

For decades, I would continue to visit the spot, usually just a couple of times a year in late summer when the trout were lying in the cold spring waters and were easy to tease up with dry flies. I did get a bit smarter about my approach after the first trip, bringing dry clothes for the ride back, and wearing a lifejacket to make crossing the river less risky. I figured out the best current line to follow to make the crossing easiest. After I had kids, a pickup truck replaced the motorcycle, so even the long drive home was warm and comfortable.

Mostly, I fished the spot solo. It was always my “Secret Spot” and despite some pressure from angling pals, I only ever shared it with a few special people, ones that I know value nature as much as I do. I don’t think I was being selfish, at least not completely. I feel ~~that mostly~~ I was just protecting a place that was very valuable, and very vulnerable. Nels, my companion on so many outdoor adventures, ~~and~~ who had first found that place with me, joined me there sometimes. Jason has fished there with me and has taken nice trout. Not many fish were ever caught on any one trip, sometimes only one or two and never more than five, but those we did land were all good-sized and beautiful. We kept a few, but not many. I am a big fan of “catch and release,” but I am also a big fan of “catch and eat” for trout and other species so long as it is done responsibly and selectively. The wrong fisherman in a place like that, the greedy kind that takes too many fish, can easily destroy it all in a day.

It has been many years since I fished there. ~~I Eventually~~ time eventually wore me down a bit, and I just wasn’t up ~~anymore~~ to the rigors involved in getting at those special fish. I wonder if over the years someone else has found my ~~“SSecret SSpot.”~~ If anyone has, I hope ~~that~~ they cherish it as much as I did, and that the lovely colourful trout are still there, finning in the cool waters.

The so-called Big Three of the skinny waters of the flats are bonefish, tarpon, and permit. Catching all three in one day is the coveted Grand Slam of flats fishing. I never achieved a “Slam.” although once I did get two thirds of one (tarpon, bonefish). Most of the bonefish I caught were not big, usually only two or three pounds, but they fought way above their weight class. All were incredibly strong fish for their size. In Cuba, I once got into a bunch of powerful brutes in the seven- to eight-pound range. That was a very special day, which left me with a sore wrist and forearm, and a hand so badly cramped that I could barely hang on to the fly rod.

The permit is the really hard part of the flats trio to get—not so common and super spooky—the ~~Ghost~~ and as it is sometimes called the ghost. I only ever had two encounters with permit, both in Cuba. The first time, my guide Frank spotted two permit cruising toward our skiff and told me to get ready. Sadly, I soon watched them turn away and disappear just before they reached casting range. Frank said I had spooked them by putting my foot down too hard as I stepped up on the casting deck. The second permit was a big one that my guide (I can’t remember his name) and I spotted in the shallows of a large bay. We tried and tried to intercept

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Commented [LB2]: Is this fishing lingo because it’s otherwise quite awkward. It sounds like you were getting into a fight but left out the word “fight”. If this is what you mean, then say, “I one got into it with a bunch . . .”

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the cruising fish, but ~~because of~~ ~~in~~ the stiff wind, ~~we~~ could never quite pole the skiff into a decent casting position. The best I could manage was to send a couple of casts in its general direction, which fell short. We even came back later in the afternoon and scoured that flat hunting for it again, but it was gone.

Hunting for geese has always been a fall event for me, but now some states and provinces allow sport hunting in the spring to help control the high snow goose populations. There is another spring goose hunt, though, that has been around much longer—for as long as people have inhabited the Hudson Bay Lowlands. The spring goose hunt is of particular importance to northern First Nations. In spring, as the land begins to poke through its white blanket, the great flocks of snow geese arrive, and native hunters are there to meet them. The spring goose hunt ~~has~~ always been a very special time for northern peoples, culturally and for the important food it provides at the end of long winters.

As the very scary reality of climate warming looms over us all, natural environments are changing: ~~this is happening~~—especially quickly in the far north. Earlier melts and unsafe ice now ~~can~~ make conditions more difficult for the ATV²s and snowmobiles used for spring travel to the goose-hunting grounds—and much more dangerous for the people that travel on them. The geese do not always fly where and when they once did. —~~This may be~~ ~~maybe~~ because the northern weather is now much different than before ~~or~~—maybe ~~it is~~ because there are now just so many geese out there ~~that they~~—themselves ~~are~~ changing the land. The future for our snow goose populations is uncertain—too many geese right now, it seems—but what will time bring for the snow geese and those that hunt them?

Commented [LB4]: Here you explain the dual seasons for hunting. I think doing that for turkeys would be good too.