

Trout Fishing
in
Chilean Rivers:
A Concise Survey

by

Alexander MacDonald

Edited and Published by

Ian Ruxton

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The Author, Alexander MacDonald
(1894-1954)

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Preface

This previously unpublished manuscript, now in your hands as a book, was first completed by my maternal grandfather Alexander MacDonald in 1940. The Second World War meant that paper was scarce and minds were preoccupied, so that publication was deferred. Another attempt to publish was made by the author after revisions in 1952, and yet again by his family in 1999.

Happily nowadays self-publishing at reasonable cost and effort is possible, so I am in a position to bring this book to readers at last. It will be for you to judge whether it has stood the test of time. At least it provides a careful study of fishing as it was in Chile, and it is pleasantly leavened with gentle humour throughout.

I have taken the liberty of adding the word “Fishing” to the original title, since it more accurately reflects the content of the work.

Ian Ruxton
October 2017

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY¹

Alexander MacDonald C.B.E. 1894-1954

Alexander MacDonald was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1894 and educated at Hutchesons' Boys' Grammar School in Glasgow. He served in the 6th Battalion The Seaforth Highlanders during the First World War and was invalided out, having been wounded and fallen victim to poisoned gas which led to chronic asthma. The treatment in those days was to seek a dry climate in which to live.

From 1919 onwards he worked on the west coast of South America, firstly in Lima, Peru for eight years and subsequently in Santiago, Chile where the climate was much kinder to his health. He led an active business life as Senior Partner of the then firm of Deloitte

¹ The author of this tribute is unknown. It may well have been my father, Allan Dey Ruxton (1925-2017), son-in-law of Alexander MacDonald, in conjunction with my mother. Few others would have had the detailed knowledge necessary. The reference to mobile phones suggests it was written in the 1990s.

Plender Griffiths & Co for many years and then as Managing Director of Odeon, a subsidiary company of Electrical & Musical Industries (E.M.I.) in Santiago, a job he much enjoyed because of his great love of music. He was a much respected member of the British community and served it in many capacities, not least as Chairman of the War Effort for which he received a C.B.E. in 1943. Two years later his son was killed in action in Germany, the son who had been his fishing companion as a small boy in the 1930s.²

Chile had much to offer a man of his talents in the 1930s and 40s and he was able to use his mathematical skills and practical experience as a golfer to design golf courses, a hobby which interested him almost as much as fishing. The first course was at Pucon, followed by the Los Leones course in Santiago in collaboration with Agustin Edwards,³ the

² See Alexander MacDonald, Ian Ruxton (ed.), *In Memory of Lieutenant Ian Lester MacDonald of the Black Watch, 1923-1945*, lulu.com, 2017.

author of the foreword of “Trout in Chilean Rivers”.

He expended a great deal of time and effort on the course at Santo Domingo, designing it and supervising the planting. The course opened in 1946 and is now a beautiful and renowned championship course, a great legacy indeed for which many Chilean golfers are grateful. Not surprisingly, in 1947 he was appointed President of the Asociación de Golf de Chile. The last course he designed was Los Inkas in Lima which opened in 1949, though there were others on the drawing board at the time of his premature death in 1954 at the age of 59.

It was in Chile, a fisherman’s paradise, that he was able to enjoy to the full the great sport of fly fishing in some of the most beautiful and unspoilt countryside in the world. He was persuaded by friends to write an account of his experiences in this field when he had a few

³ Probably Agustin Edwards MacClure of the Edwards family, well-known in Chile. Los Leones opened in 1937.

months of enforced idleness in 1938 owing to illness. He had an enviable knowledge of many of the best fishing rivers and applied painstaking attention to detail to the excellent maps of the areas he knew. "Trout in Chilean Rivers" was written in a more peaceful age before the advent of intensive commercial air travel, sophisticated hotels, mobile phones and all our modern aids. Even colour photography was in its infancy. It was intended as a guide to fly fishermen visiting Chile and the author's wish to share his enthusiasm for the sport with others is obvious. He revised the book in 1952 and his widow returned to England bringing the manuscript and accompanying photographs and maps to hand on to their daughter and family.

Alexander MacDonald had an abiding love for his native Scotland and for his adopted country, Chile, and its people, among whom he had many friends. They regarded him as the epitome of a gentleman, which he was. Moreover, he was a gentle man with a delightful sense of humour and a great record

of public service. He and his contemporaries did much to foster Anglo-Chilean relations in their day.

FOREWORD

“Angling in Chile”⁴ is an interesting, amusing, instructive book, even for an ignorant man in such matters as myself. All I know about fish and in particular of rainbow trout, is that I find them delicious to eat and my own speciality is to find more bones than other people in every mouthful. Perhaps, when someone⁵ said that “angling is somewhat like poetry, men are to be born so”, he uttered an indisputable truth. By association of ideas – that string and indivisible chain that binds the human mind – that comparison of angling with poetry, brought to memory those lovely lines of Pope:

“In genial spring, beneath the quivering shade,
Where cooling vapors breathe along the mead,
The patient fisher takes his silent stand
Intent, his angle trembling in his hand

⁴ This was probably the working title of the book before “Trout in Chilean Rivers”.

⁵ Izaak Walton (c. 1594-1683), author of *The Compleat Angler* (1653-55) from which this quotation is taken.

With looks unmoved he hopes the scaly breed
And eyes the dancing cork and bending reed.”⁶

I must contradict the author, when he says that he presents his book under no delusion as to its literary merits. These do not depend on well turned sentences, carefully drafted and polished, in which the reader detects a certain superfluity of artful wording and a tendency to appear as having some kind of superiority over the reader bordering perhaps on the pedantic, but on the description of the author’s observations, impressions, experiences, feelings and ideas, in a plain, simple and direct language which will put author and reader at once on the same level, on a kind of intellectual intimacy between them. And thus, page after page, in this book, will be read eagerly and enjoyed thoroughly. The author enjoys fishing, has a long experience as an angler, and the reader becomes infected with his love and fancy for this sport which someone [George Parker] described as an

⁶ From ‘Windsor Forest’, a poem by Alexander Pope (1688-1744).

innocent cruelty.

The germs of this "infection" are the flies with which he will catch readers as easily as he hooks rainbow trout or brown trout in those places in Southern Chile where they seem scarce and too cunning for the inexperienced.

As a Chilean, I feel I owe a debt of gratitude to the author for writing a book about a sport which is bound to attract English-speaking visitors to my country. It shows that in the many years he has spent here, he has felt in congenial surroundings and among people he likes. That is always a reciprocal feeling, and one never likes people who do not like you, for life is like a mirror that smiles at you when you smile back. He repays generously the hospitality we have been glad to give him and shows we gave it to the right person.

I have read somewhere a sentence which I quote, for it is most appropriate in this case and runs thus:

"It is an excellent circumstance that hospitality grows best where it is most needed. In the thick of men it dwindles and

disappears, like fruit in the thick of a wood: but where men are planted sparsely it blossoms and matures, like apples on a standard or an espalier. It flourishes where the inn and lodging-house cannot exist.”⁷

Those hidden lakes among our Southern mountains, those lonely rivers and brooks, where Mr. MacDonald has found such pleasure in fishing, could not be either hidden or lonely if paved roads and fine hotels were built and advertised. Fish, as has happened in those places that have been made accessible and comfortable for the idle rich, would become more and more scarce and it would no longer be true that angling is idle time, not idly spent, in the peaceful silence of the bank of a stream only accompanied by the monotonous and delightful whisper of running water.

The author describes vividly the scenery, the peculiar and maybe awe-inspiring beauty of our Southern lakes, rivers, volcanoes and

⁷ A quotation from Hugh Miller (1802-1856), a self-taught Scottish geologist, writer, folklorist and evangelical Christian.

countryside, and in a manner which shows, besides his keen powers of observation, how fond he has become of Southern Chile. And there is the best of reasons for that; his second home reminds him of Bonnie Scotland, the land of his birth.

His sense of humour appears in Chapter VIII, "A day's fishing in Chile". In reading it, I could not help remembering Harry Tate⁸ in one of his comic sketches which he christened "Motoring", when he speaks about the taxi which took him on one of his fishing expeditions. The car, in that sketch, went to pieces, for, like the taxi in question, it was all held together with strings and wires. Tate examines the heap of ruins and enquires from his son, who acts as the perfect fool, what has happened. He gets a most convincing explanation: "The wheels aren't round, papa". "What do you mean, my son?" he said. "They are not going round, papa". Some years ago, I had a similar experience as the one provided

⁸ Ronald Macdonald Hutchison (1872-1940), professionally known as Harry Tate, was an English comedian in music halls and films.

by “Guatón” (an Indian word, for Fatty) for the benefit of the anglers who went on the expedition described by the author. It was in the early days of Ford cars. Suddenly the car stopped, the chauffeur got out to inspect and, at once, applied the jack and lifted the back wheels, started the engine and made the wheels turn round full speed in the air with the most frightful noises and back-firing in the midst of one of Santiago’s thorough-fares. I enquired what that most peculiar treatment meant. The answer was in Tate style. “Bueno; es que es a éstas que se les ha olvidado dar vuelta y hay que amansarlas”. (Well; it is because these wheels have forgotten how to turn round and I am taming them).

In that amusing chapter, Mr. MacDonald describes with great humour and sympathy how most of my countrymen despise punctuality. We know down here that time is money, but we know also that even in England the currency is depreciated. More so in Chile!

Of course, English-speaking anglers who came to Chile are handicapped by the language. It is particularly complicated for

them owing to genders. The first Rector of the University of Chile, a great scholar and learned man, Don Andres Bello,⁹ married an English lady, and as she constantly was mixing the genders and turning into masculine what is feminine and vice-versa, he gave this advice: "Use only one gender, my dear, for thus you will reduce to half the mistakes you make".

But it is interesting to know, as my own experience shows me, that English-speaking folk in Chile, as well as Chileans in English-speaking countries, feel entirely at home even when they are unable to speak the language. In my days in London, I knew an old Chilean farmer from Talca who could not speak a word of English and yet used to say to me constantly that England was the only European country in which he found himself entirely at home.

The discomforts in seeking the best fishing are, no doubt, evident in those regions in Southern Chile where the angler gets the best sport. It is, in a way, part of the amusement.

⁹ Andrés Bello (1781-1865). Rector of the Universidad de Chile, 1843-1865.

You can, however, get the greatest comfort in big hotels if you are willing to run the risk of getting smaller rewards for your labours. In places, such as Pucon, you may or you may not get big trout in large quantities, for it is, at times, most discouraging. There are good and bad seasons, good and bad days for angling; but you never fail to meet plenty of nice people, good-looking women, music and dance in the evening, good rooms to rest and dream of wonderful exploits next day. Besides trout, you can fish for compliments and hear fishy stories from your male friends.

However, even in those lonely rivers and lakes where one has to live under a tent, one is bound to feel surrounded by lavish accommodation and to think the arrangements for fishing are perfection itself when one remembers the experience of Vice-Admiral John Byron,¹⁰ grandfather of the poet¹¹ who

¹⁰ Vice Admiral The Hon. John Byron (1723-1786). Known as 'Foul Weather Jack' because of his frequent encounters with bad weather at sea.

¹¹ George Gordon Byron, Lord Byron (1788-1824).

was wrecked two hundred years ago, in 1740, on an island in Southern Chile which bears to this day the name of his ship, the “Wager”. He resorted to fishing to save the survivors from starvation and his boatswain was, perhaps, the first Englishman who fished in Chile. In Byron’s “Narrative”, published on his return to England, the episode is thus described:

“The pressing calls of hunger drove our men to their wits end, and put them upon a variety of devices to satisfy it. Among the ingenious this way, one Phips, a boatswain’s mate, having got a water puncheon [container or barrel], scuttled it; then lashing two logs, one on each side, set out in quest of adventures in this extraordinary and original piece of inbarkation. By this means he would frequently, when all the rest were starving, provide himself with wild-fowl (referring to fish, as is proved by preceding paragraphs); and it must have been very bad weather indeed which could deter him from putting out to sea when his occasions required. Sometimes, he would venture far out in the

offing, and be absent the whole day: at last, it was his misfortune, at a great distance from shore, to be overset by a heavy sea; but being near a rock, though no swimmer, he managed so as to scramble to it; there he remained two days with very little hopes of any relief, for he was too far off to be seen from shore; but fortunately a boat, having put off and gone in quest of wild fowl that way, discovered him making such signals as he was able, and brought him back to the island.”

In Chapter XIX, Mr. MacDonald deals with “Fishermen’s Yarns” and speaks of the proverbial untruthfulness of anglers. I prefer to follow on the footsteps of Mr. Winston Churchill and call them, in parliamentary language, “terminological inexactitudes”. Are these confined to anglers, or is it a universal amusement? I remember, many years ago, during a long stay in Southern Spain, a fishing yarn which might be added to Mr. MacDonald’s delightful collection. An Andalusian was telling another he had caught

a fish five metres long and weighing over one hundred kilos. The other showed no surprise, but replied he was a coppersmith and was making a copper vessel so big that when he was hammering on one side, people standing on the other could hardly hear a sound. The Andalusian angler not in the least perturbed, asked him what was that colossal copper vessel meant for. "Ah!" retorted the other – "just to cook fish as large or larger than the ones you catch."

Chapter XX, "A word to the prospective visitor", has, besides very useful and practical information on costs of living, some general remarks worth quoting. Mr. MacDonald speaks of a kind of freemasonry about fishing. It comes, perhaps, from the absence of competition between anglers. One cannot imagine a tennis player, a golfer, an athlete, or a boxer helping his opponent to beat him. Fishing is not a sport of an antagonistic nature. Anglers, after a good day, eat together the fish they have hooked and enjoy exchanging notes and information on their exploits mingled, here and there, with a few yarns. It is the

pepper and salt to season the chatting. And on a glorious morning, with a blue clear sky, surrounded by snow capped volcanoes, sitting round a fire on the borders of a lake, so still that you can see reflected on its surface the whole gorgeous scenery, what is there to prevent feeling the joy of living and the happiness of good, intimate companionship.

Mr. MacDonald speaks of the waters of Chillán¹² as being the best in Chile, and perhaps in this continent to cure rheumatism, the most widespread ailment of anglers. I believe he is right. A Jesuit, Padre Diego Rosales,¹³ who lived in Chile from 1630 until his death, speaking in his “Historia del Reyno de Chile” of the resources to be found for medicinal purposes, said over 300 years ago, that almost in every forest so many trees and bushes were to be found with some kind of medicinal properties that they were like chemist shops, and so many waters with healing qualities, that some were like a

¹² Chillan is about 400 kilometres south of Santiago.

¹³ Diego de Rosales (1601-1677).

doctor's prescription. He refers particularly to Chillán and endorses Mr. MacDonald's remarks three hundred years in advance.

May I, in conclusion, say that this book will be eagerly read not only by English-speaking anglers, but by all Chileans who know the language in which it has been written, for it is a valuable contribution to strengthen the links of friendship and understanding which already exist between Chile and England and the United States of America.

AGUSTIN EDWARDS¹⁴

Santiago de Chile, May 1941.

¹⁴ The Edwards family of Chile is of Welsh origin. They became financially and politically influential in the 19th century, and still own its most influential newspaper chain, El Mercurio, S.A.P. Several family members were named "Agustin Edwards". Probably it was Agustin Edwards MacClure (1878-1941) who wrote this foreword.

TO MY
FISHING FRIENDS
IN CHILE

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

CHAPTER I

(pp. 1-8 of the typed manuscript)

I have often wondered what has inspired the writing of a particular book by an amateur author. Expeditions to unknown countries, unusual experiences, distinction in particular spheres of activity or sport, scientific research – those are a few of the reasons why books are written and there are many more. In my own case an active life with comparatively little spare time and a knowledge of my own literary limitations have caused my efforts in the direction of journalism to be confined to a few articles in the press. Some years ago, however, an unexpected turn of events provided me with a lot of spare time on my hands and the search for an outlet to occupy those hours of leisure is the “raison d’etre” of this book. In all modesty I present it, under no delusions as to its literary defects, but in the hope that it may give pleasure to kindred spirits in this country

and in other parts of the world.

The problem of the subject to choose was an extremely difficult one as it seemed to me that little or none of my experiences or ideas could have any possible interest to the average reader. After considerable thought I came to the conclusion that, as many of the best days of my life have been spent trout fishing in Chile and, as the subject is comparatively little known to fishermen in other parts of the world, a book on such a theme could not fail to make an appeal to fellow anglers and might even attract some of them to pay a visit to this country at some future date. I was supported in this conclusion by the recollection of a conversation I had in Pucon several years ago with an angler who had come out all the way from England to fish. In the course of conversation he told me that he had been induced to come to Chile by an article he read in "The Sketch" and he proceeded to relate to me that the article was written about a camping expedition in the south, in which the

information regarding the fishing had attracted his attention. Actually I was one of the party in that particular camping expedition, but what impressed me was that the article in question, which was quite short, should have been responsible for the visit of this fisherman from England. If this book should have a similar result and at the same time assist our visitor in making his plans, I shall be amply rewarded.

It has often been said that, wherever you have a trout stream, the surrounding country is beautiful, and in my own experience I have always found this to be true. The south of Chile is very beautiful country and its lake district is renowned the world over; every year more and more visitors from abroad are being attracted to it as the travelling facilities and hotel accommodation improve. The best fishing in Chile lies in the heart of the lake district and the natural surroundings of the trout rivers are extremely beautiful and reminiscent of the finest scenery in

Switzerland and other parts of Europe. Perhaps it would be fairer to say that the Chilean lake district has a beauty peculiarly its own and the combination of lake, river, forest and the inevitable snow-clad volcano puffing smoke into a cloudless blue sky is something worth going a long way to see. Certain parts of the south of Chile remind me very much of my native land (Bonnie Scotland) and, in recalling to me the beauty of that little country north of the Tweed, stir in me a deeper affection for the land of my adoption, my second home. A subject, therefore, involving the recollection of the lovely parts of Chile in which I have had the good fortune to fish, has a particular appeal to me and is a happy choice which will afford me many hours of pleasure.

Books on fishing subjects are as a general rule written by experts who tell their less experienced readers how to flick a fly under an overhanging tree on the opposite side of the river in a gale of wind, how to tie knots, what

flies or bait to use and all sorts of useful information. This book is an exception to the rule in that it is written by a very ordinary fisherman, who would not have the effrontery to try to teach anybody how to fish, and who is merely writing as the intermediary for fishermen in Chile in conveying to fishermen in other lands information about the magnificent sport to be had in the country.

It is unfortunate that none of the older and abler anglers of Chile, as for instance Dr. James H. McLean,¹ has found the time to do what I am now attempting. Dr. McLean is, after all, a scholar and from the literary point of view he would have done justice to the theme, in addition to the fact that his experience with rod and line is much wider. There are few rivers in this country that he has not fished and he is also well known to anglers in New Brunswick and other parts of

¹ James Hector McLean, author of *Historia de la Iglesia Presbiteriana in Chile*, Santiago: Impresa Universitaria, 1932.

the world. I have come to the regrettable conclusion that the anglers in this country are much too busy to find the necessary time to give their fellow anglers the benefit of their ideas and experiences. During the fishing season they spend every available moment on the trout stream – who am I to blame them? – and during the close season they have to tie flies, sort out their tackle and prepare for the next fishing season, which occupies many hours of leisure and considerable thought in determining the choice of flies and other articles of re-equipment. Force of circumstances has put me in the position of having the necessary time and more to spare and it is fitting that I should utilise this time in assembling as much information as possible on the subject of trout fishing in this delightful country and putting it down in black and white.

There is, in the fisherman's opinion, no relaxation comparable with that afforded by the "gentle art". Business and other worries

vanish as soon as one approaches the stream and, when one is finally in midstream casting at a rising fish or in prospect of a rise, it is quite out of the question to think of anything else.

What more peaceful and restful atmosphere could one choose than a trout stream! The lone angler, wading quietly and slowly along the stream, at peace with himself and his surroundings, cannot but absorb the atmosphere of rest and contentment which he finds in the midst of nature at its very best. The occasional excitement of taking a fish adds zest to the relaxation. I cannot imagine any recreation more satisfying and complete. In choosing fishing therefore as my subject, I feel that the pleasure of recollection which it must afford will convert what might have been a task into a mental relaxation.

A matter of twenty-five years ago trout fishing in Chile was limited to a few places in the Central Zone and the south and there were only a few trout fishermen in the country.

Since then, however, fishing has made great strides and every year many more enthusiasts are being attracted to the rivers; in this connection I am not referring only to the man of leisure or the businessman who is looking for holiday recreation or an entertaining weekend but to the much more humble citizen. All over the country one comes across farm labourers and working men trying their luck with the old bamboo pole and a bit of clothesline – and good luck to them! In recent years also more rivers have been stocked and with the passage of time trout have found their way from the main rivers to the smaller rivers and streams with the result that there are few rivers or streams between the Aconcagua in the north and Cape Horn in the south where they cannot be found. It is a truism of fishing in Chile and elsewhere that, the more inaccessible the river, the better the fishing, and the older and more experienced fisherman, who hates a crowd, is constantly going further afield looking for “new rivers to

conquer". For a time the secret is jealously guarded – the degree of secrecy varies with the keenness of the fisherman and in some cases not even one's best friend is told – but eventually it leaks out and the newfound stream can never be quite the same again. In this way year by year one is hearing of new fishing resorts all over the country and, while one has to discount the fabulous tales which are sometimes unfolded, there is no doubt that there is excellent fishing to be had all over the country, and that a great deal of it is still unknown. For the benefit of the angler from abroad, however, it must be made clear that, in addition to the difficulty of getting there, no hotel accommodation is to be found in such out-of-the-way places, which is a good reason for confining my selection of rivers mainly to those better known where reliable accommodation can be obtained. Of course, there is always camping for those so inclined, and I know that many anglers seek the wide open spaces as a matter of preference. For the

visitor, however, camping is a major problem and he can generally only consider fishing resorts where hotel accommodation and facilities are to be found. If I should fail to include certain rivers or have omitted your favourite water from the select few, it may be attributed to my ignorance of their existence or their outstanding qualities and for such omissions I crave the indulgence of my readers.

New Zealand has been called an “Angler’s Paradise” and I have heard Chile similarly described but I should go further and describe Chile as “A fly fisherman’s Paradise”. Conditions are generally so favourable for flyfishing that it is rarely that one is obliged to resort to other ways and means of catching fish. In my case, as in many others, I am sure, flyfishing appeals to me because I started with a fly and have rarely had occasion to use anything else nor felt that I wanted anything better. On one occasion when I attempted to learn to spin with a baitcasting reel of the “Altex” type, I had no success whatsoever and

had to abandon six perfectly good spoons and minnows in the bed of the river, although I must confess that with the exercise of infinite patience this form of spinning would have appealed to me in the course of time; but the temptation to stick to a fly in this country is too great and there is an indefinable something about flyfishing which puts it on a different plane to any other kind of fishing. My spinning and trolling friends will probably dub me a supercilious purist but, far from this being the case, I am very conscious of my incompetence as a fisherman in having, so to speak, only one shot in my bag and wish I had the ability to adapt myself to any conditions which might arise. Nor do I make any claim for flyfishing on the academic grounds that it is more sporting as far as the fish is concerned as he has more chance of getting away as I think his probability of escape in the hands of a capable fly fisherman is almost equally remote. In my fishing bag I always carry a few spoons and other gadgets for emergency

purposes but it is a bad day when they have to be produced as I have so little idea of how to use them. This longwinded explanation is in the nature of an apology for writing this book almost exclusively from the point of view of the flyfisherman and, while I must confess that my main purpose is to interest flyfishermen in other parts of the world in the excellent sport to be had in Chile, I trust that the information contained therein will not be without appeal to the fisherman who prefers to spin or troll.

In the number of *Punch*, dated August 14, 1939, there is an amusing caricature of a fishing visitor and a small local boy on the bank of a river, with the following dialogue:

Visitor: "What's the favourite fly in these parts, boy?"

Boy: "A worm." ²

2



The *Punch* caricature

It would be unjust to say that the favourite fly in Chile is a worm but the allegation would have some foundation as there are in this country a considerable number of bait fishermen and they are not confined to small boys and those who can afford nothing better. It is only fair to state, however, that the main factor is the cost of the salmon fly, which is prohibitive to the majority of local fishermen, and that few have yet acquired the ability to tie a fly, which would overcome the difficulty. There can be no objection to fishing with a worm when there is no alternative, but in a trout stream where the water is clear as crystal it can only be regarded as a barbaric custom, a relic of the dark ages which is bound to disappear to a great extent in the course of time as flyfishing becomes better known and appreciated. I should mention that worm fishing in this country is entirely unskilled and does not mean casting as in other parts; it consists simply of dipping the worm into each successive deep pool and hoping for the best,

which as a means of “catching fish” is highly successful.

As previously mentioned, this book is primarily intended to interest fishermen in other parts of the world in fishing conditions in Chile but certain local problems are taken up, which are obviously for internal consumption. I have been very frank about such matters and I trust that my readers in this country will realise that my criticism is constructive in that I have endeavoured to suggest steps which might be taken to improve fishing conditions.

Chile employs the metric system of weights and measures but for the benefit of fishermen in the English-speaking countries, I have used the fishing weights and measures to which they are accustomed. The only exception to this is that I quote distances, and also show them in my fishing maps, in kilometres as well as miles.

I am afraid it will be found that I have been guilty of repetition in certain instances; I have

tried to avoid this but have found that certain matters requiring emphasis fall under more than one appropriate heading. I had also hoped to eliminate myself almost entirely from the book but found it impossible as so many fishing experiences are personal and, again, I have to take the responsibility for most of the opinions expressed. For such sins of repetition and egoism I beg your pardon.

This book was first written in the year 1940 at a time when everybody was much too busy with the war to bother about fishing in Chile or elsewhere and when paper was very scarce, as a result of which any question of its publication was deferred until better days. I have discovered that putting it up to date is a major problem as the fishing world is in a constant state of flux. Rivers change, new rivers are discovered (in the fishing sense), new hotels and fishing lodges spring up, anglers come and go, and fresh records are made; in a country so widespread it is hard to keep pace with it all and things happen which

one only hears about years later. Some fishing resorts may have changed for the worse – I know that is true particularly in the Central Zone and it is possible that my description may show fishing conditions in too favourable a light for present day standards as there has undoubtedly been a levelling down in recent years. In such cases I can only excuse myself by suggesting that my picture is as it used to be and ought to be if all were well in the state of Chile from the fishing point of view! Nothing short of a catastrophe in the shape of a radical change in the climate and the rivers going dry can alter the fact that Chile has all the natural conditions of a great fishing country and, provided that man plays his part in looking after it, Chile will always rank very high in the world's fishing ladder.

I am greatly indebted to my many fishing friends in Chile and other parts of the world who have provided me with photographs and invaluable information and have been so helpful and patient throughout.

But let us have done with explanations,
apologies and acknowledgments and proceed!

CHAPTER II

(pp. 9-13 of the typed manuscript)

SOME LEGAL ASPECTS

For my information on the legal side of trout fishing in Chile I am indebted to two distinguished members of the legal profession in Santiago, Don Mariano Puga¹ and Don Benjamin Claro,² who are also keen fishermen.

Don Benjamin Claro informs me that, when he had an interview with the late President [Franklin D.] Roosevelt³ in Washington, one of

¹ Don Mariano Puga Vega (1899-1976). Advocate. Member of the Chilean National Congress. Ambassador to the United States, 1957-8. Delegate at the General Assembly of the United Nations, 1963.
(https://www.bcn.cl/historiapolitica/resenas پارlamentarias/wiki/Mariano_Puga_Vega accessed September 16, 2017)

² Probably Don Benjamin Claro Velasco, sometime Minister of Education.

³ Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945) was a lifelong avid fisherman. This part must have

the main topics of their conversation was fishing and the President displayed a lively interest in all he was told about the rivers in the south of Chile. It is rather significant that outstanding men in all walks of life should be keen fishermen and that, in normal times when they can slip away for a well-earned rest, they generally seek a quiet haven where they can devote themselves to their favourite sport. Anglers have always been regarded by their fellow-citizens with a certain amount of suspicion as to their sanity but surely the patronage of so many distinguished world figures must help them to live down this unenviable and unjust reputation!

It would seem advisable before going any further to acquaint visiting fishermen with the legal conditions prevailing in Chile so they may know where they stand. I shall endeavour to make this legal survey as concise as possible without sacrificing essential

been written after his death.

information as I am afraid that a lengthy discussion on law might weary my readers. Only those sections of the law dealing with fishing in rivers and lakes and with trout, are considered.

All rivers in Chile are the property of the State, with the exception of those that rise and fall in the same property, over which the owners of such property have absolute rights. There has always been some doubt as to the correct interpretation of this exception, which, translated literally, reads, "Springs which are born and die within the same property." I believe that the opinion is now generally held that the exception only applies in the case of a stream having its source and coming to an end within one and the same property and that a tributary of a main river itself does not fall within this definition as the tributary or main river itself does not come to an end but merges with the main river or the sea, as the case may be.

It is difficult to imagine a trout stream

rising and finally coming to an end within a property and the practical effect of this interpretation of the law is that trout rivers in this country are all public property.

All lakes, in which a vessel of over one hundred tons can navigate, are also the property of the State, and all the important lakes connected with fishing are in this category.

According to the law the President of the Republic is authorized to concede private fishing rights over small portions of lakes, rivers and streams for periods of three years at a time, subject to the payment of a consideration. It is inconceivable, however, that such fishing rights would be granted today, other than for commercial purposes in which the State might be interested. The tendency of legislation in this democratic country is socialistic and the possibility of establishing private fishing rights may be dismissed as not merely unlikely but in open conflict with national interests. It must also be

remembered that fishing is a secondary feature of the rivers, which must be considered primarily from the standpoint of their importance for irrigation purposes. Nevertheless it may become necessary for fishing rights to be granted in some of the best rivers if the fishing is to be preserved for the benefit of visitors from abroad.

A further stipulation of the law is to the effect that, in addition to the river itself, a space of five metres on each bank is also public property and owners of property are obliged to keep this space clear of crops, buildings, etc. for the benefit of fishermen. They are under no obligation, however, to give access to the river through their property so that, if such access be withheld, fishermen have to find their way to the river by the water's edge or the water itself. In certain cases the difficulty of access is tantamount to the existence of private fishing rights but such cases are so rare that they may be ignored for practical purposes. This question of access to the river is the most

tricky point in the law and opinions are by no means unanimous as to the rights of the fisherman in this respect. In some quarters it is held that the fisherman can demand right of way to the river through any property and that, if refused, he is entitled to the assistance of the authorities to enforce his rights. My advisers state, however, that there is nothing laid down clearly in the law to support this argument and that the fisherman would require to take action in the courts to establish his right of access. The best advice that can be given to the fisherman regarding this matter is that, if his path to the river takes him through private property, he should ask politely for permission to go through: if such permission be refused, which is extremely unlikely, he should not argue about it but leave at once and look for another river.

The administration and control of fishing in Chile is vested in the “Dirección General de Pesca y Caza”, which will be known hereafter in this book briefly as the “Department of

Fisheries". The chief of the Department, the "Director General de Pesca y Caza" will be known as the "Director of Fisheries".

The right to fish in lakes, rivers and streams can only be exercised by persons in possession of a license issued by the Department of Fisheries; the license for citizens and residents is annual and for tourists monthly. The tourist license refers only to certain of the principal rivers in the South and must be taken out by all fishermen, local and foreign alike. A fishing license, annual or monthly, costs at present fifty Chilean pesos (about four shillings or fifty cents American) and is easily obtained.

It is prohibited to fish, purchase, sell, carry or have in your possession trout during the period from 15th April to 15th October of each year, the spawning or close season. There is an exception to this regulation in the Central Zone, in the region between the River Aconcagua in the north and the River Tinguiririca in the south inclusive, in which fishing for rainbow trout is permitted up to

31st May, provided that the catch is not sold in the market; in other words, this special provision applies only for sporting purposes.

Trout measuring less than 30 centimetres (11.8 inches) must be put back in the water.

As a matter of interest the regulation for salmon gives the minimum measurement of 40 centimetres (15.75 inches) but you have to catch them first! You will hear more about salmon later.

