

FISHING THE ROGUE—By Zane Grey

THE happiest lot of any angler would be to live somewhere along the banks of the Rogue River, most beautiful stream of Oregon. Then, if he kept close watch on conditions, he could be ready on the spot when the run of steelhead began.

This peculiar and little-studied trout runs up streams and rivers flowing into the Pacific, all the way from Northern California to British Columbia. During their run, which occurs at varying seasons according to locality, the steelhead are caught in abundance, on bait, salmon eggs, spinners and spoons. But so far as I can learn they will rise to a fly in only two rivers, the Eel and the Rogue, particularly the latter. The Rogue is probably the outlet of Crater Lake, and is the coldest, swiftest, deepest stream I ever fished.

The singular difference in steelhead of different localities is probably a matter of water. The steelhead that runs up the Klamath, which is a stream of rather warm yellow muggy water, is less brilliantly colored than the Rogue steelhead and certainly not to be compared with him as a game fish. Many anglers claim that rainbow trout and steelhead trout are one and the same species. My own theory is that the rainbow is a steelhead which cannot get to the sea. He is landlocked. And a steelhead is a rainbow that lives in the salt water and at the chosen season runs up fresh-water streams to spawn.

Once the whole western part of the continent was submerged. As the land became more and more elevated through the upward thrust of the earth the salt water receded, landlocking fish in lakes and streams. The rainbow might be a species that survived.

The relation of the two fish has never been satisfactorily established. But one thing seems assured—to fly fishermen who know the Rogue River, the steelhead is the most wonderful of all fish.

I FIRST heard of steelhead through Mr. Lester, a salmon fisherman of long experience. He was visiting Long Key, Florida, and happened to tell me of his trip to Oregon and his adventure on the Rogue. He said he could not hold these steelhead—that when they were hooked they began to leap downstream through the rapids and had to be followed. The big ones all got away. They smashed his tackle. Now this information from a noted salmon angler was exceedingly interesting. That happened seven years ago. I made a trip to Oregon and found the Rogue beautiful beyond compare, but there appeared to be no fish in it. Three years ago R. C. and I ventured again, along about the end of June. Forked-tail trout and Chinook salmon had begun to run, but no steelhead. They were expected any time. R. C. and I could not catch even the less desirable fish that had already come. We persevered, but all to no purpose.

The following summer recorded a different story. Upon our return from Vancouver and Washington we reached

Grants Pass, Oregon, just when the run of steelhead was on. This was in September, and Lone Angler Wiborn had accompanied us. Fishermen friends we had made there assured us that we had struck it just right and were in for the sport of our lives. Fred Burnham, of California, surely one of the greatest of fly fishermen, was there; and he and several of the native experts kindly took upon themselves the burden of showing us how and where.

We had the finest of tackle, but only two fly rods in the collection that would do for steelhead. Too light! And not one of our fly reels would hold a third enough line. There were no reels of American manufacture that would do for this great fish. We had to have English reels that would hold a hundred yards of linen line besides the thirty or forty yards of casting line. These steelhead ran, we were told by men who knew them of old.

ALL our flies were too small. Number fours and sixes were used, and Royal Coachman, Professor, Brown Hackle were advised as a start. I had a very old and prized fly rod, nine and a half feet, eight ounces, that took the eye of these gentlemen anglers. Burnham had a hundred rods, but said he would cheerfully steal my treasure if I did not sleep with it. We rigged up seven-ounce rods for R. C. and Lone Angler. All this fuss and care and deliberation over a lot of fishing tackle seem to many people an evidence of narrow, finicky minds. It is nothing of the kind. It is unalloyed joy of anticipation, and half the pleasure. If anyone should claim it a remarkably expensive procedure I could not gainsay that.

Next morning we got up in the dark, had breakfast at five o'clock in a little all-night restaurant and were on the way up the river to Pierce Riffle before daylight. The morning was cool and gray. Forest fires were burning in the mountains and the fragrant odor of pine filled the air. Gradually the day broke, and when we turned off the road and ran down to the river the red of sunrise tipped the timbered peaks. A fringe of trees bordered the river and hid it from sight until we penetrated them.

The roar of swift heavy waters greeted me before I saw the long green-and-white rapid that bore the name Pierce Riffle. Upstream the broad river glided round a wooded curve and, hurrying and constricting its current, slid into a narrow channel with a mellow roar. A long flat bar of gravel led down to the water, and on the other shore the current rushed deep and strong, chafing at a rocky willow-skirted bank.

