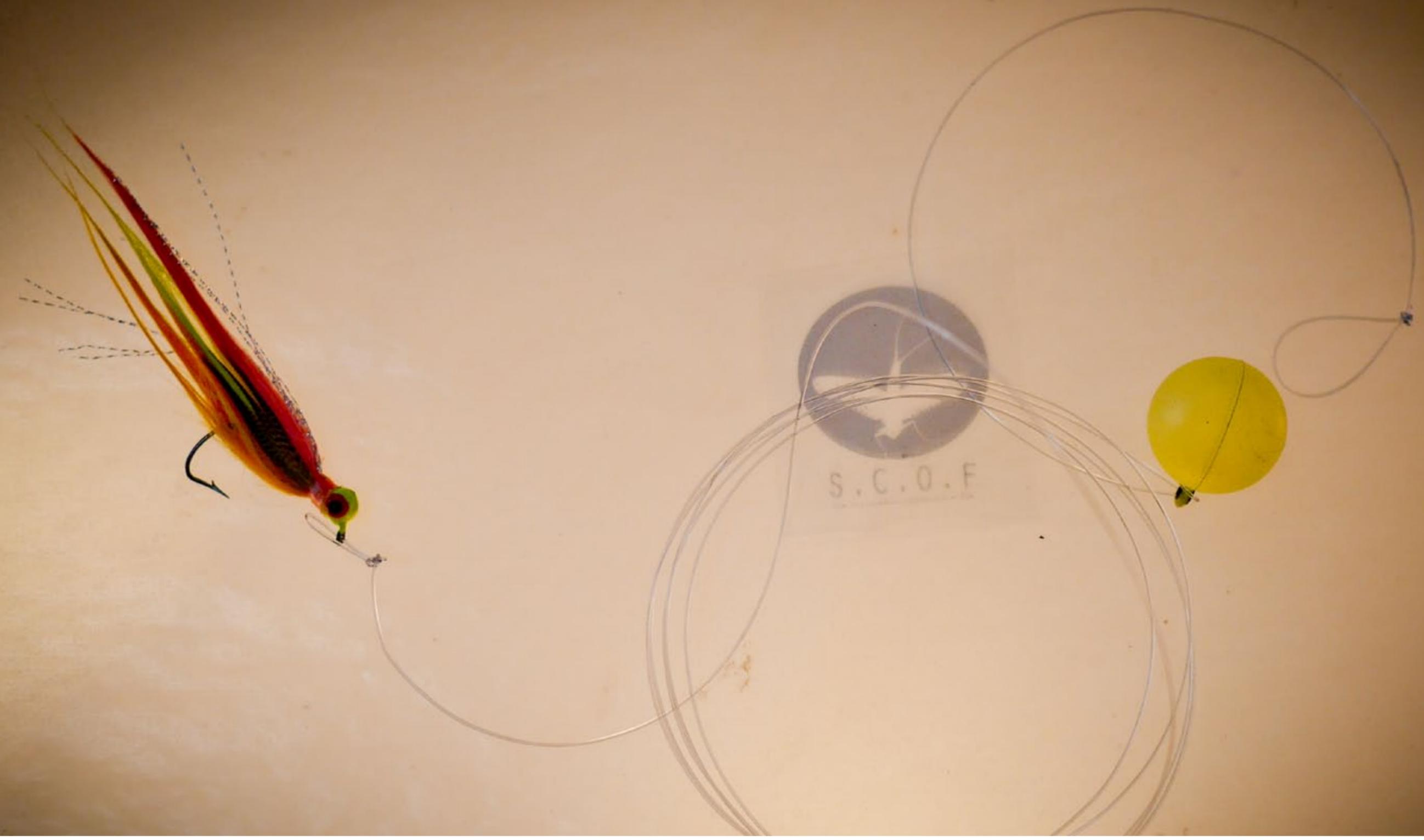
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Float N' Fly Rig





From late fall through winter, when water temperatures begin dipping into the mid-50s and lower, catching bass on deep reservoirs with traditional fly fishing setups can become extremely difficult.

Bass become sluggish as their metabolism begins to plummet from the cooling water temperatures on the lake. With lower metabolism, the bass feed less frequently and they also move shorter distances to forage on food in an effort to conserve energy. This is generally bad news for fly anglers, because it drastically shrinks the size of the strike zone and makes it much harder for fly anglers to locate, present, and retrieve their fly patterns through these small strike zones. Also, a good portion of the bass on the lakes will have moved out of the shallow water feeding grounds of the fall and moved back out

into the main lake deep water areas, where they'll often suspend in the water column in 10-25' of water, sometimes even deeper. (Bass are significantly more difficult to catch on the fly in deep water than in shallow water.)

But, the main problem with cold water suspended bass is that it's really hard for fly anglers to keep their fly patterns in the strike zone throughout the entire retrieve with traditional setups. It's really only in front of the bass for a small percentage of the retrieve.

