



The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild *Gazette*

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March 2021

The next meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will take place on Friday, March 19, at 7:00 P. M. Zoom links will be sent to all members prior to the event.



A circle of beautiful wet flies, tied by Tom Mason

President's Message **By Joe Ceballos**

With Opening Day in New York less than a month away, let's be hopeful that winter is passing quickly and that warmer temperatures are coming soon. From most accounts, the guild's video presentation, *Past, Present, and Future* that was shown during our last membership meeting, was well received. Feedback expressed by our members offered some suggestions for changes, and those changes are being made. When the revisions are complete, another presentation will follow.

Continued progress on our website is being made, and ideas from our membership regarding content that you'd like to see are welcome. Let's hear from you—and don't be shy.

The history committee continues to review submissions for the guild's book archive, and an updated list will come out soon. Many thanks go to the members who followed through with suggestions of titles to add to the list. Several of those books have already been added.

Due to the pandemic continuing, there are no face-to-face meeting plans on the near horizon. For the foreseeable future, we'll continue to have meetings using Zoom. The turnout has steadily increased with each of our virtual meetings, and our last meeting approached fifty members in attendance. Virtual meetings are not perfect, but they have offered an opportunity for many of our members to attend who would otherwise be too far away to meet in the Catskills, and we can anticipate an excellent March meeting with the presentation of our members' favorite flies.

It was suggested at our last meeting that we meet outdoors to fish. We'll look into the feasibility of doing this and plan a fishing outing for May or June where distance protocols can be met.

In the meantime, please keep safe, stay healthy, and good times will follow.

Secretary's Notices **By Nicole March**

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will be putting together a presentation to show at the March meeting, taking place via Zoom, March 19th, at 7:00 P.M. The presentation will showcase different fly patterns

that are submitted by our members. A few notices regarding this event have previously been sent, but we are sending another reminder, because we have not had many responses.

We are looking for one, two, or three of your favorite fly patterns. The flies that you choose can be historical, can be something that you have come up with, or can be any fly of your choice that works for you on the water. You might pick a fly that you simply feel like sharing with the membership. These patterns do not have to be tied specifically for fishing in the Catskills, and they can be based on any material, synthetic or natural. The presentation is simply a fun way for our membership to share ideas and conversation.

To have your fly included in the program, send a clear photo of your fly, along with the recipe and any notes that you wish to be included in the PowerPoint presentation. If the fly is original, you can include notes on how you came up with the pattern. If the fly is an already established pattern, please note how you first learned of it. We'd also like you to share how you fish the pattern.

When you submit your fly, let us know if you would like to speak for a moment and answer questions from the membership at the meeting. If you indicate that you are willing to speak, we'd like to unmute your microphone when your fly is shown, rather than just have us read your information out loud. If speaking is something that you do not want to do, then simply let us know, and we will bypass asking you to talk. It's all a matter of personal preference. Virtual meetings are not always an ideal way to communicate, but at this time, they're our best available choice, so feel free to participate based on your comfort level.

Please send all submissions to: CatskillFlyTyersGuild@gmail.com
The deadline for submitting flies is March 17, 2021.

Request for Tying Materials

Pete Adams is a Catskill Fly Tyers Guild member and a founding member of the Boy Scouts National Fishing Sub-Committee. Pete has the following announcement requesting donations of tying materials to be used at a special Boy Scout event: "We expect approximately 3,000 scouts to participate in the Fly Fishing Merit Badge program at the next National Jamboree. To meet the fly-tying requirement, each scout must tie two different flies. We plan to feature five patterns: Woolly Worm, Pheasant Tail Nymph, Elk Hair Caddis, Foam Beetle, and Clouser Minnow. Those are simple and effective patterns that will help us teach basic tying skills. Most flies will be tied on size 10 or 12 hooks. We've been collecting and preparing materials since the last Jamboree, but still need grizzly (or other colors) hen hackle or soft rooster hackle for Woolly Worms, pheasant tails for the Pheasant Tail Nymph, elk or deer hair for the Elk Hair Caddis, and bucktails for the Clouser Minnow. For most scouts, this will be their first introduction to fly tying. The pandemic has pushed the date of the Jamboree to 2023, but it is important to organize the tying kits well in advance for a group of this size. If you can help us with a much-appreciated donation of needed materials, please contact me at padams4.si@gmail.com. Thank you."

Dave Brandt Keepsakes

Bruce Concors has many hackle capes, hats, fishing shirts, and other personal items that come from the collection of our beloved Dave Brandt. Bruce wants us to know that he will not be selling more of Dave's items until we can again meet face to face. At that time, he will have all of the items available for purchase in memory of our dear friend.



Painting of Morrell Field, by Lois Ostapczuk

Morrell Field **By Lois Ostapczuk**

After the Esopus, one of the first trout streams that my husband frequently wanders is the upper portion of Rondout Creek. This little headwater brook-trout stream has drawn the attention of many angling notables: John Burroughs, Edward R. Hewitt, Everett E. Garrison, and Cecil E. Heacox. In his essay “A Bed of Boughs,” Catskill naturalist John Burroughs wrote the following about his Rondout Creek: “My eyes had never before beheld such beauty in a mountain stream.”

