

DAPPING ON CAPE STREAMS

By JAN DE JAGER

Frustration. After the heavy rains we experienced down in the Cape this past winter with the rivers all in spate but gin-clear, well into the new season, a plan had to be made to get at those fat over-wintered rainbows. Being an "immigrant" from Natal, now settled in Paarl, I was completely ignorant that one had to wait for the water to settle to fishable levels, but so then were the trout.

I tried conventional methods but soon found out that I was wasting my time with dry flies that were dragged down as soon as the fly hit the water. Even fishing straight down with weighted nymphs was a waste of time as the nymph would simply pop to the top, and one would need a ton of splitshot to keep it down.

Standing beside the Smalblaar watching trout rise in the fast-flowing, broken water, I suddenly realised that these trout might be caught if I adapted the Irish method

of dapping. Keeping a low profile on the bank, the river was far too fast to wade, I flicked a bushy dry fly, using only a leader the same length as my rod, upstream and kept only the fly lightly in contact with the surface of the water. This way the fly drift-hovers drag-free for about two rod lengths.

On the second drift-hover a plump 250 gram rainbow nailed the fly with a spectacular leap, clearing the water. I managed to land five fish that afternoon and missed about another five. As the rivers have now settled to more fishable levels I have adapted this method of dapping slightly. By wading and fishing directly upstream it is possible to cover approximately 5 metres of water; length of leader and rod. The trick is to keep the fly on top of the water as it drift-hovers back to you with the leader and tippet not touching the water. To achieve this I have modified the "Leisering Lift" whereby the left hand is extended to the side holding the line, and the rod is lifted straight up, thereby adjusting the speed of the drift to that of the water flow. Two aims are achieved by this method; a completely drag-free drift and complete contact with the fly at all times.



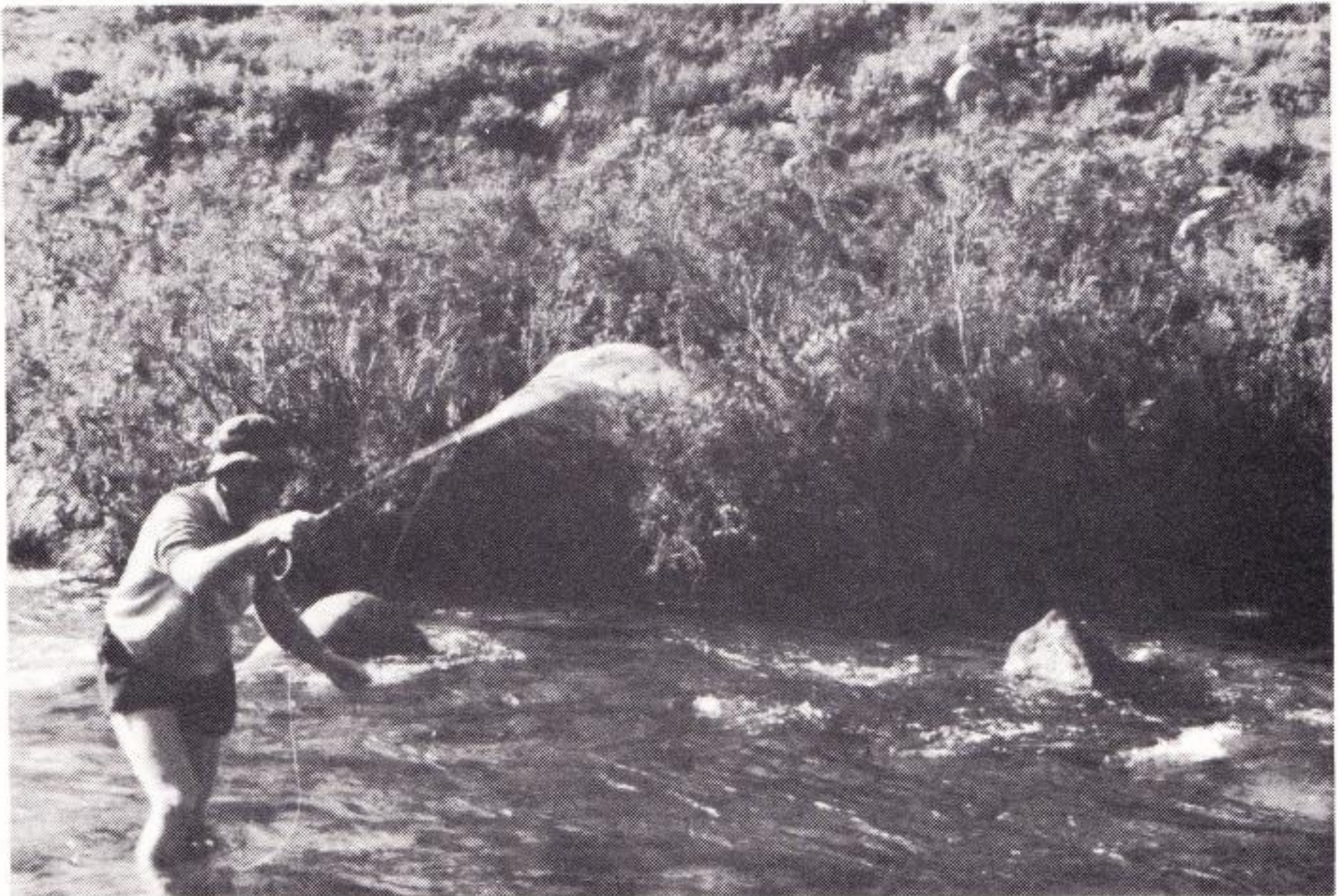
Jan dapping above the Measuring Weir on the Smalblaar.

Photograph by Jan de Jager.

An added advantage of this type of fishing is that one can skate the fly through imparting rod movement, and if there is a breeze blowing up river the fly virtually becomes alive. This method absolutely drives the trout crazy, and fish which are nor-

mally difficult to catch seem to throw all caution to the winds to get at the fly. A word of warning, though, the fish seem to take the fly much more savagely with this method and I have been broken on the take numerous times, even without striking.

My best fish to date using this method was a cock fish of 600 gram and a hen fish of 800 gram, taken from the Forestry water of the Smalblaar.



A visitor, Greg. Botha, trying it out between the Weir and Donkergat.

Photograph by Jan de Jager.