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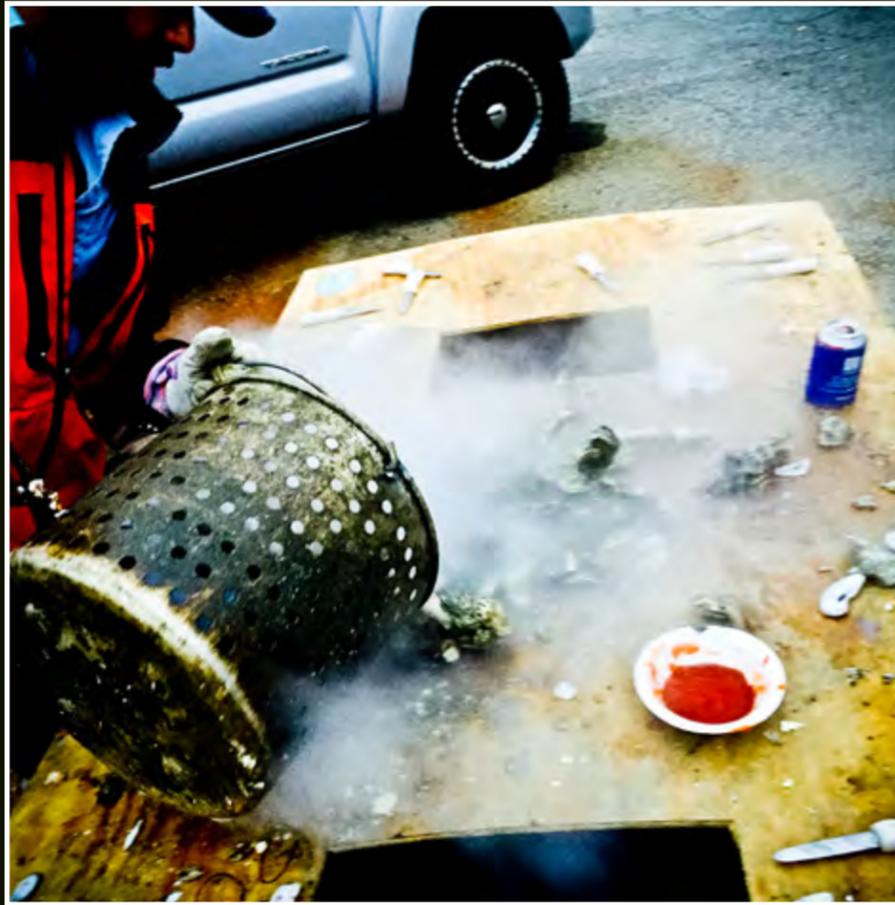




Photo: *Lagoon*, 2015, Steve Seiberger



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Photo: Steve Seinberg

S.C.O.F

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FINGER PUPPETS

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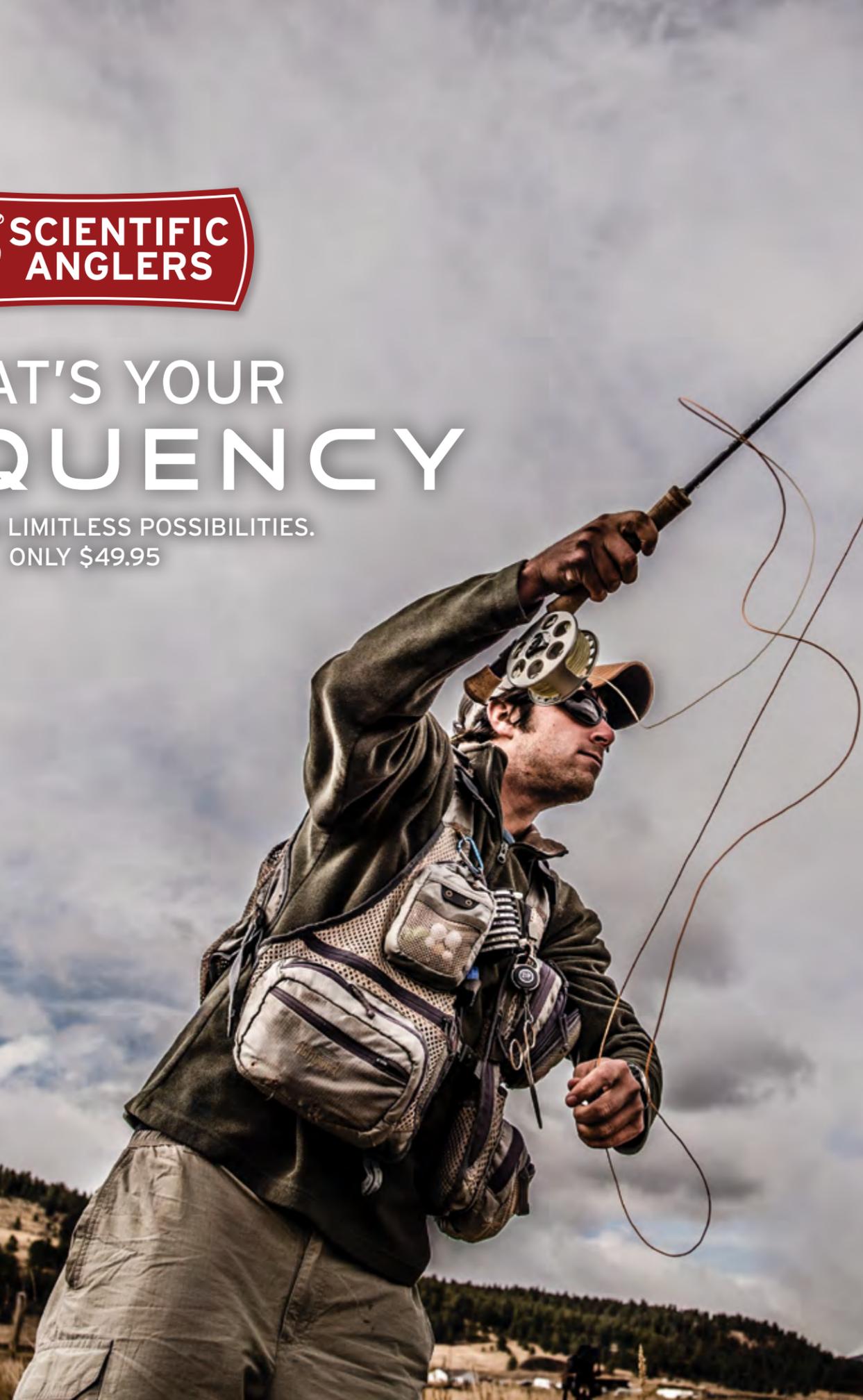
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From the Editor's desk...

to your bathroom.

spring 2015

Do you ever feel like every move you make fishing-wise is the wrong one? No matter what fly you pick, it's the wrong one. No matter which week you take off work to go fish, it's the wrong one. It's like every decision that can go two ways goes the worst way possible. Once your confidence resides in the urinal along with last night's PBR, the decisions get bogged down in a haze of indecision and second-guessing. I find myself scared to take chances going somewhere where the fishing might suck, which has pretty much left me on stocked water fished within a week of stocking. Needless to say, my soul is a giant suck hole these days.

I'm not sure where things went so horribly awry. I'm doing things the same way I always have. I haven't kicked any dogs, or put any kittens in any burlap sacks, yet I feel there is a black cloud hovering over my piscatorial pursuits ready to kick me in the nuts as soon as any small glimmer of hope amongst the drudgery begins to emerge. Confidence is weird. With it, good things happen even if you aren't trying. Once the confidence tank has hit empty though, bad things seem happen even when you're just sitting on the couch. I still can't explain how I pulled that muscle in my back.

Right now my plan is to go back to what I know. I plan on spending a lot of time on East Tennessee tailwaters this summer and fall. I hope a little home field advantage will do for me what years of counseling, therapy, and prescription meds have failed to do: make me into a confident, contributing member of something. Doesn't matter what, just something. For those of you out there who are good looking with great jobs, and up to your armpits in big fish wherever you go, all I have to say is screw you. Really I'm serious -- maybe in the act of screwing, something will rub off.