Sadly, in recent times, the upper Rondout has often been subjected to abuse and disregard by unruly summer visitors who flock to the Blue Hole, just upstream from Morrell Field and the highway bridge on Ulster County Route 42. Even the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation displayed a mild level of disregard for this area when they renamed this landmark Trailer Field; how Catskill is that notation?

My husband and I often stop here, where little wild brook trout still make their home, while pondering John Burroughs’s words above—bringing this watercolor to life.

View more of Catskill artist Lois Ostapczuk’s paintings by visiting:

<http://catskillwatersart.blogspot.com/2014/02/blog-post.html>

White Pond and Pass Lake

What could a man-made Catskill pond and a small brook trout lake found in Ontario, Canada, possibly have in common? In the case of White Pond and Pass Lake, perhaps there’s more than what meets the eye.

When my wife and I relocated to the Catskills in 1970, I remember the county highway between Big Indian and Frost Valley, Ulster County Route 47, being partially a gravel road from the hairpin turn at Giant Ledge to up past Winnisook Lake. It was one of my favorite Catskill drives. Eventually, the entire route became paved—at least it seemed so by the time I joined the Frost Valley YMCA fly-fishing club in 1977. However, storm waters gushing down from Slide Mountain, carrying much of the mountain away along the journey, made upkeep of the hilly, curve-ridden road quite the chore.

Ulster County needed stone to resurface Route 47, and rather than hauling it long distances, it was more economical to excavate rock from the Frost Valley YMCA. In return, Frost Valley got a man-

Up on the Esopus



With Ed Ostapczuk

made twenty-foot-deep pond that was about one and a half acres, built circa 1990. The late Charles “Chuck” White, a Frost Valley employee, negotiated the deal. Natural springs filled in the depression from where stone was removed, resulting in the spring-fed pond that was named in honor of Chuck White. Chuck, along with the late Catskill Bill Kelly, seined wild brook trout from nearby sources and relocated those trout into White Pond as seed fish. Crawfish and nutrients were added to create an environment conducive to trout. This pond became somewhat of a fish laboratory for Bill Kelly, a retired New York State DEC fisheries biologist.

White Pond was eventually opened to Frost Valley’s fly-fishing membership. Over time, landlocked salmon, followed by rainbow trout, then brown trout, were stocked in the pond as supplemental species to the wild brook trout. Only the brook trout could reproduce, spawning naturally by utilizing the pond’s underground springs. The salmon and rainbows were planted in the hope that each species would grow large. The experiment for both fish failed, but the brookies thrived so well that a few medium-sized hatchery browns were added to cull the stunted brook-trout population.

For decades, White Pond offered superb brook trout fishing during spring ice-outs and in the fall before the trout spawned. It was not uncommon to catch a few fat and colorful twelve-to-sixteen-inch brookies; I even taped one out at nineteen inches. Those were the days, and White Pond was clearly the crown jewel of Frost Valley brook trout fishing. Then, in 2011, Hurricane Irene caused a water body at a higher elevation, Lake Cole, to spill. The flowing water carried yellow perch down Route 47 and into White Pond. Yellow perch in the same pond as wild brookies are a death knell to the brook-trout fishery. It didn’t take long for paradise to be lost, and those halcyon days at White Pond are now only fond memories remaining for a few of us.

I’ve maintained my Frost Valley YMCA fishing membership for more than forty years. The fishing has been great some years, and other years produced lean catch rates. As with most clubs of its kind, Frost Valley maintains an anglers’ log in which all fly fishers are requested to report their results. Just as anglers have been known to do, I sometimes bent the truth, not by reporting *more* fish than I caught, but reporting *fewer* fish, and not always saying where I caught them. That said, through this log I met an honest angler, superior fly fisher, Catskill Fly Tyers Guild member, and someone I’d like to call a good friend—Wade Burkhart. From the log, I’ve always noted the fish that other anglers reported catching, and I especially noticed which fly they relied upon. When fishing White Pond, Wade often recorded successful catches using a Pass Lake wet fly.

A Pass Lake wet fly? I knew nothing of such a pattern until the late Aaron Hirschhorn initially educated me on the Pass Lake wet, followed by Wade himself as I watched him masterfully seduce large autumn White Pond brook trout, one after the other. Aaron pointed me to Dick Surette’s *Trout and Salmon Fly Index* for my original pattern introduction. Other books, such as Terry Hellekson’s *Fish Flies*, list it as a streamer, and if one searches enough, there are other variations of this pattern.

Recently, I emailed Wade Burkhart about this wet fly. Wade wrote: “Ah, the Pass Lake. A fly full of memories. I don’t recall where I ran across it, but its history is pretty clear.”

Wade provided much information about the fly, including that it was a Lutheran minister, the Reverend Emil Stubenvoll, who conceived the pattern, and that Ross Mueller, in his *Upper Midwest Flies That Catch Trout*, lists 1938 as the year of the fly’s creation. Reverend Stubenvoll’s son-in-law, Earl Paape, tied commercially and popularized the pattern.

