



The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild *Gazette*

Volume 22, number 5

September 2019

The September 2019 meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will be held on Saturday, September 21, at 1:00 P.M. in the Wulff Gallery at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum, 1031 Old Route 17, Livingston Manor, NY.

“Catskill John” Bonasera will be discussing the history and techniques of tying Atlantic salmon flies and demonstrating tying the Silver Doctor. The techniques and attention to detail involved in tying Atlantic salmon flies apply to tying any fly well, and understanding and practicing them will make anyone a better fly tyer. In his column in this issue of the *Gazette*, CJ begins a multipart series on tying these flies. Here’s your chance to see firsthand how this accomplished tyer does it.

CFTG at Summerfest

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild and Catskill Kids on the Fly attended Summerfest this year at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum in Livingston Manor, New York. Many thanks to all the guild members who helped make sure the Catskill tying tradition was represented and new generations of future tyers were recruited.



Catskill Kids on the Fly Schedule

The Catskill Kids on the Fly group will meet on the following dates in the remainder of the year. Spread the word to anyone interested.

September 21, 2019, at 10:00 A.M.

October 19, 2019, at 10:00 A.M.

November 16, 2019 at 10:00 A.M. (even though we do not have a November meeting)

December 21, 2019, at 10:00 A.M.

Looking Back Upstream



From the Archives: The Beginning

Here is page 1 of the first Catskill Fly Tyers Guild newsletter, not yet called the *Gazette*.

CATSKILL FLY TYERS GUILD

Volume I, Number 1 January 1998

Welcome:

At first, having a newsletter for our Guild seemed like a good idea, and it is. There are so many possible topics: the Catskill style of fly tying; patterns that have become known as traditional Catskill patterns; non-traditional and non Catskill styles that are used in Catskill rivers; Catskill tyers of the past - their flies, the contributions they made and their legacy; contemporary tyers; new fly designs; new materials; how Catskill flies and fishing techniques compare to other parts of the country; and I'm sure there are more topics that you can think of.

The trick however, is putting words to paper that are accurate, promote and reflect the primary mission of the Guild, make interesting reading and increase participation by the membership in Guild activities and activities that improve fly fishing.

I'm sitting here trying to think of some brilliant topic or story I can write that will convince or prompt you to submit something for the next or a future issue of this newsletter. The Guild has over 125 members. Individually and collectively we have a wealth of knowledge, memories, information, tips, ideas, etc. You can write something about an old flyfishing book you have. If you've just read a recently published book write a short review and tell us what you thought about it. Tried a new material? How did it compare to the manufacturers claims or compare to what it was supposed to replace? Maybe you can write about an experience you've had; Maybe a fly-tying technique that may not be generally known; Maybe you want to comment about something you've seen in a magazine, this newsletter or while astream; Maybe there's something you've wanted to get off your chest for awhile but had no way of doing it. Maybe you have a rod, a reel, some old flies, fly tying material or something else you haven't used and you want to advertise it for sale. The point is that there are many ways for members to participate in this newsletter.

A concern I have is how to handle a controversial topic or censorship. Right now the newsletter has no editorial board and therefore no set rules. Since I don't want to alter what you write, or reject what is submitted, I simply ask that you use reasonable judgement and keep the language clean. Also, if you want to submit something and prefer to use a false name for the author that's ok. Just place the name you want listed as the author below what you have submitted and your real name in [brackets] next to "author" name. Also include your address and phone number so if I have any questions I can get in touch with you. Also, if anyone requests information about something you've written, I can forward that request to you.

This should be interesting and I'm looking forward to reading what many of you have in your collected libraries of knowledge and experience.

Plans are for this newsletter to be written and sent out 6x a year beginning with this issue (Jan., 1998). The following information may help you understand the anticipated issuing schedule and submission deadlines for: stories; articles; information you'd like printed; an advertisement you'd like put in; or maybe a letter to the editor.

Note: **deadlines** in the **left** column are for **issue months** in the **right** column.

Deadline (15th of)	Issue Date
December	January
February	March
April	May
June	July
August	September
October	November

You may write to me:

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Or, e-mail: apodell@stny.1run.com

A TV Guide for Hackle Fanatics

By John Merola

Book reviews are a staple of fly-fishing publications, including this one, but I haven't seen many reviews of what's available for fly tyers on YouTube. Hence the need for a *TV Guide* for fly tyers in the Internet era.

