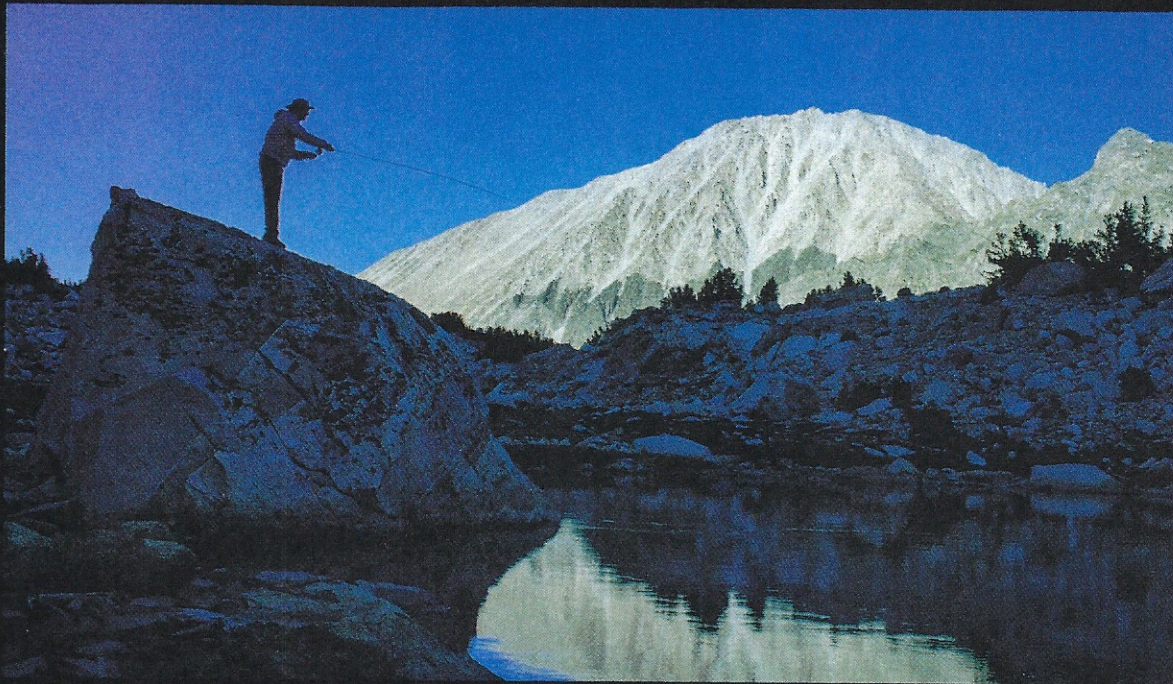


EXPOSURE

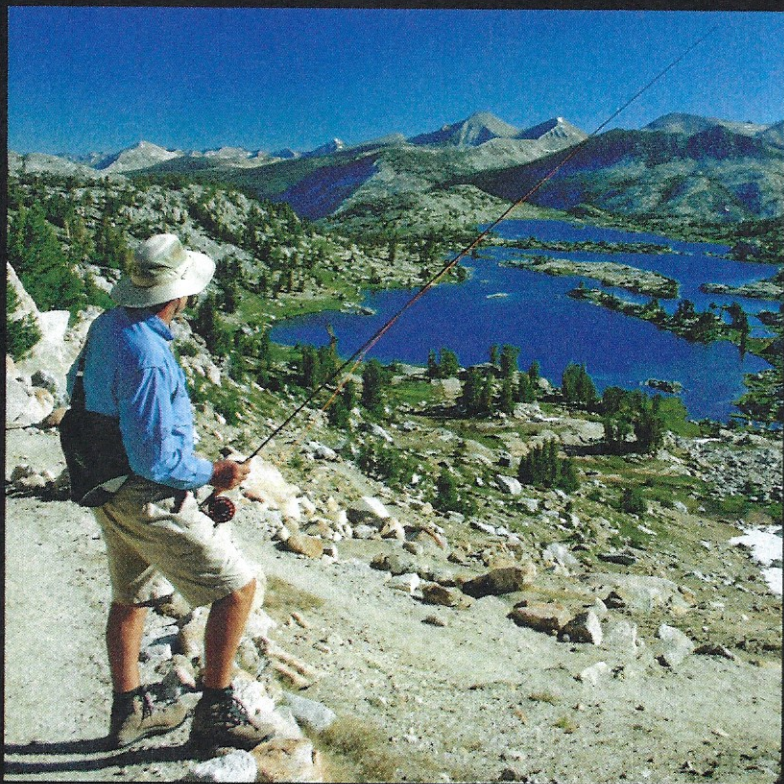
California Gold in the Clouds/By Don Vachini



