

An Exploration Group Report

TROUT IN THE BANHOEK KLOOF

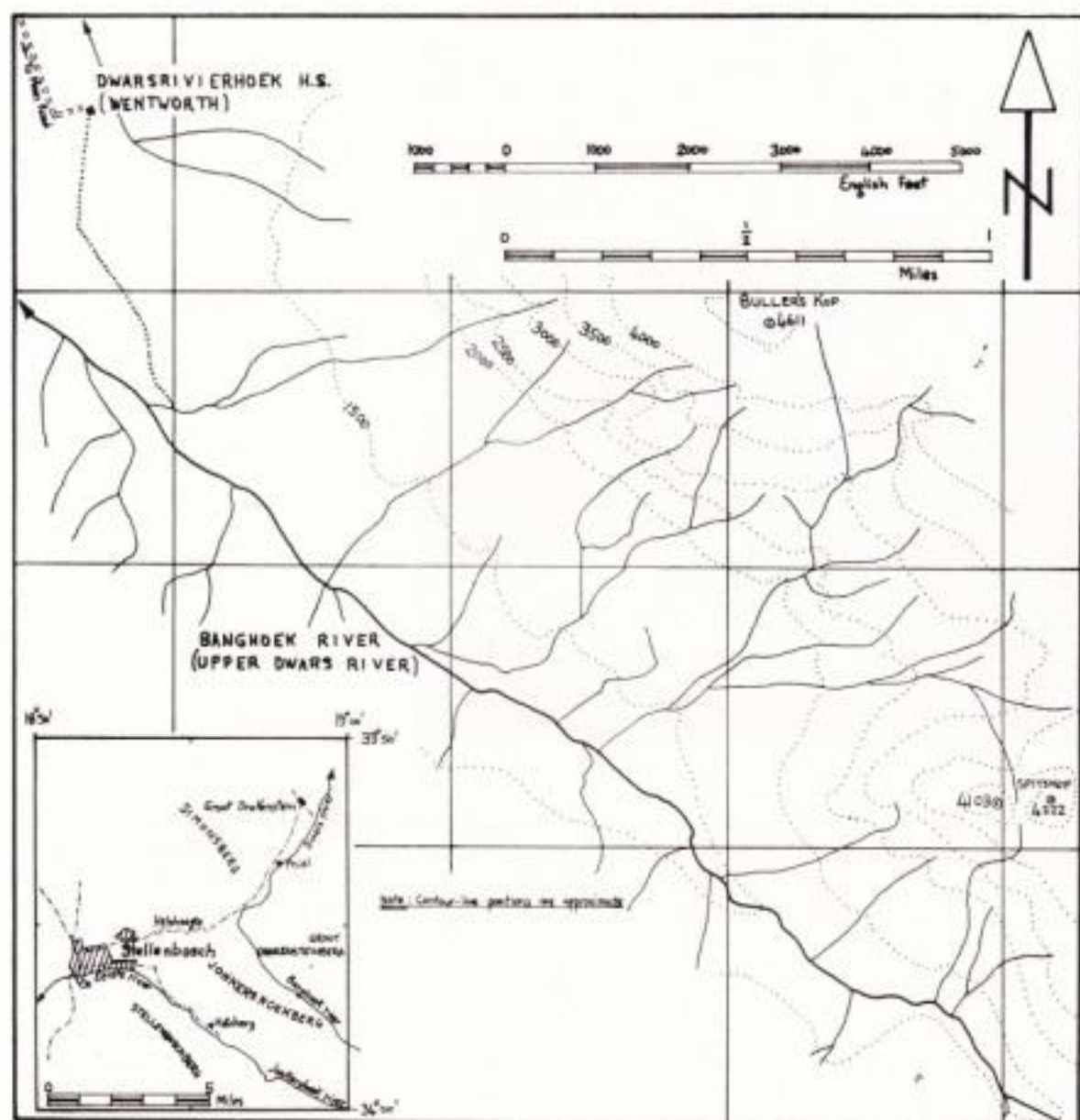
Fig. 1

Looking up the Banhoek
Kloof.

