

Tate's Hell Remembered

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The journey began in the northern reaches and long panhandle of a forlorn Florida, along a nearly forgotten coast surrounded by tea-stained sands, lowly coastal marshes, rising tides carrying lost plunder, white tree-dwelling rodents striped black, the smell of a salted breeze, and the relentless sound of swarms of menacing insects who hunger for the taste of human flesh or blood.

Our determined party ventured forth onto the misting fog-shrouded waters of the Wakula's birth, and were initiated by the locals in their guided Jungle Cruise where we grew acquainted with dread creatures like the Snake Bird, the Sharp Toothed Gator, and Fearless Manatee. We heard the forlorn cries of the Moorhen, saw the towering majestic beauty of the grey-mossed Bald Cypress, and marveled at the silvery leap of the elusive Mullet. When the delicate rains ceased, our adventure grew more personal, with the placement of face to glass and mouth to snorkel, where some of our brave adventurers swam amongst these fishes and sharp-clawed beasts, while others gathered them in with their nets to marvel upon. We encountered the proud Florida Bluegill, the diminutive but matchless and ever radiant *Elassoma*, the Chubs with eyes and bodies striped translucent red, a mass movement of Killies displaying their proud blue finnage, and the metallic-sheened *Pteronotropis* riding the spring's wide flow. The day was filled with wonders that presented themselves to our eyes and though places were restricted, we continued forth and to hold near the species we sought for. Seminole *Fundulus*, ever elusive, the blackbanded *Percina*, nearly transparent upon the

white sands, and even the least of the killie species, *Heterandria* [Eds. note: *Heterandria* are actually livebearers, but their common name is "Least Killifish"]. Satisfied and content by the long day's task, we returned to the lodge as the light fell and sat at a bountiful meal presented in the old style upon a cloth-covered table, and after cakes and pies a laying on of hands was offered upon the leathered Old Joe, immortalized by caring craftsmen, and finally a quiet return and night's rest at our humble coastal habitat, set upon the high sands of Alligator Point's protected bay, known to many as the FSU Beach House.

Our second day began with a double rainbow stretching from horizon to horizon, arcing high across the western sky and illuminated by the rising sun and misting rain. Offering promise, our dedicated leader, the ever persistent and knowledgeable Casper, a Snorkelmiester of renown, corralled our wandering ways, and granted us the wisdom with which we would need to survive our trek into the place of legend, Tate's Hell, a land so named for a lone man's tragedy years ago. Our first venture into this wetted region of wooded swamp gave us pause...even the various plants quivered with the hunger for flesh. Surrounded by carnivorous pitcher plants of many colors and varied height and sundews set low, sticky, and glistening red, deceitfully offering their false promises, our brave band stepped beyond their lair and waded into the dark, tannic-stained waters along a rutted lane no less than a low levee for our first ichthyological encounter of the day. The banded *Enneacanthus obesus* graced us first with his patterned presence, and soon appeared in our nets a purple-sheened oddity with

anus migrating forward, and the delicate yellowed-finned *ommata*, hovering gently in its vegetated world, and the *Lepomis punctatus*, a black-specked sunfish, whose scales were stained green with the verdant fury of the lush lands surrounding us.

We continued into the wild lands of Tate's Hell, stopping often. As noon approached we paused for our mid-day provisions and to drink from the sulfur spring with nostrils pinched tight, and yet again later for our troubled leader to pause for a moment to collect his thoughts and study the scrawled renderings in order to plan our final assault into the depths of the swamp lands. Ditch after ditch, pit after borrow pit, river after creek after culvert and swamp did we wade and seine, looking for the holy fish that was our leader's quest: the *Enneacanthus gloriosus*, the majestic, yes, even glorious, Blue-Spotted Sunfish. Find him we did not, but our adventure was not in vain, for we waded alongside the alligator and plucked silver-sides of transparent green and with noses of red from the dark waters. And we, followed quickly a wide tailed Fox, mounted upon a mighty machine of steel and metal known far and wide as the Snorkelmiester's Caravan, and together we netted many wondrous fishes for further study and perusal. The waters were high that day, raised by the unseasonal rains, and the fish dispersed widely, swimming beyond our easy grasp so that our nets were not brimming full of fish as we had hoped for. But our harvests were still yet mighty, and no one left without burgeoning minnow buckets and bags filled plump and high to the brim with many wonders.