The whole reach of disturbed waters was perhaps a quarter of a mile long. Below the riffle opened out a magnificent broad stretch of river. The white water poured into it. There was a swift current and dancing waves for a hundred yards, after which the water quieted and glided smoothly on toward the curve where the river disappeared. A faint violet light glimmered over the river. Most striking of all, however, were the significant widening circles and agitated

spots of the placid surface upstream and the hard splashes in the swift current before us; and below, at the head of the big pool, the sight of many fish breaking water, frequently several at once, trout of varying size, and steelhead that showed their beautiful colors, and occasionally a huge salmon. Certain it was that, what with trying to see all this and rig my tackle at the same time, I was guilty of the oversight of failing to thread my line through at least two guides on my rod.

Lone Angler, true to his instincts, slipped off alone downstream; R. C. headed for the middle of the riffle; while Wharton led me up to the wide sweep of water where the river glided into the rapids. I had only hip boots and could not wade far out. Wharton wore waders and went in above his waist. Then he began to cast his fly, reaching fifty, sixty and even seventy feet. Out there in the middle and beyond was where the steelhead lay. Even had I been able to wade out there I could not have cast far enough. At once I saw the very high degree of skill required. My spirits and hopes suffered a shock, and straightway I felt discouraged. Nevertheless, for a while I divided my time between trying to cast my fly afar and watching Wharton at work. He claimed he was not a fine fly caster, although he could reach the distance. But that morning the steelhead were not striking. After long patient efforts he tried one of the tiny brass spinners without any better success. Eventually the sun grew hot and the fish stopped breaking and playing on the surface. R. C. and Lone Angler had found no luck. We gave up and started back to town. Wharton advised us to try it in the afternoon, from four o'clock until dark.

The day grew very hot and oppressive. The mountains appeared shrouded in smoke. Oregon was in the grip of a very severe hot dry spell of weather and was sadly in need of rain.

BY TWO o'clock we were on our way up the river, and this time we strolled beyond Pierce Riffle to see an irrigation dam, where, we had heard, salmon and steelhead congregated in great numbers and were visible. The concrete structure was indeed a fine piece of work, but we hardly more than glanced at it.

A board walk crossed the river on top of this dam. From the road, high up, we could see the fish leaping, and we ran over one another to get down on that bridge. Water was streaming through cracks in the gates. Evidently this dam had been built across a rocky formation in the river bed. Below stood up narrow ridges of rocks, and between two of these ran a channel of swift water, dropping every few rods over a ledge. This channel was alive with steelhead. First we saw them leaping up the white foamy falls; then we found them in corners and eddies of the channel; and lastly we stood right over a place where we could see hundreds of these wonderful fish not more than thirty feet below us! Shallow swift water ran over smooth rock and swirled in a



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medium of rose and lilac, incredible to the eye. Hot and oppressive, the dry air was full of odorous, penetrating fragrance. The loneliness, the charm of the place, the mellow, changing roar of the rapids and the leaping of steelhead everywhere inspired us once more to hope and action.

R. C. got there first, and on his initial cast he raised something big. I saw his spoon hit the water, and then something strike it. A wide breaking swirl attested to the power of this fish. How incredibly fast he shot downstream! R. C. had no time to move before the fish was gone.

I was the last to get ready, and before I stepped into the water R. C. had another strike—missed—and Lone Angler had a steelhead on. It took him the whole length of the swift water, and farther still, not a leaping fish, but a good one of five pounds. This sudden windfall of luck changed the aspect of things. With thrilling zest we went at it, and I held to my desire to catch a steelhead on a fly. The difficulties I had discovered at first hand, and the fact that very few steelhead were taken on a fly, spurred me on to an accomplishment of that worthy feat.

R. C. soon struck another snag in the shape of a salmon. One of the heavy chinook appropriated his spoon and started away from that place. Valiantly my brother performed and pursued, but that salmon had a jaw of iron and an unconquerable spirit. He could not be held.

"LOOKS as if I were going to get mine today," said R. C. to me. "Thought I could lick anything with this tackle."

He had rigged up one of my bait rods, nine and one-half feet, ten ounces, that I had had built for bonefish, with a good-sized reel full of silk line. He waded in above me, made a wonderful cast clear across the river into the shade of the willows, and a big steelhead leaped out with the spoon in his mouth. Sharp and hard R. C. came up on him, and out he sprang again, a curved quivering opa' shape, flashing the ruddy diamond drops of water. I let out a whoop, and R. C. yelled: "Run, you son of a gun—run!"