(Photo: N. Y. Garnett)

(Note: Trout had been introduced to the Dwars River tributary of the Berg river system around the turn of the century. A.C.H. had fished this river continuously in the nineteen-twenties and thirties, and had experience of the Banhoek Kloof as far up as the First Waterfall. There were rainbows, mostly small, all the way up the Dwarsriviershoek stretch to that point, and brown trout up to 3 lb. had been taken in the pool under the fall. It has always been typical of the Dwars River that the fewer browns had higher condition than the plentiful rainbows. In fact the record river-caught brown trout of 8½ lb. was caught in a pool of this river by the late Donald Swan in 1932. The main point of interest in this exploration project was to find how far upstream in the mountain gorge the trout extended. How many waterfalls were there, and did holding pools occur high up?)

IN September 1962, Peter Arderne and Jonathan Cornell went up to explore the Banhoek Kloof and slept there for a night. They caught four brown and rainbow trout, the largest a rainbow of 1½ lb., below the First Waterfall. They saw some trout above that fall, but none in the higher sections. As the result of their report, the following project was organised, as it was considered that the trout might have been unable to surmount several of the waterfalls to reach the headwaters. Late in 1953, 350 brook trout fingerlings from Jonkershoek had been carried up the kloof in metal cans by junior members, Peter Arderne, Walter Findlayson and party; but this was really an incident in the general distribution of a species, new to the country, to upland waters, and unfortunately these fish proved to be utterly unsuitable to the climate.



(By: G. Levin)

Sketch map of the Banhoek Valley.

On December 8, 1962, a party of six members, Brian Manning, G. A. Saunders, David Dickson, Neville Fuggle, Jonathan Cornell and G. H. Godley, carried 600 rainbow fingerlings up the Banhoek Kloof (in six plastic bags under oxygen). This was reported in *PISCATOR* No. 56, Summer 1962/63, by Brian Manning. The party climbed a steep slope to the east of the river and followed a path around the contours for about two miles until the kloof closed in and the stream bed became steeper. They then dropped down to the river, arriving at a point where trout were still in evidence. Godley and Saunders then released their fish and the other members went higher. Brian Manning

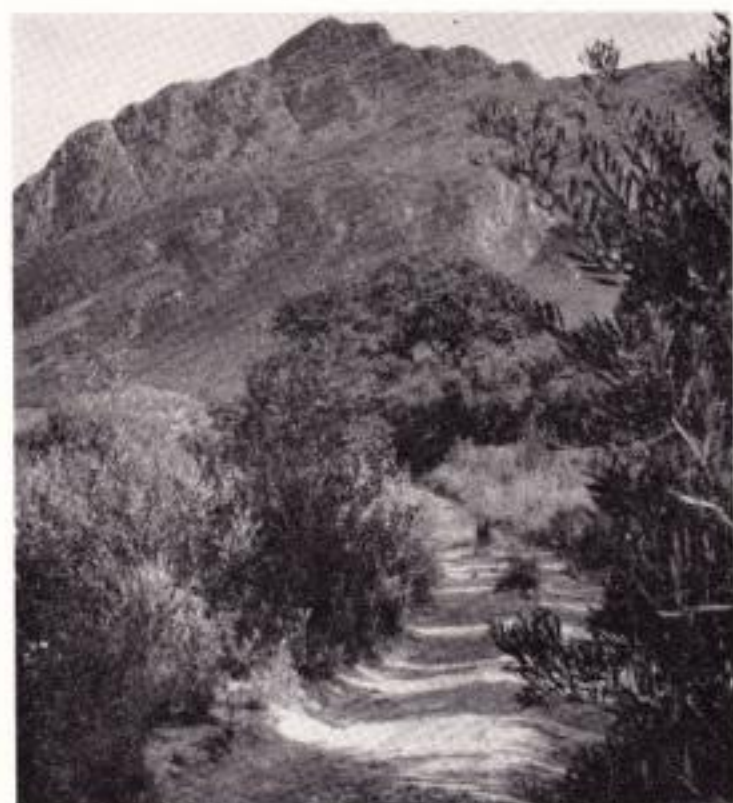


Fig. 2
Banhoek Valley.
Approach to the
Oaks by car.