Wade also pointed out that although The Pass Lake is considered a Wisconsin fly, the actual Pass Lake is in Ontario, Canada. The reverend had originally developed the pattern for brook trout in that lake, but the Pass Lake fly has now become a favorite in the Midwest.

Various sources give the original dressing as a tail of mallard flank, a black chenille body, brown hackle, and a white calf-tail wing. There is a picture of an original Pass Lake tied by Earl Paape that confirms this dressing. Other versions of the fly can be found in Schoolmeyer and Leeson’s *Trout Flies*

of the East, and some variations even include a body of peacock herl, with golden pheasant tippets for the tail.

Despite the many variations that exist for the fly, Wade wrote, “I’m not budging from the simple pattern I prefer.” Wade’s version of the fly favors a brown hen-hackle tail, black chenille body (medium or fine, depending on the size being tied), hackle of brown hen, and a white calf-tail wing.

There are no versions of the Pass Lake with a beard hackle; it is always tied with a wound hackle. Wade’s instructions note that it is very hard to get the hackle to behave if you wind it over the butts of the wing, so he winds the hackle first, then adds the wing last.

Remembering his usual practice on White Pond of always casting at least two Pass Lake flies and sometimes adding a third fly of a different dressing, Wade wrote, “In an oddity I can’t explain, the Pass Lake on the dropper always caught the most fish. The middle position is supposed to be the worst for a wet fly, but for a Pass Lake it was the best.”

Wade tied his Pass Lake wets on an elongated shank hook, but I’ve been stuck in first gear for over half-a-century, tying all my wet flies on Mustad 3399 hooks. My version of the pattern is listed below. Just keep in mind that it’s coming from the guy who stole the fly from a Frost Valley angler’s log.



Pass Lake

Hook: Wet fly in size of choice (I use Mustad 3399 size 12)

Thread: Black

Tail: Brown hen hackle

Body: Black chenille

Wing: Polar bear or white calf tail

Hackle: Wound brown hen

So here’s to angling logs, brook trout ponds, and trout flies—may they forever keep us interested.

The Fish of a Lifetime **By Dr. Larry Rappaport**

What would you give for a dream fish? For many years, I pursued my dream of catching a huge Atlantic salmon. What I didn’t foresee was how that catch would come with a catch of its own, but I’ve been in this game long enough to know that it’s the things we can’t predict that make the adventure worthwhile.

I’ve been salmon fishing at Middle Camp on the Grand Cascapedia River on the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec for a week each June since 1995. There have been good and bad years. Prior to 2011, my best year was five fish, and my worst was one fish, which was the only fish caught that week by the eight anglers in camp. Because a lifetime of throwing X-ray films onto a view-box has trashed both of my rotator cuffs, I fish a two-handed rod. For many years, I had used a fourteen-foot Sage. It cast

Looking Back Upstream



easily, and there was never a need to Spey cast on this river. A few years ago, I switched to a thirteen-foot Loomis GLX 1568, which I love, so I kept the Sage as a reserve.

About five years ago, I was chatting with Darrel Coule, a wonderful, hard-working guide who is as big and strong as a bull. I always like to have him with me, because he could easily pull me out of trouble should I fall into the river. Darrel said to me, “Larry, if I get you a forty-pound fish, would you give me that Sage which you aren’t using anymore?” I figured that my chances of getting a fish that size were about the same as the chances of a salesman successfully peddling matzo balls in St. Patrick’s Cathedral, so I agreed. The years went by, Darrel kept reminding me of the deal, and it became a standing joke.

Forward the story to June 19, 2011. When I came into Middle Camp that morning, I met David Goodman, who had fished the previous week. He reported that the fishing had been spectacular. That afternoon’s fishing session began at 4:00 P.M. I went with Darrel and his boat operator, Danny Cyr, along with my fishing partner for the day, Yvan Dupont, in a twenty-six-foot Sharp canoe. We motored upriver to Van Allen Pool, which is one of the most famous locations on the river.

In past years, you could see a dozen fish rolling in prime time at Van Allen Pool. This, however, was not prime time. Yvan is a very experienced salmon fisher, but we both had no success after swinging flies through the pool. At the taylor, Danny lifted the anchor, and we dropped down to Almon’s, which is the next pool downriver. I had the first drop, and Darrel tied to my 12-pound-test leader a size 6 Sugarman Shrimp—a fly that I’d never heard of. On the third cast, there was a huge surge in the water, and the fish showed. Darrel took one look, gave a grunt, and turned to me saying, “Larry, you can kiss your rod goodbye!” Line began zinging out of my Bogdan reel, and I was afraid that the fish was going to go back to the sea, but the reel’s smooth drag eventually persuaded it not to do so. The canoe was brought to the bank to fight the fish. After about twenty minutes, the fish was near the boat, and Darrel went into the water with a catch-and-release net equipped with an attached scale. The salmon was a beautiful, chrome-bright hen. The indicated weight was forty-four pounds. It actually might have been heavier, but Darrel was more than waist deep in the water and couldn’t raise the fish entirely clear of the water for weighing, so Archimedes’s Principle likely stole a bit of weight from the scale. The fish was bleeding a bit from the mouth, so we decided to release the fish without attempting to remove the fly or obtain measurements.



