



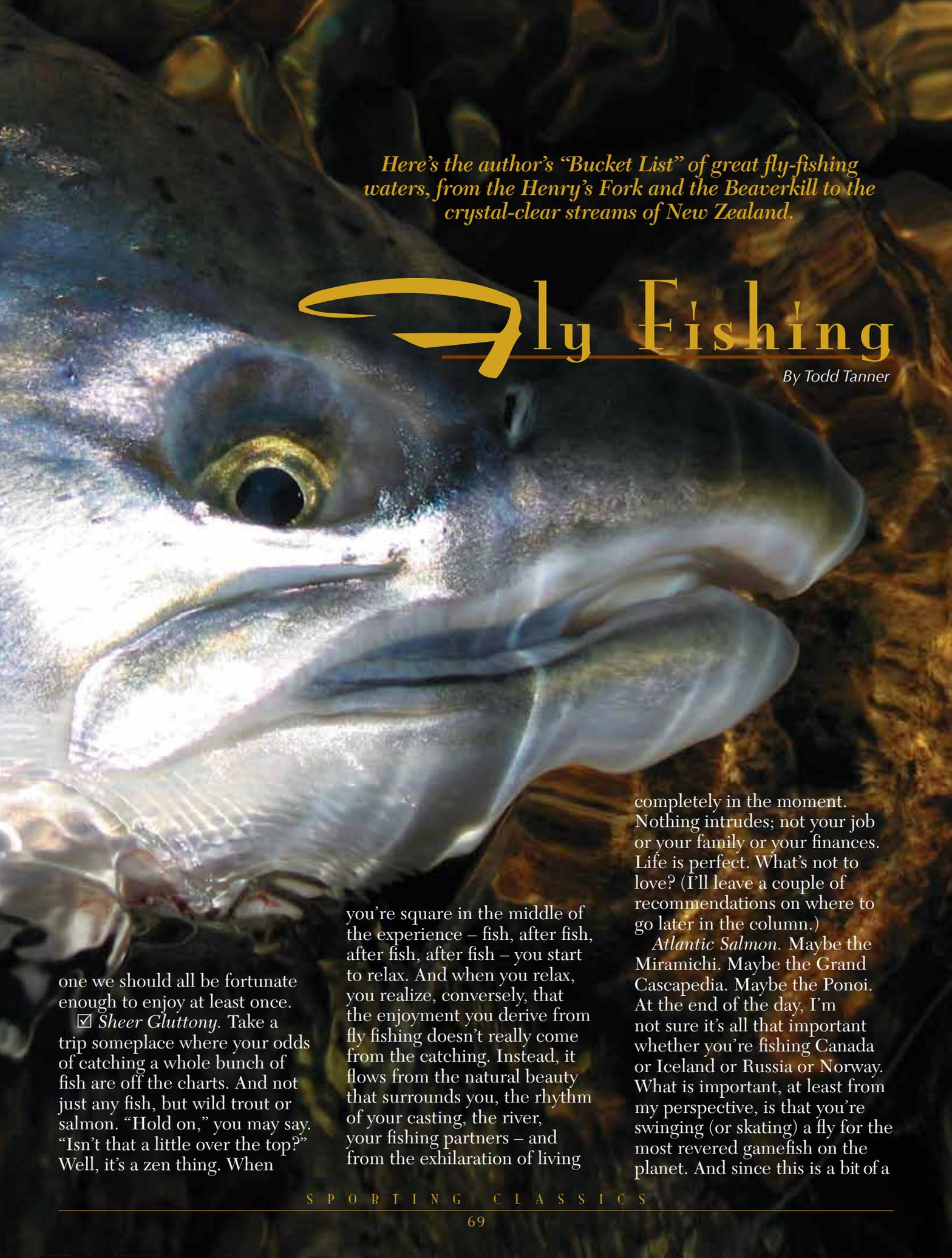
I'm not quite sure why, but I've heard a fair number of folks talk about their "bucket lists" recently. If you're not familiar with the term, it refers to the places you'd like to visit, and the things you'd like to do, before you "kick the bucket." A little morbid, perhaps, but it's easy enough to understand the

general allure. We're only here for a few score years and there's no point sitting on the sidelines while life races by.

So with that in mind, here are my thoughts on the ultimate fly fishing bucket list; both things I've done (marked with a check) and things I'd still like to do.