There has been a proliferation of videos on fly tying and fly-tying materials, and among the best are the fly-tying and fly-fishing road trip videos by Clark "Cheech" Pierce and Curtis Fry of Fly Fish Food in Orem, Utah. These are must-see videos for hackle fanatics. The Fly Fish Food gang enjoys a very good relationship with Whiting Farms and has been afforded great access to tour Dr. Whiting's facility more than once. Four videos, in particular, provide an insider's view of Dr. Whiting's development of his flock of hackle birds. I recommend watching them in the order they are listed.

Whiting Farms: How the World's Best Hackle Is Made

This twenty-three-minute video posted on February 4, 2018, shows the Whiting operation from the incubation of the eggs through the adult bird. There is a fascinating discussion of the breeder program and how Dr. Whiting uses his genetics knowledge to bring us all the great hackle that ultimately makes it to our fly-tying benches. It's at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQTvfVI9A0A>.

Why We Drove 5 Hours to Look at Chickens

This fifteen-and-a-half-minute video posted on February 9, 2018, provides a further look at the breeding program and the farm. Of special note in this video is the part where Dr. Whiting shows the legacy line of hackle birds he has maintained from Dr. Alan Fried of the Catskills. It's at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fJUPbw78>.

All You Need to Know about Coq de Leon

This video looks at how Dr. Whiting brought the Coq de Leon stock to the United States and his development of the flock to where it stands today. We get a great look at some beautiful breeder candidates. Posted on August 15, 2018, this video's run time is thirteen minutes, thirty-six seconds. It's at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pnd7SgXGnpQ>.

What Do Whiting Hackle Grades Mean?

In this short video, we get to meet Phil Trimm of the Whiting staff as he explains the difference between the different grades of the Whiting line. Phil has been very helpful to me in the past and quickly arranged permission to use the Whiting Farms history of hackle chart that appeared in my previous hackle article in this newsletter. This is a short, three-minute or so video. It's at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6SHLKPN0E8>.

During a recent conversation with Phil, who is always nice enough to take my calls, the discussion came around to the selection of hackles and the trend toward online hackle dealers "curating" the hackle for us. Curating hackle involves listing the predominant size range of the saddle and posting a picture of the actual neck or saddle you would receive. This is very useful information if you can't physically inspect the hackle yourself before buying. The trend actually goes back to the efforts of John Snively and his company, Fly Tiers Variant, which was ultimately purchased by Greg Becker of Whitewater Flies in New Jersey. Another longtime purveyor of curated hackle is Jim Slattery via his Jim's FlyCo website. Some dealers upcharge for this service, and some don't.

But Phil Trimm points out that whenever possible, you should be the curator yourself, going to your local fly shop and measuring the saddle out of the package. As A. K. Best says in *Advanced Fly Tying*, even he buys retail when it comes to dry-fly saddles: “I go to one of the nearby fly shops with my hackle gauge, make my selections, and pay retail. I figure it’s worth it in the long run, because I get exactly what I want in the shortest amount of time.”

Clarification: since my previous hackle article, Charlie Collins posted the following on his website: “This line of tying birds comes from Harry Darbee, Dick Bittner, Andy Miner, and my friend Doc Fried. All of these individuals had a tremendous impact on the hackle market and we are proud to give them the credit they justly deserve.”

Terrestrials

By now, freestone trout waters are seasonably low and warm, and long gone are the celebrated mayfly hatches anglers dream of when whiling away long winter hours at tying vises. But all is not lost. Trout season is still open, various terrestrials are about, and hungry fish are waiting to dine on those unlucky enough to fall into the water.

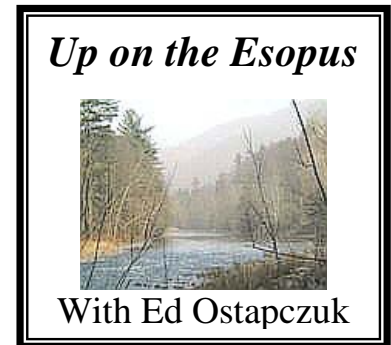
Back in the 1960s, as a very young teenage wannabe trout fisher, I read each of the three major outdoor magazines. I’d devour every fishing article, often sending off postcards requesting the paper tackle catalogs offered back then. One article in the May 1961 issue of *Field and Stream* really impressed me—I still have a copy of the magazine today. Ernest Schwiebert wrote a piece titled “Ants Can Make Trout Say Uncle,” and that was my introduction to terrestrials. This was long before tyers resorted to foam and other synthetics. Schwiebert’s five-page article introduced readers to eight fur-bodied ant patterns, from size 12 down to size 24. I still tie and use his Black Ant (*Tetramorium caespitum*), commonly known as the Pavement or Sugar Ant, in sizes 16 and 18 on Mustad 94840 hooks. His ants can account for tough-to-entice trout.

