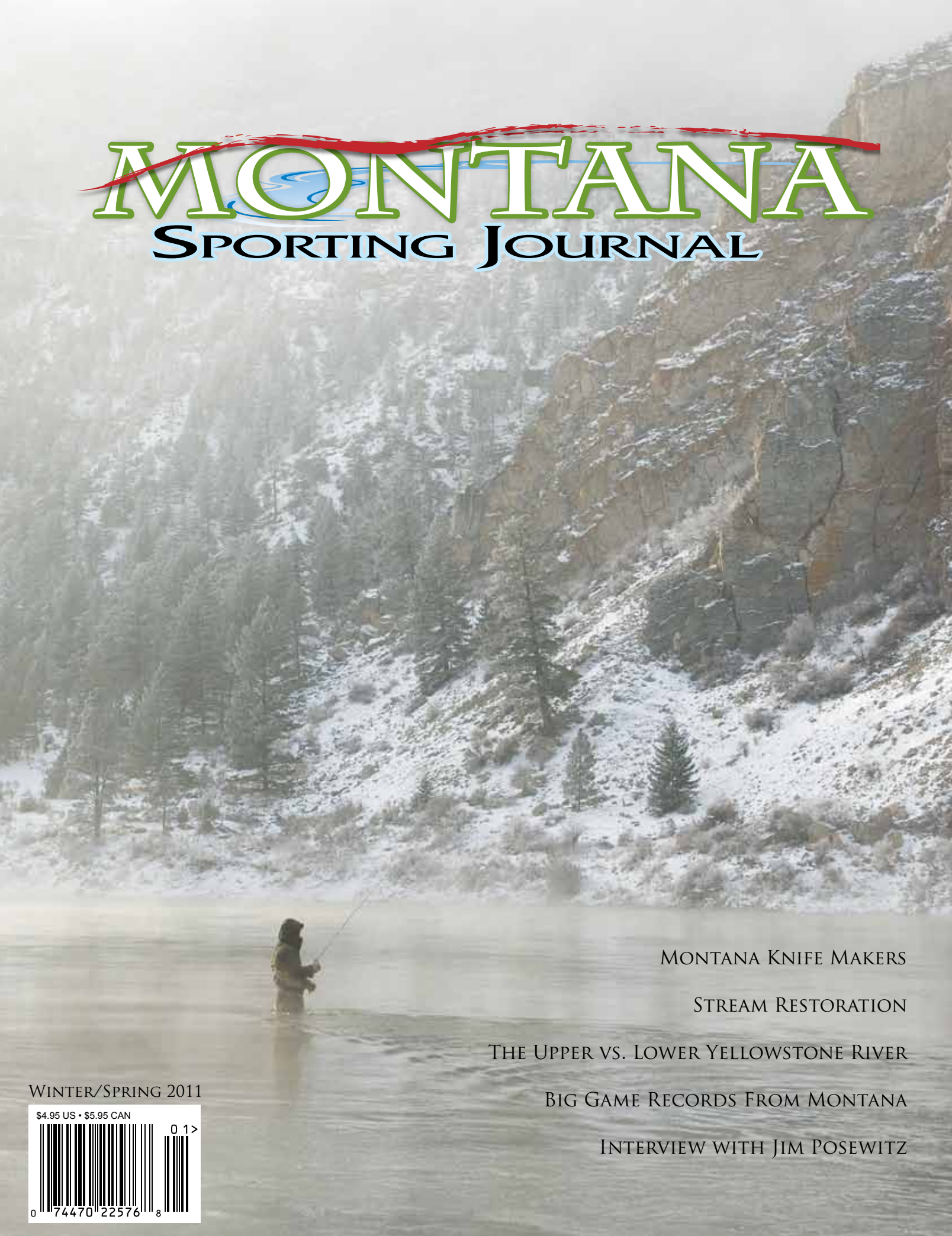


MONTANA

SPORTING JOURNAL



MONTANA KNIFE MAKERS

STREAM RESTORATION

THE UPPER VS. LOWER YELLOWSTONE RIVER

BIG GAME RECORDS FROM MONTANA

INTERVIEW WITH JIM POSEWITZ

WINTER/SPRING 2011

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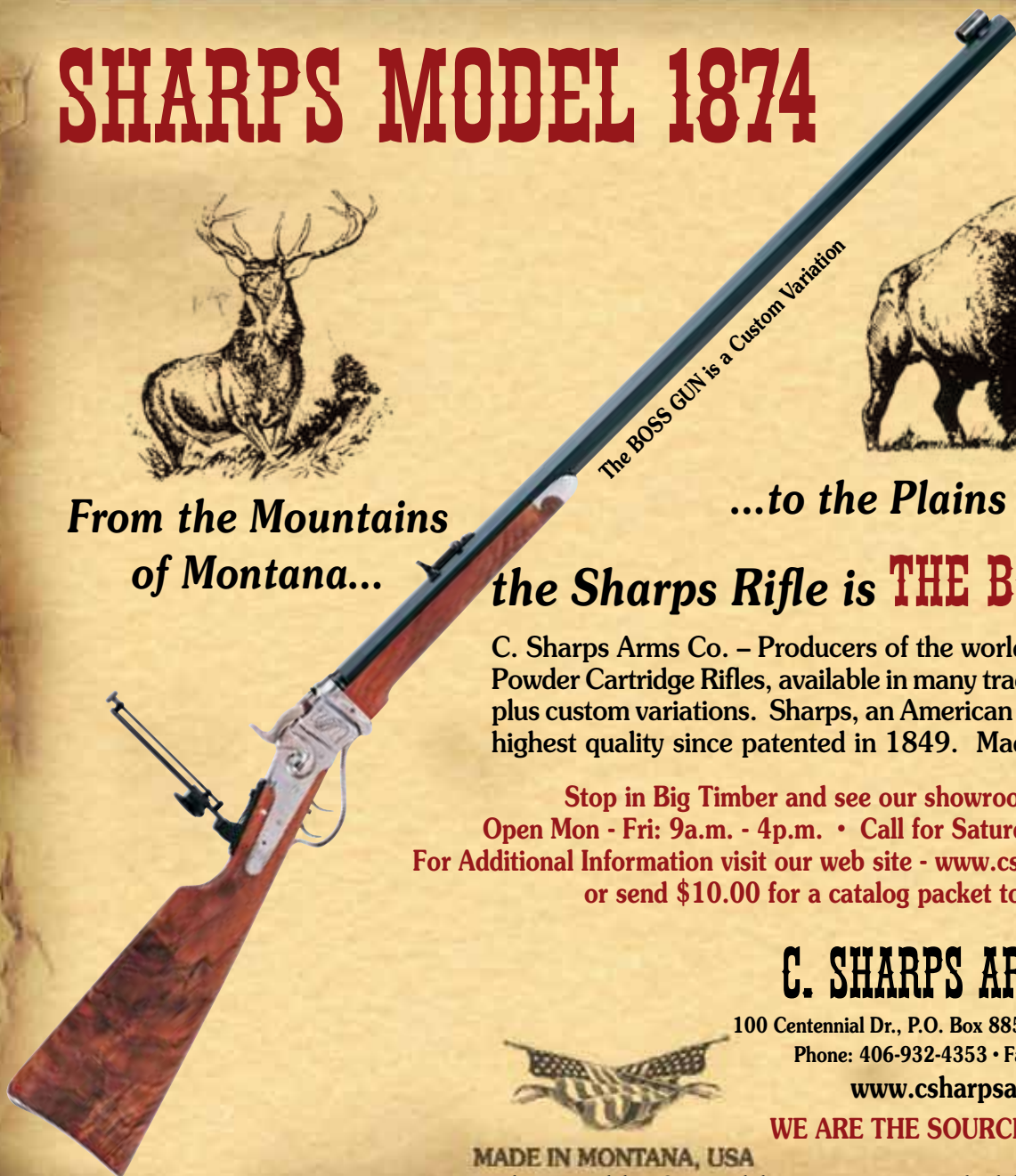
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C. Sharps Arms Co. has over 30 years in the business under the same management. We have never failed to produce the best in quality and accuracy, constantly improving our methods of manufacturing, quality of materials, and expanding our product line to better serve our customers, whether they are recreational or target shooters, hunters, or firearms aficionados, or historians.

Virtually every rifle we produce is a special order rifle and the number of options we offer cannot be incorporated into one rifle. We however have our limitations: I cannot fathom why anyone would want scope blocks on a classic Sharps Rifle or for that matter a recoil pad.

When it comes to the cost of our rifles, the customer receives more for his money than any other similar rifle produced in the world. Producing actions and parts from solid steel is more expensive than casting; we do it because the end product is superior in material, strength, and accuracy. We use Badger Barrels with cut rifling

and hand-lapped only because they are the best in the marketplace; we could produce a button rifled barrel for 25% or less of the cost of a Badger Barrel, but it would be considerably less in quality and performance as well as material.

We use all air-dried walnut. Kiln-dried walnut is more available and less expensive; however, it is also much more fragile and has a greater tendency to split with age. Wood is not a perfect product at its best, but you will never see plastic or laminated stocks on our rifles; yes, we have had requests for just that.

We do not offer antique finishes simply because the Sharps Rifle Co. did not have such a finish. Buffalo hunters, target shooters, sportsmen, as well as the US Military, all received new

rifles with a new finish. If Quigley would have ever been, he would have owned a new rifle and done his best to keep it in that condition simply because it was the most expensive rifle of its time and you can bet it was cared for. Antique finish came about after many decades of neglect and lack of care. Hollywood doesn't always get it right.

