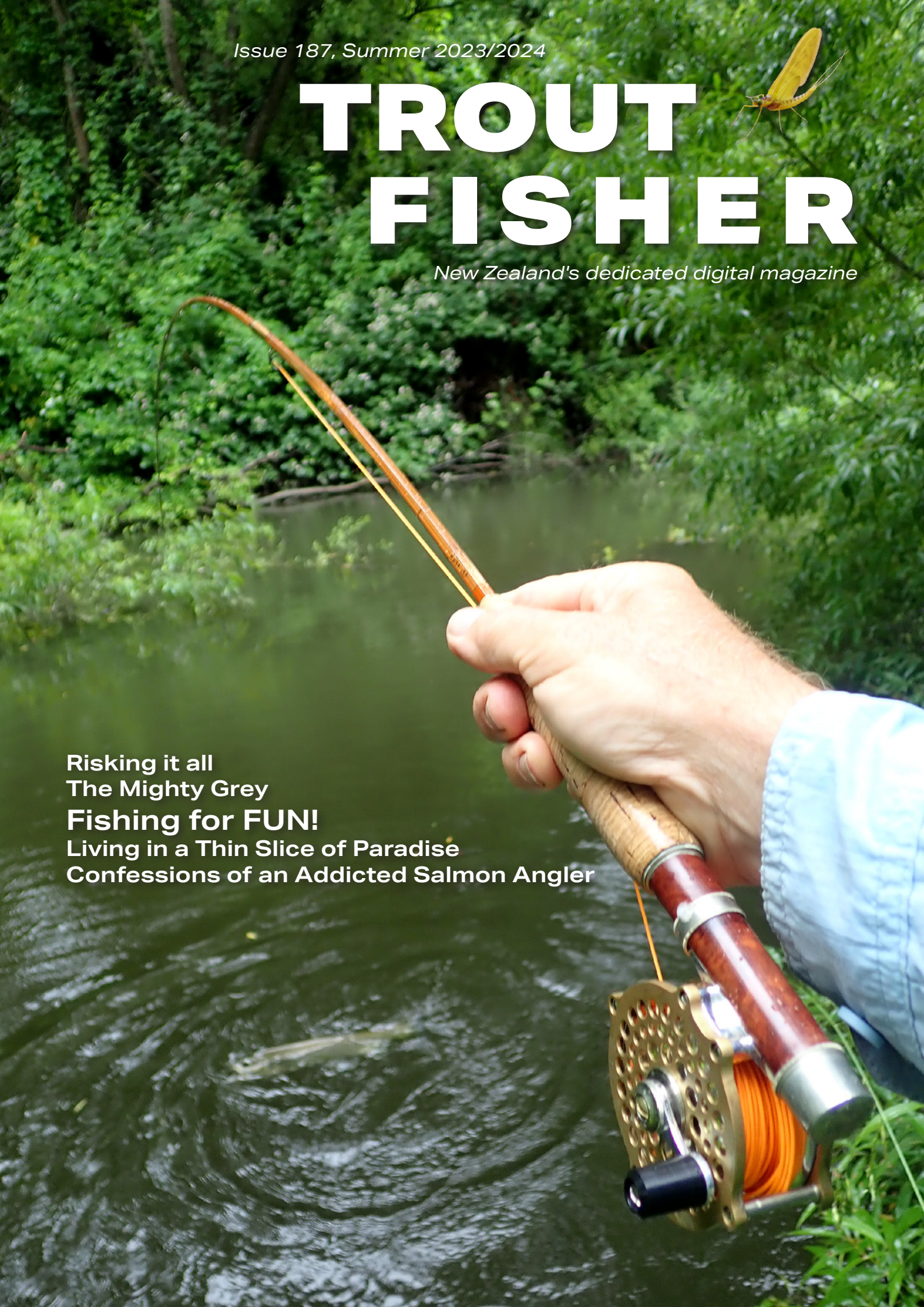


Issue 187, Summer 2023/2024

TROUT FISHER

New Zealand's dedicated digital magazine

Risking it all
The Mighty Grey
Fishing for FUN!
Living in a Thin Slice of Paradise
Confessions of an Addicted Salmon Angler