Traps can only be installed in rivers with the authority of the Department of Fisheries. If a dam or barrier be constructed in a river with a height of more than 60 centimetres (23.6 inches), a fish-ladder or fish-pass must be provided to conform with the specifications of the Department of Fisheries.

The manufacture of caviar from salmon or trout roe is prohibited.

The use of dynamite or other explosives is expressly forbidden and also the pollution of the rivers.

Netting is forbidden, but there is a special

proviso that the President of the Republic, on the advice of the Department of Fisheries, may authorise netting temporarily in rivers where there is a superabundance of fish. In such cases of authorised netting, the mesh of the net for trout must show a minimum width or opening of 40 millimetres (about 1 1/2 inches).

The functions of fishing police are vested in the "Cuerpo de Carabineros", the police force of the Republic. The Director of Fisheries may also appoint ad-honorem fishing inspectors for a period of two years, subject to re-election. The duties of such inspectors, who are generally well known fishermen, are to report contraventions of the law and to cooperate in the enforcement thereof; for identification purposes they are supplied with a special license by the Director of Fisheries.

There is nothing more to tell you about trout fishing legislation in Chile, which I think is adequate for present day requirements, except for one minor defect, namely, that the minimum size of trout which can be taken,

while reasonable in the south, is too large for the Central Zone and should be adjusted accordingly.

As far as a visitor is concerned, the practical effect of the law is that, provided that he procures a license, he may fish anywhere and must put back all trout measuring less than say twelve inches.

I doubt whether there is any country in the world where the law is more liberal to the fisherman and where there are fewer restrictions than in Chile.

CHAPTER III

(pp. 14-23 of the typed manuscript)

CLIMATIC AND GENERAL CONDITIONS

If you look at the map of Chile and the Argentine Republic, you will observe a curious fact that the great majority of the rivers rising in the Andean mountain ranges are on the Chilean side of the mountains. My only comment is to congratulate Chile on what appears to be a remarkable stroke of good fortune!

The map of Chile is rather an unwieldy document on account of the long and narrow shape of the country and for the sake of convenience I am dividing the fishing map into three zones, namely, (1) the Central Zone, (2) the Intermediate Zone and (3) the Southern Zone. As the fishing characteristics and climatic conditions are somewhat different in each zone, the subdivision has much to commend it apart from a matter of convenience.

My fishing zones may be roughly defined as follows, reading from north to south:

CENTRAL ZONE: From Los Andes (River Aconcagua)¹ to Talca.

INTERMEDIATE ZONE: From Talca² to Lautaro.

SOUTHERN ZONE: From Lautaro³ to the extreme south.

¹ The Rio Aconcagua enters the Pacific Ocean 12 miles north of Valparaiso.



² Talca is a city about 158 miles south of Santiago.

³ Lautaro is a city in Chile's Araucania Region.

The fishing qualities of the respective zones may be summed up briefly as Central Zone, good, Intermediate Zone, better, and Southern Zone, best.

On discussing this proposed subdivision of fishing zones in this country with experienced fishermen, they all concur that the Department of Fisheries should have some such subdivision in the law. As an immediate illustration of the different features of the zones I have suggested, the average size of trout is different in each zone; yet the law stipulates one minimum size of trout, which can be taken, for the whole of Chile.

My readers in the Northern Hemisphere will forgive me for reminding them of the obvious fact that the seasons in Chile are exactly the reverse of theirs. Our fishing season for trout commences in the middle of October and ends in the middle of April each year. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, a seasonal distinction is drawn between rainbow and brown trout but this only applies to a sector of

the Central Zone and is therefore of minor importance as it does not go far enough. The seasons for rainbow and brown trout are, of course, quite distinct and the proper season should be made effective throughout the entire Republic but I suppose that the authorities take the view that under present conditions the advantages of having fixed dates for the duration of the season outweigh the advantages of catering to the idiosyncrasies of the various species of fish. It would certainly be very difficult, if not impossible, to control the seasonal distinction in this country at present.

The paramount importance of the weather to the fisherman gives it a right to early consideration and it is a subject which I approach with diffidence. However, my readers know as well as I do that there is no golden rule about it and my intention is merely to give a general idea of the weather which may be expected in a normal season in Chile, while at the same time mentioning

some of the particular difficulties the visitor may have to contend with in the south on account of unseasonable changes and other local disturbances.

In the Central Zone there is virtually no rain during the fishing season and, apart from the coastal districts, it is very hot in the months of January and February, although fortunately there is little or no humidity about it and the nights are cool. The mean temperature in the summer months in Santiago and environs, for instance, is about 85° Fahrenheit in the shade and sometimes it reaches 95°. In these months the main efforts of the inhabitants in this part of Chile are directed towards getting away from the heat to the coast or the south.

Between the Central Zone and the south, in what I describe as the Intermediate Zone, the chances of good weather in the summer months are favourable and rain is infrequent or, in other words, you have more chance of escaping rain than in the far south.

In the Southern Zone it is generally conceded that January and February are the only months when one has a reasonable prospect of avoiding rain altogether or nearly so. The weather in Chile, however, is no less treacherous than elsewhere in the world and I remember a few years ago when it rained every day, except one, in February in the south. In the months of November, December and March I should say that the chances of good weather are about even and in October and April, the odds are in favour of bad weather. In those two months it is a matter of luck although in my own experience I have rarely run into bad weather fishing in April. When it does rain, however, it is generally no half-hearted affair and my advice to the visitor from abroad is to come prepared for bad weather. In the south it can be warm in January and February, but generally speaking the temperature is very pleasant throughout the summer and it is only in the early part or late in the fishing season that cold weather

need be feared.

The prevailing and fair-weather wind in Chile is the south wind, the converse of which is that the moment the wind veers round to the north you may look for trouble. A troublesome wind in the south in the summer is the “puelche” which in each place has its own peculiar local characteristics but is generally understood to be a strong warm wind which comes over the Cordillera from the sun-beaten Argentine plains. This wind occasionally lasts for several days – usually one or three and hardly ever two – and gathers strength as each day progresses. There is not the slightest doubt that it affects the fishing adversely, much more than the ordinary wind, and, when it is prevalent, the wise fisherman will concentrate his energies on the early morning before the wind rises or on the evening if and when it has dropped temporarily. While the “puelche” is at its height, there is little chance of catching fish and the conditions are rather unpleasant.

The temperature in the south is at times affected by forest fires which in recent years have been unduly prevalent and quite serious in some parts. The authorities are now taking the matter in hand and attempting to stop or control such fires which are generally caused by the small landholder desirous of clearing forest land and extending his crops. It seems a crime to see forests disappearing in this crude fashion, leaving behind a picture of wanton destruction reminiscent of the western front in the year 1918, which detracts considerably from the beauty of the country. The argument of the small landholder, of course, is that he has to live! It must also be borne in mind that to all intents and purposes there is no other way of clearing the land at present as machinery brought in for this work is extremely limited.

The Andes mountain range has a number of volcanoes, all more or less active in a quiet way, and there have been cases where rivers have been seriously affected by volcanic

disturbances; some years ago certain rivers contained thousands of dead fish towards the end of the season and volcanic ash deposits were claimed to be the cause. You will hear more about this when I deal with Puyehue. A volcano eruption sometimes causes a considerable rise in temperature in the surrounding district and, in some way or another which nobody seems able to explain, volcanic disturbances in the water must be the reason for the fish dying. In the 1940 season the Llaima volcano, east of Temuco, was in eruption and, in combination with forest fires, was said to have been the reason for the heat wave in that district and even further south. For ten days or more the temperature in Pucon and other parts of the south was around 90° [Fahrenheit] and actually touched 95°, which is extremely unusual. There were no reports, however, of damage in the rivers although the fishing was undoubtedly affected adversely while the heat wave lasted.

In the summer of 1948/1949 ⁴ the Villarrica

volcano became much more active and there were several serious eruptions, the first of which caused some loss of life and property. The lava melted the snow around the peak and water rushed down the mountainside in torrents, carrying everything (farmhouses, bridges, rocks, etc.) in its course. There were reports of dead fish and serious damage to the fishing but happily these were exaggerated.

In an occasional summer, and particularly after it has been hot, the “tábano”, which is a large-sized horsefly, can make things unpleasant. In the lake district around Ensenada it is a hardy annual and never fails in late December and January; in February fortunately it disappears. You will have no difficulty in identifying this fly if he should be around. I have known of cases where fishermen have left the river because they could not put up with the “tábanos”, which will

⁴ The years mentioned prove that this is the revised manuscript of 1952, not the original of 1941.

give you some idea of how troublesome they can be on occasions. It is also said that fishermen have been seen wearing veils and gloves, but this may be an exaggeration. In my own experience I have never been seriously worried by insects on Chilean rivers. I gather also that it is safe to say that anyone who has experienced the flies and other crawlers on American and Canadian rivers will decide that we have nothing to complain about in Chile.

There are no poisonous snakes in Chile and the small specimen one occasionally sees on the river bank is quite innocuous.

The visitor from abroad must not be alarmed at the possibility of having his fishing holiday ruined by such climatic conditions and local disturbances as I have mentioned, which are extremely rare; the chances are that in the average season he will enjoy good weather and good sport.

The south of Chile, with its extensive system of inter-connected lakes and rivers, is particularly well suited for the development of

salmon and trout. The lakes act as huge reservoirs for the fish and are more in the nature of inland seas.

As regards the rivers, there is little to say beyond the statement that they are typical salmon and trout rivers with all the usual characteristics and I trust that the photographs shown in the book⁵ will give my readers a good idea of what they look like. They rise in the Andean mountain range, are fed in the spring and early summer by the melted snow, and pursue their short, mad course – no river in Chile is more than 240 kilometres (150 miles) long and most of them are shorter – over a rocky and gravelly bed, broken by falls, rapids, cataracts and cascades until they reach the sea. Perhaps I should be more explicit and say that the early or mountainous part of their course is precipitous and often causes a raging torrent; as they

⁵ Unfortunately there are no photos with the manuscript.

approach the sea, they gradually widen and become bigger and quieter until they finish up in a broad estuary at the sea coast. The water is cold enough for salmon and trout, especially in the south where the trout thrive and grow to unusually big sizes; in the Central Zone in recent years a succession of dry winters with the consequent scarcity of snow almost dried up some of the trout streams and it surprised the local fishermen that the trout continued to exist in the small quantity of apparently tepid water which remained towards the end of the season. The past few winters have been fortunately more normal in rainfall in the Central Zone and the streams are benefitting accordingly.

For some considerable time I have been accumulating data regarding river temperatures in Chile and find that the temperature in the southern rivers, such as the Trancura and the Enco, varies between 48° and 54° Fahrenheit during the fishing season while the surface waters of the lakes, such as

Villarrica and Panguipulli, which are quite deep, show temperatures varying between 60° and 70°. In the month of March, the Collanco stream, which is in the Central Zone near Santiago, registered a temperature at midday of 62°, which must be considered highly satisfactory in view of the small amount of water in the stream at that date, while another stream near Santiago, the Molina, with more water, showed a temperature in the evening of 55°. In those small mountain streams during the hottest part of the summer, the morning and evening temperatures vary as much as 8°. In previous seasons after abnormally dry winters, the water temperature in Central Zone streams must have reached 70° at times, I imagine, although this is guesswork.

The main rivers, as they approach the sea, lose their clarity and become discoloured and, in the height of summer, almost tepid in temperature, so that it is only in the region towards the mountains that conditions for

trout are favourable; furthermore, in the Central Zone the main rivers (Aconcagua, Maipo, etc.) are muddy practically all the year round and it is only in the tributaries, the mountain streams, that the water is clear. As you proceed from north to south the tendency is for the main rivers to become clearer but, broadly speaking, it is not until you reach Temuco that there is any fishing west of the main railway line, that is to say, in the seaward direction.

There is little or no pollution in Chilean rivers as, of course, most of the rivers, or the fishable waters, are in the Cordillera district away from the big towns. The river Mapocho, which flows through Santiago, gets the tailings from the Disputada⁶ copper mines and is scorned by trout and fishermen alike. Some years ago the lower reaches of the river San

⁶ Compañía Minera Disputada de Las Condes S.A. owned the Los Bronces and El Soldado mines near Santiago. It was acquired by Anglo American from ExxonMobil in 2002.

Pedro were occasionally fouled by the operations at a gold-washing plant on one of the tributaries. The upper reaches of the Bío-Bío were similarly affected, in certain sections and for short distances, by gold-washing operations. Apart from those cases, I cannot recall detrimental reports regarding any other rivers in the country and am sure that they are singularly free from pollution. The law protects the rivers and lakes, and the inhabitants thereof, from damage which may result from impure residues from farms, factories or mines, as it is stipulated that such residues must be rendered innocuous before they enter the waters.

Trout in the south of Chile have always had a reputation for their good condition but for the past two years in certain rivers in the south they have been affected by a species of worm. When a fish is taken in bad condition you may expect to find the existence of worm and unfortunately it is stated that the worm can also affect human beings. In the summer

of 1951 a Government commission made a study of this matter and presented a report; again in this last summer another commission was engaged in a further examination of the problem. Whatever the official report may or may not disclose it is a good idea to ensure that any trout you may eat has been properly cooked.

An important factor affecting the trout rivers and streams in the Central Zone, and to a lesser degree in the Intermediate Zone, is that every year more and more water is being drawn off for irrigation purposes. The effect in the small mountain streams is that it is only right up in the mountainous regions that there is any water left late in the season and the fish are overcrowded; in the bigger rivers in the Intermediate Zone the water becomes low towards the end of the season but the fishing is apparently unaffected. In any event I am afraid that nothing can be done about this matter as irrigation has a prior claim to the water.

Many cormorants and ducks are to be found on Chilean rivers. The cormorant is the natural enemy of the trout and takes a heavy toll, indeed, a much heavier toll than the fisherman.

With the possible exception of the Bío-Bío in the Intermediate Zone, it is only in the south that rivers can be fished from a boat and, generally speaking, a flat-bottomed boat can be handled without much difficulty despite the strength of the current and the occasional rapids which have to be surmounted. A canoe would be very useful on the swifter rivers and it is rather surprising that it has not yet been introduced into Chile as one was tried successfully some years ago. In the rivers in the Central and Intermediate Zone, with little exception, it is all bank fishing and wading. In the majority of rivers in the south, there are many places where the fly fisherman can get out of the boat and wade or fish from the bank, particularly on the islands which divide the rapids or heavy current; for bank fishing in

the south the best time to fish is obviously in March and April when the water is low.

There are very few dryfly fishermen in Chile and the reason for this is chiefly that the conditions are generally deemed to be more suitable for the use of the wet fly. In the small mountain streams in the Central Zone, the only way to catch the better trout in the crystal pools towards the end of the season is with a dry fly and in the big rivers in the Intermediate and Southern Zones there are many still waters away from the current where the dryfly angler can get all the sport he wants in suitable weather. I have seen the rivers in the south on still summer evenings literally boiling with trout rising apparently to moths and other insects hovering on the water. I have tried them with every conceivable fly in my bag on many occasions without the slightest success; once in a while I have got a few on a Coachman but generally they have defeated me, and I am sure that the expert dryfly angler would be in his element under

such conditions. I have never seen anything resembling a big hatch of fly on a Chilean river nor is it likely, as the underwater conditions in such rapid waters are not conducive to the intensive breeding of insects. The flies and other insects that one sees on the surface are mostly land-bred insects, many of which come from the overhanging trees and branches on the river, and water-bred flies are in the minority and scarce. The trout have to depend for their food mainly on fresh-water crabs and other crustaceans, snails, slugs, tadpoles, beetles, caterpillars, worms, etc. and, unfortunately in waters where food is scarce, on small trout. A favourite food for the trout is the small "pejerrey" or fresh-water herring, which is unfortunately on the decline in Chilean rivers. The fresh-water crab (apancora) is a great delicacy for the trout; it is said that the crabs are migratory and that the rivers are replenished annually with food for the trout by the migration of many thousands of crabs from the sea shores. Whether or not

this is the case, there is no doubt that the condition for the trout in the southern rivers depends to a great extent on the supply of crabs and other crustaceans available. It is also an accepted fact that the vivid colour of the flesh of the trout in the southern water of Chile is due to the abundance of crustaceans available as food.

The trout, therefore, are ground or bottom feeders in this country as a general rule and that is the reason why the wet fly is the preferred of fly fishermen and also why spoons, minnows, flatfish and orenos or plugs are almost infallible. The standard patterns of wet fly are so generally successful that very few anglers in this country trouble to study the flies on the water and it is only on rare occasions such as the still summer evenings I have described that they find themselves in any difficulty. Although the dry fly does yield a heavy creel⁷ in Chilean waters, its use

⁷ Creel: a wicker basket for holding fish.

requires special skill and involves extra pains. It is not surprising, therefore, that, while good catches can be made with the wet fly, few will forsake it for the more delicate art.

The select few, who do devote themselves to the dry fly in this country, claims that it can be used on most of the rivers in Chile, and will often prove more successful than the wet fly. One of them tells me that “drag” on the dry fly, so studiously avoided by the experts in Great Britain, is sometimes desirable with the rainbow and that, on propounding this heresy to an expert on holiday in this country, he confirmed that the same was true in New Zealand.

CHAPTER IV

(pp. 24-35 of the typed manuscript)

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF TROUT IN CHILE

I am indebted to the Department of Fisheries of the Chilean Government for the statistical information they have given me with regard to the introduction of trout in Chile.

The credit for the introduction of trout into Chile belongs, without any doubt to the late Federico Albert,¹ a German citizen, who persuaded the Chilean Government of the advisability of introducing salmon and trout to the eminently suitable rivers in the country,



¹ Federico Albert (1867-1928)

and he was nominated the first chief of the Department of Fisheries, which was set up in the year 1905. He established the hatchery at Río Blanco in that year and then proceeded to Germany to superintend the acquisition of salmon and trout ova [eggs] for Chilean rivers. At the same time he engaged two technical men, one of whom, Don Pedro Golusda, was still with the Department until a few years ago, and all three set sail for Chile with 150 salmon and trout fingerlings,² which did not survive the sea trip, and 400,000 ova distributed as follows:-

Atlantic salmon (Rhine) – <i>Salmo salar</i> ...	
160,000 (40%)	
Brown trout	– <i>Salmo fario</i> ...
160,000 (40%)	
Rainbow trout	– <i>Salmo irideus</i>
... 40,000 (10%)	

² A small, young fish, especially one less than one year old and about the size of a human finger.

in the first instance, were made as follows:

Year 1906 400,000 ova

Year 1907 400,000 ova

Year 1908 600,000 ova

Year 1909 400,000 ova

Year 1912 600,000 ova

In the year 1907 the importation of 40,000 ova of brook trout (*salvelinus fontinalis*) was made from the Argentine Republic.

The surviving ova from those shipments were hatched out at Río Blanco and the resultant fry were liberated annually from 1905 to 1914 in the main rivers, ranging from the Aconcagua in the Central Zone to the Puelo in the southern vicinity of Puerto Montt; according to the official statistics over 2,300,000 fry were distributed over fourteen of the main rivers in those years. The result was that the acclimatisation of the trout prospered beyond all expectations and, indeed, trout fishing in Chile is ranked today in the first flight of such fishing in the whole world. Alas and alack a day, the story of the “salmo salar”

is not such good reading as, apart from a few isolated specimens which were said to have been taken in the River Cautín, there was no sign of their acclimatisation by the year 1914. As the subject of the failure to acclimatise salmon in Chile is rather an interesting one, I propose to deal with it in a separate chapter and for the moment will limit my observations to trout.

By the year 1914 therefore trout had been successfully introduced in the main rivers, the hatchery at Río Blanco was a going concern, ova were available in considerable quantities annually from spawning fish and there was no need to go to the trouble and expense of further importations of trout ova, as further stocking and re-stocking requirements could be bred artificially. However, in order to extend the radius of action of the Department, a second hatchery was established in that year in Lautaro and, indeed, this hatchery was necessary for the annual re-stocking of the southern rivers. The River Blanco, close to the

Río Blanco hatchery, and a portion of the River Cautín at Lautaro, have been reserved by the Chilean Government for the exclusive use of the hatcheries and from those rivers officials of the hatcheries obtain the milt [semen of male fish] and ova from the spawning trout in the close season for incubation purposes.

The capacity of the hatcheries today is 800,000 ova in Río Blanco and 2,500,000 in Lautaro. It is interesting to know that the Chilean hatcheries have supplied trout fry to the Argentine Republic, Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru. Several years ago the Argentine Republic sent in return a consignment of the ova of landlocked salmon (*salmo sebago*) and promised also freshwater herring (*pejerrey*), which thrive exceedingly well in Argentine rivers. The land-locked salmon fry were liberated in the River Toltén but no news has been heard of them.

Subsequent to the year 1914, there were no further importations of trout ova, with the

exception of a special lot of lake trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*) ova, included with the salmon ova introduced in the year 1930 from the United States of America. The resultant fry from the lake trout ova were deposited in the Laguna del Inca, the lake at Portillo, a station on the international railwayline to the Argentine Republic, and also in Lake Villarrica, but so far a few specimens have been caught only in the Laguna del Inca. In the 1930 shipment there were also included whitefish (*Coregonus clupeiformis*) ova, which were also utilised for stocking Lake Villarrica. As fishing in Chile is almost entirely confined to the rivers and the lakes are only fished very superficially, it is not surprising that no specimens of lake trout or whitefish have yet been reported from Lake Villarrica.

Reports of strange unidentified fish caught in the Trancura "bar", however, give me the impression that they might have been lake trout or whitefish. The descriptions of the fish,

given by the hotel officials, tally with those species and it is unfortunate that the specimens found their way to the frying-pan without being officially identified. They have been reported as having the appearance of “hybrid” fish, that is to say, a cross between brown and rainbow trout. For my part I have never seen a fish with the appearance of a “hybrid” but I have heard of curious cases. For instance, a friend tells me that in February last he caught a fish at Llifén which he thinks was a cross between a rainbow trout and a “trucha común”. Unfortunately he was unable to preserve the specimen for expert examination.

Steelhead trout (*salmo gairdneri*) are to be found in certain rivers in the far south but not north of the River Tolten, as far as I am aware. The steelhead trout, as is well known, is closely related to the rainbow trout, and, indeed, most authorities maintain that they are one and the same species, the only differences being in colouring and habits.

According to this theory, the steelhead is simply a rainbow with sea-going tendencies which are responsible for the differences in colouring. the steelhead having a steel-blue back and silvery sides as opposed to the blue-grey or green back and bright rainbow colouring on the sides of the rainbow. Other authorities claim that, while they agree that originally they were one species, in the course of time the steelhead, as a result of its life in the sea, has developed as a distinct species, and the local authorities state that a small quantity of steelhead ova was introduced into Chile specifically as such, although classified under the one general heading of "irideus". Steelheads are taken not only in the rivers near the sea, such as the Tolten, but frequently also in the rivers in the vicinity of the Cordillera, such as the Trancura, and as regards the latter, many local anglers believe that such specimens live in the large inland lakes, instead of the sea, and only go up the rivers to spawn; in other words, the lakes take

the place of the sea and there is no need for the fish to go to the sea to attain the characteristics of the steelhead, provided that the inland lakes contain the necessary food. The steelhead is a very game fish and its wonderful fighting qualities are no doubt due to its life in salt water or the equivalent.

I have seen a published statement that “Dolly Vardens”³ have been caught in the south but this is presumably a mistake as there is no evidence of the ova having been introduced into the country. It is possible, however, that the specimens reported were lake trout as the two fish are, of course, very alike.

The stocking of brook trout has been very limited and since the year 1914 the fry have only been liberated in the Rivers Aconcagua, Arrayan and Cautín and in the Laguna del Inca. I believe that they are still to be found in

³ “Dolly Varden” (*Salvelinus malma*) is a char, not a trout, named after a character in *Barnaby Rudge* by Charles Dickens.

the upper reaches of the Arrayan but there is not recent or reliable corroboration of this information. In the Laguna del Inca they thrived for a time but it is now reported that the other species in the lake (lake trout, brown trout, etc.) are getting the better of them and they are expected to disappear eventually. As the lake is notably short of food, it is unlikely that the brook trout will survive the fight for existence. It would be a pity to see the brook trout entirely eliminated from Chilean waters; it is a sporting fish and as a table delicacy has no equal in the trout family.

It is reported that sea trout are to be found in large quantities in the tidal waters of the river Chamiza near Puerto Montt. I have also heard from a reliable source of sea trout being taken in the Laraquete, in the vicinity of Coronel, near Concepción. This is the only actual information to hand of their existence in Chilean waters today, although it is quite feasible that they are to be found in many coastal rivers in the south and are caught

regularly and identified by sea fishermen in the estuaries of the main rivers.

An angler friend informs me that in the Aysen district the rivers, while being in every way suitable for salmon and trout, are rather short and precipitous and contain little in the shape of ground feeding, at least in relation to the countless numbers of trout which inhabit these waters. The result is that many trout go out into the estuary, where the water is salt, and eventually return to the rivers to spawn, having lived the life of a salmon in the interval. The theory is entertained by some local fishermen that in the course of time a new species of fish will be developed in the shape of a trout but with all the characteristics of a salmon, but surely it will merely be a large-sized steelhead or sea trout. It is reported that each year in the month of May many very large fish can be observed on their way up those Aysen rivers but this information does not emanate from a reliable source. Nevertheless, it seems that the matter might

bear investigation by the Department of Fisheries.

Since the year 1914 the stocking and restocking of rivers has been carried out annually from the two hatcheries with the satisfactory result that today there are few rivers or streams, if indeed any, from the River Aconcagua in the north to Cape Horn, where trout cannot be found. Amateur fishermen have willingly assisted in the stocking of the rivers and the Director of Fisheries has been glad of their cooperation.

Treating the steelhead and the rainbow as one species, that is to say, as rainbow trout, the statement can safely be made that there are only two varieties of trout to be found in Chilean rivers today, namely, the rainbow and the brown. Until a few years ago there were rivers where only rainbow trout were to be found but today I doubt if there are any where brown trout have not penetrated. From the statistics I have already given, you will observe that brown and rainbow trout were

introduced into Chile in the ratio of four to one respectively and statistics also show that the stocking of the rivers was carried out on a similar basis. The rainbow, as is well known, migrates more readily than the brown trout and this fact is exemplified clearly in Chile where the rainbow in the early days found its way quickly up rivers, across lakes and into rivers higher up in the vicinity of the Cordillera, where only in recent years have the brown trout commenced to appear. There is nothing unusual in this state of affairs which is in keeping with the natural characteristics of the two species; the brown trout is less active and prefers the bigger and stiller waters in the lower reaches of the rivers to the rapids and strong currents in the upper reaches where the rainbow is in his element. And in the more rapid rivers, where the brown trout has penetrated, you will generally find him in the deeper pools and quieter waters away from the current where the rainbow lurks.

Of the two varieties there is no doubt that

the rainbow trout is by far the more desirable from the fisherman's point of view and, unless he is out of condition or hooked in such a way that fight is impossible, he can be relied upon to put up a very good show. The brown trout, on the other hand, is more sluggish in character and the larger specimens, when hooked, are more inclined to go down to the bottom and sulk than to fight for their freedom. As a matter of preference give me a four-pound rainbow before an eight-pound brown trout!

It is noteworthy, however, that towards the close of the season the brown trout, on the way up river to spawn, puts up a splendid fight and is an entirely different problem to the fish hooked in the early part of the season.

The brown and the rainbow trout in keeping with their natural habits take up their respective positions in the bigger rivers in the south and there appears to be plenty of room and plenty of food for both. In certain streams in the Central Zone, however, there

are far too many fish and there is too little food with the inevitable result that the predatory instincts of the fish predominate and the fish degenerate quickly. In such streams systematic netting under the direction of the Department of Fisheries would be a good thing but this does not get over the lack of food. In the course of time in such streams where the conditions of too many fish and too little food are accentuated, the fish change in appearance even and it gives one the creeps to catch a trout with a big head and long slender body with no inclination to fight. I should emphasize that this only applies to some of the rivers and streams in the Central Zone and not at all to the rivers in the Intermediate and Southern Zones where there is no evidence whatsoever of degeneration; as you go south, the first definite signs of improvement in the condition of the fish are to be found in the River Claro at Molina and the River Achibueno south of Linares, where the flesh of the fish is pink and there is every evidence of

plenty of ground feeding as in the south.

The question of the relative tendency to degeneration of rainbow and brown trout has been widely discussed in Chile and, without being dogmatic about it. I think the general consensus of opinion is that in a stream where the space and food are limited and there is a preponderance of brown trout over rainbow, the fish degenerate more readily; it is also considered that, where the brown and rainbow trout are evenly matched and the question of "living space" is involved, the brown trout will predominate in the course of time with the inevitable result. This opinion is held so strongly by some of the older fishermen in this country that there is an unwritten law among them – it must be unwritten as it contravenes the fishing regulations – that no brown trout, however small, is ever put back and I am inclined to believe it is a good thing.

As interesting evidence of the cannibalistic habits of trout, the picture on page [blank] shows a five-pound brown trout with a small

trout half consumed. It gives some idea of the voracity of the fish when they are feeding – this trout, before having properly devoured the small fish, could not resist the fly offered to him and was afraid he might miss it if he waited! It is not uncommon, on opening up a large trout, to discover a small fish inside and cases have been reported where two or three small ones have been found tucked away.

I remarked in the previous chapter that trout thrive in the south of Chile and grow to abnormally big sizes. Experience shows that the larger fish caught are more often than not brown trout and on the average the brown trout appears to grow to a bigger size than the rainbow. There are no official records in Chile of big fish taken and information in this connection cannot be relied upon, as big fish are frequently not even reported. I had originally planned to prepare a list of big trout taken for publication in this book but a census of my fishing friends showed me very quickly that such a list was impracticable as the

catching of trout between ten and fifteen pounds is almost an everyday occurrence; there are, however, relatively few recorded cases of catches of fifteen pounds and over and with these I propose to deal in detail as far as I can. There are bound to be many cases of which I have never heard.

In the Department of Fisheries there is on show a 24 pound brown trout but this specimen was caught in a net in the River Cautín by the hatchery officials at Lautaro. As far as I know, the record brown trout, taken on rod and line in Chile, stands to the credit of H.D. Humpstone, who caught a 20 pounder in the River San Pedro in March, 1937. The details of his fish were:

Weight 20 pounds.

Length 33 1/2 inches.

Girth 23 1/2 inches.

While this catch was being celebrated in the usual fashion at the local fishing hotel, A.W.F. Duncan turned up with a fine 12 pound rainbow of which he was rightly proud

and was astonished at the reaction of the group of celebrating fishermen who described it as a “sardine”! He must have felt as if he shouldn’t have mentioned it!

During the 1939 season M. Kline caught a brown trout weighing 19 pounds 2 ounces in the River Trancura and in 1938 the late John P. Chadwick caught an 18 pound brown trout on a fly in the Enco “bar”.

In the month of January 1940 the late John P. Chadwick caught a 15 pound rainbow trout in the River Enco and at that time it was the biggest rainbow, I believe, to be taken on rod and line in this country. Then one month later Sr. Nicolás Correa, a Chilean young man on his first fishing expedition, broke all records by catching by far the biggest rainbow ever heard of in Chile in the “bar” of the River Trancura at Pucón. The particulars of this magnificent specimen, of which a photograph appears on page [blank], were as follows: -

Weight 20 pounds 14 1/2 ounces

Length 34 1/2 inches

Width 10 inches

Girth 22 inches

Towards the end of the 1939/40 season, two more large rainbow were taken in the “bar” at Pucón, one of eighteen pounds by J. McDowall – also on his first fishing expedition – and the other, stated to have been between nineteen and twenty pounds, by the boatman Zapata. In the early part of that season also that an eighteen pound rainbow was caught by F. Compton.

Sr. Arturo Medina, of Concepción, is reported to have caught an eighteen pound rainbow in the Laja in the year 1941.