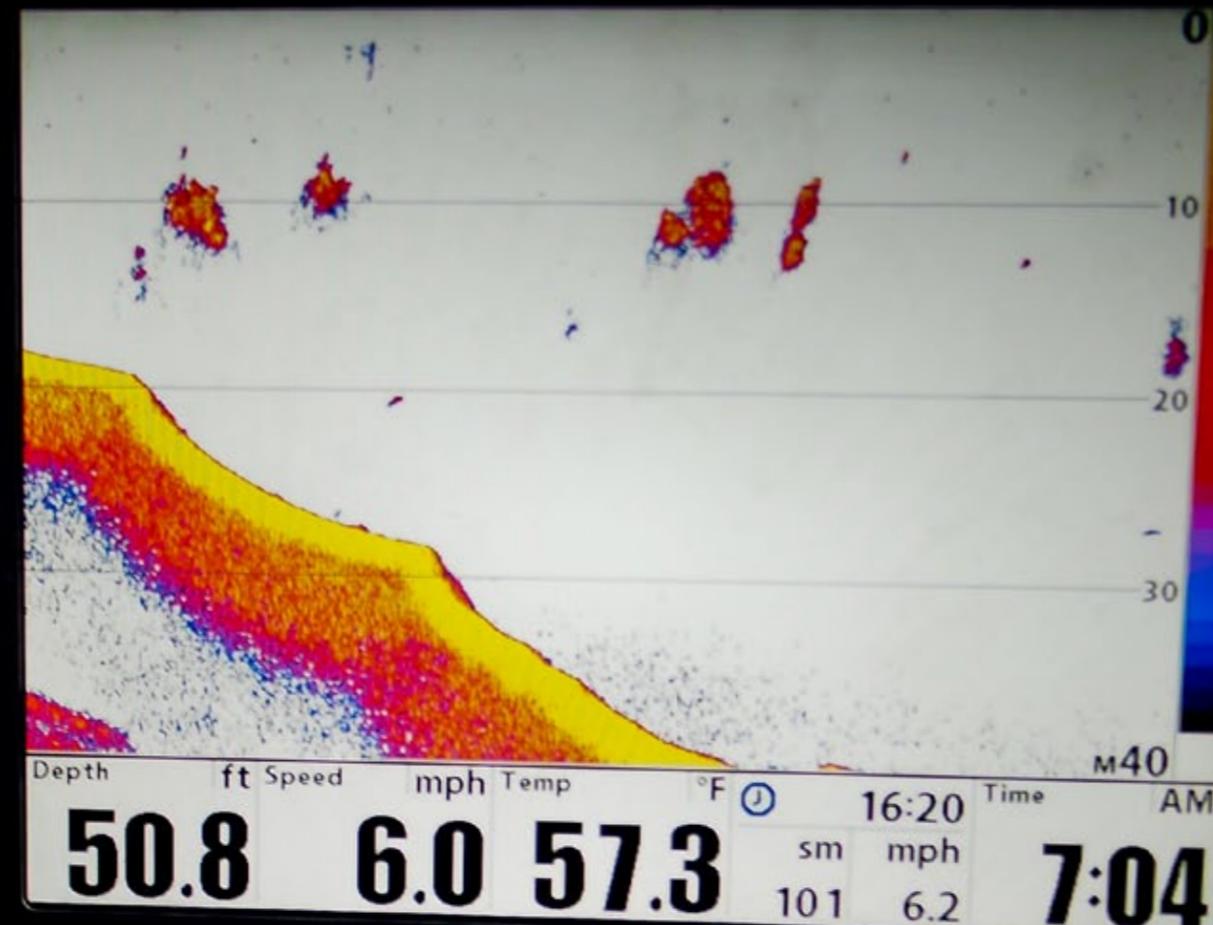
With the first half of the retrieve, an angler struggles to get the fly down to the level of the bass, and the last half of the retrieve, the fly is coming up and out of the strike zone as it gets closer to the angler and the boat on the surface. This means you have to be damn lucky that your fly comes by the bass at the correct depth and close enough to the fish to convince it to eat. Otherwise, you'll end up making casts all day and be lucky to if you catch a fish or two.

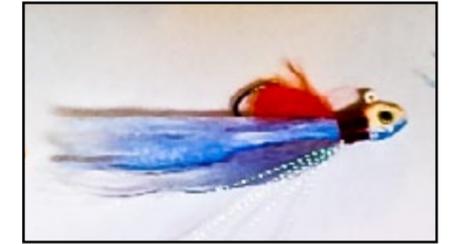
WHAT MAKES THE FLOAT N' FLY SO SPECIAL?

The Float N' Fly is a finesse rig that's specifically designed for targeting and fishing to suspended bass. With this particular rig, the suspension/floating device (strike indicator set to a preferred depth) allows you to maintain and control a consistent depth with your fly pattern during the entire retrieve, even when you're working it extremely slow to entice cold water bass. That's critical for triggering lethargic bass that often need to be coaxed into feeding. With the Float N' Fly rig, you want to get it to the correct depth and make that baitfish jig pattern look injured or dying. If you're successful in making your fly look like an easy meal, the bass will usually suck it in. That is, of course if you get your fly close enough.

Try making a long cast to the bank, let your fly sink the majority of the depth your strike indicator is set at, and then slowly bring the entire rig back to you with very subtle rod tip bounces or jiggling. All you want is the strike indicator to barely be moving as you're bringing the rig back to you. I usually stop the twitching retrieve and pause for 20-30 seconds a couple of times during each retrieve. Many of my bites on the Float N' Fly rig come during this time when the retrieve is dead. Keep in mind, the bank will start off shallow in depth and then drop off the further you get out

from shore. Try to work your rig off the bank just fast enough to keep it from getting hung up. Move it to slow when you start your retrieve and you'll get snagged quite a bit. Trust me when I say re-rigging is not something you're going to be wanting to have to do a great deal of on the lake in the dead of winter. To help you from getting snagged, it's really important to pay attention to the gradient of the bank that you're fishing and try to visualize what's underneath the water. That really helps me keep my Float N' Fly following the contour of the bottom as I work it out into the deeper water. Although many fish will be holding off the bank suspended, you will find times when bass will be holding close to the staircase-like ledges or deadfalls coming off the bank. By working your fly from the shore back to the boat into deep water, you'll find it much easier to locate and catch better concentrations of bass. When you catch a bass or two, mark it with a buoy or your GPS, and work down the bank on the same line (keeping the boat staying in the same water depth). It's important to understand that quite often too much action with the Float N' Fly is a bad thing, and on windy days when there's more chop on the surface, the less you'll have to twitch the rod tip to add action -- you'll naturally get added action on your jig from the choppy water created by the wind, and it will often actually look more natural to the fish.