Issue 187

TROUT



FISHER

New Zealand's dedicated digital magazine

Summer 2023/2024

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Willow Grub feeders – a subtle feature of Summer fly fishing (Nick Taransky)

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An early season Lake Tarawera sunrise from the shoreline angler's perspective (Trout Fisher)

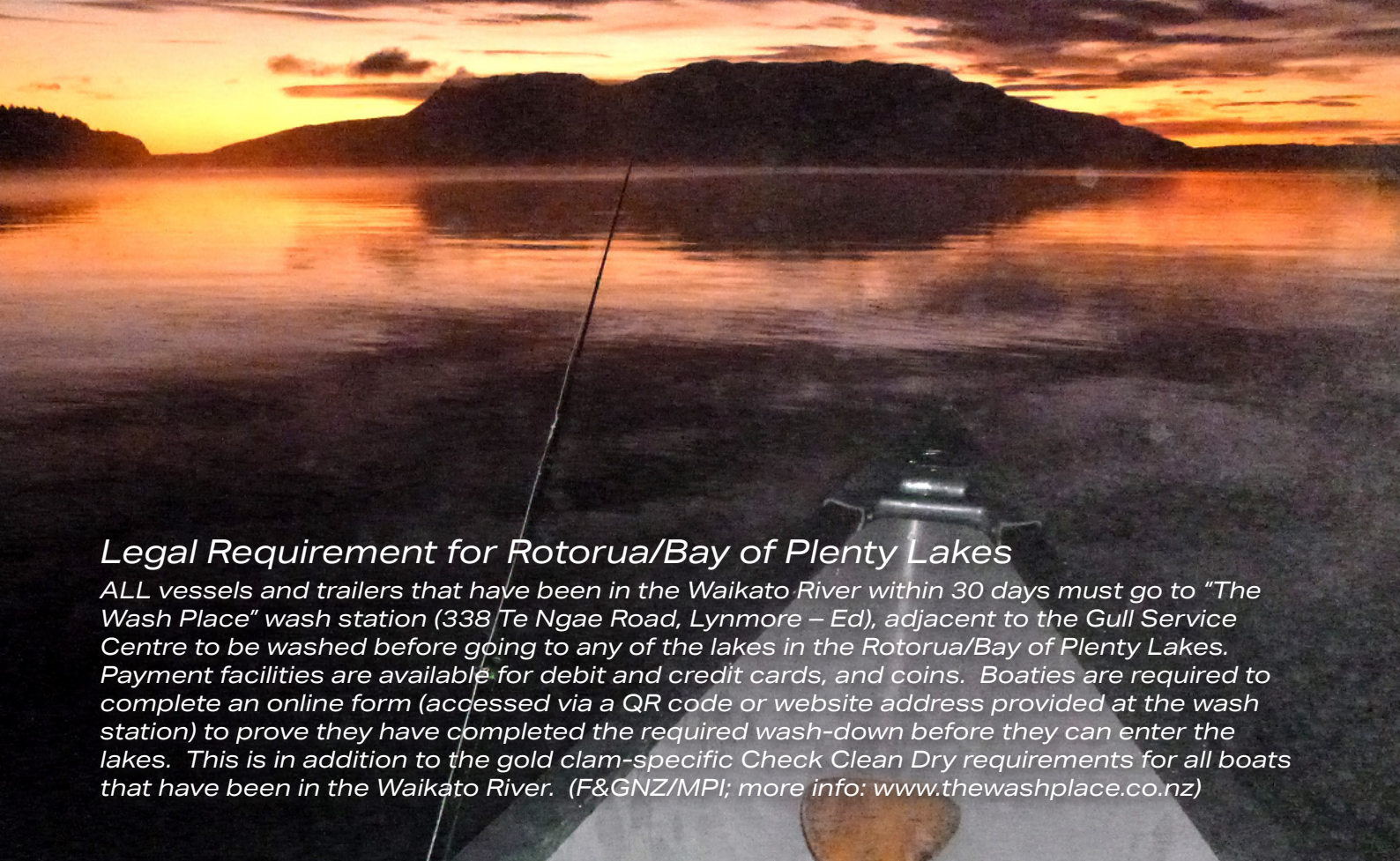
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Legal Requirement for Rotorua/Bay of Plenty Lakes

