

**Review of *Huckleberry Days*,
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**HUCKLEBERRY DAYS: A TROUTING,
SHOOTING AND READING LIFE**

Author: Garrett Evans

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Review: GRAHAM LINSOTT

THIS little book is ostensibly an account of the outdoors life in several different localities: the American Deep South; England and Scotland; South Africa and New Zealand. But it is as much a literary exploration as the author connects the localities to the work of his favourite authors by way of a series of highly evocative vignettes. It is also the story of his life.

Garret Evans is a professor of English literature. The child of an American military family, he was already well travelled between the various postings before he went to Exeter University in the West Country of England.

Here he simply extended the trout-fishing and shooting activities that had been part of his life since childhood days, developing a deep empathy with the moorlands of Devon, and its people, as well as with

other wild localities in England and Scotland.

Much of the appeal of trout-fishing and shooting pigeons and game birds is the breathtakingly beautiful surroundings in which the fisherman/hunter finds himself; his immersion into primaevial hunting and gathering activities that are part of the folk memory.

Evans connects this to the work of his favourite authors – Yeats, Byron and Shelley among them – and makes his own observations. It all adds up to something lyrical and evocative. An example:

“There’s a timelessness about moorland that comprises one of its greatest attractions: out there only the ripples of the streams seem to change. In the months that followed and turned into years I increasingly spent longer periods out there along the streams. It was marvellous coming back down them in the dark, listening to

the song of the nightingales, or the seatrout crashing in the pools. Often, too, at night there was the smell of honeysuckle floating in the summer air.”

Of course, many people today would regard fly-fishing with distaste; the shooting of game birds with something approaching revulsion.

Blood sports are not cool.

Evans is perfectly aware of this and makes the point that such people also invariably enjoy eating chops.

Evans obliquely and subtly takes us through his own life career; the romances and atmosphere – Exeter University really made a deep impression – before marrying then eventually moving on to New Zealand.

I found this little gem of a book engaging and entertaining – and one of the most enjoyable reads I have chanced on in a long time.