R. C. never moved from his tracks. He held his rod well up and apparently lightly thumbed the reel. I could hear it screech—screech—screech. Below us stretched the hundred yards of swift water, white and choppy close at hand and gradually quieting down into the broad deep pool. That steelhead tumbled over the white waves in the most bewildering exhibition I had ever seen. He did not seem to go under at all. He danced like a will-o'-the-wisp, like a twisting light, over and over with a speed unbelievable. He surely ran that hundred yards in less than ten seconds. He ended this run with a big high leap. Then he sounded.

R. C. came wading down to me. His face was beaming in spite of its tensity. His eyes were aight.

"Say, did you ever see the beat of that? Sure, this steelhead game has got me," he said. "Run, you Indian! That's what all this line is for."

Before the steelhead slowed down he ran off another hundred yards of line. Then R. C. waded out and went with him down stream. Lone Angler accompanied him, and then I, unable to withstand the temptation, waded out, laid down my tackle and joined them. R. C. gave an admirable performance with that steelhead, handling him perfectly and eventually beaching him far round the curve of the big pool. Seven and one-half pounds!

MY ETHICAL ambition expired for the time being and I put on a spinner. I made, more or less, nine hundred casts without avail. Then as I was letting my line drift, looking back at Lone Angler, totally unprepared for anything, I had a most tremendous strike. Thirty yards of fly-casting line went by the board in a flash, and the green linen line followed. I burned my fingers and thumb. All the hundred yards of linen line whizzed off the reel. Then this thunderbolt of a fish slowed up. Seizing the opportunity I nearly drowned myself wading ashore below where I should have gone. Then I ran along the river, downstream. Soon I found that my fish had snagged the line on the bottom. How sickening was that realization! I worked for a long time

to save the line and finally did so, but the steelhead was gone.

Next day Burnham took us up the river, five miles beyond the dam, to a place he called the Suspension Bridge. A couple of wire cables sagged across the water between high banks, and to these were attached loops of chicken-fence wire, which in turn supported some rotten loose boards.

The stretch of Rogue River here was Burnham's favorite place. No wonder! It surpassed any stretch of fishing water I ever encountered. A narrow riffle roared at the head of this stretch and sent its swift current along the far shore under the cliff and through deep channels out in the flat rock of the stream-bed.

WIBORN and R. C. waded out to the riffle. I saw the latter hook and lose a steelhead in the white water. Then I essayed to follow Burnham. I had a task. He stood over six feet tall and wore seven-league wading boots, and deep or shallow was all the same to him. He worked downstream.

Nevertheless, here was a place where I could wade out as far as I liked and reach all but the farthest spots. For a hundred yards out the water ran scarcely a foot deep over level rock and led to where the deep ruts and channels and lanes could be reached. These deeper aisles in the rocky formation of the river-bed were wonderful places to fish. The water ran dark and eddying through them. The river here was very wide, bank full, so that no bars or gravel beds or ragged rocks showed from one green shore to the other.

The steelhead were not there or would not rise. Burnham said this stretch seldom failed and we should keep on. What a wonderful sight to see him cast a fly! It fascinated me. It seemed so easy. His fly gleamed like a spark of gold in the sun. It shot out and back, forward and back, and his line seemed to wave, to undulate, to sweep up in a great curve and at last stretch out low over the water to drop the deceiving wisp of feathers like thistle-down. He always cast quartering a little across the channel so that the bag in his line would drag the fly faster than the current. He said a steelhead rose to a fly, and followed it downstream and struck it so hard that it hooked itself. Twice he raised fish, and both times he let out a lusty yell. But he missed them, to my great disappointment.

Toward the lower end of that magnificent stretch of river the water deepened somewhat, and the channels appeared harder for me to reach with a fly. I could not cast over into the shady ruts under the cliff, and it was here that Burnham was raising fish. I would make half a dozen attempts, and that meant at least six sweeps of my rod for each cast, and then I would rest my tired arm and watch Burnham.

I CAME to a place Burnham had left for me, a joining of two dark channels above a flat rock, behind which swirled and eddied the most haunting and beautiful little pool imaginable. It was fully sixty feet away, a prodigious cast for me. But I essayed it, more in the persistence and pride of practice than in a hope of raising a fish. Straining nerve and muscle I swept my rod forward and back, forward and back, watching my fly, letting out more line until I reached my limit. The fly dropped perfectly. I saw it sink and float under the surface, and then as the current caught the bag of line it dragged my fly a little more swiftly. The sight pleased me.