ALL vessels and trailers that have been in the Waikato River within 30 days must go to "The Wash Place" wash station (338 Te Ngae Road, Lynmore – Ed), adjacent to the Gull Service Centre to be washed before going to any of the lakes in the Rotorua/Bay of Plenty Lakes. Payment facilities are available for debit and credit cards, and coins. Boaties are required to complete an online form (accessed via a QR code or website address provided at the wash station) to prove they have completed the required wash-down before they can enter the lakes. This is in addition to the gold clam-specific Check Clean Dry requirements for all boats that have been in the Waikato River. (F&GNZ/MPI; more info: www.thewashplace.co.nz)

Apologies to those of you for whom this switch to digital-only has occurred without warning. I have been flagging the possibility for some time, but nonetheless, was hoping to put this issue out in print and see whether sufficient sales eventuated after the election to keep going (elections always deflate sales and this has been one of the worst). Recent bulk retail issues have sold miserably, however, and the Winter one especially. Combined with a substantial increase in mailing cost to put that issue out, the accumulated losses forced my hand. It was simply too risky to commit to another printed issue.

I do not see the economy improving soon either. Given the recent election result it's pretty obvious most New Zealanders have realised that we cannot keep heading the way we have for the past 200 years, or National would have achieved a clear majority. With the economy likely to stay depressed in the short term at least then, and given the negative environmental footprint of print publishing, combined with the wastage of sale-or-return retailing, the move to digital-only makes best long term sense. My intention is to keep going until it's plain this medium is viable. If it is, then I see the magazine reverting to bimonthly; if it's not, then I will close up completely – and I definitely hope that will not prove to be the case. It's been a pleasure producing this magazine over these last 32 years; a far more rewarding experience than my previous endeavour.

Meantime, there are intriguing times ahead, because kiwi trout fishers are entering new territory with this intended Ministry of Fishing & Hunting. Fish & Game have no clear picture what is involved at this stage but believe, from talks to date, the outcome could be beneficial for anglers if this new government, "walks the talk". Doubtful, given National's history over the time I have been publishing and therefore expecting it is intended to create further privatisation of our sport, I simply hope to be proven wrong.

I also hope this next government will not further diminish the freshwater resource available to support trout. The recent election suggests that if 'getting our country back on track' means freeing-up industry to turn even more of New Zealand into a mirror of its northern hemisphere counterparts, the public will not play along. The recent move by ECan over the Rakaia WCO suggests some think otherwise, however, and we need to stay vigilant.