The day's light subsided with a final respite atop the assembled boardwalk set high and overlooking the vast stand of stunted and dwarfed Cypresses, both bald and of pond, and whereby amidst the mosquitoes, unseen gnats, fluttering butterflies of orange and yellow, and hummingbird moths, our rested leader did request a majestic sunset, his artist's brush stilled by the mightiest brush of all, and we were over-awed by the splendor that was displayed before us. We found a greater fish than the sunfish *gloriosus*, indeed, we were graced by the black-sided sky darter, whose very shadow darkened the sky and humbled out spirits.

Our final morning brought us to the wise sages of the Gulf Specimens Marine Lab, where we were presented with intimate displays of creatures summoned from the depths. We touched the starfish, felt the ray's skin, and observed mysterious species of unknown origin. We fed sharks the raw flesh of fish, were taught of maimed sea turtles and told of the pained piercing sting of a ray's tail and discovered that the blue crab is indeed the most vicious of all creations. A finer small marine aquarium I have never seen, and yet the day was still young.

As the sun rose higher and our skin warmed to sweat we ventured forth to Hutton's, a humble respite, barely a shack, set upon rusting wheels and yet capable of offering seafood of the very best and freshest varieties. Chunks of golden grouper, plump shrimp, cakes of crab and their soft-shelled brethren grilled and fried were the orders of the day, and a leisurely meal fit for kings was relished by all, and all were cooled by the cared placement of box fans upon our outdoor wooden tables, all courtesy of this simple roadside establishment.

It was here our tale takes a dark turn. Disappointed at the lack of serpentine presence in our journey, the ever-jubilant and without a watch to mark his time, Pierre, a person of renown enthusiasm and whose virtue may not be besmirched, asked your humble servant to accompany him in rectifying this absence. Girded with net and pole, I followed our snake hunter as he uncovered potential nests with abandon, overturning pallets and wooden conveyances without fear and full eagerness to view the coiled beast. Alas, our search was for naught, and, as returning to the rest of the party, it was here that I was felled by the cruelest of blows. A simple nail, rendered vertical by way of the wood to which it was affixed, did sorely aggrieve my foot, piercing sandal, sole, skin and flesh deep to the bone. Pierre, that noble saint, quickly brought clean towels of paper to hand then foot, and the bloodied wound was stanchd forthwith. I was brought before the local leechminder, who did apply the traditional poultices and tonics to fend off tetanic lockjaw, by the fine noble Fritz and his fair maid Mary Jo. A more patient and kind pair was never wed, and they did convey me back to our bastion upon the beach to rest my sore hackles until our final feast. The rest of our party continued their adventure, for wounds and travails must be overcome. Some ventured forth to the Lake of the Otter, and encountered the esteemed *Fundulus chrystotus*, black-flecked and rare, as well as other beautiful specimens sought after by those not of these lands. James, our errant companion from the far west lands of golden California, did succeed on his quest for the American *floridae*, after chancing an encounter with his inestimable wife Patti's extended clan, the Crums, whose emporium traded in wisdom as much as in wares. The esteemed Tom, our currencier, along with his companion and lovely wife Lanita, did journey forth upon their quest to tame the white squirrel with peanuts, fruits and photographs all the while carrying fish in buckets, with aerator in servance.