(Photo: N. Y. Garnett)

and Jonathan Cornell went up above the Fifth Waterfall (fig. 7) and released their fish in the pool shown in fig. 8. Neville Fuggle went higher, to the fine pool shown in fig. 9, with his bag. He had first proceeded some way above, but finding no suitable places returned to the pool to release the trout. No trout were lost in transit on this occasion.



It was felt that further exploration should be made of this small and rarely-fished mountain stream, now that survivors of the 1962 stocking would be 3+ years old.

On January 28, 1966, G. A. Saunders and A. M. Mackereth made a preliminary investigation. By permission of Mrs. Austin of the farm "Wentworth" (formerly "Dwarsriviershoek") they approached the river through her property. A farm road winds through plantations of oaks and then opens up as a rougher track, terminating at a suitable parking place under two very tall oaks, which also form a useful landmark when returning through the bush (fig. 2). They found the stream running quite strongly for midsummer, with water temperature of about 60 deg. F. in the bush-shaded bed. It was crystal clear and upstream dry-fly fishing was necessary under the interlacing trees. Four-inch yearlings were plentiful, and these tried for the fly and larger fish caught took without hesitation.

Mack Mackereth went up to the First Waterfall, taking four rainbows on the way; one of 9 inches, two of 10 inches and a female of 13 inches, 12 oz., C.F. 36, age 2+ years with a spawning mark at the 1965 winter. One rainbow of about a pound was hooked and lost and others seen. Bulked stomach contents of the trout included the

Fig. 3

G. A. Saunders at a pool in the lower section of Banhoek Valley.

Taken on February 13, 1966, when the mountain stream was flowing quite well in the driest summer for over twenty years.

(Photo: N. Y. Garnett)



remains of terrestrial insects, parts of dragonflies, wings of small mayflies, the claw of a crab and debris, with plant matter occurring.

On February 13, 1966, G. A. Saunders went with Mr. and Mrs. N. Y. Garnett up the Banhoek valley, with the express purpose of obtaining photographs. He caught one rainbow of about 10 inches on a dry fly.



The next visit was made by G. A. Saunders and Mark Mackereth on February 26, 1966, rather late in the day. Mark Mackereth went up as far as the Second Waterfall, but saw no trout between the first and second falls. He took three rainbows from 10 inches to 13 inches long below the First Waterfall.



On March 7, 1966, H. A. Biggs made the trip up the kloof alone, fishing with the dry fly. He had chosen a good day, and below the First Waterfall caught 21 rainbows, all of size, and released 18 of them ranging from 9 inches to 12 inches long. The three he retained were 13 in., 13 oz., C.F. 38 (age 2+ years), 11 in., 10 oz., C.F. 48 (age 2+ years) and 10 in., about 8 oz. (age 1+ years). He saw no trout on this occasion between the First and Second Waterfalls; but he went higher (definitely above the Second, for a mile or so) and clearly saw two rainbows of about 16 inches and 18 inches long, but no fish in runs between pools. Unfortunately these longer trout would not take a fly, or we might have got something linkable with the 1962 stocking.



Fig. 4

The First Waterfall.
The upper Dwars River has a normal stock of brown and rainbow trout up to this fall, which had a crest of six feet above the pool in moderate flow after the rains late in March, 1966.

(Photo: H. A. Biggs)

Fig. 5
The Second Waterfall.