Eventually, I learned about other terrestrial patterns from other sources. One was a library copy of Charles Wetzel’s *Trout Flies: Naturals and Imitations*. Another was Vincent Marinaro’s classic *A Modern Dry-Fly Code*. It took several years before I could lay hands on my own Crown Publishers edition. Nick Lyons deserves a big thank-you for making this book readily available to tyers like me. However, I never had much luck fishing Marinaro’s Jassid, though I tried many times over. It must have been me.

Two books then appeared dedicated solely to the topic of terrestrials. In 1978, Gerald Almy’s *Tying and Fishing Terrestrials* was published, providing a one-stop-shop reference on this subject. I gobbled up that book, but it has collected dust on my shelf, and I never put it to good use. And in 1990, Ed Koch’s *Terrestrial Fishing* became available. Koch’s book provided a summary of different terrestrial patterns, including work done by others, but with a definitive Pennsylvania piscatorial bent and legendary limestone country flavor. It has served me as a good historical reference, as well as a useful pattern guide. More on this in the next newsletter.

However, one of the more enduring terrestrial patterns dates all the way back to John Crowe’s 1947 *Book of Trout Lore*, which covered the trout fishing gamut from bait, to spin fishing, to flies: the Crowe Beetle, a very simple, but highly effective trout fly that has served me well late in the season, when hard-to-catch, fished-over trout selectively sip who knows what.

Crowe tied his beetles with just deer hair, noting that “the most useful colors in the dyed deer hair are black, yellow, brown, orange, and green.” He also wrote, “The beetle which I have used with



the greatest success is black.” which is the only color in which I tie my Crowe Beetles. He added, “Black is not an easy color to fish,” because the fly is hard to see on the water, and I have altered his pattern slightly as a result.

My adaption might have been influenced by another *Field and Stream* article. In the January 1979 issue, Eric Peper wrote about a fly called The Beetle in his “Fly of the Month” column. Peper credited Larry Solomon with this pattern, which is essentially the Crowe Beetle, but with a peacock herl body, and that is the way I have long tied it. Peper praised the pattern’s simplicity while recognizing that other recipes probably exist. Peper also wrote, “The beetle is best in the summer and early fall when terrestrials are the most common insects on the water.” And interestingly enough, both Peper and Gerald Almy suggest that a “sloppy” cast, one that splats onto the stream, often improves fishing a terrestrial. The noise serves notice that a terrestrial just fell into the water, and dinner is being served.

Schwiebert’s Black Ant

Hook: Mustad 94840, size 16 and 18

Thread: Black

Abdomen/gaster: Black seal

Legs: Blue dun hackle, tied sparse

Thorax: Black seal

Head: Black seal

Schwiebert tied this pattern with three small bumps of black seal, separated between the rear and middle bump by sparse blue dun hackle. I tie my ants with only two bumps, combining the head and thorax while separating this formation from the abdomen with a wisp of blue dun hackle to mimic the legs. I find this to be highly a effective pattern. Today, of course, black rabbit dubbing can be substituted in place of the seal.



Modified Crowe Beetle

Hook: Mustad 94840, size 18

Thread: Black

Shell: Black deer hair, tied in at back, folded over the body, clipped at the head

Body: Peacock herl

Optional indicator: Short clump of fluorescent green poly yarn protruding through deer hair shell

I include an indicator on approximately half of the Crowe Beetles I tie. After tying in the herl and wrapping it forward, I tie in the poly yarn and raise it to create a post, which I pull through the black deer hair as I create the shell, Then I clip it to form a stubby, bright indicator.



Tying Atlantic Salmon Flies, Part 1

When I first became interested in fly tying as a middle teenager, Atlantic salmon flies were as beautiful to me as they were mysterious. Compared with trout flies of the late

1970s, they looked nearly impossible to make: so many fibers, all attached at the eye, so many colors, so much glamour on one hook. I loved looking at them, but never thought it possible to replicate them.

With time, though, I started tying wet flies, and it struck me that some of the more colorful winged ones were in some ways just simpler, smaller salmon flies. In fact, a lot of the techniques a fly tyer uses when tying much simpler flies apply when tying these more elaborate creations, and tying them helps refine your skills for tying any fly. The materials can be more exotic, and the results can cross the line separating practical flies to catch fish from works of art, but at bottom, these all originated as fishing flies, and learning to tie tying them will make anyone a better tyer.

