



AUSTIN FLY FISHERS

June 2021
Volume 23, Issue 6



Amethyst Guerrero Orr with trout caught at
Yellow Stone National Park
article on Page 5



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Charter Club

President's Message by David Bush

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I'm pleased to announce that we will be holding our regular monthly meeting in person again! This week on Thursday, June 17, we'll meet outdoors at the Northwest Recreation Center, 2913 Northland Dr., and will get started around 6:00 pm and wrap up by dark. No worries if you can't arrive by 6:00...just come when you can. Since the city has not yet opened park facilities, it might be wise to make a pit stop before you get there.

We haven't been able to meet in-person for more than a year, so this meeting will be a social gathering to get to know other members if you're new to the club, or to catch up with old friends if you've been a member for a while. We'll have plenty of ice-cold beverages to help battle the heat, and if you want to get off your feet, be sure to bring a comfortable chair and a koozie.

To keep things interesting, there will be casting activities for those who would like to participate. If you're a new fly fisher learning to cast or just want to give the sport a try, we'll have experienced fly casters available to help you take the next step. For those who are feeling a bit more confident where casting is concerned or just want to see how they're progressing, we'll have a few casting challenges set up. Feel free to bring a rigged rod if you'd like to join in the fun and please leave the hooks at home...we'll have yarn available for safe casting if you need it.

Another good reason to attend the meeting is that we will have a silent auction for a really nice 5-weight Echo 4-piece rod, Ross reel, and floating line to benefit SKIFF. This sweet-casting outfit is one of several that were donated to the club during the pandemic by a generous lady from Sun City who had learned about SKIFF and knew her late husband would appreciate his gear benefitting the youngsters who participate in this terrific program. The rod will be rigged and ready to try out, so come give it a cast and enter your bid.

I'm really looking forward to seeing everyone on Thursday, so put the event on your calendar, bring a chair, a koozie, a rod, and your best pandemic fishing stories to share.

See you at the meeting!

Dave



Financial Report

by Jim Robinson

5/1/2021 to 5/31/2021

Begin Bal. Checking	\$20,620.24
Income:	
Total Income	\$00.00
Disbursements	
Total Disbursements	\$00.00
Net	\$00.00
Unencumbered:	\$12,943.89
Encumbered Funds:	
Casting for Recovery	\$2,365.52
SKIFF	\$5,310.83
Ending Bal-Checking	\$20,620.24

SKIFF Program by Bob Maindelle

Dear Friends of S.K.I.F.F.,

SKIFF' During the month of May I conducted two SKIFF trips.

On May 1st, I was joined by 15-year-old Matthew Merchant of Copperas Cove. Matthew's dad, US Army Captain Courtney Merchant, is currently separated from his family attending a course qualifying him to become a hospital chaplain. He has been away from his family for over a year's time now.

Following Chaplain Merchant's graduation later this month up in Washington, the entire family will relocate from Fort Hood to Fort Gordon, Georgia. Having been the son of a soldier and having attended three high schools in four years, I sympathized with what Matthew and his sister, Allison, are facing.

As I arrived at lakeside and prepped for the trip, I did so in a steady, light rain. As Matthew arrived at 7:30AM, we got him into a "loaner" rainsuit, as it was still raining. It continued to rain as we made our way to our first fishing area, but then had stopped by the time we arrived. It never rained another drop for our entire 4 hours on the water.

