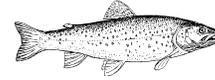
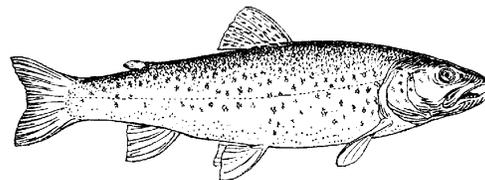
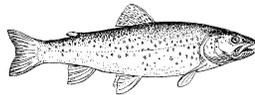
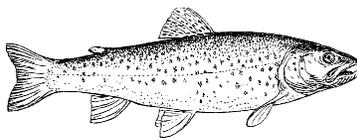


A



FISHERMAN'S LIBRARY

Honoring the Gift of
Angling Books from
Robert A. DeVilbiss '33



CHAPIN LIBRARY · WILLIAMS COLLEGE

SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 1995



A Fisherman's Library



ANGLING – that is, fishing with a rod, line, and hook – is an ancient activity. How ancient, scholars may argue, but it dates from at least 2000 B.C., as shown by Egyptian artifacts of the period.

The literature of angling is less old, though it too is of remarkable antiquity. The practice is mentioned in the Old Testament, and in Homer. The first complete treatise on fishing is the *Halieutica* (ca. 169 A.D.) by the Greek poet Oppian. In English, the bibliography of angling has a history of almost five hundred years, beginning with the *Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle* by Dame Juliana Berners in the *Boke of St. Albans* (1496).

Since the 15th century, and especially since 1600, works about fish and fishing have appeared in an unceasing flood. The British writer Arthur Ransome (1884–1967) offered an explanation of this phenomenon when he described fishermen (like himself) who spend their summers fishing and their winters thinking about it. The “dimple of a trout on a smooth run between the weed-beds,” the quickening of the heart “at the stir of a salmon not leaping into the air but rising modestly and quietly, sure sign of a taking fish,” watching a float, “long idle by the waterlilies, twitch suddenly to life” – with such emotions to recollect in tranquility, “what wonder is it that more good books have been written about fishing than about any other sport? What wonder that fishermen, when they cannot fish, enjoy reading those good books?”

Robert A. DeVilbiss, Williams College Class of 1933, has read and collected many such books, and in 1994–5 kindly donated his angling collection to his alma mater. These formed the nucleus of a Sporting Books Collection in the Chapin Library, which we extend also to hunting, mountaineering, and other outdoor activities as well as fishing. We have drawn chiefly from this collection in mounting the present exhibition, *A Fisherman's Library*.

We also show a few books acquired earlier by the Chapin Library, most of them gifts from other donors. The DeVilbiss books nicely complement these holdings – naturally so. Just as the Chapin Library documents civilization in all of its aspects, so any collection of angling books is itself a microcosm of civilization, a blend of literature and history, science and art. Here is the ballet of the cast line, the engineering of the cunning lure, the portraiture of the dressed fly; here is the fisherman as biologist, conservationist, travel-writer, philosopher – and cook (see Izaak Walton's recipe for roasted pike with herbs).

We are very pleased to have these books in the Chapin Library, and to display them as a tribute to the generosity of Bob DeVilbiss.

Wayne G. Hammond
Assistant Chapin Librarian
September 1995

Maximilian I, 1459–1519

Marx Treitz-Saurwein, d. 1527

Der Weiss Kunig: eine Erzeblung von den

Thaten Kaiser Maximilian des Ersten

Vienna: Joseph Kurzböckens, 1775

Although not printed until 1775, the woodcuts for *Der Weiss Kunig* (“The White King”) were prepared in 1514–16. The book traces the life and reign of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I in the form of a romance, and in its early pages shows the disciplines learned by the young ruler – including the use of rod and line, “der Vischerey.”

Gift of Alfred C. Chapin, Class of 1869

Jan Dubravius, ca. 1486–1533

A New Booke of Good Husbandry

London: William White, 1599

John Taverner

Certaine Experiments Concerning Fish and Fruite

London: Printed for William Ponsonby, 1600

Dubravius and Taverner, like many others to the present day, were interested in the artificial propagation of fish, chiefly carp and pike but also eels. Dubravius is concerned primarily with methods of constructing a fish-pond, Taverner to its stocking and care. But Taverner also includes an acute observation of fish feeding on flies, and Dubravius a “fish story,” about a frog and a pike, which Walton repeats almost verbatim in *The Compleat Angler*.

