

Issue 175, Summer 2020/2021



TROUT FISHER

New Zealand's dedicated trout fishing magazine



**MOMENTS
LAKE LYNDON
A TYPICAL OUTING**
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2 Moments

By Hannah Waghorn

6 Conservation Issues

A letter from John Kent

8 DUH!

Deep Lake Flyfishing with Peter Storey

12 NEW PRODUCTS

From ILFF, Kilwell and Manic

16 A Good Evening & Contrasting Methods

Episode 9; Stories from the Bach by The Lake, by Peter Gould

20 Braised Trout, Singapore-style

Wild to the Table with Tony Smith

24 A Typical Outing

By Les Hill

30 Keep Learning

Cruising The Mainland with Zane Mirfin

36 Avoiding BOOT PRINTS

By Tony Orman

40 Lake Lyndon

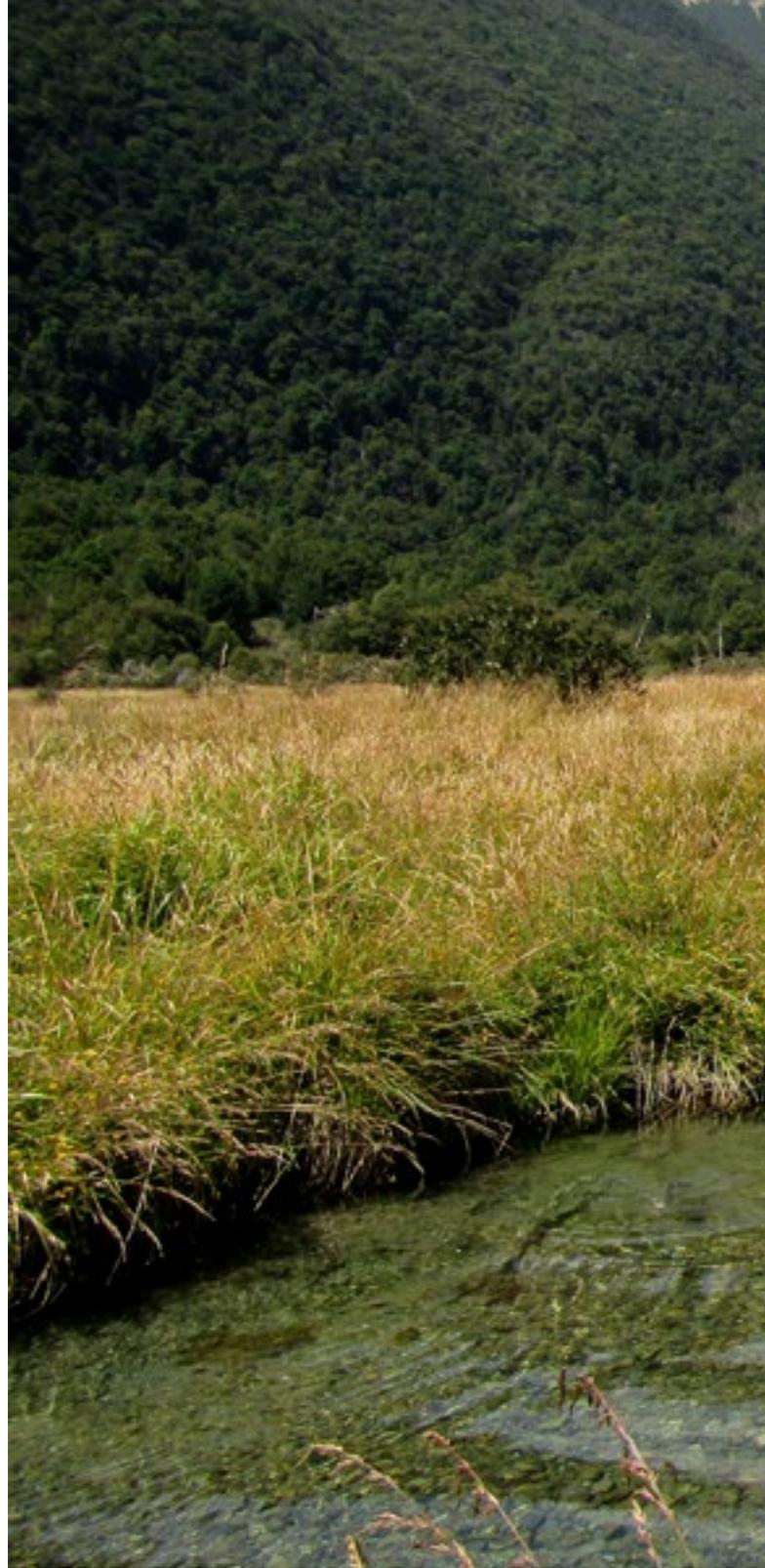
The closest High Country lake fishery to Christchurch, profiled by Nick Moody