Finally, with all rejoined, we settled into our final repast, a gumbo which satisfied every palate, despite the lack of okra which would otherwise have completed the meal. We were accompanied by David, the gumbo's chef and hailing from the

nearby village of Carrabelle, a longstanding friend to our leader, separated by time and space, and yet rejoined this day by fellowship for all; and Ace, forester and custodian of the state's lands wide and to the north, and his wife whose name your humble servant cannot remember, a crime for which he most certainly will be flogged, for her wisdom and beauty enlightened us all at this evening's table. We heard tales of Casper's venturesome days, learned of ancient people's treasures, marveled at pictures of fish, snakes, crabs, and tortoises from here and lands far beyond, and finished all with a finely frozen, crystalline key lime pie served

before us.

This is a journey which will be writ large upon the waters, long remembered in memory, and the fish enjoyed for many a year in aquaria, pond and in journals with treasured renderings adorned.

Thus endeth my tale.

Your humble servant and netter of fish, Keith 

Eds. note: Please see the photos that "verify" the tale on the following pages. Thanks!

NANFA Book Review: *Cutthroat: Native Trout of the West*

Second Edition

By Patrick Trotter

Illustrated by Joseph Tomelleri

University of California Press

560 pages, 10" x 7", 108 color illustrations, 20 b/w photographs,
8 line illustrations, 18 maps, 6 tables

Review by: Tom Watson, P.O. Box 40, Milton, WA 98354
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Living as I do in the Puget Sound region of Washington State, cutthroat trout have been a part of my life for nearly 50 years. For 20 years the authoritative information source for all things cutthroat has been the first edition of *Cutthroat: Native Trout of the West*. Now Patrick Trotter has released the completely revised and updated second edition.

The first chapter provides an overview of the cutthroat as a species, how the 12 subspecies are distributed across the west, and how to distinguish them from other trout and trout-like fish. The second chapter covers cutthroat evolution and how the various subspecies ended up in their current ranges. The next 12 chapters describe the 12 subspecies that still swim in the west, followed by a chapter discussing the two extinct species.


Each subspecies chapter starts with a complete description of the fish, including chromosomal and taxonomic details. Accompanying each description is one or more illustrations by NANFA member and renowned artist Joseph Tomelleri. Following the description are sections on historical and current range, life history and ecology, current status, and what the future may hold. All of this is supported by maps, tables and other illus-

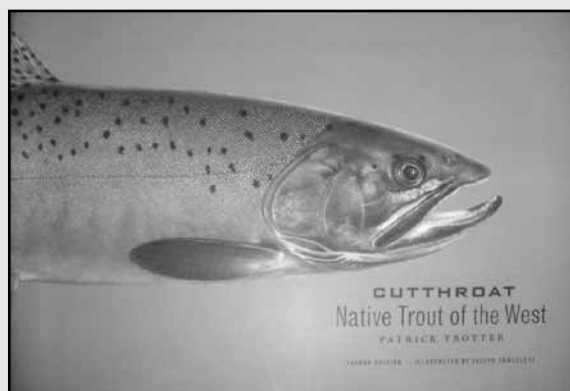
trations as well as color photographs of typical habitat.

One of the things that really stands out about this book is the extensive bibliography filling 58 pages with 75% of its entries dated after 1983. Add to this the extensive footnoting that guides you to additional detail through names and dates of data sources. This is a truly comprehensive reference work.

Patrick Trotter has a Ph.D. in chemistry and spent 30 years in chemical and biological research. He has also spent a lifetime pursuing cutthroat as a game fish. As a result he is intimately familiar with the trout and their habitat. His writing is clear and engaging, making the book a great read.

The book itself is a thing of beauty. The publishers put as much effort into the layout and design as Trotter put into its content. Joseph Tomelleri's illustrations capture the features of the fish in meticulous detail. The end result is that the book is a piece of art as well as an exhaustive reference work.

I would recommend the book to anyone with an interest in cutthroat trout both professionals and anglers or to people looking for a good read on a fishy subject. 



Day 1 Wakula Spring, the River, the Lodge & McBride Slough



Day 2 Tates Hell, the New River, Sulphur Spring & the Dwarf Cypress Boardwalk



Day 3 The Gulf Specimens Marine Lab, Huttons & the Incident