Utilizing a vantage point to spot a trout and determine its cruising direction, Brandon Parker aims his offering ahead of the intended quarry.

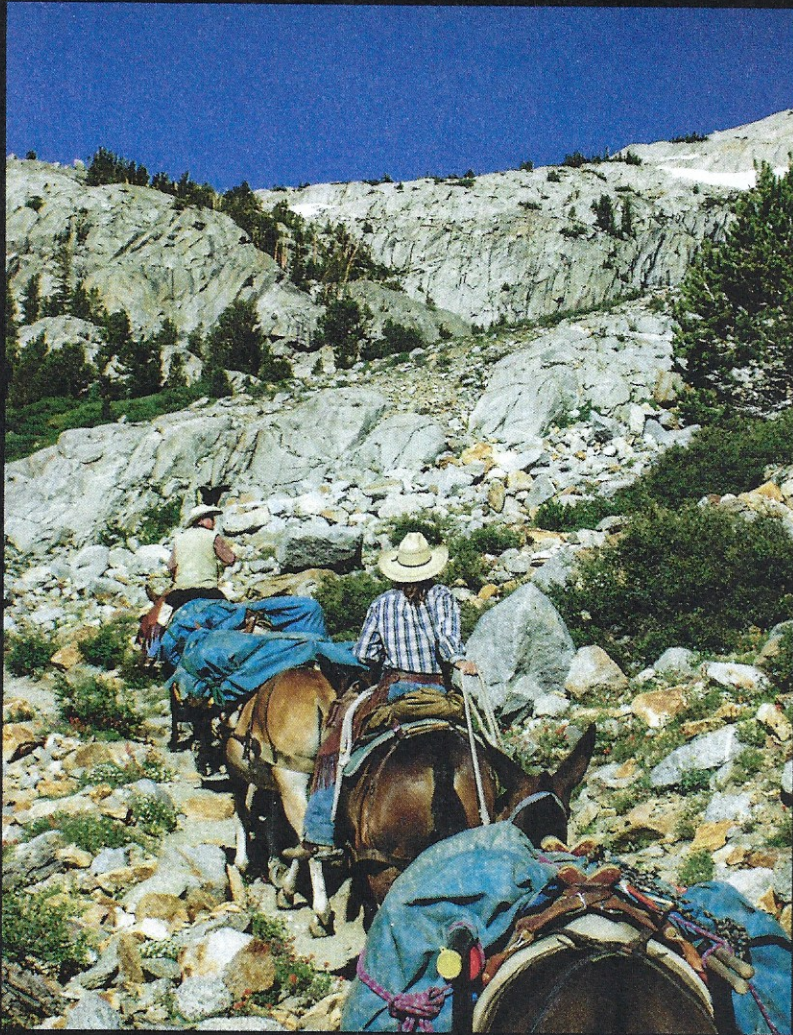


Worn horseshoes, nailed to a gnarled stump well off the trail, signify a secluded packer's camp.

