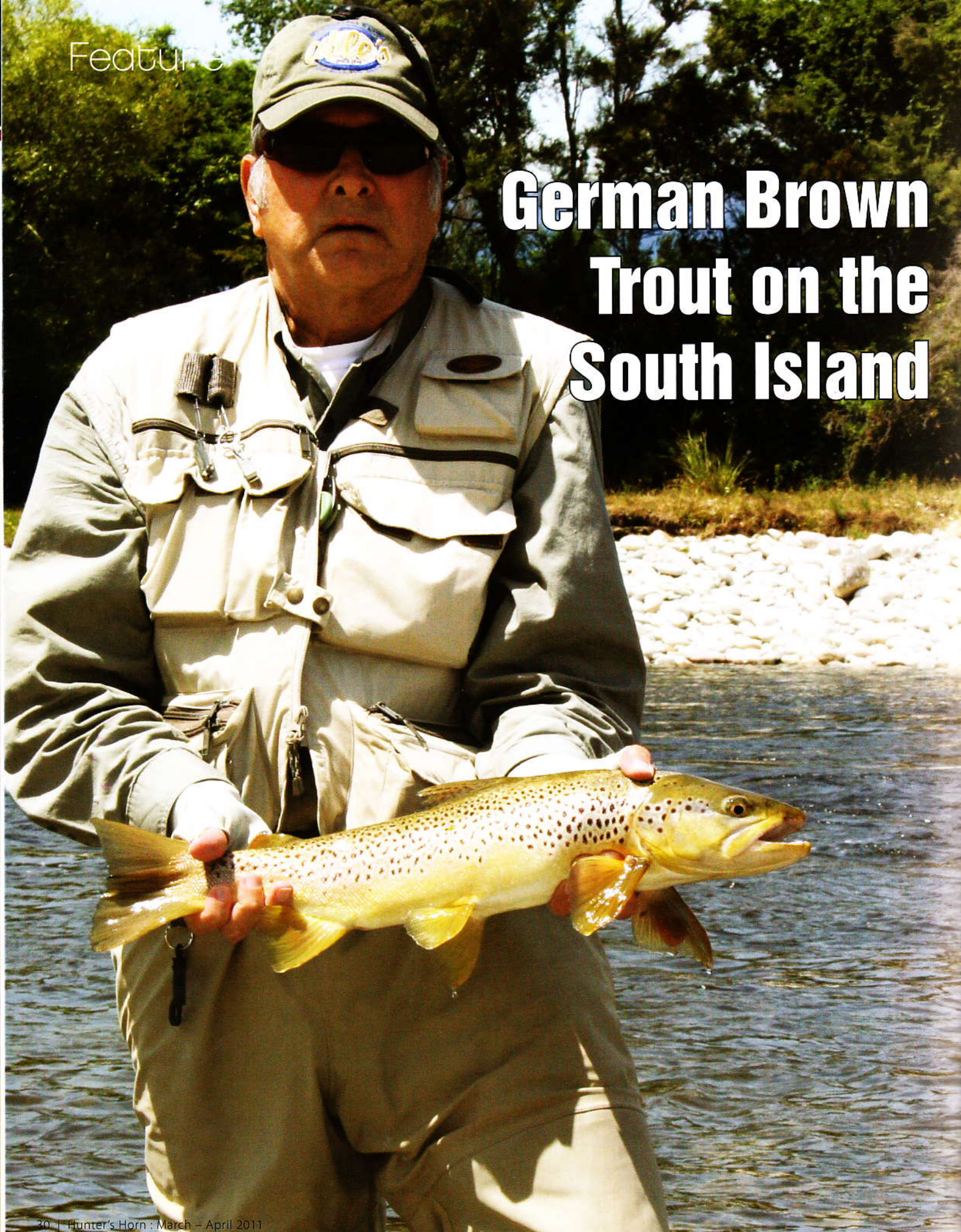


Feature

# German Brown Trout on the South Island





By Joseph Matulevich

It is with great hesitancy that I write this report. I always felt that reporting on bird hunting in the Hunter's Horn was on the margin for relevant topics. But sight-fishing for big brown trout in New Zealand actually has a lot of similarity to big game hunting.

Firstly, you stalk from downstream (downwind) after walking quite a bit. You approach quietly and low to the ground. Your clothing is drab olive green. You shoot the line precisely 4 to 5 feet from the nose of the fish (shot placement). If the fish bites, a smooth hook set is vital (squeeze the trigger). Unlike most hunting efforts, the battle has just begun. Tight line and appropriate drag are essential now. Let the fish run to tire, but never let the line go slack. After several minutes, bring the fish to net; take a photo, and then release it to fight another day.

One major difference from hunting, a big German brown will never turn, charge, and kill you.

If you're still with me, here are some details of the trip.

Mike McClelland's agency handles only New Zealand trips and his experience was obvious as he provided a very enjoyable package. Sasha and I had 9 days of touring interspersed between 2 lots of 5 day fly fishing on the South Island.

The first fly fishing leg began from the Riverview Lodge near Hanmer Springs.

The lodge had a family feel to it. We sat with the owners, John and Robin Gemmell, at dinner and shared their wine.

The fishing was difficult here. Efforts included maneuvering over large rocks in the river and on the river's edge. Also, upstream winds had to be dealt with on two days. But of the two venues, the fish were the larger here.

Lack of familiarity with hook setting for these fish caused me the loss of two 4 to 5 lb. fish. A delayed subtle hook set was required.

The second fly fishing leg emanated from Lake Rotoroa Lodge. This was more of a formal hotel with less of a family feel, but very pleasant none the less. The general manager, Bill McDermott, couldn't have

been more helpful. He even fixed a flat tire on our rental car.

My casting had improved by the time I reached Lake Rotoroa, and my success rate followed. The rivers had their share of rocks to travel over, but less so than the first venue.

The challenge of New Zealand fishing was all I could hope for and at times, more than I could handle. Nonetheless, I'm glad to have undertaken it.

Furthermore, at 64 years of age, it was quite pleasant to return to a well appointed lodge for a hot shower, a fine wine with a great dinner, and a restful night in a comfortable bed. This, for me, completed the adventure.