The craftsmen at C. Sharps Arms are among the best you will find anywhere in this country; their pride in their work, attention to detail, their willingness to teach our younger workers and be an example of showing our best is the least they tolerate.

Our custom rifles have stood among the finest ever produced since we started our custom shop in 1979 and C. Sharps Arms are without a doubt the rifles most copied because we are simply the best. Other producers of similar rifles may have more rifles

in the marketplace, but our goal is not to

produce the most just simply to produce the best.

I often do record searches for customers and in completing the search I give the original price: one such rifle shipped in 1989 sold for \$995.00 new, purchased used in excellent condition for \$1850.00 in 2005 and current replacement cost would be approx \$2300.00. What else could you have purchased new, that would have appreciated accordingly? Certainly not gold, a computer, or a video camera. The only thing that comes to mind is a Rolex watch - do you think quality has much to do with that? We have often said in our marketing, "Quality doesn't cost - it pays" and we can prove it.

John Schoffstall
President C. Sharps Arms



FIRST SGT. JOHN RYAN AT THE
LITTLE BIG HORN WITH MAJ. RENO 1876
By Ralph Heintz

A mind of its rotenone: How much do we value native fish?

WOULD YOU RATHER catch a cutthroat over a brown trout? Grayling over a rainbow? Whitefish over the flu? How much do Montanans value native fish? Montana's cutthroat don't generally get as large as the introduced trout and have a reputation for waving the white flag after a weak fight, but both Yellowstone and westslope cutts are unique species that most agree should be protected. At what cost?

Consider the scenario this past summer at southwest Montana's Cherry Creek. Thanks to partial funding by Ted Turner, whose Flying D Ranch makes up the vast majority of the surrounding banks, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks undertook a controversial project to poison the brooks, rainbows and Yellowstone cutthroats from dozens of miles of the upper section of Cherry Creek (the one that dumps into the lower Madison River) and its tributaries so they could plant westslope cutthroats, whose range has greatly diminished in the past century. The idea did not go over well with many local anglers who thought it would only beleaguer a perfectly productive fishery. After months of lawsuits and bickering, the project was approved and began in 2003 and concluded this past September.

The hubbub died down until this past July when word came that something had gone wrong, and a much larger portion of the creek had been poisoned. Theories emerged from FWP that the rotenone (the substance used to poison the creek – it's regularly used in such operations due to its quick-dispersing quality) was possibly mislabeled, or that the poison had sunk into the groundwater and re-emerged downstream, still with lethality.

Anecdotal reports of floating white bellies pouring into the Madison heightened concern among anglers. A cursory drive along the creek a few days later revealed no such horrors, and in fact some concentric circles of rising trout. But few.

The fact is that hundreds, possibly thousands

of trout had died. The full extent of the damage is unknown, but it was likely significant in the sections it fished best (where only a hike of several miles could get you). Pessimism reigned. A fishing outing by a duo of intrepid anglers and friends of mine revealed that it was more or less barren of trout in the aforementioned good water. But all may not be lost.

Further investigation unearthed optimism among fisheries biologists familiar with the situation. “We do expect the fish population in that section of stream to return to its former status, and are monitoring it to see how long it takes,” Pat Clancey, the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks fisheries biologist from Ennis who worked on the project, said. “The accidental poisoning occurred on August 4, we sampled on August 27, and have seen some recovery, though so far it's mostly 2-year old rainbows (8-10 inches) pioneering upstream.”

Any given stream can support a certain number of fish-pounds. Since rotenone supposedly dissipates fast and leaves no toxins, Cherry Creek should be able to recover in due time, especially since it's directly connected to a productive fishery.

FWP fisheries biologist Mike Vaughn explains further: “Think of it this way. In a top notch trout river like the Madison, nearly every physical spot that will hold say, an 18-inch brown, will be occupied by just that, an 18-inch brown. Now every trout in the river is growing, so a 15-incher is going to turn into an 18-incher before long. He's got to find a new home suitable for an 18-incher, but they're all taken. He won't last long without that suitable spot. This constant growth and limited living spots are one reason that we find 30 to 50 percent average annual mortality rates in good wild trout streams. That's right, a third to a half of the individual fish in the Madison today will not be there a year from now. The stream can only hold so many numbers/pounds of fish but the fish are constantly growing. Something's got to give. This annual mortality happens whether anglers are fishing the stream

or not. This is also why some angler harvest can be allowed on many streams without impacting the overall trout population.

“The population pressure I've described for the Madison River should help repopulate Cherry Creek with fish of all sizes. Some trout seem to stay in one reach but others move long distances quite easily and will find the empty habitat in Cherry Creek.”

Vaughn speculated that spawning browns from this past fall should have run up Cherry Creek, and many could have stayed because of the available habitat.

