

APRIL, 1926

"Rocky Riffle on the Rogue River" by ZANE GREY

25 CENTS

Field & Stream

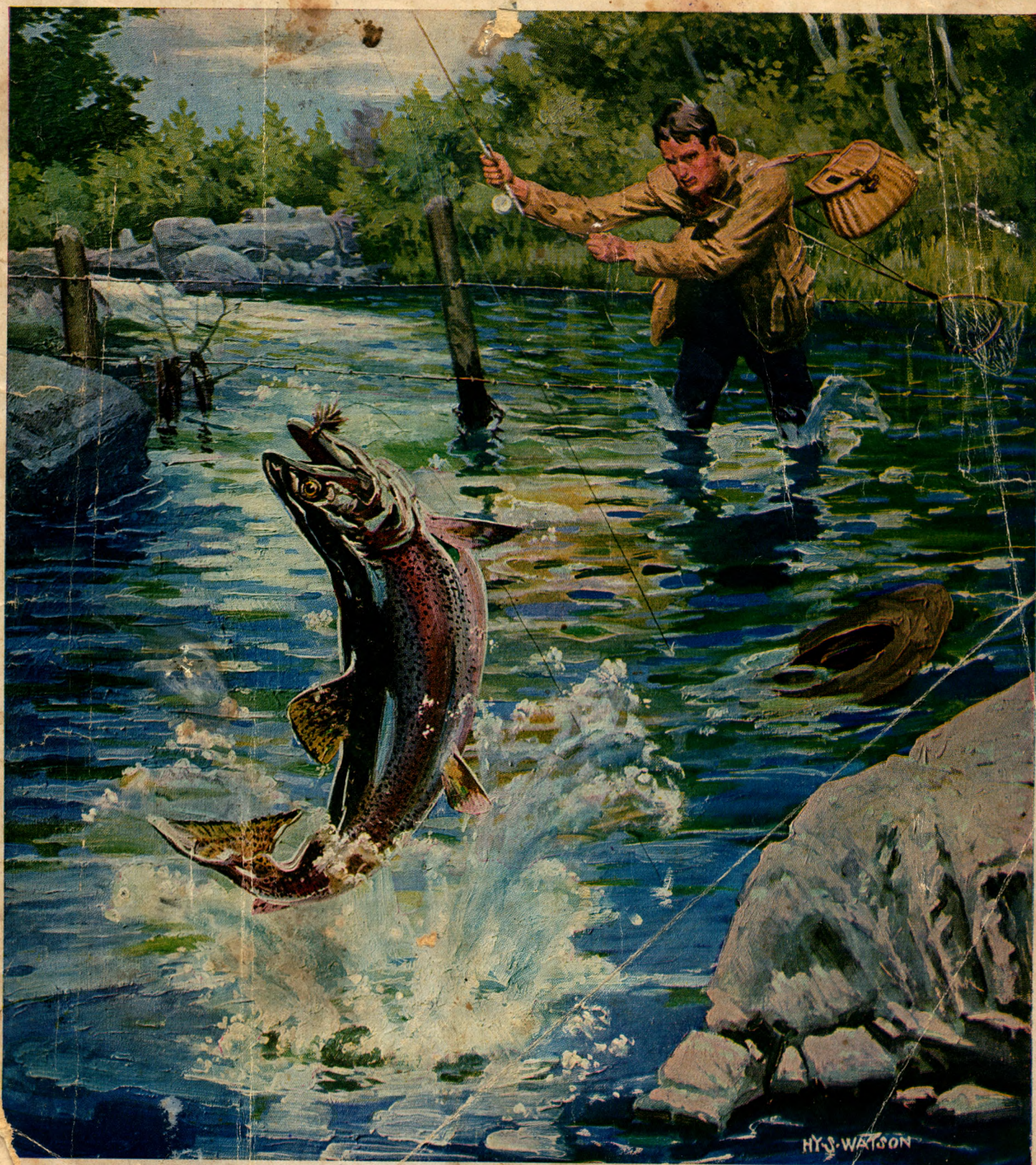
AMERICA'S MAGAZINE FOR THE OUTDOORSMAN

In this issue

COUGAR LORE

ZANE GREY W. C. TUTTLE

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APRIL, 1926

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A little humor helps.