Then out of the dark eddying depths of that pool loomed a shape, dim at first, gathering color and life until it became the reality of a steelhead, huge and broad as he swerved half over to follow the fly, shining pink and silver through the water. My heart leaped to my throat. Just as he reached the fly I jerked—and pulled it away from him. The action was involuntary. Then one instant I thrilled and shook, and the next my heart turned to lead, and I groaned at my stupidity. Many and many a time I cast again over that pool, but all to no avail.

Suddenly my attention was attracted by Burnham's yell, and then shouts of on-lookers up on the cliff opposite his position. He had hooked a steelhead. I saw it leaping. He called for me to hurry down and

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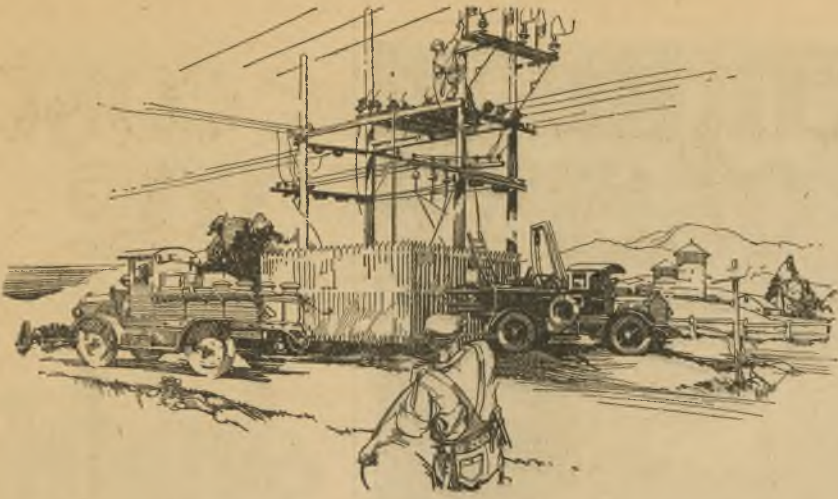
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Practical difficulties have delayed farm electrification. Even where high-voltage transmission lines have been carried through agricultural sections, the farms are often so widely separated as to make economical electric service impracticable. To build a substation to serve a single farm costs nearly as much as one to supply a hundred farms.

The farmer's problem is to get electric service at a cost low enough to make it profitable for him to use. The utility company's problem is to supply the service at a cost that will enable it to pay a fair return on the money invested.

This joint problem is now being studied by a committee of representatives of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, American Farm Bureau Federation, American Society of Agricultural Engineers and the National Electric Light Association.

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take the rod. I yelled back no. But he insisted. By the time I covered the goodly stretch of distance between us the fish had stopped leaping. But he had out nearly all of Burnham's line. So I took his rod, much to the amusement and interest of the audience on the cliff, and I waded after that steelhead. It took me fully a quarter of an hour to get back that line, and longer to lead the steelhead ashore. My left arm felt dead. The fish was not large, but on Burnham's light rod he was indeed heavy.

After that we fished down to the end of the stretch of good water, with no success. Next day the three of us tried Pierce Riffle again and struck another off day. The following morning we left at daylight to motor twenty-five miles down the river to meet Burnham at the end of the road. Eventually we found the end of the road and the ranch where Burnham was staying. Late that afternoon he took us to a place called Chair Riffle, where the night before he and a Mr. Carlon had taken a dozen steelhead.

Naturally we were both excited and elated. Chair Riffle owed its name to a chair-shaped stone, on which an angler could sit and fish to his heart's content. This stretch of the Rogue revealed a long, wide sweep of water, running four feet deep over gravel beds, where the steelhead lay in certain currents. They loved swift water. Burnham said it was necessary to learn where they lay. This evening, however, they did not lie anywhere in that riffle. But I enjoyed sitting in the stone chair, watching, and listening to the river.

NEXT day we motored several miles back upstream from the ranch to Mr. Carlon's favorite fishing water. It was at the foot of a rapid that foamed in many white channels around and between many little islands, all of which were covered by a long heavy green grass. Burnham took Lone Angler and R. C. up above this rapid while Mr. Carlon rowed a skiff through tortuous swift channels and in all kinds of difficult places, in order to get me just where he wanted me. In half a dozen spots he held the boat and instructed me to cast here and there. What swirling dark eddies, and holes under shelving rocks, and little deep pools overhung by willows! Always behind us on the other side of the ledges of rock was the main, roaring, white channel.

At last this genial and indefatigable gentleman hauled the boat up on the edge of a rocky island, right in the middle of the lower fall of the rapid. Below us a long irregular sunken ledge of rock divided the deep heavy water from the eddies and pools on the other side.

