

BINGO

By Gary Fuller
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In the career of a fly rodder, there is a point where you no longer have to catch a fish to have a successful day. Just being there is usually enough.

All alone in 1979, I paddled my float tube along the shore line of a small lake near the Continental Divide in Montana. I hadn't hooked a fish all morning, but that did not diminish the day and the beautiful backcountry setting.

The lake usually produces big rainbows and as I reviewed my fly choice, two fishermen were launching their float tubes at the far end of the lake. On a still day, casual conversation carries clearly across the water. Some disappointment began to set in over losing the solitude I usually enjoy at this spot when I heard one of the new arrivals call out, "Bingo!" First they were just intruders, but now these people were catching fish. A few minutes later I heard it again, "Bingo." After lunch they subjected me to more of the same and still I had not gotten a single hit.

The distinct success of these interlopers bruised my pride and began to depreciate the wilderness setting. At the take-out spot, I gathered my gear slowly to let them catch up. After a polite "Hello", I tactfully tried to move the conversation toward the subject of fly selection for the day. Their's had obviously been much more successful than my own. Just as I opened my mouth, the elder of the two men called out, "Bingo." Shock was written all over me as a small blue heeler cow dog

came bouncing out of the sage brush. “That’s Bingo?”, I blurted. They abruptly informed me they had not touched a single fish, their dog kept running off and the only redeeming part of the day was the beautiful fall weather. I quietly inventoried my tackle for the walk out, but I have never regretted the decision to leave the need to catch fish behind.