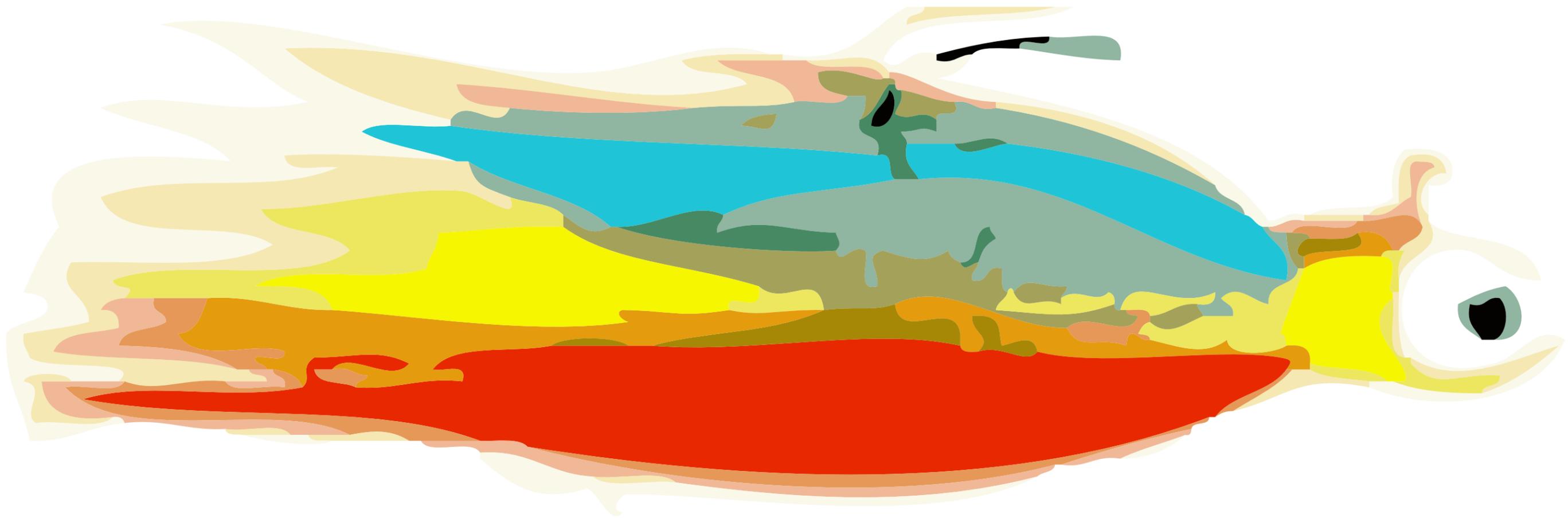




FROM A SPIN ROD TO A FLY ROD

Four or five years ago, I spent quite a bit of time bass fishing with my head bass guide, Eric Welch (who uses primarily conventional tackle), during the fall and winter. That's when I first saw how he located and caught a number of suspended bass with his Float N' Fly rig on our deep mountain lakes. He used a long spinning rod (8 1/2' to 10' in length) spooled with 4-6lb. test. He would then tie on a three-way swivel onto his main running line, attach a small bobber to the second tie-off area of the three-way swivel, and then tie on a long section of fluorocarbon tippet (8-14'), from which he finished up the rig by tying on a small hand tied Float N' Fly jig. Year after year, we caught huge sacks of suspended bass with his hand-tied 1/8 -1/32 oz. jigs. The best part of those trips together was that we almost always had the lake entirely to ourselves. One day, I told Eric, "Man, all we're really doing is nymphing for bass, and there's no reason I can't do this with my fly rod." The next trip, I did just that, tying on a 9' 2x leader, tied on a tippet ring and then added 3-6' of fluorocarbon tippet to which I'd tie a Float N' Fly jig (usually 1/16oz.) with a non-slip loop knot. Lastly, I'd attached a strike indicator or two at the far end of the butt section of the leader (usually about 10-12' in depth). That day, I held my own, catching just as many bass with my fly rod as Eric accomplished with his spinning outfit. I've modified the rig a little over the years, but it still largely remains the same as that first standard trout nymph rig I ever used trout fishing, only with a longer leader, a tippet ring, and a baitfish fly pattern tied on a jig-style hook.





WHERE TO FISH THE FLOAT N' FLY

The best place to start is on rocky bluff banks (steep 45 degree banks), main lake points with deep water (brush around is a plus), and deep water piers and docks. Keep in mind every day is different on the lake bass fishing. Bass are constantly moving with the bait or relocating to find more favorable water conditions. To regularly have success during the colder months bass fishing, you need to listen to the fish and try to fish where the forage food is located. With today's high-tech, side-imaging GPS units, an angler can quickly run down a bank watching his electronics, and determine with pretty good certainty whether there's any bait or bass around. I know not all of us are fortunate enough to have this kind of expensive gear, so if you don't, focus your efforts on fishing key main lake areas.

Most of the flies are tied with multiple colors of craft fur. We do use some Krystal Flash, mallard flank at times, and add 3D holographic eyes to the flies as well. Bright contrasting colors in the patterns seem to work much better than just tying and fishing patterns that look like the naturals on the water. Just because your Float N' Fly looks exactly like a blueback herring doesn't mean it will catch a lot of fish. Bright attractor patterns seem to help gain the attention of the bass and snap them out of their lethargic state. Lastly, don't tie your jigs too big. I rarely fish jigs over three inches. Most of the baitfish this time of year will be three inches or smaller. When the bite gets tough, and you've tried different colors jigs, go lighter and smaller with your Float N' Fly jigs.



JUST THE TIPS

Additional pointers for the Float N' Fly rig.

