

# Field Sports at Home and Abroad

## AFTER SHEEP AND GOAT IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

(By C. F. Lane, in Field and Stream.)

The first link in the chain of circumstances that led to my making a trip after sheep and goat took place on board a steamer from Liverpool to Montreal. My journey was to terminate at the latter city, whence I had been called on business, but my friend—for friends we had become during the six days' voyage—was merely starting forth to spy out the land with the intention of making his home in the western part of Canada, if the life appealed to him. Our first evening on Canadian soil was spent together and I saw him off at night, agreeing, at parting, to keep up a correspondence. Like many promises to correspond this promise never materialized, and it was some two years later before I received any word from my fellow voyager. One morning when thinking over where and how to spend a month's vacation that was due to me I received the following letter:

Dear Lane.—I am not going to waste your time in explaining why I have not written, the fact is, there is no explanation. I will shortly tell you what happened to me since we parted and then will come to the main object of my letter. After saying good-bye to you that evening I stuck to the train till Calgary was reached. Here I was fortunate enough to obtain a position as "chain-man" with a government survey party, and for a year was out in the wilds, certainly seeing the country, but with little intention of making my permanent home therein. However, in Southern Alberta we passed through the spot where I am now located, its beauty appealed to me at once, and the desire to permanently settle amidst such enchanting scenery so grew upon me that at the end of six weeks all thoughts of returning home had departed and I had made arrangements to buy a few horses and cows, had fenced 480 acres at the base of the mountains, put up a house, and started ranching on a small scale. It was not only the great natural beauties of the locality that influenced me, but the vague reports of game being very plentiful in the almost unknown mountains to the west. So here I am living by myself with the exception of one hired man, some thirty miles south of the railway on the northern boundary of the Waterton Lakes Parks Reserve. Now to business—I want you to come and visit me in September. Drop me a line as to what date I may expect to see you—leave the train at Pincher station and you will find "yours truly" with a team of horses ready to escort you to the ranch. It will only cost you your train fare and the government license of \$25, and I will guarantee that you will not only enjoy every minute of your stay, but that you will go home the proud possessor of hunting trophies that many a man has spent thousands of dollars and travelled thousands of miles in the vain effort to obtain.—Yours ever, Bob.

A decision was at once arrived at to visit the budding rancher, and there being nothing like acting promptly, a letter was despatched stating that I would be at Pincher station on September 2nd. The weeks of waiting for the day of departure seemed months, but at last starting time came. The journey was pleasant and interesting, but in order to get to my story, any description thereof, or of the sensations experienced by a first sight of the Rockies, must be omitted. Suffice it to say that by the time the ranch was reached all remembrance of city life had departed.

The first morning we were up early, and personally I cannot say that I slept much during the night owing to a severe attack of that disease known in England as grouse fever, in the states as buck fever, and what I presume I must call in Alberta, sheep fever. It was intended on this first day to merely take a short tramp so that muscles and wind should get into something like decent order; and to defer going after the big game till "in training," therefore we only took with us a small .22 rifle in order to shoot a few blue grouse, and a fishing rod, so that we might have a few mountain trout for dinner. About three miles from the ranch we entered the mouth of a small canon and had scarcely ascended it 200 yards when a touch on the shoulder warned me to drop to the ground. Following the direction of my friend's gaze I saw thirteen mule deer—one an enormous buck—on the scrubby mountain side above us, only 300 yards distant. A suggestion had been made at starting that the heavy Savage rifle be taken along in case big game should be seen, and the sight of the deer almost forced an "I told you so," but knowing that my host was experiencing the same feelings and regretted the absence of the rifle as much as I, the remark was wisely omitted. There we lay and watched them feed for a while, there was nothing else to be done, for the little .22 would have no effect at the distance. Eventually the deer disappeared over the ridge without having sighted us, so we continued our tramp. About 300 further on we came to a small gully running down the mountain side, the bottom of which resembled a small plantation of evergreens, and thinking that here we might find a bird or two, we plunged down the side and had almost reached the bottom when a bunch of eleven deer which had been lying sunning themselves on the bank jumped up almost to our feet. Eight of them went off in great bounds across the gully and over the opposite bank, but three, including a good buck, started up the gully, and when about 100 yards dis-