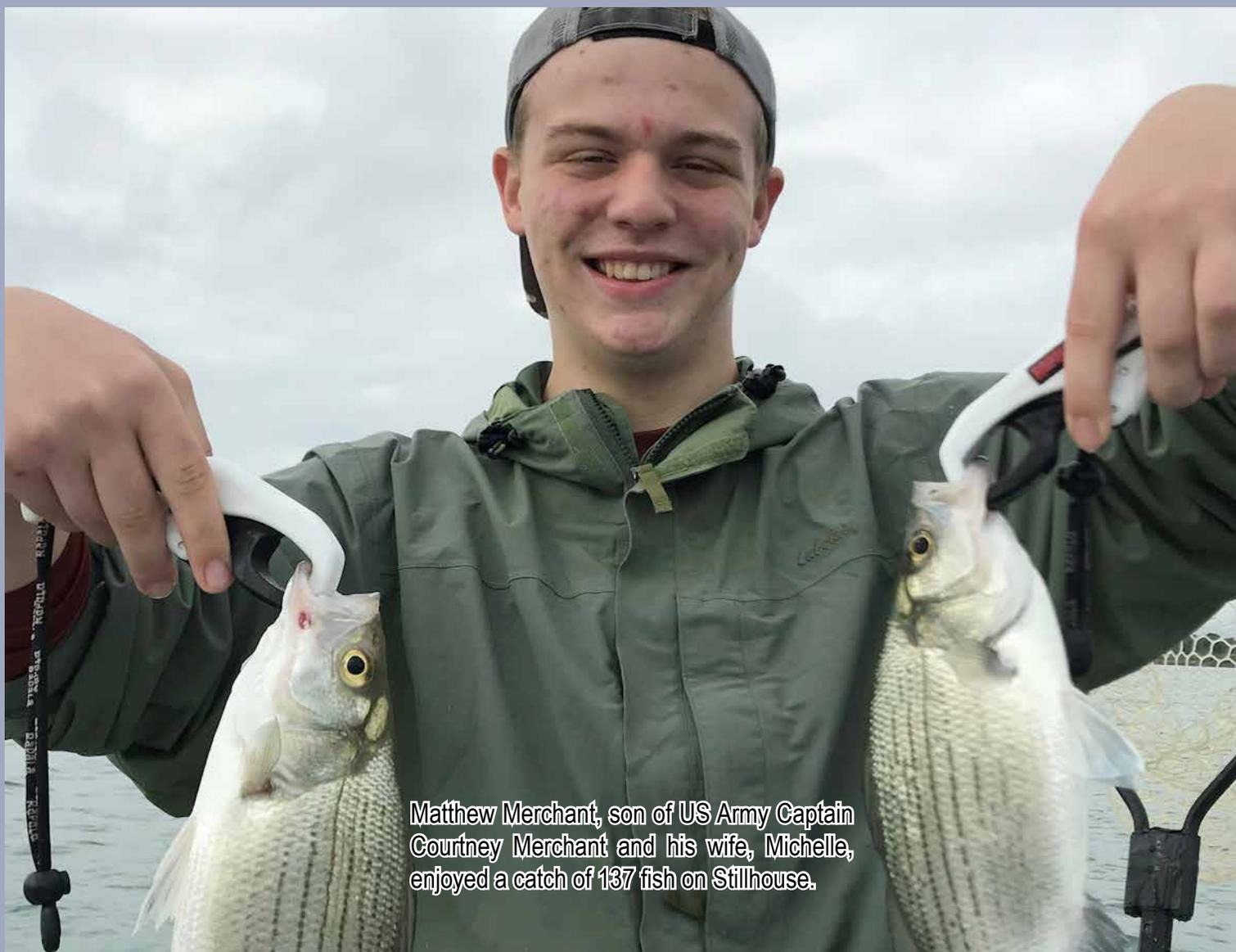
We spent an unproductive first hour flat-line trolling in shallow water because 1) it was so grey and gloomy, I felt shallow water fish would be our best option (where light was penetrating to bottom well), and 2) I suspected late-returning spawned out white bass would be around. This did not work out.

I began searching deeper and we finally put the puzzle together finding fish around the 30-foot mark. We fished 4

areas successfully, all with vertical tactics using the MAL Lure on spinning gear. Each scenario was nearly identical ... we'd spot fish on sonar holding within a foot of bottom, Spot-Lock atop them, get them stirred up by working our lures, then, once the first fish or two was hooked, the whole school in that vicinity would engage and we'd catch the fire out of them for 10-15 minutes until the flurry settled back down, tapered off, and necessitated a move.

Sonar was the key. There were no birds feeding, no bait skipping on the surface, no fish boiling, nor any other clue to the fishes' presence other than sonar signatures.

We finished up at 11:30 with 137 fish landed, 100% of which were white bass.



Matthew Merchant, son of US Army Captain Courtney Merchant and his wife, Michelle, enjoyed a catch of 137 fish on Stillhouse.

SKIFF cont.

On May 15th, I was joined by Mrs. Soo Yi and her four children, three of which were old enough to participate in the fishing. On the rods that day were 7-year-old Kaleo, 6-year-old Shalom, and 4-year-old Zech (and on snack and nap duty was 2-year-old Shiloh!).

The children's father, U.S. Army Captain Joshua Yi, has been deployed for seven months now to Poland where he serves his fellow soldiers as a chaplain there. The Yi family has been part of the military for 2 years now. They are stationed at Fort Hood and live in Copperas Cove.

Incredibly, despite juggling 4 young kids single-handedly, and making part of the drive to the launch site in the dark, Mrs. Yi arrived about 10 minutes early with the kids fully equipped and clothed as I'd specified in the pre-trip email I sent to her two days in advance.

With kids so young, experience told me we needed to "keep things moving", meaning we could not do any one tactic

in any one place for very long or else the kids would lose interest, even if we were being successful.