☑ *The Henry's Fork*. If you haven't fished it yet, you need to. Not because of the hype, or

because it's the most interesting river in North America, or because it's the ultimate dry fly water, but because standing knee deep in the quiet flows of Bonefish Flats while darkness settles gently over the Island Park caldera is the angling equivalent of saying the rosary in St. Peter's Basilica or vision-questing in Glacier Park. It's a transcendent experience;



Here's the author's "Bucket List" of great fly-fishing waters, from the Henry's Fork and the Beaverkill to the crystal-clear streams of New Zealand.

Fly Fishing

By Todd Tanner

one we should all be fortunate enough to enjoy at least once.

☑ *Sheer Gluttony.* Take a trip someplace where your odds of catching a whole bunch of fish are off the charts. And not just any fish, but wild trout or salmon. "Hold on," you may say. "Isn't that a little over the top?" Well, it's a zen thing. When

you're square in the middle of the experience – fish, after fish, after fish, after fish – you start to relax. And when you relax, you realize, conversely, that the enjoyment you derive from fly fishing doesn't really come from the catching. Instead, it flows from the natural beauty that surrounds you, the rhythm of your casting, the river, your fishing partners – and from the exhilaration of living

completely in the moment. Nothing intrudes; not your job or your family or your finances. Life is perfect. What's not to love? (I'll leave a couple of recommendations on where to go later in the column.)

Atlantic Salmon. Maybe the Miramichi. Maybe the Grand Cascapedia. Maybe the Ponoï. At the end of the day, I'm not sure it's all that important whether you're fishing Canada or Iceland or Russia or Norway. What is important, at least from my perspective, is that you're swinging (or skating) a fly for the most revered gamefish on the planet. And since this is a bit of a

stretch anyways, at least for someone like yours truly who falls well short of the top income brackets, let's double down and say we're after a 30-pound Atlantic on a dry. Maybe it happens, maybe it doesn't, but the entire experience would be worth every penny.

☑ *Steelhead On The Dean.* Okay, this is an obvious choice. One of the most beautiful fish on the planet, on one of the most beautiful rivers in existence – and the peak of the run is in July, when you can fish for steelhead without freezing your butt off. If I could, I'd visit the Dean every single year.

New Zealand. They speak English, they boast incredible "Lord of the Rings" scenery, they have huge browns and rainbows that live in crystal clear rivers . . . and everyone I've ever talked to who's spent time in New Zealand just loves it. I'll admit that it's a long ways to travel just to wear waterproof pants and cast a fly rod, but there are two different islands and they both offer world-class, trip-of-a-lifetime angling.

☑ *The Beaverkill.* Anyone who loves

the heritage and tradition of fly fishing needs to visit Roscoe, New York, and spend a little time on the Beaverkill. The true legends of the sport – Theodore Gordon, Edward R. Hewitt, George LaBranche, Hiram Leonard, Art Flick, Ray Bergman, Sparse Gray Hackle, Lee Wulff – all haunted the Catskills. While the Beaverkill is no longer the epicenter of the fly fishing universe, just wetting a line at Cairns, or on the Junction Pool, means you're standing on the shoulders of giants.

The Salt. While I've never fished saltwater (believe it or not, that's part of my ongoing attempt to stay married), I wouldn't mind hooking a bonefish, a tarpon or a permit on a fly, then walking down a sandy beach with the love of my life as the giant orange sun sinks below the western horizon and palm trees sway gently in the breeze. (Do palm trees even sway in the breeze? I don't have any idea, but it's sure a nice mental image.)

☑ *Bristol Bay.* Next time I head to Alaska I'd like to fish mice for big,

hungry rainbows on some of those gorgeous Bristol Bay rivers. And wouldn't it be great if the trip was a celebration of the day we finally drove a stake through the toxic heart of the Pebble Mine? There's no reason that America's anglers should be asked to sacrifice one of the planet's most important, irreplaceable trout and salmon fisheries for a gold mine. None.

Good Company. Okay, I know this is a bit of a long shot, but I'd love to show up at an obscure fishing camp on a remote river in British Columbia or Alaska and find out that my fellow guests were Craig Mathews, John Gierach, Tom Rosenbauer, Greg Thomas, Seth Norman, Phil Monahan, Kirk Deeter, Bill Klyn, Tim Linehan and Yvon Chouinard. While luminaries like Lee Wulff, Roderick Haig-Brown and Leon Chandler are no longer with us, there are still some pretty amazing anglers out there – folks who've given a tremendous amount to our sport, and who share their knowledge and talents freely. Can you imagine the late-night

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conversations? Or better yet, the quiet times, when the fire crackled and the river played its music, and nobody felt the need to break the silence . . .