tant, climbed the bank we had just descended. Arriving at the top they stopped to look for the rest of the bunch, but finding that they were alone turned back after the main herd. We had been so surprised to see the deer getting up at close quarters that neither of us did anything but stare, but now seeing the big buck preparing to recross the gully the rifle was brought into play and as he climbed a steep cut bank not more than 120 yards distant, I pulled the trigger. He stopped, and firing again behind the shoulder, I had the great satisfaction of seeing him drop and roll down the bank into the bushes. You may be sure we covered the intervening space in record time, finding him as dead as a door-nail, both bullets having penetrated the heart. The camera had also been left behind in the morning, and thereby we missed two fine chances of photographing mule deer in their native haunts. How I wish that I possessed a picture of my first deer as he lay dead among the bushes, though the scene will never fade from my mind. While I went to the house to get a pony, Bob attended to the obsequies, and when I returned he had the animal skinned. We were not long in packing back to the ranch and dinner. That afternoon we spent in a stroll down a beautiful creek, our reward in the evening being twenty-seven trout, the best fish weighing three and one-half pounds, and four over two pounds. The next day Bob had to go out to the railway again to bring in some supplies, but I decided that walking exercise would be better for me. I consequently spent the day in rambling along the creek with the small rifle and fishing rod, catching several trout which were returned to their native element for we had all we needed for eating purposes at home, and incidentally securing half a dozen of that grand specimen of the grouse tribe, namely, the blue grouse. It is quite good sport shooting these birds at a distance of from forty to fifty yards, taking care that your shot if successful shall only strike the head. Needless to say in securing the half dozen birds many cartridges were expended, for I am not proud of my skill with the rifle. Late that evening Bob got back with his provisions, and we arranged that next day should be spent in a serious attempt to secure a specimen of *Ovis montana*, the far famed big-horn of the Canadian Rockies. To get to their feeding grounds it was necessary to make a lengthy trip, so early in the morning, having saddled horses and filled a lunch pail with bread, butter, salt and pepper, we rode some ten miles to the mouth of a big canon. Here having tethered the horses and deposited the dinner pail, we started on foot up the creek which ran along the bottom of the gully, seeing many deer trails on the sand banks and hundreds of trout in the pools. In a short time the creek became too rocky and difficult to follow, so we climbed up the side, through the big timber, until we emerged on the grass at the base of the rocks. As we proceeded large game trails were seen worn deep in the loose rock and also many old trails in the snow at the bottom of the numerous ravines which scarred the slopes from wall-like rocks above to the roaring creek below. These snowy patches remain through the year and serve to keep the creeks in good fishing order during the hottest weather. We had only gone a few hundred yards, after emerging from the timber, when we came to the fresh tracks of nine animals which had crossed the gully ahead of us and you can imagine how my heart beat when I was told that these tracks were those of mountain sheep. Very cautiously we crawled up the dividing ridge and peeped over the edge. There on the front side of the gully not more than one hundred and fifty yards away were nine sheep, two of them being old rams. This time we had big game rifles with us, and after resting a moment or two to let nerves steady and to recover breath, and having decided in whispers which animal each should fire at, we took careful aim and at the word of command both fired. My shot was a bit too far back to more than stagger the sheep, but the second shot, properly placed behind the shoulder, did the trick. Bob only needed to expend one cartridge for his bullet struck his animal in the neck severing his cervical vertebrae. The rest of the band dashed off up the slide rocks and in a moment were climbing what looked to be a smooth and almost vertical rock wall without foothold for even a fly. When half way up the cliff they stopped on a ledge some three hundred yards distant, and there they remained, watching us while we went up to the dead rams, measured, and admired them. The two animals were fine specimens and might have been twins, for their measurements were practically identical, the horns being 6½ inches in circumference at the base of the horn, and 23½ inches between the tips. Once more the camera was where it should not have been, for we found it had been left in the dinner pail. I now got my first lesson in skinning big game. This operation successfully concluded we took a last look at the bunch of sheep still on the cliff and made our way down to the horses. Being hungry after our exertions, I made a fire in the bed of a creek while Bob returned to the sheep and cut some chops from the carcasses. On his return we had a meal consisting of wild sheep chops cooked on a hot stone before the fire, tea made in bush fashion, by first putting the tea into a pail of cold creek water, which was then

heated to near the boiling point, and bread and butter. While smoking a pipe and looking up the mountain side to the north my eyes were attracted to a small white spot, about three hundred feet above the creek, on the face of a big buttress of large red rocks. Thinking, however, that it was merely a piece of snow, I paid little attention to it at first, until that patch began to move. Quickly drawing Bob's attention thereto and getting out the glasses he examined it, announcing that the snow patch was an exceptionally fine old billy goat feeding on the ledges. We decided that his life should be spared, but afterwards were sorry, for though we each secured two goats (the legal allowance) none were as fine specimens as this old gentleman who was wandering on the sheep grounds.