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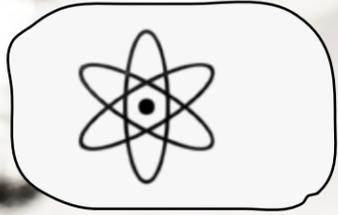
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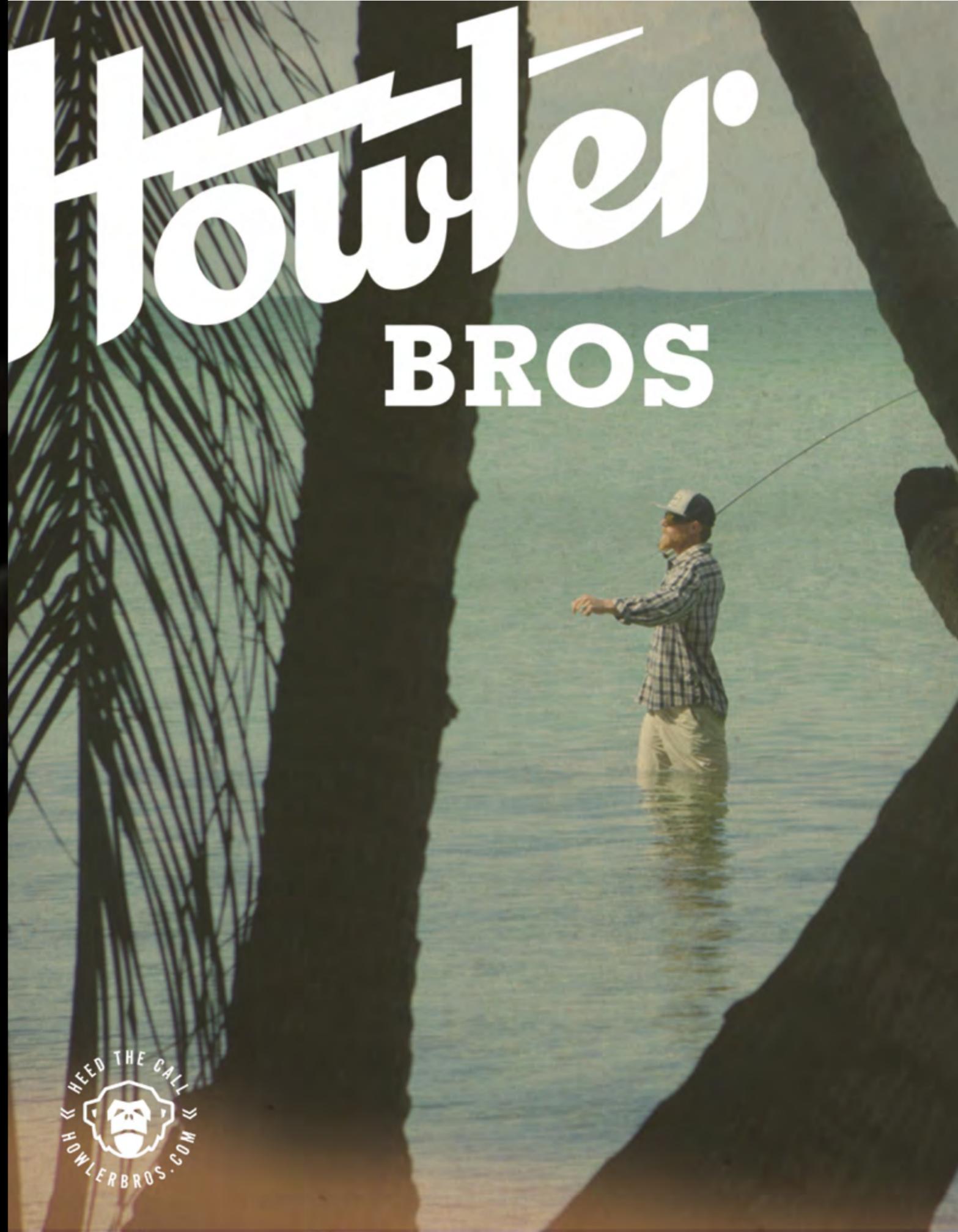
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with Shawn 'Diddy' Combs
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How to choose which is the best
Not my fault I Drink



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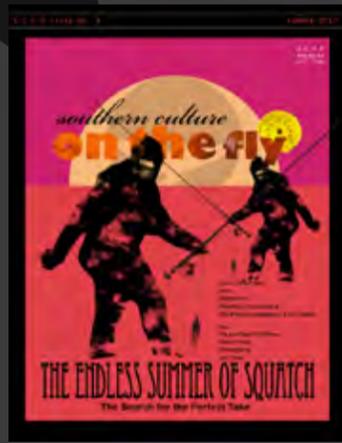
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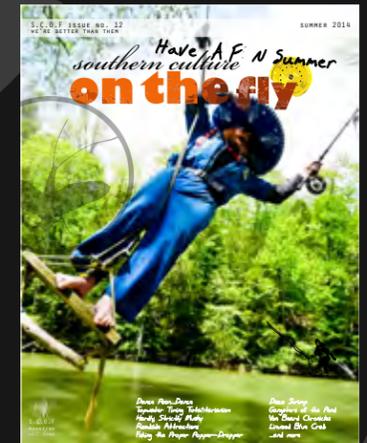
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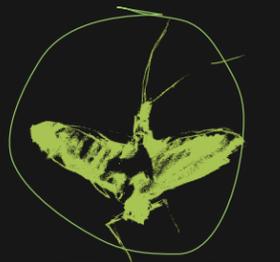
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By David Grossman
Photos: Dave Hosler and David Grossman

A Tale of Two Trips

White River / StreamerLoveFest

Once a year, the bloody ram's horn is blown loud and the savages crawl out from their various rocks and lean to's, armed with B10S's, 8 wt's, and fly lines that look more like Johnny Cash than Jimmy Buffet. From the far flung corners of the country, they descend on Arkansas, smeared with chicken blood and bragging on their feathers. Yes, good denizens of the intrawebs, Dally's Streamerlovefest is not for the weak of knee or light of loafer. When this many streamer "dudes" get together, a hootenanny is sure to ensue -- but not necessarily good streamer fishing.

Thus this really is a tale of two trips. On one hand, Streamerfest was a splendiferous menagerie of time spent with friends and like-minded streamer junkies. The fishing story, however, was one of three decent-to-good fisherman beating their collective heads against a wall for three days with a whole lot of small rainbows and sore shoulders to show for it.



Let's dispense with the good. Streamers have come a long way in the past 20 or so years if ya hadn't heard. The days of the Mickey Finn and the venerable Matuka have pretty much been relegated to the old folks home where you sent that Uncle nobody wanted to claim. These days, it's all about the Sex Dungeons, Red Rockets, and Double Nickles. Flies that were articulated one way five years ago are now broken six ways as if they owed someone money.

There's no better event in the world where you can get streamer knowledge, gurus of stripping junk, and copious amounts of pork in one place than Streamerlovesfest at Dally's Ozark Flyfisher in Cotter, Ark. From tiers with names like Galloup and Schmidt, to a mountain of whole hog pork laid out smorgasbord-style, Streamerlovesfest has a lot of everything I love (and yes I can now I say I love Kelly Galloup...not in a weird way, but in a completely normal way for a heterosexual man to love another man who has forgotten more streamer fishing and stick fighting knowledge than I will ever possess...completely normal). The night got away from me a little bit, but there is nothing foggy about the fact that Dally's Ozark Flyfisher is a hell of a shop and they throw one helluva streamer party. Be warned though, the owner speaks Australian. Don't stare.









Now kids, we move on to the fishing. One goes to the White River in February with grand notions of yellow-bellied slabs t-boning 8 inches of chicken lashed to a hook. I mean this is Arkansas, home of brown trout measured in pounds not inches. Where 20-inchers are looked down upon like common trash and if the kype isn't the size of my thumb, the trout is deposited back into the river after being slapped in the face hole for not living up to its full potential.

Arkansas is where brown trout dreams are born, and in our case go to die...a slow, very painful death. Apparently no one told the Southwestern Power Administration we were coming. Because nobody turned

the water on the entire time we were there. Low water on the White is low and bony, and not really anywhere close to ideal streamer conditions. It's not like we didn't catch fish. We caught our fair share of rainbows, but the big boy never showed up other than fleeing as we passed over him with the boat. The big fish of the trip was caught early on day one and measured in at a whopping 16 inches of yellow thunder. He was caught on a size 20 zebra midge...under a bobber. I have no shame on this subject, so please hold your jeering. You won't see this fish gracing the pages of this article, because blinded by our hope of things to come, we didn't even take picture of him. My bad.