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COUGAR LORE

Did you know that a cougar would attack a human being?

ROCKY RIFFLE ON THE ROGUE RIVER—Part III

Steelhead trout and fast water.

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Caribou and moose and bear.

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FIELD AND STREAM PUBLISHING CO. Publisher—ELTINGE F. WARNER
45 WEST 45th STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.
Western Advertising Office Wrigley Building, Chicago, Ill.

Issued Monthly. Yearly Subscription \$2.50 in advance. Single Copies, 25c. Foreign Postage, \$1.00. Canadian Postage, 50c.

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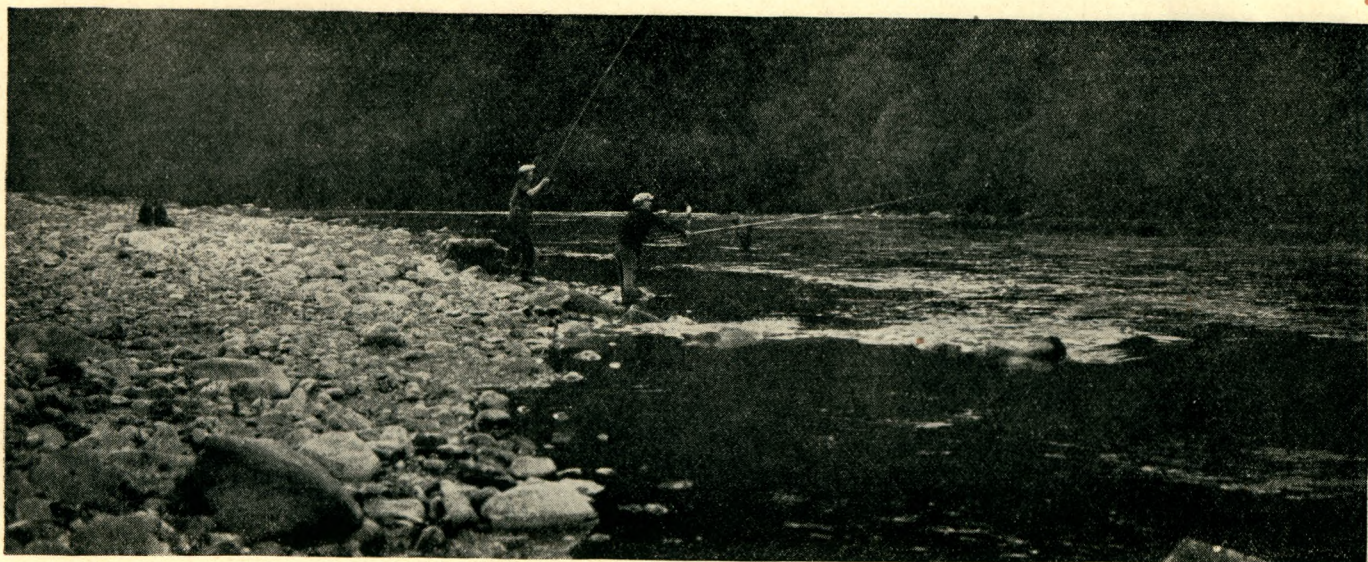
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Entered at the New York Post-Office as Second-Class Matter, March 25, 1898, under act of March 3, 1879.