I broke the trip up into 3 parts over the 3.5 hours we fished. Part one involved downrigging with twin downriggers equipped with 3-armed umbrella rigs rigged with #12 and #13 Pet Spoons. We worked deep flats in open water and did well, landing 21 white bass, including a triple (one fish on each of the three lures of the umbrella rig simultaneously), six doubles, and 6 singles. The downrigging allows the kids to move about the boat while the 'riggers are working the lures, and lends itself to taking turns and making sure everyone catches about the same number of fish.

The second part of our adventure involved heading up shallow to pursue sunfish with poles and fixed-length lines. The sunfish aren't teeming in the shallows quite yet due to the cool, cloudy weather we've been having, but we man-

aged 5 longear sunfish regardless.

We closed out the trip using MAL Lures for congregated, bottom-hugging white bass caught with the aid of Garmin LiveScope, which the kids loved. They got quite excited every time a pack of red footballs (the fish signatures on the blue Garmin color palette I prefer) showed up moving left and right on the screen.

I found a nice school of white bass occupying a gentle break in about 32 feet of water, Spot-Locked on them, and got them stirred up as the MAL Lures started working their magic. We more than doubled our catch of 26 fish up to that point, taking our tally to 56 fish in our final 40 minutes on the water.

By 10:30 both the kids and the fish were wearing out, so, we headed back to the dock.

Thank you for the part you played in introducing these kids to the outdoors while their fathers are away.



In front, from left: Shalom, Zech, and Kaleo Yi, chaperoned by their mom, Soo Yi, on today's SKIFF trip provided free of charge to military kids separated from their parents by military duty. Not shown is 2-year-old Shiloh, who was napping soundly in the bow.

Yellow Stone National Park by Austin Orr

In January of 2020, there was a lot we didn't yet know. We didn't yet have much inkling of the changes that would soon sweep the globe. However, there was one thing I was absolutely sure of - I needed mountains, and pine trees, and big trout on hoppers. I was already planning for August, and I was planning for Yellowstone. For those keeping score at home, that's a solid 7 months of planning, and I intended to use every available minute.

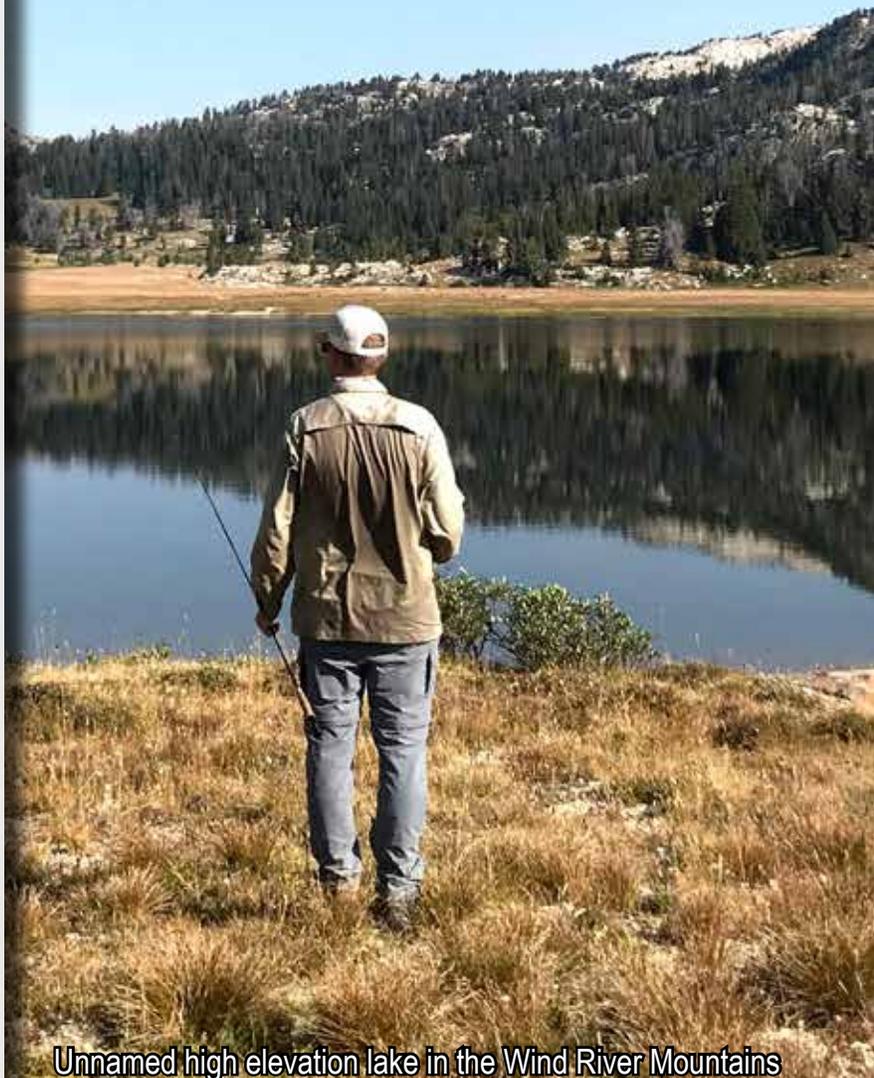
I hoped that our Yellowstone visit might be something of a crown jewel in a much longer trip, as my wife had suggested that we should do a long hike - something in the magnitude of 5 or 6 nights out on the trail. We would backpack through a broad swath of the Wind River wilderness, ending up with 60 miles over 6 days of hiking. It was this pack trip that took up the majority of my planning time - I'd say that a solid two thirds of my effort went towards making sure I was confident we weren't going to get lost and die. Of course, a not-small part of that was spent ascertaining we were taking trails that meandered along or near bodies of water that happened to hold trout. Priorities, you know? Suffice to say, we ate well (brook trout are delicious) and had one of the most incredible adventures of our lives. A mountain was summited, bull moose narrowly avoided, a tent was broken, and our marriage was strengthened. Ha! Didn't expect that last part, eh?