Gift of Alfred C. Chapin, Class of 1869

Izaak Walton, 1593–1683

The Compleat Angler, or The Contemplative Man’s Recreation

London: Printed by T. Maxey for Richard Marriot, 1653

First edition

The Compleat Angler

Third edition, much enlarged

London: Printed by J.G. for Richard Marriot, 1661

The Universal Angler: Made So, by Three Books of Fishing

London: Printed for Richard Marriott, 1676

The Compleat Angler

Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909

No. 69 of 450 copies, designed by Bruce Rogers

The Compleat Angler

Introduction by Bliss Perry

Decorations by W.A. Dwiggins

Boston: C.E. Goodspeed, 1928

Here are five of the innumerable editions of the most famous book devoted to fishing. The Chapin Library is fortunate to own every edition of *The Compleat Angler* published during its author’s lifetime, and to have his signature in the 1653 first edition on an inserted leaf.

The original text is in the form of a dialogue, chiefly between a fisherman (Piscator) and a hunter (Viator, later Venator). The characters discuss the pleasures and methods of angling, with interludes of poetry and song. Walton considerably enlarged *The Compleat Angler* beginning with the second edition (1655). The fifth edition (1676) was published together with a continuation by Charles Cotton (1630–1687) and a separate work by Colonel Robert Venables (1612?–1687), under the title *The Universal Angler*. In some editions, the treble and bass parts of the “Anglers Song” are printed in opposite directions on facing pages, so that the singers can share the music while holding the book between them.

All but the last are the gift of Alfred C. Chapin, Class of 1869; the 1928 edition is the gift of Charles A. Wimpfheimer, Class of 1949

George M. Kelson

*The Salmon Fly: How to Dress It and
How to Use It*

London: Published by the Author, 1895

The Salmon Fly is a milestone in the literature of salmon fishing. Kelson was an artist at dressing salmon flies, and although his method is laborious and his flies sometimes overly intricate, his account of their creation is of lasting value to those with an interest in the process. His book, weighing in at about four pounds, is heavy for a *vade mecum* (as he describes it) but is as comprehensive as one could wish. It includes, for example, several pages wholly devoted to silkworm gut (the predecessor of nylon for lines).

Gift of Robert A. DeVilbiss, Class of 1933

Alfred Ronalds

The Fly-fisher's Entomology

Fifth edition, revised

London: Longman, Brown, Green,
and Longmans, 1856

Eleven editions of Ronalds' book were published from 1836 to 1913. With the fifth edition, he completed the process of linking the artificial flies he describes with both their vernacular names and the scientific classification of their naturals. Ronalds was a profound student of trout stream insects, and his book was important in forming the school of thought that artificial flies must resemble as closely as possible their counterparts in nature.

Gift of Robert A. DeVilbiss, Class of 1933

W. C. Stewart

*The Practical Angler, or, The Art of Trout-Fishing
More Particularly Applied to Clear Water*

Fifth edition, revised and enlarged

Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1867

H. Cholmondeley-Pennell, 1837-1915

*Fly-fishing and Worm-fishing for Salmon, Trout
and Grayling*

London: George Routledge and Sons, [ca. 1865]

Stating that "no method of angling can imitate the hovering flight of an insect along the surface of the water, now just touching it, then flying a short distance, and so on," Stewart advocated a wet-fly technique, using lightly dressed flies in close imitation of natural insects. He is also noted for his recommendation that trout be fished upstream, from which direction the fisherman is less easily seen by the fish.

Cholmondeley-Pennell dismissed Stewart's upstream method, and also argued long and hard against a multitude of artificial flies. He maintained that only six typical flies are needed: three for salmon and three for trout and grayling. All that the fish can distinguish, he said (wrongly), are general shape, general color, and size. Stewart and Cholmondeley-Pennell became such bitter critics of each other that Ransome in *Fishing* imagines them, long dead, on the Styx, one fishing upstream and one down, passing each other without speaking.