As far as I am aware the biggest rainbow ever caught on rod and line in Chile was a 22 pounder and the fisherman was Captain F. Long, a Panagra pilot. This magnificent fish was taken on an oreno at dusk in the pool just above Prado Verde on the River Toltén. It is reported that when the fish was finally landed after a great struggle Captain Long demonstrated his enthusiasm in no uncertain

fashion by first kissing his wife, then the fish, and finally the astonished boatman, after which the celebration followed the usual lines.

There are unconfirmed reports of the catching of a 23 pound rainbow in Lake Maule and a 24 pound rainbow in the River Bueno and, indeed, there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the reports in a country where big fish abound.

Scales of some of the bigger fish taken in Chile have been sent abroad for examination and report. They generally show the fish to be from five to six years old; for the first two or three years the growth is comparatively slow and thereafter very rapid. As a rule they show at least two spawning marks.

It is generally accepted among our local fishermen that in Chile there are two main "runs" of fish, one in the early part of the season, in December, and the other usually in March and April. It is certainly noticeable that the bigger fish are caught for the most part early on or late in the season and rarely in

January or February.

There has always been a certain amount of discussion among fishermen in Chile as to the reason for the abnormal size to which the trout grow in the south. Some hold the opinion that a great number of the fish live the greater part of their life in the sea and only return to the rivers to spawn but, with the possible exception of the steelhead in the southerly rivers, I cannot see any grounds for this contention. The explanation would appear to be simply that the rivers and lakes in the south of Chile are particularly rich in ground food, of which the fresh-water crab (apancora) is one of the tastiest delicacies; another factor contributing to the growth of the trout is the fresh-water herring (pejerrey) which abounds in the rivers and lakes in the south and is a favourite food of the trout. This fish, however, is not now so prolific as previously and this may account in part for the decreased size of the trout in certain rivers.

It is understood that the Department of

Fisheries is contemplating the importation shortly of trout ova on a considerable scale with the object of re-invigorating the fish in Chilean waters. The proposal commends itself as a good one as it is important that the high standard of Chilean trout fishing should be maintained.

I am sure that an ichthyologist would find a great deal to interest him in the southern waters of Chile. It must be frankly admitted that there is no one in Chile, as far as one knows, who devotes himself to a study of the life of the salmonidae family or who has the necessary knowledge, with the result that most of our theories are derived from intelligent observation and, to a large extent, conjecture. There is no such thing as "marking" or "tagging" fish in this country. When you read later on of what has happened in many rivers and particularly Lake Puyehue, you will agree with me that fishing conditions in this country require to be studied by experts; the need is urgent if the excellence of

the fishing is to be maintained.*

There are, of course, other fish in Chilean rivers such as carp, "pejerrey" (already mentioned) and the "trucha común", the Chilean species of perch and a most disappointing fish other than for its edible qualities. One hears very little nowadays of the "peladilla", which might be described as the native species of trout, and it is said that it is gradually becoming extinct and can only be found now in certain isolated rivers, such as the Carampangue, near Coronel. A game surface feeder, with graceful lines, it unfortunately never seems to grow to any size. I do not propose in this book, however, to consider from the sporting standpoint any fresh-water fish other than trout, as obviously in a country where trout abound in such quality and quantity, the angler will not be interested in coarse fishing.

* Fortunately in January and February of this year [1952] a visit has been made by a fisherman of world renown, Roderick Haig-Brown,⁴ and he has fished most of the prominent rivers in the south of Chile; his knowledge of the species of salmon and trout and their characteristics is extensive and his findings are awaited by fishermen in Chile with the keenest interest. He combines with his recognition as a biological expert a well deserved reputation as one of the world's most skilled fly fishermen and his experience in the south will be well worth reading.

⁴ Roderick Langmere Haig-Brown (1908-1976). Canadian writer, angler and conservationist, born in Lancing, England. His book *Fisherman's Winter* (pub. 1954) describes his angling exploration of Chile.

CHAPTER V

(pp. 36-41 of the typed manuscript)

WHY ARE THERE NO SALMON IN CHILE?

The word “salmon” in English and Spanish has a totally different meaning in this country. In Spanish it means simply any member of the “salmo” family and not merely the “salmo salar” [Atlantic salmon] as in English. All the different species of trout are “salmones” and the word “trucha” refers to a native fish quite different from any trout.

No one can cavil at my definition in the preceding paragraph of the colloquial usage of the words “salmon” and “trucha” in Chile but it is interesting to note that, in a decree published in the year 1934 containing fishing regulations, a determined effort has been made by the authorities to use the words correctly, examples of which are “salmon rey” (King salmon) and “trucha arco-iris” (rainbow trout).

A consequence of this confusion is that there are constant rumours of salmon being caught in the south and on investigation the alleged salmon turn out to be large-sized brown, steelhead or sea trout. Many people in this country, who should know better, make the literal translation from Spanish to English and it is very irritating to hear constant references to salmon which one knows can only refer to trout. The abnormal size to which trout grow in this country, of course, adds to the confusion. It is stated that a few isolated specimens of salmon were taken in the River Cautín in the early days but there is no real confirmation of the report and for practical purposes I think it can be ignored. I think it is safe to say that the acclimatization of salmon (*salmo salar*) in Chile has been a complete failure up to the present time^o.

[Footnote added in 1952]

^o Recent reports of salmon having been caught in the River Petrohue appear to have some

foundation although unfortunately scales of the fish were not kept for identification purposes. The fish are believed to be landlocked salmon (*salmo sebago*) which have come down from the Southern Argentine lakes through the River Puelo into the Reloncaví estuary from which they have found their way up to the River Petrohue. During the past season several specimens have been taken including one of 15 pounds by Charles G. Bush (Buxie) trolling in Lake Todos Los Santos at the outlet of the River Petrohué. This is good news!

In the previous chapter I mentioned importations of the ova of Atlantic (Rhine) salmon to Chile from the years 1905 to 1912, which were hatched out in the Río Blanco hatchery. The fry were liberated annually in rivers from the Aconcagua in the north to the Puelo in the south but there was apparently no result apart from the few isolated specimens reported to have appeared in the

River Cautín. At this stage it was apparently decided that it would be more feasible to acclimatize Pacific salmon in Chile and the attention of the authorities was turned to that possibility.

In the year 1924 the Bureau of Fisheries of the United States sent down to Chile 80,000 ova of sockeye salmon. The shipment was made in a cargo boat, which took a long time to reach Chile, and the result was far from good as only 10,000 fry hatched out, all of which were planted in the River Cautín. Once again the efforts of the Department of Fisheries were doomed to failure, which is not surprising in this case as one of the peculiarities of the sockeye salmon is its refusal to enter any river that has no lake adjoining it, and the Cautín was obviously the wrong river to choose. This species largely supplies the canning industry in the west of Canada, Alaska, and the United States, but from the sporting standpoint is not so highly rated as the Atlantic, quinnat or coho salmon.

In the eyes of the angler it is the least desirable of the salmon family.

The latest determined attempt to introduce salmon to Chile was made in the year 1930 when Don Pedro Golusda went to British Columbia and returned with 1,000,000 ova, of which 400,000 were ova of lake trout and whitefish. The salmon ova distribution was the following:

Quinnat, Chinook Tyee,
Spring or King Salmon¹ – *oncorhynchus*
tschawytscha – 200,000

¹ The Quinnat salmon.



Adult male.

Sockeye, Blueback or Red
salmon²

– oncorhynchus

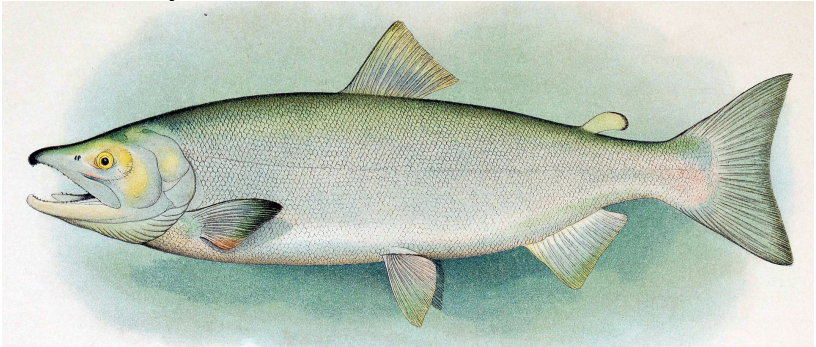
nerka – 200,000

Coho or Silver Salmon³

– oncorhynchus

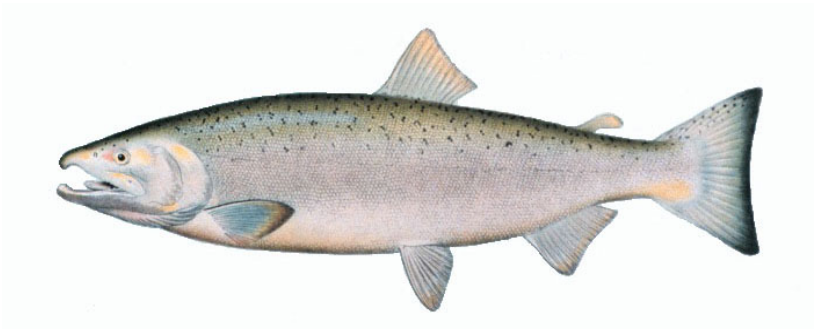
kisutch – 200,000

² The Sockeye salmon.



Adult male.

³ The Coho salmon.



Adult male.

As every fisherman knows, the foregoing are the recognised types of Pacific salmon and great hopes were entertained of their successful acclimatisation in Chile.

As in the case of previous importations, the eggs were hatched out in the Río Blanco hatchery, where the water is colder than in Lautaro, and the resultant fry, about 50%, were liberated in the rivers in the south from the Cautín to the Aysen. By this time it was realised that there was little chance of success in the rivers in the Central Zones and the colder waters of the southern rivers were considered more likely to prove successful.

But there is still nothing to report! What has happened to the salmon? That is the burning question and the Director of Fisheries and many fishermen in Chile would like to know the answer.

Many theories have been advanced by local fishermen as to why salmon have not become acclimatised in Chile and most of them are

rather far-fetched. For instance, it is said that the salmon fry have been devoured by predatory trout already in the rivers but this does not explain the failure of the first few years when the salmon and trout fry were liberated together. Another point to remember also is that the real fight for existence does not lie in the river but in the sea. I think the best way to attack the problem is to learn from experience in New Zealand, where the conditions are very similar to those in Chile and where, after many unsuccessful attempts, quinnat salmon first and Atlantic salmon later were finally acclimatised.

The story of the acclimatisation of quinnat salmon in New Zealand is briefly that from the year 1864 to the end of the nineteenth century every attempt to introduce salmon into New Zealand rivers ended in failure. The credit for the success finally attained belongs to the late Mr. L. F. Ayson, Chief Inspector of Fisheries, who had made a special study of the subject in other countries and made it his ambition and

life's work to achieve success in his own country. Research drove him to the conclusion that it was useless sending out small scattered forces of salmon fry to conquer rivers and sea full of savage and voracious enemies; that it was not sufficient that a river had all the necessary characteristics but the sea must also be right; and that stocking had to be intensive and systematic and concentrated in one river until success was attained. His next step was to choose his river and after a study of temperatures of rivers and sea, he settled on the River Waitaki in the South Island and had a hatchway built in the vicinity thereof in the year 1900. In the following year a shipment of 500,000 quinnat ova arrived and four further similar shipments were made in the following years. Each year all the available fry were liberated in the River Waitaki until finally in the year 1906 a female quinnat salmon of eight pounds was caught in a trap in a tributary of the Waitaki and from that time progress was fast, the quinnat salmon

increasing by leaps and bounds every year and spreading to other rivers also.

Subsequently efforts were made to introduce sockeye salmon which were abandoned as a failure and still later, following on the policy of concentrating on one river, Atlantic salmon (*salmo salar*) were acclimatised but I believe that the authorities are dissatisfied with the results achieved in this case as the fish run small and show signs of developing into a land-locked variety. In the course of time, however, it is anticipated that the Atlantic variety will be thoroughly and satisfactorily established in New Zealand rivers as in the case of the quinnat.

If the situation in Chile is examined in the light of experience in New Zealand, the conclusion is reached that the failure of the early importations of the ova of Atlantic (Rhine) salmon between the years 1905 and 1914 might be attributed to any one or all of several reasons as follows:-

(1) The rivers, in which the fry were

liberated, were wrong.

From the years 1905 to 1910 the rivers selected were from the Aconcagua in the north to the Bueno in the south and in the years 1910, 1911 and 1913 the Rivers Maullín, Pescado, Coihuin, Petrohué and Puelo were stocked. I cannot believe that the tepid main rivers north of the Cautín could possibly be suitable and evidently this was the conclusion of the authorities as after the first few years attention was given to the more southerly rivers.

(2) The sea off the Chilean coast is wrong.

The temperature of the sea is given as ranging between 53° Fahrenheit in the south and 57° in the north. The Humboldt current, which runs in a northerly direction up the Chilean coast, is a cold current and it is difficult to imagine that there could be anything wrong with the sea from the point of view of the acclimatisation of salmon.

(3) The stocking was spread over too many

rivers.

Examination of the records shows that the quantities of fry liberated in the early years were insignificant in each river when it is remembered that only a small percentage, possibly not more than 2%, of the fish survive to return to spawn in their native rivers.

The most probable explanation is the last and it would apply also to the later importation in the year 1930.

If further attempts to acclimatise salmon are to be made in Chile, as they surely will be made, may I respectfully suggest to the authorities that they concentrate on two suitable and carefully chosen rivers in the far south and that they make the attempt to acclimatise the Atlantic and Pacific varieties separately, that is to say, Atlantic salmon in one river and Pacific in the other; and that the stocking be carried out intensively and systematically year after year until they "take". Experience shows that the only way to

achieve success in the acclimatisation of salmon is to remember [Robert the] Bruce and the spider, and, if at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again!

I hear that an attempt has been made to introduce land-locked salmon from the Traful district in the Argentine Republic to the River Huahun east of Panguipulli. This may prove a step in the right direction from the sporting point of view but I feel that more is required.

It is my belief that Chile is the natural salmon country of South America and that the introduction of salmon should be considered from the industrial as well as the sporting angle. As a further suggestion to the authorities, it would seem practical to engage a young man in the early thirties who has been brought up in a salmon fishery in the Northern Hemisphere and make it worth his while to settle in Chile for the purpose of introducing the real "salmo salar". Quite apart from the question of salmon, I believe that his usefulness would be felt in the better

preservation of the trout fishing and the general improvement of fishing conditions for the visitor. Of course, the authorities would have to be prepared to wait for results and give him proper backing, financial and otherwise, without which his work would be of no avail. The opportunity for the right man would be a big one and I cannot imagine there would be great difficulty in finding a young enthusiast ready to take the plunge on such a pioneering undertaking. He would certainly carry with him in his work the good wishes of all fishermen in the country.

CHAPTER VI

(pp. 42-49 of the typed manuscript)

A FEW REFLECTIONS ON LOCAL PROBLEMS

Some of my friends may feel that this chapter might well have been left out of the book as it may be liable to create in the minds of anglers abroad an unfavourable and totally erroneous impression of the fishing conditions in the country. Possibly I am making a mountain out of a molehill but I feel that no description of fishing conditions in Chile would be honest without a reference to the abuses which are prevalent and I shall endeavour to present a few constructive suggestions as to how they may be overcome. Let me make it clear at the outset that I am well aware of the difficulties encountered by the Department of Fisheries in combating abuses, which occur mostly in outlying districts miles from anywhere and it must be remembered that

they are entirely dependent on the action of the police authorities. They are to be congratulated on the progress they have made in recent years in their attempts to improve fishing conditions and they deserve the full support and cooperation of every fisherman in the country.

The following story will give you an idea of what they are up against. A group of fishermen camped out several years ago on the shores of a lake in the south at a point close to the outlet of a river coming from the Cordillera.¹

They were far from any village, road or railway, quite out in the wilds. One night they heard a weird noise in the distance which sounded like organised shouting and screaming; the noise was growing louder and obviously coming closer so they went out to investigate. The explanation was a group of indians – there are comparatively few indians

¹ A 'cordillera' is a mountain range in Spanish. Here it refers to the Andes.

left in this country – coming down the river on rafts, with flaming torches, beating the water with branches and making at the same time an infernal row. At the mouth of the river a rough palisade had been constructed in a V shape with a gap in the middle and on the other side of the gap there was a net. I need hardly explain that the purpose of this expedition was to frighten and drive the fish down the river and net them at the palisade and I believe they got a considerable haul. In case this should be deemed a fairy tale, the fishermen took photographs of the palisade next day as evidence.

It is rarely that fishermen go as far into the wilds as on this occasion and this sort of thing might be going on in the upper reaches of many rivers without the authorities knowing anything about it; and it is still more liable to happen in the winter during the spawning season when food may be scarce. It is to be presumed that the fish were being trapped for food purposes as it is hard to see how they

could be marketed in such a remote spot. You will appreciate that, even if the fishing authorities and the police are advised of such happenings, it is difficult to suggest a means of stopping them, outside of permanent vigilance on every river, which is quite impracticable. It must be remembered that this country is large and sparsely populated. The area is some 300,000 square miles and the population is said to be in the neighbourhood of 5,500,000 of whom 30% reside in Santiago and Valparaiso. In the country districts, leaving out of account all towns, the average population cannot exceed ten per square mile.

Another story has to be told of a development of recent years. One day I was fishing up stream in the River Collanco in the Central Zone, near Santiago, and from the point where I entered the stream for several hundred yards I was surprised to find no trace whatsoever of any trout. I decided to leave the water and walk along the bank further up stream. Shortly afterwards I was astonished to

discover the reason for the lack of fish! Four men in bathing costumes, each carrying a sack, were catching trout by hand, the procedure being for two of them to stand at the top of a pool while the other two drove the trout up under the rocks and stones whereupon they picked them out by hand and by the time I reached them two of the sacks were more than half full. I need hardly say that the whole affair took my breath away and depressed me as I was powerless to interfere. I continued up stream a few hundred yards and had some good sport although with the feeling that, if this sort of thing continued, I might as well give up any idea of fishing this delightful stream again and, in fact, I have never returned.

Unfortunately I hear that the same practice is going on in the River Molina, near Farellones, where some workmen have become expert at this method of catching fish. An interesting feature is that they state that they only catch brown trout, the rainbow being

much too clever for them whereas the brown go to the bottom and are easy victims, a further corroboration of their distinctive habits.

Dynamiting still goes on, although on a reduced scale, and illegal netting continues to be practised by professional fishermen. It ought to be a simple matter to put a stop to dynamiting as, according to the law, dynamite can only be bought with a permit.

Another common offence is fishing without a license; in fact the fishermen who do take out licenses are in the vast minority and are actually the sportsmen who observe the rules of the game.

The biggest problem of all, however, is the fishing, or perhaps I should call it "poaching", in the close season and professional fishermen throughout the country carry on this practice every winter with a complete disregard for or in ignorance of the harm they may be doing.

And now, having painted this unhappy picture, it behoves us to consider ways and

means of improving matters.

The experience of Pucón is an object lesson to the whole country. After the new hotel was opened, the fishing in the River Trancura deteriorated year by year to such a point that the management became seriously worried over the lack of trout, which was keeping fishermen away and causing Pucón to lose its well-earned reputation as “the best fishing in Chile”. Experienced fishermen were consulted and gave as their opinion of the cause of the deterioration that the failure to enforce the law regarding the buying and selling of trout during the close season encouraged netting and dynamiting by professional fishermen, precisely during the period when the fish were spawning. The winter in the south of Chile is a long dreary period with abundance, indeed superabundance of rain, and the professional fishermen used to eke out a livelihood by netting fish – and spawning fish at that – and selling them. They had apparently no difficulty in finding a market for the trout and

it is even said that large quantities of smoked trout were being exported to Germany from the south of Chile. When it was explained to the hotel management that the extraction of spawning fish in the close season was doing more harm than anything else, it was decided to approach the authorities for assistance in combating the close season poaching in the River Trancura. I believe that for two winters professional fishermen were forbidden the river and anyone found offering trout for sale was immediately taken to the police station, put into custody and then asked to explain their origin. The result of this vigilance speaks for itself. The fishing in Pucón greatly improved in the seasons following and quite recovered its lost prestige. Let us hope that the experience in Pucón will be an encouragement to Government authorities to prohibit close season fishing all over the country; this is easier said than done, of course, but I have no doubt it will be achieved in time.

Several years ago there was a small hotel

in Pucón where smoked trout were generally on sale. When the authorities commenced to take action there, they fined the owner of the hotel for receiving fish during the spawning season for smoking purposes, as it is against the law to buy and sell fish during that period. He was very upset about it and as a result gave up the smoking business. This goes to show that the enforcement of the law by the authorities will have a salutary effect.

On the other hand, it is regrettable to report that fresh trout are to be found on the menu of Santiago hotels and restaurants throughout the spawning season. It is very discouraging and disquieting for those interested in the development of fishing in this country when hotels and restaurants, which should do everything possible to encourage tourists, continue a practice so detrimental to a sport of great attraction to visitors.

It has been pointed out to me, and rightly, that I should draw a distinction between poaching in the close season for commercial

purposes and for food purposes. However grievous an offence close season poaching may be, one cannot blame the settler in very out-of-the-way places for harpooning fat spawning trout for his own food. A friend tells me that at the far end of Lake Caburga (north-east of Pucón) he met an old fellow who had lived there in the back of beyond for twenty-seven years. He was most hospitable and in the course of conversation revealed that two of his sons were artistes at spearing trout in winter and that hardly a day passed when they did not get a twenty-pounder! He explained that they only took what they needed for food and could scarcely get anything else. There is nothing more to be said in such circumstances.

It has frequently been suggested that the granting of fishing rights by the Government would help to solve the problem as the lessees of the water would take their own steps to protect the fishing for which they were paying. The renting of fishing to those who are in a position to pay for it and the consequent

exclusion of the poorer citizen would not, I am sure, appeal to the Government of this democratic country and can safely be discounted as a possibility. To my way of thinking, it is one of the splendid features of fishing in Chile that anyone may fish, whatever his station in life, and I should be very sorry to see any limitation of such privileges.

The solution of the problem of the protection of the rivers lies with the police authorities chiefly and, if they will enforce the law regarding fishing and/or the buying and selling of fish during the spawning season, the trouble is as good as over. Another matter which should be actively taken up is that of licences, As the law stands at present, one has to have a licence to fish but the law is not enforced and it is rarely that any fisherman is asked to produce his licence. It would be more satisfactory to issue free licences to fishermen in poor financial circumstances and to ensure that the law is properly observed.

The cancellation or suspension of licences for contravention of the law might have a salutary effect on the professional fishermen who are at present the main cause of the trouble. Free licences would, of course, only be issued to fishermen with a satisfactory record.

At present the Director of Fisheries, in accordance with the law, has named a number of ad-honorem [unpaid] fishing inspectors throughout the country, whose duty is to report infringements of the law. Many of them do their job quite conscientiously but their work is of no value whatsoever if the authorities do not take action. The idea of naming ad-honorem fishing inspectors is a good one, but the root of the matter lies in the co-operation of the authorities, and by that I mean the police officials in the fishing districts. In such remote places control is undoubtedly difficult but it can be exercised, especially if the offenders have to come down to the railway stations or the more populous districts to dispose of their illegal catches. If they find it

difficult to sell the trout, they will stop catching more than they require for household purposes.

If any of my readers in other countries are inclined to look askance at the condition of things I have so frankly exposed, I would ask them to remember that trout fishing in this country is in its infancy and that the fishing history of other countries discloses that they have had the same problems to contend with in the past in a greater or lesser degree. Human nature is, after all, the same the world over!

There is nothing to be alarmed about in the existing state of affairs, with the exception of the fishing by hand, and anglers intending to visit Chile need have no fears that the fishing is suffering seriously. Leaving out of account seasonal disturbances of a temporary nature, the general opinion is that it is as good as ever it was. Indeed, while I strongly disapprove of the abuses I have cited, I believe that up to a point they are actually having a good effect on

the fishing, a statement which sounds so paradoxical that it calls for an immediate explanation.

The point is that there are experienced fishermen in Chile who hold the opinion that the greatest enemy of the fish is the fish themselves, that they multiply too quickly in relation to the food and space at their disposal, and that close season fishing and netting in moderation are actually beneficial in keeping down the numbers. On the other hand, there are others who claim that the best fish are taken in the nets, the mesh of which is of a size to let the small ones escape, and in the close season when they come up to spawn, and they give that as the reason why the fish in certain rivers seem to be smaller than they used to be. I incline to the opinion that the reduced size of the fish in any river is an indication that there is a surfeit of fish and that steps should be taken to reduce the numbers, but emphatically such steps should be systematic netting by the Department of

Fisheries and not illegal methods. I am aware that a certain amount of authorised netting has in the past been carried out in rivers which the Department of Fisheries has considered too full of fish but would respectfully submit that this problem of "living space" is a serious one and will have to be tackled in a bigger way to achieve any real result. The same problem has occurred already in New Zealand and has been handled successfully by the authorities, I understand, by means of wholesale netting and the provision of more food in waters where deterioration has been evident. Fortunately, no serious problem has arisen as yet in the south of Chile and it is only in certain rivers in the Central Zone that the need for immediate action is great. In any event the angler from abroad may rest assured that the fishing in Chile will come up to his expectations and I trust he will realise that my criticisms are not destructive but made with the definite purpose of anticipating possible deterioration and

counteracting it, so that the high standard of trout fishing in this country may be preserved.

And when he reads in later chapters of the glorious fishing to be had at, for example, Pucón and Panguipulli, he will decide that we have no real fishing problems in this country as yet.

Finally, may I propose that there be set up in Santiago, under the wing of the Department of Fisheries, a Salmon and Trout Fishing Advisory Board, composed of leading fishermen of experience, who would be willing to give their services in an honorary capacity for research work and the preservation and development of fishing in Chile. I am sure that there are a number of keen and progressive fishermen, with experience in this and other countries, who would be altruistic enough to devote their spare time in the interests of their favourite sport. And if they could have at their disposal the services of a fishing expert, as suggested in the previous chapter, good results could be expected in a reasonable [reasonably]

short time.

But such a board would be of little avail without the cooperation of the governing authorities and in the exercise of vigilance and the development of the fishing resources of the country, they would have to be prepared to spend money.

CHAPTER VII

(pp. 50-58 of the typed manuscript)

TACKLE, EQUIPMENT AND BOATMAN

The main purpose of this chapter is to advise the angler from abroad what he requires to bring along with him in the shape of tackle and equipment. My own equipment has been acquired over a period of years from British makers, mainly Hardy,¹ and for identification purposes I have mentioned “Hardy” tackle with which I am most familiar. This, I trust, will be a sufficient guide to American and Canadian anglers to enable them to select the tackle they require from the makers they favour. The visitor generally concentrates on the south and few have the

¹ The firm of Hardy Brothers of Alnwick, Northumberland was founded in 1872 and is still in business. For a brief history see <http://www.hardyfishing.com/Hardy-history.html> (accessed 3 October 2017).

opportunity of trying the rivers in the Central Zone. While my main remarks will deal with requirements for the south, I feel that a few words about Santiago and district would not be amiss.

For the small mountain streams where the fish average about three-quarters of a pound, I use very often a 7 1/2 foot split cane rod weighing 3 1/4 ounces with a reel and line balanced to the rod. Some of my friends prefer a slightly heavier rod, of say 9 1/2 feet and 5 ounces, such as a "Fairchild", as they argue that the very small and light rod is not so good for casting. While I am prepared to admit the soundness of this argument, I feel that on the average the advantages of the small rod outweigh the disadvantages. Most of the mountain streams are somewhat difficult to fish on account of overhanging trees and branches and the utility of the small rod under such conditions is obvious; the other advantage is that the small three-quarter pound fish can be appreciated better by fishing

as light as possible. Nevertheless, towards the end of the season when the water is as clear as crystal and the trout are becoming very wary, there is every advantage in being able to cast as far as possible and on such occasions I always bring out my 9 foot light rod. A fine trout line of say 25 yards, with the same amount of backing, would be adequate under any conditions in this zone. For the cast I should recommend 1/x to 3/x strength. As regards flies, my experience is that on a favourable day and most days are favourable – the trout appear to be ravenous and will take almost anything; on such days two at one time are taken frequently and on one occasion I even saw three at the same time. The ordinary lake trout flies will do, the size ranging from 0 to 5 “Hardy” hooks, to be determined by the clarity of the water. In my own experience a teal wing has never failed me and my particular favourite is a Peter Ross.² However,

² Peter Ross (1873-1923) was a store keeper in

I know that every angler has his own favourite flies, for every type of fishing, and will use his own judgment in accordance with the conditions he has to cope with.

The following can be highly recommended:-

Peter Ross	Black Zulu
Greenwell's Glory	Watson's Fancy
Hardy's Favourite	Butcher
March Brown	Colonel Downman
Coachman	Beaverhill
Wickham's Fancy	

In recent years considerable success has been obtained by the use of "parachute" flies, the theory being that their deadliness is due to the way they land upon the water.



Killin, Perthshire.
A Peter Ross fly

Later on in the season when there is not too much water, an expert dry fly fisherman can have excellent sport in the pools. I do not consider myself fitted to advise the expert dryfly fisherman regarding the flies he should have available – I should say, a comprehensive selection of standard patterns as the Chilean trout are not very particular – which must include a white moth for the evening. The following is a possible selection of dry flies:

Red Spinner	Greenwell's Glory
Dark Cahill	Olive Dun
Quill Gordon	California Coachman
Silver Sedge	Ginger Quill
Black Gnat	Webb Fur
Alder	Baigent's Brown

There is a fly uncommonly like the grannom³

³ Also called a caddisfly.

to be seen on Chilean waters.

The reason why few fishermen use a net in the smaller mountain streams is probably laziness and the desire to travel light. For the same reason it is rarely that waders are seen in those streams, the majority preferring to get wet rather than carry the extra weight. This is understandable as one has to walk longish distances in hot weather and on the way home the creel [basket to hold catch] is generally well filled and inclined to be heavy.

Nowadays the angler is very often accompanied by a “secretario”, a small native boy from one of the shacks in the vicinity who is quite happy to come along and make himself useful as ghillie for the fun of it. For my own part I always take a “secretario” if one is



A grannom

available as his general utility is considerable and I like company when I am fishing. If he should start off by being over talkative and a bit of a nuisance, he will soon learn what is expected of him and keep his distance. At the end of the day a gift of a fly and an old piece of gut will be appreciated by the “secretario”.

For the rivers in the south, say from the River Laja southwards, the tackle required is very different.

The rod I favour for casting purposes is something on the lines of the “J.J. Hardy No 2”, which is a wet fly rod, 9 feet 9 inches long and weighing 7 1/2 ounces. Of course, if you run into a 19 pounder with this rod, you will wish you had something a little heavier but with patience you will land the fish. For ordinary purposes I think it is quite heavy enough and I generally take the risk of the big one. Nevertheless there are occasions when one is glad of a more powerful rod as, for instance, towards the end of the season when the fish are running bigger, and I would recommend

the visitor to include in his equipment something heavier, but not exceeding say 11 feet in length and 10 ounces in weight. On a windy day also, when casting is difficult it is much more useful than the lighter rod.

In most rivers in the south the bank fishing is limited and there are long stretches where trolling a fly or a spoon or other lure is inevitable. For this purpose a spinning rod is advisable, such as Hardy's "Hollingworth" rod. In this country orthodox spinning is rarely indulged in, presumably because submerged rocks and tree trunks are so frequent in many rivers; it may, however, be nothing more or less than lack of experience on the part of the fishermen although it must be admitted that in recent years it has become more prevalent. In the south in most rivers it is a good plan to carry two rods, one for flyfishing and one for trolling unless, of course, you prefer spinning in which case one good spinning rod will be adequate.

The reel and line will naturally be balanced

to your particular rod. I should recommend as a minimum forty yards of double tapered line and sixty yards of backing as essential; in my own experience with one hundred yards in all I was taken out to the bitter end by a big fish and would have felt more comfortable with twenty yards more. Gut strength in my opinion should vary between 9/5 and 5/5, which is as strong as necessary under any circumstances. My preference is for nine feet casts tapered from 5/5 to 9/5 but some of my friends fish finer than 9/5 even.