Thus ended our first sheep hunt, in what I believe is the best sheep country in the West. It was too long a story to narrate the details of the balance of that holiday, suffice it to say that we secured two more fine rams in addition to four goats.

## DAYS OFF—FISHING WITH FLIES FOR TROUT

The most important thing in fly fishing is proper tackle and proper casting. The choice of flies is a secondary matter so long as they are quiet in tone, small in size, similar to the natural flies in the waters of the Eastern and Middle States.

In the choice of a rod that will exactly fit the angler, it is a matter of experienced selection; a large-framed, long-armed man, can wield with greater ease a long, heavy rod than a smaller man, so that it is best to change till one is procured that is just right. A medium-sized man will handle with good effect a rod of 10 feet long, weighing 7 ounces, made of split bamboo—or even a steel rod is a weapon I have used with good effect to force the fly, and play a fish in a satisfactory manner. The best reel is made entirely of rubber, or aluminum and rubber, with only a strong, single click, without any complicated gearing that is likely to get out of order. On a small river 75 feet wide—more or less—the line need not be more than 150 feet long and it should be fine, of even thickness throughout. The best line I know is the oiled silk, extra finish, mist color "King-fisher brand." To my mind the tapered line has no advantages. I prefer it fine throughout, so that I can take it off the spool and reverse it to get the best out of both ends. For the very clear water of these mountain streams you cannot get a leader of gut too fine. It should be 8 feet long and tapered; the second fly should be 32 inches from the end fly, and from the second fly to the upper fly a distance of 30 inches. The two upper snells should be two and a half inches long from the eye of the hook to the leader, and the snells must match the leader exactly. The leader I describe is an English Cummin's leader, used in fishing waters where trout are plentiful, but very, very wary.

Don't believe people who tell you that to cast 100 feet is essential; it is not good trout fishing, because so much line out prevents an immediate strike when fish rise to the fly. It is much better fly fishing to creep up stealthily 50 feet nearer, then cast 50 feet to the fish in that you will have complete control over it, quicker action and more certain to embed the hook, as well as an easy matter to creep the fish from getting under snags. Even with a big two-pound trout, a hundred feet of line out is a nuisance to manager. The first dash of a big fish requires 25 feet more line out, and with fine leaders, small hooks, it is ten to one but what the fish gets off with so much cumbersome line and lack of control. Tournament casting and actual fishing to hook a wild trout are two opposite things. There is no question but any angler who is patiently industrious to practice, may attain the honor of champion caster. The same patience devoted to acquiring a knowledge of the habits of trout, the study of their food—especially flies on the water at different seasons, is of infinitely more service to fill the creel, and is the source of much greater pleasure. You are never guilty of over-enthusiasm calling the attention of your angling friends to that "superb cast" which does not land a fish—and particularly if you lack their skill. Don't emulate them, go on bagging trout at close quarters, even if they succeed in forcing their flies 500 feet away.

For the Pennsylvania and Catskill Mountain trout, flies should be tied on No. 9-10-12 size hooks. I like a slight neck bend, they hold fast to the lips. Also choose flies with thin bodies for May and June fishing; they should be quiet in tone, grey, black and brown, like the natural fly you see on the surface. Remember that the fish sees the fly's body from below easily at a depth of 6 or 8 feet, that is why the body of the fly is the most important part to exactly imitate. The cast is different in the waters of Northern Maine and Canada, which is usually a dark color; then the flies must be larger and brighter in color and allowed to sink, or they would not be observed by the fish. A safe cast of flies to begin fishing with is the end fly with grey wings, silver or light body with black hackle. The middle fly, brown speckled wings, orange hackle and dark body. Upper fly, a black grout with thin body, and no hackle. Keep a mental record which fly gets the most fish, if such happens to either of the upper flies, change the best to the end of the cast; it is safer and easier to land a good fish on the end fly. Meanwhile keep your eyes open to notice the color and size of flies that are flitting over the surface. Remember that flies in the early season are most abundant at mornings from 9 to 11 and

a short time from sunset to dark. Trout feed till about an hour after dark, because the cold mist of night drives flies to cover, when they again wake after the sun is well up, about 9 a. m. During the night trout go to the bottom for food, or take a rest; therefore, a worm is more effective at night and early morning than flies. The most unproductive time of trout fishing is from before sunrise to 8 a. m., and high noon to sunset, simply because they are not feeding, or they are resting.