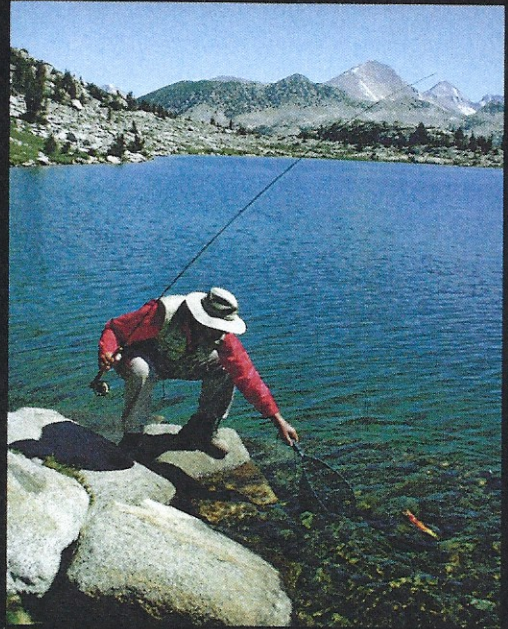


Viewing a body of water from above can yield productive information about its structure, such as the locations of inlets, outlets, and transition zones.

*Pack trail
waters,*



Pack trains deliver clients and their gear close to excellent but faraway golden trout waters, saving anglers' legs for less-strenuous day hikes.



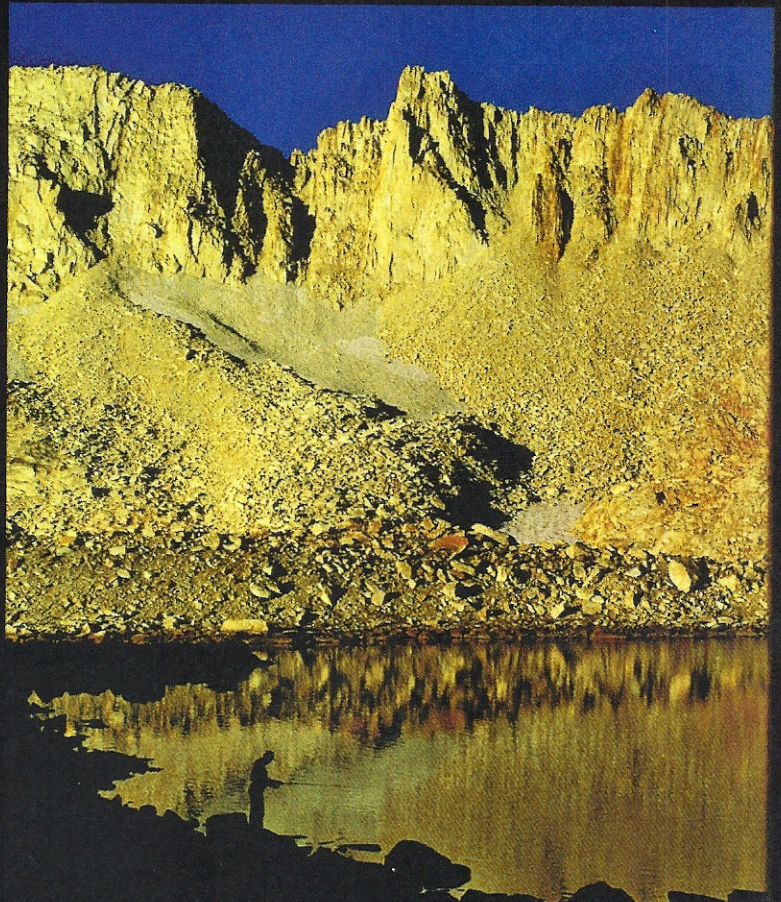
Don Vachini prepares to net his 24-karat reward. Dredging a black Woolly Bugger along an ebony drop-off unlocked the combination to this kaleidoscopic treasure.



Sitting high atop Humphreys Basin, this base camp allows anglers to hike the contours to nearby lakes without severe gains or losses in elevation.



John Dolinsek scrambles above a high-altitude jewel on his way back to base camp.