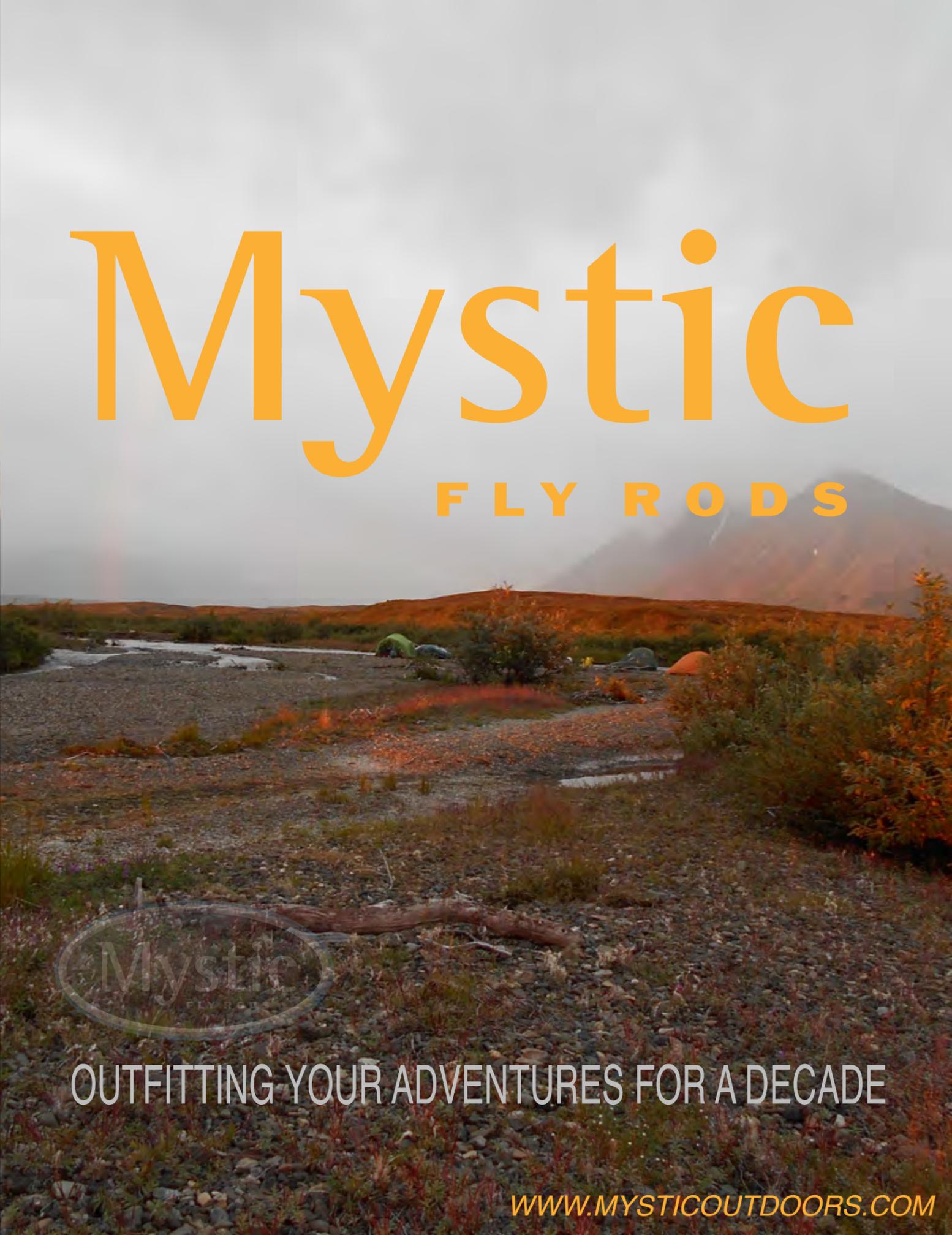


In what has been the story of my life lately, they turned the water on the day after we left, and everyone who stayed caught my fish. I'll be back on the White, because from what I saw in 22 miles of it, I was seriously impressed and far from content.





I'm sure there's a lesson to be had here, but quite honestly I'm too hungover, dejected, in love with Kelly Galloup, and sore to care.



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Steve Seiberg



Tailer Trash

Steve Seinberg
Tailer Trash

s.s.

It's how Steve always signs off. A sane man would understand it's simply his initials, Steven Seinberg, and that a successful artist can't be bothered with surplus consonant and vowels. Every time I read it, my simple mind decodes "Steve Sucks." Why? Petty jealousy mostly...

s.s. is a renaissance man, a modern day Michelangelo (painter, not ninja turtle). With two fine arts degrees from prestigious institutions hanging on the industrial walls of his posh downtown Asheville studio, s.s. makes magic... on the vise.

"To be touched by this work is not unlike experiencing a subtle glance, or a faint whisper held under the breath, or the wind's light kiss on your cheek."

"Beautiful. This seems almost magical. It takes me to a place that is almost innocent or pure, like the instant you awaken from sleep, the moment before you are completely conscious. Before life hits you like a ton of bricks in the form of awareness."

Sure, critics gush over his work on canvas and paper, but my marvel stems from the deliberate way s.s. ties flies. Behind the vise, surrounded by chic modern art, s.s. blurs the line between form and function with a childlike enthusiasm. Paints and parallel palettes replaced by fur, feathers, and flash, but the talent lingers. The medium is immaterial. Brush or bobbin, s.s. demands to be noticed.

t.h.

P.S. – *Tailer Trash* was developed for redfish in Florida and the Lowcountry. Foam, rubber and fake hair, the pattern was inspired by Steve's time in Mosquito Lagoon. The pattern will be available commercially through Orvis in the coming months.

Materials List:

Hook: Gamakatsu SC15 size 1/0 (or Daitchi 2456 size 2)

Thread: Danville's 210 – chartreuse or pink

Eyes: Hareline foam Booby Eyes, small: black, olive, or chartreuse

Legs: Amber/Gold Flake Sili Legs

Body: 2mm foam – natural colors: olive, tan, cinnamon

Underbody: Olive, gold, chartreuse or tan estaz

Tail: Tan or olive craft fur mix with a few strands of UV crystal flash

Optional: Bar tail with marker



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



1 Start your thread and continue wrapping until you're in line with the point of the hook.

2 Select a clump of craft fur from the synthetic hide and attach on the topside of the hook shank with a few tight wraps.

3 Next, add a few strands of UV Crystal Flash.

4 Select a clump of craft fur from the synthetic hide and attach on the topside of the hook shank with a few tight wraps.

5 Attach your Estaz underbody with tight thread wraps.

6 Next, add your first Sili Leg by x-wrapping the leg on top of the hook shank. Half of the leg should fall on the left side of the hook shank and the other half on the right side. Repeat this process as you work your way up the hook shank and towards the eye of the fly. Attach your last set of legs 1/4" behind the hook eye.

7 Palmer your Estaz underbody through the legs. Tie off the Estaz and add a half hitch.

8 Select a pair of Foam Booby Eyes and attach them to the top of the hook shank. Cover your thread wraps by wrapping your Estaz between the Booby Eyes. Tie off and remove any excess Estaz. Your thread should rest behind your eyes.

9 Stretch your foam backing forward and bind down behind the eyes with a few tight wraps.

10 Advance your thread to behind the hook eye and half hitch. Push your foam rearward to create a loop. Capture and bind down the foam with a few pinch wraps ensuring the foam remains on top of the hook shank. Whip finish and add a touch of superglue to the exposed thread wraps.

11 Pull the tag end of the foam vertical and snip to create an additional foam lip.

12 Finish the fly by barring the tail with a permanent marker and trimming the legs.



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- DON'T MISS OUT MAN.

The Holy City

By Mike Benson
Photos by Steve Seiberg and David Grossman

Anybody who's ever sat in an American History class already knows a few things about Charleston, SC. Mainly that we fired the first shots of the Civil War. And those who've ever lived here for any length of time may tell you a few other things about our city. They'll tell you about Moultrie, the "Swamp Fox", John C. Calhoun, the "War of Northern Aggression", and of course, Hurricane Hugo. Nowadays, fly fishermen from across the country, and in particular the South, are becoming more and more familiar with Charleston as a great place to chase redfish with the fly rod. But if you're going to come on down and join us amidst the Spartina grass, I ask that you take a second to really take a look around and attempt to take in what is going on around you.



