



# The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild GAZETTE



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*Twenty-Fifth Anniversary*

May 2018

**The May 2018 meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild** will be held on Saturday, May 19, at 1:00 P.M. in the museum building at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum, 1031 Old Route 17, Livingston Manor, NY. Note the change from the usual venue, the Wulff Gallery.

Enrico Puglisi will present a program focused on the use of synthetic materials in fly tying, a development in which he has played an important role. He will be discussing the background, history, and evolution of this development and how he identifies and refines his materials. He also will demonstrate tying techniques using them. Expect an interactive discussion and interesting insights into this major innovation in fly tying from one of its principal innovators.

Enrico Puglisi is celebrated for his realistic-looking synthetic baitfish flies, which are not only durable, but also prove irresistible to the most finicky fish. Over the past few years, his fly designs have proven themselves time and again, garnering Puglisi a very dedicated—and growing—following.

In his native Sicily, surrounded by the salt water of the Mediterranean, Enrico learned about fishing before he could walk. Later, he learned English by reading fishing magazines. Now living on Long Island, he learned about fly fishing at the Connetquot River State Park Preserve and on other New York State streams, and he taught himself to tie flies. His first fly, a Muddler Minnow, took him a month to finish.

When Enrico hooked his first trout, he was driven to understand exactly why fish take artificial flies. And it was only a matter of time before he returned to his first love, saltwater angling, transposing what he had learned about what triggers strikes to targeting saltwater species. “I discovered the stripers and blues and said, ‘I think I’m going to like this,’” as he puts it.

In 1992, he opened The Practical Fly Shop in Little Neck, Queens, NY, where his customers encouraged him as he created many of his innovative patterns. That led him to experiment with more durable synthetic and natural materials to create the flies that eventually became part of the current EP catalogue and to the materials he uses to tie them.

Today, Enrico no longer maintains his fly shop, but his innovative products are changing fly tying and pattern design. And although the EP catalogue has been oriented more toward materials for saltwater patterns, treated hydrophobic EP Trigger Point Fibers and patterns are becoming increasingly favored by freshwater fly tyers and anglers. His unique flies are recognized around the world, and he has been invited to demonstrate his meticulous tying techniques across the United States and Europe. EP fibers and the other products that Puglisi sells have put the focus squarely on what can be accomplished in fly tying with innovative materials.



## **Bylaw Revisions Approved**

The proposed revisions to the bylaws of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild were approved by a vote of 46 to 5. The existing bylaws required a two-thirds vote of those voting in favor, and thus the proposal was carried. Many thanks to those who voted.

## Tyers Needed

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will have a table at the Anglers Market in Roscoe, NY on Saturday, May 26, from 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. If you'd like to tie at this event, contact Judie DV Smith at [judiedvsmith@yahoo.com](mailto:judiedvsmith@yahoo.com) or (607) 498-6024

## The 2018 Fly Tyers Rendezvous



On April 14, 2018, the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild hosted the annual Fly Tyers Rendezvous in the Wulff Gallery at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum. Since this year's event was not held in conjunction with Opening Day ceremonies at the museum, foot traffic was down, but the group of nearly thirty tyers who participated enjoyed the experience of tying together and swapping techniques and stories—tyin' flies and tellin' lies, as one participant put it.

That's one of the reasons why the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild was formed in the first place, twenty-five years ago. If you haven't visited or tied at the Rendezvous, consider doing so next year. It's fun.

This year, examples of flies tied by participants were collected and will be mounted in a display and framed, courtesy of longtime guild member and supporter Ted Rogowski.

## Japanese Environmental Conservation and More

On Saturday, May 19, 2018, the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum will welcome Mr. Kenzo Hayashi from the Okukinu Iwana Preservation group in Tokyo and Mr. Yukinobu Murata and Mr. Fumito Motosugi from Yamato Keiryuka, who will discuss their efforts to preserve native char (*iwana*) and trout (*amago*) in Japan and will demonstrate and offer lessons in tenkara fly tying and casting.

Mr. Hayashi belongs to the Okukinu-Iwana Hozonkai-Okukinu-Iwana Preservation Club, which protects and preserves fish in the Okukinugawa-Okuinu stream in the Nikko area near Tokyo. Mr. Murata is the chair of Yamato Keiryukai, NPO, which undertakes conservation efforts in the upper Oigawa River and supports environmental conservation and the protection of fishery cooperatives in the Southern Alps and the Ikawa District.



Mr. Hayashi will begin his presentation at 10:00 A.M., followed by Mr. Murata and Mr. Motosugi at 11:00 A.M. At noon, there will be an intermission for lunch, followed by fly-tying demonstrations and lessons in the Wulff Gallery at 1:00 P.M. Tenkara fly-casting lessons will be held outside at the pavilion at 3:00 P.M. The cost of this event is \$20, which can be paid either in advance or upon the day of the event. Please call the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum at (845) 439-4810 to reserve your spot.

