

FURTHER NOTES ON JAN DUTOITS KLOOF

By JOHN BEAMS

OVER the past two months we have made several week-end trips to this kloof. Originally Tom Burgers and I set out just to catch a few fish which, in fact, we didn't. Ordinarily this would have put paid to further excursions for a while, but then there was the kloof itself.

This is a fishery that occupies a very special place among those others so well known to us all. Starting near the junction with the Waaihoek stream, the river runs a level course for about half a mile with few pools and little holding water for sizeable fish. One must penetrate well into the Jan Dutoits valley itself before the river begins its ascent which steepens quite sharply as one progresses upstream. Looking at the map you will see there are seven barriers below the ladder; these barriers are the risers in

the giant staircase that is the course of the river. First Pool and Palmiet Pool lie well behind before the true nature of the terrain reveals itself. The river at this stage is a succession of pools with few runs during the summer months, the basalt formation which forms the bed has produced a rocky bottom often with polished sides affording no holding places for silt. Some of the larger pools are fifteen to twenty feet deep, the gin clear water reaching depths that turn it black. A cool temperature range is maintained even through the heat of summer while the flow seems to level off at about eight to ten cusecs.

Despite the hard and stony nature of the riverain, there is no lack of marginal vegetation including a wealth of wild flowers, *Crassula*, *Stapelia* and *Rooikwas* to name only some. As the kloof climbs, it narrows. Rocky walls rise sheer away on both sides for many hundreds of feet before being absorbed by the serried battlements five and six thousand feet above sea level. The valley floor, often only as wide as the river itself, is littered with gigantic boulders left there after the top soil had long been dispersed over the lowlands. Huge chunks of yellowish T.M.S. are scattered here and there, evidence of the work of earthquake and erosion. Time has wrought curious shapes from the rocks still defying gravity on the valley walls, they stand sentinel over the river like so many sculptured Inca gods. It is a beautiful kloof, mysterious and aloof though not unfriendly, it is a place of quiet and repose and it is the reason that I found myself there again two weeks later.

On this occasion Dave Robertson accompanied me. He, like everyone else who sees Jan Dutoits for the first time was visibly impressed. Our week-end yielded three fish, two of 1 lb. 10 oz. and another slightly smaller. We moved fish in every pool but could only tempt the odd one to take. The next week Eddie Shelton and myself went yet again, this time to take river samples and to check the contents of Neville's map and add to it. Eddie's knowledge of the river and its catwalks enabled us to reach the highest stocking point (Fuggle's Fancy) without any effort. We also managed to take one fish that supplied the necessary for one very important bottle labelled "stomach contents".

Two more trips in quick succession, one with Ron Bell and the other with Tom Burgers again, produced three fish. These trips also served as double checks on our map and, of course, to become familiar with the network of catwalks that cuts one's travelling time considerably when you know how to find them. Each time there is something different to see, each time is a promise to return, and each time, thankfully, the Overhang camp creeps a little closer to the car.

Small trout ranging from three inches, through nine inches to a pound plus have been taken, all have been spawned in these waters since 1968. The most striking are those of nine to ten inches, these fish are built more like bass with deep fat bodies, their C.F. must reach to between 50 and 55. The original stocking has produced trout of over two pounds in beautiful condition. Other types of fish have also been taken or seen; there are shoals of *Rooivlerkies*, a small *Barbus* which so far has not been seen over five inches long. As yet we have found no sign of crabs. Otherwise the food chain of the river is little different to our other streams except that it is considerably richer. Possibly the depredations of the trout community in a year or two will thin out this abundance.

The future of this river augers well, there is lots of room and obviously plenty of spawning grounds. It seems unlikely that the river will ever suffer from over-fishing as it requires a considerable effort to reach further than a third of the way up. It is really a two day trip with all that that entails. One final word, it is a foolhardy man who would attempt this kloof alone. The smallest accident could mean days up there on his own. Further, it is the type of kloof where accidents can occur. Always go with a companion, it is a long way back with a twisted ankle.

Angling Reports

23.11.69, by *Neville Fuggle and H. G. Heugh*. Two rainbow males, 13 in., 1 lb., C.F. 48, and 12 in., 1 lb., C.F. 60, both aged 2+, from March 1968 stocking. Several other large trout seen.

3.10.70, by *Eddie Shelton*. Cascade Pool, below Overhang Camp, female rainbow, 14 in., 1 lb. 4 oz., C.F. 46, age 2+ years, on dry March Brown. Ledge Pool, above Overhang Camp, male rainbow, 13 in., 1 lb. 2 oz., C.F. 53, age 2+ years. Both stocked in November 1968, i.e. 1968 winter bred.

12.12.70 by *Eddie Shelton*. Rockfall Pool, male rainbow, 13 in., 1 lb., C.F. 47, on wet Bloody Butcher fly. Scales showed remarkable growth, age 1+ years. Definite first year growth to length of 8 in., followed by open circuli to length of 13 in. Most evidently from first breeding in the river of winter 1969.

30.12.70 by *Dale C. Lewis*. Lower area, first large palmiet pool, rainbow male, 14½ in., 1 lb. 5 oz., C.F. 46, on wet Wickham, and female, 14 in., 1 lb. 3 oz., C.F. 44, on wet Coachman, age 2+ years, 6 in./1969 and 12 in./1970. Probably from third stocking.

16.1.71 by *Neville Fuggle*. "Rio Pool" at 4.30 p.m. (the time of the start of the Rio yacht race), rainbow, 17½ in., 2 lb. 3 oz., C.F. 43, on dry Parachute Spider fly, age 3+ years. Stocked March 1968, bred 1967, 6 in./1968, 12 in./1969 and 15 in./1970.

There was much evidence of river breeding, as many fingerlings were hooked, jumped out, and got off.

John Beams, 14/15.2.71: very hot with light south-east wind, rainbow female 1 lb. 10 oz., and male 1 lb. 8 oz., on wet flies. Good condition. Later was broken twice in two successive pools by trout taking very close to undercut ledges. Saw many trout fingerlings of 3 in. to 4 in., and 6 in. to 8 in., obviously two different spawnings. 28.2.71: Archie's Dilemma pool: rainbow male of 12½ in., 1 lb. C.F. 53, on wet Invicta. Age 1+, river bred. Containing elephant tusk caddis and toebiters. 6.3.71: Bit Pool, rainbow male of 1 lb. 8 oz., on wet Invicta. Containing elephant tusk caddis and toebiters. Water still flowing well, about 12 cusecs, and temperature very much lower than last week.

Ron Bell, 5/6.3.71: Cobra Pool: rainbows, about 1 lb., released, and male of 1 lb. 5 oz., on wet Wickham's Fancy fly.

Dr. D. Robertson, 14/15.2.71: rainbow male of 1 lb. 10 oz., very high condition, and released after weighing. (Weather too hot to retain fish not eaten on spot.)

Food Items Collected in Jan Dutoits River.

22.2.71. Stomach contents of 1 lb. rainbow: Two Corydalid larvae (toebiters) and 23 elephant tusk caddis.

Bottom samples: Buttress Pool: 4 sandgrain caddis, 2 elephant tusk caddis, 1 toebiter, 2 water bugs and two small Leptophlebiid mayfly nymphs. Chute Pool: 3 juvenile damselfly larvae. Mermaid Pool: 1 toebiter, 3 large vegetable case caddis larvae, 5 elephant tusk caddis, 2 damselfly larvae, 1 "sucker" tadpole, and small mayfly nymphs. One adult Corydalid fly was also caught on rock.