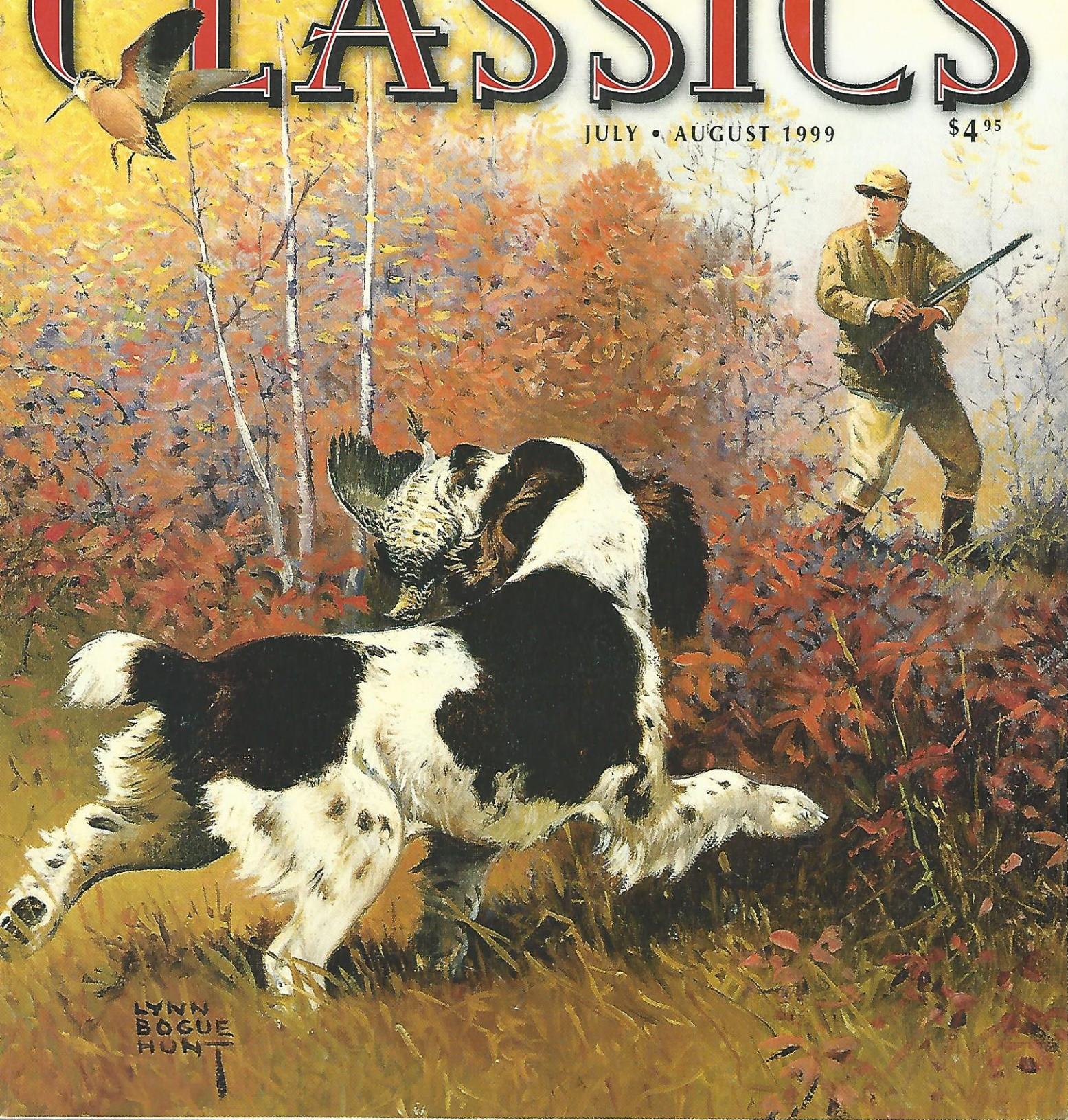


# SPORTING CLASSICS

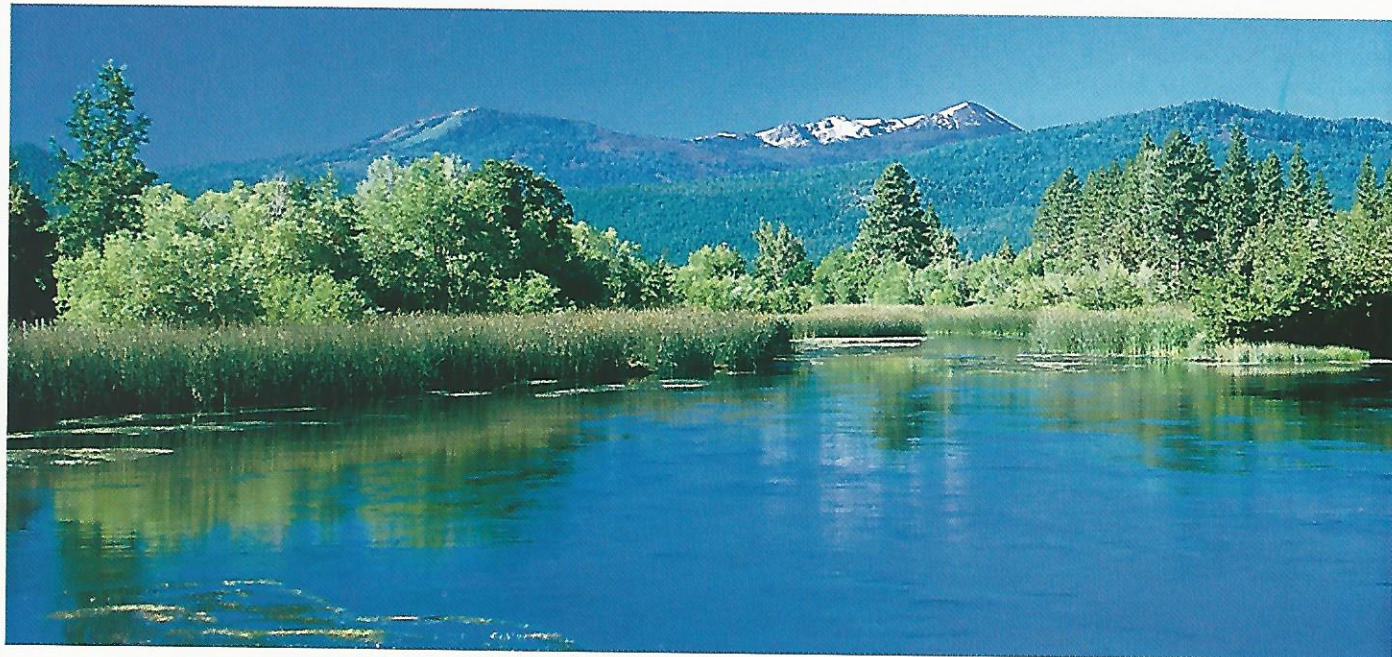
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# T r a v e l

By John Ross



**W**ere I a younger guy, I'd pull up stakes, pack my rods and a few shotguns in an old motorhome, and beat it across country to the northeast corner of California. There I'd set up shop. Winters would find me hammering out copy for some Redding ad agency, doing my best to thin out the pintails in the rice checks south of Chico, and giving up single malt for a cheap bottled-in-USA blend.

All of this I'd suffer just to spend summers and fall where wild trout abound and tourists – relatively speaking – do not. Here in the quadrant bounded by Interstate 5 on the west and State Route 44 to the south are a handful of trout streams that will suit the temperaments of any angler, from slothful (like me) to ultra-sophisticated.

Redding is the headquarters for an expedition into this land of soaring volcanic peaks, wide farming valleys and dense stands of piney forest. Check with The Flyshop (800-669-3474) for local

conditions and opportunities to fish private waters. Depending on your taste, staff at The Flyshop will steer you to the Upper Sacramento, the McCloud, Fall River or Hat Creek. Each is a stream of different character.

For thirty-five miles from the head of Lake Shasta to Siskiyou Lake, the Upper

*In his Travel Column premiere, the author explores a California connection of trout streams that will suit the temperaments of every angler.*

Sac flows through a deep gorge. Its course is hard by Interstate 5 and the railroad, but don't let that fool you. For a roadside stream, some sections of the river see quite limited pressure. Every two or three miles is an exit leading to a road which crosses the river. You can park along the RR right of way.

A mile's walk up or downstream will

**V**olcanic Mt. Lassen rises behind Hat Creek at Cassel where big browns sip the tiniest insects known to mankind.

leave most other anglers behind. Rainbows lurk in deep green pools and pockets behind boulders. Gravel runs are few here. For sheer beauty, fish below Mossbrae Falls where scores of crystal rivulets stream over a long cliff verdant with moss and hardy shrubs. Dunsmuir, near the head of this stretch, contains a pair of good tackle shops: Ted Fay Flyshop (530-235-2969) and Dunsmuir Flyfishing Co. (530-235-0705).