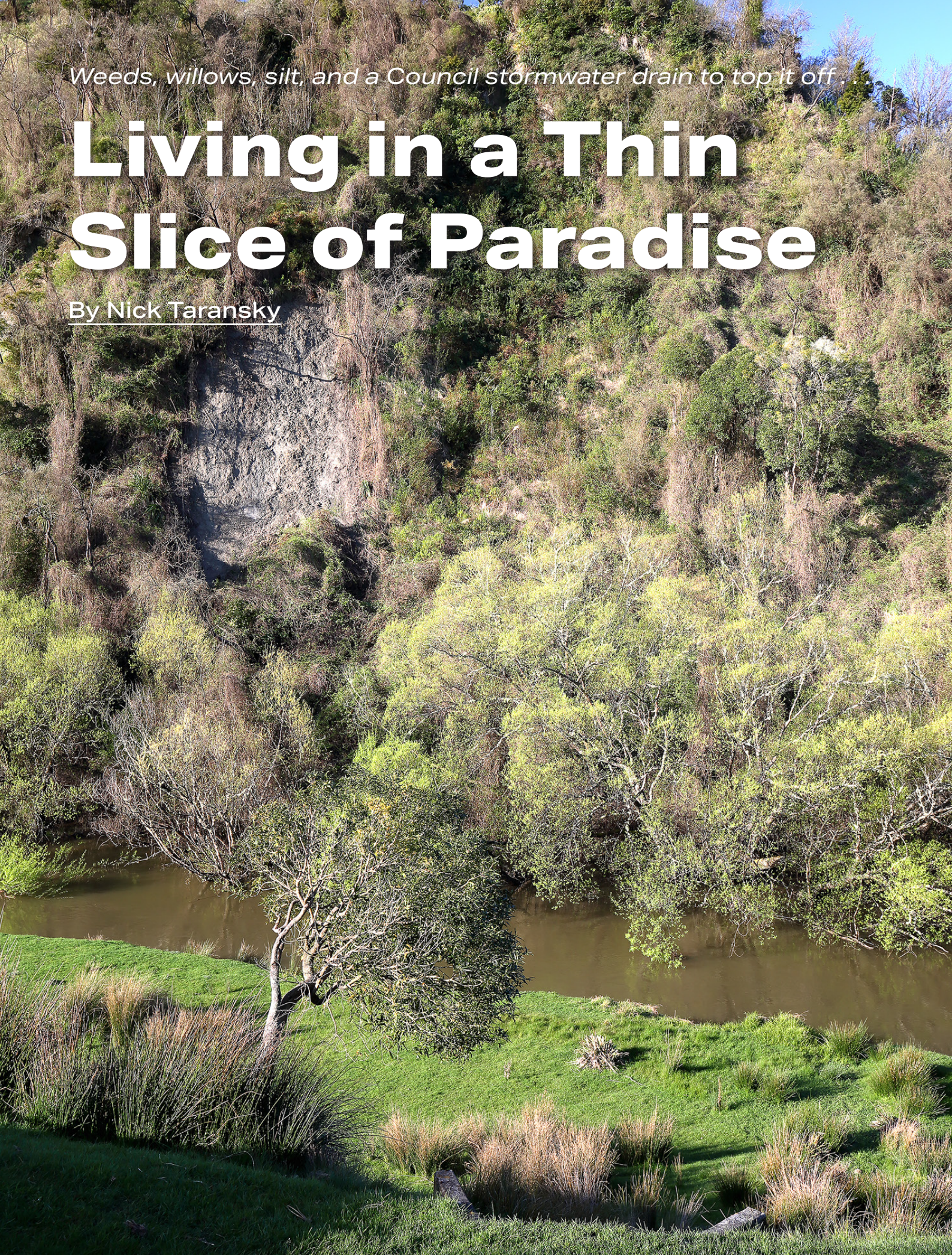
Enough business and politics. My thanks to the numerous readers who have taken the time to register support of this next phase of Trout Fisher, whatever results. Have a great Christmas and New Year and before then, in between and after, it's Summer 2023/2024, it's holiday time and there are trout waiting. Tight Lines!



Weeds, willows, silt, and a Council stormwater drain to top it off . . .

Living in a Thin Slice of Paradise

By Nick Taransky



Visiting somewhere for a holiday and living there are two vastly different propositions. I can use a fishing holiday as an obvious example. Firstly, trips are planned around the best time of season, so unfortunate weather events aside, you see conditions at their best. Secondly, because of the limited holiday timeframe, local politics, bureaucracy, and other nuisances associated with everyday life (like needing to work) don't factor into the experience. But living somewhere, you soon realise that there are four seasons (and a closed fishing season) to live through every year, plus all of the aspects of everyday life to deal with around the fishing.

This was hit home to me when I visited Kiribati for a bonefishing holiday several years ago. Talking to the young guides about life there, they stated their frustration at visiting anglers repeatedly telling them how lucky they were to be "living in paradise" on a tropical island with endless bonefish flats. As one of them told me, "for us and our children, we have no higher education path, no job prospects outside of guiding (where there is a deep pecking order for payment and growing competition), the island hospital has no doctor most of the time, there is no basic sanitation, the water is unsafe to drink, and the government has sold our commercial fishing rights to international fishing enterprises. It's basically a 2-week fishing 'paradise' if you have a home somewhere else to return to for the other 50 weeks of the year".

Of course New Zealand isn't in the same "third world" category as Kiribati (!), but living here for two years has reinforced the "holiday" vs "every day" comparison. I've lost count of the number of friends from Australia and elsewhere who've told me how lucky I am to be living in "trout fishing heaven".