OAKCHILL'N

By Larry Littrell

Photos: Steve Seiberg



The first flats skiff I owned was affectionately called the Battlewagon. The title listed manufacturer and year as UNK, since the kind soul who gave it to me never recalled it ever having had one. After getting it, FWC inspected it so I could to apply for a “lost” title, and upon seeing it, simply signed the form and said “good luck...” After scraping off countless layers of faded green and yellow paint, she got a new grey and black color scheme worthy of a battleship. The 1956 Johnson 10 HP outboard hung from her stern was a hand-me-down from my wife’s great uncle.

For a couple of years, I patrolled the North Indian River Lagoon near Scotsmor looking for redfish and trout, often spending more time trying to figure out how I was going to get the motor started as an afternoon thunderstorm was bearing down than doing any actual fishing. It was an hour drive each way to get there, so it didn’t take too long before I started to dream of having my own place closer to the coast.



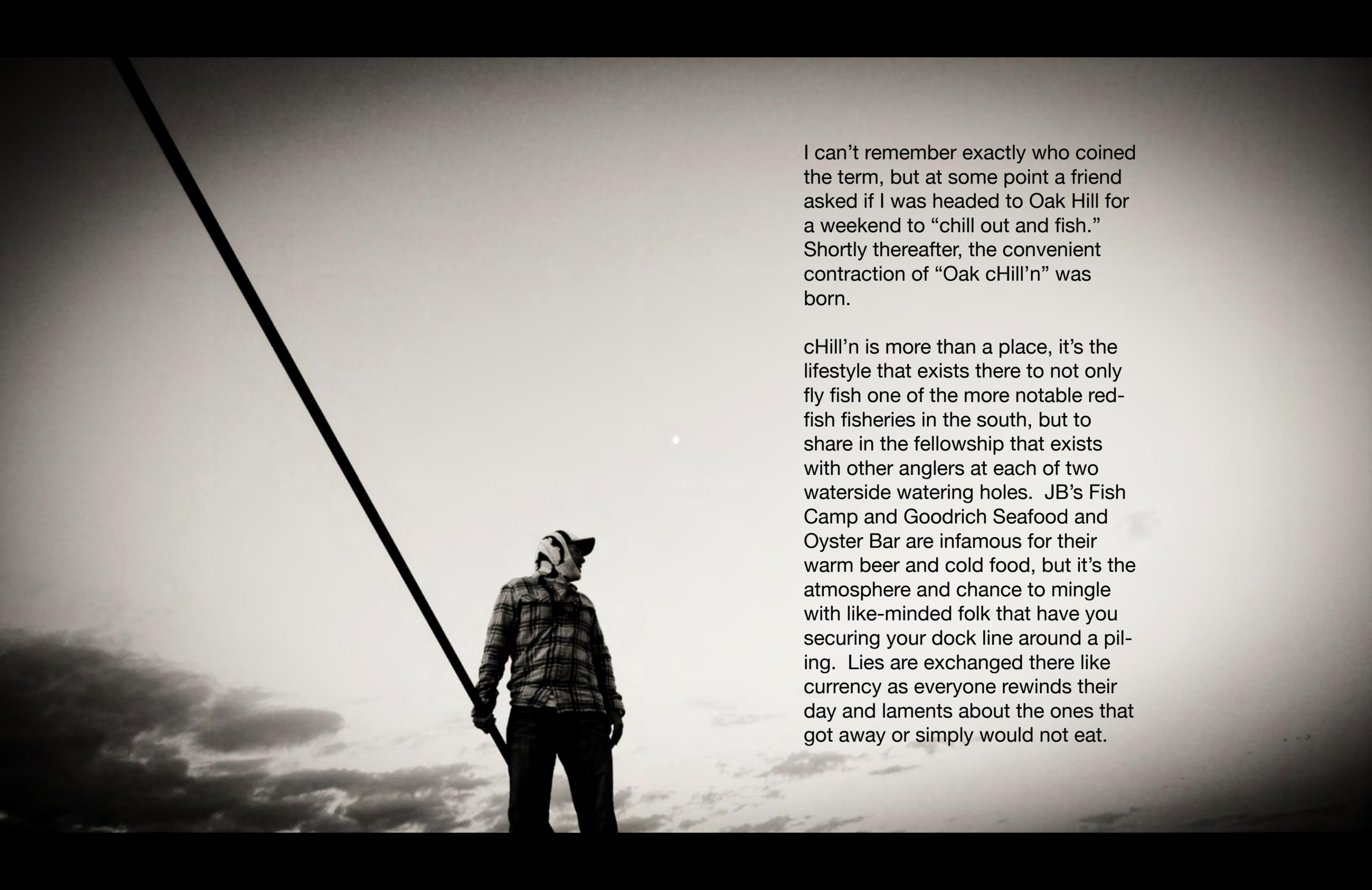


The stretch of U.S. Highway 1 between Titusville and New Smyrna Beach is as close as you can get to a bygone era in Florida without using a time machine. Things happen there at a slower pace, and aside from the anglers that come and go, it's mainly a sprawling collection of pasture and the remnants of once flourishing citrus groves.

Along that lonely road, just north of the entrance to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, is a persistent yellow traffic signal hanging low across the lanes, blinking as if it were a metronome keeping time. It's often used as a landmark when giving directions to or from the town where it hangs -- Oak Hill, Fla. -- mostly as a starting point of sorts: "Once you pass the yella blink'n light, you'll wanna start looking for..."

About 9 years ago, I got to that place I'd dreamed of -- the one near the water where I could spend the weekend or any other lazy day I could sneak off and enjoy. It's a few turns north of the Yellow Light.

I quickly fell in love with the place, and now spend as much time there as I possibly can. The drive there is such that it resets your priorities. Cell signal drops off about halfway and only comes back in that digital, every-other-syllable kind of way as you pull in the driveway. To me, it is license to let go of real world troubles and concentrate on the important matter of chasing redfish in hopes of dropping a fly in front of an agreeable fish.

A black and white photograph of a person standing outdoors, holding a fishing rod. The person is wearing a plaid shirt, dark pants, and a cap. The background is a bright, cloudy sky. A thick black diagonal line runs from the top left corner towards the person's hand.

I can't remember exactly who coined the term, but at some point a friend asked if I was headed to Oak Hill for a weekend to "chill out and fish." Shortly thereafter, the convenient contraction of "Oak cHill'n" was born.

cHill'n is more than a place, it's the lifestyle that exists there to not only fly fish one of the more notable red-fish fisheries in the south, but to share in the fellowship that exists with other anglers at each of two waterside watering holes. JB's Fish Camp and Goodrich Seafood and Oyster Bar are infamous for their warm beer and cold food, but it's the atmosphere and chance to mingle with like-minded folk that have you securing your dock line around a piling. Lies are exchanged there like currency as everyone rewinds their day and laments about the ones that got away or simply would not eat.



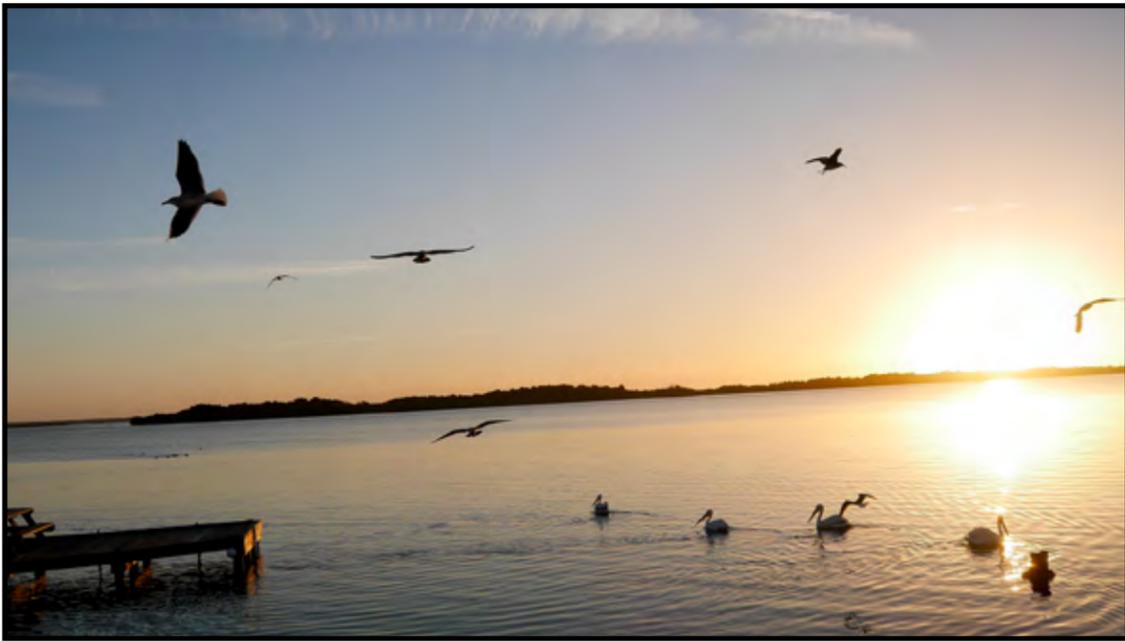
Oak cHill'n would become, and remains, the best way to describe time spent in the northern reaches of Mosquito Lagoon. Aside from the endless opportunities to slip around some of the best shallow water creeks and flats throwing a fly, the history and charm of the area washes my soul with positive vibes any time I go there.