Crossing the mountains to the east brings you to the McCloud, mother of rainbows planted in eastern streams at the turn of the last century. Two sections are worthy of attention. Above McCloud Lake, the river is easily accessed by the camping crowd and car-borne anglers. McCloud Loop Road shadows the river. Getting to the water is relatively easy

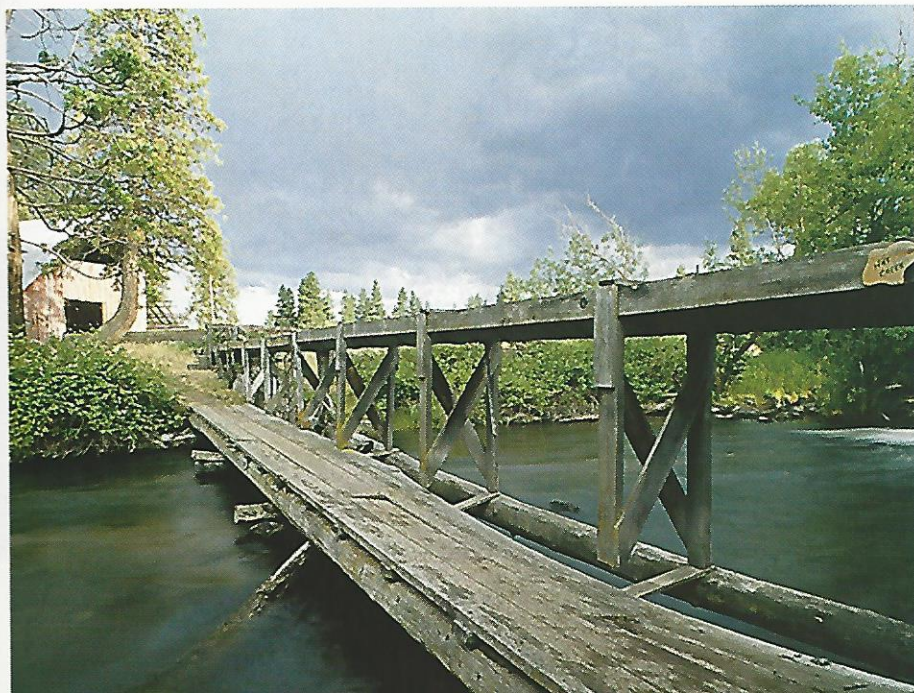
and there's some stocking here. Good place for family fishing.

Below the lake is the McCloud of which everyone dreams. Thick currents eddy among boulders of basalt deeply shaded by stands of timber. The first few miles below the dam are public water, reached by the road to Ah Di Na campground. But below this mileage is the real prize: several miles managed by the Nature Conservancy. To fish it, anglers must call 415-777-0487. Only ten anglers are permitted per day.

State Rt. 89 runs east from Mt. Shasta and through the town of McCloud. Roughly fifteen miles farther, the McArthur Road forks off to the left, heading into the Fall River headwaters. The upper Sac and lower McCloud are hurly-burly waters in comparison to the sedate flows of the spring-fed Fall River. Rainbow water of peerless quality, the river flows largely through private land. Carpeted with undulating aquatic weed, the Fall's bottom is difficult wading at best. Most anglers fish dry flies and float the river in jonboats powered by a pair of electric trolling motors. Rick's Lodge (530-336-5300) provides access and accommodations for guests; the local scoop is available from Shasta Angler in Fall River Mills (530-336-6600).

The Fall joins the Pit River at Fall River Mills and five miles below, Hat Creek enters from the south. Hat is the

**A**t Hat Creek Ranch, you'll find a bit of old California as well as great fishing.




smallest of this quartet, whether it's the best depends on your preferences. Hustling down out of Lassen Volcanic National Park, the Hat is a happy little freestone stream until it enters a broadening valley at the junctions of State Rts. 89 and 44. Then its character gradually changes. Narrow, it sweeps over cobbles beneath brushy banks where lovely browns hide. Above Cassel, the Hat slows to a walk and ambles through a series of small impoundments where dry flyfishing is as technical as it gets. Below powerhouse #2 is a 200-yard tailwater of riffles that makes nymph-fishing nimrods feel like pros. Below, though, the water slows and pools and becomes a challenge to even the most dedicated dry-fly angler. Best source for info on the Hat is Dick Galland at Clearwater House (great lodge) in Cassel (530-335-5500).

## Travelin' Rods

**T**raveling flyfishers used to spend an inordinate amount of time wrestling with four-foot-long rod cases. Back then, two-piece rods were the order of the day. Why? Only one ferrule, and ferrules were the Achilles heel of flyrods. No more. Now, multi-piece rods have come into their own that feature stronger ferrule systems. With the possible exception of heavyweight rods, there's little reason to choose a two-piece rod over one of four sections or more.

The two best ferrule systems are "tip-over-butt" and "plug." The plug system is stronger because it flexes more readily, says master rod-builder Dave Lewis of Performance Fly Rods (540-867-0856). And should the plug fail, it can normally be replaced quite easily.

My travel rods include a great 7-piece, 5-weight Vagabond from Thomas & Thomas (413-863-9727) and an equally good, 5-piece, 5-weight from Winston (406-684-5674). Dave built me a dandy 5-piece, 8-weight that packs down to 22 inches. All have plug ferrules. 

## A fishing secret...

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