Interestingly, quite a few of these people have never visited New Zealand, but have seen plenty of magazine articles and videos about the incredible fishing that obviously spans the whole "100% Pure" country. It probably comes across as being ungrateful if I ever share with them some of the challenges and problems facing anglers and the environment here.

One thing I really admire about this magazine (through our esteemed editor), is the balance that is presented between sharing a love of trout fishing, and providing a platform for raising issues that threaten it. As a relative newcomer here, and having been a "holiday" visitor for 30 years before that, I have the deepest of sympathy for Kiwi anglers who have seen fishing and the environment suffer decline over their lifetime.

Australia shares many of the same issues, including water extraction, intensive farming and forestry practises and invasive species. Tasmania, like New Zealand, at least has a recreational trout fishery of renown that offers "some" degree of political protection for trout through economic benefit of tourism.

Local Kiwi and Tassie anglers will have their own views on the plusses and minuses of this protection, with the downside of increased pressure from tourists. I can only say that as a mainland Australian trout angler, the level of trout hating among some people (including some recreational native fish anglers) can be very confronting. An extreme case was a native fish University Academic in my home state of South Australia who was an unapologetic trout hater. "Off the record", he bragged about electrofishing trout from a small stream as part of his "research", kicking them up the bank to die, in flagrant defiance of the law. A subsequent government trout review in that state decided that trout fishing was of "limited value" to a "small group" of people, and the result effectively withdrew support for trout in over 80 percent of the rivers. It's a testimony to the resilience of trout, and the people who passionately support them that they still survive there at all to this day.

As I write this, and you reading, we are looking across the Hautapu River on the small property Miri and I have bought here in the North Island. With maybe 50 metres of the property fronting the river, in keeping with the Kiribati terminology, I call it living on "a thin slice of paradise". It's interesting, and a little sobering to observe that several of the issues threatening trout and the wider environment in New Zealand seem to be present in this narrow microcosm at my back door.

Starting with the river itself, I should start with a couple of positives. It does hold a good population of brown trout, and I've observed a diversity of aquatic food sources, including mayfly, caddis, midge, corixa and bullies. In saying that the food is diverse, I would stop short of calling it prolific in food population density.

This goes to the first threat. Water quality. The river often carries a high silt load and discolours after even modest rain, particularly in Winter, and suffers algal growth in Summer. Yet 15 minutes drive upstream, it remains clear, where flax and other native vegetation borders the stream. Geographical changes along the catchment might explain some of



this, but there is a noticeable difference in grey papa discolouration from possible natural cliff erosion, and brown muddy water pouring off some bare paddocks adjacent to both the main river and tributaries. (I say "some", as there is evidence of riparian fencing and positive farming practises too).

The second obvious thing of note is the range of invasive vegetation. How much of this affects the fishery directly, and how much the environment more generally is up for debate, but at the end of the day I think that everything is connected. At the very least, for me, a large part of the fishing experience is the overall beauty and vibrancy of the environment. It's hard to look at fish alone with tunnel vision when the land around is suffering.



The sloping cliff opposite us has a few native trees clinging onto it, but these are being heavily covered by Old Man's Beard vines (*Clematis vitalba* – above with close-up of the seed head overset). Elderly neighbours tell us how sad they are to see a once beautiful native view being choked to death. I did make a feeble attempt to scale the lower part of the cliff face with secateurs and vigilant herbicide to rescue some badly affected Maire trees, but couldn't reach them because of an impenetrable wall of blackberries. I know there are efforts being made to tackle Old Man's Beard, but the cliff-loving nature of it, and the fact that the seeds spread on wind and water makes this, like many spreading weeds, an "uphill battle".

Willows are another "feature" that define the far bank of the river opposite us. Are willows a blessing or a curse? It seems to depend who you ask. In some places they are advocated for erosion control, and many anglers, myself included, play the cards that they are dealt and chase the inevitable willow grub feeders. There's no doubt that willows can afford some shade and protection for fish. But allowed to go unmanaged they can completely choke up waterways, and are very thirsty in regard to water consumption. Like many of these problems, total removal can be easier said than done. I've seen rivers in Australia turned