Gift of Robert A. DeVilbiss, Class of 1933

Frederic M. Halford, 1844-1914

Dry-fly Fishing in Theory and Practice

London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle,
& Rivington, 1889

The Dry-fly Man's Handbook

London: George Routledge & Sons, 1913

Martin E. Mosely

The Dry-Fly Fisherman's Entomology:

Being a Supplement to Frederic M. Halford's

The Dry-fly Man's Handbook

London: George Routledge and Sons; New York:
E.P. Dutton, 1921

The idea that the artificial fly must be fished "wet" to be effective – that is, offered to the fish under the water – persisted until the mid-19th century. "Dry" fly fishing, in which the fly is cast so as to float on the surface of the water, was first properly described by the British writer G.P.R. Pulman. But it was Frederic M. Halford who more than any other authority established the cult of the dry fly, beginning in 1886. Dry-fly fishing, he maintained, is far more exciting, and requires more skill, than fishing "wet."

The two books by Halford shown here, together with Mosely's supplement, illustrate the close connection of the natural sciences to fly fishing and how sophisticated the sport can be. The angler who absorbs a knowledge of entomology such as that displayed in Mosely's little book, and who obeys Halford's suggestion to frequently dissect fish to study their feeding habits, deserves an academic degree as well as a full creel.

Gift of Robert A. DeVilbiss, Class of 1933

G.E.M. Skues, 1858–1949

Nymph Fishing for Chalk Stream Trout
London: Adam & Charles Black, 1939

The popularity of fishing with the dry fly became so great that Skues could write, by 1939, of "the old art of wet-fly fishing as practised by our forebears." In fact, that art was then, and is still, being practiced, and can be successful at times when the dry fly is not. Skues developed another method, auxiliary to the dry fly, called nymph fishing, which presents to fish an artificial fly resembling the insect in its pupa state.

Gift of Robert A. DeVilbiss, Class of 1933

J.W. Dunne, 1875–1949

Sunshine and the Dry Fly
London: A. & C. Black, 1924

Sunshine and the Dry Fly is one of the most fascinating and poetic of fishing books. It tells first of a happy accident which occurred while Dunne was tying an artificial May-fly with synthetic silk: he oiled the body and it turned miraculously translucent. Mated to a hook painted white, the fly was a remarkably close and effective imitation of the delicate natural insect. Dunne describes the construction of this fly, and of others of his devising. But his book is most important for its attention to color and light in the use of flies, and to the appearance of flies from the fish's point of view.

Gift of Robert A. DeVilbiss, Class of 1933

Thomas Hariot, 1560–1621

Admiranda Narratio Fida Tamen, de Commodis et Incolarum Ritibus Virginiae
Frankfurt: Theodore DeBry, 1590

The abundance of life in Virginian waters and the several methods of catching fish practiced by the Indians of 16th-century Virginia are here illustrated by the English traveller John White.

Gift of Alfred C. Chapin, Class of 1869

Thaddeus Norris, 1811–1877

The American Angler's Book: Embracing the Natural History of Sporting Fish, and the Art of Taking Them
New edition
Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1864

Theodatus Garlick, 1805–1884

A Treatise on the Artificial Propagation of Fish
New York: A.O. Moore, 1858

Angling books began to appear comparatively late in America. The first American edition of *The Compleat Angler* was not published until 1847. One of the best of the early American writers on angling was Thaddeus Norris, whose *American Angler's Book* we show. Norris was an expert fishing craftsman – his rods won a first prize at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876. He also crafted appealing prose.

Another important American writer of the period was Theodatus Garlick, a Cleveland, Ohio surgeon and a pioneer in fish culture in the United States. Garlick's *Treatise* describes American fishes best suited for artificial propagation, the methods of doing so, and the most appropriate water for each kind of fish. He also includes occasional angling tips.

Gift of Robert A. DeVilbiss, Class of 1933

Charles Hallock, 1834–1917

The Fishing Tourist: Angler's Guide and Reference Book
New York: Harper & Brothers, 1873

Hallock contrarily notes in his preface that “fly-fishing as a fine art has been expatiated upon till it has become a worn-out leaf in books. I forbear to delegate myself instructor in a branch of study which can be thoroughly mastered only by diligent and intelligent practice.” Instead of another work on method, Hallock wrote a guidebook for the travelling angler, telling where to go in America to find salmon and trout, and how to get there.