The size of the salmon fly required will depend on circumstances and in my experience it is useful to carry a selection between 1/0 and 3, with perhaps a few larger ones to tempt the "big one" on the odd occasion when you may decide to try for him in selected water. However, the very big hooks are too heavy for the light trout for casting purposes and are only useful when trolling but the same effect can be obtained by the use of "streamer" flies, to which I shall refer later. It has always been

said that the silverbodied salmon fly does best in the south of Chile, which is probably explained by its resemblance in the water to a small fish; in my experience the recognised salmon flies are all successful and each angler has his own particular favourite. I would suggest that one should be armed with the following selection:-

Silver Grey	Thunder and Lightning
Silver Doctor	Dunkeld
Black Doctor	Dusty Miller
Blue Doctor	Green Highlander
Jock Scott	Durham Ranger
Wilkinson	Red Torrish
Lady Caroline	Yellow Torrish

In recent years fishermen in the south have had considerable success with the “streamer” salmon fly which differs from the ordinary salmon fly in that the wing is twice or even three times as long and is generally tied to order. The action in the water resembles a small fish and is said to be irresistible to the trout but possibly its success may lie in the

fact that it is something different from the everyday salmon fly or, in other words, a new attraction for the unsuspecting trout. Whatever the explanation is, some anglers in this country now swear by the “streamer” fly and there is no doubt that for casting purposes it is especially useful as the length of the wing conveys all the effect of the big fly and attracts big fish.

For the information of those fishermen who are not familiar with the “streamer” fly, I show on page [blank] a photograph of four “streamer” flies, tied in Chile by Agustin R. Edwards, which are exact as to size and colour. He finds that with those four patterns he can tackle any situation which may arise.

Then there are two salmon flies, which are tied locally and are especially interesting; one is “The Norton”, tied by the late Bertram Norton, which has the reputation of being a killer, and the other is Dr. [James] McLean’s “apancora” or crab fly, of which there are excellent reports. It resembles a crab in the

water and has the reputation of being almost infallible. If you have the good fortune to have one in your fishing bag, try it after everything else has failed and you may be surprised at the result. A photograph of this interesting fly is shown also on page [blank].

While on the subject of salmon flies I am reminded of a fly, not included in the list, which has an interesting history. On a wet day in Pucón some twenty two years ago Mr. Clarence Elliot,⁴ of Stevenage, England, amused himself by making up a fly from the wrappings of a box of chocolates, mainly silver paper secured by cotton thread, and red and green strands of wool from a cushion or antimacassar, and he presented the completed article to a lady in the hotel, who proceeded

⁴ This may be Clarence Elliott (1881-1969), garden writer and alpine plant specialist, who visited Chile in 1927-8 and 1929-30. He had a nursery at Stevenage named Six Hills, opened in 1906. However, given the extra 't' in the family name, this may be a coincidence.

next day to catch the record fish of the season, a twelve pounder, with the fly. Further experiments continued to be successful and Mr. Elliot told me later that as far as he knew nothing under a five pounder had ever been caught on his fly. When he returned to London, he had the fly patented by Messrs. Ogden Smith under the name of "Elliot's Ragbag". I have tried the fly on several occasions and it has lived up to its reputation with the unfortunate addendum that I have never caught a fish at all on it.

I have remarked earlier that Chile is "a fly fisherman's Paradise" but it would be ridiculous to suggest that conditions are always favourable for fly fishing, as every fisherman knows. The river may be a little dirty after heavy rain, the water may be too deep or it may just be a day when the fish will not look at a fly, however tastefully presented. The wise fisherman will be equipped, therefore, with a selection of artificial lures (spoons, minnows, flatfish, orenos, etc.) of varying

shapes and sizes to meet varying circumstances, or, as the purist describes them, an assortment of “ironmongery”.

I never think of “ironmongery” without recalling a delightful story told me several years ago by a fisherman friend. Towards dusk one evening he was casting from the bank near a mouth of a river when a boat drifted down to within a few yards of him. Notes were compared of the day’s fishing and the boat fisherman complained that he had had what he described as a “lousy” day, having lost all his artificial lures, except one, on submerged tree trunks, stones, etc. and got only two fish. However, he had kept the “piece de resistance” until the end and he was sure he would get results with it, he announced, holding up triumphantly an amazing contraption called a “wobbler”, which was a sort of superminnow with a joint in the middle to make the tail move or shimmy and convey a touch of realism to the unfortunate and unsuspecting trout. He then proceeded to lower his treasure into the

water but, no sooner had he done so than a most unseemly storm of invective rent the air and shook the peaceful waters, language such as had never been heard before on the river. He had forgotten to tie the cast to the line!

Another amusing story takes us to the dining car of the express from the south, where several fishermen from various fishing resorts have foregathered on the way back to Santiago after a long weekend – Thursday to Wednesday – and are recounting their experiences. One sportsman announced that his best catch was a four and a half pounder on the tail and a three-pounder on the dropper⁵ at one and the same time, and he proceeded to give an account of the engagement and its successful conclusion. A keen young fisherman, a student of the art and anxious to learn, who had joined the party, was deeply impressed with this feat and could not refrain from

⁵ Dropper (fishing): a subsidiary line or loop of filament attached to a main line or leader. “a dropper line”

asking "What flies were you using?" The answer took his breath away. "Flies! Not a chance! I had a spoon on the tail and a minnow on the dropper."

To get back to equipment, as the rivers are generally swift and the footing insecure, for wading purposes I strongly recommend a combined landing net and wading staff on the lines of "The Don" in Hardy's catalogue. I also recommend the use of thigh waders or fishing stockings as I think that waist waders or fishing trousers are dangerous in a strong current; whatever one may say, there is always the temptation to go a little further and a little deeper to reach some likely water and the deeper you go in heavy water the more likely you are to lose control. I freely admit, however, that one misses a lot of good water with only thigh waders.

In the south, where a boat is required, the importance of the boatman can hardly be over-emphasized. A good boatman, who knows the river and can handle his boat skilfully, will

enable the fisherman to take advantages of stretches of beautiful water where bank fishing is possible; it is often a question of skilful manoeuvring and the inexperienced boatman will allow the current to carry the boat beyond the spot or over the very water which should be fished. My advice to the visitor is to concentrate on getting a good boatman and to treat him well, that is to say, with consideration.

It has always seemed to me that one would get the best out of the southern rivers if it were possible to anchor the boat and cast all around from it as in loch fishing. The difficulty has always been that the ordinary anchor is useless as it gets caught under the rocks and stones and becomes immovable and it is suggested that a rope-net with a rock inside would solve the problem. Anyway, it is well worth trying and I commend the idea to my fishing friends in this country for what it may be worth. Another suggestion, which appeals to me, is that an iron weight, similar to that

used with the canoe in the swift flowing Canadian rivers, might be successful; the difficulty is that the flat-bottomed boat used in Chile is much heavier than a canoe and the iron weight, required to hold the boat against the current, might be too heavy and unwieldy for practical purposes. Some years ago I understand that an Old Town canoe was used successfully in the River Trancura at Pucón and that it was possible to anchor it almost anywhere by means of a rope-net. The ordinary oars proved too light and heavier ones had to be made of native wood. The main point is that the canoe could be anchored to give access to water otherwise inaccessible to fishermen wading or trolling. An arrangement whereby boats could be anchored easily would undoubtedly revolutionise fishing in the south of Chile. I have, in fact, seen an iron weight used during the past season with considerable effect.

While on the subject of the boat, the visitors would be well advised to include in his

equipment a rubber cushion as the wooden seats are very hard. Some years ago I had a cushion made of rubber composition in the shape of a duckboard, and it was a great comfort, not only in the boat but also when riding a horse on an uncomfortable saddle. And if you go to Llifén, you will probably have to ride a horse.

A rod rest is a good thing to have while you are trolling as, otherwise, you have to hold on to the rod all the time and it is usually just when you are lighting your pipe in a wind and have your rod between your knees that a fish gets on; in any case, you probably want to fix up a cast while you are trolling and it is annoying to have to hang on to your rod all the time.

In my remarks on climatic conditions I advised you to come prepared for rain. Some American fishing friends in Chile have finally arrived at what they claim to be the best protection against heavy rain. It consists of a long waterproof cape with sleeves and a hole

for the head with a zip fastener to close up the neck tightly; it is long enough almost to touch the ground when one is sitting. Combined with a broadrimmed waterproof hat, it is claimed that this cape, which is really an adaptation of the Chilean “poncho” (a woollen blanket with a hole for the head), will keep you dry under the worst conditions.

If you are an exponent of the “Solunar” theory, you will, of course, bring along your tables. Opinions among local fishermen as to their utility in Chile are divided but there are more in favour than against. It is understandable that local fishermen, who claim to know the best fishing times under varying weather conditions on their favourite waters, should be stubborn about being guided by tables instead of their own knowledge of nature and the habits of the fish. For example, Laja fishermen will tell you that the best fishing on that river is between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. invariably and it generally seems to work out; if that be so, the “Solunar” tables would

not apply there. It must also be borne in mind that local conditions, peculiar to Chile, such as volcanic disturbances and “puelches” [winds from the Andes],⁶ would upset any tables but they should not be abandoned without an adequate test. I keep an open mind on the subject and believe that time and experience will prove the tables to be useful.

Now I feel that my visitor is more or less equipped with essentials and am assuming that he will look after accessories, such as the fishing bag with its one hundred and one contents, and the inevitable fisherman’s flask. He must arrive in Chile with everything he is likely to require, as, while certain fishing requisites are obtainable in limited quantities, he should not count on being able to replace things easily.

⁶ A ‘puelche’ wind is a dry foehn-like wind that occurs in south-central Chile, named after the Puelche people. They can cause fast snow melt in the Andes, producing floods.

CHAPTER VIII

(pp. 59-66 of the typed manuscript)

A DAY'S FISHING IN CHILE

Having told you something about the weather you may expect and the tackle you should bring along with you, the time has come to introduce you to what I should describe as a typical day's fishing in Chile.

You are comfortably installed at a fishing hotel somewhere in the south of Chile and, although you have been fishing ever since you were a boy at school and had experience in many parts of the world including New Zealand and British Columbia, you are pleasurably excited over the prospect of a new experience in unknown waters. The weather seems fairly settled and the people you have met on the train and elsewhere have been very friendly and have made you feel at home despite the fact that you do not know more than a few words of their language. Yes,

undoubtedly Chile is a hospitable country and the stranger can be assured that he will meet with every kindness when he comes along!

You have enjoyed a good lunch and have buttonholed the owner of the hotel in an effort to complete your fishing arrangements without delay. You are obviously having a bit of a struggle over language difficulties and are considerably relieved when an Englishman at another table comes across and volunteers his assistance. He tells you that his friend and he are going up river next day for a full day and invites you to join them. You accept with alacrity whereupon he suggests that you leave all the arrangements in his hands. Needless to say, you are only too happy to do so and feel that your first hurdle is over.

It transpires in the course of conversation that his friend is a Chilean, who has travelled a lot and seems to know London as well as you do, and that he is an Englishman, who came out at the end of the war in 1918 and made Chile his home. You discover that you have a

great deal in common with your newfound friends and altogether you are highly satisfied with the partnership you have made.

Later in the day you endeavour to find out something about the arrangements for the next day but all you can gather is that everything has been settled, the boats have already been despatched on ox-carts, and that all you have to do is to be ready for breakfast at eight o'clock next morning. Having left instructions with the hotel porter (who is also the waiter, bartender and general factotum about the premises) that you wish to be wakened at seven o'clock, you proceed to prepare a few casts and generally get your tackle in order, after which you tumble into bed in an atmosphere of glorious and eager expectancy.

Next morning you are roused at twenty minutes past seven – it is the custom of hotel porters in the south to get you up either much too early or too late but very rarely at the right time – and instead of having plenty of time to

get ready, you have a bit of a scramble in order to be downstairs for breakfast at the appointed hour. But you needn't really have hurried at all as there is no sign of your friends nor of breakfast and you have to hang around for fifteen minutes before anything happens. You are accustomed to a good old-fashioned English breakfast, which is not easy to obtain in a country where a cup of coffee and a roll is generally considered adequate, but you make the best of it on scrambled eggs, toast and coffee and by twenty to nine your party is ready for the road.

“But where is that confounded taxi?” your friends exclaim. “It was ordered for eight thirty!” A small boy hanging round at the door of the hotel – there is always at least one small boy there at any hour of the day – is sent off to dig out the chauffeur, who is apparently a genial fellow who answers to the nickname of “Guatón” (Fatty) and a well known character in the village. In an incredibly short time the peaceful atmosphere

of this little place is rudely disturbed by a truly horrible row coming from a small shack on the other side of the plaza (village square) and eventually, spluttering and gasping, your car of a rare old vintage makes its appearance and advances by short rushes to the door of the hotel. Guatón, still busy with his breakfast roll and, of course, unshaven, is quite unconcerned and a reference to the fact that he is late only produces a broad grin from him and the shattering explanation “Me quedé dormido, patrón!” (I overslept, master). There was a finality about this laconic answer which indicated clearly that the discussion was closed. It should be explained at this juncture that in such small places nobody appears to have a watch or to care about the time and the universal timepiece is the clock at the railway station. For an Englishman who has been brought up with a strict regard for punctuality such utter disregard for time is apt to be rather upsetting and, indeed nervewracking; if the best is to be got out of a holiday in Chile,

however, a philosophical attitude should be accepted from the very beginning.

To return to our story, you wonder how you will all fit in the car as, in addition to your friends and yourself, there are three boatmen and a good-sized lunch-basket, but the car is one of the old roomy touring type with tip-up seats and no great difficulty is experienced. So finally everything is ready and you are off! The old engine shows considerable reluctance in the initial stages but gradually works itself up to a fever heat and all is well outside of the fact that you are being jostled about rather badly. Fortunately there are three of you in the back seat and you are wedged in tightly and this alone prevents you from hitting the roof. How the car is able to surmount the series of obstacles is amazing and you are filled with genuine admiration for the veteran and his phlegmatic driver Guatón. You really had no idea that a road anywhere could be as bad as this one nor would you have believed that a car would go over it. However, you are

making progress quite steadily and all seems to be going well when the engine suddenly stops, having apparently had quite enough of it. Well, you feel that this just had to happen and you are not in the least surprised! Guatón gets out, opens the bonnet, has a cursory glance at the engine, takes out a piece of wire from his pocket, works intently for a few minutes while you all sit still behind with bated breath, and the damage is repaired; he also notices that the front bumper has fallen on the ground on one side, and he ties it up securely with a bit of stout string. It is surprising what a Chilean chauffeur can do with wire and string and you now lose any doubts you may have had as to his ability to take you to your destination. Off you go again and you eventually reach what you think is your destination but no such luck – it is merely a ferry which you have to cross! It is one of the old type of ferries, of which there are many in Chile, consisting of a cable stretched across the river, with a pulley, from

which a strong chain is attached to the ferryboat, which is propelled across the river by the force of the current. Of course, when you arrive at the river, the ferryboat is at the far side and there is not a living soul to be seen over there nor the remotest sign of any human habitation. Guatón and the three boatmen shout and whistle fiercely but ten minutes have gone and there is still no sign of life on the other side. You feel that this is really too bad and you are rapidly becoming exasperated! Your friends, having shown their annoyance at the outset by loud outbursts of fluent Spanish, which have made you green with envy, have ceased to worry and are sitting on a log quietly enjoying a cigarette. You stand there gazing at the river, certain that you are missing the morning rise and bemoaning your fate that you should have been induced to come to a country where everything is so incredibly haphazard. Punctuated by shouts and whistles, half-an-hour has gone when a small urchin makes his appearance on

the far side. he takes in the situation at a glance and disappears again, to reappear a little later with two Indian lads who lazily commence to move the ferryboat across the river. It transpires that the old Indian, who looks after the ferry for the Government, was annoyed over the insignificance of the tip received from a party which crossed at a late hour on the previous day, and somebody has had to suffer. Taking a car across on one of those ferries is no easy task but the judicious placing of big stones and planks of wood solves the problem and the car skids and bumps its way on and off the ferry without apparently turning a hair, while you look on in undisguised amazement. Eventually you reach the other side and off you go again on the final stage of your journey. The climax in the morning's misfortune comes when a little further on you pass three ox-carts, loaded with boats, wending their way slowly as if time were of no possible account. By the time you reach your final destination on the river

higher up, you are speechless with indignation and maybe it is just as well that you do not speak the language as your relations with your boatman would undoubtedly be strained to breaking point.

Your friends seem to be unperturbed and remark that, by the time the rods are put up, the boats will probably have arrived. Your boatman gives you a hand and assists you in the selection of the fly, after which you leave him to fix up your trolling rod while you have a few casts in the river. Although you are unaware of it, this is an important moment of the day when your boatman is sizing you up and making up his mind as to whether you are a fisherman or not. On his verdict a great deal may depend. You discover subsequently that he has been chosen specially for you on the assumption that you are a good fisherman and that he is one of the best boatmen on the river; if he is satisfied that you know what you are doing, there is no trouble he will not go to in order to ensure the success of the day. The

good boatman in the South is a most willing fellow with plenty of commonsense and the fact that you cannot talk to each other does not prevent you from developing a highly satisfactory mutual understanding.

The other two boats have gone and your boat is now ready, more or less one hour later than intended, and you are still worried in case you may have missed the best of the morning. Half-an-hour passes, an hour, and you have not seen the semblance of a rise! Your boatman, silent behind you, is managing the boat well and you are missing no likely water; he is now manoeuvring the boat to the bank and immediately below you see a run with a still pool at the foot of it which looks promising. You get out and cast across and down the run, allowing your fly to drift into the pool below. After a few casts you suddenly feel a determined tug, you strike, the reel sings and a beautiful rainbow trout leaps out of the water. For the next few minutes you are kept busy and finally your first Chilean trout,

a five pounder, is safely in the net. The boatman grins and you feel better! It is now noon and for the next hour you have excellent sport without a dull moment; by the time you arrive at the spot down below on the river bank where your friends have decided to lunch, you have picked up three more fish, one about two pounds and the other two around three to four pounds, all good fighting rainbows. You have forgotten all about the morning's annoyances, you are enthusiastic about the river and you are ready for a good lunch. The other two have not done quite so well as you have but appear to be profoundly satisfied and are both in the best of good humour, apparently deriving great satisfaction out of your good fortune. They are proud of the fishing in Chile and anxious that you should have an equally high opinion of it.

Your Chilean friend is superintending the lunch arrangements and, as he hands you a Martini cocktail, he explains to you how the trout is being cooked. Wood has been gathered

by the boatmen and a large fire has been built. The fish is cleaned, salted and peppered liberally, and placed inside greaseproof paper which has been well buttered. This package is then rolled inside a newspaper and the final package, secured with string, is thoroughly soaked in the river, after which it is buried in the red-hot embers for twenty minutes. When the burnt paper is removed, the skin of the fish peels off very easily and the flesh is beautifully cooked. Possibly the pleasantness of the surroundings and the joy of lunching in the open air contribute in your appreciation of the fish, cooked in this manner, but, whatever the explanation is, you quite honestly admit that you have seldom tasted more delicious fish. A bottle of the best Chilean red wine is produced and you have a really good lunch, at the end of which a short siesta is indicated before you resume fishing.

It is a lovely day and quite hot after lunch. The fishing is spasmodic and nothing of any great interest happens until about five o'clock.

From then until the sun goes down over the hilltops, you have a glorious time, finishing up with a seven-pounder just as it is getting dark. You have hardly had time to notice the sunset which was brilliant but that does not matter a great deal as you will see many more sunsets before you leave Chile. As you are packing up and examining the catch, you reflect on the day's sport. That glorious final hour when the sun was going down, when you were dryflying and every moment held you spellbound with intense excitement when the only sounds on the river were the gentle swish of your rod and line, the flopping of the rising trout and the note of an occasional bird, how quickly it seemed to pass! You were completely lost to the outside world, your troubles for the time being had ceased to exist, nothing mattered but the absorbing occupation in which you were engaged, there was no jarring note to mar your enjoyment, nothing to disturb your peace! And when you analyzed the day, you realised that two brief spells of unbounded

pleasure were responsible for the entire day's enjoyment and more than compensated for such petty annoyances or dull moments as you may have had. Was it not so often the case, that a whole day's pleasure hinged on one outstanding incident of the day? So often an uneventful round of golf has given you pleasure in the recollection of one inspired shot. Well, anyhow you will never forget your first day's fishing in Chile and you look forward eagerly to further enjoyment of those unspoiled waters.

You trudge back to the hotel, a tired but happy man, and there, over a whisky and soda, you compare notes with your friends. You have all had a splendid day and, when you express your gratitude to them for having taken you, a complete stranger, under their wing, the answer is that you are welcome to join them whenever you wish. And when you are dropping off to sleep, pleasantly tired after the day in the open air, you reflect what a difference it makes to life when people are

really friendly and you feel that there is nothing shallow or insincere about the kindness you have received in this far-off land. That hopeless feeling that you are a stranger in a strange land has gone and you are ready to enjoy every minute of your stay.

Maybe I have been guilty of exaggeration in my picture of a typical day's fishing in Chile! If so, the intention has been well-meant, contriving to show that the real pleasures of your stay in Chile will completely counterbalance such difficulties as you may encounter, to which you possibly attach too much importance. Nothing has been farther from my mind than to convey any depreciatory idea of the simple country folk of this hospitable land. You will find that, while they may put no value on time and annoy you by taking things just as they come, they possess the inherent qualities of friendship and helpfulness so valuable in human relationships. For my own part I have received nothing but kindness at their hands.

CHAPTER IX

(pp. 67-78 of the typed manuscript)

THE TROUT RIVERS OF CHILE – A GEOGRAPHICAL SURVEY

In the chapter on “Climatic and General Conditions” I divided the fishing map of Chile into three zones and told you something about the conditions in each zone.¹ Now I propose to go into further detail regarding the trout rivers and, in order to avoid wearying my readers with a long list of names which mean nothing to them, I shall endeavour to confine my attention to the better known among the rivers and shall make the survey as concise as

¹ There are other common ways of dividing Chile into zones. See for example the *History of Chile, 1808-2002* (Cambridge Latin American Studies, 2004) where five zones are used for the whole country: Norte Grande, Norte Chico, Central Chile, South and Far South. The last three of these correspond broadly to the fishing map given here.

possible.

Proceeding from north to south, we start with the Central Zone with its mountain streams and small trout, where the small trout fry is all that is required.

CENTRAL ZONE

I believe that the Aconcagua Valley, in which I include the River Putaendo as a tributary of the River Aconcagua, is the most northerly part of Chile where trout are to be found and this is a reasonable assumption as further north I should imagine that conditions would be quite unsuitable for trout owing to the heat. My Central Zone extends from the River Aconcagua in the north to the River Claro in the vicinity of Talca and in this zone, as already mentioned, the main rivers (Aconcagua, Maipo, etc.) are dirty all the year round and trout fishing is confined to smaller rivers and streams.

In the old days the Aconcagua valley was a favourite rendezvous of fishermen, particularly from Valparaiso, but is not much

frequented nowadays. As there are few clear streams in the valley and so many nearer to Santiago, fishermen from the capital rarely go there. The best known streams in the valley are the Blanco, Los Leones, Riecillos and Las Perdices.

Within easy reach of Santiago there are two valleys, the Las Condes valley through which runs the River Mapocho, a tributary of the River Maipo, and the Volcan valley, through which flows the River Maipo itself. There is no fishing in the River Mapocho, as the water is fouled by copper tailings from the Disputada mines, but in the vicinity of the winter sports fields at Farellones there is a stream (the Molina) where trout are to be found. This stream is probably the coldest of all the Central Zone streams and highly suitable for trout but unfortunately it is not often clear. However, the Covarrubias, a tributary of the Molina, is almost invariably clear and has some delightful pools. Still nearer Santiago there is the Arrayan, about which little is

known nowadays as there is no right of way through the property, through which it runs. Rumour has it that there are brook trout in this stream and there may well be as it was stocked with brook trout fry a long time ago. In the Volcan valley there is a bigger choice of streams, the best of which are the Collanco, about which you will hear more later, the Manzano and the Clarillo.

Before leaving this section I must mention an incident which took place in the River Molina some time ago. A party of fishermen included Mr. Gleboff, a Russian music master and a man of extraordinary adaptability, and all efforts to catch trout on the usual standard flies proved unavailing. Late in the day Mr. Gleboff plucked a strand of red wool from his wife's sweater, tied it round a hook, cast it into a pool, and took out a five pounder, which must be about the record for that stream.

On another occasion in Farellones, 7,000 feet up, it was discovered at cocktail time that there was no ice in the log cabin. Mr. Gleboff

immediately grabbed a bucket and climbed up to the nearest patch of snow, returning in an incredibly short time with the bucket filled with beautiful crisp snow.

In the Coya and Cauquenes district to the east of Rancagua there are several good trout streams, one of which, the Cauquenes, runs through a farm, the property of the Braden Copper Company.² Other well known streams in this valley are the Claro and Pangal.

At Rengo there is the River Claro, where good sport can generally be had throughout the fishing season and further south in the neighbourhood of San Fernando is another well known river, the Tinguiririca, which flows through a number of farms in its lengthy course. Unfortunately the Tinguiririca is often dirty and unfishable but there is another

² Braden Copper Company was founded in 1904. It was an American company which controlled the El Teniente copper mine in Chile until 1967 when its copper holdings were nationalized.

Claro in this neighbourhood, which is good upstream from Puente Negro. The Clarillo is also good but the fish in this district are generally small and there are too many of them.

Between San Fernando and Curicó there are the Rivers Chimbarongo and Teno, both of which contain trout but are not much frequented, and further south in the vicinity of Talca there is yet another River Claro. "Claro" means "clear" and is a favourite name for Chilean rivers and so, for that matter, is "colorado" which means the reverse, "dirty". A few years ago this Claro near Talca was a fine river with plenty of brown trout averaging around two pounds in splendid conditions. What has happened to it I cannot say but the latest report I have heard is that it is hardly worth fishing now, a state of affairs which calls for investigation.

In recent years the upper Maule, near Talca, and Lake Maule have come into great prominence and there are many reports of

incredibly large rainbow trout having been caught in that remote and barren region in the Chilean uplands. When the early reports were received of big fish in Lake Maule a party was organised by a sportsman in the American Embassy and flown up there – the lake stands at an altitude of about 10,000 feet – in a Catalina flying-boat,³ the obvious way to get there if you are lucky enough to be able to arrange to go that way as it takes one hour as compared with a heavy journey by car, the latter part of which is over dusty mountainous roads. This expedition was a conspicuous success and many goodsized rainbows were



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A PBY Catalina flying boat

caught with several over ten pounds with the result that enthusiasm for Lake Maule ran high and it has been greatly frequented. Unfortunately its fame has contributed to its undoing and a fishing friend informs me that on a recent visit on a public holiday the place was a miniature Coney Island with fishermen of all types crowded around the lake and river, some trying to fish but most of them asleep. There is no accommodation at the lake and, if you decide to camp up there, take plenty of warm clothes as it is cold.

Local Talca fishermen, however, are proud of the Maule and it has earned a reputation for big fish. If you have the good fortune to be there when few fishermen are about, you will probably enjoy good sport.

INTERMEDIATE ZONE

My Intermediate Zone extends from Talca in the north to Lautaro in the south and has an abundance of trout rivers. As we proceed south the trout are getting gradually bigger and we are in the transition stage from the sea

trout size of fly to the salmon fly. The fishing in this zone is comparatively little known, except to local fishermen, as it is mostly off the beaten track and there is a lack of accommodation for the visitor.

The first river of note is the Achibueno, south of Linares, and apparently the ground feeding in this river is much better than further north as the flesh of the trout is pinker and they begin to resemble the bigger fish in the south in condition; with any luck you will get a four or five pounder in this river.

Further south before reaching Chillán there are the Rivers Longavi, Perquilauquen and Ñuble. The latter is a fine river and I have very pleasant recollections of a weekend spent some years ago at the “Dadinco” farm, where fishermen were always made welcome by Don Luis Izquierdo Valdes and his charming wife. As an added attraction they built a fishing and shooting lodge for their friends, which, as a contemporary of the film “Snowwhite”, was known as “La Casa de Los Siete Enanos” (The

House of the Seven Dwarfs). My chief recollection of the River Ñuble is that I had no luck at all until I switched from salmon to sea trout flies, after which the sport was excellent. The best fish caught among our party was a six pound brown trout. Another point which sticks in my memory is that we were each provided with a horse and groom and were able to cross the river, where it would have been impossible by foot, and take full advantage of the fishing on both banks. The best time to fish the lower Ñuble is in January as the water gets rather low towards the end of the season. In the upper reaches near the Cordillera the fishing is also very good as is borne out by the catch of a 9 1/2 lb. brown trout by Ian Morrison in March, 1941. He goes there every year in autumn and swears by it.

South of Chillán there are the Rivers Diquillin and Cholguan both of which are very pleasant for the fishermen, before you come to the Rivers Laja and the Bío-Bío. I recall with great pleasure a pleasant week-end spent in

the “Los Tilos” farm in the vicinity of the Diquillin some years ago with a group of fishermen. The Laja is the main tributary of the Bío-Bío and will be the subject of a separate chapter as I have chosen it as the representative trout river of this zone. The Bío-Bío is a big river and has a reputation for good-sized trout; excellent sport is to be had in the upper reaches as the following report will show.

Anthony Stobart,⁴ accompanied by a Buenos Aires friend, David Babbington-Smith, made a trip into the Manzanar and Lonquimay district east of Curacautín, in the month of March, 1940. Their transport consisted of horses, brought over from a farm in the Argentine, and they were without camping

⁴ Anthony Brydges Stobart (1903-1989). He worked for a steelmaking company, John Summers and Sons, and spent time in Chile and Argentina, where he kept the Anglo-Argentine Iron Company running throughout the war. (Obituary in *The Himalayan Journal*, No. 46, 1990)

equipment or even plans, although they were well aware that the district was almost entirely devoid of hotel accommodation and unknown to the fishing fraternity in Chile. For two weeks they rode from one place to another in search of good fishing and good company and got both. This is what Anthony Stobart says about the reception they got from the people they met:

“I must say that we neither of us have ever met such charming people in such an out-of-the-way place. Everybody was pleased to see us and we could have stayed anywhere we liked.”

They were enchanted with the upper reaches of the Bío-Bío and the following excerpts describe briefly the fishing conditions on one section of the river:

“Above this spot is some lovely water for about 20 kilometres. The valley is open like at Lonquimay with few

trees and the river is easily getatable from both banks.

The river is pretty well fished by local fishermen who are all keen but none of them had ever seen people fishing with a fly and I should doubt if that stretch of water had ever had a fly cast on it before.

On the Bío-Bío we took only one brown trout; all the rest were rainbow.

I can imagine no nicer place to spend a few quiet days fishing.

As this portion of the Bío-Bío is situated in between two ranges of mountains, I feel quite convinced that it experiences better weather than the country to the east and west of it. Any approaching storm breaks its force on the surrounding mountains before reaching this little bit of valley which is a point well worth remembering.

There is no fear of the river being overfished.

As you have gathered there are no such things as hotels, and one must either bring a tent or stay with friends which you quickly make.

The real discovery of that trip was that splendid stretch of water in the upper reaches of the Bío-Bío.”

One day's fishing is given as follows:

“I got eight fish, the biggest about 3 1/2 lbs., mostly on a Silver Wilkinson. David meanwhile had landed 7, one of which weighed 8 lbs., and two more of about 5 1/2 lbs. each. He was fishing mostly with a Zulu but caught his biggest with a Dusty Miller.”

I am sure that my readers will be interested in the story of this trip. It is a novel experience for an angler to find water where a fly has never been cast before and there is no doubt that there are other stretches of water

in Chile where the same would apply.

Such trips as this to remote rivers off the beaten track require to be undertaken in a spirit of adventure and are well worth while!

The rivers Duqueco, Renaico, Mininco, Malleco, Blanco, Quino and Quillen all contain trout but are little known. Dr. [James H.] McLean spent his summer holidays regularly in the neighbourhood of the Rivers Renaico and Malleco and speaks well of the fishing there. Other reports also indicate that a quiet fishing holiday can be profitably spent in this district.