In a multipart series of columns on tying Atlantic salmon flies, we will look into materials, hooks, and techniques and go through the steps of creating one that many tyers could likely tie with materials they already have—the Silver Doctor.

With all flies, the first step is choosing a hook. With salmon flies, this is a little more complicated than choosing a hook for making a dozen Dark Cahills to swing on the Willowemoc. If you're a hook aficionado, you may decide to make a fly on a particular hook, but then during the tying process find that the materials for the pattern are too short or not sized correctly for that hook.



Whenever I begin a fly, I *size the hook to the materials*. In other words, I make sure the wing fibers are long enough, the crests for the topping are long enough, and the hackle has proper barb length, among other things. Everyone who has tied a few salmon flies can't wait to make a giant 9/0 Green Highlander, only to find that after the body is complete and it's time to start the wing, the golden pheasant tippets don't even reach the hook point.

When it comes to hooks, the other consideration is whether you are interested in making antique-style gut-eyed flies using blind-eye hooks or up-eyed, japanned hooks. Either is fine, though the blind-eyed hooks add another step—as well as another way to become obsessed with tying these flies, if you allow it.

For those starting out, I would recommend a size 1/0 or 2/0 up-eyed, return-eyed hook. The most important reason is that almost any dyed goose shoulder feather has more than enough length for winging a fly that size, and any golden pheasant head has enough crest length to finish with a topping over the wing. It's also big enough to be displayed and not so small that adding the needed materials makes it too difficult to tie.

What distinguishes Atlantic salmon flies from all the other flies we tie is the amount of different materials all brought together in one package. While there are simple flies with as few as four or five materials, the average fancy fly has anywhere from twelve to eighteen different materials, and in some cases many more.

Among the hundreds if not thousands of patterns, a good choice for beginning to tie Atlantic salmon flies is the Silver Doctor, It's a classic, known to almost every fly tyer, and while it is a beautiful pattern, it also uses many materials that the average trout fly tyer already has. That's no small consideration. When I first started collecting materials for these classics, it became evident that many patterns I fell in love with were also going to be patterns I wouldn't be able to make until I did some serious shopping. Materials such as Indian crow, chatterer, and toucan are expensive, as well as being difficult to locate. Substituting commonly found feathers is not only perfectly acceptable, it's most times downright necessary.

It's become so necessary, in fact, that dying and manipulating materials to make the substitutions is an important aspect of tying Atlantic salmon flies. For example, Indian crow feathers are brilliantly tipped in red, fading into an orange-yellow and ending almost black near the stem. Feathers shaped like Indian crow can be dyed in stages to make a beautiful and nearly identical substitute, but you can see how things can get complicated, fast.

But our Silver Doctor, with its body of tinsel and relatively simple wing, is an Atlantic salmon fly that anyone with an intermediate level of ability would not have a problem completing. In the next installment, we will gather the materials and begin the process of winding this classic onto a hook.

Obituary


Michael F. Romanowski, fifty-six, a resident of Swoyersville, PA, passed away unexpectedly on Thursday, June 20, 2019, at his home. Michael Romanowski was a graduate of Wyoming Valley West High School, Penn State University, and King's College, Wilkes-Barre. He began his career as an educator at the former Holy Child Grade School, and in 1995, he became a mathematics teacher in the Wyoming Area School District. He was passionate about education and the betterment of each of the students he taught throughout his career. Additionally, he enjoyed working at A.A. Outfitters, in Blakeslee, PA.

An avid outdoorsman, he was skilled in fly tying and possessed a vast knowledge in all aspects of fly fishing. He was an active member of the Stanley Cooper Sr. Chapter of Trout Unlimited and of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild.

Michael is survived by his sister, Ann Lowery, and her husband, David, of West Wyoming, as well as aunts, an uncle, cousins, and friends. The family requests that you consider making a donation in Michael's memory to either Trout Unlimited, Stanley Cooper Sr. Chapter, P.O. Box 1135, Kingston, PA 18704, or the American Cancer Society, 1948 East 3rd Street, Williamsport, PA 17701.



“I can fix that.” Inimitable Catskill fly tyer Ralph Graves with John Jacobsen (left) and Hank Rope and Gerard Zazzera (right), November 14, 1997.

 This newsletter depends on all guild members for its content. Items from nonmembers are welcome at the editor's discretion. Without the articles, information, for-sale or want ads, cartoons, newsworthy information, and whatever else is interesting and fun that members submit, this newsletter simply becomes a meeting announcement. Send submissions to Bud Bynack, budbynack@gmail.com or 69 Bronxville Road, Apt. 4G, Bronxville, NY 10708, (914) 961-3521.