Guide Darrel Coule with the author’s fish

Darrel got his rod. As it turned out, another “sport” (as salmon anglers are termed in Quebec) had heard of my wager, and during the previous week, he had made the same deal with Darrel. Sure enough, he also got a forty-pounder! That’s two rods for Darrel. The tale swiftly made its way up and down the Gaspé and even onto the Restigouche River.

I wanted a permanent reminder of my dream fish. Fortunately, photos had been taken, and there was a carving of a similar forty-four-pound fish at the camp that we measured for comparison. The

Ten minutes after my large salmon came to hand, Yvan got into the act with a sixteen-pounder. I promptly landed another fish, slightly lighter than Yvan’s, on a Blue Charm fly pattern. We both thought that our catches were not bad for an evening’s work. Congratulations were expressed all around in the boat and again at the camp, where a bottle of champagne was opened at dinner to celebrate.

The fishing the rest of the week was terrific. I made the two-fish-per-day limit every day save one. All of the fish were released. It was time for the piper to be paid: a generous cash tip for Danny and, with some ceremony,

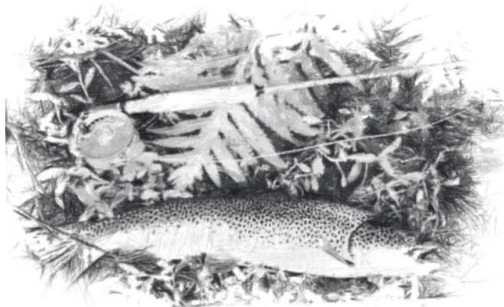
dimensions of the carving were forty-eight inches for length and twenty-seven inches for girth. I called master carver and painter Steve Smith in Jamestown, New York. Sure, a model of my salmon could be made, but Steve had a four-year waiting list. I would be seventy-six years old when it was done! I appealed to Steve to move me ahead on the basis of my age, and I got the model by the end of the year.

Follow-up: I reported the above events to Greg Liu, my Salmon River, New York, guide. Greg said: "Larry, no problem. I've got a fourteen-foot Sage I want to get rid of. You can have it." One guide taketh away, and another guide giveth.



Steve Smith's Carving of the author's salmon

Casting Catskill Cane



With Mark Sturtevant

A Spring Fly Box – Tested Patterns

I have been a fly tyer for something like thirty years, a passion dedicated to my wont, no, my *need* to show the trout something different. Though I tie and fish a number of classic Catskill patterns, a close look into my spring fly box will find that most of the flies have been tied with my own little flourishes.

My influences have brought me to the conclusion that a good trout fly must offer the impression of life and, if it is to be selected by a substantial wild trout that's previously been bombarded with thousands of commercial patterns, it must offer a better impression of

life than all of the other flies drifted over said fish by fellow brothers of the angle. Living insects exhibit movement, translucency, color, and a characteristic shape. I try to incorporate all of those features in the flies I tie, whether that fly is a Catskill Hendrickson or is one of my own designs.

Thirty years ago, I developed the habit of sampling bugs. I would pluck them from the surface of the stream, pull them from tangles of aquatic vegetation, or chase them into my hand from their favorite rock. I'd compare their sizes with the fly that I was fishing, and I would study their conformation and color. Ah yes, color—a debated topic among fly fishers and fly tyers. I learned my lesson on color at the scene of my very first mayfly hatch, all those years ago.

I was fishing Maryland's Big Gunpowder Falls, a small, clear tailwater stream with a nice population of wild brown trout. It was a gorgeous, sunny afternoon. Little yellow flies began to appear on the surface, and trout began to eat them. I opened the only fly box that I had and brought forth a size 16 Light Cahill. I'd read about the Sulphur hatch and realized that was what I was experiencing, and I had further read that the Light Cahill was a popular imitation. The Gunpowder browns had not read those words.

My fly looked right to me, but not to them, so I plucked a bug from the water's surface, turned it upside down, and held it next to my Cahill. The little bug was yellow: a mixture of a soft pale yellow tone with highlights of a brighter yellow. My Cahill was a creamy ivory color, and not yellow at all, though it otherwise looked close to the little mayfly on my fingers. I tried my other size 16 Cahill. I scratched my head; I didn't have a match. I did, however, have a caddis dry fly in size 14 with a fairly bright yellow body. I knew the rules that we've all read—size, shape, color—those are the

characteristics one's dry fly has to match, and in that order of importance, with color being last.

Heretic that I am, I tied the yellow caddis to my tippet and caught all six of the trout that were rising to the Sulphurs emerging in that pool! At that moment, it seemed that sometimes, color was the most important characteristic of all. That experience caused me to modify the rules in my own mind and to do my best to match all three of those characteristics with every fly that I cast to a rising trout from that day forward. I realized that on any given day, under continuously variable conditions of light, water, and insect activity, there was simply no way to tell how the trout interpreted the puzzle.

