



MONTANA- ROCK CREEK (TAR|OCT.2018):SETH FIELDS

**DATELINE: BAHAMAS**

**News Analysis**

**Are You Ready to Try the Local-Lodge Option?**



*Editor emeritus Don Causey filed the following report after a visit last month*

*to Chester's Highway Inn Bonefish Lodge on Acklins Island. Enjoy!*

Here is a news flash that will surprise some readers of this publication: there are fishing lodges out there that don't provide vintage wine and fine, wafer-like bread items to nibble on until your salad arrives. Some fishing guides don't show up in crisp uniforms with lodge logos embroidered neatly above the left pocket either. In fact, there are lodges where the owners actually expect you to sit down for lunch with a sea breeze ruffling your hair instead of air conditioning.

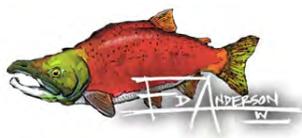
Don't get the wrong idea. I'm not about to subject you to a hatchet job on top-end lodges. I love being at a top-end lodge such as Mangrove Cay Lodge on Andros Island or Delphi Lodge on Abaco, to cite just two top-end lodges

in the Bahamas. Everything works at these lodges. The guides are polite and proficient, and you wind up catching fish. Indeed, there is nothing, in all of that, not to like.

My point is this, though: as pleasurable as these elegant lodges are, there is a kind of sameness about a lot of them, a practiced hospitality that walls you off from the destination you are visiting. Place is something you catch glimpses of out the window as you move from plane to car to lodge to boat. If all you do, as an angler who travels, is fish at top-end lodges, in my humble view, then you are missing something. Witness my experience last month at Chester's Highway Inn Bonefish Lodge on Acklins Island.

In case you have not been to Acklins Island, it is one of the lesser developed places in the Bahamas. In fact, it is clearly un-developing, if there is such a word as that. The population there has dropped over the years more than 75 percent, hovering currently around 500 individuals scattered widely over a crooked strip of land that is close to 90 miles long from end to end. You can drive for a half hour on the southern end of Acklins Island and encounter no human habitation at all. Elsewhere, there are about as many abandoned houses as there are houses with humans inside. I counted ten D-8 Caterpillar tractors on Acklins that have just been abandoned. Weeds and shrubs grow right to the edge of the highway in many places, creating the unmistakable feel of a place being overtaken by wilderness. The lack of machine noise is deafening. There are birds everywhere. I can't recall at the moment any reasonably accessible place

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## Fishing Buddies

There's something about these strange round walls that seem to just set my mind at ease. Maybe it's the yurt's architecture, its supports angling toward the central glass dome in sunburst-like fashion, that make the space so inviting, so foreign. Maybe it's the tune of Rock Creek's cold, clear flows harmonizing in the background that start slowly dissolving the layers of stress and anxiety of life back in Tennessee.

Then again, maybe it's just the beer.

We started drinking early. Not early by daytime standards, but by the fact that we were seated at the local brewery no more than 10 minutes after walking out of the Missoula airport.

My friends and I have a history that is punctuated by fishing trips and good beer. Most often, the beer is better than the fishing, but we're in Montana this time around, so the fishing is going to be great. I just didn't know that the beer would be so good too.

You see, we originally bonded over beer, and though we all share a passion for fly fishing, it's always been the beer that we have united around. We're all craft beer snobs, at best. It often seems like we come up with ideas on what to do, just so we'd have a reason to drink a few beers. Building cane rods—beer. Fly-tying nights—beer. Wood carving—beer.

You get the point.

It's been that way since the beginning.

In fact, the night I met these guys, I was attending my first Trout Unlimited meeting back in Georgia, and, knowing very little about the organization or its demographics, I soon found myself scanning the room of old men for someone, we'll say, less "retired-looking." About that time, I was greeted by an older man who could only be described as someone who resembled Santa Claus—if Santa Claus were an incurable trout bum who wears tie-dye in the off season. Well, old St. Nick slid me a pint of Yuengling, and the rest is

history. Ken and I were fast friends. That's also where I met Danny, our third counterpart on this trip. He was the other young guy in the room that night, and has also become a good friend over the years.

The three of us managed to fish a lot together in the years before we scattered throughout the country following families, careers, and fish. Now, Danny lives in Virginia; Ken spends his winters in Georgia, and summers in Montana; and I am in Tennessee. Our times together are limited, but we try to cross paths once or twice a year, if we're lucky.

We first started talking about Ken's plans to build a yurt here nearly three years ago, and now here we are, reunited on the other side of the country, sitting beneath the sunlit dome of this strange cylindrical utopia, and though we have not seen each other in some time, this particular brew has bridged the gaps in time, and we're back to our old selves again.

It's funny what a cold beer can do.

