

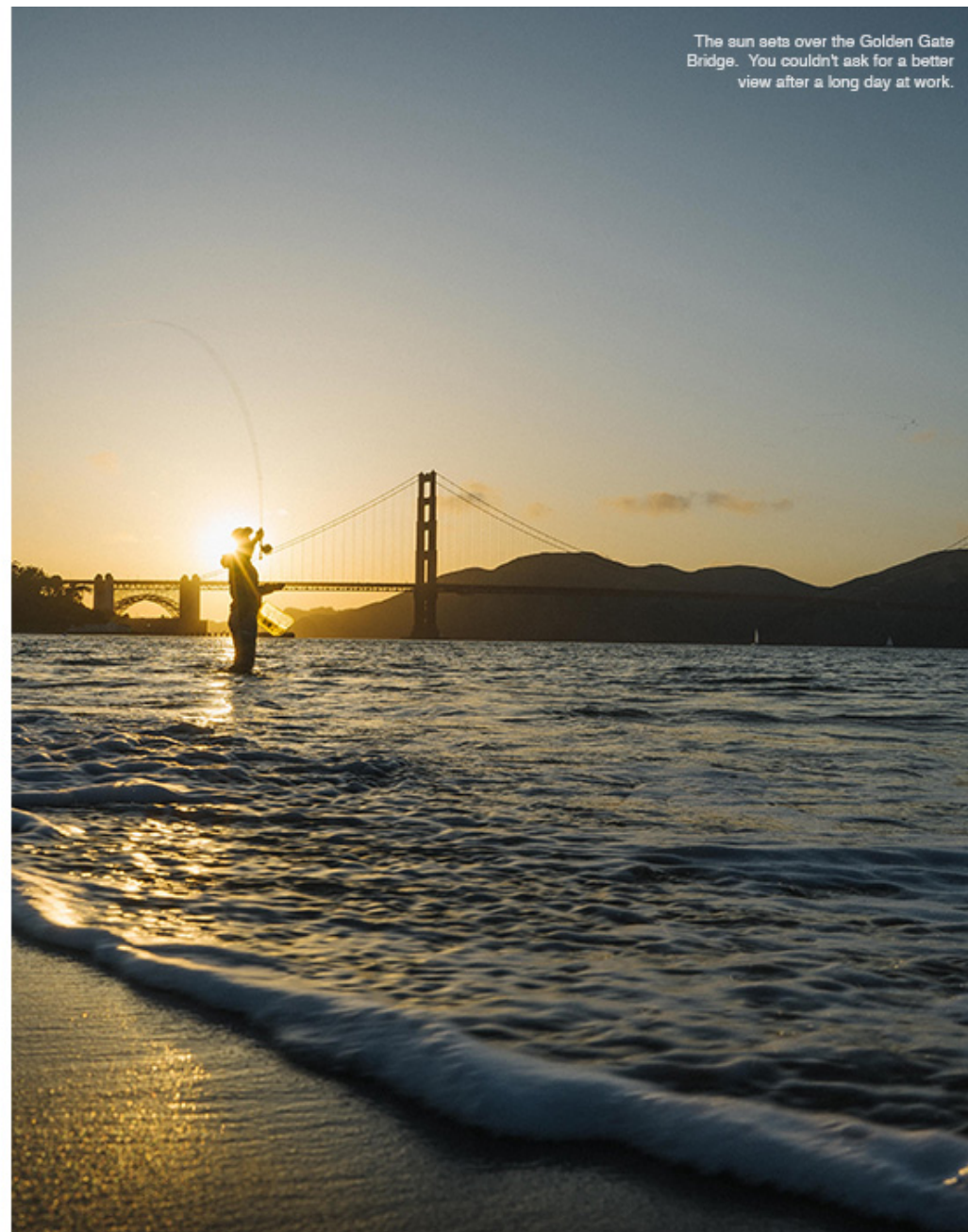
FINDING HOME WATER

@ BAETISANDSTONES



ALTHOUGH SAN FRANCISCO HAS STORIED HISTORY FILLED WITH FLY FISHING LORE, MY GUESS IS THAT IT'S NOT EXACTLY AT THE TOP OF YOUR FLY FISHING TRAVEL LIST. IT CERTAINLY WASN'T ON MINE. SO WHEN I MOVED HERE FIVE YEARS AGO, MY FLY FISHING HABIT TOOK A BACKSEAT. MOST OF MY FISHING WAS TYPICALLY RELEGATED TO WEEKEND ROAD TRIPS FILLED TRAFFIC CHOKED HIGHWAYS, CAMPING, AND COOLERS WEIGHED DOWN WITH COLD BEER.