We will never know exactly what went wrong, and miscues like this are rare. This same restoration regimen is currently taking place at several alpine lakes in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, Jewel Basin Hiking Area and nearby national forest. With this, we must revisit the issue of man's role in populating Montana's fisheries. Without man's hand, there would be no browns, brooks or

rainbows to decimate in Cherry Creek. But when should well enough be left alone? Montana's native fish do need more room to roam, but certain places are better suited than others.

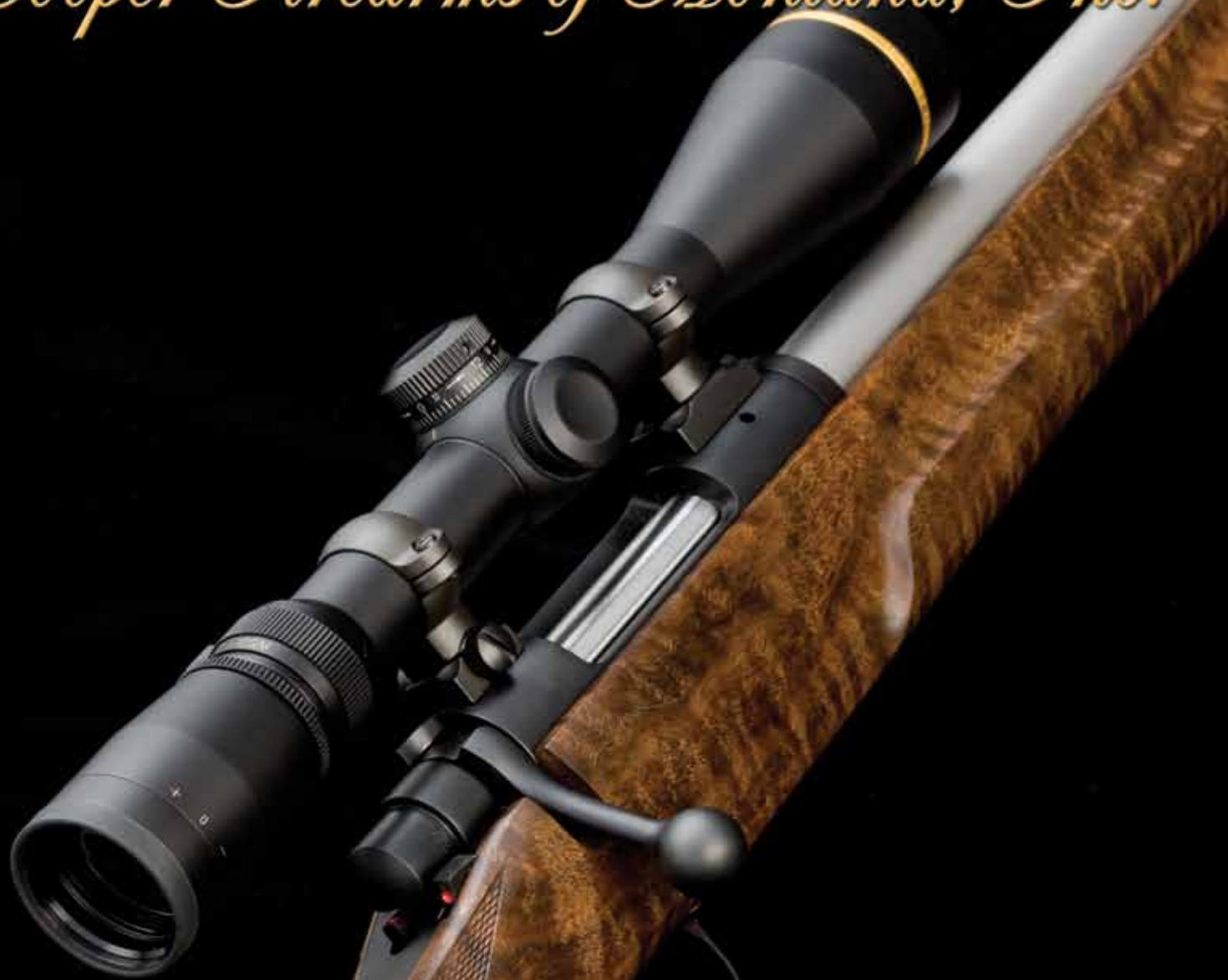
Montana's unique river-stocking policy is evidence that sometimes leaving well enough alone is best.

We may be beyond the point of no return for cutthroat trout. With overfishing, the addition of rainbow and lake trout, whirling disease, water quality degradation, and any number of other complications, trying to restore cutthroats to their native range, at this juncture, is a monumental task.

Are we willing to sacrifice our famous browns and rainbows to restore natives? Will more manipulation lead to more loss? Maybe we should take a lesson from the signs we read at Montana's trailheads and campgrounds and leave what we find as we found it.



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