Funnier still is how there are some friendships that need very little tending to, the ones where you pick up right where you left off. It's a good thing, too, because now is not the time for living in the past or catching up on all the details of our time apart. The collective anxiety to hit the water is growing, and the sound of the river seems to get louder and louder with each passing minute. Everyone feels it, and it's not long before we shuffle into our waders and take off for the creek bed.

We'll spend the next five days catching up, catching fish, and having one hell of a good time. By the end, I will have caught my first bull trout, had a close encounter with a bear, and learned firsthand that the recipe for a successful trip often has little to do with what happens on the water.

Fishing buddies, unlike most things, do not come and go. There are only the times we fish together and the times in between.



## THE ANGLING REPORT

### GROUP PUBLISHER

John D. Lunn  
512-470-7447

### EDITOR

Seth Fields

### COPY EDITOR

Gary J. Hamel

### CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Jed Lyons

### LAYOUT & PRODUCTION

Ben F. Badger Jr.

### ILLUSTRATIONS

Ed Anderson

### ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Michael Floyd  
706-823-3739 / mike.floyd@morris.com

### EDITOR EMERITUS and FOUNDER

Don Causey

Subscription Inquiries:  
(Orders, address changes, problems)  
**800-283-9471**

[www.theanglingreport.com](http://www.theanglingreport.com)

Email: [theanglingreport@emailcustomerservice.com](mailto:theanglingreport@emailcustomerservice.com)



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**Donna Kessler**, President

**Patty Tiberg**, Vice President

**Scott Ferguson**, Director of Circulation

**Donald Horton**, Director of Manufacturing

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**Morris Communications Company, LLC**

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# THE ANGLING REPORT

I've been that is better suited to the person who just wants to get away from it all for a while and catch a fish or two.

One of the more pleasurable moments of my stay on Acklins last month was sitting by the water out front of Chester's Lodge and listening to the breeze sigh through the needles of an Australian pine. The only disturbance was an occasional polite toot of a car horn. Everyone toots on Acklins, you must understand. You don't just drive by any fellow human on Acklins without tooting hello. The other favorite moment of my recent trip was trying to keep up with my bonefish guide, nicknamed Gator (yes, Gator), who lost all patience with a tide that just wouldn't recede and push the bonefish out of the mangroves where we could fish for them like normal people. Instead of waiting around, we charged into the mangroves after them on foot. Think *Apocalypse Now*. Mud sucking at our boots. Baby sharks scattering in front of us. And bonefish everywhere! I had two bump into my leg at one point. Ultimately, I did not land a single fish in the mangroves, but I did hook at least six that crashed away into the bushes with Gator in pursuit, yelling "Hold your rod up! Hold it up!" The whole experience was total madness of the fall-down-laughing variety. That brief experience was worth the entire cost of the trip.

Mind you, all of the guided fishing I enjoyed at Chester's was not this clownish. My first day with Gator I caught 15 fish despite a stiff 25-mile-an-hour wind that made casting and poling extremely difficult. The second day the wind was blowing so hard it was difficult to stay on the platform. My line kept blowing clear off the boat. Thanks to Gator's persistence and stamina we still caught five fish. Given the hand I was dealt weather-wise, I came away pleased with my guided-fishing success. I was less pleased with my DIY fishing experience, and I will have more to say about that in a moment.

The owners of Chester's Highway Inn Bonefish Lodge are Julius and Arnette Chisholm. They bought the lodge two years ago, they told me, and

sank quite a bit of money into improving the lodge itself and its website and buying equipment such as kayaks; bicycles; and, of course, boats. The lodge owns two boats, one a more-than-adequate flats fishing skiff and the other an offshore craft. They contract with independent guides such as Gator to provide guided fishing in these vessels.

Julius and Arnette did not say as much, but I gather they bought the lodge as a sort of retirement project that would rationalize their near-full-time residence on Acklins Island, a place they both love.

Julius owns a construction company in Nassau that he no longer runs full-time himself, though he does seem to go back and forth between Acklins



and Nassau quite a bit. While my wife and I were there, Julius spent most of his days painting the railing around the front porch of the lodge, bailing out the kayaks, and taking my wife and me to meet our guide. Arnette was our cook and housekeeper. The term "mom-and-pop operation" describes perfectly what it was like to be at their lodge. And therein lies a large part of the charm of the place, as well as its largest shortcoming.

Like an increasing number of lodges in the Bahamas nowadays, Chester's offers do-it-yourself fishing, as well as guided fishing. You can do the former by walking across the road from the lodge and wading for miles in either direction. You can also use one of the lodge's three kayaks and cover more

territory. I waded away from the lodge the afternoon I arrived, and I saw some bonefish. They were skittish, though, and I returned to the lodge scoreless.