We will now step into the water to wade down stream. There is absolutely no advantage to fish up stream in quick running water. I fished the English River Dove last September and caught just as many trout and greyling down stream as up stream, in shallow as well as deep water. It is the English custom to fish up stream where the rivers are slow moving and deep, fishing from the banks of the river.

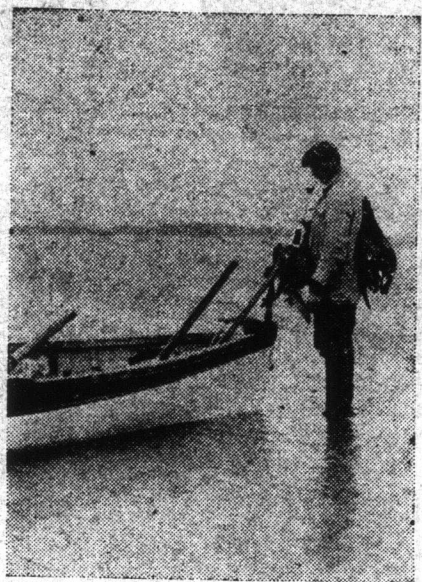
With us it would be impossible to fish and wade against the heavy flow of strong water in the streams here mentioned, unless fishing from the banks, which is not so effective, because from the middle it is easy to cover and have full control of the entire water on both sides; it is also of greater assistance to the amateur who is not a perfect caster in that the water flow carries the flies with a little judicious manipulation, to the most likely spots where trout lie. There is also much less chance to entangle the flies on trees and other obstructions. I always fish from the centre, if not too deep; when it is, I move off to the shallowest side, then cast right across the deeper runway and allow the flies to float down to the middle, moving the tip in a jerky way till it comes right back to my side of the stream. Trout are so exceedingly quick as to often hook themselves before the angler sees or feels them—they also sometimes visibly strike by flopping out of the water in a leisurely manner—but feeling that the steel is not meat, flick the hook out in a trice. In that short time they have closed their mouths, and it is at that time that a quick strike is effective. If the mouth is open when the strike is made the fly comes back when the strike is given and the fish goes his way—for a time. It is useless to let the flies lie still in one place, keep them forever on the move, either in recasting or flitting them along the surface; and if the flies are not taken at the first cast, try another place unless you have seen them rising; at such time a few casts repeated may succeed. If a trout rises to a fly and misses—wait just a minute or so till it goes down to its usual place of observation to be again on the watch for your cast. Place your flies in circling eddies, runways, foot of falls—under and near all obstructions in the water, also the deepest parts of open rippling shallows.

When a fish is hooked, raise the tip, make no effort to curb the first rush outside of what the reel-click does, and keep your hands off the line, it is the most amateurish method I know. To have a long stretch of line dangling in the water to become entangled any moment with the rod or netter limbs. Get control of the reel handle when the fish has gone some distance, then begin to reel in—if it will not come peaceably, follow it down stream, but stop it from running up stream even to almost breaking point in the tackle. The fish gains strength against the flow of water and becomes weaker much quicker along with the flow of water. If you are standing in deep water get out to the shallows in order to net and creel the fish with greater freedom; after the fish is reeled sufficiently close, place the net deep in the water facing its tail, then swoop it out and walk ashore in order to unhook it without danger of slipping back into the water.

Fly and worm fishing are very much alike; indeed the art of fishing with an angle for all fishes differ but slightly. All fish live to eat—take the lure upon that basis, and man, by many ingenious contrivances, succeeds fairly well. But fly fishing soars far above other means as an art of catching fish. Some flies, notably those made and sold for 3 cents apiece in England, for both dry-fly and wet-fly fishing, when seen on or through the clear water, are wonderfully realistic and true to nature—furthermore, the wonder becomes a marvel how they are made, to be ruthlessly knocked about, chewed and even swallowed—to yet retain their perfect form and color.