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The native fishermen with long bamboo poles were certainly machines for extracting steelheads from the water

ROCKY RIFFLE on the ROGUE RIVER

By
ZANE
GREY

AND still our party fails to take steelhead with the floating fly while native fishermen with heavy tackle haul them in

PART III

SYNOPSIS

The party consisted of Zane Grey; his brother, R. C.; Ed and Ken, fishing chauffeurs, and little George, the Japanese cook. All reports had pointed to wonderful fishing, but on the first attempt everyone failed miserably. Then two friends, expert steelhead fishermen, visited the camp and displayed two wonderful steelheads in the 10-pound class. All was excitement again. R. C., becoming disgusted with the fly, took the first steelhead on a spinner and later, returning to the fly rod, he landed a six pounder.

WHILE R. C. and I relished our sandwiches and argued about the unknown and alluring qualities of this steelhead trout, the other boys made their way back to us. "By Golly, I had a big one on!" announced Ken, and then for a space he raved about the fish, giving a remarkably different angle from that reported by R. C.

Ed was not wanting in weird narrative as to his piscatorial adventures during the morning. From it all I gathered that he had several strikes and had left a fly sticking in the jaw of a fish or on the willows, he was not certain which.

George Takahashi was the last to arrive, and he had a broad grin and non-committal air. "I show you some day," he said.

While we were talking, a car hummed out of the willows behind us and bumped down the rocky slope to the gravel bar. Several immensely long bamboo fishing poles waved and wagged from the side of

the car. Three native fishermen piled out, to grasp the poles and come striding down toward the river.

In my interest I quite missed the loquacious remarks of my comrades. If ever I saw assurance, certainty, in the demeanor of fishermen, I saw it in them. They advanced as if they meant to stride straight across the river. But they halted at the edge. Not one of them was clad for wading. They shouted gay badinage from one to the other anent the immediate catching of fish.

These bamboo fishing poles fascinated me. They recalled boyhood days. I had learned to fish with one, though indeed not one so enormously long. That of the tallest native was fully twenty feet in length and quite limber. It had a small reel some two feet from the butt, and guides for the line. What a formidable tackle! When that lanky native fisherman clambered upon the highest rock along the bank and waved that huge pole, I was stunned with the certainty that he would do terrible execution with it.

He grasped the end of the butt in the hollow of his left hand and with his right held the pole above the reel. His lure was a small brass spinner, not the smallest made but about the second in size. It bore a fairly large gang of three hooks. I noted that he used a six-foot leader, but whether it was wire or gut I could not tell.

Then he began to wave the long pole. The line hissed out; the spinner whistled. He cast to get out line, not letting his spinner down to the water. His action appeared to be a powerful jerk with right

arm, both forward and back. His left hand furnished only a fulcrum. The pole was limber, as I said, and it bent almost double.

In a surprisingly few waves of it he had that spinner shooting out over the river, back over the bar, out again, farther and farther until I calculated over a hundred feet of line was out. It was an amazing performance. Then he dropped the spinner precisely alongside a dark ledge of rock, a place that I had so slaved to reach with fly and failed, and he let it float down with the current. When the line straightened out, he jerked back with powerful sweep and made another cast. This time there was a swirl on the water. Then we all exclaimed simultaneously as he hooked a fish.

IT swung downstream, pulling hard, but did not leap. The fisherman drew back upon the bent rod while his comrades yelled at him. Then stepping down from his perch, he walked backward and downstream a little, drawing the fish toward shore. It swept up and down, lunged and threshed on the surface, fighting desperately hard. But it could not break the tackle or get away.

Without winding in the line, the fisherman walked backward on the bar and dragged the fish out on the sand. It flopped with tremendous energy until all its silver and rose sheen was covered with dirty sand. Then the fisherman hit it on the head with a rock.

Naturally we all had something to say amongst ourselves and most of it was un-



Zane Grey and his first Rogue River steelhead

printable. Then a lusty shout from another of the native anglers wheeled us to see that he had hooked a fish. He stood some fifty feet above our position, in quite swift water. Did he walk downstream and let the steelhead have some line? He did not. He yelled as if at the fish, holding hard on the pole.

The steelhead made a magnificent leap and threw the spinner. Then it was our turn to yell. We were far from good-natured about it, but the fellow took it good-naturedly.