Another way you can fish on your own is by riding one of the lodge's two bicycles to more distant and presumably less heavily fished flats. Finally, you can rent a car and reach just about any flat on the island. My wife and I paid \$80 a day, plus gas, for the car we used to run around on our own for three of our four days devoted to DIY fishing. When I decided to go to Chester's I was very intrigued by its DIY options, and I looked forward to giving them a try. Unfortunately, neither Julius nor Arnette knew much about the flats, or about sportfishing in general, much less fly fishing. I am quite sure Julius would have thought a nail knot had something to do with a hammer, not a fly line.

In my view, this lack of fishing knowledge was a definite shortcoming of the lodge, and I told the proprietors that repeatedly before I left. In fact, my wife said at one point I was becoming way too insistent and strident on the subject, and I should really just shut up about it. I did just that, but not before I got a promise from Julius to deal with this lack of fishing knowledge.

All things considered, Chester's is clearly not for everyone, but it is dead right for a certain kind of angler. If I have done my reporting job well, you know if you fit into this situation. My wife and I did. We had a great time. Enjoy!—*Don Causey*.

*Postscript:* You can get more information on Chester's by going to the lodge's website. The address is: <https://chestersbonefishlodge.com/>. You'll note right away that some of the mixed DIY and guided fishing packages are very attractively priced. The cost of renting a car is affordable, too. As noted above, the only thing to beware of is the lack of in-house fishing knowledge. That should be cleared up by the time you read this. Julius specifically agreed to provide maps of the various DIY flats with reliable information on the right tides to explore each one. Ask if they are going to be available at the time of your visit.

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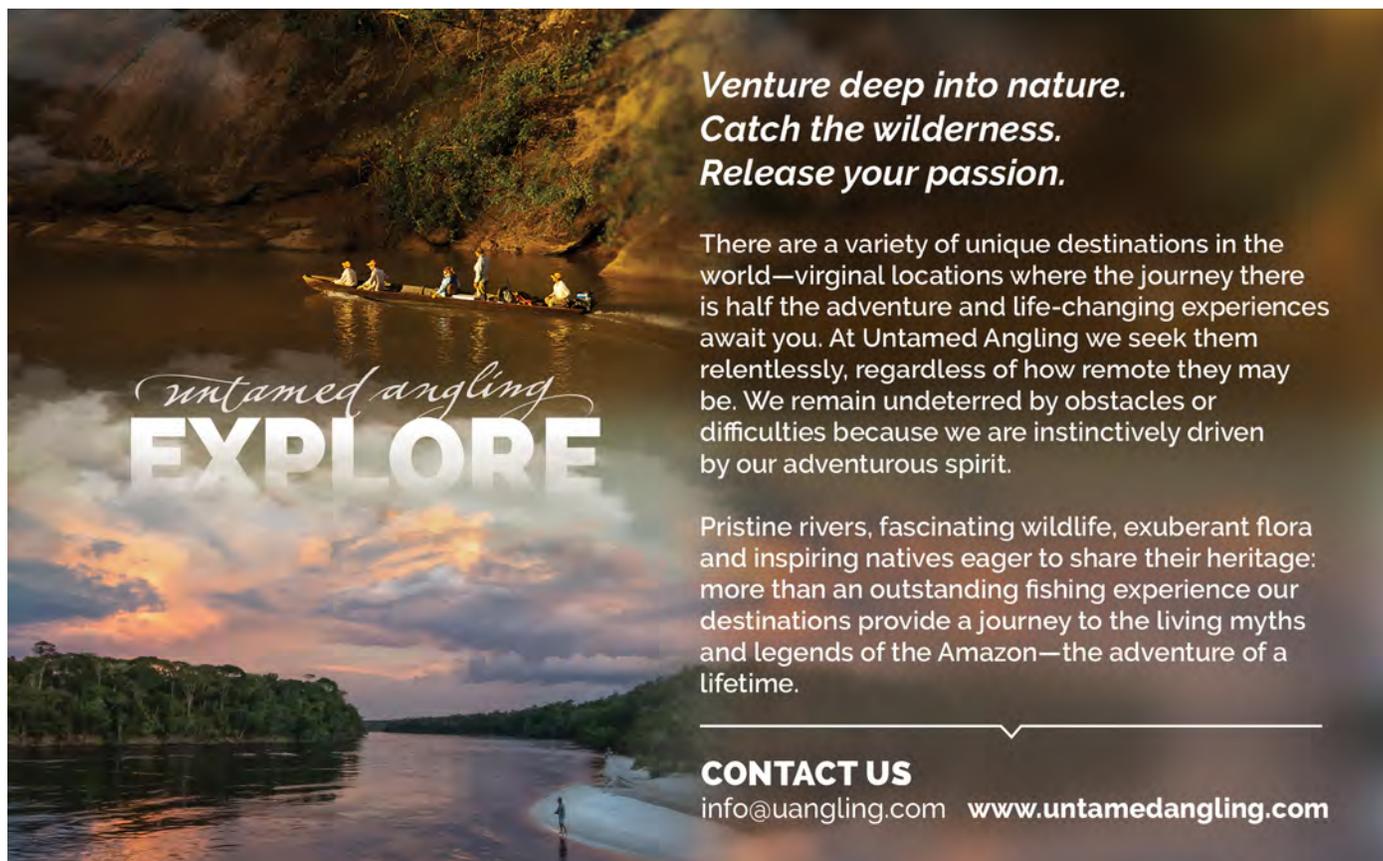