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Top: Aaron waits for the tug of a cruising striped on a foggy morning. Left: 8wts and intermediate lines are the weapons of choice in the Bay. Opposite: A box full of flies ready for a morning at the beach.

Although San Francisco has storied history filled with fly fishing lore, my guess is that it's not exactly at the top of your fly fishing travel list. It certainly wasn't on mine. So when I moved here five years ago, my fly fishing habit took a backseat. Most of my fishing was typically relegated to weekend road trips filled with traffic choked highways, camping, and coolers weighed down with cold beer. Within a three to five hour drive, you can get access to great brown trout fishing, super productive tailwaters, steelhead fishing, spring shad on the spey rod, Pyramid Lake, and some decent largemouth bass fishing too. However, it's not quite sustainable to do weekend trips of that magnitude more than once a month. Well...not if you'd like to keep your significant other happy, maintain friendships, or foster productive career growth. Needless to say, I was in need of finding something I could consider home water.

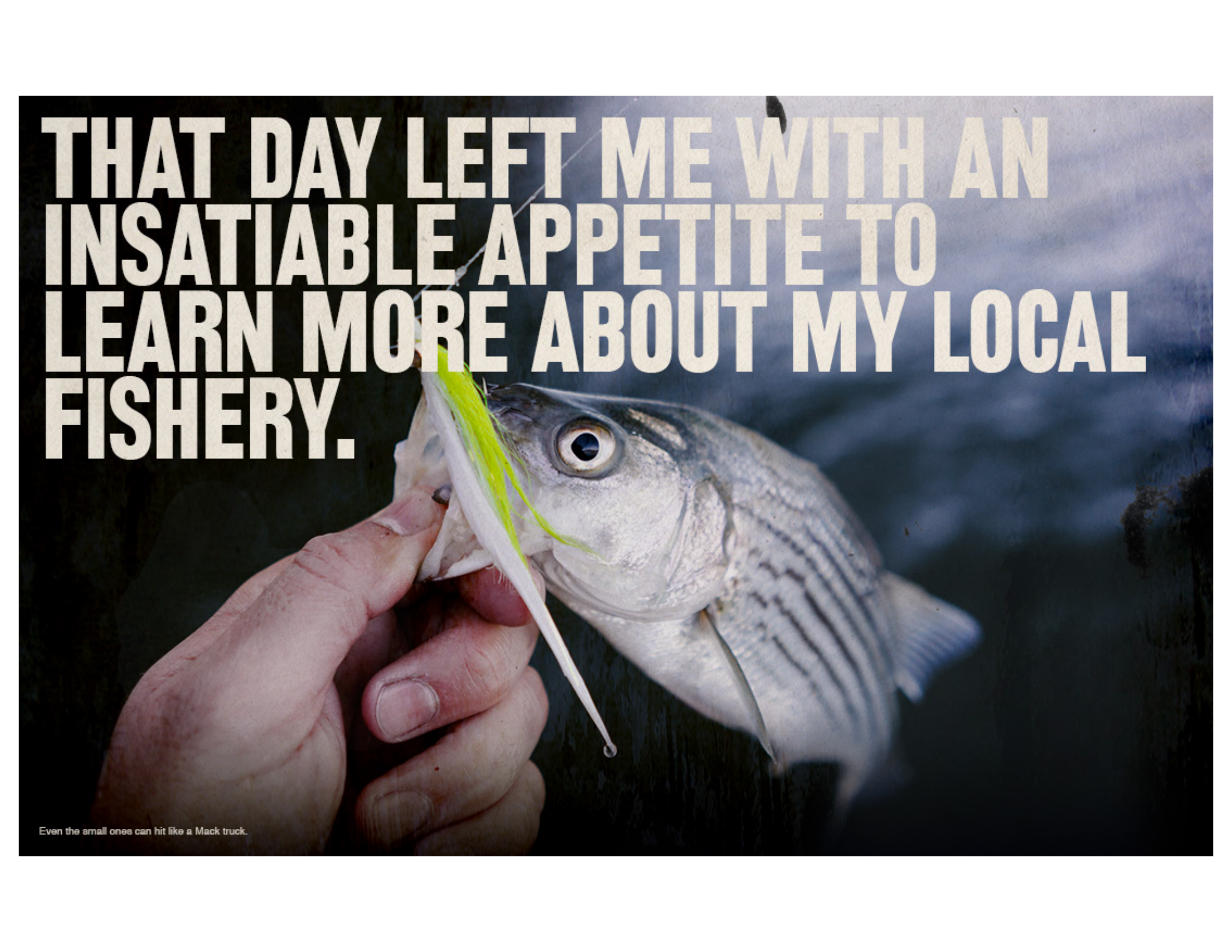
A few years ago, I was lucky enough to meet the owner of our local fly shop, George Revel of Lost Coast Outfitters. We had connected at a few of the events his shop hosts, but hadn't found the time to get on the water together. On a rainy March afternoon we went back and forth over text, with a mutual friend coordinating a morning session for Striped Bass. I'd never even thought of fishing for them so having his expertise to point me in the right direction was something I wasn't about to turn down.



