



An Exploration Group Report

STOCKING THE
KLEINKLIPHUIS
RIVER

By RON BELL

Locality sketch and photos by Ron Bell.

INTRODUCTION

SOME years ago the Society embarked on a scheme to seek and stock the more remote streams. In the process an attempt is being made to provide a choice of streams in each area, the aim being to compensate the angler in some way for the greater distance travelled. Two recently completed patterns are: the Upper and Lower Elandspad and Kraalstroom triangle; the Witte and Upper Krom link.

The Exploration Group has now turned its attention to the Winterhoek System in the Porterville area. It will be seen from the locality sketch that this system comprises roughly the Ratels (a tributary of the Olifants River) and the Grootkliphuis and Kleinkliphuis (tributaries of the Twentyfour Rivers).

The Ratels was stocked with trout in 1948, but as no further information is available the Society is negotiating with a farmer in that area for permission to do the necessary work. The Grootkliphuis, apart from its good gravel beds, is not important, for it becomes very narrow and low during the summer months. The Twentyfour Rivers from Die Hel—a high waterfall—downstream is an established fishery but access is at present rather difficult.

The Kleinkliphuis (abbreviated K.K.H.) is the main feeder of the Twentyfour Rivers, but the upstream movement of fish into this feeder is barred by a long gorge containing many waterfalls (see *PISCATOR* No. 42, p. 13). This necessitated the introduction of trout above these barriers. A report of this operation is given below. We are grateful to Mr. George Anderson for having made the trip possible by transporting the party over some very rough country in his Land Rover.

Some members of the Group at the farm Weltevreden. The dotted line shows the route travelled on foot to the K.K.H., which lies behind the ridge indicated by an arrow.



(We understand that the words "Groot" and "Klein" in this case refer to the comparative size of *caves*, not of the streams.—Ed.)

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On December 18, 1961, the Exploration Group carried 2,000 brown and rainbow trout to the Kleinkliphuis River. The fish were released over a length of approximately half a mile of water above the barrier gorge.

The party met the Jonkershoek Hatchery truck at Klapmuts at 8 o'clock on the Saturday morning, and 22 cartons containing fish in plastic bags were transferred to our Land Rover. To pack ten people plus kit and the cartons of fish bags into this vehicle was no mean feat. Anyway, with this accomplished we were soon off on the "Sardine Cannery's Picnic".



Messrs. Saunders, Hard, Hazell and Anderson "hiking" their trout across the Grootkliphuis Valley. The road from Porterville to Weltevreden runs along the top of the mountain range in the background.



First trout in the K.K.H. Herbert Weil acclimatizes his fish before releasing them.

The route lay through Agter-Paarl, Hermon and Porterville and then up the Dasklip Pass. From the top of this pass a track runs along the top of the mountain to the farm *Winterhoek*, a distance of approximately 18 miles. The road is particularly bad, with long, rough, stony stretches. There are also several sandy patches and at two points the gradient is so steep that concrete strips have been laid to provide sufficient grip. The party were unanimous in their praise of Mr. Anderson's handling of the vehicle under these difficult conditions. Herman Ackermann led in his own car, but then his superhuman feats in the mountains are almost legendary! A new road is at present being built and in the near future the route to the Kleinkliphuis will be, we hope, just a normal drive.

The vehicles were parked on the farm *Weltevreden*, which is owned by the Engelbrechts, a most hospitable family. This is the nearest accessible point to the K.K.H. Here the party shouldered their packs and completed the journey on foot. The path followed is actually a donkey track and the only line of communication with a farm *Perdevlei*, situated about six miles up the K.K.H. It is probably one of the most remote farms in the country.

Trout fingerlings in their plastic bag under oxygen. Just before release in the K.K.H. river.



The journey to the river is a gradual uphill walk to a ridge and then a short drop to the river bed. The distance from *Weltevreden* is about two miles and the elevation 600 feet. The party walked it in an hour.

By 1 p.m. all the fish had been released. Three bags had leaked at the seams and some of the trout had died, presumably from lack of sufficient water and oxygen. In spite of this more than 95% were released alive.

Our party returned to *Weltevreden* for lunch and after a refreshment stop at Porterville, headed for home, arriving there in time for dinner that evening.

The Group were fortunate in having with them, as a "guest bearer", Denis Woods, a member of the Mountain Club. Denis, who once hiked from Ceres to Porterville via the Winterhoek and K.K.H., tells of miles of river in the *Perdevlei* area, completely unspoiled and without fish barriers. The country is wild and spectacular and will provide a most interesting exploration trip when the trout have reached keepable size.

REFERENCE

"The Twenty-four Rivers System" by Alan Yates, PISCATOR No. 42, Autumn 1958. An Exploration Group Report.