If you're like me, the main thing you need to know about Yellowstone National Park (YNP) is a big ol' chunk of conifer-and-trout infested real estate. Unfortunately, it seems like other folks have heard about the place as well, but no matter. My usual strategy is to simply walk away from the crowds. In an area like Yellowstone that's not always as effective as other national parks, and there are the bears (and moose!) to consider, but it still worked well enough.

Yellowstone cutthroat have been on my bucket list for a long time; I grew up reading tales about their willingness to eat a dry fly or hopper. My wife had just enough experience with fishing to know that she loved a topwater eat, and I fully intended to provide that experience to her via a big cuttie.

How did I get to that point? I spent an incredible amount of time reading everything I could get my eyes on regarding fishing in and around the Yellowstone region. I tried to understand the dynamics of the local water bodies, how they reacted to different conditions (rain, drought) and the behavior of their fish populations and response to fishing pressure. I even shook down a fellow Austin Fly Fisher - Juan was very gracious in answering my questions and pointed me towards several good resources.

I also tried to get up to speed on the local regulations, which can be found on the [YNP website](#). Summary: Fishing is allowed from the last weekend in May to the first Saturday in November each year. Legal hours are from dawn



Unnamed high elevation lake in the Wind River Mountains

Yellowstone National Park cont.

to dusk, and no native fish may be harvested anywhere inside the park. In some water bodies, non-native fish must be killed and harvested or returned to the water dead. We needed a YNP fishing permit for the trip, which at the time was \$40 per person for a 3 day permit.

Now that I had an idea about the basic framework, I needed to get the answer to three basic questions:

Where would we fish?

What would we eat?

Where would we sleep?

In that order, because priorities. We had the advantage of not needing much in the way of accommodations. We were sleeping in the back of the same vehicle we were traveling in (a Honda CRV) and carrying all our gear and provisions with us.

Basic gear list:

3 five weight rods

1 six weight

2 two-piece rod tubes

2 4 piece rod tubes

12 9ft 5x tapered trout leaders

5 boxes of trout flies

Spools of mono tippet 3-6x

Hemostats

Line nippers

Floatant

Hip pack

Wading boots (no felt bottoms) that you're comfortable hiking around in

Hat

Sun glasses

Earth-tone fishing shirt and pants

Sun protection (buff, sun block, etc)

In the car, I carried a wide variety of trout patterns to cover every eventuality, with a focus on hoppers of different sizes and colors. I tied all my own hoppers in order to be able to offer something that looked a bit different than the fish were used to seeing. All the research I had done indicated that after people started throwing hoppers, usually in June or July, the fish wised up pretty quickly. I brought hopper patterns tied in a variety of colors on the abdomen - gold, orange, pink, tan, brown - and a variety of sizes from 12-6. As a fallback, I also tied or purchased a variety of ant patterns which I'd heard did well when the fish were wary of hoppers.

Rigging:

My goal was to catch fish on hoppers, so the majority of the time that's what I lead with. My general strategy was simple - a single hopper tied on the end of a 9-12 foot leader, sightcast or thrown to likely locations. I didn't use a hopper-dropper setup in Yellowstone, although I'm sure it would have been successful. When I felt like the hopper wasn't working, I went smaller, swapping to an ant or mayfly. I ended up focusing our efforts on three of the most



Lamar River

Yellowstone National Park cont.

highly-pressured pieces of water in the park, so the adjustments we made had to match that reality.

