



# A WORLD APART

by Amanda C. Mitchell / photos by Tom Roshkind

## Cordillera fishermen explore the Rocky Mountains from the tranquility of the river floor

**I**T IS A QUINTESSENTIAL SUMMER AFTERNOON in the Colorado Rockies, and the heat of the day is tempered by late-afternoon mountain breezes.

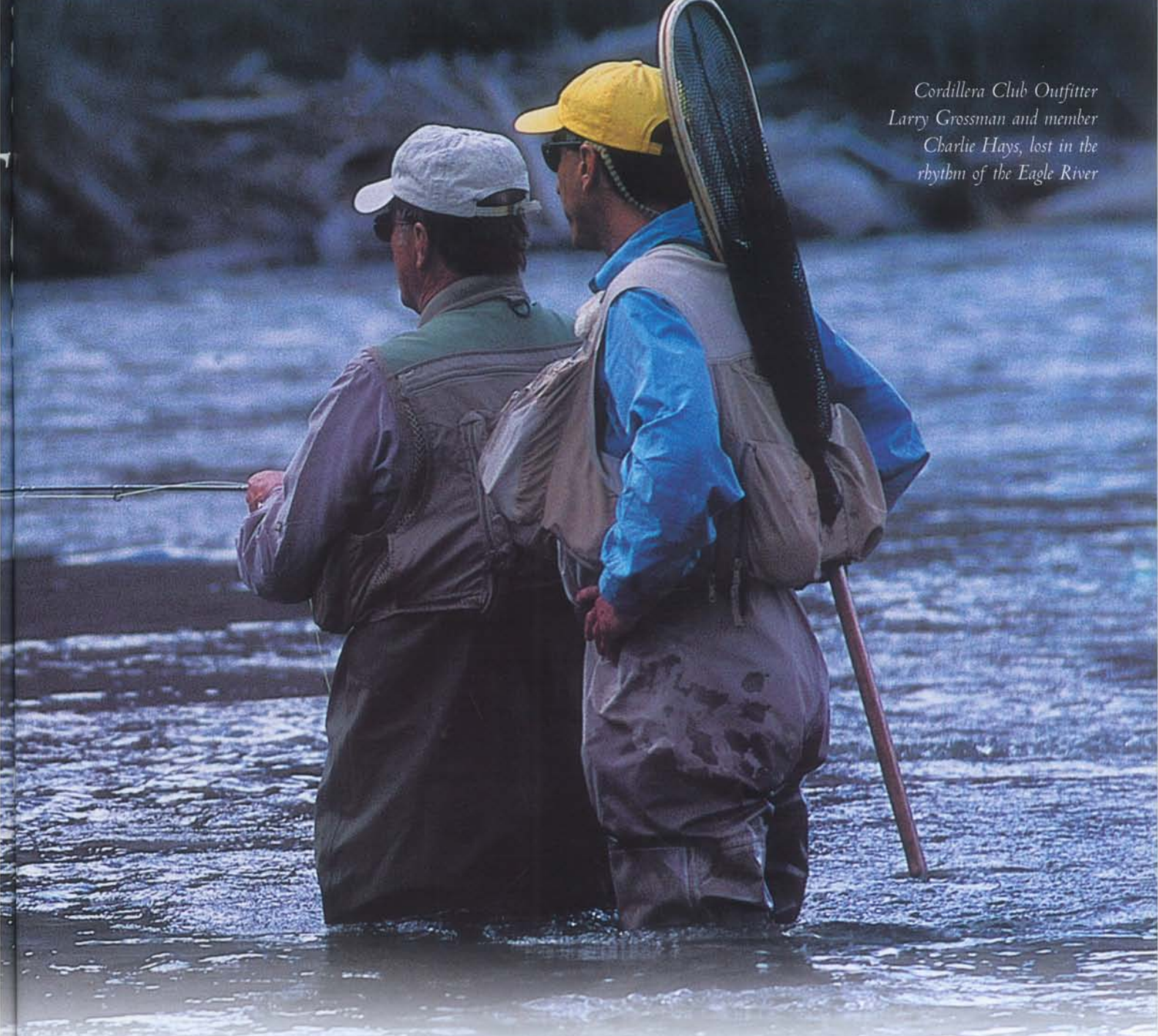
Making its way through the lush green of the valley, the Eagle River rushes over stones and sweeps past the fisherman's legs and feet as he stands firmly on the river bottom. In the crystalline water around him, fish munch insects at the surface of the water, as osprey sweep past overhead. A mink scurries along the water's edge, and traces of deer and coyotes are visible on the river's bank.

