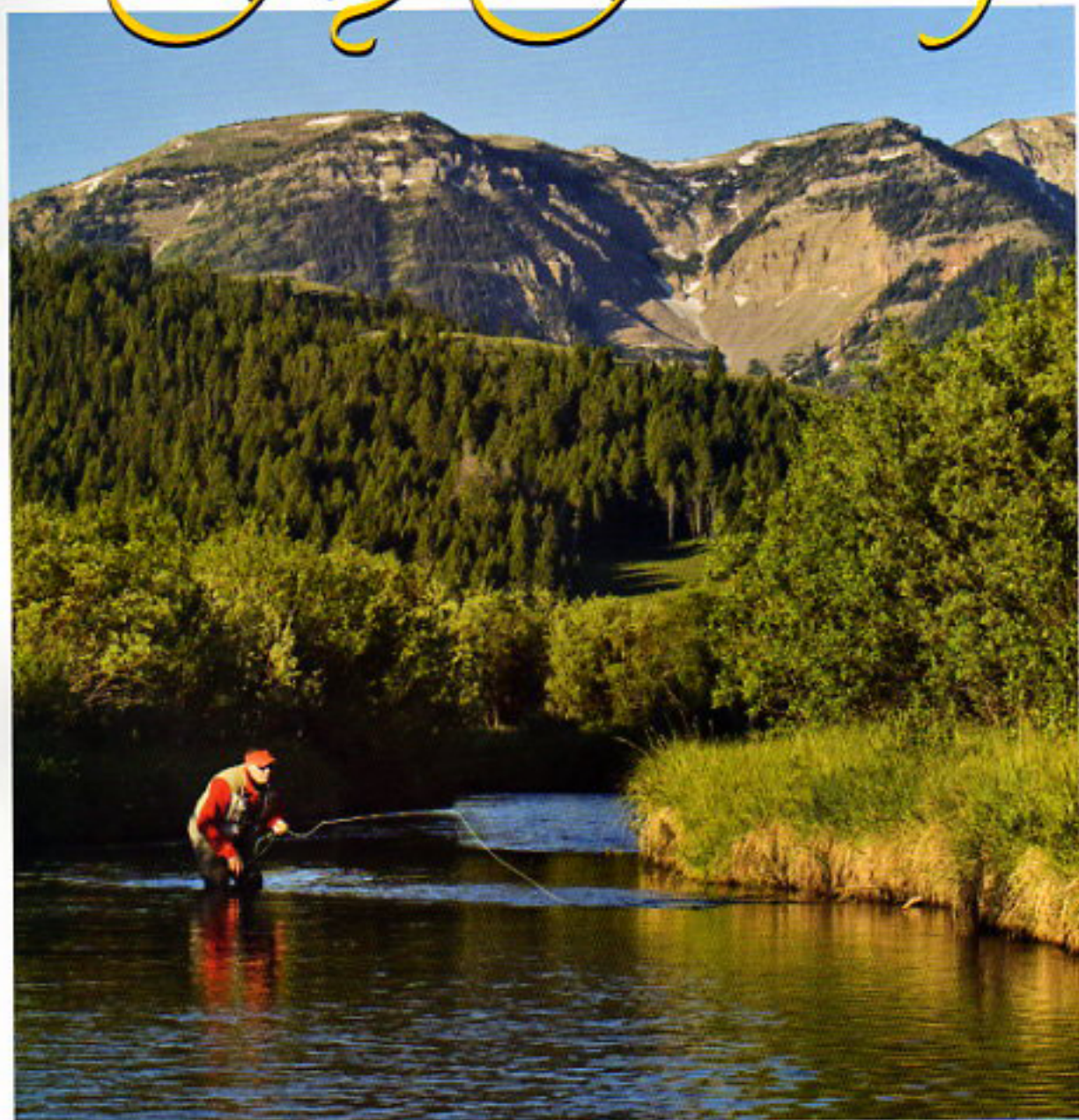


# NORTHWEST

July/August 2008

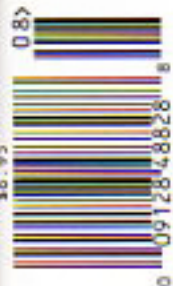
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### Bidwell Ranch, CA

By Bill Becher

Bidwell Ranch, near Burney, California, offers members and guests of its hunting and fishing club the opportunity to fish for feisty, colorful rainbows in a quiet setting. Nestled in Shasta County's Hat Creek Valley, the ranch has fishing ponds and a section of Lost Creek available for fishing.

Captain John Bidwell and his pioneer family settled in the Hat Creek Valley in the late 1800s. Now, part of the working cattle ranch that bears his name is open for waterfowl hunting and fishing to members of Wilderness Unlimited (WU), (877) 611-4868, [www.wildernessunlimited.com](http://www.wildernessunlimited.com). The man-made ponds are filled with water from Lost Creek. Four of the ponds hold self-sustaining rainbow trout and are restricted to catch-and-release fishing. A fifth pond has bass and bluegill for catch-and-keep family fishing.

Because the waters at Bidwell Ranch support WU's hunting club there, the managers have erected wood-duck nesting boxes on the property to help propagate the species. Fly

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fishers might find a few feathers on the ground to help stock tying boxes.

I spent several days at the ranch with California fly-fishing author Bill Sunderland, who is a club member. We camped in an RV at one of the ponds. A handy launch spot in front of the pond made for easy float tube launching. Strip-retrieving streamers near the pond inlet provided some savage hits by deep-colored rainbows. In the evening, the sky was a blaze of color before the stars appeared.

Camping facilities are basic, but staying near a pond means you can roll out of bed and be fishing in a few minutes. Quiet sections of the ponds can provide good dry-fly fishing during mayfly hatches. Rick Copeland, president of WU, says the ponds have produced fish over 30 inches.

Copeland says WU made Bidwell Ranch a fly-fishing destination more than 30 years ago, before the movie *A River Runs Through It* changed the fishing industry. WU offers fly-fishing classes on the property to members and also sponsors a public women-only class as part of the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program, [www.bowca.org](http://www.bowca.org).

WU also has 10 private fisheries in Oregon, including properties on the Williamson, White, and John Day rivers, and more than 20 fishing properties leased in California, including three that are fly fishing only. California residents pay about \$1,000 annually for a WU family fishing-only membership that provides access and camping, plus a one-time initial fee of a similar amount. Oregon residents pay about half that. Members can fish either state. In total, the organization manages more than 120 ranches in the two states that include opportunities for game and bird hunting.

## Sweetgrass Rods Continues the Bamboo Tradition

By Norm Zeigler

Many in the fly-fishing community were stunned when, in December 2005, the entire bamboo-rod-building staff at the R.L. Winston Rod Com-

Reel in Your Dreams in the Potholes Reservoir Recreation Area

Photography by Jon Luke

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