- *Don't fish the same float n' fly or depth as your buddy. By fishing different levels and different colored patterns it will help you determine where and what the bass want.*
- *Use Two Strike Indicators with heavier flies or on windy days to help you detect strikes easier.*
- *A perfect float n' fly setup will have your fly positioned above the suspended bass but slightly below the bait.*
- *Google "Spot Candy Float N' Fly" for a good example of one of my favorite color combinations for smallmouth and spotted bass.*
- *Matzuo Sickle Jig Hooks, size 4 is a good starting hook for tying your float n' fly jigs.*
- *Use a black Sharpie to mark 10', 12' and 14' points. This will allow you to quickly and accurately adjust your Float N' Fly rig.*
- *Understand that post frontal conditions are perfect for the Float N' Fly rig because it gets most of the bass to suspend in the lake, and that's where this rig shines most.*
- *A 10' fast action fly rod with a floating line is all you need*





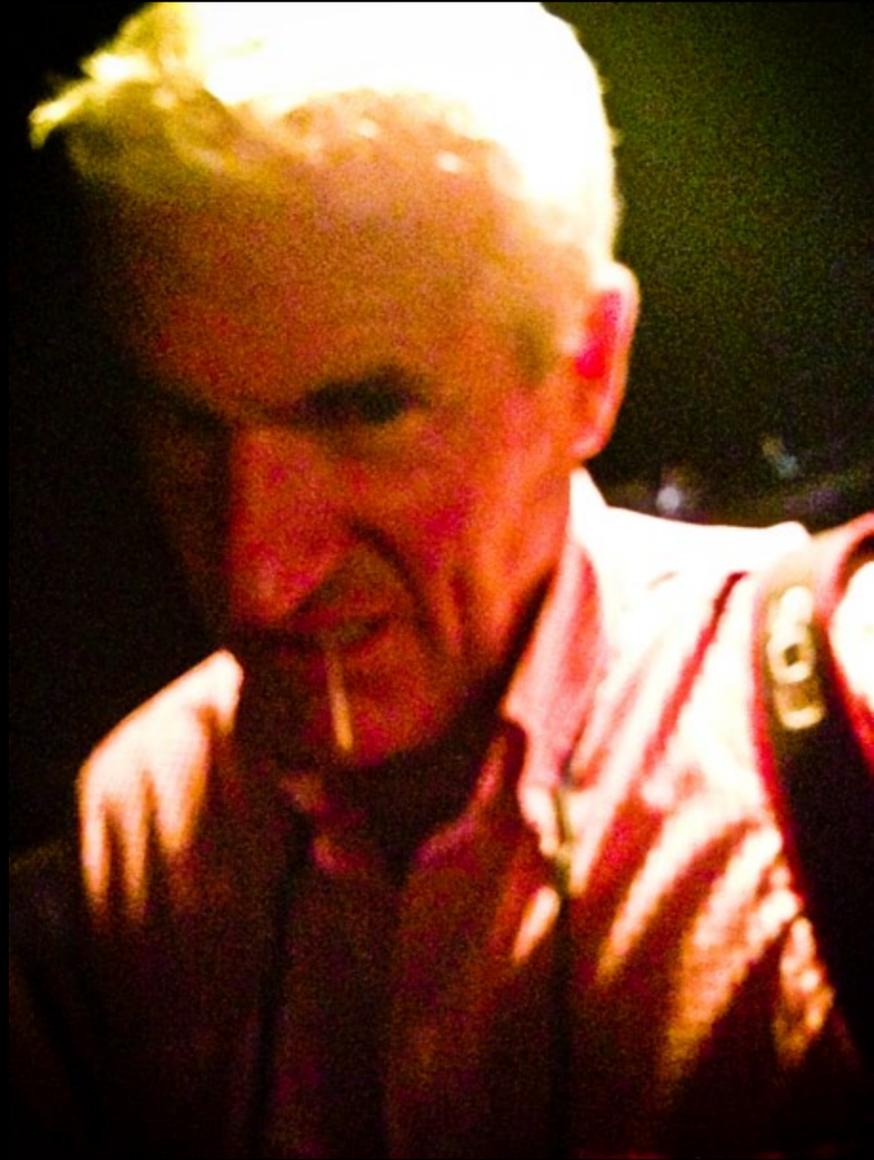
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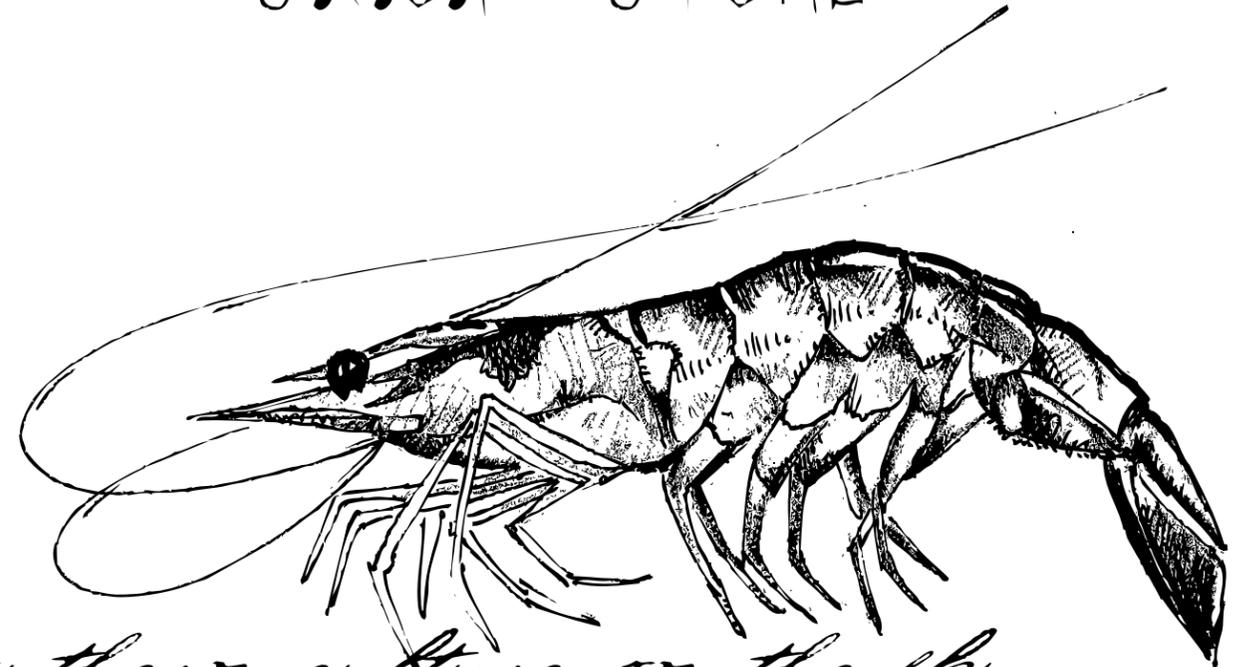
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This December, we (Yellow Dog Flyfishing Adventures' Shaun Lawson and Tom Melvin) departed on a two-week road trip through Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, with the goal of visiting and checking in with all eight lodges represented in the Yellow Dog program, exploring the Yucatan fisheries, and trying to make it all happen in two weeks - back in one piece if possible.