Early the next morning we met up, our cars parked in a large lot usually filled with commuters. That day, however, rain pooled up in the low points of the vacant parking spots. After exchanging pleasantries and catching up, I slid my seven weight out of its rod tube and ran the fly line through the guides. I had some old mono in the 15lb range and was reassured that the fish weren't line shy so I wouldn't need to worry about it. Having no idea how to fish for stripers and with my single handed steelhead rod in tow I wasn't exactly confident in how the rainy morning would unfold.

**THAT DAY LEFT ME WITH AN
INSATIABLE APPETITE TO
LEARN MORE ABOUT MY LOCAL
FISHERY.**

Even the small ones can hit like a Mack truck.





Clockwise: Every box should have some variety. Surf Perch flies can help salvage a session when the bass aren't around. Match the hatch! The Bay and beaches are teeming with bait fish, so experiment with color and size. A calm morning on the Bay while the hung over millennials contemplate waiting in line for brunch in the City. Opposite: Arron has a sixth sense for these fish. Here's a solid one he found while searching out a new spot.



I grabbed a handful of clousers from my box and we walked down the local bike path towards a spot that would likely be holding some fish. We fished for a few hours in the pouring rain. Water began running down the inside of my jacket sleeve and down the back of my neck. It wasn't all bad though, my thumb had been thoroughly shredded from lipping bass all morning. The three of us couldn't help but smile as we walked back to our cars reminiscing about the violent takes that had nearly ripped rods out of our hands and hard fighting fish we'd brought to hand.

That day left me with an insatiable appetite to learn more about my local fishery. The three of us landed nearly 30 fish in that first session. Eager to repeat the action, my next half dozen trips to our local waters resulted in nothing but a family sized serving of

humble pie. It was clear that I didn't know enough about the fishery, the habitat the fish preferred, or the migratory behavior of my new found quarry. These were proving to be more difficult to figure out than I had initially thought.

Still hopeful and excited to explore the area, I spent hours upon hours searching for fish. I fished near my house in the city, traveled around the bay to find new spots, and fished the rough waters of Ocean Beach in a wetsuit so I didn't risk filling my waders and being swept out to sea. There was some success in the following months, but the fishing wasn't what I'd consider consistent. The striper's migration patterns were still a mystery to me and figuring out how the fish reacted to the tides was like trying to figure out a rubix cube. One day they'd be putting on the feedbag and the next I'd be left wondering if there were any fish left in the Bay.



The deeper I dug into the local striper scene, the more I learned though. With that said, there are some true experts plying the waters of the Bay and adjacent Delta. Sun baked guides, secretive locals, and spin fisherman that have 15 spots for every one that I've figured out. I could probably spend the next decade throwing myself into this fishery and still be learning new techniques, spots, and seasonal migration patterns.

I still look for every opportunity I can to get out of The City for a weekend on one of Northern California's legendary watersheds. It's not like I live in Jackson, Fernie, or Missoula, surrounded by world

class fishing. However, I've found my little slice of home water here in San Francisco.

With spring only a few months away, you can bet I'll be spending some quality time behind the vise, spinning striper flies in between steelhead trips. This year I'm hoping to find one of those big 20lb fish out on the beaches of San Francisco. Next time you're in the Bay Area, stop by Lost Coast Outfitters for some local knowledge and a handful of flies. Who knows, you just might run into one of those bruttes too!

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Opposite: The owner of Lost Coast Outfitters (George Revel) steps away from the shop for a quick striper session. Top: Emily Gribble, Patagonia Sales Rep, sticks a nice halibut on the fly. Needless to say she was happy about it! Below: Keep 'em Wet doesn't apply to non-native fish that love to eat steelhead and salmon fry. Fish tacos anyone?