46 Asking The Right Questions

Southern Waters with Mike Weddell

48 Troutig Vignettes

By Garrett Evans



Here

Spring Creek Magic (Zane Mirfin)

Cover

Sharing a day's fly fishing with a good mate is a great experience (Andrew Harding)



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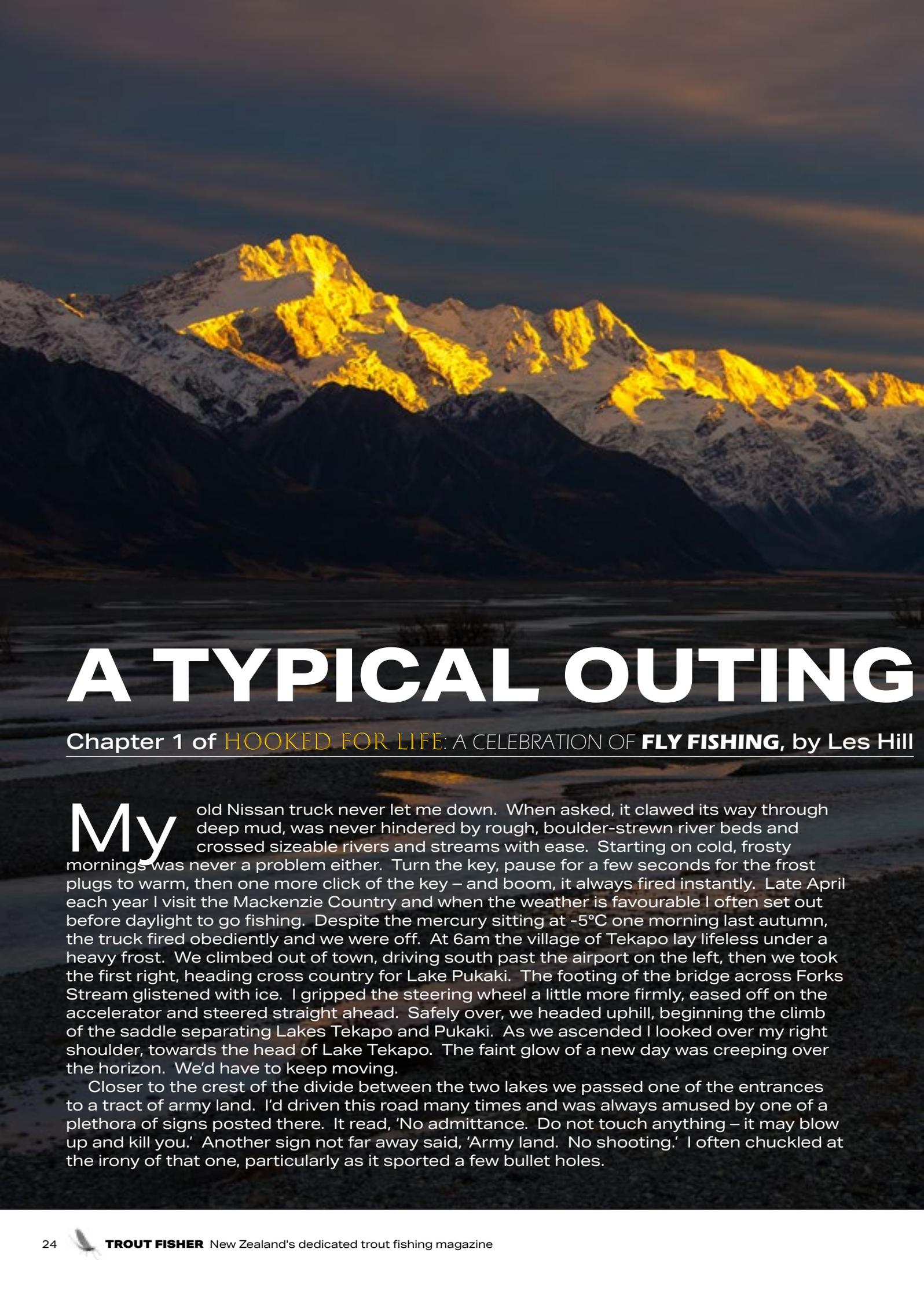
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A TYPICAL OUTING