Equipped with a Jeep grocery getter, enough tackle to run a small fly shop, a SAT phone that did not work, and zero Spanish whatsoever, not only did we learn a ton, but got a few pretty funny stories out of it along the way. As trout fishermen, this was one of our first full-blown trips to the salt, and as you can see below, was definitely an experience.



YUKATAN journal

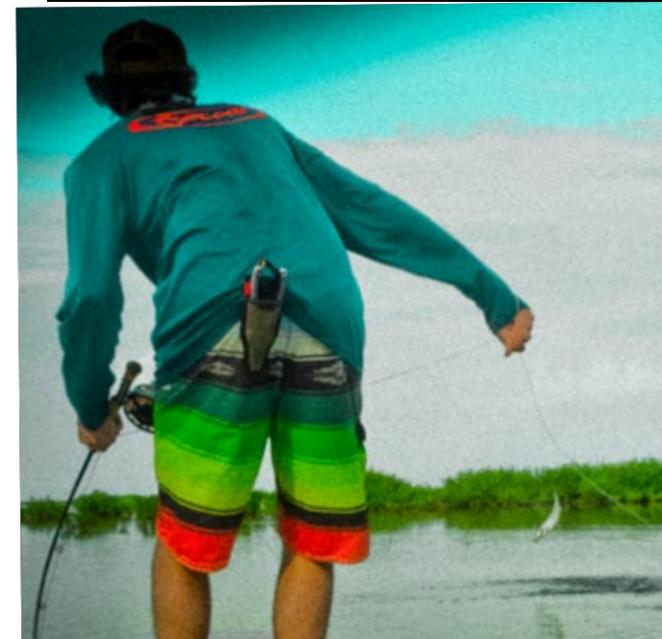
by Tom Melvin
and Shaun Lawson

Day 1

Arrival into Cancun. After 13 laps around the Cancun airport, finally get on 180 W toward Chiquila. Shaken down after five minutes of exiting Cancun by some of Mexico's finest Federales. After a short conversation (in Spanish) and \$20.00 USD lighter, en route to Chiquila. Ferry ride out to Holbox, where we both have the best margaritas of our lives, and it is only day one. This is going to be one hell of a trip.

Day 2

Early wake-up at Isla Holbox Fly Fishing Lodge. Manager Luciano makes fun of Tom's Chinese morning eyes (best margaritas in Mexico) over breakfast. 6:00 AM departure to far east corner of Isla Holbox with guide, Angelo. After 40-minute run, put us on a backcountry lagoon absolutely loaded with baby tarpon. Shaun forgets raincoat, so sky opens up and dumps buckets for over an hour. After full-blown Mexican baptism, tarpon begin rolling everywhere! Many hookups, lots of fish jumped, a few landed. Head back to Chiquila, where Shaun scares the shit out of small Mayan gas station attendant buying a beer. Almost ran off road by bus full of literally 94 people. Mexicans fully understand and are not hesitant to flip the bird. On to Campeche.