Water:

Soda Butte Creek and the Lamar River are perhaps the most-fished waters in the entirety of the YNP. They're easily accessible from the road and you're almost certain to encounter several of your fellow fly anglers during any trip there. Slough Creek is equally famous but harder to get to, requiring miles of walking to get to the most storied flatwater sections far upstream.

Our willingness to hike definitely helped us here - I fished Soda Butte first, getting dropped off from the road by my wife who wanted to check out some of the cool geological formations nearby. This allowed me to hike out to a spot that was midway between two park-and-walk locations, which I felt gave me the best chance for hitting relatively rested water. My hunch was right, and I was able to land 4 yellowstone cutthroat up to 18 inches before an angler from upstream and two anglers from downstream converged on my location. The stream itself is not large - maybe 15 feet across at the largest, with a depth usually measured in inches - and there's just not much room for the many, many anglers. After my encounter with these two groups I bid my goodbyes to the Soda Butte and looked forward to finding areas that required a bit more effort to get to. We slept outside the park that night, in Montana, nearby signs with warnings like BEAR AREA: NO TENT CAMPING. HARD-SIDED CAMPERS ONLY. So, you're saying the bears here like tent-wrapped snacks then. Got it. Hotel Honda for us.

Next up was the Lamar, which nestles into the river valley that bears its name and a few thousand roaming bison. You know what people never talk about when they talk about fishing in YNP? The noise. The back-and-forth cacophony between bison there was unique in all the areas that I have fished. It certainly made for thoughtful fishing, reflecting on how the plains must have sounded at one time and how things used to be.

Luckily for me, the Lamar also holds good numbers of cutthroat and I was excited to help my wife get in on the action. She had done quite a bit of casting practice in the lead-up to the trip and that would be key as the breeze kicked in during the afternoon. Keeping an eye out to avoid any bison surprises, we hiked about a half mile from the road and started working our way down a section of river that looked fresh. The total lack of fish in the first two spots didn't dissuade me - my research had indicated that was normal for the Lamar and we kept moving. I had my wife fishing in a classic upstream manner, cherry-picking soft pockets just off the main current. The first fish surprised both of us with both size and speed, snatching the hopper and spitting it out before she could even move. It wasn't long until she was able to find the next fish, sitting in a similar spot a few yards further up the same run. The rippled surface of the water made it harder for the trout to inspect her hopper pat-



Slough Creek

Yellowstone National Park cont.