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**DATELINE: MONTANA**

## **DIY Rock Creek 5 Days on Missoula's Blue-Ribbon Workhorse**



*Editor Seth Fields just returned from a five-day trip to Rock Creek, where he met up with a group of fishing buddies to help christen the final build of a friend's yurt (see page 2). This was Seth's first trip to Rock Creek, and you can bet it won't be his last.*

**Y**ou'll start to catch glimpses of the water about a mile after you turn on to Rock Creek Road. The water unveils itself in spectacular fashion as you pull farther and farther away from I-90 in Clinton, Montana, just outside of Missoula. Like the gift that keeps on giving, this creek—a river by the standards of most states—gets continually prettier and more rugged the deeper you venture into the Lolo National Forest.

You could spend an entire lifetime trying to familiarize yourself with this stream. Its landscape and water type vary and change around each bend of the road, but for the sake of time, I will concentrate on a few specific areas that you must check out on your visit. These notes were compiled in early September (5th–10th) and should help any anglers looking for information on fishing Rock Creek in the late summer and early fall.

The first notable portion of Rock Creek that you will come to is called the Valley of the Moon. This portion of the river begins halfway between mile marker 1 and 2 and is on a portion of the road that is still paved. The creek braids itself across this beautiful valley floor, and there

are even a few small waterfalls dotting the landscape, where diverted water seeps from shallow ponds and grassy flats. There is plenty of space to get away from any other anglers you might find, but parking is somewhat limited, so you have to be willing to walk and explore a bit here. The wading areas are probably the easiest of the ones highlighted in this report. There are a lot of uniform rocks and river banks, so the fish are spread out around the various pools formed by turns, confluences, and logjams in the creek.

In terms of fly selection and technique, the Valley of the Moon area is well-suited for a classic upstream dry fly approach. Adams and Purple Haze flies (sizes 14 to 18) dead-drifted in an incremental approach from the tail of a pool to the head of it will be most effective. If you see fish that will not rise to your fly, downsize or add a small soft hackle underneath. The fish here are small but abundant, and, to their credit, they never give up. They will jump and jump until you net them. Even then, they will continue to jump in the net until it is all said and done. Expect a mixture of rainbows, browns, and cutbows anywhere from 6 to 12 inches.

The next section of the creek you should look out for is called the Dalles. The Dalles are located around mile marker 14, and there are ample spaces to park in the late season when angler traffic is lower. Here, the valley and creek bottom are much narrower than in the Valley of the Moon, so the water is deeper and faster. The Dalles are most recognizable because of the rocks and boulders that you find in and around the creek bed. The rocks here range from baseball size to house size and they create tons of pockets, pools, and riffles for trout to lie in.

This is truly one of the most beautiful areas of the river; however, the wading may be difficult for those with some limited mobility. You often have to hop and climb from rock to rock to get yourself into position. Once you find a good hole, you have the option to fish it with dries, nymphs, or streamers. I would recommend nymphs and streamers for the swift and deep holes and runs, and

save the dries for calmer portions, where they won't get lost among the bubbles, splashes, and plunge pools.

The water here is a bit rougher on the surface than it is in other portions of the river, so I suggest using dry flies with distinguishable parachute posts. White and high-visibility fluorescent colors are best. Again, Adams and Purple Haze flies in size 14–18 did the trick, and there were much more October caddis present here. For caddis imitations, I like a large orange elk hair in size 14 or a Usual in size 14, again in orange. For those who tie their own flies or are out looking through bins in the fly shops for this trip, I recommend tying or buying these patterns with foam bodies or posts. The rougher waters of Rock Creek will drown a lot of heavily dubbed bodies or ones with materials that can absorb water. Without foam, you will likely go through a bottle of desiccant powder each day.

For nymphs, use heavier flies, especially varying caddis patterns. Admittedly, I dislike nymphing, so I never used them, but one friend in my company did and was very successful. He and I fished on opposite sides of the creek nearly parallel to one another as we moved upstream from hole to hole. As would be expected, nymphing was the more prolific approach, but bigger fish seemed to take the streamers. I am more of a streamer guy when it comes to underwater approach, so I threw a few different heavily weighted sculpin patterns and had good success, including a couple bull trout. The key was to throw these upstream, let them sink, and then strip downstream in eight-inch strips with two-second pauses in between. The fish rarely hit a swung fly, but the upstream approach worked well.

For this section, the fish tend to be a little bit bigger, as there is deeper water and lots of bug life to nourish them. Expect lots of smaller rainbows, nice cutthroats and cutbows, with the occasional bull trout and several brown trout mixed in. Fish here vary from seven to 15 inches.