His range is wide, from Labrador to Puget Sound, and so were his sales. Wetzel, in his *American Angling Books*, notes that Hallock's account of the Michigan Grayling led to that fish becoming so popular that it was almost exterminated by over-fishing within ten years.

Gift of Robert A. DeVilbiss, Class of 1933

Charles F. Orvis & A. Nelson Cheney, compilers
Fishing with the Fly: Sketches by Lovers of the Art
Troy, N.Y.: H.B. Nims, 1885

Mary Orvis Marbury
Favorite Flies and Their Histories
Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1892

Fishing with the Fly is a compilation of articles by some of the best American angling writers of the late 19th century, among them Charles Hallock, Henry P. Wells, and R.B. Roosevelt. It also includes color reproductions of nearly 150 trout, salmon, and bass flies. The Orvis name is still well-known as the provider of fine rods and other equipment for anglers.

Mary Orvis Marbury, the daughter of Charles F. Orvis, was not herself an angler but was an expert fly-tier with a wide knowledge of artificial flies as required by American waters. Her *Favorite Flies and Their Histories* is an invaluable compilation of color plates, detailed descriptions, accounts of the use of various flies, and historical notes.

Gift of Robert A. DeVilbiss, Class of 1933

Louis Rhead, 1857–1926

The Book of Fish and Fishing
Illustrated by the author
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908

Louis Rhead was a dedicated angler as well as a noted artist and illustrator. His *American Trout Stream Insects* (1916) was the first American work devoted to that subject. His dedication to the sport is well-illustrated by the cause of his death: a heart attack, suffered after removing a turtle which was threatening his fish pond.

Also shown is a copy of Rhead's personal angling bookplate.

Library purchase, 1982 (book)
Gift of Ruth Mary Sabin (bookplate)

Edward R. Hewitt, 1866–1957

Secrets of the Salmon
Second edition
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925
Inscribed by the author to Robert A. DeVilbiss

George M.L. La Branche, b. 1875
The Salmon and the Dry Fly
Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924
No. 636 of 775 copies

Hewitt's *Secrets of the Salmon* has been credited more than any other book with influencing fishermen to take up the dry fly for salmon. However, he also discusses wet- and nymph-fly methods. The author approaches his subject with scientific care, but writes in a conversational style. Like Dunne in *Sunshine and the Dry Fly*, Hewitt is much concerned with the fish's point of view, and with the effects of light on fly and leader.

LaBranche's treatise is especially worthwhile for its long Chapter 4, which describes how to make a curved cast.

Gift of Robert A. DeVilbiss, Class of 1933

John Alden Knight, 1890–1966

The Modern Angler: Including the Solunar Theory
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936

The Modern Angler is a good general book on fly fishing, but is particularly notable for Knight's explanation of his *Solunar* theory. He argues that just as the sun and moon influence the tides and the behavior of fish in salt water, so they also affect, in a predictable way, the feeding habits of fresh-water fish. Knight also published annual Solunar tables.

Gift of Robert A. DeVilbiss, Class of 1933

Preston J. Jennings

A Book of Trout Flies: Containing a List of the Most Important American Stream Insects & Their Imitations

Illustrated by Alma W. Froderstrom
New York: Derrydale Press, 1935
No. 715 of 850 copies

Herman T. Spieth, in his foreword to Jennings' *Book of Trout Flies*, credits the author as "the first American writer . . . to make a thorough, systematic effort to correlate the artificial flies with the particular natural flies that inhabit the American streams." Of course Jennings follows in the footsteps, and acknowledges the work, of predecessors such as Ronalds, Mosely, Rhead, and Marbury. His book is highly regarded, though limited in its study to insects of the eastern United States, specifically the trout streams of the Catskills and the Adirondacks.