(Photo: H. A. Biggs)



A further trip was made on March 18, 1966, by G. A. Saunders, Mark Mackereth, John Saunders and Jeffrey Knock.

On this occasion Mark did take two trout between the First and Second Waterfalls, a female rainbow of 11 in., 8 oz., C.F. 39 (age 2+ years), with spawning mark at 1965

Fig. 6
The Third Waterfall.

(Photo: H. A. Biggs)



winter, and a female brown of 12½ in., 12 oz., C.F. 39 (age 2+ years), with developing ova. The stomach of this brown contained terrestrial food items, winged ants, bugs and beetles, and several dragonfly larvae. He went well above the Second Waterfall and saw one fish there. In the low state of the stream, spring sources were evident in the bed in shallow pools, the water boiling up in bubbles and feeling very cold. The flow in the upper section of the river was good, although downstream towards the farming area most of the flow disappeared into an irrigation furrow. G. A. Saunders took one rainbow of 12 in., 8 oz., C.F. 31, on dry fly, containing a small crab.



After early rains on March 22nd, Mark Mackereth, Tony Biggs and Geoff Godley made another assault on the valley on March 27, 1966. They started in the morning in misty weather, but heavy rain set in again in the afternoon and they finished up soaked through. In the meantime Mark Mackereth and Tony Biggs pushed on upstream; Mark working up to the Second Waterfall. Tony Biggs went up with rod and camera as far as he could under the deteriorating weather conditions.

He reported that the First Waterfall had a crest of about 6 feet above the level of the pool below, in a moderate flow. He passed in all five waterfalls, but did not photograph the Fourth Waterfall which he thought could be discounted as a fish barrier. The other four waterfalls and some of the higher pools are shown in his series of photographs. He lost a trout of between 1½ lb. and 2 lb. above the Fifth Waterfall, which smashed his cast on its second dash, again an unfortunate loss for this investigation.



Fig. 7

The Fifth Waterfall.
(The Fourth Waterfall is not shown as it is discounted as a fish barrier.)

(Photo: H. A. Biggs)

Fig. 8

Pool above Fifth Waterfall. Brian Manning and Jonathan Cornell released their fish here in 1962. Tony Biggs lost a trout of between 1½ lb. and 2 lb. in this pool on March 22, 1966.

(Photo: H. A. Biggs)



Tony Biggs caught four trout between the Second and Fifth Waterfalls as follows: A brown male, 10½ in., 8 oz., C.F. 46, age 1+ years. This fish was packed with food, containing dragonfly and damselfly larvae, many terrestrial winged insects, tadpole remains, and, most interestingly, a black-eyed Gammarus "shrimp" (*Gammarus nigriculus*) a mountain-stream form. A brown female, 11 in., 11 oz., C.F. 50, also with

Fig. 9

The top pool reached by Tony Biggs on March 27, 1966, when no trout were seen in this beautiful pool, which is five to six feet deep. Neville Fuggle released his trout here in December, 1962.

(Photo: H. A. Biggs)



Fig. 10

Looking upstream from the bank above the pool shown in Fig. 9. Taken on a rainy afternoon.

(Photo: H. A. Biggs)

full stomach, age 2+ years. Two rainbow males, 10½ in., 6 oz., C.F. 36, and 11½ in., 8 oz., C.F. 34, had badly eroded scales, but were 2+ years old, i.e. nearly three years.

Lower down, Mark Mackereth caught two rainbows of 10 and 11 inches, and Geoff Godley one of similar size. The water temperature was 53 deg. F.



Fig. 11

Two brown trout and two rainbows, taken above the Second Waterfall on March 27, 1966.

(Photo: H. A. Biggs)

The stock of trout in the upper river, above the First Waterfall, is definitely lower than below that fall, although there are some excellent pools.



Fig. 12

Banhoek Kloof. The upper reaches and waterfall area in the middle distance.

(Photo:
H. A. Biggs)