The last section I would recommend is the biggest, and is technically a combination of two consecutive areas.

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These are the sections known as the Hogback and Morgan-Case. Both are named after the homesteads that sit on the two properties. You can see both home sites from the road, and there is parking near both. Over a mile of water lies between the two, and the scenery is fantastic. It is the quintessential Montana backdrop, with its mix of steep grassy balds and pine-covered mountains giving way to jagged pitches of loose granite covered in black lichen. Here, the valley widens once again and the creek braids itself across the valley floor. Unlike the Valley of the Moon, there are fewer braids here so the waters are bigger and the holes are too. The creek cuts its way through grassy beds, deep-cut banks, and beaches of white granite rocks that provide easy wading. There are places here where small streams diverge into Rock Creek, and these should not be overlooked by anyone looking to catch the Rock Creek Grand Slam (a brown trout, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, cutbow, bull trout, and a brook trout), as brook trout can be found here.

To get here, you must travel the rough 28 miles up Rock Creek Road, with its two steep, blind turns and potholed, washboarded surface, but let me assure you, it is worth the time and effort. And be sure to stop at the parking area at mile 27 to read about the Rock Creek microburst,

a truly fascinating weather event that took place in the area in 1989. Once there, you have plenty of trails alongside the river for easy access, and a few larger parking areas as well, all the way up to the Morgan-Case Homestead (mile 30).

Much like the Valley of the Moon, your best approach here is dry flies from the tail to the head of pools. Again, Adams, Purple Haze, and large October Caddis patterns are good go-to flies for this time of year. There are fish



everywhere here, so do not neglect what look to be flat, unproductive waters. Even in the flat water, fish hide along the banks and behind small rocks on the creek bed.

The fish here can range from eight to 17 inches, and they include some brook trout along with the usual suspects. Fair warning, the sunsets that display over the mountains here are spectacular, and when paired with a wild cutthroat in your hands and the crisp evening air slowly taking to your lungs, you just might find yourself

contemplating early retirement.

While these three sections of rock Creek will provide you ample opportunity for great fishing and incredible backdrops, don't be afraid to pull the car over and fish some of the waters in between. Some of my greatest successes on this trip were in the less-notable and off-the-beaten-path sections that most anglers overlook. Twice I found myself one fish away from a Rock Creek slam before lunch in an area in between the Hogback and the Dalles.

It is also worth mentioning that the brown trout are invasive to this waterway, so for those of you who like to have fresh fish from time to time, the little browns make quite the meal. If you're camping, be sure to keep a clean campsite, as bears are prevalent in the area. You should also seriously consider keeping a can of bear spray on your belt and practice your whistling when walking through some of the more heavily wooded areas and trails. Trust me on this.

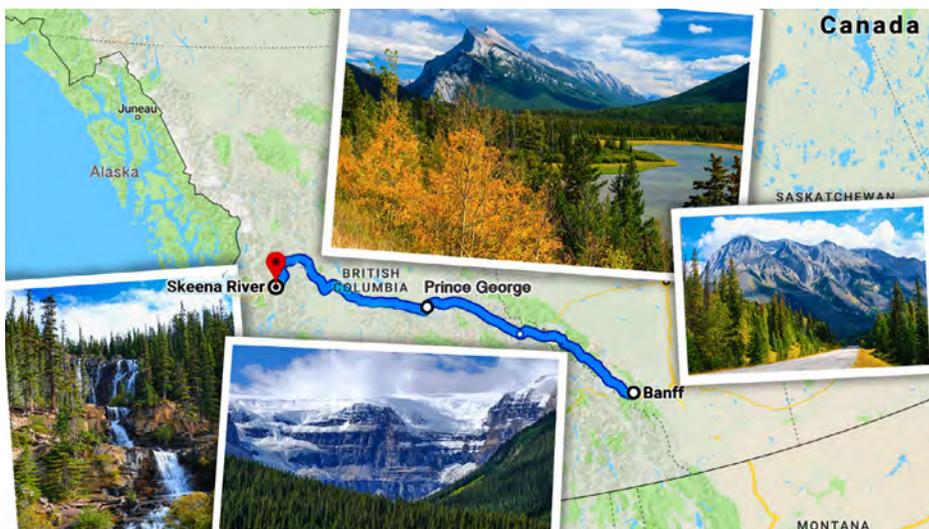
I would recommend stopping at the Rock Creek Fisherman's Mercantile & Motel (<https://www.rcmerc.com/>), a half mile after the exit onto Rock Creek Road. It is a full-service fly shop, and they have maps and information to help get you started. For housing, I would check out Trout Bums (<https://rockcreektroutbums.com/>) on mile 8 in Quigley, just upstream of the Valley of the Moon.