I seemed to have discovered something else about myself: I have a good memory for color. My small collection of fly-tying materials included several Baggies of fur dubbing, and none of them were the same color as those Gunpowder Sulphurs. I picked a pinch of cream-colored fur and a bit of bright yellow fur and mixed them together with my fingers until the color looked right. That autumn, I attended the Fly Tying Symposium at Seven Springs in Somerset, Pennsylvania and took a class with the legendary Gary LaFontaine. Gary's knowledge and enthusiasm sparked my interest in fly tying even more, and his discussion of light reflections and the properties of Antron yarn made me a convert. I have been blending dubbing materials for my flies ever since.

On my tying bench, I have a handmade wooden tower that holds a half dozen dispenser boxes of dubbing, of which half are filled with my own hatch-matching blends. I come up with some new blends every season or two when I encounter different insects on different waters. As I learned that day on the Gunpowder, trout-stream insects are not one specific color, and neither are my blends. If I'm tying a Catskill Hendrickson for example, I have a blend that mixes fox fur, beaver fur, and Antron dubbing. I select both tawny and red shades from the fox, making a total of four different colors of material, until the overall shade is matched to a handful of flies from the bench of Mary Dette Clark. A closer look reveals the mixture of colors and textures, as well as the light-reflecting properties of the Antron. When wet, the fly has the faintly mottled tone of the naturals that I have plucked from Catskill rivers, and it has a lovely translucence.

I long ago developed a fondness for barred hackles, because I believe their broken light pattern gives an impression of movement. Thankfully, I also discovered Charlie Collins and his dry-fly hackle some thirty years ago. Charlie's birds exhibit some of the most gorgeous natural colors and barring of any that I have ever seen, and I rarely tie with anything else. I miss the days when he set up a huge booth at the fly-fishing shows, and I could search through hundreds of beautiful capes to find the different ones.

During my first full spring in the Catskills, I ran across some big red Hendricksons emerging on the Beaverkill. The reddish tone in their mottled coloration spawned a new blend that I accordingly named the Beaverkill Hendrickson. Combining that dubbing and Charlie's barred dun hackle with my version of the 100-Year Dun pattern produced a very effective imitation that has seduced some of the large wild trout that still haunt that storied river.

Sampling an early Quill Gordon from the Beaverkill a couple years ago revealed another surprise. This was not the grayish mayfly that I had sampled on the West Branch of the Delaware in prior years: the bottom of the thorax and abdomen were a dirty, sulfurous yellow! I went back to the bench, and a blend was born that was then tested thoroughly on the river to become another regular denizen of my spring fly box. Both the deer hair and CDC-winged Comparaduns tied with this blend have been deadly on big springtime browns.

Perhaps the most unexpected discovery was the mayfly pattern that I dubbed the Woodstock March Brown. My friend Mike Saylor and I fished a March Brown hatch in May 2019, where every fly we offered was either refused or completely ignored. None of the natural flies seemed willing to drift nearby for sampling, and we were left shaking our heads, until Mike finally removed a bug from the film while wading farther out into the river after the rise had ceased. I called the color of that bug road

sign yellow or safety yellow—the wildest color I have ever seen on a mayfly. The fly’s wings, tails, and overall anatomy confirmed that it was a chunky size 10 March Brown.

At home, I dug out some ultrabright yellow dubbing that I had never even opened, plus a package of equally garish turkey biots, and tied a couple of flies. The next time I witnessed the same big mayflies on the water, the first couple of rising trout I fished to once again refused my various naturally colored patterns. I knotted the blindingly yellow parachute to my tippet before casting to the last riser in the pool. I believe he took the second drift, and I battled a beautiful twenty-one-inch brown trout to the waiting net. Was that trout selective to color? I’ll say. I named the fly based on its psychedelic look and the fact that 2019 was the fiftieth anniversary of the Woodstock Festival. I didn’t expect to ever see such bugs again, but they were back in 2020. This is still the weirdest fly in my box.



Left: author’s version of the 100-Year Fly with his Beaverkill Hendrickson dubbing blend.



Right: CDC version of a Quill Gordon with custom dubbing.



Left: author’s Woodstock March Brown.



Right: author’s best Sulphur of 2020, with two shades of dubbing and CDC.

Sulphurs, having started me down this road so many seasons ago on that little Baltimore County tailwater, have always been one of my favorite hatches to fish. Over the past thirty seasons, I have found Sulphurs in an array of colors and sizes from 14 down to 22. My standard blend is a mixture of pale yellow and sulfur orange beaver dubbing that I color match to the most often encountered Catskill Sulphurs, but I have been tying a lot of flies over the past year or so with an old friend—Kreinik pure silk dubbing.

I sold this silk dubbing in my Falling Spring Outfitters Fly Shop back in the early to midnineties, after learning of the company from tyer Harrison Steeves at one of the symposiums. It produced some nice flies that were trout catchers for sure. The very fine silk fibers produce wonderfully translucent fly bodies and will dub easily no matter how tiny a fly you wish to tie. Last spring, I blended two colors of yellow silk to tie a new Sulphur.