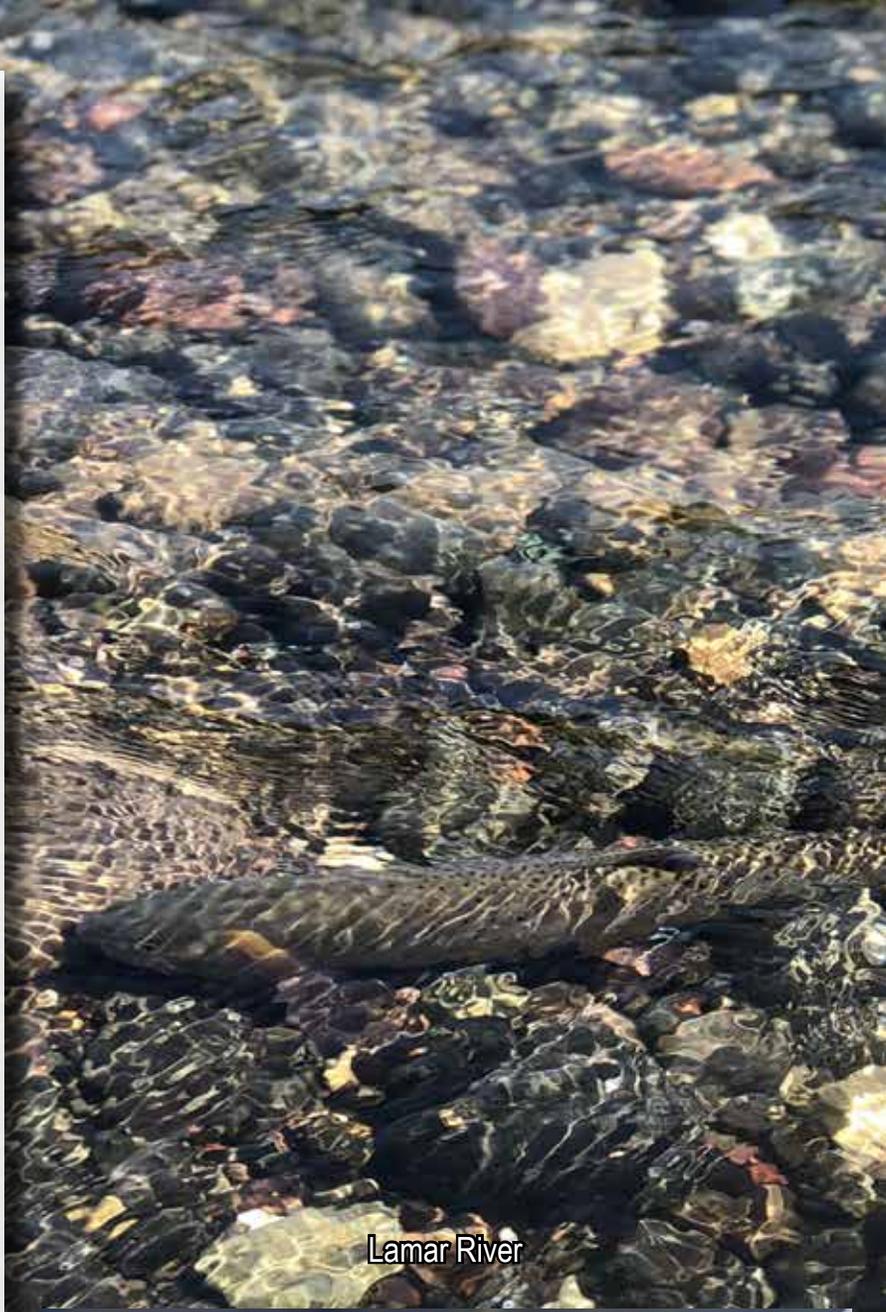
tern and led to big, confident eats. Plenty of laughter and highfives were exchanged with each trout I scooped into the net. The afternoon concluded with a meandering walk back to the car and a joint decision to head back over the Montana line to Cooke City, where they make a pretty great pizza at the Miner's Saloon. It's important to celebrate appropriately.

The next day, we headed to the infamous Slough Creek, known for its big, picky cutthroat and spring creek conditions. The idea was to camp at the reservations-only camp site that we'd managed to secure over the phone from the irritable (and irritating) camp reservation person. We'd hike in, fish Slough Creek, spend the night in a tent under the Wyoming stars (with a chance to hopefully hear some wolves howling), and hike back out the following afternoon.

I awoke several times during the night to the raucous howling of... coyotes. Lots of them, from the sounds of things. We set off from camp just after sunrise to see if we could tempt the wary fish before the sun got high. I was determined to give my wife an opportunity to sight cast to a big trout. Sneaking down the creek bank on the well-worn angler trail, I saw few fish of any kind for quite a while until stumbling on a deep hole full of dark silhouettes. I managed one fish after a slow crawl to the edge and a dapped hopper fooled the first one. After that, they all developed lockjaw and we moved on. At this point I happened to look up and see a massive bison bull making his slow way towards us to cross the creek - always keep your wits about you out there.

Glass-clear water with nary a ripple on it made for careful stalks and long casts with light tippet. My wife was focused on a particular bank where fish were more active, cruising up and down the slow current. This was the first time my wife had been introduced to highly technical fishing, but she did well to tolerate my coaching. I watched the trout's behavior while it regarded the fly and refused, insisting on switching flies each time this happened. It was nearly noon at this point, and the streamside grasses rustled with a light breeze. I had two rods and would constantly be tying on a new fly while she was trying out the new offering. Eventually she got snagged in some bushes, and I handed off the other rod while working the snag loose. She worked her way upstream a few yards and all I heard was the 'ssss!' sound of line coming tight and a whispered "Yes!". Of COURSE I missed the moment! Netted, photographed and released, that fish was the icing on the top of a fantastic adventure through some wild (and not so wild) country.

Although we'd only caught two fish in the half day of fishing, the satisfaction we felt was well worth it. We went back to camp, packed up, and started the long journey home.



Lamar River



Amethyst's first Yellowstone Cutthroat

Yellowstone National Park cont.



Outings by Juan Shepperd

Mother Nature flexed her muscles during recent AFF outings. May is traditionally the wettest month in Austin. This May ranked as the fourth wettest month in history according to the National Weather Service. Heavy downpour the day before and of the May outing to Long's Fish Camp on the Llano River wrecked havoc. Wild winds had a similar effect in Montana in June, diverting my flight to Bozeman and forcing us to land in Missoula. I hope you have been able to wrestle a few good days to fish.