The upper reaches of the Cautín might be treated as in this zone but I am including the Cautín as a southern river.

SOUTHERN ZONE

And now we come to the Southern Zone, extending from Lautaro to the far south, which contains all the world famous fishing about which you have assuredly heard. In view of the lack of accommodation and touring facilities south of Puerto Montt,⁵ except in

Magallanes, I have cut short the fishing map of the Southern Zone at Puerto Montt. Nevertheless the fishing in the extreme south is beginning to command attention and I am making it the subject of a separate chapter towards the end of the book. A glance at the map will show you that this section of Chile, from Lautaro to Puerto Montt, is a veritable lake district and the country is very lovely. From the fishing standpoint the lakes can be disregarded as they are much too deep; it is known that there are very big fish in the lakes but attempts to catch them in the ordinary way have proved unavailing and in the shallower water near the shores the fish seem to run small. One exception is the western end of Lake Villarrica where good fishing may be

⁵ Puerto Montt city was founded in 1853 after government-sponsored immigration from Germany that began in 1848 populated the region. It was named after Manuel Montt, President of Chile between 1851 and 1861, who set in motion the German immigration.

had in the lake where it is not deep. Another exception is the western end of Lake Todos Los Santos.

I shall be dealing in later chapters with several of the better known fishing resorts in this district (Pucón, Villarrica, Panguipulli, Estación Los Lagos and Llifén) which might be termed the “big five”, so that a passing reference to those places is all that need be made in this survey.

Proceeding still from north to south the first river we meet in this zone is the Cautín, which flows through Temuco. In the early days the River Cautín was much patronised by fishermen but presumably because of its proximity to the town of Temuco the fishing steadily deteriorated and fishermen found it necessary to go further afield. Some years ago the authorities decided that action had to be taken to prevent further deterioration and closed the river for two years. It is gratifying to report that whatever the reason the Cautín has come into its own again and today it is one

of the best rivers in Chile without the slightest doubt. From the point of view of the scenery it is not attractive but this is compensated by the excellence of the fishing. There is an abundance of bank fishing, both up and down river from Temuco, and plenty of goodsized trout. Two years ago I had the good fortune to spend a day on the Cautín between Temuco and Labranza and had excellent sport, the catch consisting of a dozen rainbow trout averaging three pounds. The recovery of the river coincided happily with the opening of a first-class hotel in Temuco, the Hotel de la Frontera, and, in conjunction with the local fishing club which provides boats and boatmen, the hotel management attends efficiently to all the requirements of fishermen. I can highly recommend the Cautín and indeed wonder if I have given it sufficient prominence in this account of fishing in Chile.

East and south of Temuco there is a tributary of the River Cautín, the River Quepe, which also provides good sport. In the year

1943 the British Ambassador to Chile, Sir Charles Orde,⁶ while staying at Wilfrid Cooper's farm in the vicinity, fished this stream one evening and caught fifteen trout, averaging about three-quarters of a pound.

The next fishing district is Lake Villarrica with the River Trancura flowing into the eastern end of the lake at Pucón and the River Toltén flowing out of the western end at Villarrica. This is undoubtedly the most famous fishing centre in the country.

North-east of Pucón lies Lake Caburga at the eastern end of which is the River Blanco, which is reported to hold huge fish. The river is very low in the summer but towards the end of March or in April, when the fish commence to run, good sport might be had there. Close to the Argentine frontier there is the River Maichin, a grand possibility for the future. One day Pete Obuljen took me there in a jeep and to reach the river we had to take an ox-

⁶ British Ambassador to Chile, 1940-45.

cart road on which no motor car had ever been before. We parked the jeep at a likely spot on the river and within five minutes we were surrounded by a lot of indians who rushed out to see this noisy thing which had invaded their tranquil life; few of them, and certainly not the youngsters, had ever seen a car. We only fished for a little while but came away with the conviction that more would be heard of the River Maichin.

Thirty-two kilometres (twenty miles) south of Lake Villarrica the road takes you to Lake Calafquen, which connects up with Lake Panguipulli through the River Guanehue. The hotel accommodation at this centre is very limited and somewhat primitive but recent reports of the fishing in the River Guanehue are most encouraging.

Lake Panguipulli⁷ is the centre of a group of lakes and in all directions there is splendid

⁷ This lake is of glacial origin and enclosed by the Andes mountains on all sides except the west, where the town of Panguipulli lies.

fishing, the best of which is to be found in the Rivers Guanehue, Fui and Enco. Further east near the Argentine border there is the Pirihueico district with great possibilities, including a first-class new hotel connected with the Hotel Crillon in Santiago, and a landing field. The latter is important as the trip from Santiago by land is long and tiring.

Out of the western end of Lake Riñihue runs the River San Pedro, with its fishing centre in Estación Los Lagos on the main railway line.

The next fishing resort towards the south is Llifén on the eastern end of Lake Ranco, with a choice of four rivers, the most accessible and best known of which is the Calcurrupe.

The River Bueno rises in the western end of lake Ranco and flows all the way to the sea. It is a big river and in addition to rainbow and brown trout contains also steelhead. I am told that there is a small hotel nowadays at the western end of the lake and the fishing in the River Bueno near the hotel is good.

The River Pilmaiquen, which rises in Lake

Puyehue, and the River Rahue, which rises in Lake Rupanco, both tributaries of the River Bueno, are splendid fishing rivers but, presumably owing to the competition of the more famous resorts further north, they, like the River Bueno, have never been much frequented by fishermen from abroad or even from the north of Chile.

It was to the River Rahue that Henry John Brewster⁸ took his wife for her first fishing expedition and the very first fish she caught weighed 14 1/2 pounds. He had been fishing all his life and had never reached double figures! His prowess with rod and line suffered a severe setback temporarily as his wife just refused to believe it was beginner's luck. However, with the passing of time she has come to realise that in practice that sort of thing happens once in a lifetime.

The Puyehue district is an interesting

⁸ Brewster was a mason, and Venerable Master of Britannia Lodge in Santiago in 1936. (email from Ricardo Couyoumdjian)

subject as regards fishing and I am devoting a separate chapter to it later. At the eastern end of Lake Puyehue there is the River Golgol with great possibilities and several smaller rivers (Chanlelfu, Pescadero and Nilque) running into the lake.

Sixteen kilometres (ten miles) south of Lake Puyehue we come to Lake Rupanco which is now coming into the picture as a fishing resort. Some years ago John Curphey caught a 12 1/2 pound rainbow on a fly at the inlet of the River Gaviotas, which runs into the lake, and reports regarding the last season are equally encouraging. I am informed that the hotel (Termas de Rupanco) is good and that when the fishing facilities are developed excellent sport will be had in that district.

Further south still in the vicinity of Puerto Varas, where there is a splendid railway hotel, there is the River Maullín, which rises in Lake Llanquihue, and near Ensenada, at the eastern end of the lake in the very heart of the finest scenery in the Chilean lake district,

there is the River Petrohué, which flows out of Lake Todos Los Santos and in a short precipitous course of about fifty kilometres (thirty-one miles) finds its way to the sea. The River Petrohué is unquestionably one of the finest trout rivers in the country, especially for the fly fisherman in the months of March and April. The fishing in the river is all from the bank entailing hard work scrambling over rocks and is no place for the fisherman who likes to take it easy. The rainbow trout in the Petrohué are magnificent and put up a great fight with the aid of the strong current. When I fished this river conditions were bad as the water was warm after a long spell of drought but I saw enough of it to convince me of its outstanding qualities. For the fishing visitor there is unfortunately one great snag, hotel accommodation, as the hotel at Ensenada does not cater for fishermen and there is virtually no accommodation in the small hotel at Petrohué. Another important point also is that one must make arrangements to have one's

own transport in order to get at the fishing. If you can arrange for accommodation and transport you will not regret a visit to the River Petrohué and you can ask for nothing finer than a three-pound rainbow in that river. Pancho Jones from Peru has spent several seasons there and has had wonderful sport with several rainbows over ten pounds.

In the neighbourhood of Puerto Montt, the terminus of the main railway line, there is the River Coihuin or Chamiza, which rises in Lake Chapo, and finally between Puerto Montt and Puerto Aysen there are several rivers, notably the Yelcho, Palena and the Aysen (with its tributaries the Rivers Simpson and Mañi[hu]ales), all of which have been stocked with trout and have great possibilities. They are not shown on my fishing map of the Southern Zone for the reasons previously stated.

The trouble is that in the south of Puerto Montt, except in Magallanes. you come up against the question of accommodation, as the

country is quite undeveloped, but between La Unión and Puerto Montt there are several rivers which I have mentioned, as, for instance, the Bueno, Rahue, Maullín and Chamiza, which are not included in my “big five” but provide grand fishing. It may be their proximity to the bigger towns in the south that keeps fishermen from other parts away – they naturally preferring the more picturesque rivers among the lakes near the Cordillera [Andes mountain range] – or it may be just that they are not as well known as the more famous rivers further north. Whatever it is I cannot say but it seems to me that those rivers, and the rivers between Puerto Montt and Puerto Aysen, may well be the future salmon rivers of Chile as they appear to have all the necessary characteristics.

CHAPTER X

(pp. 79-86 of the typed manuscript)

THE COLLANCO

Some of our local fishermen are inclined to despise the small mountain streams in the Central Zone and argue that it is a waste of time to bother with “sardines”, especially after the attractions of fishing in the south. I have heard this view expressed generally by those who have taken up fishing in the south from a boat and in my humble opinion it is a great mistake. The best apprenticeship for the beginner, to enable him to enjoy to the full extent the bigger rivers in the south, is the small mountain stream, where you have to study the habits of the trout and where visibility and the art of casting count for so much. The ability to cast a fly a long way, to avoid the overhanging branches and to place the fly over the desired spot, gives one such a decided advantage. The satisfaction, which comes to the angler when he picks out the spot

in the stream where the feeding fish must be stationed, decides how best to approach the problem, and after several casts has his quarry firmly hooked, can best be appreciated in the small stream. And when the beginner tackles such water for the first time, he is hopelessly at sea and it is only after he has lost a few flies in branches and discovered that he is frightening away the fish from each pool he approaches, that he begins to realise that sitting in a boat in the south waiting for a fish to grab the spoon or fly at the end of your line, is a very different story from this type of fishing where you have to use your head and skill and really stalk your fish! And when you begin to appreciate the joys of real angling, as opposed to the popular concept of fishing, you are on the way to greater enjoyment. Take my advice and get all the experience you can in the small mountain streams! You will enjoy the casting problems you constantly have to face, you will get full value out of your triumphs, you will learn a great deal from

your failures, and, when the time comes and you return to the bigger rivers in the south, the knowledge and experience you have gained will stand you in good stead and enable you to get the best out of the fishing there.

Another point to bear in mind is that the matter of the size of the fish is relative to the weight of your tackle. A three-quarter pound fish on a four or five ounce rod will give you just as much fun as a three pounder on a much heavier rod. I must admit that there are times when the fishing in the small stream is spoiled by “tiddlers” which insist on getting hooked all day long and it is undoubtedly very irritating to spend most of your day putting back tiny fish; this generally happens towards the end of the season when the water is low and is probably responsible for the “sardine” reputation of the small mountain streams among certain fishermen. The best time to fish the small streams, I think, is in the early part of the season as soon as the water clears or, better still, just as it is clearing. At this time

the rivers in the south are too full of water to provide the best of sport but in the smaller streams a lot of water is no serious disadvantage and indeed rather the reverse.

In order to give you an idea of trout fishing in the Central Zone, I have selected as a representative mountain stream the Collanco, well known to many anglers in this country. There seems to be some doubt as to the correct name of this stream but not as far as my fishing friends are concerned – it is and will always be the Collanco. It lies in the Volcán valley and is a tributary of the River Maipo, which it joins five kilometres (three miles) up the valley beyond the village of San José de Maipo. From this point to the waterfall upstream there about eight kilometres (five miles) of fishing and, as far as is known, there are no trout beyond the waterfall.

I was introduced to the Collanco some twenty odd years ago by R.M. Gilfillan, to whom I shall always be grateful. Gillie, as he is better known among his friends, is rarely

seen on the water nowadays but in his day was one of the finest fly fishermen in the country.

The fishing rights on this stream are in theory rented out to a small fishing club in Santiago, but, as pointed out in my earlier remarks on the legal side of fishing in Chile, fishing rights are vested in the State and cannot be leased to any private person or club, except by the President of the Republic under a special clause of the law. In practice, the rights of the members of this club are limited to permission to use a certain gate of entry to the farm through which access to the stream is attained; but as there is another gate one kilometre (five furlongs) lower down, through which anyone is apparently permitted to pass, the only advantage accruing to members of the club is that the upper gate means a shorter walk to the stream and a better place to park one's car. It sounds almost like high treason for me, as a member of this club, to make such a statement but the facts must be faced. I have

a shrewd idea also that the top gate is opened for anyone who cares to come along and no questions are asked. My readers will be tempted to ask quite reasonably, why bother to have a club at all? The only satisfactory answer to this obvious question is that the very existence of such a club is a good thing in that it has created an unofficial body of keen fishermen interested in the development of fishing in the country on the right lines. In effect, the practical interest of the members has been shown in their cooperation with the local authorities in the re-stocking of the streams and the development of fishing generally. I have seen members of this club spend a whole day on a stream, catching "tiddlers" in the lower reaches and carrying them by mule back several miles to liberate them in a section of the stream above falls where no fish were to be found[;] such efforts to improve fishing conditions are to be commended and I trust that, despite the fact that the fishing rights enjoyed by the club

members are of a rather mythical nature, they will keep the club going in the interests of the sport. The President of the club is M.S. McGoldrick, one of the best anglers in the country of wide experience, who can be relied upon to do everything in his power for the furtherance of his favourite sport.

However, to return to the Collanco, I want my readers to picture a small mountain stream winding its sin[u]ous way through the valley, tumbling down from pool to pool with an occasional run of shallow water. The stream has its source in the snow-clad Cordillera and the water is provided by the melting snow in the spring and early summer and by rain in the winter. As I have said before, from the waterfall to the junction with the River Maipo, there are about eight kilometres (five miles) of fishing and this stream has the great advantage over other mountain streams in being relatively clear of overhanging branches. Twenty yards scross at its widest point it can be forded easily except

in the early part of the season when there is abundance of water and, even then, you rarely have to go far to get across. The pictures on page [blank] will give you a fair idea of what the stream looks like. Perhaps the best description I can give you of the Collanco is that it is just a typical trout stream, very similar in character to those to be found in the North of Scotland and Ireland.

In addition to the standing rule that trout under twelve inches cannot be taken, which incidentally is too large a minimum for the streams in the Central Zone, the club members have a rule of their own that not more than thirty trout can be taken out in one day. This may appear to my readers an unduly liberal allowance but in practice members frequently have to stop fishing about teatime because they have reached the allotted number. On a favourable day you may catch fish all the way along the stream and two at a time are frequent; I have seen Henry John Brewster take six fish out of one pool in fifteen

minutes with the same fly. Suffice it to say that it is easy fishing for the average fisherman and the expert can always amuse himself by trying to catch the sophisticated fish in the pools, which come up and have a look at the ordinary fly and treat it with the utmost disdain. If I were to define the “height of contempt”, I should say the withering look of a good-sized trout as he turns away from a fly in a crystal clear pool with a “don’t be ridiculous” expression in his eye.

The non-club fishermen on this stream are mostly worm fishermen and they catch few fish as they are generally clad in costumes which can be seen a long way off and have little chance of success except in the white water immediately below the small waterfalls in the deep pools where they do catch good-sized fish. Such fishermen do little damage to the fishing, except in the close season, and are to be sympathised with in that they either do not know any better or have not the means to afford the equipment for flyfishing. There are

other fishermen, however, who frequent those streams for whom I have no use whatsoever! I refer to the alleged fly fisherman who puts back nothing and whose idea is to catch the biggest possible quantity of fish irrespective of size. Tiddlers, beware when he is around!

The Collanco is a favourite stream for camping out and I have pleasant recollections of many a fine week-end spent on its banks. Fishing is much more enjoyable when there is no question of worrying over the long walk down to the car in the darkness. I remember on one occasion camping out with a friend and after two days of intensive fishing we had decided that on the following morning we would not bother about getting up at dawn for the morning rise but enjoy rather a lazy day. I was ready for breakfast about nine o'clock but my friend was still fast asleep and there did not seem to be any likelihood of him getting up for at least an hour. The temptation was too great for me and I had no difficulty in persuading myself that it would be rather

amusing to go down to the stream and have a few casts before breakfast. A rod was all that was necessary and there would not be any need to get wet. A spot two hundred yards down stream attracted me, where there was an island with runs and deep pools on either side. There was no difficulty in getting to the island over stepping stones and before long I was casting from a point of vantage on the island into a deep dark pool running below an overhanging ledge of rock. Suddenly, with no warning whatsoever, I had the sensation of the rod being nearly jerked out of my hand, grasped it firmly and the fun began! I realised that I was up against a major problem with my light rod and no net and, of course, it was quite hopeless to land the fish without getting into the water. I got wet, thoroughly wet in fact, but after twenty minutes had the satisfaction of beaching a fine two-pound rainbow, the best fish I have ever got out of the Collanco. This experience I count among the most thrilling I have ever had in fishing

and quite the most unexpected, which, of course, made it doubly enjoyable.

On another occasion Henry John Brewster had set out to reach the waterfall and, when he got there, he had to swim through a deep pool in a gorge, holding his rod in the air, in order to reach an attractive pool immediately below the waterfall. His initiative was amply rewarded as his first fish from the pool was a 3 1/4 pound rainbow, the record fish of the stream until the season when Colonel Lefevre caught a 3 1/2 pound brown trout in the lower reaches.

I do not wish my readers to get an exaggerated idea of the size of the trout in the Collanco from the incidents quoted. Such fish are exceptional and undoubtedly difficult to catch. The average fish from the stream is probably about a half pound in weight.

Occasionally the Collanco springs a surprise and I have frequently seen the stream clear in the early morning, come down milky with snow-water during the day, and clear once

more in the evening. In February, 1934, however more than a temporary disturbance was caused by unusual weather conditions. A few of us had decided to camp out for a few days in the upper reaches and a week previously heavy rain fell in the Central Zone – a very rare occurrence in the summer season – and, although we were unaware of it at the time, in the region of the Collanco there was a cloudburst. We arrived rather late in the day at the gate where the mules had assembled and by the time we reached the stream it was quite dark, which did not make the task of pitching camp any easier. Imagine our horror when next morning we found the stream a raging torrent of chocolate-coloured water! One of our party tried a worm but there was no sign of a trout anywhere and, as the conditions showed no indication of improving, we had reluctantly to break camp the next day and wend our weary way homewards after the most disappointing fishing week-end I have ever known. We learned subsequently that

there had been a bad landslide higher up which, combined with a lot of fresh snow, kept the stream dirty for about a week. The extraordinary point about this story is that, when the water did finally clear, the reports of club members were that not trout were to be seen in the stream for the remainder of the season. This was a major tragedy and we had to make plans for re-stocking it at the earliest possible date. This was done and, in addition, trout found their way up from the River Maipo so that, although fewer in number than in the average year, fishing was possible in the following season.

Visitors from abroad, who have fished this stream, have been enthusiastic about it and have found it difficult to understand how such fishing can be obtained without paying a good price for it. One has the feeling, however, that, unless more control is exercised over such streams by the authorities, they will tend to deteriorate year by year; it is known, for example, that fishing goes on in the close

season but nothing is done to stop it. In recent years the fishing in the Central Zone has not been so good as usual owing to the shortage of rain in the winter and the consequent lack of snow. The small streams have had little or no water except at the beginning of the season and the Collanco has suffered with the others. Another factor which may influence the stream in the future is the ingress of brown trout. Until the floods of the year 1934 I had never heard of or seen anything but rainbow trout in the Collanco but imagine that in the re-stocking the brown trout were introduced. Certain club members advocate not putting back brown trout, whatever the size, in order to prevent deterioration and they are probably right. My chief hopes for this delightful little stream are centred in the enthusiasm of the members of the club and I feel sure that, if they take an active interest in it, there is little to fear.

It would be a great pity to see such good fishing go steadily down until it is not worth

while. If changes in climatic conditions and irrigation requirements are responsible, there is nothing to be said, but if the cause can be attributed to the thoughtlessness of man, I for one should raise my voice in protest.

It would not be right to close my remarks on the Collanco without a reference to the late John P. Chadwick, an American who made his home in Chile for many years. A fine fisherman and a good friend, he was devoted to this little stream and fished it regularly year after year. Whenever he had the opportunity, he camped out on its banks and he was invariably the last man to leave the water at nightfall. Many were the friendships he formed over a camp fire in the still of the evening in the upper reaches of this stream. On the 4th of February 1940, he passed away peacefully in his sleep while camping out up there under the stars and I believe that, if he had the choice, this is the death he would have chosen. Intensely interested in fishing, his favourite relaxation, he was an inspiration to

his fellow fishermen who mourn his passing.

AUTHOR'S NOTE¹

The description of the Collanco you have read was written ten years ago [1940-41] and is a faithful picture of the stream as it used to be and ought to be. The stream itself has not changed, the climate is the same, but unfortunately poaching of a grave nature, as reported in Chapter VI (A few reflections on local problems), has taken a heavy toll and I doubt whether the stream is worth a visit nowadays. The fishing club still exists but only in name as it is inactive and its members feel that there is no justification for its continuation as it has no legal rights whatsoever and access to the river is given to anyone who comes along. This unfortunate state of affairs can be put right if the authorities take the problem in hand, restock the stream, and follow up with protection

¹ This note was added in about 1950-51.

against such practices as I have outlined. I am well aware that this is easier said than done but I am still hopeful that some day it will be done. It would be a great pity if this delightful stream were to remain only a memory of its better days!

CHAPTER XI

(pp. 87-95 of the typed manuscript)

THE LAJA

I have selected the River Laja as representative of the fishing in the Intermediate Zone and I am sure that those who know it will agree that no more fitting choice could be made.

The Laja, although not well known on account of its inaccessibility, except to Concepción and Los Angeles enthusiasts, affords grand fishing – in fact, good judges consider it to be the best fishing in the country and, from the point of view of the fly fisherman, it is certainly hard to beat. Of the local anglers there is one who has contributed more than any other to the development of the fishing on the river, Norman Chambers, and he is to be congratulated on what he has achieved in the past twenty years.

In the vicinity of the Laja there is no hotel accommodation, which would be considered

worthy of even “one star” ranking in the English Automobile Association Year Book, and I am not being unkind. Until a few years ago there were primitive hotels at Yungay and Antuco but I understand that they disappeared in the earthquake in January, 1939,¹ which is borne out by the fact that they are not included in the more recent Railway Guides. I have rather emphasized his point as I do not wish my angling visitor to be under any misunderstanding about it.

Some twenty years ago Norman Chambers organised a party to spend their summer holidays camping in the Laja district and, thanks to the assistance of a gentleman farmer in Yungay, a good site was found for a camp on the banks of the Cholguan, a pleasant trout river a few miles away from the Laja. The

¹ The 1939 Chillán earthquake occurred in south-central Chile on January 24th with magnitude 8.3. The death toll was around 28,000 making it the single deadliest earthquake in Chile.

country folk in Chile are most ready to help fishermen and, if you should ever be stranded on a fishing expedition, there is no need to worry – you will always find a bed for the night in some farmhouse or shack and there is no trouble they will not take to make you comfortable. The weather conditions in the Laja district were found to be excellent and reliable and the sport was so good that the camping party became an annual feature and there was considerable competition to fill blanks if regular attenders dropped out. The camp improved year by year and finally its natural development ended in the formation of a club and the building of a small fishing lodge. A gentleman farmer in the Tucapel region made a present of the necessary land and today the lodge stands proudly on a promontory known as “La Peña”, a monument to the initiative and determination of the founder. In the earthquake of January 1939, “El Palacio”, as it has been nicknamed in Tucapel, enhanced its reputation by being the

only building in the district which was quite undamaged. Already in its short history it has had the honour of housing distinguished visitors, among whom the following deserve special mention: Commander R.B. Jennings, of H.M.S. *Exeter*,² who was awarded the D.S.C. for bravery in the River Plate action³ in December, 1939; Lieutenant MacBurnett of the same ship; C. Armstrong, a member of the English fishing team, who was very enthusiastic about the river and stated, I believe, that it was about the best fly fishing he had ever come across; and last but not least, Roderick Haig-Brown.⁴

² Commander Richard Jennings (1903-2001) directed the guns of the cruiser HMS *Exeter* until they were silenced by the superior firepower of the German pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee*.

³ The Battle of the River Plate of 13 December 1939 was the first naval battle in the Second World War. Three Royal Navy cruisers (HMS *Exeter*, *Ajax* and *Achilles*) engaged the *Admiral Graf Spee*, which was scuttled by her captain off Montevideo.

Three years ago Sir Harold Graham-Hodgson⁵ came to Chile for a radiology convention and after it concluded he and his wife spent a few days at “El Palacio”. Although the river was not at its best and the fishing somewhat disappointing from the local point of view, Sir Harold was impressed with the Laja and hopes to return one day. His first evening produced a five pounder and he had good sport most of the time.

Lieutenant MacBurnett will remember giving “Galgo”, the white piedog, the first bath he had ever had; and how he enjoyed the experience and how the wretched “Galgo” loathed it!

There are two features of this fishing lodge worthy of mention. One is the apparatus for smoking fish. In the early days of the camp

⁴ See Chapter IV above.

⁵ Sir Harold Graham-Hodgson (1890-1960) was one of the foremost radiologists of his time. Director of the department of X-ray diagnosis at the Middlesex Hospital, London, 1933-1956.

this consisted of an open fire, a length of piping and a wine keg with the ends knocked out. Later a beer barrel was used and now a practical steel locker, fitted up with hangers, is properly installed and does the job splendidly.

The other feature, to which reference should be made, is that the caretaker's son, who acted as ghillie for many experienced fishermen at the lodge, has by example learned to use a rod and it is a joy to see him casting a fly. A photograph of him in action is shown on page [blank].

Other pioneers of this river are Agustin R. Edwards,⁶ who frequently pitched his tent on the banks of the river, Santiago Perez, and Tomas Eduardo Rodriguez. Then, of course, there are the Concepción fishermen, who have always regarded the Laja as their own happy hunting ground.

Some years ago I spent ten delightful days on the Laja with Charlie Gubbins. We

⁶ Agustin Roberto Edwards Budge (1899-1957).

travelled around from place to place in his Ford car and, by means of an ingenious arrangement whereby the backs of the front seats were folded back level with the back seat, we slept in the car with reasonable comfort. The car lived up to the Ford reputation by going anywhere and, when I think of some of the tracks and rocky country we went over, it is a marvel to me that we were not marooned in some remote spot away from civilization. However, we got there and in those ten days we saw a good deal of the Laja as our maximum stay anywhere was two days. We had no set programme and fished when and as long as we wished each day. Our cooking was simple and we had all the exercise we wanted. At the end of the day we were pleasantly tired and quite ready to turn in, and, when we had had enough of one spot on the river, we bundled everything into the car and moved on in search of further adventure. Quite apart from the fishing, which was splendid, I look back upon those ten days as a most enjoyable

experience and one I can heartily recommend to my fellow fishermen.

You will have gathered then that under present circumstances unless you are invited to the "La Peña" fishing lodge or one of the farms in the district, you have to make your own arrangements for camping out, if you wish to fish the Laja. From the fisherman's point of view there is a great deal to be said for camping out; the problem of the evening rise is solved and the annoying experience of having to leave the water, when it may be at its best, is avoided. And now, having dealt with the question of where to live, let us go down and have a look at the river.

The Laja has been described as 'un río noble' (a noble river) and I think the description is a fitting one. It is a river which commands the utmost respect and, when you look at the waters sweeping past in a mad rush, you are filled with an awe-inspiring impression of the power they convey. The current is very strong and swift and, except in a few stretches of

stillish water, it would appear dangerous to attempt to take a boat down the river. I am informed that a Canadian canoe would be navigable on the Laja but such is my respect for the river that, until I see it, I shall remain sceptical about it. I have never heard of a boat being seen on the Laja other than in certain isolated parts of the river where it is possible to move around in the slack water outside the current. The river bed is almost entirely composed of loose rocks and stones and this is the worst feature of the Laja; when one is wading in the current, it is difficult to obtain a secure footing and a wading staff is a virtual necessity. On one occasion, late in the season when the water was low, I was tempted to cross the river – it looked an innocent crossing – in order to avoid a long walk to the "La Peña" lodge in darkness; it was a nasty experience and I shall never forget it nor attempt such a crossing again. My advice to fishermen wading in the Laja is to go warily and watch their step as the going is difficult.

My description of the river and the heavy going might have the effect of putting the would-be-visitor dead off, but the other side of the picture must be shown. The Laja is one long stretch about 50 kilometres (31 miles) of trout fishing, run after run, with the occasional variation of stretches of still water outside the current, where the bigger fish frequently lurk. The best fishing is to be had just on the edge of the current and that means in many parts of the river close to the bank so that there is no need in such places to get into the water at all. Owing to the swiftness of the current it is very difficult, generally speaking, to fish upstream and for my own part I always prefer to fish downstream on the Laja. The idea is to cast down and across into the current with as much line out as you can comfortably handle and allow the current to take the fly downstream and out of the current, after which you may, if you wish, work the fly gently up towards you before the next cast; just after it has drifted out of the current, the fly remains motionless for an

instant and that is when you are most likely to feel a tug; with the smaller trout, vigorous, and with the bigger ones, quite well defined although more in the nature of a swallow. The[n] everything happens very suddenly as you strike, the reel sings out and you pull yourself together in anticipation of the struggle. A four-pounder in the Laja on a light rod will keep you busy for a quarter of an hour and you will have to keep your wits about you all the time as the fish will undoubtedly take full advantage of the current. When fishing in the Laja I always have at least forty yards of line and sixty yards of backing and frequently I have had my line taken out well beyond the backing by a rainbow in the heavy current. One sometimes loses fish in the heavy current of the Laja through using too light a rod and a slightly more powerful rod than the one I have suggested for ordinary purposes in the south, gives a greater feeling of security.

I have a wholesome respect for the Laja rainbow. I have never caught anything except a

rainbow trout on this river, although I have heard that brown trout have occasionally been taken out in still parts of the river and official statistics show that brown trout were stocked in the river in the majority. My own theory, for what it's worth, is that the river in most parts is more suited to the strong and active rainbow than the relatively sluggish brown trout. Owing to the exceptional ground-feeding to be had in the river. another feature of the Laja is that it is very rarely – never in my experience – that one catches a fish out of condition. Summing up, the Laja rainbow is a strong hardy fish and, taken in conjunction with the strength of the current, a four-pounder on the Laja compares favourably with an eight-pounder in almost any other river I know!

The best time to fish the Laja, in my opinion, is in March and April, when the water is getting low and there is apparently not so much groundfeeding available. The natural surroundings of the river as a whole cannot be described as beautiful as in the case of rivers

further south, such as the Tolten and the Enco. From the picturesque point of view the prettiest part of the river is in the upper reaches above Polcura on the right bank but it is not such easy fishing as lower down in the Tucapel and Cholguen sectors. The countryside above Antuco, in the direction of the Antuco volcano and the Laja lake, is well worth a visit and I recommend the visitor to give up fishing for a day and drive up there in a car; the road is quite good and the scenery very lovely indeed.