I was seeing some Sulphurs on the river with noticeable yellow highlights in their pale dun wings, and I decided to tie some CDC Comparaduns with light natural dun and pale yellow Trout Hunter CDC puffs for wings. I wanted to use a slightly different color—a reddish tan similar to flies I tied twenty-five years ago for the limestone springs—for the trailing shuck, and found the right stuff in a package of Z-Yarn. I tied a half dozen flies in sizes 14 and 16, and took them fishing. The Dun/Yellow CDC Sulphur became the hot fly for me in 2020.

The keys to designing the successful fly patterns that I have stashed in my boxes are really quite simple: observation, the understanding of the properties of various materials, and a willingness to experiment. I don't harbor any aspirations of becoming known as a world-class fly designer. I don't even like the over-commercialization of our sport. I enjoy doing what I do, and the trout seem to approve. This is a thinking person's game. Going my own way fuels my passion.

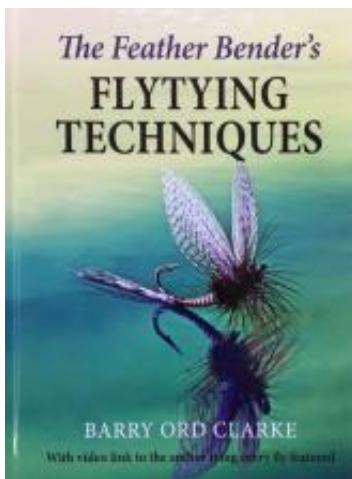
I have talked to a lot of fishers and fly tyers over the years, and many have expressed doubts about their own abilities to tie "all those great flies I see in the pattern books." Developing those skills is admirable, but let's not be too hard on ourselves. Observe, learn, and copy nature as you see it. I tied some darn-ugly flies in my early years, but I recall a statement from the late great Gary LaFontaine that kept me striving to find a better fly: "Ugly flies catch fish."

Mark Sturtevant can be followed on his blog, Bright Waters Catskills:
<https://brightwatercatskill.art.blog>

Book Review

The Feather Bender's Flytying Techniques: A Comprehensive Guide to Classic and Modern Trout Flies

By Barry Ord Clarke. Published by Skyhorse Publishing, 2019; \$26.99 hardbound.



The Feather Bender's Flytying Techniques is one of the most interesting fly-tying books to come along in many a moon. Tying books tend to be a lot alike, because there's a kind of inherent conservatism in fly tying. There are only so many ways to bind materials to hooks so as to imitate things that fish eat, and what worked for Theodore Gordon and the Darbees and the Dettles in the United States, or for Frederic Halford and G. E. M. Skues in England are techniques that are still basic to how people learn how to tie flies today. Generically, almost all fly-tying books teach those techniques, addressing themselves to beginners as well as more advanced fly tyers, and consequently, the techniques and the advice are all pretty much the same from book to book.

The Feather Bender's Flytying Techniques is different, and "techniques" deserves its pride of place in the title. This book, too, "is aimed at all flytyers, from those with modest experience to those with advanced skills," and Clarke declares that "my aim is to give tuition in certain important elementary techniques, and in particular to share some of my favorite contemporary twists on old techniques." It's those twists that set this book apart, along with its strategies of "tuition."

Clarke started tying flies—including full-dress Atlantic salmon flies—even before he started fishing, and he has been tying for over thirty-five years, so he certainly is steeped in conventional Anglo-American techniques. But as Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "The field cannot be well seen from within the field." Although Clarke is British (the book originates from there), for the past twenty-five years, he has lived in Norway, working as a fly-fishing and fly-tying photographer, and the perspective that distance has provided on conventional techniques, as well as his association with the innovative tyers of Scandinavia, led him to develop techniques for tying classic patterns and executing innovative designs that are entirely his own.

Among the twenty-eight fly patterns covered here, there are indeed a few classics, and there are performed some basic techniques, as well. However, among the “classic” patterns referred to in the title, a Pheasant Tail Nymph, a Klinkhamer, a Humpy, and an Irresistible, it’s the twists, some of them radical, that stand out, most notably in the Deer Hair Irresistible, which features Clarke’s method of spinning deer hair in a dubbing loop for the classic Irresistible body, instead of by spinning it around the hook shank, the way its originator, Joe Messinger, and the Dettles and the Darbees did it and most people still do. For good measure, it has a deer-hair hackle — hence the seemingly redundant name. Even when he ties an upright and divided wing on a large mayfly imitation, as on a classic Catskill dry, he does so in a way I’ve never seen, first with a wood duck flank feather on one side, then another on the other — easy peasy.

It’s the other patterns and the techniques involved in tying them, though, that make this book exceptional. Clarke developed a “para-weld” technique for securing a cul de canard hackle on a mayfly parachute pattern, an innovation endorsed by CDC eminence Marc Petitjean. (Clarke also uses the technique with conventional hackle on a CDC-bodied downwing caddis pattern.) He employs a collection of plastic tubes of all sorts, including the tips used to dispense UV resin, as prostheses in various ways to control and shape materials, for example, when tying his Wally Wing Mayfly Dun, which not only features the realistic upright-and-divided wing made from a single feather that was developed by Wally Lutz (you can see Lutz’s original conception at <http://www.telusplanet.net/public/whlutz>), but which is tied in the hook-point-up dry-fly style of the Waterwisp series in the United States and Roy Christie’s flies in the UK. There’s a cool Antron Caddis Pupa that features an easy technique to create a translucent shroud around the body, à la the LaFontaine Emergent Caddis Pupa, but without the aggravation. There’s a Scandinavian deer-hair fly imitating a large caddis, tied in the usual way to spin deer hair, and there are imitations of bugs native only to Europe that can easily be adapted to imitate their American cousins, notably the Willow Fly, a small black stonefly imitation. There’s a quite realistic adult midge imitation with horsehair legs, too.

