

STOCKING OF THE RATELS RIVER

By R. O. BELL

THE Ratels is a tributary of the Clanwilliam Olifants River. It commences its flow on a mountain plateau above Porterville. Its bed drops steadily north across the plateau for two or three miles, then enters a steep gorge where it descends about six or seven hundred feet to the lower level. The river maintains its northward course through open country for several miles before joining the Olifants on the west bank some miles above Keerom.

The bed of the Ratels River is of a permanent nature, most of it being solid rock, and there are no indications of recent erosion in spite of heavy spates in the 1962 winter.

The lower section is an almost continuous chain of large deep pools. In late November 1962, 1,000 brown and 1,000 rainbow trout fingerlings were released in the upper and lower levels of the river. D. S. Marais, A. D. Helps, G. H. Godley and the writer took delivery of the fish from Ray Louw at the Jonkershoek Hatchery at 8 a.m. on Saturday. The consignment consisted of one 10-gallon plastic can, and 10 cartons containing plastic bags of fish, under oxygen. The party travelled along the Agter Paarl, Wellington, Gouda route to Porterville and up the Dasklip Pass on to the plateau. (See map on page 124 of PISCATOR No. 53.)

Dr. John Dorrington, who has a farm in the area, met us at the summit of the Dasklip Pass and acted as guide on the upper level.

The first fish were released at 10.30 a.m. and the stocking of the upper level was completed by mid-day, with the loss of only three fish;

Our party was introduced to Mr. Wichahn, who also farms on the plateau. He extended an invitation to Cape Piscatorial Society members to make use of a guest rondavel near the river. After lunch and "beer all round", Geoff Godley and Arthur Helps returned to town and Gas Marais and I set off to stock the lower level. We took our car down to the farm "Grootfontein". After greetings and the usual friendly chat, the fish were released at 2 p.m.—one being lost.

At the end of January 1963, John Dorrington reported that the trout were growing well. One was seen and judged to be 5 inches long.

(The section of the Ratels River on the farm "Monte Cristo" was stocked with 500 rainbow fingerlings from Jonkershoek on December 2, 1948, apparently without result. *Inland Fisheries Dept. Report No. 5, 1948.*—Ed.)