Day 3

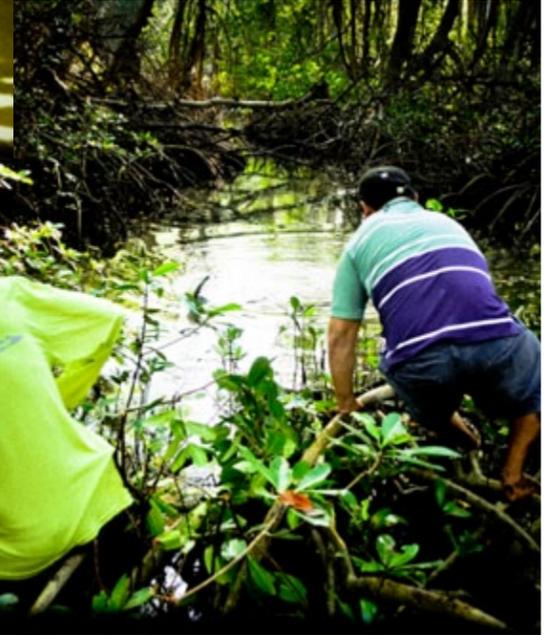
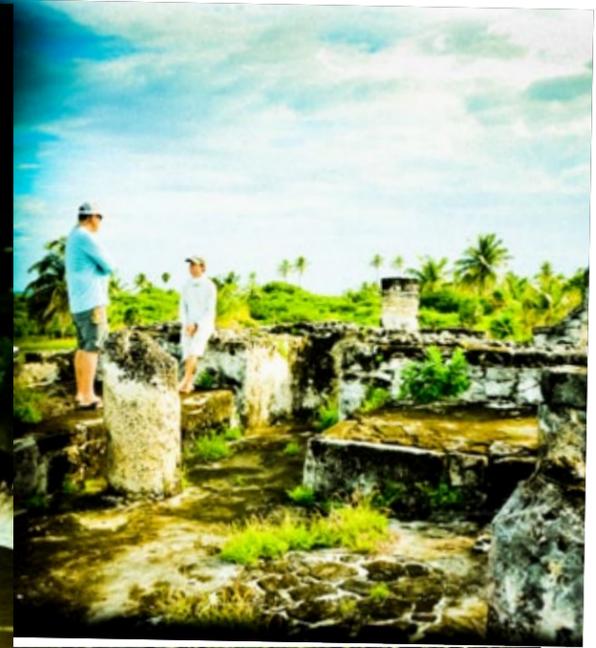
Wake up in Campeche at Hotel Castlemar. Met by Alejandro Hernandez of Campeche Tarpon and head out to the mangroves of Campeche. Shaun sticks a 10-pound baby tarpon on the morning session. head back to Campeche and visit the Edzna ruins for the day. After getting our minds blown by our ruins tour guide on Mayan culture, drive back into Campeche for dinner at the "Campeche Tarpon Museum" and beers with the team. Campeche is amazing, and already becoming one of our favorite places to visit in the Yucatan.

Day 4

Early departure to the backcountry mangroves of Campeche at 4:30 AM. Dark run to some mangrove channels of rolling baby tarpon that like the gurglers on top. Our guide, Hollywood, decides to take us on a hike deep into the Campeche mangrove jungle, where us two Montana gringos almost sink into the depths, and Shaun almost walks into spider-zilla on the trail. We noticed Hollywood jumping backwards and breaking off a stick to shoo away something scary ahead – anything from a jaguar to a 30-foot boa constrictor. After getting absolutely crushed by no-see-ums (Hollywood is immune), Tom sets the record for baby tarpon farmed in a small freshwater inlet creek. Return to Campeche after a great day of fishing for dinner with Alejandro and a tour of city and Virgin de Guadalupe festival. Young Catholics show their devotion by riding bikes or running all over Mexico. They travel from their hometown to other cities over terrible roads under great danger. Approximately 200 people are killed each year during this time. A real eye opener for us, and one of the neatest cultural experiences we have had so far.

Day 5

Transfer day to Pesca Maya Lodge and Ascension Bay. Shake down numero dos by the Mexican Federales, but all goes well and we make it through. Once they saw the Yellow Dog luggage tags, they were all smiles and wanted to check out our fishing gear. We are learning that The Yucatan is actually a very safe place because these guys are patrolling everything. Make it to Tulum for a quick taco stop, before rallying the rental SUV to Pesca Maya Lodge (we didn't know Jeep Patriots could pass as dune buggies until last night). Late evening of surf fishing, and tackled up for our first day in the world famous Ascension Bay.

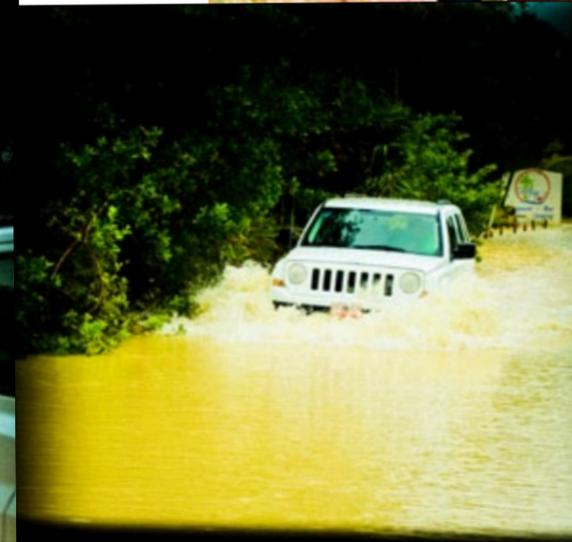


Day 6

Half day of fishing with Pesca Maya Lodge. The evening before produced lots of rain and high winds, so water a little murky and limited shots. Our guide, Wilbur, does put us on some bonefish, 'cuda, and a shot at a nice 20-lb permit that refuses one of the crabs Shaun tied that did not get replaced with the guide special. Great day, and another solid program down. After packing up, drive to Punta Allen to meet the boat out to Casa Blanca Lodge. On the drive to Punta Allen, come to a puddle that stretches out the length of a football field with a Super Duty truck being towed out of our side – never a good sign. Missing our stay at Casa was not an option, so we turned on Skynard, hit the gas and took a shot at it. After running through the puddle that came up over the windshield, the Jeep Dune Buggy edition swims through, and we catch the boat out to Casa Blanca. Already incredibly impressed with this place, and can't wait to go after it tomorrow.

Day 7

First day out on the water with Casa Blanca Lodge. Had a great dinner last night of surf and turf with Lodge Managers Johnny Parres and Rita Adams, who are incredible and run a really dialed program. We had the itch to chase after some of the Ascension Bay permit, and start seeing a few right off the bat. No permit are willing to play, so we run over and our guide Andreas immediately has us hooking up on bonefish throughout the morning. At lunch, Tom hooks up a nice bonefish and Andreas begins yelling for him to get out of the water. A massive 'cuda is patrolling the area and looking to take off some digits. Day ends with a great shot at a permit for Shaun, fish chases and a long follow, but turns away at the last minute. Capped off with a nice dinner again at Casa Blanca.