For fishermen, those with a hundred or a handful of hours logged on their fishing poles, it is this world away from the world that draws them to the sport of fly fishing. Standing in the river as the sounds of the world fade away and are replaced by the calming, melodic pattern of flowing water, these fishermen find themselves connecting with "la

vérité" of life in the mountains.

On one of these legendary Colorado afternoons, Larry Grossman, Cordillera's Club outfitter and fishing guide, and Charlie Hays, Club member and dedicated fisherman, venture down to the water's edge on the Wilmore section of the river.

Dressed the part in waders, vests, and wading shoes, Grossman and Hays place an arm on each other's shoulder for balance and venture cautiously into the river's center with fly rods in hand. Since Hays spends many of his fishing hours in the more tranquil waters of Cordillera's ponds, it takes him a moment to gather his confidence in the swiftly-moving current. The moment passes, and he stands confi-



*Cordillera Club Outfitter  
Larry Grossman and member  
Charlie Hays, lost in the  
rhythm of the Eagle River*

dently in the river's center. Grossman's natural teaching skills come out as he takes every opportunity, from the moment they pull on their wading shoes, to share his knowledge and experience with his client.

Grossman stresses being acutely aware of what is happening in the river. Everything that happens above the water indicates the situation underneath. Be aware of the insects, their size, and color, he advises, in order to "match the hatch." Insects help fishermen determine where the fish are currently swimming. If no insects are visible, then the fish are probably deeper under the water. A knowledgeable fisherman knows to use a wet fly for deeper-swimming fish versus a dry fly when they are on the surface.

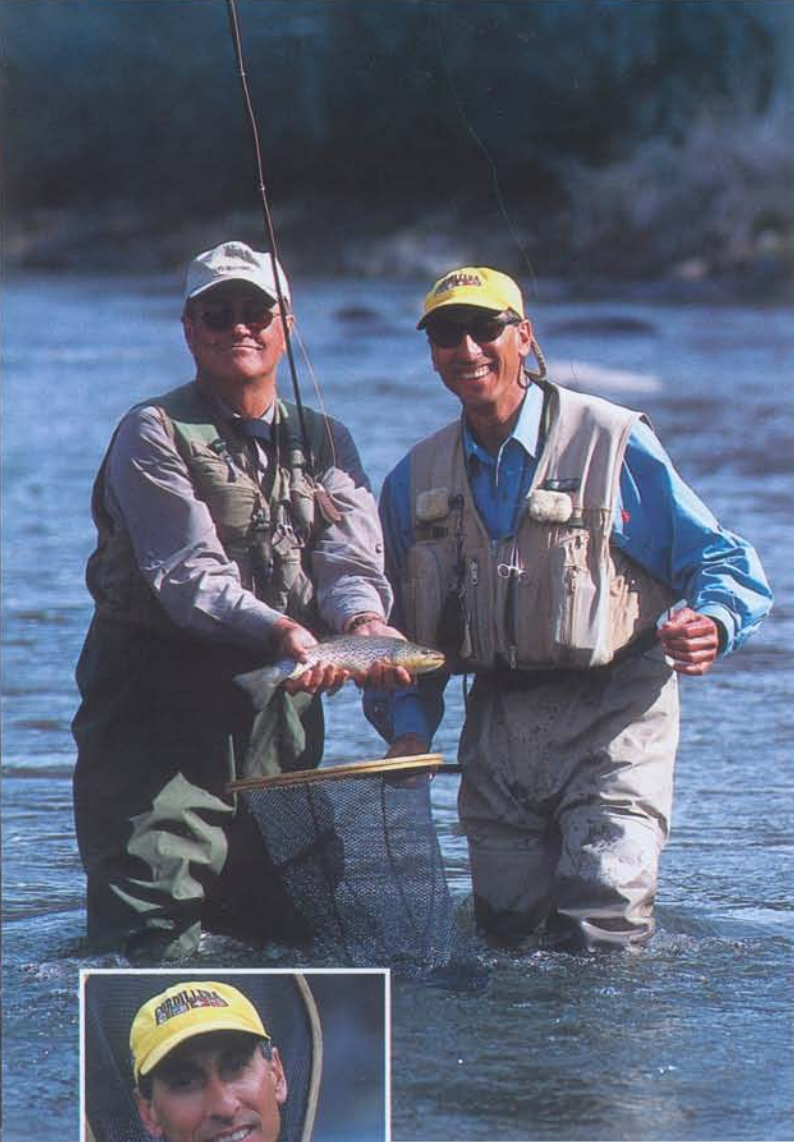
With more than 20 years of fishing experience under his belt, Grossman seems more at home in the river than on land. Few people enjoy their jobs more. He explains, "I consider myself lucky to be able to spend so much time on the water and in nature."