## Briefly Noted

### Things to Do . . . Places to Go . . . New Developments

■ Sometimes, getting there is half the battle. Other times, it seems that getting there is part of the adventure. There is something to be envied about those who put the rubber to the road and set out for destinations the old-fashioned way. For the rubber tramps out there looking for a good fishing opportunity mixed with some incredible scenery, subscriber David Lambroughton has sent us some photos and a correlating driving route that may be of interest to anyone crossing **Alberta** and **British Columbia** on their way to the Skeena River. David writes,

"In late August and early September, the annual migration of Steelhead Anglers



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to the Skeena River begins in earnest, and I've done the normal drive—up Highway 97 through Kamloops, Williams Lake, and through Prince George by way of Highway 16—countless times. This past year, I decided to do it a bit differently.

“This year, I started from the Banff/Lake Louise area and headed up Highway 93 past the Columbia Ice Fields to Jasper, past Mt. Robson—the highest peak in the B.C. Rockies—and then west on Highway 16 all the way through Prince George and on to the Skeena River. It's a long 14-hour drive from Banff to the Skeena (1,234 km), but it's an easy drive, on new, perfect pavement most of the entire way. You can easily get past Prince George in one day, even if you stop for numerous photos, as I did.

“This route is staggeringly beautiful. It's one of the best collections of snow-capped peaks and glaciers in the world, and September is such a fine month for it.

“For those driving from Alberta-Montana-Idaho-Colorado-etcetera, it would also be the quickest. So, don't miss this route if you have the chance.

“I've been fortunate to see many of the famous mountain ranges around the world, and I think driving up the spine of the Canadian Rockies might just top them all.

“A detailed step-by-step of this route can be found at <https://goo.gl/maps/91sbgQAKnLs>.”

•••••

■ I enjoy meeting *The Angling Report* subscribers and learning what has driven them to this sport and a lifestyle that involves or even revolves around pursuing fish. I often receive calls and emails from subscribers regarding the newsletter. Most times, the conversation quickly turns from business to fishing, and with each subscriber I speak to, it seems more and more clear that no two are alike. There are doctors, professors, small-business owners, and maybe titans of industry. Some are retired and living the kind of lifestyle that most anglers can only dream about. And in talking with some of you, I have even learned of other hobbies or hidden talents that go beyond fishing.

That's exactly how it went with subscriber David Lambroughton, whose

recommended route to the Skeena River appears just above. David, as you may recall, has provided many great reports for us in the past, and especially has provided lots of great information regarding his favorite location, New Zealand. Even last month, he provided us with a great insider's look at a DIY trip to Ireland & the U.K. (See the September 2018 issue, page 6). Well, aside from being a regular reporter for *The Angling Report*, David is also a very talented photographer (Check out some of David's photos for the September report at [www.anglingreport.com/david-lambroughton](http://www.anglingreport.com/david-lambroughton)).

Every year, David releases a new fly-fishing calendar with a collection of information, tips, and incredible photos



from his adventures. He sent me a copy of his new 2019 calendar series, titled *Fly Fishing Dreams*, and it is quite an impressive collection of photos, I must say.

Each page of this calendar contains beautiful photos, a brief description on the location, and a picture of a trout worthy of your most daring daydreams. It has images from all over, including British Columbia, Montana, New Zealand, Oregon, and more. This calendar, aside from making a great gift idea, will look great in your office, man cave, or she shed.

If you'd like a copy for yourself or a friend, the cost for the *Fly Fishing Dreams* 2019 calendar is a mere \$18 a piece, or \$9 a piece for orders of 6 or more. Orders come with free gift/ mailing envelopes, if

requested.

If you're interested in purchasing a calendar, contact David at [davidlambroughton@telus.net](mailto:davidlambroughton@telus.net).

Who knows what other hidden talents our subscribers have. Only time will tell.—*Seth Fields*

•••••

■ David Bryer recently sent us this report from a trip he took in August up to the US/Canadian border where the twin cities of Sault Ste. Marie (pronounced Soo-Saint-Marie), Michigan and Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, meet. Between the two lies the St. Marys River, a large river that connects Lake Superior to Lake Huron and divides Michigan's Upper Peninsula from the Canadian province of Ontario. This waterway is a major shipping route, complete with a large set of locks called the Soo Locks. The St. Marys River is also home to four salmon species, including the Atlantic salmon—the most revered of all fish that call this river home. That's where David's story begins:

“We flew into Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, by way of the Chippewa County International Airport and hired a cab to take us across the border/river to Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. There are many hotels to choose from, and all are on or within walking distance to the water. The town is quaint and very walkable, with a boardwalk along the water.

“John Giuliani was our guide for two days of Atlantic salmon fly-fishing on the St. Marys River. He has over 25 years of experience fishing, and he targets each species of salmon here, including Atlantic salmon and steelhead. At \$390 US per day for two people, we felt it was very reasonable.