There is a story which I tell against myself in connection with the Laja, which will bear repetition. Our fishing party had camped on the farm of a local character known as Don Tito, who rarely failed to visit the camp after the sun had gone over the yard-arm, with his tongue hanging out, and was often there at odd times of day on similar quest or in the hope of joining a fishing expedition. On one occasion when he had reached a singularly credulous and impressionable condition of mind at a late hour in the evening, one of our party was recounting

to him how in the old days fishermen on the River Cautín used horses and explained to him that, on hooking a fish, the fisherman immediately turned his horse right about and marched proudly out of the river with his rod over his shoulder and the fish dangling behind. This appealed to Don Tito as a magnificent idea and he forthwith proposed an expedition next day to the Laja, which was some distance from the camp, the horses to be supplied by him. Don Tito, however, remained on horseback, intent on trying out this new and comfortable (if not downright lazy) method of fishing. His tackle consisted of a thick bamboo pole (actually two bamboos lashed together) at least twenty feet long, which was known by us as the “three ounce Palakona”,⁷ a clothesline on the end of it, no gut, a large hook heavily weighted and a freshwater crab (apancora) as bait; in the choice of bait he showed good judgment as this crab is

⁷ ‘Palakona’ is a Hardy Bros. trade mark and appears on many of their bamboo rods.

a great delicacy to the trout and is generally successful when everything else fails. His fishing apparel included a terrific broadrimmed straw hat and a white coat and the fact that he might be conspicuous to the fish did not worry him in the slightest. On such fishing parties my tactics were to get as far away as possible from Don Tito and on this occasion, as soon as I saw him engaged in the river, I walked in the opposite direction some three kilometres (two miles) before I started to fish. After an hour and a half of grand sport, I had three beautiful rainbow trout, averaging four pounds, in my basket, and the fish were still rising. At this point I was in the river casting at a rising fish which had missed twice and I had just changed the fly in order to try again when to my horror and dismay I heard a shout and beheld Don Tito approaching on horseback over the brow of the hill. When he reached the water's edge, he asked me if there was a fish in the spot where I was casting. I, like a mug, said that there was and without further ado he rode into the river,

got his mighty rod into action and slung the bait with a resounding splash into the water over the correct spot. Imagine my feeling when the next thing I saw was my beautiful trout, leaping around in the water, firmly hooked, while Don Tito turned right about and rode triumphantly up the bank! I could not speak with rage! I do not think I have ever before or since been so indignant or so near to committing a crime and it was some time before I could see the funny side of the incident and join the party for lunch. When I told the story in camp that evening there was considerable amusement – my friends get a good laugh out of it and in my dreams I frequently see a rider in a white coat and a big straw hat coming over the brow of the hill carrying an enormous rod with a purposeful expression on his wicked old face!

It was an education to watch Don Tito at work on the Laja. When he got into a good fish, he would lash his “Palakona” to the nearest bush or tree and proceed to handline the fish.

His victims were brought to the bank ruthlessly without ceremony and he could never understand why we wasted so much time over playing the fish and thought we were foolish to use such light tackle. One day he found one of our party using a spinning reel and thread line and decided that he was just plain crazy. He confessed to us shamelessly that he got his best fishing in the winter [i.e. closed season] when there was nobody about.

On one of the early camping expeditions we had with us the late Dr. Stansby, always known as "Doc", a grand fisherman and a splendid camping companion. The camp was right up among the hills with not even a village within miles, and we soon became friendly with the simple country folk up there who supplied us with eggs, chickens etc. The camp servant informed them that one of our party was a doctor so one day a contingent turned up uninvited for sick parade, bringing the aged and infirm as well as ailing children, and a few chickens in lieu of medical fees. "Doc" was equal

to the occasion! He knew there was nothing for it but to attend to them and that it was no good telling them that he was a Doctor of Dental Surgery and not of Medicine, so he produced a few boxes of laxative pills and proceeded with his consultations. From all accounts afterwards his treatment had given highly satisfactory results.

There is another story to tell before we leave the Laja as indicative of the mentality of the country folk one comes across in those out-of-the-way districts. One of our party had caught his fourth rainbow of the day, whereupon his self-appointed "secretario", who had turned up from nowhere, picked up the fish and slung them over his shoulder with the remark "Ya está hecho el día, patrón", which, freely translated, means "That's all we need for today, master". His idea was that the sole object of fishing was for marketing purposes and he was quite satisfied with the day's work! The purpose of the expedition was represented by so many fish at so much per pound and nothing else.

In the old days we used to reckon that a catch of six rainbows, averaging about four pounds, was a good day's fishing in the Laja but, as our camp was some distance away, we never had a whole day on the water. Nowadays at the "La Peña" lodge, catches are larger and the size of the fish is, on the average, less; the explanation of the larger catches is obviously the proximity of the lodge to the river in conjunction with the smaller size of the fish but I cannot suggest an explanation for the smaller average size unless it be that there are too many fish in the river. I am not disparaging the present day fishing which is quite good enough for anybody and size is no criterion of quality! A year or two ago Santiago Perez, between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. on the Laja, caught a dozen rainbows averaging over two pounds, the biggest being a seven pounder. What better fishing could one desire!

Until 1940 the best fish caught in the Laja on a fly, stood to the credit of Henry Munro and weighed ten pounds, a really fine

specimen of rainbow trout. I am told, however, that Sr. Arturo Medina of Concepción in the year 1941 caught a rainbow trout weighing approximately eighteen pounds in the Laja and this catch must undoubtedly be the record for the river.

Two years ago Norman Chambers' brother Frank, on a visit from England, caught a twelve pound brown trout in the Laja near "El Palacio" on a spoon. He is a keen fisherman and is very enthusiastic about the fishing on the Laja.

If and when you fish there, I can wish you nothing better in a day than half-a-dozen Laja four-pounders on reasonably light tackle, and, if such good fortune should come your way, I think you will agree that my eulogies of the fishing on the Laja are fully justified.

CHAPTER XII

(pp. 96-106 of the typed manuscript)

PUCON¹

I have already told you that the real trout fishing of worldwide renown is to be found in the south of Chile and, in order to give my readers an idea of the quality of this fishing, I have selected the five best known fishing

1



Pucón: Lake and volcano

resorts in that region. It is appropriate that the first of the “big five” to be dealt with should be Pucón, the pride of them all.

Some twentyfive years ago when one spoke of going to fish in the south of Chile, it was taken for granted that one was bound for Pucón or Villarrica and it is not too much to say that the name of “Pucón” is even today immediately associated with fishing in Chile. It was logical therefore that, when the officials of the Chilean State Railways decided to build modern hotels in the south, Pucón was chosen as the obvious site for the initial venture.

Pucón is situated at the eastern end of Lake Villarrica, 25 kilometres (15 1/2 miles) by road from the railhead at Villarrica. Leaving Santiago on the express at 5 p.m., you arrive in Pucón in time for lunch next day, the final stage from Villarrica being completed in the hotel bus in about an hour. The whole trip, therefore, from Santiago takes roughly nineteen hours by the express train, the distance being about 800 kilometres (500

miles).

Nowadays, however, there is a quicker mode of travel by what is known as the “Flecha del Sur” (Southern Arrow),² a Diesel-engined air-conditioned coach. Leaving Santiago at 8 a.m. you reach Pucón in the evening but this mode of travel is not greatly used by fishermen as they prefer to travel by night and economise that much time.

There is now a landing field at Pucón so that there is an even quicker way of getting there



2

The Flecha del Sur, built in Germany, was first used on the southern Chilean rail network around 1940.

which is becoming more popular every day.

The lake and the surrounding country are dominated by the Villarrica volcano (9,300 feet) on the south-eastern end and the combination of lake, volcano, woods and peninsula makes up a scene of outstanding natural beauty. The peninsula just into the lake for a distance of about two kilometres (1 1/4 miles) and at its widest point measures approximately one kilometre (five furlongs); as it has become such a prominent feature of the attractions of Pucón, I propose to devote more space to it later in this chapter.

Pucón is a remarkable place and for the variety of sports it has to offer must be hard to beat anywhere on the world. Fishing, golf, tennis, riding, bathing, sailing, winter sports and shooting are all available in their appropriate seasons. I am informed by an expert that skiing is absolutely first-class on the slopes of the Villarrica volcano, not only in winter and spring but even in summer, proof of which is that a race meeting has been held

there in the month of January. However, this is a fishing book and I know that my readers are anxious to hear primarily about the wonderful sport to be had with rod and line at Pucón.

The River Trancura, which comes direct from the Cordillera [Andes] and is accordingly snowfed, runs into the eastern corner of Lake Villarrica and it is in this river that the best fishing is to be found. As a general rule the newcomer is taken by his boatman to the mouth of the river – the “bar” as it is called – and here at the meeting of the waters of the river and lake excellent fishing can frequently be obtained. If you are after “big ones”, you have every chance of catching them trolling in the “bar”, particularly with a spoon,³ minnow,



3

A spoon

flatfish or oreno.⁴ It is not possible, except at certain times, for boatmen to go any distance up the river owing to the strength of the current – although it is amazing what a good boatman can accomplish by sheer determination – with the result that the fishing space is somewhat limited in relation to the number of boats generally to be found there. Since the opening of the railway hotel, the number of visitors has increased considerably and, of course, there are more boats available. On a fine summer evening in the height of the season, it would not be surprising to find twenty or thirty boats operating at the mouth of the river and occasionally one of the motor-boats, which are used for cruising purposes, may find its way to



4

An oreno

the vicinity of the “bar”. One would imagine that the constant movement of boats would have a disturbing effect on the fish: one would also imagine that they might become extremely bored at seeing the same flies and lures day after day and that only the innocent and more gullible would succumb to such temptations. The extraordinary thing is that, despite the constant movement at the “bar”, the fishing there, apart from occasional bad spells, is still magnificent and as good as it ever was! The more experienced fisherman, of course, when he goes to the “bar”, tries to choose a time when there are few boats about and uses the boat as a means of transport from one point to another where wading is possible and there is plenty of good bank fishing in the vicinity of the “bar”.

The question of the effect of boats on the fish has been widely discussed among local fishermen and I think the general consensus of opinion is that they have little or no effect in deep water but are liable to disturb the fish in

shallow water. Nevertheless, the continuance of good fishing at the “bar” of the Trancura supports the argument that the boats do little or no harm to the fishing. While on the subject of boats, I hear rumours of a scheme to put outboard motors on the fishing boats in rivers in the south so that the transport up river can be carried out more expeditiously and at less expense. My reaction to this scheme is that I hope it will not materialise as I am sure that the vibration of the motors will disturb the fish. Maybe I am too fussy but I believe that vibration upsets fish more than anything else. However, a fishing friend with a knowledge of the subject informs me that the suggestion that fishing boats can be taken over rapids by means of outboard motors is not a practical one and that in any event the consumption of gasoline would be out of proportion to the possible advantages to be obtained. Then, again, I am told of still another scheme for moving the boats up river by means of “air screws”. Despite my nationality, I am not an

engineer and am, therefore, unable to express any opinion on the “air screw” scheme; because of my nationality, presumably, I am canny, thrawn [twisted, perverse] and inclined to distrust innovations, and I should prefer to carry on with the old ox-cart and leave the water alone!

But, to get back to the fishing in the Trancura river, the best plan to follow in my opinion is to send your boat up river by ox-cart to “Martinez” or the “primera lancha” (first ferry) and, on the day when this operation is being carried out you can either have a rest from fishing or go across to the “bar” by foot, horse or boat, if a second one should be available. Then on the following day you go up by motorcar to one of the points mentioned and fish downstream quietly. As to whether the trip from “Martinez” to the “bar” takes a whole day or two whole days [it] depends entirely on the speed at which the fisherman covers the water; if he takes his time over it, there is no difficulty in making the first day finish at the

“primera lancha” and leaving the boat there overnight. My scheme, therefore, is to send the boat up river every second or third day, depending on the weather, of course, spend one or two days fishing down and rest or play golf on the off day. It is very pleasant to get up late occasionally and have nine holes of golf before lunch and a siesta after lunch; and, if you must fish every day, after tea you can go across to the “bar” and enjoy the evening rise. Of course, I realise that advice of this nature is lost on the average fisherman, who will by hook or by crook spend every available moment on the water from early morning until pitch dark in the evening.

I know that other fishermen would recommend the visitor to concentrate on the lower reaches of the river within a mile or so of the “bar” and maintain that the best fishing is always to be found in that sector. It is largely a matter of individual preference in the light of past experience.

If it be suggested that you take a trip up to

the River Liucura, I recommend you to decline and be quite firm about it. The excursion consists of a motorcar journey of about 25 kilometres (15 1/2 miles) on one of the worst roads imaginable, if indeed it can be properly described as a road at all, after which a walk of about two kilometres (1 1/4 miles) brings you to the river. At this point the river is very narrow and as you proceed downstream it gradually widens until you join the River Trancura above "Martinez". The scenery is lovely, very lovely, in fact, apart from the desolate areas where forest fires have wrought their havoc and one is imbued with an impression of wanton destruction, but the fishing in my experience is disappointing. Towards the end of the day, when you have had enough, there are five vicious rapids to go down – compared with which the rapids on other rivers are child's play – and you are lucky if you get away only with a wetting; only the best boatmen will attempt this trip and, if you insist on trying it, I suggest that you get

down to the rapids in daylight and cover the last stage overland on foot. It is possible that my experience of this expedition was unfortunate, as incessant and heavy rain added to the general discomfort, but even on a fine day I should consider it overrated and certainly not worth the expense and trouble involved. Wild horses would not get me back there again!

From “Martinez” to the “bar”, a distance of about eight kilometres (5 miles), there is abundance of good fishing and with an intelligent boatman the fly fisherman will enjoy himself to his heart’s content. When the fishing on the River Trancura is good, it is very good, and there is no need to say more. Not once but frequently on a beautiful evening in summer when the sun has just gone down, I have seen the water literally boiling with trout and felt that the evenings were all too short to get the full enjoyment out of such perfect fishing conditions. A fine stretch of water at dusk is the “Pescadero de los Indios” (The

Indians' fishing ground) and on a good evening some splendid fish can be taken from this part of the river where the water flows gently. A dry fly would, I am sure, be very successful on this water! Another interesting stretch is to be found just above the first ferry but, after all, the river is full of fine runs and fascinating stretches of water which the angler will discover for himself, so there is no need to enlarge on them here. The rivers in the south of Chile, moreover, have a habit of changing their course from one year to another and one sometimes finds that the run, where you have previously had such good sport, has completely disappeared on your next visit.

On a visit to Pucón twenty years ago I recollect that some fine catches were made and it was no unusual sight to see a fisherman arrive at the hotel in the evening with a double figure catch of beautiful rainbow trout averaging from three to four pounds. The hotel at that time was a small one with limited accommodation and there were few fishermen

on the river. Even the veriest beginners seldom returned without some good fish and were greatly encouraged by the ideal fishing conditions. I remember a sportsman who had been up at the crater of the volcano taking photographs for the National Geographical Magazine and on the final day of his visit he asked me how he could get an afternoon's fishing. He had never before had the opportunity to fish and there he was at a loose end in a fishing hotel surrounded by a lot of enthusiasts who talked and thought and dreamt of nothing else! The temptation was irresistible and he fell, making up his mind that by some means or other he must get into "this fishing business"; somewhat apologetically I fixed him up with my son's⁵ tackle, which consisted of a bamboo pole in three pieces, with a reel and line rather like a superior bobbin of thread, the whole cost of which was the large sum of seven shillings and

⁵ Ian Lester MacDonald (1923-1945).

sixpence. The length of the line was thirty yards. A visit to the general store produced some stout gut, which had no pretence of a claim to invisibility, and a few artificial lures, and, thus equipped, without a net, off went my friend in search of adventure. I shall never forget his triumphal return three hours later as he came swinging majestically along the road to the hotel with a broad grin on his face, carrying four fine rainbow trout averaging at least four pounds each. You may call it beginner's luck, if you like, but what I marvel at is that he was ever able to land them! It also makes one wonder whether all the elaborate and expensive tackle carried by the average angler is really necessary! He was unstinted in his praise of the rod, which incidentally never looked the same again and always wore a weeping willow expression in the top joint. That was indeed its Waterloo but I got a great deal of satisfaction out of the success of my friend – whose name I cannot remember – and I trust that the afternoon I recall was

responsible for sowing the first seeds of an illustrious fishing career.

A friend tells me of a somewhat similar experience he had with a beginner in Pucón, whom he fitted out with all the necessary tackle and let loose in the “bar” with a responsible boatman. Before leaving he asked “How do I know when I have a fish on the line?” and was assured he need have no worry on that score. Before he had properly started, he felt a terrible pull and grabbed everything with the unfortunate results that the fish took away the spoon, the gut and half the silk line. The boatman tied another spoon direct on to the line and before very long our tyro had hooked and landed a beautiful nine pounder after much judicious rowing by the boatman. Later on he picked up an eight pounder and then a five pounder, which he wanted to put back as too small and was only prevented from doing so by the remonstrances of the amazed boatman. On the following day he was out again, bright and early, with a pocketful of

new spoons and other lures, and ready for the fray. He did not have long to wait before a gigantic pull from an invisible whale took away one of his brand new spoons and half of the remaining line which was now reduced to some twenty-five yards. Somewhat disconsolately he tied another spoon on the line and continued his quest. His patience was rewarded shortly afterwards by the strike of a fish which gave every evidence of good size. The line was taken out to the knot on the reel and the boatman beat all records racing after the fish all over the river. After considerable excitement a fine rainbow of 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds was brought in and our tyro returned home, thoroughly infected with the fishing virus, leaving his boatman to get over the most exhausting experience he had known on the river.

In an earlier chapter I told you how, shortly after the railway hotel was opened, the fishing deteriorated and the hotel management had to ask the authorities to take action in the matter.

They are to be congratulated on the success of their efforts as there is no doubt that the fishing in the River Trancura has completely recovered and, generally speaking, is as good as, if not better than, ever it was; and that is saying something! During the 1940 season the hotel was full of visitors and the fishermen returned from the river night after night with excellent catches, apart from a spell of three weeks when there was a heat wave followed by very heavy rain and turbulent water. Rainbow trout of ten and twelve pounds were almost an everyday occurrence until after a time nobody took any notice of them. However, Pucón was suddenly roused from this state of apathy when a young man from Santiago, señor Nicolás Correa, on his first expedition caught in the “bar” on a spoon a magnificent rainbow trout weighing 20 pounds 14 1/2 ounces, the record fish for all Chile on rod and line at that time. Earlier in the season a brown trout weighing 19 pounds 2 ounces was caught by M. Kline in the river just above the “bar” on an

oreno or plug and an 18 pound rainbow by F. Compton. Towards the end of the season two more "big ones" were caught at Pucón, one an eighteen pound rainbow by J. McDowall, also on his first expedition, and the other, a rainbow weighing probably between nineteen and twenty pounds, by the boatman Zapata. During the season several unusually large baskets were reported, one of which was given as forty rainbows between two fishermen in one day with nothing under two pounds, which will serve as a sample. No further evidence is required to show that the trout fishing in Pucón cannot be surpassed, not only in Chile, but anywhere in the world.

The reference to the catching of a large brown trout reminds me that it is only in recent years that any brown trout have been caught in the River Trancura. In the old days they were all rainbows and even now it is very rare that a brown trout is taken. If my information is correct, it has taken the brown trout some thirty years to find their way up

through Lake Villarrica from the River Tolten to the River Trancura.

It is hard to realise that the Pucón of today is the same little fishing village we knew twenty years ago. Pucón was quite unspoiled, and even in some respects primitive, in those days but we enjoyed ourselves immensely even if we did have to queue up for a hot bath in the evenings. Now conditions are very different and some fishermen think it can never be the same again with a luxurious hotel and other more modest establishments instead of only one little fishing shack. This is a view which I do not share and I fail to see why the comfort of the hotel should make any difference to the fishing other than the danger that the river may at some future date be overcrowded with boats, a contingency which seems to me a long way off. However, I am aware that the hotel management is determined to maintain the high standard of Pucón fishing and intends to take such steps as may be necessary in the future to ensure that the fishermen will have

no grounds for complaint about the quality and conditions of the fishing there, so I for one am not going to worry about it.

Chile, with the exception of Santiago and Valparaiso, and a few isolated cases, is notoriously lacking in good hotels and the building of the hotels in the south at Pucón and Puerto Varas reflects great credit on the farseeing management of the Chilean State Railways. The success of Pucón owes a great deal to the late don Juan Lagarrigue, at that time General Manager of the Railway, and to the late don Egidio Bonfanti, concessionaire of the hotels and dining cars, whose combined initiative and personal enthusiasm were responsible for making Pucón a summer holiday resort of many attractions. Among those attractions, the golf-course deserves special mention – Pucón is the only fishing resort in Chile where golf is also to be had – and, although this book is primarily on the subject of fishing, I think that the Pucón golf-course fully justifies a brief digression into the

realms of the royal and ancient game, which has so many devotees among fishermen.⁶

The Pucón golf-course was born in the month of October 1936, when at the invitation of the two gentlemen mentioned in the preceding paragraph, a committee proceeded to Pucón to study the matter. The members of this committee were enthusiastic golfers and a walk over the Peninsula on the afternoon of their arrival convinced them not only of the feasibility of the project but also of the desirability of constructing a golf-course in such lovely surroundings. No more pleasant task was ever given to a golf architect than the lay-out and construction of a course on the Peninsula at Pucón and the committee in charge took up the work enthusiastically. In the south where there is generally so much rainfall, the question of water supply seemed

⁶ As may be obvious here, besides fishing golf was another passion of the author and he had a hand in designing golf courses in Chile and Peru, including the Pucón course.

at first to present no difficulty but it was soon learned that prolonged periods of drought, accompanied by strong hot winds (puelches), wrought havoc with the greens in the summer and there was nothing for it but to have a water supply laid on to the greens. Another difficulty lay in the continuous heavy rains in winter, which delayed the growth of the grass, but year by year the conditions are improving and I think that the course can be classified without flattery as quite a respectable little holiday golf-course. As the venture was rather in the nature of an experiment, nine holes were considered ample and I think they are all that are necessary for a course with such a limited playing season; there is room for another nine on the Peninsula if the course should ever become congested which seems unlikely with so many other counter-attractions. The hilly nature of the ground available for the nine holes made it almost inevitable that a few blind shots would creep into the lay-out, as the course is intended for

holiday golf and not for championships, but no apology need be made for such defects as may be encountered by the highbrow golf architect who may perhaps take the course too seriously. The main thing is that, if you are imbued with the proper holiday spirit, you will get all the exercise and fun you want on this delightful little course. You may lose a few balls in the rough, you may miss a few putts which should go down, you may drive into the lake at the ninth – but remember, please, you are on holiday! And if you have ever seen a finer view on a golf-course than that from the fifth tee (with the volcano towering above the woods on one side and the blue lake glittering in the sun down below on the other) write and tell me about it; and when you have finally holed out at the ninth, a beautiful short hole with plenty of character, if you have not enjoyed the course, I suggest that you see your medical adviser who will probably order you to extend your holiday. The nine holes are named after the original promoters of the enterprise, who are,

need I remark, proud of the course, and recognise a big debt of gratitude to nature for providing the lovely surroundings which made it possible.

The course was inaugurated on 8th December, 1938 when the late don Juan Lagarrigue drove the first ball. The old St. Andrew's tradition for the playing-in of the Captain was followed and a golden sovereign produced for the retriever of the ball. Still in its infancy, the baby shows signs of developing on the right lines but it has always been a difficult child and cannot be treated lightly. Full of character, it requires careful handling and in the course of time it will surely be a great credit to its parents and, more important still, to its country.

The management of the railway showed great foresight in effecting the outright purchase of the peninsula as hotel grounds. The very fact of its being a peninsula is an added attraction as, while it has the link with the mainland, it nevertheless has all the

characteristics and independence of a detached island on the lake. I always think of the Pucón peninsula in the terms of that old song about “a little bit of heaven”⁷ and I wish I could do justice to a description of its fascinating and inspiring beauty. I must leave it to someone better fitted to sing its praises.

Perhaps I am over enthusiastic about Pucón – each of us has his favourite holiday spot – but there is no place in Chile where I would rather spend a fishing holiday. It is well worth looking after and I trust that those in charge of it will see to it that it remains unspoiled as it is today despite the amenities introduced in recent years.

⁷ By singer-songwriter Ernest R. Ball (1878-1927).

CHAPTER XIII

(pp. 107-111 of the typed manuscript)

VILLARRICA¹

An hour's drive from Pucón on the return journey will take you to Villarrica, on the western end of the lake, from which the River Tolten commences its course to the sea. There are two hotels in Villarrica, the better known of which is the Yachting Club, a regular little fishing hotel, the other being the Central.

Villarrica is at the railhead and is a favourite fishing resort, particularly for long-weekenders from Santiago, who wish to take advantage of every available moment. It is

¹ "Unlike Pucón, its wild neighbor across windswept Lago Villarrica, Villarrica is a real living and breathing Chilean town. While not as charming, it's more down to earth than Pucón, lacks the bedlam associated with package tour caravans, and has more reasonable prices and a faded-resort glory..." Lonely Planet Guide, accessed online, 10 October 2017.

often said that, when the fishing at Pucón is poor, the fishing at Villarrica is good, and vice versa; there is no logic, however, in this statement and it should be accepted with the proverbial grain of salt. The main difference I see between the fishing in the two places is that, whereas in Pucón you transport your boat and yourself up river and fish down, in Villarrica you fish down the river and the transport problem has to be tackled at the end of the day. The fishing at Villarrica is generally more dependable and shows little variation from one year to another. The best feature of the Toltén is that it apparently never gets dirty with mud and ash, as does the Trancura occasionally, and rain does it no harm. The fish are more abundant than in the Trancura, although smaller, and a great many of them are brown trout. I have heard it said that the Tolten is overfished and there is no doubt that it is a very popular river; my personal view, however, is that, with such an abundance of fish as inhabit the rivers in the

south, there is little to fear from the efforts of the amateur angler and, if anything, I would say that there are still too many fish in the Tolten.

When you start off for a day's fishing down the river, you can spend quite a profitable half-hour trolling in the "bar" and many a good fish has been picked up there above the bridge. In certain parts of the "bar" you can also get at some very interesting water by anchoring the boat or wading. The maximum journey in one day for the boat fisherman is to Catrico, twenty-five kilometres (15 1/2 miles) down the river. It means a very early start and is really much too far as you must hurry over good fishing to get there before dark, but there are other trips of lesser distance which one man can make quite comfortably in the day. In the upper reaches the river cuts its way through the forest and for sheer beauty I know of no other river in the south which has more appeal; as you drift down slowly amidst such beautiful surroundings under a cloudless sky

with no sound to disturb the peace other than the music of birds and the noise of the rapids, you get the feeling that you have found the antidote to the troubles of this life in such peaceful contentment and you do not wish it to come to an end. For the bank fisherman, however, the upper reaches lose a certain amount of their appeal as the water is generally too deep for wading and there is rather limited bank fishing until about half-way down to the Catrico when islands begin to show up here and there and the banks offer plenty of scope; in those upper reaches an arrangement, such as mentioned in an earlier chapter, whereby the boat could be anchored, would enable the angler to get the best out of some very interesting water.

Some fifteen years ago my son [Ian] and I spent a very profitable holiday at Villarrica and I had the pleasure of seeing him bring in his first good-sized fish. By this time the rod, mentioned in the previous chapter, had been pensioned off and he was the proud possessor

of a hardy (no capital letter, please) if still somewhat primitive weapon, with about forty yards of line on the reel; as far as he was concerned, there was no better rod on the river and that was all that really mattered. Early on in our trolling expedition, he got a fine five-pound brown trout, which took him twenty minutes to land, and just at dusk when I was getting worried about keeping our taxi waiting, he upset the applecart completely by getting into a three-pound rainbow, which put up a splendid show and took him all over the river. Finally, to shorten the length of the battle, which looked like being endless, I had to wade in quite deep in the dark to net the fish. What a fish and what a day! It seems to me that trolling in the south is a good way to start a boy on his fishing career, as it gives him a taste of the enjoyment in store for him and is not so tiring as casting, which is discouraging if the results are negative. The rest will come later quite automatically.

On the banks of the Tolten Horace Graham,²

long resident in Chile and one of our keenest and most experienced fishermen, has built a private fishing lodge and his choice of site is an excellent one as every form of fishing is available for his friends in that section of the river. There is some fine water in the vicinity of the lodge, which is well equipped with boats, boatmen and transport. The angler who is invited there will find that every detail that goes to make up comfort has been carefully considered and he will know the meaning of true hospitality. The lovely surroundings of his lodge can be visualized from the coloured photograph on the opposite page, which has

² Horace R. Graham, mining engineer of the Anglo-Chilean Nitrate Corporation. “The Tolten is a big, clear, blue-green river, fast but with deep swirling pools under high steep banks and plenty of broken water where one can get out of the boat to wade and cast. I fished the two lower reaches of the river from Catrico, the summer home of Horace Graham...” Roderick L. Haig-Brown, *Fisherman’s Winter*, Skyhorse Publishing 2014 (originally published in 1954).

been given to me by Mr. Luis Abelli, whose hobby is photography and who gets some wonderful results from his camera. The lodge can be seen among the trees in the middle distance.

A few hundred yards from the Tolten bar on the shore of the lake Pete Obuljen has a fine private fishing lodge and I have most pleasant recollections of three New Year holidays spent there. Nothing is spared to make the guest comfortable and Pete and his wife Cilette are hospitality itself. A book is kept of trout caught by the hosts and their friends and only fish over five pounds are recorded; the number of entries in the log is eloquent testimony, if such were required, of the quality of the fishing in the Tolten.

It was Pete who introduced me to fishing in the dark. One evening shortly before midnight we went out in pitch black with no moon and trolled the Tolten "bar" for a little over an hour. I had on the same flies as during the day, a Silver Grey and Green Highlander, and during

that short time caught five fine rainbow trout all around three or four pounds. It was a weird experience and I was greatly impressed with the voraciousness of the fish in the dark, especially as I was fishing with a fly. Now I know the second reason why the local fishermen do their poaching in the summer by night!

On one occasion, after a short fishing holiday at Pucón, Fernando Santa Cruz and I left the hotel there at 5.30 a.m., had breakfast at Villarrica, and then fished down the Tolten. We had arranged for a car to meet us at Catrico at 5 p.m. and caught the night express to Santiago at Temuco quite comfortably. Of course, we had to rush over miles of water to reach Catrico by the appointed time but we had a wonderful day's fishing to end and enjoyable holiday. I remember my last fish that day was an eight-pound brown trout, caught on the dropper, a N° 3 salmon fly, and after he was safely in the net I put up my rod with that feeling of intense satisfaction which

every fisherman knows.

It was in this river the Tolten that I was first introduced to what I should describe as “intensive trolling”. I arrived at the Bellavista hotel one evening to find the management excited over the catches made by four of the visitors, whose one idea was apparently to break numerical records. They had set out at the crack of dawn that morning and were expected to return late with a heavy catch. They duly arrived at ten o’clock with 150 trout between them, a new record! I was so interested that I inspected the catch and was disappointed to find that at least 50% should have been put back as being under regulation size. I was still more disappointed to see the party in action on the river next day with four boats trolling two rods apiece. There is a distinction between “fishing” and “catching fish” and happily such gluttony is very rare. If my memory serves me right, the maximum number of trout, which may be taken trolling on Loch Leven, during one day, is three,

although I must admit that the conditions are very different.

Some years ago, in the Tolten between Pedregoso and Catrico, Horace Graham caught a fine 12 1/2 pound trout, 29 inches long with a girth of 19 inches. It was in beautiful conditions and put up a splendid fight for over twenty minutes, leaving the water repeatedly. It was caught on a "Norton" fly (see Chapter VII) and, curiously enough, Bertram Norton, the designer of the fly, was close at hand to witness the taking of the fish. There seems to be some doubt as to whether it was a rainbow or brown trout; it is described as showing no coloring except silver and white with black spots, and my guess is that it was a steelhead. On the same trip Mrs. Graham caught a 7 pound trout in the Allipen and many 3 1/2 and 4 1/2 pounders were caught. During recent seasons sport in this district has been quite up to its usual high standard.

In an earlier chapter I recorded that to the best of my knowledge and belief the biggest

rainbow trout ever caught in Chile (22 pounds) stands to the credit of the River Tolten. It was taken at dusk in a deep swirling pool just above Prado Verde by Captain F. Long. In my experience it is a rare thing to catch a fish in this pool and apparently it is a favourite haunt of big fish.

I could fill pages telling you of the splendid catches of trout made at Villarrica and in the Tolten year by year and they would make interesting reading for those of my readers who like statistics. I think, however, that I accomplish just as much by telling you that a dozen fish in the day is a regular basket on the Tolten, and among them there should be one or two fish over five pounds. Trout over ten pounds are not caught as frequently as they used to be in this river, but they are still there!