Day 8

Run out to Espiritu Santo Bay. Great bonefishing for large schools throughout the day. Take a shot and cruise the permit flats for the afternoon, but nowhere to be found due to high winds, rain and overcast skies. End up in a backcountry lagoon for snook and tarpon that sounds like Jurassic Park, tons of action going on in the mangroves and a few come out to chase the flies. Super high winds and lots of rain for the day, but the guides of Casa Blanca still get us on some fish. Off to Punta Allen tomorrow to rally through some puddles and see if we can get the Jeep to do some swimming again

Day 9

Made it back to Punta Allen after a pretty insane panga ride across rough seas and lots of wind. One of the guides was riding in the front of the panga to plane out holding onto a rope, and it reminded us of a rider at the Livingston Rodeo in Montana. While we are fully rain geared out, boat driver Andreas rocks a t-shirt, boardshorts and crocs and laughs the whole way. Returned to Punta Allen to grab our car (with all the wheels still on) to head to Grand Slam Lodge. Took the Jeep Grand Dune Buggy swimming again in a puddle that has doubled in size due to the recent rains, before reaching Grand Slam. Headed out quickly with GSL guide, Daniel, and into bonefish schools immediately, but weather turns rough and flats turn tricky. Return for a great dinner with Lodge Manager Capt. Miguel before sacking up for the night. Off to La Pescadora tomorrow to hopefully stick a couple permit in better conditions.

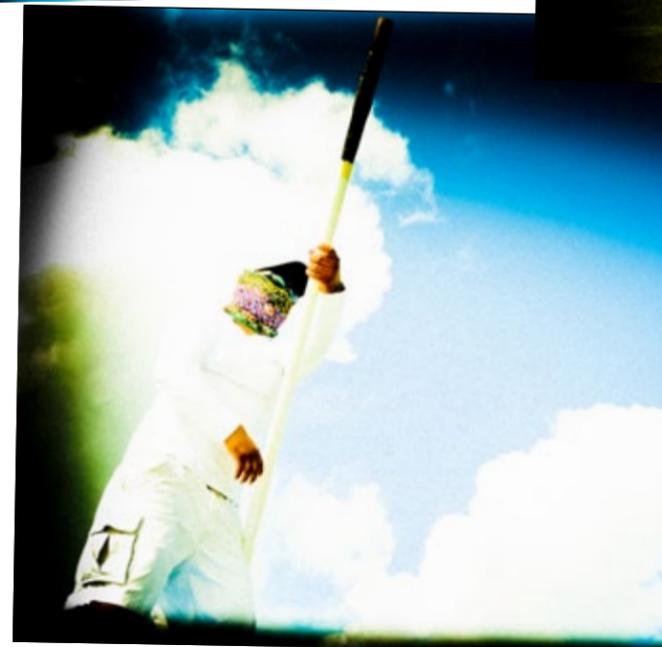
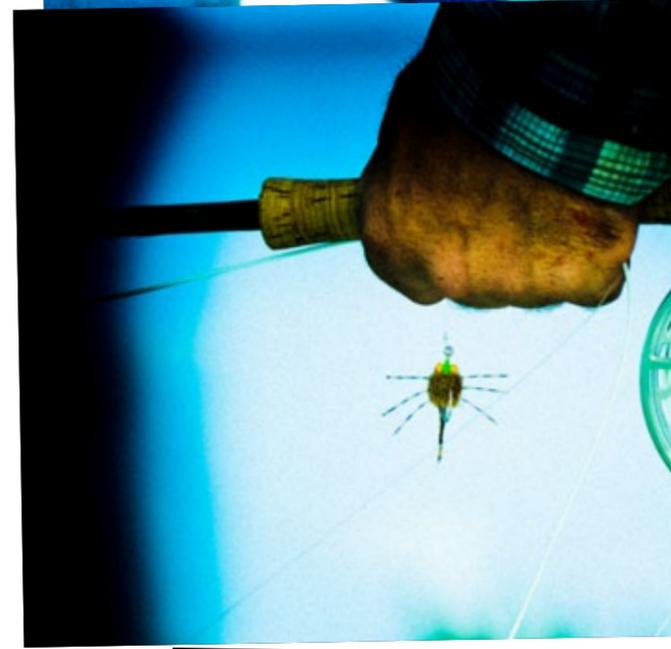


Day 10

Wake up in the morning at Grand Slam Lodge. After a 45-minute scavenger hunt and a minor panic attack looking for our car keys (great margaritas and Sol cervezas). Finally find the keys and muster up the courage to tackle the football field-size mud puddle between Grand Slam and Punta Allen for the third time in four days. Arrive at La Pescadora 15 minutes late. The head guide and lodge owner, Jose, is already pissed off at us and sleeping in his hammock. Head out into A-Bay. Dead set to find permit, but unfortunately the conditions are not ideal, so we switch to looking for bonefish and snook in the mangroves. Day turns out great, with lots of bonefish brought to the boat, and shots at permit and baby tarpon. Great dinner back at the lodge with Lily, Jose and their son Parker, with many patterns spun over beers.

Day 11

Second day with La Pescadora. After waking up to a killer cup of coffee and breakfast, head out onto the flats to find similar conditions and challenging permit weather. Head to a bonefish flat where we stick numerous 3-6 pounders, and wade into the backcountry. Tom takes a great shot at a huge 'cuda with the newly acquired Cabela's Salt Striker, and a Montana-made fluorescent green tube lure and connects. Cuda comes to the boat, is landed by our junior guide, Radolpho, who promptly buries the Gamagatsku Treble into the palm of his hand trying to release the fish. Head guide Jose (laughing his ass off) hops down off the poling platform, punches the point of the hook through Radolpho's hand, and clips him off. Great final day on the water with these guys – a step above and some of the finest guides in all of the Yucatan.