"Never have I failed to catch a steelhead here," he said. "Cast-farther. Watch me."

Then he swept his line out over the water without letting it touch, farther and farther, with a wonderful grace and skill. It undulated as had Burnham's, only in longer, higher waves, and it seemed instinct with life. Reeling in he took a position directly behind me, and grasping my rod hand he gave my wrist quick powerful jerks, getting my line out with the sweep that had characterized his. In a few moments he had taught me the swing of it.

"Now try it," he said finally, turning toward the channel of swift deep water. "Cast across and down. Don't drop your fly until it is as far out as you can cast. Then let it float down along that ledge."

I complied to the best of my new-found ability, succeeding fairly well in reaching the spot designated. But I did not see my fly float under the ledge. The ruddy glow of sun on the water dazzled my eyes.

"You raised one!" shouted Carlon.

THEN my rod sprang down, straightened by a violent tug, so energetic and electrifying that I was astounded. The scream of my reel told me what had happened. I swept up the rod to feel the strong pull of a steelhead taking line. Carlon called something that I could not distinguish above the roar of the water. But I thought he said the fish was leaping. Facing directly in the sun I was dazzled and could not see downstream. My fish took a hundred yards of line out into that swift channel, and there he hung. As good luck would have it R. C. and Lone Angler with Burnham came along down the rocky shore and provided me with an inspiring audience.

If moments could be wholly all-satisfying with thrills and starts, and dreads and hopes, and vague deep full sense of the wild beauty of environment, and the vain boyish joy in showing my comrades my luck and my skill—if any moments of life could utterly satisfy, I experienced them then. It took what seemed a very long time to tire and lead that steelhead, but at last I accomplished it. When he bored under the ledge of rock he alarmed me considerably and evidently worried Carlon, who wanted to take me in the boat and row around the ledge. This I feared might be needful and was about to comply when the steelhead came out where I could lead him over the ledge. For five minutes he swam in the shallows below me, showing plainly, dark-backed, rosy-sided, gradually slowing in action until he turned on his side, his broad tail curling, his fins waving. That was the moment to have released him. I had the motive but not the unselfish appreciation of him and his beautiful Rogue—not that time. He had been too hard to catch, and there across the river stood those comrades of mine. Instead I lifted him up in the sunlight for them to see.

They Needed a New Poultry House

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C. R. Snyder, president of the county Farm Bureau, was there with his hammer and saw. Allen Tracht, who has carried off the first prize cockerel ribbon at the Ohio State Fair four times in recent years and who taught the fanciers that farm-bred Rhode Island Reds are as good as any, helped all day. Even the Rev. D. E. Tobias, preacher at the Whetstone Reformed Church, a rural community church near by, was on hand and worked as hard as any.

Mr. Shearer had the foundation already built and the lumber ready. Miller and Vickers brought plans and bossed the job. The thirty men present each took hammer or saw and cut, fitted and nailed together that poultry house, put in windows, droppings boards and everything.

Mr. Shearer showed me the old poultry house in which the hens had been kept. It was an antiquated type, with no light or ventilation. He is delighted with the new modern house and is glad that in the building his neighbors had a chance to learn how to build one themselves.

I found that each state recommends a different type of house, designed by the poultry and agricultural-engineering departments to fit the peculiar needs of their own state, taking size of flock and climate into consideration. Iowa recommends the semimonitor, Missouri the straw loft, as does Indiana for larger flocks. Ohio and Illinois recommend a shed-roof type.

"Any of these types are good. In planning all of them, certain fundamentals had to be taken into consideration. Any good poultry house should have proper ventilation, as much light as possible, dryness, warmth, convenience in cleaning and egg gathering, sanitation, all of which should be considered, as well as durability and cost," Prof. J. B. Davidson, of Iowa State College, told me.

All these plans provide that the house shall face the south. Concrete floors are universally recommended, with either cinders or tile underneath to keep out moisture. Windows on the north side, near the floor, should be put in. The droppings boards should be built in sections and the roosts in sections and on hinges. For the average Corn Belt farm, the houses should be at least sixteen feet deep. The house should be large enough to give four square feet of space to each hen for the heavy breeds and three square feet for Leghorns.

Any farmer who plans to build a new or remodel his old poultry house should first see his county agent, who probably has on file copies of the plans recommended for his state. If not, or if there is no county agent, the state agricultural college will send free bulletins with plans of these houses and for ten or fifteen cents a sheet will furnish him with blue prints.

EDITOR'S NOTE—This is one of a series of articles by Mr. O'Brien. The next will appear in an early issue.