Above all, there’s Clarke’s All Hackle Dry, which actually also uses Antron and pearl tinsel, but was developed to make use of unusual feathers such as Coq de Leon, teal, and even partridge for dry-fly parachutelike hackling. It is another hook-point-up dry, and there is literally nothing about this mayfly imitation that is anything like any other dry-fly parachute pattern in appearance or technique, from the way the hackle is created to the tails. Words seldom fail me, but . . . you’ve got to see it tied.

And you can. Because Clarke is a professional photographer, you would be correct to expect that the book contains lucid step-by-step photographs for all the patterns, as well as stunning photos of insects and fishing scenes. What you would not expect is an instructional feature that is unique to this book, though others may imitate it in the future. For each pattern, and also at a few other points in the book, there is Quick Response (QR) code, the square, rasterized thingy that the QR reader on a cell phone can interpret. Clarke’s QR codes take you to YouTube videos of him tying the pattern in question or delivering other information relevant to the book, as well as to a tour of Clarke’s tying room. You can check them out, as well as his other tying videos, on his YouTube channel, The Feather Bender.

You might think that linking a book to videos makes one or the other redundant. After all, if you’re reasonably familiar with conventional tying techniques, just sequentially eyeballing the steps in the step-by-steps of most books is like animating a series of flip cards to produce a movie from a sequence of still frames, while like the book, the videos also take you through tying each fly, step by step. You might think that, but in fact, the book and the videos complement each other.

The great value of the book is the out-of-the-box thinking about techniques, and real-time videos do not match up with the implementation of new techniques in real-time tying. When you’re tying a new pattern, and especially when you’re tying in a new way, you need to focus on each step, and putz

with it, and make mistakes, and start over, and wonder why you ever thought you could tie flies in the first place, and calm down, and finally get it right, and then move on to the next step. You can't do that while Clarke, in the video, is blithely tying away, producing a perfect example of the pattern. Pausing the video still leaves you struggling to keep up and to overcome the gap between what your fly looks like and his. Books and videos exist in two different temporalities. A video can be stopped and started, but what it captures is evanescent, while a photograph and its caption are always just there, waiting patiently for you to get your act together. The book and the videos together make it easy to move from one to the other as needed.

On the other hand, in the videos, there are a few twists that are just mentioned in passing there that you don't get in the printed pictures and text. A basic principle of tying, for example, is that unless otherwise specified, you need to keep materials on top of the hook as you tie them in. Clarke has a way to guarantee this happens by wagging the material from one side to the other as each wrap is applied. I've been watching fly-tying demonstrations live and online for over thirty years, and I've never seen that done before. In the immortal words of Homer Simpson, "D'oh!"

There is nothing conventional about *The Feather Bender's Flytying Techniques*. From Clarke's All Hackle Dry all the way to his belief that instead of a collection of tying threads in a variety of sizes, materials, and colors, all you need to tie flies is a spool of Dyneema (gel-spun polyethylene) and some marking pens. There are innovative approaches to a pursuit that dates back to Dame Juliana Berners in the 1400s and beyond. From the perspective of that tying room in Norway, Barry Ord Clarke has come up with interesting new ways to think about and practice the art and craft of fly tying.

—Bud Bynack

Tribute to a Friend

This is my tie of a Female Beaverkill, from *Family Circle's Guide to Trout Flies*, published in 1954. This fly is about as Catskill as you can get.



Hook: Allcocks 4991 Model
Perfect, size 14
Thread: Tan
Wing: Gray mallard quill
Tail: Brown
Egg sack: Yellow buttonhole
twist
Body: Gray muskrat.
Hackle: Brown.

My best friend, Ken Kobayashi, passed away recently after a long bout with cancer. Ken was a longtime member and supporter of the guild. This fly is in honor of Ken.

—Tom Mason

Obituaries

Glenn Overton. Glenn Charles Overton, seventy-three, passed away on May 3, 2020 in Libby, Montana. He was born on December 19, 1946, in Elmira, New York to Louise B. Lohmeyer Overton and Lester C. Overton. He served as an airman in the U.S. Air Force from 1966 until his honorable discharge in 1968. He spent most of his career as a sheet metal worker. In the 1970s, he invented and developed Overton's Wonder Wax, the world's best fly-tying wax, which is now sold all over the world. Glenn Overton was an outdoorsman who enjoyed fishing and hunting. He moved to Libby, Montana, in 1979, where he continued his passion of fly fishing along streams of the Kootenai River. He is survived by his sister, Linda Cicora, of Horseheads, New York, his children from a prior marriage, and many friends.