When Hays snags the first fish of the afternoon, Grossman's elation almost matches Hays' own sense of triumph.

"I fish vicariously through my client," he says. "I remember how excited I was when I was first introduced to fly fishing and began to understand what was happening on the river. To see small successes one at a time is a lot of fun. It's also a bonding experience for everyone involved."

If anyone understands the nature of the fish, it is Grossman. Hays often phones him for tips before heading out to the pond for an after-golf fishing break. As both understand, there is a little-appreciated intelligence quotient to fishing.

"You don't just throw the line in the pond," Grossman emphasizes. "There's a reason why fish are eating in certain sections of the pond at certain times of the day. The fly you use depends on the time of day, as well."



Larry Grossman

Charlie Hays shows off his catch

The two departed from the Eagle airport at 7 a.m. in a single-prop Cessna 206 and touched ground in Dutch John, Utah, 50 minutes later. Ash chuckles as he describes the flight as a straight shot. "We were never really more than 3,000 feet above the ground, so the views were spectacular. Then suddenly we came over a mountain range, and we were making the approach. We didn't make one turn from Eagle to Dutch John."

A guide was waiting for the pair when they touched ground in Utah. After a quick stop to pick up a Utah day-fishing license, they boarded their waiting boat at the Green River Flaming Gorge. From that point, Ash describes, both the scenery and the fishing opportunities were staggering.

"The river is crystal clear," he explains, "and there are 9,000 to 15,000 fish per mile. You can see 30 to 40 fish when you look over the side of the boat."

They began fishing at 9 a.m. and took a break for lunch on the shore at 1:30 p.m. Ash called it a day and enjoyed a relaxing afternoon floating down the river, while his son Dana continued fishing until after 5 p.m. The two were then taken back to the airport by their guide, and they arrived back home in Cordillera for dinner and a good night's rest.

Back on the Eagle River, the water sparkles with the glow of the setting sun. As people zip past on a nearby road on bicycles or behind the wheel of 4x4 vehicles, the fisherman seems a world away, lost in the ebb and flow of life on the river.

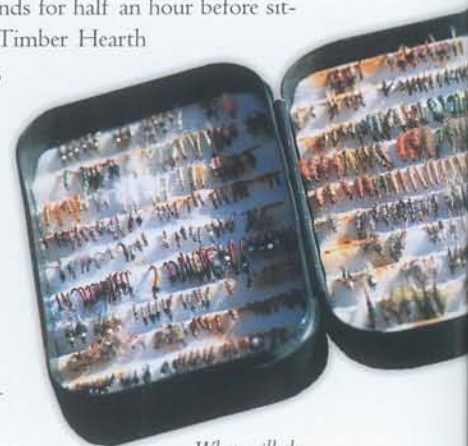
Grossman passionately expresses, "It seems a shame not to experience what's on the river, what's in our very backyard." It is, after all, the lifeblood of all who call this valley home, its leafy, aquatic, four-legged and two-legged residents alike.

Hays began fishing as a young boy but abandoned the hobby until his family moved to Cordillera from Bermuda last year. Although he has earned most of his fishing hours on the Cordillera ponds, he enjoys fishing the river.

"It's more challenging on the river, and I enjoy the movement of being in the water. The scenery is beautiful," he explains. Fishing on the ponds does not demand as much time, since Hays can throw on his waders and be in the water in minutes. If the fish are biting, he stays. If they are not, he goes home. Most of all, he enjoys trying to outsmart the fish. He laughs when he says, "I've been outsmarted enough times by the fish not to be as mad as I am when I'm outsmarted playing golf!"

The Cordillera Outfitter Program was introduced last summer as an added Cordillera amenity and another way for Club members to enjoy playing in the Rocky Mountains. Outfitter Program offerings include half-day (four to five hours on the river) guided fly fishing trips, private fly casting or fly tying instruction, free fly casting clinics, and half-day fly fishing schools and clinics for adults and children. Grossman has also organized several destination trips for 2001, including a Yucatan bonefish, permit, tarpon fishing trip this fall.

Club member Bill Ash and his son Dana signed up for a Green River fly fishing trip organized through the Outfitter's office last July. Ash describes himself as a laid-back fisherman who enjoys throwing the fly rod around the Mountain Course ponds for half an hour before sitting down to dinner at Timber Hearth Grille. His son, however, is an avid fisherman who enjoys walking the Eagle River for hours.



What will the fish go for today?