Kian Tanner. This one is truly personal. My son Kian is about to turn 8. When he's a few years older, I'd like to sit down on a river rock or a wildflower-laden bank and watch him fish for an hour or two. No camera, nobody else around – just Kian and the river.

☑ *Spring creeks.* Nothing else in fly fishing beats the magic of a spring creek. If you've never waded a stream where the watercress waves gently in the current and every pebble on the bottom shines bright, you owe it to yourself to give it a shot. Light rods, light tippets, small flies, large fish . . . it's the absolute pinnacle of our sport.

☑ *Stewardship.* While we don't talk about it a whole bunch, most fly fishermen realize that we have a moral obligation to pass on our angling heritage. When I am lying on my deathbed, I want to know that I did my very best to hold up my end; that I've done everything humanly possible to share the grace, the beauty and the magic of fly fishing with future generations. And that means I have to be a steward and a conservationist for as long as I live. Whatever your inspiration, whatever your motivation, I hope you'll do the same.

☑ So those are the items at the very top of my bucket list. What does your list look like? ➡

Author's Note: As promised, in no particular order, here are my favorite places to scratch that "Lots of Fish" itch:

1) The Missouri River in Montana. The Missouri is tremendous, and it fished out of its mind in 2012. Contact Headhunters Fly Shop or The Trout Shop, both in Craig, Montana.

2) The Kvichak River in Alaska. One of the best rainbow fisheries on the planet. Contact Alaska Sportsman's Lodge.

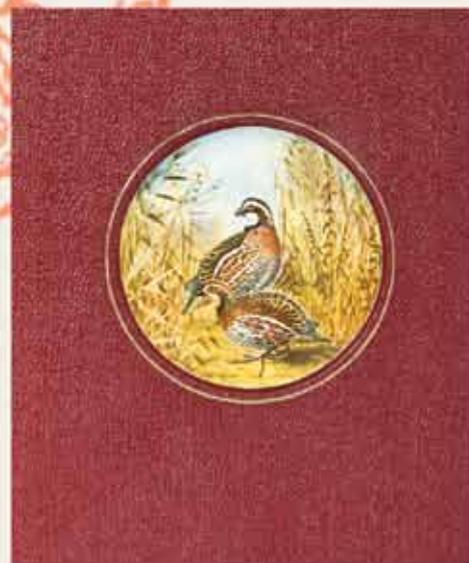
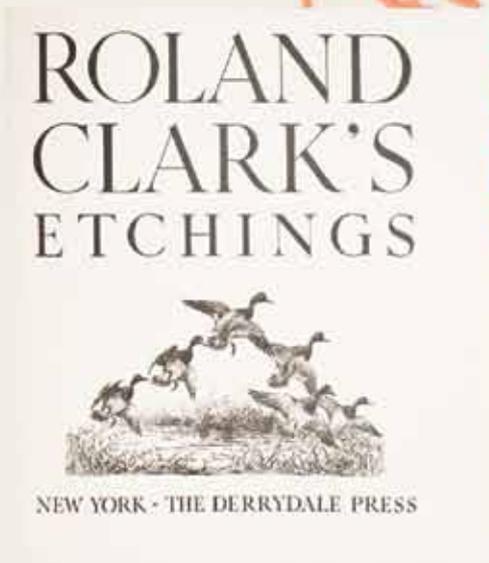
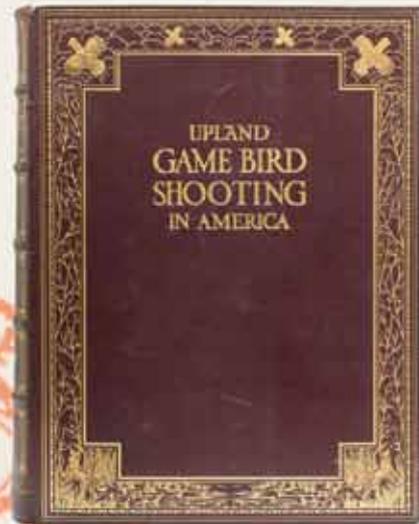
3) The Blackwater River in British Columbia. If you hit it just right, you may discover that 50 wild rainbows is a slow day. Contact John Blackwell's Moose Lake Lodge.

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