

Alaska. These fish are white-bellied and as hot as any trout in the state.

This large trout is the first of many on this day. And it's the first day of a six-week period during which the Kvichak becomes the land of super-sized trout that reach better than 30 inches. It's one of three designated trophy trout rivers in Alaska, and it lives up to its reputation. And for anglers who don't want to drift beads under indicators, the Kvichak's rainbows readily take a swung fly.

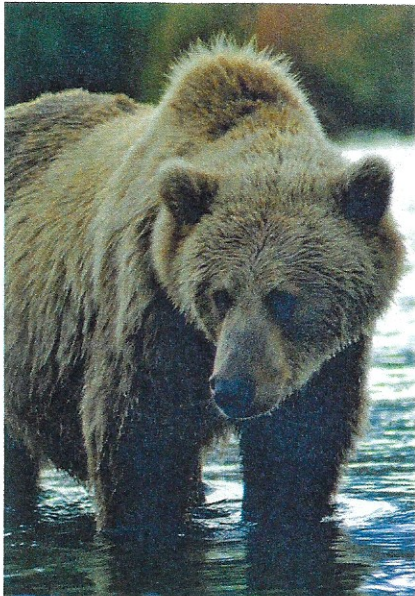


PHOTO BY GREG HEISTER

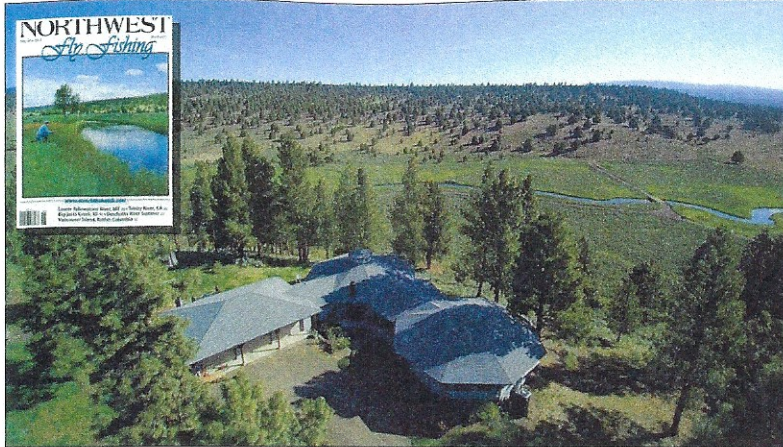
The high water last August made it bit difficult, but most of my days fishing were spent swinging flies with a two-handed rod. To fish the Kvichak River from the convenience of its only do-it-yourself lodge, call George Riddle, (907) 980-1780, or log on to www.softlodge.com.



Soulajule Reservoir, CA

By Don Vachini

Leaving the parking area, I climbed above the dam, briefly followed the fading trail, then trekked freestyle for nearly a mile through lush grasses and varicolored wildflowers. Scrambling down to the glassy water's edge, I was raucously chided by an inquisitive Steller's jay, shattering the eerie silence.



BLACK DRAKE RANCH offers 420 acres of privacy with miles of two year-round flowing streams, teeming with wild native redband and brown trout that thrive on prolific insect hatches, a unique opportunity for the fly fishing enthusiast! On a rock point overlooking the stream step pools, Gearhart Mt, pine timber, meadows and sage sits the Ranch House; uniquely one of a kind, floor length windows, Southern pine beam ceiling, hickory, granite, historic barn wood, rock fireplace, wrap around deck & 3 car garage. In addition; the Fish Camp log cabin and the bunk house plus 3/2 MF home tucked in the pines by a water fall and 75 acre pasture. Well priced at \$1,760,000.



Insert: cover of May/June 2012 issue.

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Book Review

The Imperiled Cutthroat: Tracing the Fate of Yellowstone's Native Trout

By Greg French

Patagonia Books

Patagonia is well known for its excellent outdoor clothing and gear, as well as its conservation initiatives. Its iconoclastic founder—Yvon Chouinard—helped start 1% for the Planet, a program through which companies donate at least 1 percent of their sales to environmental initiatives. Patagonia also has a publishing arm—Patagonia Books—that prints works addressing fly fishing, mountain climbing, surfing, sustainable business practices, and other outdoor and socio-environmental topics.

In 2016, Patagonia published Greg French's *The Imperiled Cutthroat*. French is a well-known Australian angling author who wrote *Trout Waters of Tasmania*, among other works. Assisted by artist Geoff Holstad's colorful illustrations, French presents readers with an idiosyncratic, outsider's view of Yellowstone cutthroat trout and other natural resource issues. The travelogue approach echoes 19th-century French writer Alexis de Tocqueville's fresh-eyed, anthropological look at America: seeing familiar things from a perspective that might not be obvious to natives.

This concise, well-written book is divided into easily digested essay-like sections that generally correspond to places French and his wife, Frances, visited on a whirlwind grand tour through Yellowstone National Park. He frequently veers off to other topics (e.g., bison, wolves, and Indians), locations (e.g., Tasmania, Mongolia, and Nevada's Pyramid Lake), and interesting people he meets to underscore his themes.

The journey can be dizzying, but the book's epicenter is the history and current condition of the Yellowstone cutthroat, set within the context of its core habitat in the world's first national park. "Of all the places I've visited in the world," French writes, "I think Yellowstone is the one most like a touchstone. Surely this is the place that other places should be compared to in order to test the veracity of all we deem precious."

Of particular interest to French is the cataclysmic decline of Yellowstone cutts in their namesake lake and its tributaries. Biologists blame the presumed illegal introduction of predacious nonnative lake trout, but French explores other possible angles, including climate change, whirling disease, and fisheries management practices. There are no easy answers—French doesn't pretend otherwise—and not everyone will concur with all his assertions.