Once the homeland of Timucuan Indians, it's not uncommon to find pottery shards and nearly fossilized fish and marine mammal bones in shell middens, if you know where to look. During World War II, the Greatest Generation flew overhead, their radial engines and machine guns roaring, preparing to beat back the forces of evil that were bent on taking over the world. Relics of that time, patina colored brass shell casings and copper clad projectiles, can still be found as the tide slowly strips away sand that has hidden them for decades. The remnants of two airplanes wrecks mark where young men lost their lives defending freedom.





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Have I mentioned the flora and fauna? Whether a roseate spoonbill, reddish egret, or a pelican, there is always a bird on the next point or down the shoreline to capture my interest. Just when you think you're alone, an otter will make an appearance across the flat or a bobcat will creep off, disappearing just behind the mangroves. Occasionally, I have to slow down in my skiff to let a raccoon finish his swim across the channel's deeper water, always keeping his tail high and dry above the water like a handle on a cast iron skillet.

With every passing year, make no doubt about it: There is a lot I love about fly fishing for redfish, black drum, tarpon, tripletail and the occasional snook in Mosquito Lagoon. But more than anything, I simply enjoy cHill'n.



Larry Littrell is a global galvanter. He may have been raised in E. TN and live in FL, but the world truly is his oyster.

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BLUEFINING

your way to youth

By David Grossman
Photos: Alan Broyhill



I haven't scrambled up a creek in a long time. There was a time when I'd head upstream till I found the beginning. I always wanted to see the water around the corner or two miles past that corner, and maybe just a little further up. Exploring was at least as fun as the fishing, and there were a lot of times I was more interested in seeing water than fishing it. At some point that changed. I think it was an "ignorance is bliss" kind of scenario. I'm not sure when, but I started passing up the opportunity to go explore, and wound up settling for what I already knew. I'd fished enough to know where fish were going to be most days. Why go look for fish when you already know where they are?

The problem with this particular strain of thought is that settling for what you know leads to a life of complacency and humdrumness. The other interesting correlation in this story is that my thirst for exploration was in direct inverse relationship with my age and all the responsibility and baggage that goes with it.



I now have a son who is easing into fishing age-appropriateness. When I take him fishing, he is always itching to go to another spot, to see more. He wants to catch fish, but after a few, he is just wide open in discovery mode. I'm learning a lot from my son. Seeing this new world through his eyes reminds me of how I used to be insatiable for the new, and that I was a lot less jaded for it. He's not quite old enough to start scrambling up creeks off trail, but when he is, I guarantee I'll be just out of eyesight behind him breathing hard, and fighting off a stroke...just like when I was seven.

Blue lines on a map are actually pointing back to our youth, no matter how many squiggles they happen to make. It's about as cliché as it gets, but fishing these little creeks is only marginally about the fishing. It's about the "what might be" as opposed to what you already know. Knowing too much can be just as detrimental to your constitution as being utterly clueless. And in my experience the clueless are a lot happier in the end.





It's easy to fall into a rut and fish what you know. Unfortunately, for most of us over the age of 10, what we don't know started seeming a little too risky a bet with limited time and resources. But then we remember that the risk is almost always worth it, and the sure thing just means you're sure to do it over and over again. I can't be young again, but I'm sure as hell going to try to start fishing like I am.





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rebuild

PART THREE : STRAIGHT BALLER

Steve Seinberg and David Grossman

Photos: Steve Seinberg and Jesse Register



HELL'S BAY

Preferred
WORKS



When we started down the path of skiff restoration, we were pretty proud of ourselves for just pulling the trigger on a skiff in the first place. What we wound up with, courtesy of the fine folks at Hells Bay Boatworks, was way more than Steve or I could've expected. The HB Professional is brand new again, and all things being equal, even better than when she rolled out of Hells Bay shop the first time in 2003. We can honestly say that this is now the nicest thing that SCOF has ever owned. However, that won't stop us from riding this Hells Bay like a donkey all over the Southern shores, staying skinny and straight ballin'.







Look out for more of this skiff in Southern Culture
On the Fly Mag and around Florida.....



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Paul Puckett



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Bonefish & Tarpon Trust

SEARCHING FOR CONNECTIONS





The water was not quite clear enough to see the bottom, but clear enough to easily see fish if they were swimming high. The water's hazy, emerald green hue provided a good contrasting background to the dark backs of tarpon cruising slowly in search of food. Staked out in six feet of water, 100 yards off the beach, we had the lineup to ourselves. Every so often, a tarpon would blow up on baitfish or make a slow roll in our sight line, letting us know more fish were coming. It was just a matter of luck whether they were swimming high when they came into range. Our optimistic nature as fly anglers is to expect more good luck than bad, so we waited patiently for a shot at a high swimming tarpon. Slow cruisers busting bait -- with that behavior, we knew a fish would eat if it saw the fly.

A light offshore breeze smoothed the ocean surface to a slick copper sheen. Small, knee-high surf created by winds thousands of miles away surged up the beach every 10 seconds. Every third wave deposited a fresh batch of anchovies as it receded from the beach, the panicked fish sparkling in the soft dawn light as they flapped wildly on the drying sand. Twenty yards off the beach, then 10, then in the wash came carnage. Ladyfish, jacks, and then a tarpon blew threw schools of anchovies so thick they turned the water a dark reddish-brown. The ladyfish and jacks drifted away as more tarpon came into the fray. The tarpon drifted under the anchovies, then exploded toward the surface, inhaling food by the bucket. A tarpon rode a wave up the beach in pursuit of anchovies, then pivoted and rode the wash to safety. A black and purple fly drifted slowly toward the bottom, hopefully into the path of a tarpon scooping up scraps.

The water that had drained off the mangrove flat with the ebb had left the uneven, algae-covered bottom exposed to air. Even as the tide turned to flood the outer edge of the flat, small rivulets continued to drain the depths of the mangrove-covered limestone flat. The soft light of early morning combined with an overcast sky to cast a cloak of grey. The strong winds that rose with the sun each day were light enough in the early morning that the short mangroves cast a wind shadow over the leeward shoreline.

Small crabs scurried in the shallowest of water, quickly grabbing their own meals in the small, isolated pools before the water deepened enough to allow hungry bonefish to enter.

