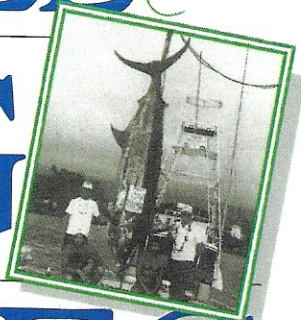
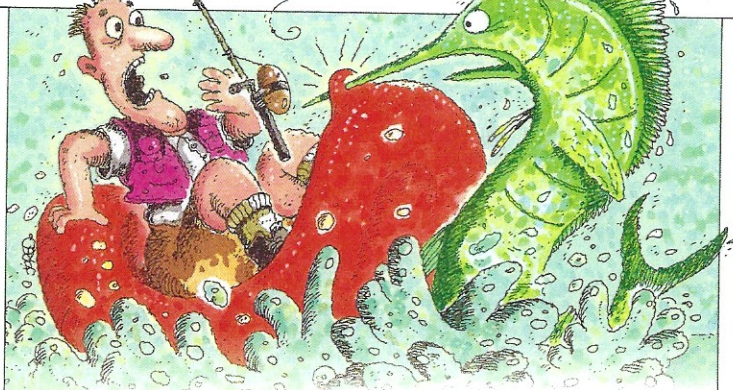


# INCRECIBLE FISHING STORIES



Collected,  
Personally  
Verified and  
Written by  
**SHAUN  
MOREY**

Illustrations  
by **Jared Lee**



**INCLUDING**  
**REMARKABLE CATCHES**

**Bear Catch!**  
**75 Marlin in One Day!**  
**40 Out of 40 –  
the Final Trout!**

**GRUELING BATTLES**

**Angler and Skipper  
for 17 1/2 Hours!**  
**Against All Odds!**  
**The Old Man and the Sea  
–Relived!**

**REVENGE OF  
THE FISH**

**Speared!**  
**Rattlesnake on Board!**  
**Nearly Skewered!**  
**Wahoo Attack!**  
**Bushwhacked  
by Whales!**

**LEGENDS,  
RECORDS  
AND MYTHS**

**Mysterious Giant  
Sea Horse!**  
**The UFO and  
the Broadbill!**

## 22 GOLDEN RECORDS

**T**o get to the record-holding lakes of California's Sierra Nevada Mountains, Don Vachini and his sons hike hours and often days over jumbled talus, icy snowfields and remote ridgelines. They hunt trout with fly gear, and since 1987 they've recorded 22 golden trout world records and 5 brook trout world records.

"We've been backpacking ever since Jason and Matt were 9 and 10 years old," Vachini said. "We would hike to specific lakes where we knew the golden trout lived. These fish fascinated us, and when the IGFA opened a fly record class for them we returned to the lakes to set records."

Golden trout are considered by many to be the most beautiful species of the trout family. Native only to California, they have been successfully transplanted to high-altitude lakes in Washington, Idaho and Wyoming. The All-Tackle World Record was caught in Cook's Lake, Wyoming, and weighed 11 pounds.

To catch the record fish, the Vachinis trekked above the timberline, sometimes as high as 12,000 feet above sea level, timing their arrival with the lake's first thaw. Only during this period, known as "ice-out," are the golden trout readily accessible from the shoreline.

"The lakes up there are often 50 to 60 acres

wide," Vachini said, "too big to randomly cast your fly. At ice-out the fish move into the inlets and will be stacked in large schools numbering 15 to 20 fish, each fish weighing from one to four pounds."

The high-altitude lakes are sunk into bare granite craters with no surrounding cover to conceal a fisherman. Golden trout swim apprehensively along the shoreline and once spooked may not return for days. When he finds a fish-filled inlet, Vachini must slink ahead low, slowly inching along the granite bank on his belly. He carries a fly rod in one hand and pulls himself along the harsh rock with the other.

"I wear knee pads when I crawl along the granite," Vachini said, "and when I get to the water I lie down flat on my back and lean up just a little to cast in a semi-prone position. It's not very comfortable, but it's the only way to get close to the fish. I've lost a lot of fishing



### DID YOU KNOW?

**T**he most venomous fish in the world is the stonefish. Found in the Indo-Pacific region, the stonefish has spines that contain deadly poison. Without anti-venom, agonizing death usually occurs within six hours.

days by being careless, but now, moving slowly, I can get right next to the fish."

While fishing, Vachini strips the fly line onto the top of his stomach and often watches the fish take the fly. The casting is exhausting, and he trains all year to keep his stomach fit. "During one stop," he said, "I could have set four IGFA fly records, but I got such bad abdominal and back pains that I had to stop fishing."

Of the fishing family's 27 world records, 5 are

recognized by the IGFA and 22 by the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame.

"A one-pound golden trout in California is considered a trophy fish," Vachini said. "But the guys in Wyoming keep beating our records. That's where the really big fish are, so next year we may go to Wyoming to try and take back some of our records."

The Vachinis have 27 more than most anglers. Odds are, they'll get to 28 soon.

**O**ne of Don Vachini's many world record golden trouts. This IGFA 20-pound tippet-class record fish weighed 1 pound even. The record was beaten in 1992 by an angler fishing Thumb Lake, Wyoming.

Courtesy Don Vachini

