

# SOAK IT ALL UP

A COFFEE TABLE BOOK THAT WILL ALLOW YOU TO DO JUST THAT.

EVERY NOW AND THEN I GET A SMALL GIFT IN the mail. It usually comes in a plain brown, square flat package, a touch smaller than a CD case. It arrives without advance notice via regular post with a U.S. stamp and the first thing that comes to mind is usually, "I won't need to search for a cover image for the *Journal* next issue."

Eldridge Hardie, for whatever reason, sent me these parcels randomly over the last 20 years. Each contains a 4X4 transparency of a recent painting, always a salmon angling scene. Along with John Swan and CD Clarke, no other artist has appeared on and in the *Journal* as many times.

Now in his latest book, *The Sporting Art of Eldridge Hardie, Paintings of Upland Hunting, Angling and Waterfowling*, the artist offers 150 paintings covering every kind of outdoor sporting scene. There's a certain chronology to Hardie's art that begins in an unlikely place, El Paso, Texas. Fishing and hunting opportunities were few, but in his own words, "almost daily I'd be hopping on my bike to check the magazine rack at the drug store for the latest issues of *Sports Afield*, *Field & Stream* and *Outdoor Life*. The stories I read in those magazines captivated me."

Art, hunting and fishing infused themselves into his life after he spent four summers guiding on Yellowstone Lake. His work was coloured by what he loved to do, and he loved to do it all. Field hunting geese, sinkbox gunning, dove hunting and more. Hardie has this thing about light, it's early morning, or dusk, but a lot of his paintings also show the brightness of mid-day. He paints where and when the action takes place—hunters setting up decoys, anglers bringing a catch to the net, dogs flushing and retrieving birds.

One of my all time Hardie favourites, however, found its way into the book. It's different from many of his other paintings because the action is very subtle. Titled "Bright Water," for me it represents the



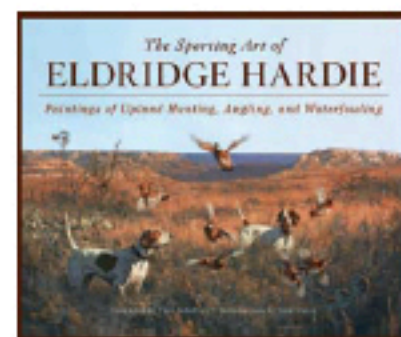
Eldridge Hardie's oil painting of the Upper Pool on the Godbout River captures the essence of this pristine wilderness location.

quiet moment between the excitement of a rise and the crucial instant when the follow-up taking cast is made. It's where an angler and guide seem to be waiting those two minutes between a bump and recasting. This painting brings me back to my first salmon on the Etamamio River. I was casting on Rapid West Pool when a dark torpedo came up and splashed near my fly. My heart leaped from my chest almost propelling me from the boat into the water. I was ready to cast right back when François Mastenapeo, my Montagnais guide, told me to hold on. Hold on? How long, I whispered. He pulled out a cigarette indicating I was to wait just the time it took him to enjoy a smoke.

It seemed like an eternity, but it was maybe two minutes before he told me to get ready to cast again and, sure enough, there was the take and game on with my first salmon ever. I remember almost every second of that two minute wait, but the actual take I can't put into words. Fortunately, Hardie describes it ever so perfectly, "The fly swims just below the surface. Now there it is. I see the slight hump in the water just before I feel the solid pull on the line. My heart jumps, but I do nothing until the salmon turns and hooks itself against the reel's drag."

Whether you enjoy upland hunting, angling or waterfowling, *The Sporting Art of Eldridge Hardie* offers 150 moments just like my salmon. Or best put by author Paul Schullery in his foreword to the book: "So turn the page and off you go, out to the high country streams, saltwater flats, grouse coverts, salmon pools, snowy duck blinds, heather meadows, stubble fields and all the other places to which our dearest dreams have always drawn us. Go, relax; pay attention; soak it all up. You don't need to worry. With a guide like Eldridge Hardie you won't miss a thing."

—MS



*The Sporting Art of Eldridge Hardie, Paintings of Upland Hunting, Angling and Waterfowling*  
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