"Aw, I'll snag another in a minnit," he

called, cheerfully, as he retrieved his line.

My attention reverted to the tallest native, whom I instinctively recognized as a master of this kind of fishing. Precisely upon his third cast he raised and hooked another fish. It made a deep, stubborn fight of about two minutes, and when dragged forth from its element proved to be a jack-salmon, a bronze-colored black-spotted fish of about nine pounds.

Next the third native, fishing below, caught a small steelhead which he unceremoniously hauled out. We sat there

then, spellbound, and saw these natives catch eight more steelhead, five of which were taken by the tall fellow. He certainly was a machine for extracting steelhead from under the dark, submerged rocks. He could pick them out of the farthest edge of the channel, a hundred and twenty-five feet across the river. He could hit any spot he aimed at. He never missed a strike. A steelhead, no matter how big, had no chance with him. The largest he took, which I estimated to weigh between eight and nine pounds, was literally jerked out before it had gotten its head.

Then the steelhead ceased rising. The native fishermen, laughing and joking, threw their catch into the car, tied on their wagging rods, and with loud and raucous guffaw, probably meant for us city fishermen, they rode away. They had been with us about one-half hour.

FOR me the incident was tragic. It hurt me deeply to see these magnificent trout treated like German carp.

"I be damn! Just like Jap fishermenz," said George Takahashi. "No monkey! Pull 'em out quick."

"Bingo! what do you know about that?" exclaimed Ed, with fire in his eye.

"Seems all right to me," added the practical Ken. "It's their river. They catch fish to eat and salt for winter. It's none of our business. And we needn't be sore because they showed us how to catch steelhead."

"Ken, you've got the wrong idea, common to most Americans," spoke up R. C. "If you ever have a son, he will never know the thrill of catching a steelhead, let alone having one to eat. . . . Because the steelhead will be gone! You've just seen one of the reasons."

I had little to say, but I was thinking hard. I wondered what was Burnham's opinion of this sort of thing. For the time being, that slaughter absolutely sickened me. It was almost as bad as seeing four 500-pound tuna murdered with mattocks in a net in Nova Scotia. It brought to mind the bugbear of all thoughtful anglers, compelling them to dwell on queries and facts that were disagreeable and disheartening.

Our wild life, our forests and fish were vanishing. What was a broad point of view and what a narrow? It seemed to me that in this particular case if the fish were eaten there was no room for argument. But I had traveled to many places, remote and otherwise, and had collected a vast fund of information relative to this vanishing America, and I was skeptical about the legitimate cutting of forests and their adequate protection from fire, and the regard for fish and game laws, and the interest of the great public in preserving anything.

That time, however, did not appear to be the right one for me to dwell on conservation; so forthwith I set off whistling to whip my stretch of water again. R. C. called after me, as in the old baseball days.

"Hey, you've got a game leg and a bum arm. Let's go back to camp and rest."

But I was bound to have my last fling, which really was a defiance of the native fishermen and my morbid reflections. So I began to cast, while the boys looked on and waited. Remarkable to see, even with the kind of arm R. C. said I had, I could cast farther and better. I had learned while I rested. It encouraged me.

Turning a deaf ear to my lazy and facetious comrades, I waded in deeper and essayed to make more of those casts which had astonished and pleased me. They improved, even though my arm gave aching

Rocky Riffle on the Rogue River



A curling wave appeared behind my floating fly. A sharp splash followed. "Oh! what a strike!" I cried

premonitions of weakening. But I waded and cast on. It was practice and perseverance. Steelhead I had forgotten! I wanted to see how far out I could cast that Golden Pheasant and how deftly I could make it alight. So I gradually drew away from the others, on down toward the middle and best part of that riffle.

At length I made such a splendid cast, for me, that I uttered an admiring exclamation. "Oh, pretty poor, I don't think—eh, what?"