Chapter 1 of **HOOKED FOR LIFE**: A CELEBRATION OF **FLY FISHING**, by Les Hill

My old Nissan truck never let me down. When asked, it clawed its way through deep mud, was never hindered by rough, boulder-strewn river beds and crossed sizeable rivers and streams with ease. Starting on cold, frosty mornings was never a problem either. Turn the key, pause for a few seconds for the frost plugs to warm, then one more click of the key – and boom, it always fired instantly. Late April each year I visit the Mackenzie Country and when the weather is favourable I often set out before daylight to go fishing. Despite the mercury sitting at -5°C one morning last autumn, the truck fired obediently and we were off. At 6am the village of Tekapo lay lifeless under a heavy frost. We climbed out of town, driving south past the airport on the left, then we took the first right, heading cross country for Lake Pukaki. The footing of the bridge across Forks Stream glistened with ice. I gripped the steering wheel a little more firmly, eased off on the accelerator and steered straight ahead. Safely over, we headed uphill, beginning the climb of the saddle separating Lakes Tekapo and Pukaki. As we ascended I looked over my right shoulder, towards the head of Lake Tekapo. The faint glow of a new day was creeping over the horizon. We'd have to keep moving.

Closer to the crest of the divide between the two lakes we passed one of the entrances to a tract of army land. I'd driven this road many times and was always amused by one of a plethora of signs posted there. It read, 'No admittance. Do not touch anything – it may blow up and kill you.' Another sign not far away said, 'Army land. No shooting.' I often chuckled at the irony of that one, particularly as it sported a few bullet holes.





We pushed on and soon the vague outline of Lake Pukaki came into view. The basin it occupied lay cloud free, just as we had hoped. However, on mornings like this, fog could form right around you within moments. Fingers crossed, we descended towards the lake shore then turned right, heading closer to the lake head. We stopped right on the water's edge, where the expanse of the lake and mountains beyond opened impressively. The outline of the mountains was beginning to show against a brightening sky. We dived into the back of my truck for our gear – not fishing tackle, but camera gear – cameras and tripods. These were assembled hastily ready to capture the first rays of sun on Mount Cook, one of New Zealand's finest views.

For two or three hours my fishing mate, John Cornish, and I lingered. We watched in awe as the pre-sunrise shades of blue and magenta succumbed to an orange hue, and then came the 'coup de grace' as the orange turned yellow on the eastern face of Cook. The spectacle gradually waned with sunlight spreading inexorably across the valley floor and the scene becoming awash with daylight whites.

Being fed by the silt-laden snow melt from the Tasman Glacier, the waters at the head of Lake Pukaki are frequently discoloured and any trout lurking there are rarely revealed. However, closer to the southern end of the lake, where the water's colour morphs from grey to turquoise, visibility into the water improves. Early morning light photographed, we headed that way hoping to intercept an unwary trout cruising along the edge. Fishing was now the focus.





counts down to twenty, and then strips the fly back with twitches and pauses. Dad will often out fish me in the mornings, when the fish are looking down, and then I will catch up around mid-day, when the fish are looking up for terrestrials. It takes a sinking line to get the nymphs down, but I need a floating line to fish the dries, so lately I've taken to carrying two rods as part of the friendly competition.

STREAMER

At dusk the trout come into shallow water to feed on cock-y-bullies and dragon-fly nymphs. Regular feathered lures like the Hamills Killer catch fish, but also catch the bottom. Muddler Minnows have buoyant deer-hair heads which mean they sink very slowly, staying above the weed and rocks. In a size 8 they can be deadly. We retrieve them slowly, almost waking and bulging in the surface film, until a trout intercepts the muddler, sometimes with just a gentle pluck, other times with a hard, tippet-snapping hit.

WINTER FISHING

The lake is now open year round. In winter snow frequently falls to the water's edge. Parts of the lake freeze over and people ice skate on the adjoining 'Little Lake Lyndon'. The days are shorter, and once the sun goes behind the hills it gets very cold. On the plus side, the lake is likely to be quiet and free of the strong winds and speed boats of summer.

The fish will generally be feeding on snails with their noses down in the weed beds. But even in these conditions they can still be caught by the patient angler using egg patterns, nymphs and streamers. The best fishing will be during mid-afternoon when the aquatic insects start moving. Happily this is also the most pleasant time of day for the fisherman.