Glenn Overton and the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild

By Bud Bynack

Glenn Overton was a good friend of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild and contributed material to the *Gazette* when I was its editor—emails that I ran as articles (after a bit of editing, because Glenn had a unique approach to prose) and photos and scanned images, such as the membership card for the Beaverkill-Willowemoc Rod and Gun Club from 1967 that I sometimes used to complete a page layout.

I originally made contact with him via Terry Hellekson, the author of *Popular Fly Patterns* (Gibbs Smith, 1977) whom I knew when I lived in California, having done some minor editorial work on the first edition of his two-volume *Fish Flies* (Frank Amato, 1995). Terry, who had been a major tying materials importer and a fly shop owner near Sacramento, had moved to Libby, Montana, as Glenn had done, after some personal travails, and he had used Glenn's extensive angling library to revise the work, which became the enlarged, one-volume *Fish Flies: The Encyclopedia of the Fly Tier's Art* (Gibbs Smith, 2005). For the June 2006 issue of the *Gazette*, Terry wrote an article, "Bill Tobin's Little People," about the flies of the Cortland, New York, hackle breeder and fly tyer that was based on Glenn's personal acquaintance with Tobin and his archive of materials about him. Terry put me in contact with Glenn, who offered some things I could use in the *Gazette*, and since he appreciated reading about his old stomping grounds in the Catskills, sequestered as he was up there on the Kootenai River near the

Canadian border, I always sent him the *Gazette*, though he never actually was a member of the guild.

When *The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Fly Tyers, Volume 1: Mary Dette* DVD came out, I sent him a copy and asked about a comment she makes there about fly-tying wax. I figured if anyone knew about fly-tying wax, it was Glenn Overton. He directed folks to the recipe in Harry Darbee's *Catskill Flytier* and said of the Dettes and Darbees, "My wax may have been good, but really, the wax those two families made was much better. It was almost impossible to untie their flies." You can read his full reply in the April 2007 issue of the *Gazette*, if you have it or can access back issues.



American March Brown tied by Bill Tobin

Photo: Bruce Corwin

In the next few years, Glenn sent me scans for some of his old notebooks, but I believe health problems intervened, including knee replacements. However, he returned to the *Gazette* in the May 2015 issue with “The Overton Nymph and Olive Woolly Bugger.” The Overton nymph, which he developed in 1972 and which must have been taken as an *Isonychia* imitation, is a model of doing a lot with a little. He again returned in the July 2015 issue with “Eric Lieser and Wonder Wax,” in which he declares: “Lieser was the person who gave me a start. It was when he was at Sam Melner’s Fly Fisherman’s Bookcase. I had a round ball of wax that I had made up, and I asked Eric to give it a try. . . Well, Eric did try the wax, and he said that if I could come up with a special container, they would put it in their catalog. They gave me several containers from Italy—the type that pushes up the contents using a screw mechanism. They also were the ones who came up with the name ‘Wonder Wax.’” And in the January 2016 issue, I ran more of his responses to the Mary Dette DVD, where he said, “It brought back memories of those wonderful days with the folks of Roscoe and the open and giving hearts that these people had. That is why so many learn this beautiful style of fly tying.”

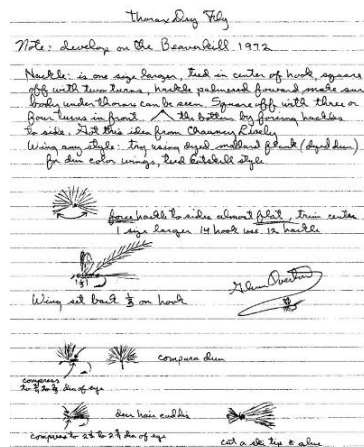
Glenn Overton was a serious fly tyer—he thought long and hard about the art and its applications. However, he will always be known for his tying wax. It was unavailable for a long, long time, until only a few years ago, when he finally arranged for it to be rereleased, and for decades, owning a tube was the mark of a real tyer—they went for big bucks on eBay. It must have been about the time when he set in motion its rerelease that he finally gave out his stash of original tubes to his friends. Of those he sent me, some went into guild auctions, where indeed they brought big bucks.




Overton Nymph

Photo: Bud Bynack

Glenn Overton was not just a friend of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild, but one of the disappearing links to the golden era of the Catskill style. As he once wrote me, recalling how he dealt with twisted hackle, “One day with Elsie Darbee, with her wonderful smile and laughter, she said that some tiers would bet her if she could tie with their prize hackle that was twisted, she could keep the neck. To hear her chuckle when she told how she fooled so many out of great necks . . . with watching me at the same time tying at the next table, making that twisted stuff behave on those Olives I was tying for the shop, with one eye on Elsie . . . learning. . . .”



Notes and sketches from Glenn

 This newsletter depends on all guild members for its content. Items from nonmembers are welcome at the editor’s discretion. Your articles, cartoons, photographs, reports of information, and bits of whatever else is interesting and fun are vital to this newsletter. Send submissions to Chuck Coronato, coronato3@verizon.net or 412 Highland Avenue, Wyckoff, NJ 07481 (201) 723-6230.

Note: CJ’s Flies with “Catskill John” Bonasera will return in the May issue of the *Gazette*.