Then something remarkable happened. A curling wave appeared behind my floating fly. A sharp splash followed. The slack line I was holding in my left hand flipped quick as a flash out of my grasp. It twanged tight on the rod. Then a powerful, violent jerk all but took the rod away from me.

Too late I realized and pulled. But the steelhead had let go and gone. "Oh! what a strike!" I cried, tingling all over. Next disappointment assailed me, then fury, at my absent-mindedness, and lastly dismay at what seemed more bad luck. Still I went on casting until I was so tired I could not cast any longer. Thereupon I wearily waded out and trudged back over the boulders to where the others waited.

"Say, didn't you get a strike?" queried the keen-eyed R. C.

"Me? Oh, that! Guess maybe it was," I replied, casually.

"Humph! Thought I saw a wave and a smash. You acted funny, too," he replied, dubiously.

"Well, Brother," I replied resignedly, "if you keep strict tab on me, you're liable to see lots that's funny."

Tramping back to camp over boulders and through dragging sand and up brushy trails, burdened by wet waders and heavy brogans, was tedious and wearisome toil. The sun shone hot. There was a drowsy hum of insects. This afternoon I appeared to be pretty much all in when I reached camp. Yet as soon as I changed to dry, comfortable clothes and had stretched out in the shade, the sense of rest and ease was so delightful that I

rejoiced in the pangs which had made possible the contrast.

A low, soft sigh of wind stirred the lofty firs and pines; colored leaves floated down from the oaks and maples; the black slopes of the mountains heaved toward the sky; white columnar clouds sailed across the blue; and always the river murmured and babbled and roared down its stony bed.

After supper the hour was still early, with the sun topping the high mountain. R. C. amazed me by appearing in waders and with a very determined expression. He went up river, to disappear in the thick brush along the bank. The other boys likewise went off fishing.

For a while I deliberated as to whether I should follow suit or not, and came to the conclusion that not always to be doing my darnedest—of which I had been accused—might be a welcome change. It even might change my bad luck. My arm was almost as sore as it used to get after pitching a hard game of baseball. I rubbed it with liniment.

That done, I went down through the trees to the bank where the great fallen fir overhung the river. Climbing to the trunk, I found my way carefully down to the thick foliage of vines that enveloped its branches, and there I sat hidden. My intention was to spy upon the innocent fishing evolutions of the boys. But no one was in sight.

My position appeared to be about twenty feet above the river, at a point where the water ran a few inches deep over flat, dark rock. Suddenly, as luck would have it, a bird came flitting down the shaded shore under the foliage and alighted right under me.

It was a water-ousel, one of the few of that species I had ever seen, and this was very close to me. To me birds had always been beautiful, mystical, exquisite creatures to be loved. A water-ousel is the rarest and wildest of birds, exceedingly shy and almost impossible to approach. It haunts the lonely, swift mountain streams, and is very seldom seen.

This water-ousel was unaware of me.

Yet its every motion was indicative of its wild nature. It was about the size and color of a catbird, except that it might have been a little heavier and shorter, and also minus the long tail. The color was a dark slate, unrelieved by lighter touch. It had a sleek, small, fine head with small dark eyes and bill. Its legs and feet were dark, too, and though I could see the toes I was unable to make sure whether or not they were webbed. I thought not.

Now this water-ousel had the strangest actions of any bird I ever watched. In the first place, he was most vitally and keenly alert. Every second he looked here, there, up and down—everywhere. I could see him turn his head and peer up into the foliage as if he suspected an enemy hidden there.

All the time he bobbed up and down. It was a singular, springy action, and seemed to be a constant precursor of flight. In fact, he teetered on his tiny feet, quick, nervous, intense. At the same time he waded the shallow places searching for food. Often when he pecked at something, his head went under water. At others, when he got in a little deep, he breasted the current like a duck. Then, most strange to see, he went wholly under. He dipped rather than dove. I could not be sure, but I thought he walked under water. He did not swim.