—Misako Ishimura

## Kids On the Fly Report

By Nicole March

The newest chapter of Kids on the Fly—Northwest New Jersey is in full swing. Senior mentors Nicole March and Robert Hopken would like to thank the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild for their sponsorship of this program. The delivery of new Regal vises that the guild supplied has helped tremendously with our fly-tying lessons. You can see them in use in the pictures below.



While some of the kids have been with us since the beginning, we have been welcoming more new members to each session. Seeing the kids excited to find out what we will be spinning up is half the fun, but hearing what they want to tie at the next one, having their own ideas and opinions, shows us how much they really enjoy it. The positive feedback from parents is welcoming to hear, as well, especially when they tell us the kids can't stop talking about what we tied, and I am even hearing that some now have their own tying set-ups at home.

While these new fly tyers always show up with nonstop enthusiasm, being able to hear that enthusiasm come out in an explanation of why they tied a fly the way they did, why they selected that color, and what fish they might catch is a constant reminder of how important first impressions are when someone is trying something new. Those first experiences are what will make or break someone's continued interest, and being able to give these kids some fun first experiences is what we look forward to with every new session.



## Looking Back Upstream



## Phases of a Fly Tyer's Education, Part 2

*Editor's note: in the last issue of the Gazette, we asked members to recall how they learned the craft of fly tying, their favorite books and other instructional resources, and who their mentors are. We received several different kinds of response, long and short. We'll have more in the next issue.*

**Nicole March:** I've been tying flies for about five years now, and I still remember the first one I ever tied. As a matter of fact, I found it the day I unpacked my materials when I moved to the new house. It wasn't a real pattern, nor did it have a name—it was actually a mess of yellow craft fur that was spun in a dubbing loop around a hook.

That morning, I had gone online looking for a place to buy wooden fishing lures that I could paint myself, since I was tired of paying so much money for them in the store—little did I know I'd eventually spend even more money on fly-tying material than I ever had on spinning gear—and I stumbled upon a video of someone spinning deer hair on a hook. I was entranced. It was the coolest thing I had ever seen. I then spent the rest of my morning on a search for a fly tying-kit in a store, went home, and burned through all the hooks and material in one evening, that dubbing-loop fly being my first victim. After that, I couldn't get enough, and to this day, I am still addicted to tying flies. I met some great people about a year after I started tying, but there are three that stand out the most.

Dave Brandt, Bruce Corwin, and Pat Cohen were the first people that I'd ever watched give a real fly-tying demonstration, and I couldn't have asked to meet three better people as a beginner fly tyer. They never once made me feel like my questions were stupid as I watched each of them tie and were genuinely happy to be bombarded with my excited questions as they watched me scribble all of my new-found information into my notebook as they explained each step. That is the reason I continue to enjoy tying to this day. It's also the reason before any demonstration or presentations I give that I make sure the people attending know to ask those questions, no matter how ridiculous they think they are, because its how you learn.

While I love to attend fly-tying shows and seminars, books have always been my weakness in life, and my home is lined with many volumes both old and new that I have read and reread repeatedly. Most of the pages are worn down, with Post-It notes sticking out the tops and notes scribbled in every margin. While I can't put my finger on one title I would recommend, I can tell you that the first book I ever purchased was *The Fly-Tying Bible: 100 Deadly Trout and Salmon Flies in Step-by-Step Photographs*, by Peter Gathercole, and if I said I didn't try to tie every single fly in that book, I'd be lying. It's an excellent book for beginners, and I recently gave my old copy away to a friend's son in my Kids on the Fly group. His mother says he, too, now has his own Post-Its coming out of the top of every page, notes in the margins, and a list of patterns he wants me to show him how to tie in class. It looks like my old books will be in good hands from now on, and I won't be so sad to see them go.

**Bud Bynack:** I started fly tying around 1995, so I guess I've been doing it for about twenty-five years. And I'm not even tired! (Hey, the Catskills were the Borscht Belt, too.) I had two sources to draw on back then. I've been accused of approaching the world through my library, and to learn how to tie specific patterns, I worked through Randall Kaufmann's *Fly Tyers Nymph Manual* and *Tying Dry Flies*. I'd started fly fishing while teaching in Oregon, where the Kaufmann brothers had a shop outside Portland, and that seemed to make sense to me.

The other source I had to draw on were the voices I heard in my head. This was not a psychotic break. I was then living in California, and both in Portland and in San Mateo, I had hung out at the Fly-Tying Theatre at the International Sportsmen's Exposition, then the biggest West Coast fly-fishing show. There, even before I purchased a basic kit with a Thompson Model A vise and started tying, I watched and listened intently as tyers demonstrated the craft and the art of fly tying. Some were famous, such as Lefty Kreh and André Puyans, but more were locals such as "Fast" Eddy Chiles, who owned a junk ya . . . an auto recycling facility . . . and who would tell you which alternators had the

best wire for ribbing (Toyotas). And there was Pete Parker, a retired Unitarian minister who ran the theatre after Dan “Zonker” Byford left for Thailand and who demonstrated spinning deer hair by building helicopter imitations on large hooks—Bells, mostly, but also Sikorskys—complete with rotors and pontoons. It was said that one of these was tied on a tippet and cast on a steelhead river, but that owed more to rum than to reason. These people made fly tying fun.