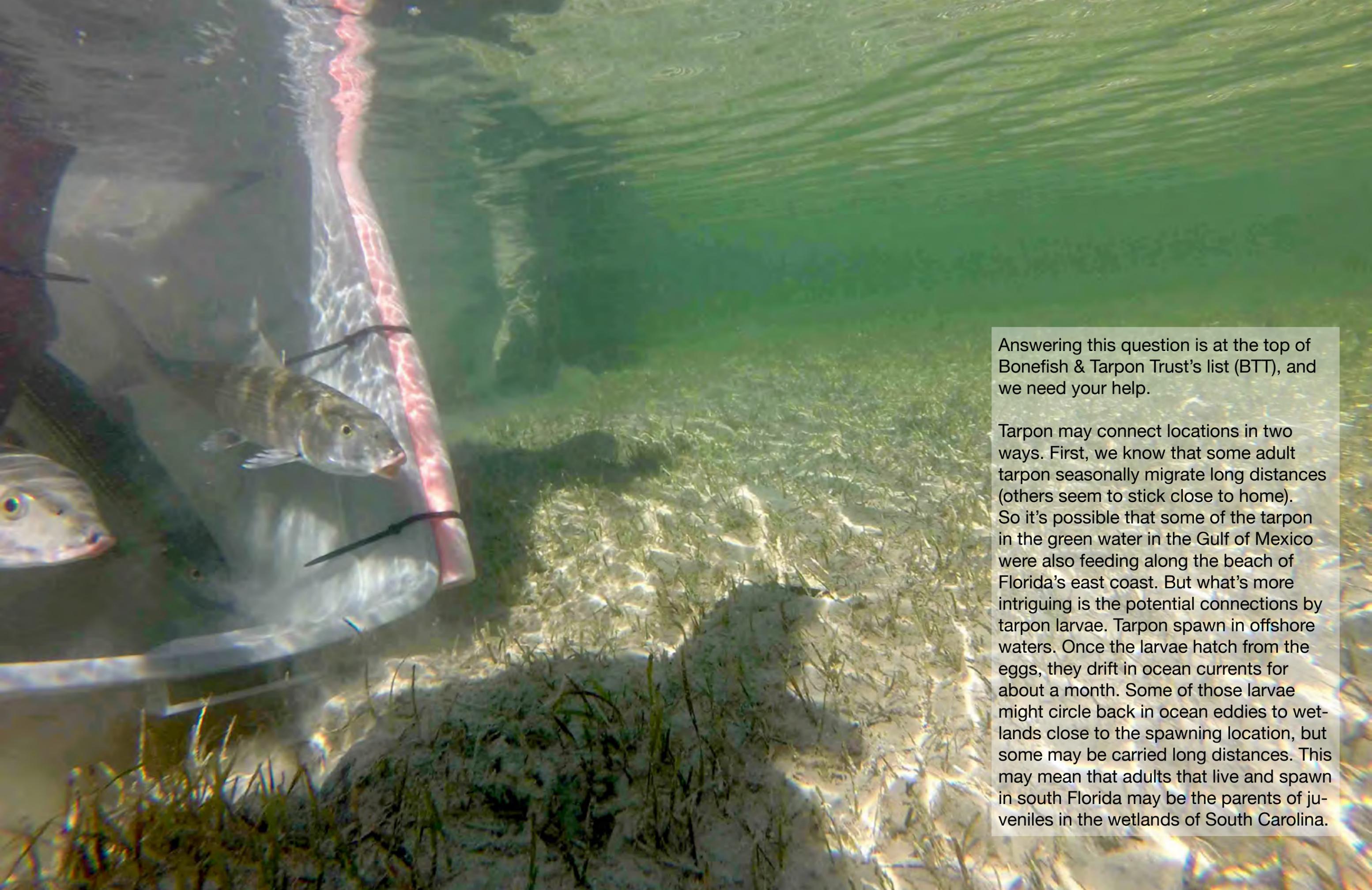
The slick water surface was soon broken by a fin, and then a tail of a bonefish eager to move onto the flat with the rising tide. The bonefish crawled through a shallow trough, only an inch or two deeper than the surrounding flat. When it reached a shallow knoll, and could somehow sense a pool beyond, the bonefish wriggled over almost dry ground, body exposed for an instant, before settling into a new pool of deeper water. The occasional splash of the tail and body shudder revealed another meal consumed.





These experiences are why we fish, and why we fish the way we do. Why we spend hours, days, weeks in search of the chance to stalk and cast to a tarpon, bonefish, permit, redfish.... Think about it. This isn't something the bookies in Vegas would post odds on. We are fishing in an ocean that covers much of the world, hoping to have a fish swim within casting distance – a circle perhaps 180 feet across – and then getting that fish to eat a concoction of feathers and fur tied to a hook. We fish the edges, the fragile intersection between land and sea, the coasts, flats, and estuaries that are daily assaulted by human impacts.

Though we have these experiences in many different locations, and each experience may seem unique and separate, there is a good chance they are connected to a greater extent than we know. From a conservation perspective, we must figure out how connected they are to answer the question: How much of our conversation needs to be local, how much at a larger scale? Answering this question is essential if we are to ensure that we have opportunities for these experiences in the future.



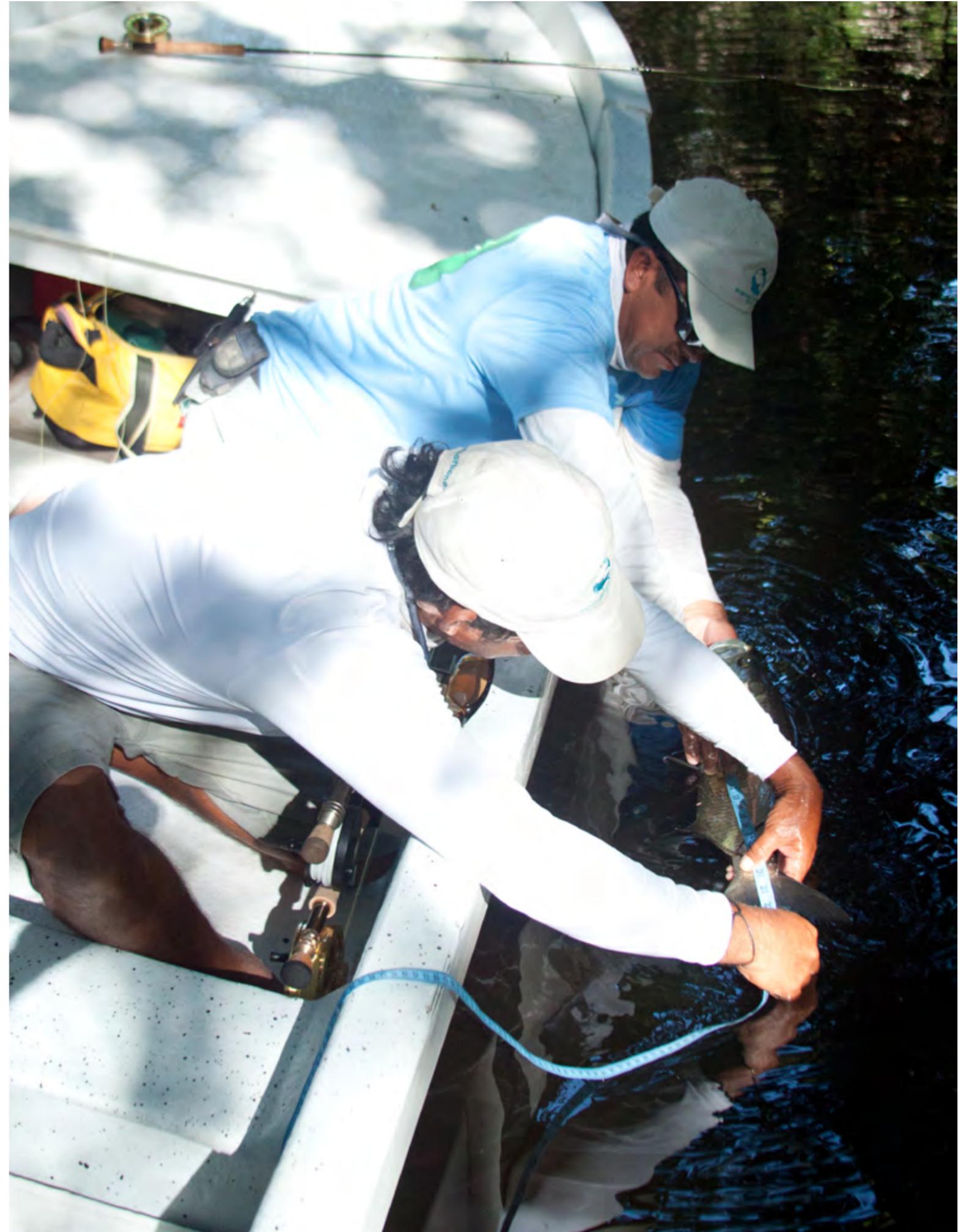
Answering this question is at the top of Bonefish & Tarpon Trust's list (BTT), and we need your help.

Tarpon may connect locations in two ways. First, we know that some adult tarpon seasonally migrate long distances (others seem to stick close to home). So it's possible that some of the tarpon in the green water in the Gulf of Mexico were also feeding along the beach of Florida's east coast. But what's more intriguing is the potential connections by tarpon larvae. Tarpon spawn in offshore waters. Once the larvae hatch from the eggs, they drift in ocean currents for about a month. Some of those larvae might circle back in ocean eddies to wetlands close to the spawning location, but some may be carried long distances. This may mean that adults that live and spawn in south Florida may be the parents of juveniles in the wetlands of South Carolina.