While craning my neck the better to follow the movements of the bird, I rustled the foliage. This alarmed him. He stood in one place and bobbed up and down, uttering the sweetest, wildest bird notes it had ever been my fortune to hear. On the moment I thought of Hudson, the English naturalist, and how beautifully he could describe the music made by birds. How impossible for me to give an adequate sense of the actual sounds I caught! I heard the bird utter his sweet, sharp, delicate note many times, and thought I would never forget it.

Suddenly the bird flitted away as swiftly as he had come. And I found

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ROCKY RIFFLE ON THE ROGUE RIVER

(Continued from page 23)

that he had left me with a vague, haunting echo of his bird-cry, something too soft, too wild and strange to be imitated in words. It was indeed the very essence of the lonely nature of this water-ousel.

IT would be wonderful to know all about such a bird. Haunter of rushing, clear mountain torrents, mossy-bouldered, fir-shaded, he represented the very soul of all that was alien and aloof to civilization. He was the unattainable in nature.

Naturalists tell us that all birds evolved from reptiles; that during long, dry eons of the past, feathers had to be developed to cover distances in search of water and food. No doubt this is true. Many scientific facts are stunning and incredible, not to say ugly. But if this water-ousel did not have a soul, then the illusive and elevating thing I felt was in me. Still that bird-creature would have expressed the same, absolutely alone in his primeval haunts.

How and when did he court his mate? Where did they build their nest? What were the eggs like, and the baby birds? Whence came that wild, fugitive alertness, that eternal vigilance? Did it emanate from knowledge of man? How infinite the knowledge of the nature lover who could learn the past and present life history of a water-ousel!

(To be continued)

CHICKEN FISHING

(Continued from page 35)

one another, and of the five I boat but three. It takes some minutes to clear away the mess, and the school has sounded.

I amble onward, quite content with myself and considering the world in general—my little niche in it, especially—as a very fine place indeed. Nothing happens and, thinking that I may have overrun the fish, I swing back, taking a course that will bring me off Ben Weston Head, on the westerly side of the island—a good place, at times, for the fish that I seek.

The Head is nearly abreast when an albacore takes the short line. I boat him. Another takes the long, and as I am hauling in the fish I notice a big boil in the wake behind it, then see the fin of a large shark—mine ancient enemy. I haul for dear life, and the brute—a 7-foot specimen of the torpedo species—follows even up to the very side of the *Mable F.* almost getting my fish as I gaffed it! I took a pot shot at him, but he was too deep for effective results.

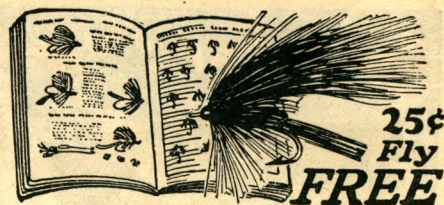
THUS the morning passed, while I wandered hither and yon, picking up fish singly and twice more in doubles. The heat and glare were both becoming strong, and as albacore rarely strike well after ten in the morning, I took in the lines and stowed the outriggers.

Let me add that on regulation Tuna Club light tackle—6-ounce rod, 6 feet in length, with No. 9 line—friend albacore will give you as pleasing a twenty-to-thirty-minute fight as heart o' angler could desire. It will doubtless be of interest to know that the albacore taken in southern California waters in one year weighed 7,263,895 pounds. All taken on hand lines, as above described. The figures are from the "Annual Report" of the California Fish and Game Commission.

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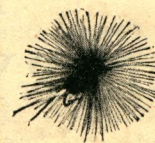
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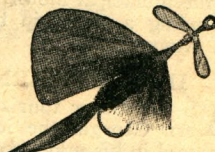
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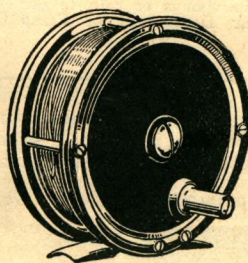
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