You will not be disappointed in a fishing holiday at Villarrica.

CHAPTER XIV

(pp. 112-119 of the typed manuscript)

PANGUIPULLI¹

The “gentle art” of angling is a wonderful sport which brings out the best in a man. It takes him away from the crowded centres of life into beautiful country, it gives him rest and contentment and enables him to relax from his troubles and anxieties, it provides him with healthy exercise in the fresh air and

1



Panguipulli

improves his mental outlook, and it tests his skill and ingenuity.

Unfortunately, however, it brings out another trait in his character – selfishness; and the more practised and experienced the angler becomes, the more does this uncharitable attitude towards his fellow anglers manifest itself. Have you ever known or heard of the angler who would introduce his visitor to his favourite stretch of water on the river? Or can you imagine an angler, who discovers a new and untouched stream, brimful of trout, spreading the news abroad for the benefit of others? While some of my readers may object to the insinuation that this disagreeable trait is common to anglers, I am sure they will admit that there are few who overcome the temptation to keep their information to themselves. The general tendency is to keep quiet, or as it is so aptly expressed in Spanish, “calladito” (a little silent), about one’s discoveries and to reap the benefit as long as secrecy can be maintained.

In telling the world of the glories of Panguipulli, I am running the risk of incurring the displeasure of the fishermen in this country, who have “found” it and are hoping that its development as a fishing resort will be retarded as long as possible. But that is indeed a forlorn hope!

The point about Panguipulli at present is that it is off the beaten track and fishermen, who go there, must be prepared to fend for themselves and to rough it, unless they have the luck to be invited to a farm or private fishing lodge in the district. From the standpoint of the fisherman from abroad, it is almost out of the question and, if it were not on account of its future possibilities, I should have omitted it from this book because of the lack of hotel accommodation there. Until a matter of fifteen years ago very few fishermen in Chile could have told you where Panguipulli was and quite the big majority did not know that it even existed. In a fishing sense it was discovered by the late John P. Chadwick and

until his death he was a regular visitor there throughout the fishing season. He had three fishing cabins in that district, the main one of which stands on a lonely spot on the shores of the lake between the Rivers Enco and Fui and is one of the few habitations there. Today relatively few of the fishermen in Chile have had the pleasure of fishing there and know of the excellent sport to be had in the rivers in that region.

The older fishermen in this country tell of the early days in Pucón thirty or forty years ago when the journey there was such an adventure that it made them think twice before attempting it and when they had to camp out on the banks of the river when they got there; they were the pioneers of fishing in Chile and richly deserved the glorious sport they got, for which they had to undergo a good deal of hardship. And look at Pucón today, with the railhead at Villarrica instead of Freire, with a motor road from Villarrica along the shores of the lake, and several hotels

available, including the railway hotel with all its comfort for the fishing visitor. Something similar is bound to happen in Panguipulli in the not far distant future and, indeed, is already happening if the rumour is correct that a semi-fiscal concern connected with the Chilean Government intends to build three fishing hotels in or near the Panguipulli district, one of which at Lake Pirihueico is already open. The sites chosen for the others are Lake Calafquen and Lake Riñihue, I believe.

The late John P. Chadwick was a keen student of the life and habits of fish and, when he found his old haunts being overrun with fishermen, he looked for new water. The knowledge that the River San Pedro, above and below Estación Los Lagos, was full of trout of good condition and size and that the trout must inevitably have found their way through Lake Riñihue, up the River Enco to Lake Panguipulli, and thence to the Rivers Fui and Guanehue, drove him to the conclusion that he

should concentrate his attention on the rivers running in and out of Lake Panguipulli. He had the foresight to see that this system of inter-connected lakes and rivers provided a splendid background for the development of trout under ideal conditions. Just how right he was will be shown a little later when I give you a few facts and figures regarding the fishing at Panguipulli.

A glance at the map will show you that this system of rivers and lakes, of which Lake Panguipulli is the centre, connects up with Lake Pirihueico and finally with Lake Lacar over the Argentine border. Some day we shall hear a great deal, I fancy, about the fishing in the Pirihueico district and at the end of this chapter I have a short story to tell about what lies in store for the angler there. Meanwhile, there is no doubt in my mind that the Panguipulli district will be developed still further within a few years and become one of the favourite fishing resorts in the country. The trip to Panguipulli is made by road from

the main line station at Lanco, eighteen hours from Santiago by the express train, and covers a distance of roughly fifty kilometres (31 miles). The hotel at Panguipulli itself is said to be fairly good but the trouble is that it is quite a long way from the Rivers Enco and Fui and the lake tug only does the trip round the lake on two days of the week at present; for the fisherman, the hotel is too far away from the fishing to be of any use to him. The lake is long and narrow and has the reputation of being somewhat treacherous as storms are apt to come up suddenly and render navigation difficult. It will be readily seen that the lack of accommodation on the southern end of the lake is a serious difficulty for the fisherman and the reason for the fishing being available only to a select few at present.

The rivers are big and there is plenty of scope for the boat fisherman and even more particularly for the bank fisherman. Indeed, of the "big five", this is the place where the bank fisherman can really enjoy himself most,

especially in the River Fui, where he can fish all day long without a boat. This is one of the best features about Panguipulli, namely, that it caters for every type of fisherman. In the River Enco a boat is necessary and the bank fishing is limited.

In order to avoid the risk of wearying my readers I have purposely refrained from quoting records of individual catches and, indeed, few are available in Chile, even if I wished to quote them, as the average fisherman is not interested in keeping a fishing log. However, I am much indebted to Fred Utz for a most interesting set of records of trips he made to Panguipulli in the company of the late John P. Chadwick and a few facts extracted therefrom will give my readers a very good idea of the quality of fishing there.

The totals of two trips of six days each were as follows:-

	TOTAL NUMBER OF <u>FISH</u> <u>CAUGHT</u>	TOTAL WEIGHT IN <u>LBS.</u>	AVERAGE WEIGHT IN <u>LBS.</u>
<u>MONTH</u>			
March, 1939	78	392	5.03
January, 1940	<u>65</u>	<u>349.5</u>	<u>5.38</u>
	<u>143</u>	<u>741.5</u>	<u>5.18</u>

This means an average catch over the two trips of approximately six fish per day per fisherman at an average weight of over five pounds per fish and on several days the weather was bad.

The January 1940 trip shows the following interesting details:-

<u>PLACE</u>	TOTAL NUMBER OF <u>FISH</u> <u>CAUGHT</u>	TOTAL WEIGHT IN <u>LBS.</u>	AVERAGE WEIGHT IN <u>LBS.</u>
River Fui	18	78.5	4.36
Upper River Enco	10	24	2.4
Lower River Enco and outlet to Lake Riñihue	<u>37</u>	<u>247</u>	<u>6.67</u>
	<u>65</u>	<u>349.5</u>	<u>5.38</u>

The fishing in the River Fui includes the outlet to Lake Panguipulli which presumably accounts for the increased average weight over the fish caught in the upper Enco. The fish seem to run bigger in the lower Enco and at

the outlet to Lake Riñihue.

In the March 1939 trip no brown trout were caught and in the January 1940 trip there were only two and they were taken in the River Enco; previously three brown trout were reported from the Enco in the 1938 season, including one of 18 pounds caught on a fly by the late John P. Chadwick. In the river San Pedro there are probably more brown than rainbow and the fact that brown trout have apparently not yet penetrated into the River Fui is interesting as further evidence, if it were required, of their slowness in migrating as compared with rainbows.

In the March 1939 trip there were seven fish of ten pounds or more, the largest being a rainbow weighing $14 \frac{1}{4}$ pounds (length 32 inches, girth $18 \frac{3}{4}$ inches). In the January 1940 trip there were six fish of ten pounds or more, the largest of which was a 15 pound rainbow (length $32 \frac{3}{4}$ inches, girth $18 \frac{3}{8}$ inches), caught by the late John P. Chadwick. A photograph of this beautiful fish is shown on

page [blank]; the cigarette packet between the jaws gives a good idea of the fish.

I trust that my readers are duly impressed but, in case there should still be any doubt as to the fishing in this district, here is an evening catch made by Fred Uts [Utz?] in March 1939. Fishing in the lower Enco and the outlet to Lake Riñihue, he caught 19 rainbows in 3 1/2 hours with a total weight of 78 1/2 pounds. A photograph of this wonderful catch is shown on page . The biggest weighed 12 pounds and the smallest 1 1/2 pounds, and the average weight was 4.18 pounds. Does that not whet your appetite? On another evening in the big pool above the outlet to Lake Riñihue on the River Enco he caught two rainbows weighing 11 1/2 pounds each within one hour. They were both taken on Dr. McLean's crab fly.

A point which I should like to emphasize is that on both trips nothing but a fly was used. The "streamer" salmon flies were by far the most deadly.

The following information regarding a trip to Panguipulli made by A.W.F. Duncan, one of our ablest fishermen with wide experience, is also worth recording. The trip was made in March 1940 and occupied five days.

TOTAL NUMBER OF <u>FISH</u> <u>CAUGHT</u>	TOTAL WEIGHT IN <u>LBS.</u>	AVERAGE WEIGHT IN <u>LBS.</u>
43	218.5	5.08

The last day's fishing represented 13 rainbow averaging 5.09 pounds and is described as "the finest day's trout fishing I ever had".

Points of interest in connection with this trip were that the weather was bad at first and the river slightly discoloured. The fishing was all in the River Fui and exclusively from the bank with a fly. No brown trout were caught. A five ounce rod measuring nine feet was used.

“Streamer” salmon flies with 1/0 hook were used each day until the final day, when the size was reduced to N° 1 hook as the weather was good and the water clear. The most successful fly on this final day was made up of turkey wings (long), blue hackle, gold and blue body.

Lest my readers should think that the records quoted are exceptional, I should mention that the experience of other fishermen provides ample corroboration that the average size of rainbow taken in this district up to 1940 was over five pounds in weight.

I think you will agree that my enthusiasm over Panguipulli is justified and, if there is better trout fishing to be had anywhere in the world, I should like to hear of it. Its main attraction lies in the fact that it is still undeveloped and I sincerely trust that the hand of man will not be instrumental in damaging it in an attempt to exploit its lucrative value and extend the enjoyment of its pleasure to fishermen generally as against the

privileged few who enjoy it at present.

Cran Kenrick² has a farm on the banks of the River Enco and the fortunate fishermen who have had the privilege of spending a holiday there are enthusiastic about the comfort of the house and the glorious fishing. He is to be congratulated on his choice of a farm right in the heart of this fisherman's Eden!

My slogan is "Keep your eye on Panguipulli" and that goes for the authorities as well as the fishermen!

And now, in the fashion of the broadcast announcer, let me take you over to the Argentine for a brief spell and give you an idea of how all this splendid fishing in Chile is linked up with the magnificent sport to be had on the other side of the border. I hope I shall not be accused of "poaching".

Several years ago Agustin R. Edwards and

² He is also mentioned in R. Haig-Brown's *Fisherman's Winter*.

his son left Pucón by motor car for San Martín in the Argentine, a trip which occupied fourteen hours although the distance is only some 200 kilometres (125 miles), including a trip by motor ferry across Lake Quillehue on the Chilean side of the frontier. He speaks very highly of the Hotel Los Andes at San Martín and also of the rainbow trout fishing in the Rivers Chimehuin and Quilquihue in that district but the outstanding feature of the trip was the experience of fishing for land-locked salmon (*salmo sebago*) in the River Trafal, several hours away from San Martín. This is a most beautiful river near which is the home of Mr. Lariviere, a very keen Argentine angler who bought the estate called La Primavera some years ago. I understand that Argentine fishing legislation provides for private fishing rights and Mr. Lariviere takes great care of the river, which contains rainbow and brown trout in addition to the salmon.

The fishing is described as difficult as the water is crystal clear and the salmon are

exceedingly wary so that you literally have to stalk them. Agustín Edwards gave me a vivid account of the catching of the one salmon he took on one of his own streamer flies, a beautiful fish in fine condition weighing just over eleven pounds.

After fishing for brook trout in a small stream called the Arroyo Culebra, which enters Lake Melikina, the return trip to Chile was made via Lake Lacar and Lake Pirihueico. The trip across Lake Lacar takes three hours by motor launch and at Huahun, the Argentine frontier post on the western end of the lake, there is an excellent small hotel owned by a Dutchman married to a Chilean. The trip from Huahun to Pirihueico, at the eastern end of the lake of the same name, can only be made on horseback or by foot at present.

At Pirihueico one of the three hotels, mentioned earlier in this chapter, is now available to fishermen and it is reported also that the River Huahun, close to the hotel, has

been stocked with land-locked salmon and rainbow trout. Lake Pirihueico connects up with the River Fui, and consequently with the whole Panguipulli district, but up to date there have been no trout in the Lake Pirihueico district owing to the inability of the trout to get up over the big falls at Huilo-Huilo on the River Fui. With ordinary luck, now that the lake has been stocked, the Pirihueico district should develop into an attractive fishing resort. It is just as well that fresh places are being opened up as every year there are more people fishing.

At present it is no easy matter to travel from Pirihueico to Panguipulli and vice-versa but in a few years time the transport problem will assuredly be solved and fishermen will enjoy the magnificent sport which can be foreseen in the Pirihueico district.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, this new hotel at Pirihueico is connected with the Hotel Crillon in Santiago and already in its short history has established a first-class

reputation. An important point to mention also is that there is a landing field at Pirihueico and the possibility of travelling there by air from Santiago and other places in contrast to the tiring trip by land changes the complexion of things. The whole Panguipulli district has a great deal in store for fishermen in the future.

CHAPTER XV

(pp. 120-125 of the typed manuscript)

ESTACION LOS LAGOS

The River San Pedro¹ flows out of Lake Riñihue, referred to in the previous chapter, and at Antilhue joins the River Calle-Calle, which enters the sea at the port of Valdivia. It is really interconnected with the Panguipulli district but is generally regarded as a separate fishing resort. Trout (rainbow, steelhead and

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Rio San Pedro (Wikipedia)

brown) are to be found in every part of the river from its source to the mouth and, from the angler's point of view, the most central place to stay is in Estación Los Lagos [The Lakes Station], which, as its name implies, is on the main railway line, and from which one can obtain easy access to long stretches of water above and below.

The fishing hotel in Estación Los Lagos is owned by Don Emilio Zadzawka, who provides transport facilities for boats and fishermen and generally looks after their requirements. It is always booked up well ahead of time for each fishing season.

The San Pedro is a big river in every sense of the word and I should say that its main characteristic is that so many big fish are taken out of it. This is particularly the case in the latter part of the season when there is not so much water and I should go so far as to say that you are unlucky if you fish the River San Pedro in March or April without getting a trout over ten pounds in weight. The fish in

this river are in the majority brown trout and towards the end of the season they show splendid fighting qualities. From the fisherman's point of view there is comparatively little bank fishing above Estación Los Lagos but below he is more fortunate and all the way down to Antilhue he will find plenty of scope. The boat fisherman is in his element on this river and, except on a very bad day, he can rely on getting ten to twenty fish without any trouble, including generally one or two over five pounds. The surrounding country is lovely, especially in the upper reaches of the river.

If you decide to fish above Estación Los Lagos, you go up by car in the morning and return to the hotel by boat and, if you elect to go down the river, you can return by train in the evening. Boats are transported up river by truck and the fishing arrangements generally are handled efficiently.

Some distance above the hotel, possibly about five miles, there is a tributary of the

River San Pedro, called the Quinchilca, which flows into the main river from a south-easterly direction. Some years ago a small fishing hotel, owned by a Swiss of the name of Alberto Schwalm, opened up on this river and the reports about it are very favourable. I have heard of a catch of 40 pounds of trout there in one day including a fish of nearly 14 pounds and two others weighing 10 and 8 pounds respectively, all brown trout. As a general rule the trout do not run so large as in the main river but on the other hand you can wade to your heart's content although it is somewhat heavy going in places. In the early part of the season, and later on if there is sufficient water, it is possible to go down by boat and it must make an excellent day's fishing under such conditions as, without the assistance of a boat to enable one to get from point to point, it is exceedingly hard work. I have reason to remember this as late in the season when I fished the Quinchilca, it was out of the question to use a boat and at the end of the

day I was dead tired. I had arranged to meet my boat at four o'clock in the afternoon at the bridge near the junction with the main river. When I arrived there, I had no other thought but a hot bath as soon as I should reach the hotel. The sole of one of my fishing boots was hanging off and I had fallen into the river during the course of the day; on the other side of the scales, however, I had a dozen excellent fish to my credit and, highly satisfied, was quite ready to call it a day.

My boatman, however, had other ideas and persuaded me that, as I was going to Santiago the next day and this was my last day on the river, it was out of the question to row down to the hotel without even trolling a fly. He reminded me that a day or two previously we had seen evidence of a big fish at the outlet of the Quinchilca to the main river where the waters meet and to add weight to his argument he declared that big fish were constantly being taken at that very place. I tried to be firm but ultimately weakened.

Fortunately the boatman had brought up my light salmon rod, a useful weapon for tackling a big fish, and he had it ready except for the cast. I selected a strong cast, which I had made up from odd bits of gut the previous evening, and a very large [S]ilver Doctor salmon fly (Hardy's N° 5/0 hook). Off we went, my boatman fresh and keen and I tired and rather bored with the whole proceedings, having already had all the fun I wanted in one day. We reached the River San Pedro and the boatman took the boat slowly across to the far side and back again. As the fly darted into the eddy at the meeting of the waters, I felt an indecisive tug and, with the feeling that it was one of those annoying small ones which would have to be put back, I struck and prepared to reel in rather hurriedly. The next thing I remember is seeing something streaking swiftly along the surface of the water in the opposite direction and my reel screaming endlessly. – then, at the end of the run the fish leapt out of the water and I realised that I was

into my first big fish. The boatman shouted with a note of triumph “Es una ballena, patron”! (It’s a whale, master) and rowed hard for the bank. Those twenty minutes were among the most exciting I have ever experienced! The fish was very active, took the line out time after time, and leapt out of the water at least six times. My thoughts were centred in the certain knowledge that, if I did not succeed in landing the fish, my friends would never believe how big it was and it would be just another stupid story of the big one that got away; that patched-up cast kept recurring to my mind every time the fish tugged and I had further misgivings when we got him close in eventually and then found that the net was much too small for him. However, the long and the short of it was that finally my boatman got his fingers in behind the gills of the fish and lifted him out of the water to my intense satisfaction. He was a brown trout, weighed 14 1/2 pounds and measured 13 1/3 inches long, and stood as the

record for the river up to that season. A month previously two fish of fourteen pounds were caught in the same river – one in the very same spot – and in every season one hears constantly of fish over ten pounds being caught there.

In March, 1937, however, H.D. Humpstone broke all records for the river and at that time for Chile by catching a 20 pound trout, a fine specimen which created quite a stir among fishermen.

To return for a moment to my own story, my boatman was delighted over the success of his boat and made no protest when I began to take down my rod as soon as the fish was unhooked and told him to row to the hotel without further delay. When we got there I recall that there was considerable excitement while the hotelkeeper produced the scales and the measuring tape. The hotel was full of visitors, mostly politicians, as there was a bye-election in the village on that day, and great interest was taken in the fish. The only other incident

worth recording was a discussion I heard in the hotel as to how the fish was caught, which ended in the unanimous conclusion that the net was the thing!

The mental reactions of a fisherman, when he has his first big fish on his line, are interesting to record and I trust that I shall be forgiven for having given mine at some length. I was fortunate in having plenty of action in what seemed a very short space of time. More often than not the big brown trout goes down to the bottom and sulks and with a light rod there is apparently nothing to be done about it. I have seen a fisherman, sitting on a rock, waiting for an hour until the trout finally came up to the surface dead. There was no satisfaction whatsoever in the catching of the fish and he was completely bored with the whole affair. That is the argument against fishing with a light rod in a river where you are liable to run into occasional big fish but, on the other hand, you get so much more fun out of the average fish you catch with the light rod

that as a matter of choice I should always be in favour of fishing rather lighter than the circumstances apparently demanded. As I remarked in the chapter on tackle, my ideal weight of rod for the south is 7 1/2 ounces.

Another interesting point which arises out of this story is the theory of "the bigger the fish the bigger the fly" which I have frequently heard discussed among fishermen in Chile without any conclusion being reached. On the occasion recalled I put on the biggest fly in my collection, quite deliberately, and met with immediate and most unexpected success, so that it would be readily understandable if I were to uphold the theory. I think, however, that it is a mistake to use a fly designed to catch the big fish in the river as by doing so it is possible that you may frighten away a number of average-sized fish, on which you really depend for your sport. A great deal depends on the condition of the water. If it is crystal clear a big fly is probably wrong; on the other hand, in deep water a small fly may be a

complete failure. Generally speaking, my opinion is that fishermen in Chile use bigger flies than are necessary or advisable. There is no great credit in catching a big fish but it is only human to try to break records once in a while! And there is certainly no rule about it as one of the fourteen pounders caught in the San Pedro in that season, was taken on the dropper² on a N° 3 salmon fly! I take off my hat to the fisherman who will use a dropper in a river with such fish lurking around. I should describe it as “asking for trouble”!

Agustin R. Edwards³ is enthusiastic about this river and speaks of the excellent sport he and his family had there. His boy and girl, aged 10 and 9 years respectively, caught 8 3/4 and 9 3/4 pounders on their light rods, an

² Dropper (angling): a short length of monofilament by which a fly is attached to the main trace or leader above the tail fly.

³ This must be a different person to the Agustin Edwards who wrote the foreword, since the latter states at the outset that he is not a fisherman.

experience which must have been akin to big game fishing in thrill for them.

While you are at Estación Los Lagos, it might be worth while taking the train up to Lake Riñihue and crossing on the lake tug to the River Enco on the far side, the fringe of the Panguipulli district. But you will have to be prepared to camp out as there is no hotel accommodation up in that region, so do not even consider it unless the weather is on its best behaviour.

When I review what I have written about Estación Los Lagos, I find that I have said very little actually about the river. There really is little to say about it beyond the general description that it is a big majestic river and I think the photographs on page [blank] will give you a much better idea of it than I ever could with my pen. The fishing there during recent seasons has been excellent and a number of fish between ten and fifteen pounds have been taken, including a fourteen pounder by Colonel Lefevre. One of

my fishing friends tells me that he had an eighteen pounder (?) on for twenty minutes in the San Pedro the other day and within a few yards of the boat he got away. They so often do, those very big ones!

If you should decide to go to Estación Los Lagos, be prepared to catch a monster as there are plenty of them in the river; and unless he is over twelve pounds he is hardly worth making a fuss about!

CHAPTER XVI

(pp. 126-128 of the typed manuscript)

LLIFEN¹

One of the main attractions about Llifén is that it is off the beaten track and from the point of view of the fisherman its relative inaccessibility is a big point in its favour. The countryside is quite unspoiled and there are many who consider that it is the most beautiful and best of all the fishing resorts of the South of Chile. The photograph on page [blank] will convey to the visitor some idea of the magnificent panorama which awaits him

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Llifén

in Llifén.

In order to get there you have to leave the main line at La Unión station and proceed on a branch line to Lake Ranco station. From this point you cross the lake by a small steamer to Llifén, the trip from La Unión station taking four hours and the whole trip from Santiago twenty-six hours.² As the branch line train and the steamer do not run every day throughout the season, it is just as well to make enquiries beforehand and avoid having to kick your heels for one whole day en route. However, Llifén now has a landing ground which makes travel easier for the airminded.

The hotel at Llifén is owned by a German and consists of a strong wooden building, a converted farmhouse, with accommodation for forty people. It is a simple place, without even a sitting-room, but the bedrooms have the great virtue of being clean and comfortable.

² By car on Panamericana Sur/Ruta 5 nowadays it would take about nine and a half hours (Google Maps).

The food is also simple and a hot bath can be provided, so that the fisherman has all that he wants in the way of comforts as a background for his fishing holiday. As the accommodation is limited, you have to book your rooms a long way ahead and the months of January and February are of course the most popular.

The main fishing is in the River Calcurrupe, which links up Lake Maihue and Lake Ranco, and the whole length of its course is 15 kilometres (9 1/2 miles), which is fished generally in two days. The boats are sent up to the outlet of Lake Maihue by ox-cart and the fishermen have to ride there, this being the only means of transport other than their own flat feet. At nightfall the boats are left at the first stage, where the fishermen rejoin them the following day.

In addition there is the River Caonahue, which runs into Lake Ranco at a point north of Llifén and the River Nilahue and Riñilahue which runs into the lake from a south-easterly direction and join the lake at points south of

Llifén.

The trip to the River Riñilahue takes three hours by motor-boat and it is therefore only occasionally visited by the hotel visitors. The “bars” of the Rivers Caonahue, Calcurrupe and Nilahue are the favourite resorts of the fishermen and, as the maximum capacity of the hotel is only forty people, there is plenty of room for everybody on the water. The custom is for the fishermen to arrange with each other every evening where they will fish the next day so that there is no clashing. The choice of three rivers and three “bars”, considered in conjunction with the limited hotel accommodation, is the great attraction of the fishing at Llifén. Another attractive feature is that the trout in that region are almost entirely rainbows; in fact, it is stated that only one brown trout has been caught in the River Calcurrupe up to the present.

It is reported that the fishing several years ago at Llifén was not up to its usual high standard and the reason for this temporary

setback gave local fishermen food for thought. As a result of an unusually mild spring, there was very little snow on the Cordillera and the snow-fed rivers in that region suffered accordingly. The River Calcurrue is indirectly snow-fed and the other three rivers, which enter Lake Ranco, are directly snow-fed and, as a consequence of the lack of snow there was very little water in any of those rivers that year. This situation, aggravated by a spell of exceptionally hot and dry weather in the summer, which further reduced the water in the rivers and lakes in that region to a very low level, had the effect of increasing the temperature of the water considerably above normal. Frank Morrison, who used to spend his holiday there every year, informs me that the River Calcurrue, for instance, was so low that he was able to wade across in places where in previous seasons he would have been right out of his depth and that the only fish he saw in the river were "tiddlers" apart from one big fish which was hooked immediately above

one of the deep pools but got away. It would seem obvious to me that under such conditions the bigger fish would seek the cooler waters of the deep pools and the lake and there was no reason to be alarmed as to the danger of anything beyond a seasonal setback. That the bigger fish were still in the neighbourhood was shown by the fact that they could be seen clearly every day feeding at the edge of the current in the "bars" of the rivers and by several catches made during the following season. It is also reported that in the months of March and April, after the rains came, the fishing recovered a great deal although it did not touch its customary high standard. A similar situation occurred during the past season owing to a long spell of drought.

In the year 1937 Frank Morrison caught a 13 1/2 pounder in the River Calcarrupe on a fly and during the 1941 season he had the pleasure of catching a 12 1/2 pounder in the "bar" of the river. George Andrews tells me that in January 1945 a 15 pound rainbow was

caught in the River Riñanihue of a fly but he does not know who the fortunate angler was nor can he furnish any particulars. Many fine catches have been made in the past in the Llifén district and there will be many more in the future.

If you are looking for a quiet fishing holiday away from the madding crowd with the modicum of comfort, Llifén is your haven and you will enjoy it. In fact, I feel that this account does not do justice to Llifén and that I have not made sufficient use of the superlative in describing its outstanding qualities as a fishing resort. I will be honest and admit that my knowledge of it is rather limited.

CHAPTER XVII

(pp. 129-135 of the typed manuscript)

PUYEHUE¹

The fame of Puyehue rightly lies in its hot mineral springs which are of the first order. Legend tells us that, in the days of the Spanish conquest, the son of the leading Araucanian Indian was taken prisoner after a grim battle and that some time later, when

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Puyehue (photograph courtesy of Bert van Hensbergen)

the commander of the Spanish forces was taken ill, the young Araucanian acted as his guide and took him to the springs, which cured his infirmity. The Spaniards took possession of the district and organised its defence with the construction of forts, which still exist on the shores of the lake.

In the old days despite the difficulties in the way of travelling, many made sojourns to the curative waters. Now the mineral spring installation at Puyehue, according to the opinion of well-informed judges, compares favourably with the leading spas in any part of the world and from what I have seen I imagine it would be difficult to find better facilities anywhere.

The old hotel was burned down in the year 1939 but on its ashes there has been built a modern luxury hotel costing the equivalent of more than a million American dollars. This is no small achievement when one considers that Puyehue is 84 kilometres (52 1/2 miles) from Osorno, the nearest town, and it rather takes

one's breath away to find tucked away among the woods at the eastern end of the lake a modern building with all the most up-to-date amenities such as central heating, air conditioning, cold storage chambers and the like. It requires vision and courage to embark on an enterprise of such magnitude, which cannot possibly give any return on the capital invested for some considerable time and which depends so largely on the future construction of roads and transport facilities generally in order to attract visitors, and the officials of the Banco de Chile responsible for this undertaking are to be congratulated on their achievement. On page [blank] is shown a photograph taken from the air of this magnificent building of stone and wood, Nordic in architectural style, which stands like a medieval castle amidst incredibly beautiful surroundings in the heart of the Chilean lake district. The lover of nature will find a great deal to interest him in the lovely walks in the neighbourhood and those looking for

recreation have the choice of several sports, aquatic and otherwise. I am told by winter sports experts that the skiing fields up the valley are of the highest order and will attract attention when transport facilities render them accessible.

Looking from the hotel balcony the view of the lake is very lovely. The whole picture, and especially the deep blue colouring of the lake in contrast with the rich green wooded hills, is reminiscent of the lochs in the Western Highlands of Scotland. Not infrequently it rains quite steadily all day, covering the lake and the woods with mist, making the recollection even more vivid! At the eastern end of the lake there are several attractive islands, the largest of which, Fresia, is owned by a family of refugees from Europe. It is said that after their distressing experiences their one idea was to escape from civilization and, apart from the holiday season when they are occasionally visited by parties from the hotel, they see practically nothing of the outside

world at all. They receive no newspapers and have no wireless set and I recall when I went over to the island in January 1942 they were unaware that the United States had been at war for over a month. They have some livestock, grow their own food and appear to be quite contented.

But I seem to be forgetting that this is a fishing book! The name “Puyehue” in Araucanian language² means “the land of fish” and there can be no doubt that the lake abounded with fish in the olden days. In fact until the 1936/1937 summer there were fish (pejerrey, trucha comun and peladillo but no evidence of trout) in the lake and adjoining rivers but suddenly in that particular season the shores of the lake were strewn with

² The Araucanian languages are a small language family of indigenous languages of the Americas. There are about 200,000 Mapudungu-speakers in central Chile and 40,000 in the Argentine. Huilliche is the native language of a few thousand Chileans.

hundreds of thousands of dead fish. Local inhabitants describe the lake as looking white on account of the bellies of countless dead fish floating on top of the water. The reason attributed to the wholesale disappearance of the fish was a volcanic eruption in the lake and rivers, a most feasible explanation; indeed there can hardly be any other to account for this major tragedy. From that time until a few years ago there was no evidence whatsoever of fish life of any description above the Pilmaiquen falls.

When I first went to Puyehue in the year 1941 it was the general consensus of opinion that there were no fish in Lake Puyehue nor in the River Golgol, Chanlelfu, Pescadero and Nilque running into the lake; nor was there any sign of a crustacean or insect life in the lake and the rivers and the lake was singularly devoid of birds. The River Chanlelfu, a few hundred yards away from the hotel, looked the most perfect trout water imaginable although somewhat inaccessible on account of

the trees, bushes and ferns on its banks and the River Golgol, the main river at the eastern end of the lake, was about one hundred yards wide at the inlet to the lake and also looked good, especially further up on the way to the Argentine border. As soon as I got to Puyehue I started making enquiries about the fishing and was informed by the hotel management in a vague way that the rivers had been stocked; eventually I found that the barman (Fernando) was a keen fisherman and that six months previously he had personally stocked the Chanlelfu and the Pescadero with fry obtained by the hotel management from the Lautaro hatchery. I decided that on future visits I would keep my ears and eyes open for the slightest indication of trout; unfortunately Fernando lost his job a few months later and there was nobody left in Puyehue with any interest in fishing which meant that information of a dependable nature was lacking. Persistent enquiries and observation brought no result until April 1943 when

cormorants began to appear and I found plenty of crabs (apancora) in the lake and in a lesser degree in the River Chanlelfu. At this time there were rumours about trout having been seen in the lake but no reliable information. In December 1943 I returned to Puyehue and this time I took a rod as I felt that zero hour was approaching. On arrival I had a talk with the local boatman who claimed to have caught a rainbow trout measuring about eighteen inches in the River Chanlelfu. He said he had caught this fish at a time when workmen, engaged on the construction of a bridge nearby, were constantly throwing scraps of food in the river. He had used bait, fishing from the bridge with a hand line, and the description certainly fitted a rainbow trout. I asked him why he had not shown it to the manager of the hotel so as to have the catch and the identity of the fish established. He said he was afraid it might not be returned to him and he needed it for food for his family. There is no answer to that!