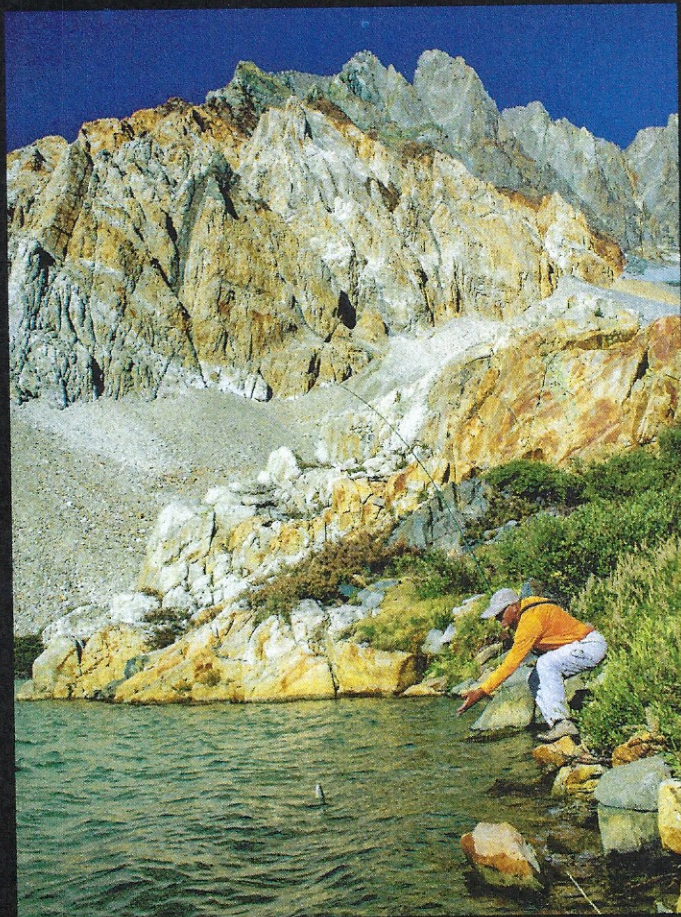
The golden trout is a high-altitude specialist, thriving at elevations more than 2 miles above sea level, such as Granite Lake, nestled along the Sierra Nevada crest near Italy Pass.



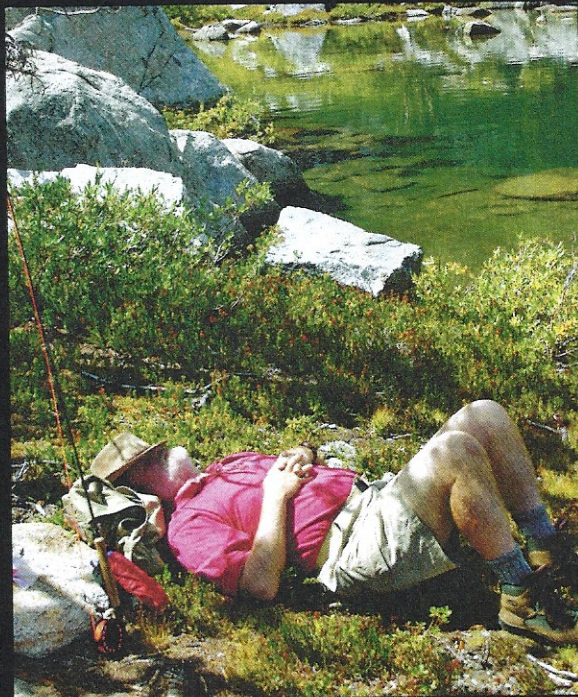
Guarded by the serrated Sierra Nevada crest, numerous crystal-clear tarns in the John Muir Wilderness provide aesthetic mining sites for anglers seeking gold.



*The golden trout's scientific name, *Oncorhynchus mykiss aquabonita*, aptly stands for "pretty in the water."*



Another golden trout comes to hand.



Terry Donahoe finds time for a brief midday siesta after a demanding morning session.

Don Vachini is a freelance writer and photographer who lives in Petaluma, California.