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River Smallmouth Fishing: The Best Techniques & Best Rivers

Tim Holschlag
Ron Nelson, illustrator
Smallmouth Angler Press (September 2011)
Softcover $24.95 (358pp)
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The widely accepted estimate that forty-eight million Americans fish for fun may or may not be accurate. After all, a skeptic might ask, who's actually doing the counting out there on the countless scenic rivers and lakes where the multitude find refuge from the responsibilities and uncertainties of everyday life?

But there is certainly nothing fishy about the claim that among those millions, Tim Holschlag, a Minnesota-based writer who quit his day job more than twenty years ago and went fishing full time, is an angling champion. He has fished some three hundred streams and one hundred lakes, mainly for smallmouth bass—the Everyman's species of the rod-and-reel society.

To support his addiction, he's written for magazines, published a couple of books, and even produced a movie about fishing for smallmouth or the bronze back, as it is also called. He is co-founder of The Smallmouth Alliance and has received national and regional conservation awards. His most recent book, *River Smallmouth Fishing*, should establish him as the foremost authority in the field. Holshlag is to smallmouth fishermen as Lefty Kreh is to the trouting elite.

His appeal, in addition to his obvious expertise, is that he keeps it simple, and when instructing is never preachy about it. He views smallmouth as a sort of universal fish, and he wants to help us catch them.

"Smallmouth live in huge, industrialized rivers," he writes, as well as in pasture streams "so tiny you can almost jump across them." And they also inhabit Southern creeks and even the remote Devil's River in the Texas desert, streams in California vineyards and the mountains of Idaho and Montana.

He reveals all his secrets, including a state-by-state listing of 102 of the best rivers for smallmouth. He suggests what equipment to use, whether for bait and spin casting or fly rod, and which lures and flies work best. The book's illustrations on how to read riffles and runs take the mystery out of the challenge of "reading a stream," and there is a pleasing selection of color photographs of anglers who mastered the currents.

And it is heartening that he concludes with a thoughtful plea for conservation, unlike too many other books about fishing. Holschlag favors catch-and-release, the removal of dams, protection against invasive species, and support of efforts to combat climate change, saying, "Our wonderful smallmouth need and deserve all the support we can give them."

TOM BEVIER (June 14, 2012)

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