You may be surprised to learn that bonefish also spawn off-shore. Although they live most of the year in a small home range, they migrate to spawn. In the Bahamas, we've tracked bonefish migrating from their home flat to a spawning location more than 70 miles away, and then return to their home flat. So though bonefish can migrate long distances, it's only for spawning, and they return home right away. Not much chance of mixing by adults. But just like tarpon, their larvae float in the open ocean, but for a longer time period – an average of 53 days. This just about ensures that the larvae connect populations. The question is, to what extent?

We are using genetics to answer this question of connectivity. By taking fin clips from bonefish and scales from tarpon from throughout the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and Atlantic Ocean, we will be able to assess the genetic population structure of tarpon and bonefish. But this poses a problem. Although I would love to spend the next couple of years traveling the western hemisphere, this is not in my job description. But if you are reading this, you either fish for tarpon or bonefish, or have these fish on your bucket list. Here is your perfect excuse to chase tarpon and bonefish -- contribute to bonefish and tarpon conservation by helping BTT's conservation efforts.





It's easy.

Step 1

Plan a trip to fish for bonefish and tarpon. Please.

Step 2

Contact us to request a fin clip kit (for bonefish) or a scale collection kit (for tarpon).

Step 3

Catch bonefish and tarpon, taking a fin clip or a scale from each fish before you release it.

Step 4

Fill in the information about your sample (date, location, fish length).

Step 5

Mail the completed kit back to us when you return home.

It's that simple.

For tarpon, we have another year to collect a scale from as many tarpon from as many locations as we can. We already have almost 15,000 tarpon samples for Florida from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission's recent tarpon genetics program, so our need now is for samples from everywhere else – from the Carolinas to the Gulf of Mexico to the Caribbean Sea. Our goal is to collect more than 100 samples from as many locations as we can – Georgia coast, South Carolina, Texas, Louisiana, Belize Mexico, Cuba... you get the picture.

For bonefish, we have two years to get it done, but our needs are much greater. We are targeting more than 1,000 samples from each location – whether the Florida Keys, an island in the Bahamas, or a region of Belize. If you can catch them, we'd love to have a sample.



***To obtain a sample kit, please contact us:
info@bonefishtarpontrust.org, or 321-674-7758.***



Dr. Aaron Adams is a lot smarter than us and Allen Gillespie. It's a good thing he is, because our bonefish and tarpon need someone looking out for them that didn't have to make up the "Dr." in front of their name.

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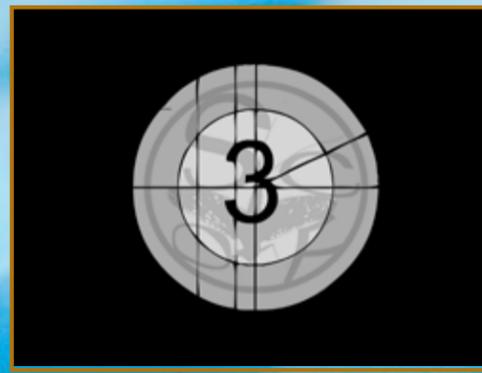
PHOTO BY CAMERON MORTENSON, THE FIBERGLASS MANIFESTO

FUR AND FEATHER MATINEE

Chris Franzen and Alan Broyhill

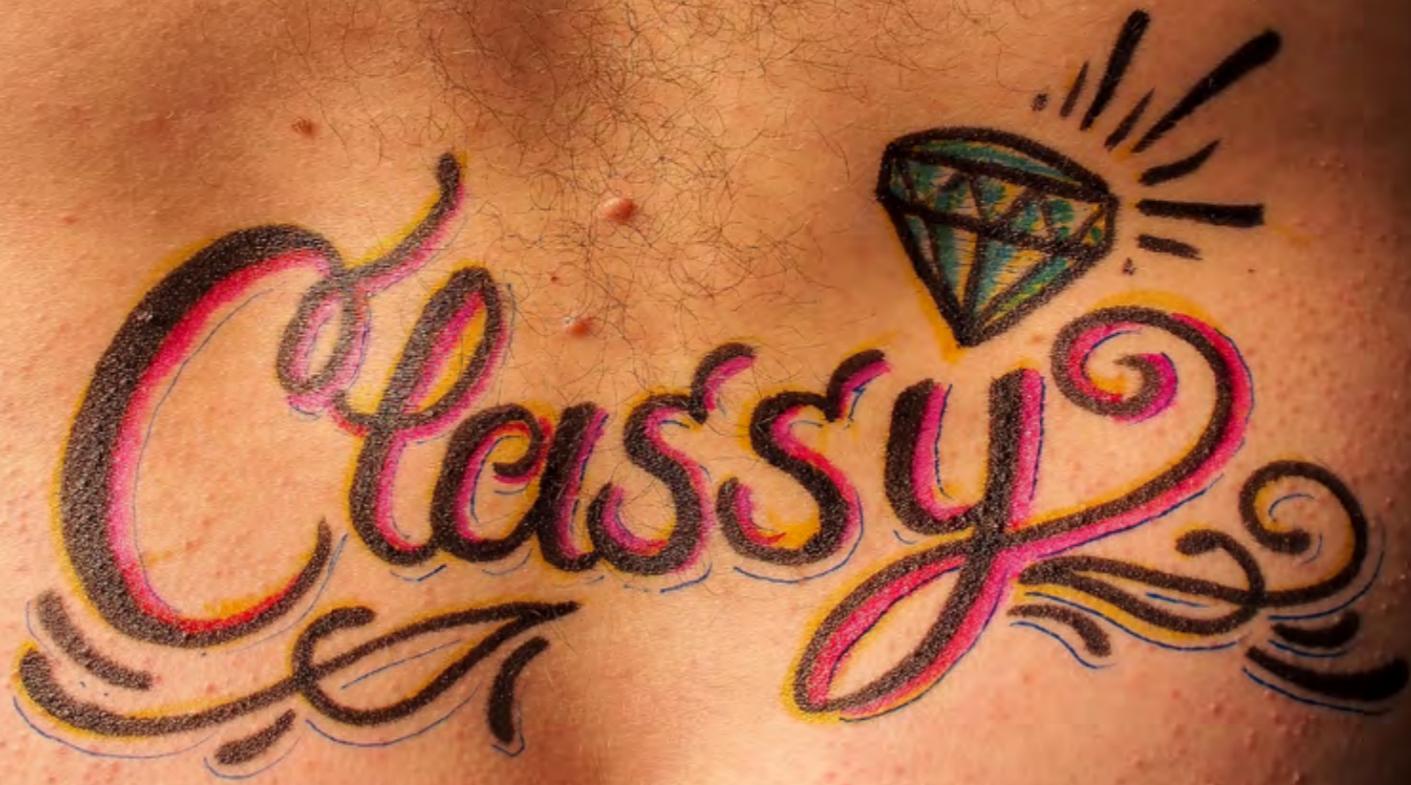


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TOCCOA RIVER REBOUND

By David Grossman
Photos: Jeff Turner





In 2010, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) began the largest rehabilitation project in the history of Blue Ridge Dam. For this project to be executed, the TVA drew down Blue Ridge Lake to the original river banks, leaving the Toccoa tailwater below the dam virtually waterless for the better part of a year. The fish kill was almost universal throughout the system. I am not a fisheries biologist, nor am I any type of biologist for that matter, but even I know a river without water means a river without fish. Once the dam was fixed and the cold water came back to the Toccoa, the fine folks of Fannin County, Ga., breathed a collective sigh of relief. GA breathed a collective sigh of relief.



What happened next is really quite remarkable. The fly fishing community of North Georgia, banded together armed with hyper vigilance and passion for their home waters, and oversaw what in my mind was truly a miracle; the rebound of the Toccoa River.

The Toccoa was never a bastion of thriving wild fish populations, but relied heavily on stocking as a lot of Southern man-made rivers have and do. This factor definitely made it easier to repopulate. Big trucks with a butt-load of fish in it tend to help. What has surprised some though, are the bugs that have come back to the river in full force. Caddis, sulfurs, BWO's, and swarms of midges have fish in the river looking up, and who can blame them really?

The Toccoa's rebound doesn't mean that things couldn't be better, however. When I was there last, the generators were down and minimum flows were the name of the game. The banks could still use more riparian zone to combat siltation, and the idea of a slot limit seemed to have once again been tabled by the state back in 2011. These problems aren't exclusive to the Toccoa, and I could name a half-dozen other rivers in the South with the same laundry list of issues.