“For a little back story: The University of Sault Ste. Marie has a marine biology department that raises and releases Atlantic salmon to restore the once indigenous salmon to the river and Lake Superior. John is passionate and very involved in the Atlantic salmon restoration project, making him a very knowledgeable guide. He was also extremely helpful with the logistics in setting up our trip and even transported us to and from the boat and the rapids.

“We used two different methods to

fly-fish for Atlantics, allowing a greater chance of success. One method was good, old-fashioned wading in the rapids. Historically, the rapids have been an important place for the First Nations of Canada and Native Americans. This is where they came for generations to harvest whitefish and salmon.

“In the rapids we cast to the runs and pools with single or two-handed 7- or 8-weight rods. John showed us how to swing our fly to cover the most water. The time of year will determine the variety of fish found in these large rapids, which are three-quarters of a mile long and a third of a mile wide.

“The second method we used is the Norwegian method called “harling,” a method similar to trolling. This was the method we used most. We fished from the boat in a flat area of the river where a stream dumped in and hydropower

generators put a lot of oxygen into the water. The smelt gather in this area and the salmon chase them to the surface. When the river boils enough with salmon and baitfish, you cast right in the middle of the action.

“We used the harling method where John had four fly rods with two flies each (smelt patterns) that would go down about eight to 10 feet. We had our flies on the line trailing about 40 yards behind the boat just under the surface. This method is how I landed two Atlantic salmon weighing about 10 and 15 pounds and one six-pound steelhead.

“My wife, Eileen, caught a six-pound Atlantic salmon and lost one that may have reached the 20-pound mark. That one took us down river and then back up river and then wrapped the line around some snags on the bottom! These fish are powerful, and the fight can be addictive!

“Our day started at dawn and we fished two four-hour sessions per day, with a break in between. After four hours of fishing in the morning we would return to the hotel to have breakfast. Afterward, we relaxed, toured around the city, and ate dinner at one of the restaurants downtown or on the river. Lots of great views and great food, too. We were then picked up at the hotel around 5:30 p.m., and we fished until dark. The drive was only 10 minutes to the rapids or the marina where the boat was. We waded the rapids only one evening. That night, we did not catch anything, but a fisherman upstream from us landed a six-pound Atlantic salmon with a Spey rod.

“I would highly recommend this trip. John is a great guide and fun to be with. You can find more information about John Giuliani’s guide service at <https://www.stmarysrapidsguiding.com/home>.”

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• OUTFITTER CRITIQUES •

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## The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

*This section of The Angling Report is based entirely on subscriber-written Fishing Trip Report Forms. Our policy on these forms is to publish excerpts in the newsletter of Angler Network Forms as received, without censorship. Agents, guides, lodge operators, and/or outfitters who disagree with any comments in this section are free to submit a rebuttal. As a subscriber, you can help extend the reach of this program by filing a Fishing Trip Report Form yourself. You will find one online at [www.anglingreport.com](http://www.anglingreport.com), and clicking on File a Trip Report.*

■ Subscriber Steve Chies sends us this brief report about his experience fishing at Three Rivers Ranch in Warm River, **Idaho**. This family-owned establishment has received rave reviews in the past from our subscribers, as well as the likes of Orvis—who dubbed Three Rivers Ranch the very first Orvis-endorsed lodge in the country. Steve just returned from a trip to Warm River at the beginning of September, and he had this to say about it:

“This is a world-class trout fishery, and with so many available rivers nearby, it’s also a world-class location. We have a group of anglers that have fished together for over 36 years, all across the United States and Canada, and Three Rivers Ranch is the only lodge that we return to again and again.

“The options for fishing in the Warm River area are vast, including

about 30 beats in the six or so rivers and lakes in the area. They include the Henry’s Fork, the South Fork of the Snake, the Warm River, Robinson Creek, the Teton River, the Madison, Bitch Creek, the Firehole, and the Yellowstone River, to name a few.

“On this trip, we fished the upper Teton, middle Teton (near the former dam site), and the Henry’s Fork (twice) from Warm River to the dam and below. All of these stretches proved to have excellent fishing. The fishing on the Henry’s Fork and Teton was with a dry and dropper setup, though most of the fish were caught with the nymph. There was some hopper action, but limited.

“The Henry’s Fork was mainly rainbows and some browns, while the upper Teton was brookies, cutties, hybrids, and rainbows. The middle

Teton was mostly cutthroats, with the occasional hybrid. We fished with 4-, 5-, or 6-weight rods. On our trip three years ago (August time frame), it was pretty much dry fly fishing only. The number of hook-ups was incredible, with 30-fish days not being uncommon.

“Most of the fishing is done while floating in boats, but there are options for wading, including Robinson Creek, which runs thru the property (six miles of access) and the Warm River immediately next to the lodge. I understand that they also have an overnight trip to the South Fork, with tents, cots, sleeping bags, and so on.

