

MONTE BURKE'S LATEST BOOK | MAKING WINTER STEW | FISH HANDLING 101 | MAKING A LIVING ON THE EASTERN SHORE

THE VIRGINIA SPORTSMAN

WINTER 2020

AD MADDOX
AN ARTIST'S JOURNEY



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HUNTING
IN MAINE**

*Holiday
Gift Guide*

Virginia Beers
for Holiday Cheers

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MONTE BURKE'S "LORDS OF THE FLY: MADNESS, OBSESSION, AND THE HUNT FOR THE WORLD-RECORD TARPON" HAS RECEIVED CRITICAL ACCLAIM. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ELEVEN EXPERIENCE

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DESCHUTES HAS A TAPROOM IN DOWNTOWN ROANOKE, WHERE THEY SERVE A VARIETY OF BREWS—INCLUDING A FESTIVE WINTER ALE.





THAT GUY

STORY BY JUSTIN WITT

I'M THAT GUY.

You know that guy. If you're lucky enough you have one. He's the guy who always calls and bugs you to go down the river. To walk through the woods. To put on the waders and pick up the rod or the shotgun, even to borrow these things from him if you don't have your own. He's the one who does everything he can to pull you out of your office, off your lawnmower, away from your spouse. The one who breaks up your routines and throws curveballs through your strike zone, picking off your excuses one by one until you are left with no further choice but to comply.

That guy. Said spouse is generally not his biggest fan.

I could of course just go and float the river myself. Anchor up or pull over every time I want to fish. It sucks but it's doable, and it's sure as hell a lot better option than staying home. Instead though, I'm spending hours sorting gear and checking off lists, making sure we've

got the rods and the lines and the tippetts and the flies we'll need, not to mention the life jackets and first-aid kits and extra clothes in the dry bags just in case somebody takes an unexpected swim in the 30-degree weather. This stuff takes me hours. And then half the time you idiots call me right when I'm getting in the truck and say something ludicrously inadequate like, "It's too cold dude," or "She won't let me go man, I've got shit to do," never even realizing the work I just put into paving your way to the sweet bliss you now so casually opt out of.

AND THEN HALF THE TIME YOU IDIOTS CALL ME RIGHT WHEN I'M GETTING IN THE TRUCK AND SAY SOMETHING LUDICROUSLY INADEQUATE LIKE, "IT'S TOO COLD DUDE."

AUTHOR AND FLY-FISHING GUIDE JUSTIN WHITT IS BASED OUT OF RIO PICO, ARGENTINA, WHERE HE RUNS A LODGE AND HELPS ANGLERS STICK HOOKS INTO TROUT.

I think about all of this as I ready the drift boat for what seems like the thousandth time, glancing at my phone every couple of minutes and waiting on one, just one, hell any one of the more than a dozen friends I have invited for today's plan to get back to me and confirm the float. And it's been this way since middle school. What I don't understand is why.

Why do the rest of you, for all that you have "normal lives" and "normal jobs" not spend your miserable routine-entrenched weeks still at least planning and preparing for weekends that involve moving water? Why are the rest of you just sitting there thinking about going fishing when you could actually be going fishing? Why do you always have to wait on me to f-ing drag your asses down the banks and into the boats? You're invariably happy that I did it; so why not just learn your lesson and show up there on your own?

The problem has been so relentless that at this point I've even turned my part of it all into a "career." I have client lists and prospect lists, spreadsheets and websites and blogs, videos and podcasts and week-long photo shoot yields from waters all over the world. I mean, it's my life's work. And for what? To make money? Sure, though only because then I get to fish myself. But in the process it's all really still about something else. Something entirely separate from the more obvious structure of the whole. Something it has taken me years to drill down to and put my finger on. A higher purpose, if you will.

It's to get you people in the boat.

The phone buzzes against the dry box lid and a message lights up on the screen. Bingo. A bite.

Same old shit. Story of my life. (;)

Justin Witt left Roanoke in 2007 and took a seven-month walk up the spine of the Andes trying to figure out what came next after too many years in the rat race. Turned out he was a fly-fishing guide and has been rowing rivers and poling flats ever since. His previous work has appeared in *The Flyfish Journal*, *The Drake*, *The Angler* and a variety of literary journals that, for the most part, no one's ever heard of. These days when he's not wandering the Earth with his wife and five-year-old daughter in search of new water, he can be found at home in Rio Pico, Argentina, where he runs a lodge and helps anglers stick hooks into trout. hemispheresunlimited.com

THE AUTHOR'S HIGHER PURPOSE AS A FLY-FISHING GUIDE IS TO GET PEOPLE IN THE BOAT.

BUT IN THE PROCESS IT'S ALL REALLY STILL ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE. SOMETHING ENTIRELY SEPARATE FROM THE MORE OBVIOUS STRUCTURE OF THE WHOLE.