The inevitable result was that I arranged to go out with him next day (New Year's Day) for the whole day to fish the inlets of various streams and rivers to Lake Puyehue. The expedition was by boat and an outboard motor enabled us to lose no time in getting from one point to another. From nine in the morning until five in the afternoon I fished constantly at the various "bars" and upstream as far as possible in each case and did not see the slightest indication of a fish. I spent some time at the inlet of the River Golgol, a most imposing wide estuary, but there was no sign of anything. Nevertheless there were gulls and cormorants around, quite a lot of them, and I was convinced that there must be fish too! During the last three hours of our expedition it poured with rain and by the time I got to the hotel, I had decided that as far as I was concerned I did not care if there were any fish or not in the district and had no intention of doing anything further about it.

But it is wonderful what a hot bath – and

especially in thermal water – and a whisky and soda will do! Before dinner I was planning the next day's attack.

On the following morning I walked down to the bridge on the River Changlefu, where the alleged trout had been caught, and spent some time casting into a fine pool at the bridge without the slightest touch or sign of anything. I then started on a run of about sixty yards immediately below the pool and after a few casts pulled out a small rainbow trout nine inches long. I hated to have to keep it but for identification purposes the regulation had to be broken. I had a few more casts and got another small rainbow of the same size which I put back. I was fishing with 1x gut and a small Peter Ross fly.

The rest of the story is easily told. I took the small rainbow back to the hotel and laid it for inspection on the manager's table. The various fishermen in the hotel, who did not even consider bringing fishing tackle to Puyehue, all had a look at it and the

important point was that the lie had been given to the idea that trout could not live in Puyehue waters on account of volcanic disturbances as this small rainbow must have been there at least two years. The Department of Fisheries was advised by the hotel management and later they sent a representative there to study the district and advise on the next season's stocking of the various rivers. Plans were made to start a hatchery in the vicinity of the hotel which I am afraid have never materialised.

I spent several other days fishing and took out and put back another small rainbow from the same run but in no other part of any river in the district did I see a fish. It certainly was not for want of trying! I came to the conclusion that there were few fish there owing probably to the fact that the stocking was done in a small way.

I can quite honestly say that no fish I have ever caught – not even that 14 1/2 pounder in the River San Pedro – gave me the same

satisfaction as that small rainbow trout; and I believe that I shall always be able to say that I caught the first trout on a rod and line in one particular river in the South of Chile.

In January 1947 I was invited to fly to Puyehue for the week-end with a party in an American Embassy [Douglas] DC3³ and I readily accepted the invitation as, in my opinion, that is the only way to travel to Puyehue. The trip took three hours as compared with a dusty and exhausting journey of twenty[-]six hours by train and bus at the end of which one can hardly fail to be in the worst of bad humour. Two years previously I had the great pleasure of flying to Puyehue and all over the southern lakes with Sandy MacDougall⁴ in the British Embassy plane, a



³ A Douglas DC-3 in 1954. (Wikipedia)

De Havilland Dragon,⁵ and that was an unforgettable experience. You will have gathered that I like flying but, whether you are air[-]minded or not, I still think the only way to go to Puyehue is by air under present conditions and the same applies to Pirihueico, the journey to which by land is equally tedious and exhausting. There is no doubt that the development of civil aviation is having a big effect on fishing and touring in the South of Chile. However, to come down to earth again, I went to Puyehue in January 1947 for a short

⁴ Group Captain A. MacDougall was air attaché at the British Embassy, appointed on 27 November 1944 (*Air Force List*, April 1945, 260-289).



⁵

A De Havilland Dragon Rapide. (Wikipedia)

week-end (two days) and did not think it worth while taking my fishing equipment, waders etc. I did nevertheless stick a small box of trout flies in my pocket! On arrival I was informed – and found it hard to believe – that five-pound trout were being taken out of the River Chanlelfu and that afternoon Pancho Jones returned to the hotel with a two-pound rainbow. In the late afternoon of the following day Pancho lent me a rod and off we went to the Chanlelfu, he with waders and a net and I in sports clothes with only the rod. We arranged that we should keep a distance of about 150 yards apart and, if I should require the net, I had to shout and he would come along. I put on a Peter Ross trout fly (N^o 7) and started off fishing from the bank at a point where there was a drop of three feet to the water and the water was at least three feet deep, clear as crystal and very inviting. On my third cast a trout tried to take the fly and missed so I waited a minute or two and then cast over the same spot. This time there was

no mistake and the battle was on! And what a battle! I was fishing very light and that trout took me all over the river but after about twenty minutes showed definite signs of tiring and came up a few yards from the bank. After a few final half-hearted runs I finally got my fish close up and decided that the time had come for the net. I shouted and shouted but apparently Pancho was out of earshot and nothing happened. A few minutes later a small boy turned up on the bank beside me and I offered him twenty pesos to go along and find Pancho. Ten minutes passed and neither the small boy nor Pancho appeared. Another country lad on a horse came along and I offered him fifty pesos with the same result; still another joined me on the bank after an interval and this time I raised the ante to one hundred pesos. By this time I had had the fish on for forty[-]five minutes and it looked dead, a beautiful five-pound trout according to my estimation. I could not bear the thought of losing the fish but, on the other hand, I did not

like the idea of hanging on indefinitely so after a few more minutes and no sign of my third messenger, I decided to risk lifting the trout out of the water. Alas and alack a day, the cast (nylon) snapped in the middle and my beautiful trout was lost.

My readers will probably be amused at my story of the big fish that got away from me but no matter, the story must be told. I have lost many fish before and since but suffice it to say that I have never lost a fish which meant more to me than that five-pound brown trout which would have been a catch worth while in view of the background of the years when I looked so often at that lovely water and fished it without any encouragement, almost convinced about the theory that volcanic properties in the bed of the river made it impossible for fish to survive.

That is the story of one of the most interesting and at the same time disappointing fishing problems in this country. It is satisfactory that Fernando's efforts to

restock the waters of Puyehue have met with some success but it is not enough. The Chilean Government holds the key to the rapid restocking of the lake and rivers if a fishladder were built at the Pilmaiquen falls. When the new hydroelectric plant, which is situated at the falls, was under construction and the falls were dry several years ago, determined efforts were made by fishermen to persuade the Government to build a fishladder but it was not done and a golden opportunity was lost. Perhaps it may still be possible at some future date.

The latest information received from Puyehue is that fishing there is improving year by year but there are few facilities and the angler has to make his own arrangements mostly. There is no doubt that the future possibilities are very good.

CHAPTER XVIII

(pp. 136-139 of the typed manuscript)

MAGALLANES

It is only in recent years that fishing in the extreme south of Chile has commanded attention. The Straits of Magellan are famous the world over for their beauty and grandeur and those who have had the good fortune to make the trip through the straits are envied by their fellowmen. Since the building of the Panama Canal few passenger ships have used the Straits of Magellan route, except for touring purposes, and the country down there is too bleak to attract holiday visitors. But the country is eminently suitable for trout fishing and the object of this brief chapter is to bring this feature to your notice. I am indebted to Rex Doublet and Peter MacLean for the information they have obtained for me regarding the history and development of trout fishing in those far-off southern parts.

In the years 1927 and 1928 trout ova (rainbow, brown and brook) from the Lautaro hatchery were brought down and deposited in various rivers in the Magallanes district. It was not, however, until the year 1933 that a trout was actually taken from any river and the story is worth recording.

The Morrison family, owners of the San Gregorio farm, situated about 120 kilometres (75 miles) north of Punta Arenas, have a stream called the Penitente running through their property. In the year 1933 one of the boys (Johnnie) was sitting on a bridge fishing with a worm for “trucha común”, or whatever he could get, when suddenly without any warning something very different seized the worm and made off with it. The fish was brought in eventually, rushed home, and identified as a brown trout weighing four pounds. The family, excited over this discovery, assembled quickly and decided that something had to be done about it.

Now Mrs. Morrison had a beautiful green

parrot and, after she had retired for the night, this bird became the centre of attraction, little realizing what an important – and from his point of view undignified – part he was to play in the development of trout fishing. A towel was thrown over his head and feathers – red and green chiefly – were extracted from his tail for the manufacture of flies which lasted well into the small hours of the night. History relates that from that moment the trout fishing in the Penitente never looked back and it has given a great deal of pleasure to all who have had the good fortune to fish it.

The Penitente joins the River Rubens later and finally becomes the River Gallegos before entering the Straits of Magellan but the best of the fishing is in the Penitente itself. It is a fine stream, broad and deep, its water being clear with a very slight brown tinge, and even after heavy rain it rarely becomes discoloured or muddy. Catches vary from a few up to twenty more per person per day. The average size or weight nowadays is from two to four

pounds; on three occasions trout weighing fourteen pounds have been caught, and on other occasions up to ten pounds, but those must be rated as exceptional. The trout are almost entirely brown trout which seem to have thrived better than other varieties. It is also very likely that a much higher proportion of brown trout was used in the original stocking of the stream.

It is all bank fishing with a stiffish wind. The hotel accommodation in Punta Arenas is of the very first order and near the Penitente there is a small hotel at Morro Chico which is said to be good. It would appear that this is undoubtedly the best fishing to be had in the district and you must admit that it sounds almost too attractive.

In the other streams emptying into the Straits, such as the Tres Brazos and Agua Fresca, brown trout only are found but in the sea at the mouths of these streams fishermen are reported to have netted fish weighing from twelve to fifteen pounds, which have not been

identified. As "salmo salar" ova were brought down with the trout ova originally, it is suggested that those fish might have been salmon, which is, of course, possible, but once again I think it is safe to assume that they were merely large trout which had gone to the sea, as it is hardly likely that the salmon ova were used in sufficient quantity to produce results.

In the Ultima Esperanza district there is one main river, the River Chinas, which flows into Lake Toro. This river has numerous tributaries, in one of which, the Guillermo, the first ova were deposited. Mr. S.S. Greer obtained permission to take charge of the stocking of the Gullermo and it is said to be due to his personal care that the venture was successful. As a result the trout, which are all brown, have found their way to the various tributaries, the best fishing being found in the Bagaul and the Viscachas higher up. The fishing in the Vizcachas,¹ over the Argentine

border, during the past two seasons is reported to have been excellent, catches of twenty or more in the day having been made with the fish running up to six pounds.

In Tierra del Fuego trout ova were deposited in a number of rivers and streams on the Chilean side but only in the Rivers Nuevo and Marazzi has any success been achieved and even then it has been on a very limited scale.

In the San Sebastián district the River Chico rises in the Chilean side and flows into the Argentine. The river has been stocked with rainbow trout and it is reported that the fishing for the past few years has been good and that it has been improving every year. Catches of twenty or more in the day have been taken, the fish not running more than two and a half pounds and averaging around one and a half pounds, but they have the reputation of being the liveliest in the district.

¹ Both spellings are given here, but Vizcachas seems to be correct for the river, while there is a rodent which might be spelt either way.

The stocking of this river was carried out by Mr. John Goodall, who also stocked a tributary, the River Cachimba, with brown trout. Fewer fish are caught in the latter but they run about a pound heavier on the average. An interesting point in connection with the stocking of these two rivers is that, while occasionally rainbow trout are taken in the Cachimba, it is exceedingly rare that a brown trout is found in the Chico. Once more the migratory habits of the rainbow are brought to light.

The River Grande further south was also stocked by Mr. Goodall and recently a rainbow trout weighing one pound was caught in this river fifteen miles inside Chilean territory, although I understand that the stocking was carried out many miles on the other side of the border.

Favourite flies in the Magallanes district are the following:

Alexandra	Peter Ross
Durham Ranger	Green Highlander

Zulu

Red Tag

Butcher

Jock Scott

Teal and Red.

Devon minnows of 1 to 1 1/4 inches are reported about the best; some times the fish will take the silver rather than the golden, and at other times the reverse is the case. There are also days when the gudgeon² is preferred to either. Wonderful catches have been made from time to time with home-made lures of different sizes and shapes.

It is evident from the information received about the fishing in the Magallanes district that a lot of trouble has been taken to establish trout fishing there and that the efforts of those pioneers in the far south are being amply rewarded.

² A small freshwater fish.



A gudgeon

(Wikipedia)

Here's wishing them the best of luck in the future!

CHAPTER XIX

(pp. 140-146 of the typed manuscript)

FISHERMEN'S YARNS

“and the truth is not in him”.

The above is the conclusion of a quotation relating to the fisherman.¹ There is also the time-honoured angler's prayer,² too well known to require repetition here, which is clearly an indication that the proverbial untruthfulness of the angler is frankly and openly admitted by the angler himself.

¹ The full quotation reads:

“Behold the Fisherman!

He riseth up early in the morning
and disturbeth the whole household.

Mighty are his preparations.

He goeth forth full of hope.

And when the day is spent, he returneth,

Smelling of strong drink.

And the truth is not in him.” – Anon.

² The Angler's prayer:

“God give me the grace to catch a fish,

So large that even I,

When talking of it afterwards

May never need to lie.” – Anon.

Then there is one definition of “fishing” which puts it rather crudely: “An uninhabited body of water completely surrounded by liars in old clothes.”

The angler’s reputation for, shall we say, exaggeration – it sounds better than untruthfulness – is on a parallel with the Scotsman’s reputation for being niggardly; it has become a worldwide joke and nobody pays any serious attention to it. Everybody knows that the fisherman does not lie maliciously but at the same time the inherent tendency to “shoot a line” is so strong that his accounts of his achievements on the water must be taken with a grain of salt. It is an extraordinary and curious fact that the most upright of men on his return from a fishing holiday will tell the old, old story of the big one that got away and that nobody will believe him; and that, when he speaks of battles with five and six pounders, his audience will automatically knock off a pound in every case. The facts may have been absolutely correct in every detail but the

inborn tendency to call a 5 1/2 pounder a 6 pounder discredits the angler's story from the very beginning, and among his fellow anglers it is still more difficult to get away with it!

I remember one New Year's Day going out in a small boat with my son in the estuary of the River Aconcagua at Concon for an hour or two and, after trying every bait we had available with no result, we decided to take down our rods and give it up. On the way across to the landing stage a fish jumped out of the water into the boat and my son bore it home in triumph. When I reported the affair to fishing friends some days later, they said nothing but conveyed the impression that they looked upon me with grave suspicion and felt that I had gone too far. The ordinary everyday fishing yarn was all very well but it was too much to expect them to believe a stupid yarn of that nature and I ought to be ashamed of myself. However, I stuck to it and managed to live it down eventually. Believe it or not, it was true!

The angler himself is not always responsible

for the exaggeration of his achievements. I heard recently of the case of a dear old gentleman with a kind-hearted boatman, who, on weighing the fish, always added an extra pound because, as he put it with a broad grin on his face “it pleased the old gentleman so”.

I met an old angler the other day who told me an amusing story of a friend of his, who decided to have a fishing holiday in the south and borrowed a book on fly fishing in order to prepare himself for the great adventure. On his return the old angler was delighted to hear that his pupil had caught some good fish but quite disgusted and flabbergasted to hear the confession that he had used nothing but a worm!

An amusing story is told of a fisherman in the south who got into his first big fish and had the misfortune to break the top joint of his rod shortly after the commencement of the battle. Determined that under no circumstances must the fish be lost, he dropped the rod and grabbed the line. Putting

the line round his body, he then turned round and round until, with the line wound round him, he finally brought the struggling trout, a ten pounder, to the water's edge, whereupon he fell upon it to ensure its capture.

Then there is another yarn about one of our tug o' war specialists on his first fishing expedition in the south. As strong as an ox, he apparently had the idea that the catching of a good-sized trout was a trial of strength and physical endurance. In due course his first test came along, and, as the fish was taking out his line, he rose in the boat and backed step by step, gripping hard and pulling with a determined look on his face, until he finally disappeared over the side of the boat into the river.

A rather similar yarn concerns a German on his first fishing expedition on a well-known river in the South. Dressed in a spick and span white summer outfit, he looked for all the world like a chef on holiday. After an hour or more of trolling, he suddenly felt a tug and,

sure enough, he had a fish firmly hooked. Having seen other fishermen get out on the bank to land the fish, he was certain that was the correct procedure and ordered the boatman to pull for the shore. As soon as he put his foot on land, he decided to “strafe” the fish and, under the impression that brute force was necessary, he gave a terrific heave and a small trout flew through the air. Simultaneously he lost his balance and fell backwards into the river waist-high. So the other fishermen on the river were presented with the unique spectacle of the fish on dry land and the fisherman at the other end of the line in the water. Later, the Teuton, a sadder but wiser man, was observed wearing the boatman’s “poncho” as a kilt while his pants were drying.

During the past season I lent a rather aged and dilapidated net to a friend on a fishing holiday in the south. On attempting to land a 14 pounder with the net, the mesh gave way and the trout disappeared again into the water.

He decided to try to bring the net back over the rod and line but unfortunately, while engaged in this delicate operation, the revived fish went off on a fresh run, which almost knocked off his balance into the river. He tells me he got into an amazing tangle but eventually landed the fish.

My readers will have realised by this time that there is nothing stereotyped about fishing in Chile nor about the local exponents of the “gentle art”.

In the early days there was a trout fisherman who lived at Collipulli, on the River Malleco, and every week-end during the fishing season it was his custom to journey by train to the Cautin at Lautaro for his sport. One fine day a fisherman turned up at Collipulli to fish the Malleco and returned at nightfall with his creel full of fine trout to the consternation of our friend, who was unaware that the river had been stocked years previously.

There is another story about four friends of

mine who spent a long weekend fishing the River Ñuble [in the Bio Bio region]. On the first morning one of them, not a keen fisherman, had spent several hours thrashing the water with no result so he decided to take a nap on the river-bank. As he awoke along came a lad carrying a long pole in one hand and five beautiful four-pound rainbow trout in the other. He asked the lad where he was going with the trout and the reply was "Chillán" (about eight miles away). The long and the short of it was that he paid the lad the Chillan price of the fish and suggested that, as the arrangement was obviously to their mutual advantage, he might deliver a few fish at the farmhouse, where he and his friends were staying, on the two following mornings, whereupon he called it a day and returned to the farmhouse with the intention of pulling the legs of his friends until the final evening of their stay when he would let them into his secret. In the evening the others returned with two small fish between them after a very bad

day and asked him, comfortably seated in a deckchair smoking a cigar, how he had fared. He said he had enjoyed a very good day and invited them to look at his catch hanging up round the corner. After the initial shock there were the usual questions as to what particular fly or lure he had used, and where and at what time of day he had caught the fish. Next day and the following day the others were out at daybreak but their successful friend did not even get out of bed until late in the morning and on both evenings there was a repetition of the scene of the first evening; by this time the amazement of the others had reached a point where they no longer regarded it as funny and they took a very poor view of the futility of their own efforts in comparison with the success of their friend. He for his part realised that it was no longer a joke and decided that his original plan of divulging the secret on the final evening of their stay had to be abandoned in the interests of personal safety. In Santiago two weeks later over a bridge

table the opportunity came when everyone was in the best of humour and he unfolded his humiliating tale of how he had acquired the fish to the accompaniment of considerable laughter which contributed to his forgiveness. But the next time he says he was using a “Silver Doctor” it will not sound convincing!

Quite the best fishing yarn I know was told me by a fisherman from England, whom I met in the south of Chile some years ago. I trust I am not stealing his thunder or infringing his copyright by telling the story – if so, I beg his pardon! He belonged to a family of fishermen and from his earliest days he was accustomed to listen to the tales of his elder brothers about the fish they had played. The ambition to play a fish became an obsession with him and he made up his mind that, although he had not yet reached the age to be taken on a real fishing expedition, somehow or other he would experience the joy of playing a fish. There was a fair-sized pond in the grounds at his home, the inhabitants of which were mostly carp and

there was one particular old carp which made a habit of sleeping peacefully every afternoon in a shaded corner of the pond. He got hold of a net belonging to an elder brother – he had not yet reached the age of discretion when a net was allowed – and, wading quietly into the water, he netted the fish and took him ashore. Imagine the feelings of the old carp, rudely wakened from a peaceful slumber and removed to dry land, when the small boy then firmly impaled a hook into his lower jaw and, having satisfied himself that the fish was securely fastened to the end of his rod and line, threw him back into the water in a gasping and shattered condition! The fury of the old carp knew no bounds, he rushed hither and thither leaping around, and for twenty minutes the small boy held on grimly until he eventually reduced the fish to complete submission and landed him again. After such a thrilling experience, crowned with victory, he was reluctant to return the old carp to the water but decided after due consideration that

it would be the right thing to do. This angler, who in his maturer years has had many a fight with salmon and trout, told me in all seriousness that no later experience of his fishing career could be compared with that battle with the old carp. In my mind's eye I can see the whole picture of that small boy's adventure and I always enjoy it.

My final story is about the keenest fisherman I have ever met, George Andrews, a member of the Foreign Service of the United States. There are many keen fishermen in Chile, who literally live for the sport and find it difficult to talk of anything else, whose wives describe themselves cheerfully as fishing widows. Winter is nothing more than a season sandwiched between autumn and spring when one orders necessary flies and casts and prepares tackle for the approaching fishing season. The extending of the arms in front of the body in a laterally opposed direction is never the length of a missed putt but always the size of a fish! But they are as

children compared with George Andrews. In my mind's eye I can see him, got up in a rig-out which makes him unrecognizable standing silently on the bank of a river, rod in hand, waiting for the season to open! From early morning until late at night, in the sunshine and in the rain, I can picture him never relaxing for a moment except possibly to light a cigarette, never stopping to have a meal, but always intent on the water and the possibility of catching on a fly that fifteen-pound rainbow trout he has set up as his fishing target. Here is his description of a trip to the River Enco and the source of the River San Pedro in December 1943 and I have his permission to include it:-

“Why didn't the trout take more? God only knows! The solunar tables had very little bearing on the matter. The moon was almost dark and later on in the first quarter, and that is reputed to be the best phase of the moon. Furthermore, the moon was in perigee or nearest the earth on December

1st and that is supposed to be the best time to fish. It's all nonsense, almost. The barometer was falling and there were no sudden changes in the weather, excepting for the strong "puelches" which brought good, not bad, fishing. (See page 3 of the Solunar Tables for 1943, which were all wrong).

We used innumerable kinds and sizes of flies but the plugs brought better results (for non-cricket barbarians), the reason probably being that the predaceous Chilean trout thought that those wiggling chunks of wood were some sort of strange and delicious fish.

At the outlet of Lake Riñihue and in the San Pedro River there were thousands of beetle-like insects with white bellies and light green backs called "San Juan" and the stomachs of the fish caught in those waters were full of the creatures. That may explain why we got no more strikes than we did, although I used a Green Highlander for

hours. Another contributing cause for our rotten catch was probably that the water was too hot, ranging from 58 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit in the Enco River and in Lake Riñihue below the mouth of the Enco River, from 59 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit down in the San Pedro River above Los Lagos. There had been very little rain for three or four weeks and, as far as I was able to gather from various and mendacious accounts, it had not really rained for about 20 days. This, I think, was the main reason for the dearth of strikes, on two counts: the water was warm and there had been no recent change in conditions to stir up the trout. (The high temperature of the water is somewhat open to doubt as a cause, since a fisherman who was on the Enco when we arrived there told me that two years previously he had had tremendous luck with two or three hours of fishing a day when the water was much warmer than it was at the end of November 1943).

The fish appeared to be in the lake, both at the top and the bottom of Lake Riñihue, because among the three of us only one decent fish was caught in either the Enco River or the San Pedro River, namely the 5 3/4 lb. brown trout caught by Tito Wessel up in the Enco on December 1st, and that was a freak. Furthermore, the only good fishing that we had at the bar of the Enco was in the early morning and in the evening, when it was almost dark. In the morning the fish appeared to be playing, like so many dogs or seals or porpoises, and not feeding.

At the outlet of Lake Riñihue the fish struck only when a “puelche” was blowing and the larger fish were taken only in the very late evening, almost at dark.

In the San Pedro the fishing was indescribably bad and I can offer no plausible reason for this, excepting that it had not rained for many days. However, “Don Emilio” (Sadzawka) told me that on Sunday, December 5th, a fish of 4 1/2 kilos

had been caught and Carlos Ribera, my boatman on the San Pedro, told me that on the same Sunday a fisherman who had gone with him had caught 35 fish on “orenos” and spoons.

If the world’s best ichthyological expert can make any rhyme or reason out of this truthful account of this fishing trip or the attempted analysis of the poor fishing, he is a better man than I am, by a dammedsight!”

I am happy to report that since he left Chile he has achieved his goal in British Columbia where he caught lots of coho salmon over fifteen pounds. Good luck to him!

CHAPTER XX

A Word to the Prospective Visitor

(pp. 147-150 of the typed manuscript, of which it is the final chapter)

Now that I have told you all I know about fishing in Chile, what do you feel about it? Are you tempted to escape from the rigours of your winter climate and enjoy some fishing in Chile? If you decide to come, I do not think you will be disappointed and take my advice and book your accommodation well ahead of time.

One trip, which might appeal to you, would be to come through the Panama Canal and down the west coast to Valparaiso. In Santiago, 160 kilometres (100 miles) from Valparaiso, you can make all your fishing arrangements, if you have not already made them by mail, which is advisable nowadays as the fishing becomes more popular every year. At the end of your fishing holiday, you can proceed from Puerte Varas across Lake Llanquihe, through Ensenada, Petrohue and Peulla, across Lake

Todos Los Santos and over to Bariloche, the railhead, in the Argentine Republic. From there you can go to Buenos Aires by train and return home up the east coast of South America. In this way you can combine with your fishing the pleasure of a trip through the best of the Chilean lake district. Another alternative, although not so easily arranged on account of the rather infrequent boat service, would be to return via the Straits of Magellan and Buenos Aires.

In the month of March 1940 a party of sportsmen from the United States arrived at Tocopilla in a private yacht. Their plans were to fish for marlin off Tocopilla and then proceed to the south of Chile for trout fishing before the end of the season: this was to be followed by a month's shooting, after which they proposed to return to Tocopilla to try their luck with broadbill swordfish. The whole trip from the United States was scheduled to take about three months and sounds most interesting.

When you come to Santiago, or beforehand by correspondence, get in touch with the local fishermen through your Embassy or Legation and I can assure you that they will be only too glad to be of service to you. There is a freemasonry about fishing – as there is, indeed, about every sport – and the local angler is just as glad to see you as you are to see him. Contact with you freshens his knowledge on fishing matters and you get the benefit of his local knowledge.

This book does not purport to be a fishing guide to Chile and the object of it is merely to tell the story of the sport to be had in this country in a general way. However, I have been persuaded by my fishing friends that some indication of costs should be given so that fishermen from abroad may have some idea of what they are up against before they come here. It is with considerable reluctance that I approach the subject of costs as I realize that any figure I give may be quite out of date in a year or two and that by the time any

visitor arrives conditions may have changed radically.

Since the year 1931 the Chilean exchange has been unstable and the cost of living has been rising steadily, especially since the beginning of World War II. The present rates of exchange are approximately the following:-

On London \$300. – Chilean pesos per £1

On New York \$120. – Chilean pesos per US dollar.

I have discussed this matter of costs with knowledgeable fishermen in this country and have arrived at the conclusion that living expenses (hotels, etc.) and fishing charges (boatmen, etc.) should each be reckoned at an overall figure of US \$6.– per day or, in other words, your fishing holiday should cost you a total of US\$12 per day. Of course, if you spend the whole time at Pucón, an extra \$4. – should be added to the figures given and, on the other hand, if you stay at Llifén, there will undoubtedly be a saving. I am assuming that you will look for variety and on that basis I do

not think the figures given are far out under existing conditions.

The constantly rising fishing costs in recent years are to a great extent the fault of the fishermen themselves, who whet the appetites of boatmen and chauffeurs by overpaying them. It is a good thing to make enquiries regarding those matters and the most economical solution in the long run is probably to engage boatmen and arrange for transport through the hotels.

There is another point I should like to mention before I close. A great many fishermen suffer from rheumatism and kindred complaints – it is not surprising when you think of the way they expose themselves to the cold and wet on every possible opportunity – and it may be of interest to mention that Chile abounds in spas or watering-places of great merit. There is a story told of a Chilean who was suddenly afflicted with a bad attack of sciatica or some similar complaint and decided to go to Germany to

consult a great specialist there. After a careful examination the specialist in Germany advised him to go to Chillan, in Chile, where he would find the best mineral spring in the world for his affliction. I cannot vouch for the story but it is a good one and speaks volumes for the reputation of the Chilean watering-places. The best known and most renowned are Chillan, Tolhuaca and Puyehue, about which I have already told you. If you wish to combine the treatment with your fishing holiday, there is a spring in the vicinity of Llifén, which is said to be good, and in the neighbourhood of the Tolhuaca watering-place, near Curacautín, there is a variety of trout rivers to chose from to satisfy the most exacting fisherman. The River Diquillin rises not far away from the Chillan watering-place and you might find some good fishing there, although transport is the difficulty. The Pucón hotel management, to provide still another attraction, is considering opening up a watering-place at Minetué, 18 kilometres (11

1/4 miles) from the hotel, and the intention is to make available at that place an installation of the first order as an annex for the benefit of hotel visitors. There are a number of other watering-places, which you will observe marked in my fishing map, and, although in certain cases the hotel accommodation may be somewhat indifferent, the curative qualities of the waters are undisputed.

During recent years there has been a considerable improvement in conditions for the visitor to this country and, from what I have told you, you will have gathered that facilities in the future are likely to make a visit still more attractive. The reason is that it is only comparatively recently that the Chilean people have come to realize fully the beauty of their country and the pleasures it has to offer. This fact, combined with exchange restrictions which have curtailed travel in the United States and Europe, has brought about the development of the wonderful holiday and health resorts to be found in Chile itself. The

great strides now being made in civil aviation will undoubtedly be of considerable aid to the development of this country as a place to visit.

I trust that in writing this book I have fulfilled the mission on which I set out, namely, to give my fellow anglers in other parts of the world some idea of the wonderful sport to be had in this far-off corner of the globe. Let me assure you once again that, should you choose to take a fishing holiday in Chile, you will be welcomed by a people renowned for their hospitality and courteous consideration for the foreigner. You will find that the Chilean is filled with an intense love for his country and you will agree that he has every reason to be proud of it.

POSTSCRIPT

(p. 151 in the typed Manuscript of which it is the last page)

Looking back over twenty odd years of fishing in Chile, what fun I have had, what friendships I have formed, and what luck to have made my home in such a delightful country, an “Angler’s Paradise”!

The good days, when the trout were taking, when everything went right, when the strike was invariably welltimed, when thrill followed thrill, when the number of fish in the creel was entirely secondary to the glorious feeling of satisfaction engendered by the pleasures of the sport and the beauty of the surroundings! The bad days, when the weather was disappointing, when the trout were either uninterested or just missing the fly, when nothing went right, when one’s casting was faulty or inaccurate and the fly kept getting entangled, when the trout were continually getting away through errors of judgment,

when the evening rise on which one pinned the last hope was a dismal failure, when one returned home tired and dissatisfied!

Fishermen have all had these inevitable experiences and the joys of fishing can only be fully appreciated when one learns to take the rough with the smooth. After all, fishing would be poor sport if one were invariably successful and every other cast produced a fish; one or two good fish on a bad day are worth ten on a good day and it is the unexpected which proves the real thrill of this wonderful sport.

For my part fishing in Chile has been an unforgettable chapter in my life and I know that many of my friends can say the same.