At least this one time we should take a breath and turn our focus to the fact that five years ago we were all partially convinced that the Toccoa and all its economic, recreational, and social benefits would be something we talked about in the past tense. Now, five years later, the river is alive and symbiotically supporting the fishing community that loves it. It's hard not to say thank you.



Thanks to Jeff Turner from Blue Ridge Fly Fishing Shop for letting me sleep in his parents bed. Your secrets safe with me buddy. Also thanks to all the folks who put blood, sweat, and tears into bringing this river back from the brink.

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SUMMER RIVER CARP

Phenotypic Plasticity: the capacity of a phenotype to vary, owing to environmental influence on the genotype (e.g. the shape of a plant or the color of its flower).

Carp, like all aquatic vertebrates, are products of their environment, and their size and shape varies accordingly. Phenotypic plasticity in invasive species such as the common carp, has been suggested to increase the range of environments and habitats under which they can establish or invade. The common carp, *Cyprinus carpio*, are habitat generalists and have spread to the waterways of all of North America, which is good news if one is a carp aficionado who loves to pursue them with a long rod. Due to the variation in habitats and prey, one must be mindful that the flies and tactics used vary according to where you are pursuing them.



I am fortunate to live in East Tennessee, which possesses an abundance of major and minor aquatic habitats from freestone streams in the mountains to large meandering rivers and reservoirs in the valley; the common carp inhabits nearly every one. If pressed for time, naturally any body of water with carp will do. Given a preference, however, you will nearly always find me on one of the major tailwaters that flow into Knoxville in search of 20-pound-plus fish. More specifically, I search out transitional zones, where deep waters border flats, which offer both a refuge from the variable flows generated by TVA and shallow water zones where the larger fish forage during periods of low flow.

Both the French Broad and Holston Rivers, whose confluence sits on the eastern edge of the city limit of Knoxville, represent the ideal habitat for carp, due to an abundance of forage for the fish to pursue. Both rivers are bucolic in nature, meandering through pastoral settings prior to converging in an urban environment to form the Tennessee River. Cultural eutrophication throughout their post-impoundment course below Douglas and Cherokee Dams (respectively) ensures a high biomass. TVA's oxygen diffusion systems in both of the reservoirs above the dams ensures dissolved oxygen levels well above what the species requires to thrive. The result is a Frankenwater environment conducive to growing extremely large specimens.



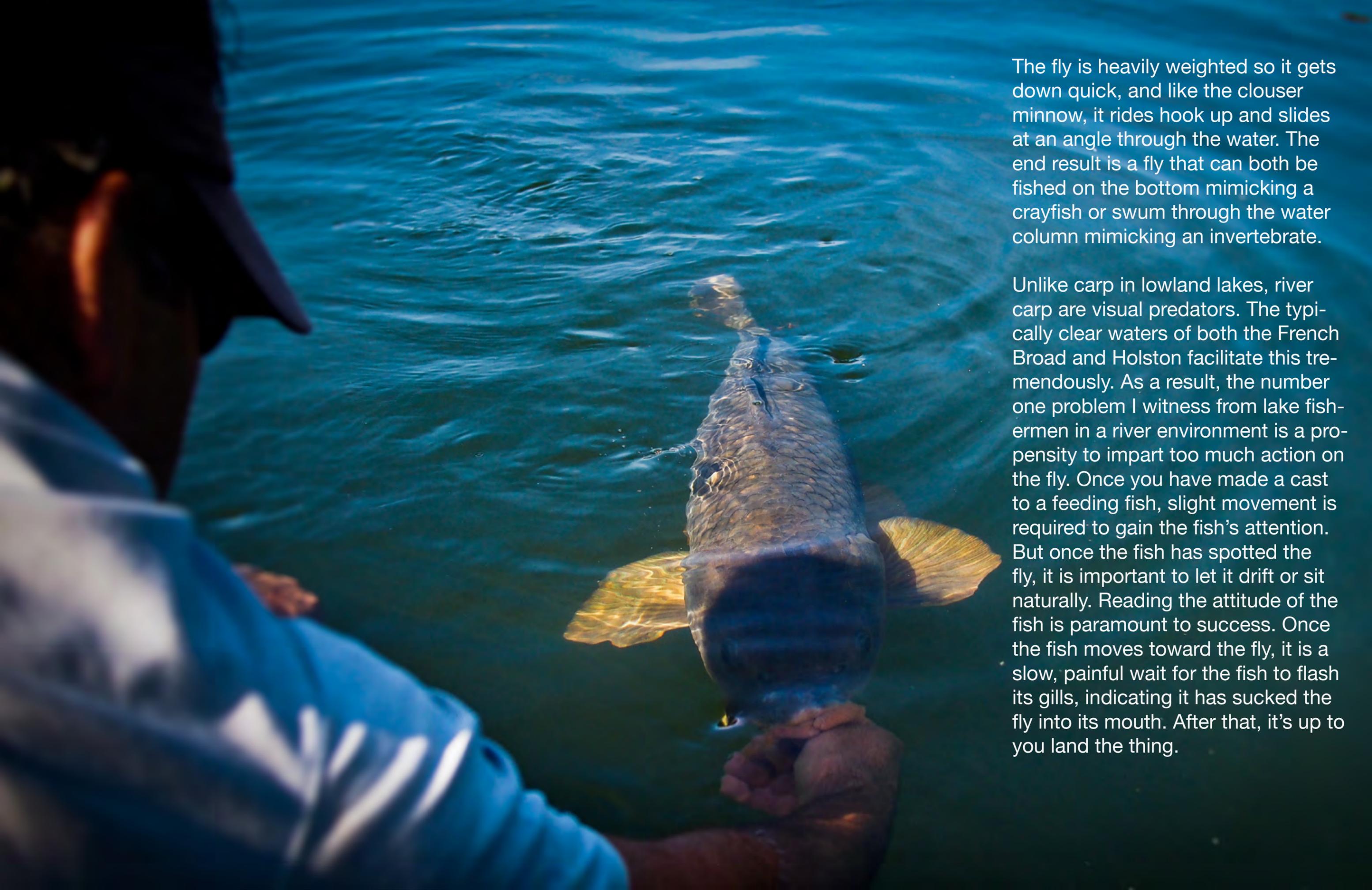


Unlike their lowland cousins, tailwater river carp are plagued by a constant but variable flow rate, and their bodies adjust accordingly. Pectoral fins are broad, tails are dinner plate-sized, and foreheads slope down toward the mouth as a result of constantly feeding within the benthic zone. The current that results in these unique morphological characteristics can be both a hindrance and an advantage to the fly angler. On the one hand, current permits a means of transference by which to convey your fly to the feeding fish. On the other hand, it also creates a scenario where you are somewhat at the whims of the flow.

Nearly all flies I utilize in the rivers east of Knoxville are heavier than what I might choose in the still water associated with our larger lakes. The weight is required to account for the current and to get the fly down quickly to the fish. When casting to cruising carp on a river, one must consider simultaneously the depth of the water, the movement of the fish, the distance to the fish, and of course, the speed of the flow. Because river carp virtually always feed in an upstream orientation, the fly angler is presented with the problem of how to present the fly to the fish without the fish either see-

ing or bumping into the leader. For these reasons, most of my shots are either from the side, or more frequently from upstream.

While it is generally believed that smaller flies are required in riverine environments due to the abundance of aquatic invertebrates, I've found that once carp are in excess of 15 pounds, they are capable of consuming much larger prey items such as crayfish. My favorite fly these days is Barry's Carp Fly, which is a hybrid between a swimming nymph and a clouser minnow.



The fly is heavily weighted so it gets down quick, and like the clouser minnow, it rides hook up and slides at an angle through the water. The end result is a fly that can both be fished on the bottom mimicking a crayfish or swum through the water column mimicking an invertebrate.

Unlike carp in lowland lakes, river carp are visual predators. The typically clear waters of both the French Broad and Holston facilitate this tremendously. As a result, the number one problem I witness from lake fishermen in a river environment is a propensity to impart too much action on the fly. Once you have made a cast to a feeding fish, slight movement is required to gain the fish's attention. But once the fish has spotted the fly, it is important to let it drift or sit naturally. Reading the attitude of the fish is paramount to success. Once the fish moves toward the fly, it is a slow, painful wait for the fish to flash its gills, indicating it has sucked the fly into its mouth. After that, it's up to you land the thing.



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