Day 12

Early wake-up at La Pescadora and depart for Xcalak and Costa De Cocos Lodge on the 3.5-hour roller coaster ride, and the fourth trip through the mud puddle capital of the world. Hussled for the fourth time by a gas station attendant before a quick stop in Puerto Carillo for a great lunch and Sol cevasas. We actually get what we ordered -- after two and a half weeks, our Spanish is finally getting better. Shaun has a blown flip-flop since Campeche, and expectations are high that we will find one in Tulum. After four spots in Tulum, Shaun realizes that finding a size 13 flip-flop in Mexico is like trying to harvest a unicorn in the mountains of Montana. Drive through the town of Limones, where Shaun spots and nearly wrecks the car getting a glimpse of the largest local that we have seen on the entire trip, dressed in a skintight mini-skirt, long bleach blonde hair, and a five o'clock shadow -- all at 6'3" and 270 pounds. Both of us spent the next 150 miles betting whether or not this was a man or an excessively large hermana with an attitude. Arrive at Costa De Cocos for our first night. This place is incredibly remote, and we are looking forward to some great "off-the-grid fishing".

Day 13

Wake up at Costa De Cocos. Our scheduled guide was either sick or had a case of the brown bottle flu, so we head out with the lodge server and go-to man Joel. Run out to Chetumal Bay and "the fingers," where we are immediately into baby tarpon, a curious crocodile and larger than average bonefish. While sharing a Mexican Marlborough red, Shaun relates to Joel with stories of seeing the giant, suspected she-man in Limones the day before. We are pleasantly delighted when Joel explains that he and the infamous "Raquel" are close acquaintances and friends. As it turns out, one of Joel's closest friends in Xcalak, was seduced by Raquel one evening at a fiesta after a night of debauchery. The next morning, Joel informed his compadre, that Raquel was indeed not a woman. Minds blown and a little sketched out, we head to the permit flats of Chetumal, where we get our asses kicked once again by high winds and rain. Final dinner and night with CDC and Lodge Manager Chay, who is one of the most genuine amigos we have met in Mexico. Incredible food, service, and one of the finest places we have seen on this entire trip.





Day 14

Wake up to incredible nuevos rancheros and a much needed shock of coffee. Big day ahead, where Shaun boards a panga "Snook-erd" to continue his trip to San Pedro and onto Belize, and Tom heads back to Cancun. After saying our goodbyes, the Mexican Recon team splits ways and heads off to the next part of the adventure. Shaun is off to Belize to spend Christmas with his son, Beau, and Tom is heading back to a balmy four-degree Montana. Flies are exchanged, knots are tied, and another great experience is "checked off the box" for the Yellow Dog crew.

Yukatan 2013

Tom and Shaun are dicks...real dicks. When they're not living the life of the dickiest dicks in all of dickdom they're a couple of really nice guys that will hook you up with the trip of a lifetime and the rumor is they do accept layaway. Check them out at yellowdogflyfishing.com

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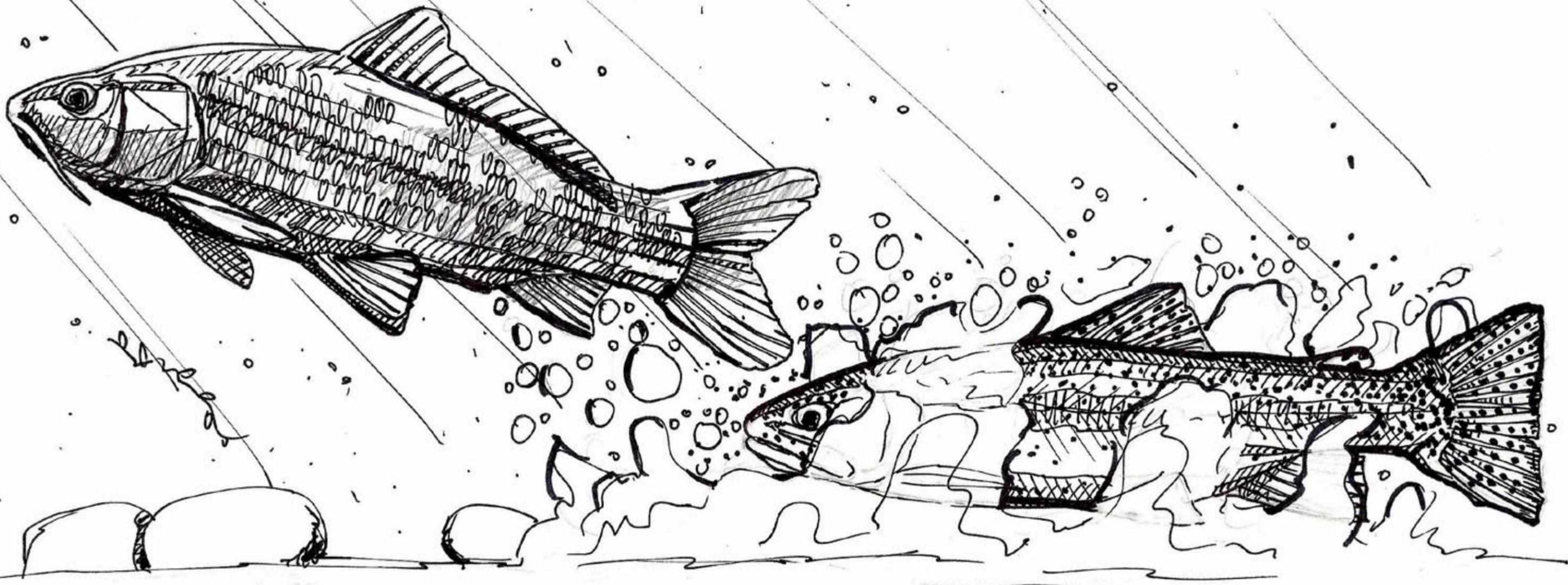




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