French's curious mind covers expansive territory. He philosophically grapples with topics such as native trout versus exotics; wild versus stocked; "natural" versus "unnatural"; biodiversity; genetic analysis; species, subspecies, and race distinctions; the wisdom of various fisheries management practices; and how humans interact with the natural environment. It's a peripatetic approach, but evocative imagery and the narrative thread mostly hold it together.

To his credit, French draws upon some of the giants of Greater Yellowstone angling, fisheries research, and writing: Joe Brooks, Dan Bailey, John Varley, Paul Schullery, Craig Mathews, and especially biologist Robert Behnke, whom French interviewed shortly before his death.

This interesting, opinionated, passionate book will give first-time visitors a helpful list of wonderful places to explore. Beyond that, French provides all fly anglers with a look at important issues facing both native cutthroats and indigenous fish everywhere. He aptly summarizes humans' role by suggesting that "when you fish, the natural environment is not merely a nice concept, it becomes part of your day-to-day life; that even when you are not actually fishing, you are dreaming about it; that threats to the environment begin to threaten your sense of self, your immediate well-being; that dedicated anglers do care enough to change the way they vote."—Jeff Erickson

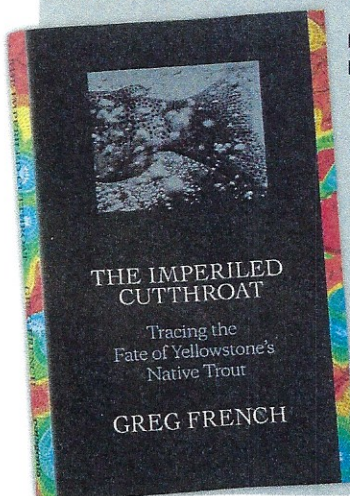


PHOTO BY DON VACHINI

Hidden among the rolling ranchland hills of northwestern Marin County and inundating approximately 6 miles of rugged canyon landscape on Arroyo Sausal, Soulajule Reservoir supports a rather unusual warm-water fishery. Pronounced soo-la-hoo-lee, this little-known, 10,572-acre Marin Municipal Water District impoundment doubles as a backup water supply and an uncrowded escape for adventurous anglers.

Prior to dam construction in 1979, Arroyo Sausal served as a spawning tributary for Walker Creek's seagoing rainbow trout, which entered from the Pacific Ocean via Tomales Bay. While legally mandated releases continue to sustain threatened steelhead downstream, their landlocked progeny trapped behind the dam have virtually vanished.

Benefitting from a moderate forage base, suitable habitat, and light angling pressure, largemouth bass are now the main characters in this spacious, serpentine-shaped valley nestled among the wooded coastal mountains. Most finned residents fall into the 1- to 2-pound category, although individuals ranging up to 4 pounds lurk throughout. A decent black crappie population contributes to a healthy fishery.

Bounded by a thick oak and bay woodland blanket, this hike-in watershed is governed by a strict, no-water-contact regulation. Factor in precariously steep banks, accompanying chaparral and poison oak, and restricted casting, and the keys to unlocking its spiny-ray secrets remain a distinct challenge. However, sometime during mid-spring, as water temperatures approach 60 degrees, a significant window of opportunity opens: both bass and crappies stage near shore in 2 to 4 feet of water and become highly protective of their spawning beds. I plan visits to coincide with this timetable.

I prefer to key on back reaches of the reservoir. Here, coves are more open, chances of locating less-pressured spawners increase, and I can avoid snag-happy trees with 45-degree-angle roll casts. While fan-casting effectively

covers more water, offerings retrieved parallel to shore remain the most productive for shallow-water largemouth. With the onset of summer, the bass typically scatter and go deep.

Minnow-imitating Matuka and Zonker streamers worked through the water column or crayfish imitations darted erratically on the bottom can entice violent strikes during recruitment rituals. Purple, black, or chartreuse-hued surface poppers and rubber-legged bugs are among the most effective summertime offerings for deeper-holding lunkers. Mimicking tiny mosquito fish, size 10 to 14 beadhead nymphs worked subsurface around brush can dupe crappies.



PHOTO BY DON VACHINI

From US Highway 101 in Novato, take the San Marin Drive exit and drive west to Novato Boulevard. Turn right and drive 9 miles to Point Reyes-Petaluma Road, turn right, drive 0.25 mile, then turn left onto Hicks Valley Road. Drive 2.7 miles and turn left onto Marshall-Petaluma Road; drive 5 miles to the signed SoulaJule turnoff on Arroyal Sausal Road and turn left. Follow the road to the parking area below the dam. The reservoir is open from sunrise to sunset, with no on-site facilities. Parking and day use are free. Zealous exploration of the more remote sectors usually involves a full day. Carry plenty of water, snacks, and sunblock. The Marin French Cheese Factory, (707) 762-6001, www.marin-frenchcheese.com, is nearby.

Washington Fly Fishing Fair

**Have fun and sharpen your fly fishing skills.
Free fly tying on Saturday!
May 5th & 6th 2017**

Ellensburg, gateway to the Yakima River, will host the 11th Annual Washington Fly Fishing Fair, on May 5th and 6th. The event features fly-tying demonstrations, casting classes, seminars on a myriad of topics, vendor displays, and a fly-casting obstacle course that will allow you to test your skills and hone your techniques. Steve Fernandez will be our guest fly tier. Private lessons with a certified casting instructor will be available for a fee. Molly Semenik and Alan Buhr will be guest Fly Casting Instructors. The WSCIFF Awards Banquet takes place Friday night. The Fly Fishing Fair is held at the Kittitas Valley Events Center at the Fairgrounds.

For more info visit www.wsciff.org

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