That pretty much sums up my fishing recently. As a reminder, club meetings are free. Club outings are limited to members. Unofficial club outings are open to anyone. I want to help plan trips you want to join. If you have ideas, suggestions, or want to lead an outing, let me know. I am happy to work with you and/or step aside and let you lead. Help is always appreciated. If you're interested in our Yellowstone trip, I'll share a few details. If not, skip to the end.

Since I was gone earlier this month, and since this weekend is Father's Day, I do not have an outing planned this month. I encourage you to spend time with your family, and if possible fish.

I will be out of town next month. If you are interested in hosting an outing, I can help. Shoot me a note.

Thanks.

Juan Shepperd
AFF Outings Coordinator

Club Sponsors

The following individuals who made presentations to our club in 2017/2019. Please follow the links to get more information on the services they provide. You won't be disappointed.

Marcus Rodriguez – <http://livingwatersflyfishing.com/> Central Texas Guide

Capt. Billy Trimble – <http://trimbleflyfishing.com/> Fly Fishing Rockport/Texas Coastal Bend

Chris Johnson – <http://livingwatersflyfishing.com/> Living Waters Fly Shop and Central Texas Guide

Pat Dorsey – <http://www.bluequillangler.com/> Fly Fishing Colorado

Capt. Scott Hamilton – <http://www.flyfishingextremes.com/> Fly Fishing Florida's Atlantic Coast

Capt. Eric Glass – <http://www.captainericglass.com/> Fly Fishing South Padre Island

Kevin Stubbs – <http://www.expedition-outfitters.net/> Fly Fishing the Devils River

Kevin Hutchison – <http://hillcountryflyfishers.com/> Fly Fishing the Hill Country

Capt. Steve Soulé – <http://www.theshallowist.com/index.asp> Fly Fishing Galveston

Jeff Davis – <http://allwaterguides.com/jeff-davis/> Fly Fishing the lower Colorado River

Jud Cole – <http://centraltexasflyfishing.com/> Central Texas and Colorado

Capt. Rus Schwausch – <http://www.epicanglingadventure.com/> Fly Fishing Southwest Alaska

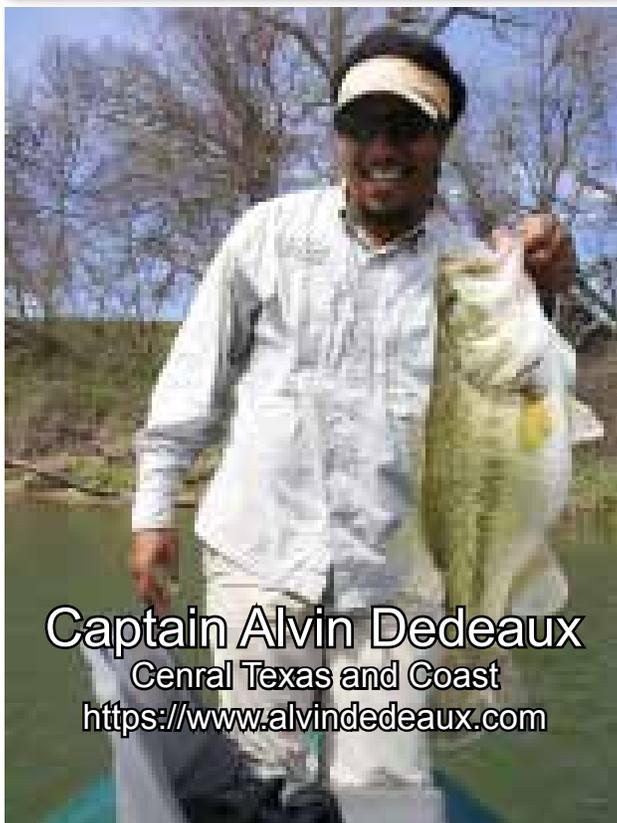
Nick Streit – <https://taosflyshop.com/flyguide/main> New Mexico and Southern Colorado

Capt. Randy and Truette Cawfield – <http://www.lagunamadre.net/styled-33/index.html>