“In a prior visit, we fished the South Fork of the Snake and other sections of both the Teton and the Henry’s Fork with similar results. On this trip, another group at the lodge fished the Henry’s Fork Lake and did

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very well, catching large fish often reaching more than 24 inches in length.

“Our daily schedule started with coffee at 6:30, followed by a 7:30 breakfast made to order. Then we would connect with our guides around 8:00 to come up with a plan. We would head out to the river and usually get started around 9–10, depending on the destination. We fished until 4 or 4:30 p.m., with a short lunch break around noon (usually a sandwich on the riverside). Then it was back to the ranch, where we would get cleaned up for a 7:30 meal.

“The guides here are very knowledgeable and highly skilled. Another highlight of the lodge, in addition to the staff and fishing, is the excellent culinary experience. They

have great choices in meals and service.

“The housing at the ranch is a series of cabins with a variety of bedrooms. We stayed in the Robinson Unit, which is a large, four-bedroom



house, with bathrooms for each of the four rooms, a full kitchen, and large living area. There is a deck attached and a wader room for changing and gear storage. I did not see the other cabins, but I understand there are one-

and two-bed units. All are a short walk to the main building, which houses the dining room, bar and lounge area, and food service preparation. The ranch also has a separate full-service fly shop. In addition, they operate a number of freestanding fly shops in Idaho.

“While the cost of the trip for four days of fishing is high (\$6,000), I believe it is a good value for the lodging, food, fishing, and location. The owner/host, Lonnie Allen and her family have been on the property as the original homesteaders. Lonnie is a wonderful host and very focused on hospitality. Our group highly recommends this lodge.”

*Postscript:* You can find more information on the Three Rivers Ranch at <https://www.threeriversranch.com/>.

## Best of the Best

*Our readers are some of the most well-traveled, and knowledge fishermen and women on the planet. From distant island lodges to backcountry beats long forgotten by the world, you have fished it, and then some. Here, in the Best of the Best section, we publish your responses to questions about some of the memorable experiences that have stood out to you in your travels. Subscribers have their chance to answer these questions and more for our monthly segment. If you would like to contribute to this month's set of questionnaire or the upcoming issue, email [seth.fields@morris.com](mailto:seth.fields@morris.com) and also be on the lookout for new feedback requests sent to your subscription email.*

### Best guide you've fished with?

“The two best guides I've ever fished with are Rob Nicholas, of Cornwall, Connecticut ([www.housatonicanglers.com](http://www.housatonicanglers.com)), and Jenny West of Hamilton, Montana ([www.fishgwest.com](http://www.fishgwest.com)).

“Rob's home streams are the Farmington and Housatonic rivers, and Jenny's home stream is the Bitterroot, in southwestern Montana.

“Why do I recommend them? Both are incredibly knowledgeable about fly fishing in general and even more so about their home waters, both are extremely helpful and encouraging, and they are simply great people with whom to spend time with.”—*Andrew H. French*

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“The best saltwater guides I have ever fished with are now retired, but they include Bubby Rodriguez, who was the father of all Louisiana saltwater flyfishing, and Gary Taylor from Slidell, who was Lefty Kreh's favorite in Louisiana. Stanley Glington at NRP, and Paul Pinder at Abaco

Lodge are the best bonefish guides I have ever had the pleasure of fishing with. Lincoln Westby is the best permit guide I have fished with.”—*John Schneider*

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“Best guide I've fished with is Steve Huff—no question.”—*Robert Sewell*

### Best meal at a lodge?

“The July 4th banquet at Alaska West: king crab, prime rib, grilled lamb chops, grilled corn on cob, potatoes au gratin, mashed cauliflower with some fancy sauce, deviled eggs, sourdough loaf, Caesar salad, teriyaki sockeye, and some fancy desert with a fancy name that forced me to have seconds and thirds.”—*Bryan Whiting*

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“Port Sulfur, LA area at several places. Oysters on the half shell, blackened cobia and reds, and all the different great deserts.”—*Rick Heim*

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“In the summer of 2017, I fished Kulik Lodge, which is the oldest

fly-out lodge in Alaska and sits in the wilderness of Katmai National Park. I just so happened to be there on Thursday night....They served Thanksgiving dinner. Apparently they serve turkey, ham, dressing, and all the fixings each Thursday during the season. The Thanksgiving meal is among many reasons—the fishing, the beauty, the people, the lodge—to visit Kulik.”—*Russ Lumpkin*

### Destination with the most beautiful scenery?

“At the bottom of the Seven Mile Hole trail in the canyon of Yellowstone.”—*Bryan Whiting*

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“Nothing compares to British Columbia's Dean River. It flows through some of the most rugged and remote turf on the planet with towering mountains overhead and clear blue water out in front. That steelhead swim there doesn't hurt a bit. Spend a week along the banks of this river and you'll never want to come back.”—*Greg Thomas*

WHERE ARE YOU FISHING NEXT?



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