Insect life in its varied forms, constitute the major portion of the food for mountain trout, and the rapid water requires constant activity on the part of trout to secure their food, which is the sole cause of their gamy qualities. The Willowemoc is remarkably free from coarse fishes, like dace, chub, suckers, or eels, and minnows are not abundant. The case is very different with the Beaver Kill—its sister river—into which it flows. The latter river is full of these coarse fish, in addition to a growing supply of black bass; all, however, are very gamey by reason of the rapid flow of water. On more than one occasion I have had big chub, over a pound in weight, leap above the surface three times when captured on the fly. There is no objection to their presence, except that they consume the food that trout could and would eat. The repeated statements of various writers that brown trout are dull and listless fighters has been the reverse of my experience with them. They are just as bold and vigorous to resist capture as the speckled trout, though I prefer to capture the latter when of fair size.

The foregoing statements are made with I trust, pardonable confidence; they are not made from the writings of others, or taken from government reports, but from the experience of 26 years at close quarters with fresh water game fishing—not annual two-week hazardous vacation, but some seasons of continuous fishing from early April to end of September.



## Sportsman's Calendar

MAY

Trout-fishing good this month EVERYWHERE.

Steelheads still running in certain rivers.

A run of small silver salmon or cohoes comes in May.

Geese and brant may still be shot.

ber. Not for sport alone, but in order to make careful studies of their habits and best mode of capture, yet still with a season's record of over 3,000 trout and bass to the writer's credit.—American Sportsman.

## PASSING COMMENTS

At the time of writing there is no game warden resident in Victoria, and there are abundant reasons why the place left vacant by the late warden, who has handed in his resignation, should be filled without delay. The birds are breeding and the cock blue grouse are hooting to advertise their whereabouts to the unscrupulous with the .22 rifle and the brazen law-breaker with the shotgun, which he abuses by using it to kill birds sitting in and out of season. The fish-hog is abroad in the land and the trout of less than the legal length of six inches are suffering. Complaints come in frequently of nets used in our best trout streams without let or hindrance, and we are waiting impatiently to see the promises put into effect of more consideration given to the protection of our small game.

The recent fine weather has been all in favor of the fisherman, and some very good baskets have been reported from Cowichan Lake, Koksilah, Sooke, and other well-known resorts. Trout have been taking the fly well in Prospect Lake in the mornings, as reported by a resident of that district. These fish are some of the best on the island both for the table and for the hook; and the stock seems to be holding out wonderfully well, considering some of the methods of catching them in vogue, the salmon spoon reflector with the worm behind it being the favorite bait of so many who frequent this water.

If the rumor is true that an attempt has been made to get catfish introduced into Cowichan Lake, this constitutes a serious offence against all sportsmanship and a menace to the existence as such of one of the finest playgrounds of the game fish fisherman to be found anywhere in the world. The lake is so large, that, so long as the breeding grounds of the trout are protected, there will be good trout fishing to be had there for many a generation. Cowichan is a name famous now wherever there are keen fishermen, in both the old world and the new, possibly even better known and appreciated by Old Country fishermen than by Canadians, and to deliberately attempt to ruin the trout fishing by the introduction of these beastly creatures would be a crime which should be heavily punished. There is an ever-present fear that they will find their way there anyhow, now that Shawnigan is full of the pests, but every precaution should be taken to render this as unlikely as possible.

## CATFISH AND COWICHAN

To the Sporting Editor:

Dear Sir—Having read Col. Prior's letter re catfish being transplanted from Shawnigan lake to the Cowichan river and lake, I must inform him and the general fishing public that the catfish are already in the Cowichan river, having seen two caught just below the E. & N. railway bridge and one at Sahtlam, two years ago. I presume they came from Somers lake, which is full of them, having been put there some four or five years ago from Shawnigan lake. I may also say that I saw the party put the first seven catfish into Shawnigan lake. Notwithstanding the fact, there is still good fly-fishing to be had at the present time in Shawnigan.

M. A. WYLDE.

"Pape, what is a safety match?" Mr. Henpecked (looking carefully round to see if his wife is within hearing)—"A safety match, son, is when a bald-headed man marries an armless woman."