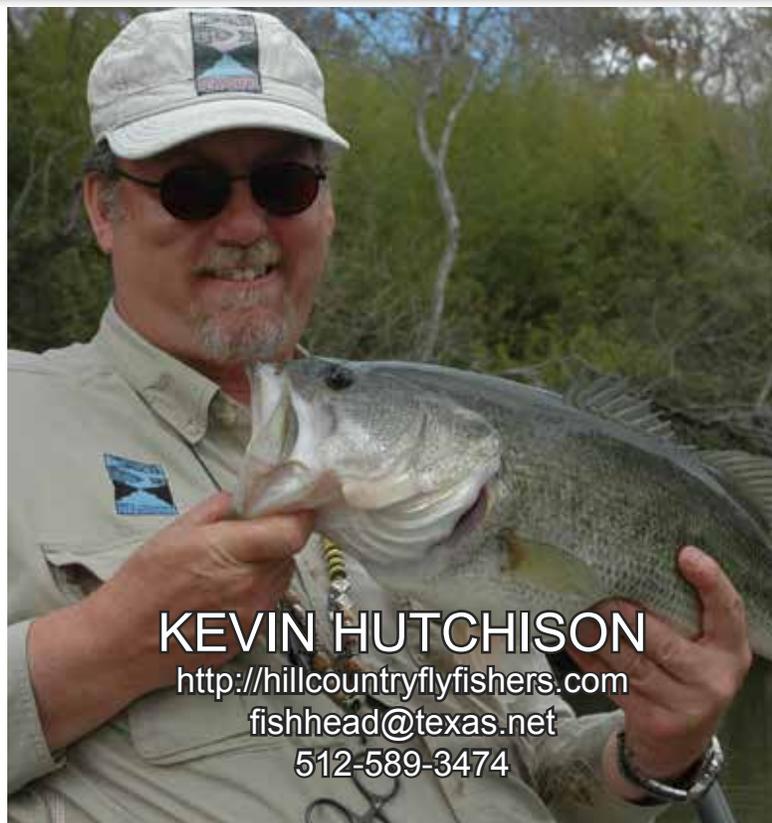
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Capt. Scott Hamilton
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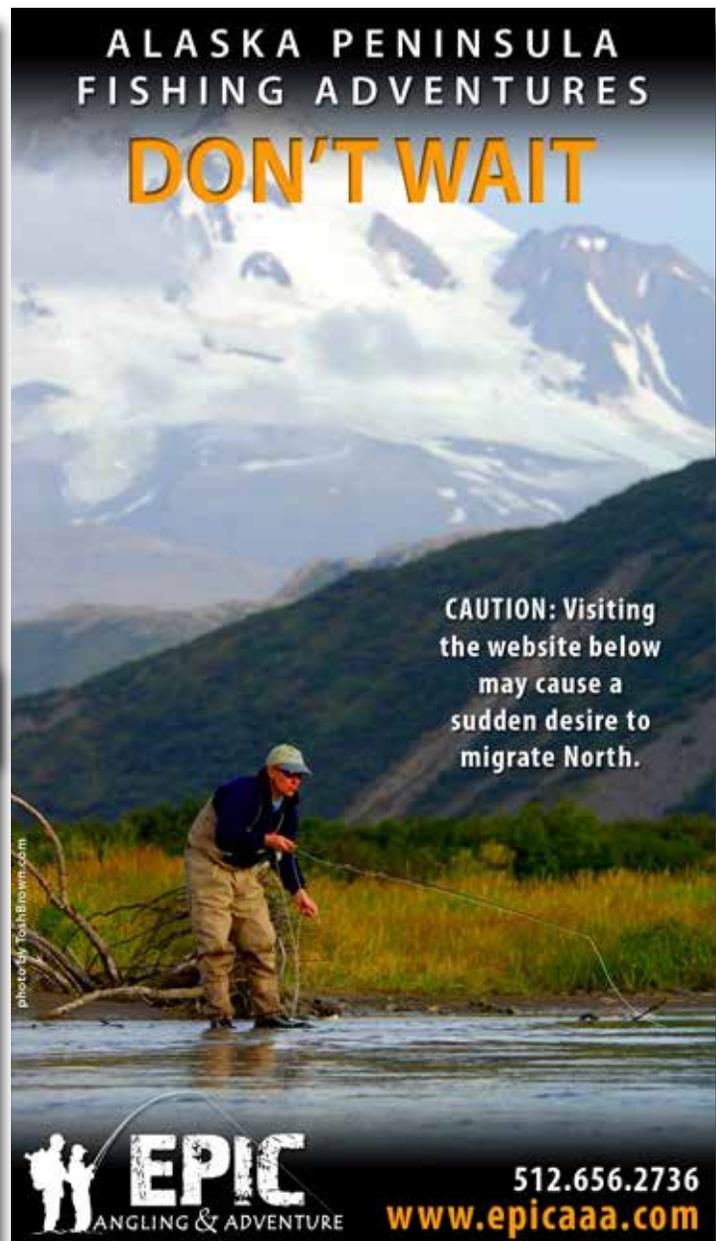
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