

HERE THERE BE TIGERS

Utah's Boulder Mountain has more than 50 lakes and ponds packed with fish—including the highly-coveted tiger trout. All you need is some fly gear, a pumped-up float tube, and a rugged ride that'll get you to the top

By T. Edward Nickens

Photographs by Nathaniel Welch





I smell like fish, sweat, and skanky waders, and I'm beyond ready to call it quits as I find my float tube across the dark surface of a Utah alpine pond. That's when the first sliver of the moon crests the horizon, through a fringe of dark spruce in the eastern sky, and I start kicking like crazy for a better view. This is a full harvest moon—the super blood moon of 2015—and the sight of it rising through the trees gives me a jolt of fresh energy.

For the last 10 hours I've crisscrossed southern Utah's Boulder Mountain, stalking brook trout, cutthroats, and Arctic grayling, racing UTVs from lake to pond atop the highest timbered plateau in North America. Now my buddies Steve McGrath, Brandon Sparrow, and Mike Hadley bob in float tubes nearby. We are all spent from a dash to fish the last minutes of daylight, but as the blood moon climbs and earth's shadow moves toward a full lunar eclipse, our foursome floats in awestruck silence. A light breeze ripples the water and that's when I hear them—elk bugling beyond the ridge, their screams carried by the

"IT WASN'T EASY GETTING HERE, BUT FOR THE MOMENT THE FISH ARE COMING HARD AND FAST, AND IT'S THE EASIEST FISHING I CAN RECALL. IT'S SUCH CRAZY FISHING THAT WE DO THE CRAZY THING: LEAVE FISH TO FIND FISH."