Gift of Robert A. DeVilbiss, Class of 1933

The Anglers' Club of New York

Henry Ingraham, b. 1878

American Trout Streams: A Discussion of the Problems Confronting Anglers in the Preservation, Management and Rehabilitation of American Trout Streams

New York: Anglers' Club of New York, 1926
No. 23 of 150 copies, signed by the author

Eugene V. Connett 3rd, b. 1891

Magic Hours: Wherein We Cast a Fly Here & There as We Wade along Together
New York: Privately Printed by the Author for the Anglers' Club of New York, 1927
No. 31 of 100 copies, printed by The Derrydale Press

Edgar Burke, b. 1890

American Dry Flies and How to Tie Them
New York: Anglers' Club of New York, 1931
One of 500 copies, printed by The Derrydale Press

Richard Carley Hunt, b. 1886

Salmon in Low Water
Illustrations after watercolors by Dr. Edgar Burke
New York: Anglers' Club of New York, 1950
No. 10 of 500 copies, printed by Peter Beilenson
Inscribed by the author to Robert A. DeVilbiss, 1950

"Sparse Grey Hackle" (Alfred W. Miller), b. 1892

Fishless Days
Illustrated by Charles DeFeo
New York: Anglers' Club of New York, 1954
One of 591 copies, printed by Peter Beilenson
Inscribed by the author to Robert A. DeVilbiss

The DeVilbiss gift includes a complete set of the books published by The Anglers' Club of New York, from *Geological Ancestors of the Brook Trout* by John D. Quackenbos (1916) to *Sparse Grey Hackle: His Life, His Stories, and His Angling Memories*, edited by Austin M. Francis (1993). Five of the ten intervening titles are shown here. Mr. DeVilbiss himself had a hand in shepherding some of the Anglers' Club books through the press. They are all handsome as well as literate productions, the work of fine printing craftsmen such as Eugene V. Connett 3rd, Peter Beilenson, and W. Thomas Taylor. Henry Ingraham's *American Trout Streams* is especially notable for its chapters on stream ecology and conservation. Connett's *Magic Hours* is the first work to bear the imprint of The Derrydale Press, the renowned publisher of sporting books.

Gift of Robert A. DeVilbiss, Class of 1933

Herbert Hoover, 1874–1964

A Remedy for Disappearing Game Fishes
Woodcuts by Harry Cimino
New York: Huntington Press, 1930
No. 584 of 990 copies

Herbert Hoover, former President of the United States, was also twice president of the Izaak Walton League of America. At his second inauguration in the latter office, he declared that Americans have a right to fish, but that America's game fishes were disappearing, partly from overfishing, and partly due to destruction of habitat. Hoover recommended the establishment of more game-fish hatcheries, the protection of unpolluted waters, and the recovery of those waters already tainted.

Gift of Robert A. DeVilbiss, Class of 1933

Henry P. Wells, 1842–1904

*Fly-rods and Fly-tackle: Suggestions as to
Their Manufacture and Use*
Revised and enlarged edition
New York: Harper & Brothers, 1901

E.F. Payne Rod Co.

Catalogue
Highland Mills, N.Y., [1952?]
Engraving by Sidney Alabaster

A child with a cheap bamboo pole and a bent pin can catch fish. But the serious angler investigates the best tackle, and never tires of experimenting with new rods, reels, lines, and flies. The literature shown here is only a small part of the vast body of writings on angling equipment.

Wells is noted for his chapter on rod-making in *Fly-rods and Fly-tackle*, and for having advocated a lighter fly-fishing rod (adopted in America) compared to heavier English gear.

Gift of Robert A. DeVilbiss, Class of 1933

References

American Fishing Books: A Bibliography from the Earliest Times up to 1948, Together with a History of Angling and Angling Literature in America by Charles M. Wetzel. Newark, Del.: Privately Printed by the Author, 1950.

Angling in America: Its Early History and Literature by Charles Eliot Goodspeed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939.

Fishing by Arthur Ransome. London: National Book League, 1955. The essay portion of this work is reprinted, with revisions, as "A Library of Fishing Books" in Ransome's collection *Mainly about Fishing* (London: A. & C. Black, 1959).

Fishing from the Earliest Times by William Radcliffe. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1921.

Fresh-water Angling: Fifty Books and Other Material Tracing Its Development. Text by Carl Otto v. Kienbusch. Catalogue of an exhibition in the Princeton University Library, May–June 1946.



The drawings in this handlist and on the exhibition labels are by Edmund H. New, from Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1897).