From all these tyers, I learned to listen and remember when someone does something amazing at the vise. These were the voices in my head I was hearing when I first started to tie.

That’s why I joined the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild when I moved back to the East Coast—to listen and learn and remember. Now I hear more voices. I’m the guy who laps up every technique old or new, whether demonstrated in a book, in person, or on the Internet, and who ties all the cool new patterns. Then, like everyone else, I fish the same old patterns that always seem to work for me—to the extent that any do. I review fly-tying books for a West Coast magazine, *California Fly Fisher*, and I get to see a lot of innovative things that way, but I find that more and more, the flies I admire are developed by friends who have fished the waters I fish much longer than I have. If there is a Catskill tradition that’s alive today, they’re the ones who embody it. They’re doing what the originators did, but with new materials and new ideas.



## The Summer Place

The weekend when I opened up the summer place, it was the eighth year that I closed valves, switched breakers, reconnected pipes, and crossed my fingers as I stood in the cellar, flashlight in hand, waiting for the forty-gallon hot water heater to fill up, allowing the air to escape from the pipes. It’s both exciting and terrifying listening to the gurgling of water as the pump, 400 feet below the house, brings the cold Catskill water to ground level.

Years before I had the summer place, a 1986 Chevrolet Silverado, gloss black, was my summer place. Angler parking areas up and down the Willowemoc knew that truck well, mostly after dark and in the deepest recesses of the parking area. I would stretch out on the front seat, using a duffel bag stuffed with fly boxes, soft drinks, and a change of clothes for a pillow and try to sleep. I was the last one off the river and the first one on back then, because my commute to the stream took less than a minute either way.

Now, the summer place is my rest stop, considerably more comfortable than a truck, but far less mobile.

I leave the cellar and once in the house crack the kitchen faucet open slowly, hear a rush of air and then water, and the task is complete. The summer place weathered another Catskill winter, and it will be ready for the family on Mother’s Day weekend in a few weeks.

I check on the house several times every winter, and it’s always strange to walk into a house where the interior temperature is the same as it is outdoors, sometimes even colder. But the wood stove exhaust builds a fantastic draft, and in forty-five minutes, it’s capable of heating the house’s interior to acceptable comfort levels.

When I’m not there, mice keep it company. I see their activity in many forms. Sometimes it makes me smile, and sometimes I curse the small rodents. For such tiny and lightweight creatures, they can move things I would have thought impossible for them to disturb. My daughter kept a small tea cup on the counter she used for paintbrushes, and I found it on the floor, unbroken, but at least three feet from where it was. I find bits of paper and wood scattered around the house, no doubt nest-building material that got left behind during construction. I don’t love having mice in the house, but I don’t hate it, either. As pets go, they are very capable of fending for themselves.

I have an antique table in the area next to the kitchen where the wood stove is, and I use that for a fly-tying bench. It’s a rough thing, musty smelling when you get your face next to it when picking up a hook or feather that dropped on the floor, but I have tied many fishing flies from it, flies that I’ve used the next day to match a bug the trout were eating or just flies to replace used ones. The table faces



the front of the house, and from the chair, I have a great view of the lake, the mountain on the opposite side, and sometimes an eagle or osprey circling over the water, doing their kind of fishing.

Most of the furniture in that house was found and purchased close by. It was something I wanted to do, filling the house with “local” stuff. It didn’t take much, either. It’s a small place, easy to clean and maintain, sitting on one acre that’s mostly wooded, and since the grass in the mountains grows at a ridiculously slow rate, the exterior work is easy, as well.

Through the years, the summer place has taken on a more fly-fishing-friendly look. I have been hanging shadow boxes of flies on the walls, decorating with a more trouty look. My wife even quilted a wall hanging with classic wet-fly designs sewed in. It really is starting to look and feel like a fishing-specific dwelling.

It’s was a cold and slow start to the season, but it won’t be long before it all has turned around, and I look forward to overnighting in that place again, enjoying family time on the weekends. It certainly beats that bench seat between two truck doors.

## **Don’t Count Out the Ol’ Rat-Faced McDougall**

**By Dave Plummer**

Several years ago in early May, the waters were very high in the Delaware branches and their tributaries. I was burning with early season fishing fever and determined to find a suitable destination upstream on the Beavercill. At the covered bridge park, I found fishable water and more importantly, no people. This time of year it was possible that if I waited long enough, I might find the Blue Quills and Hendricksons showing up. I stationed myself at the head of Theodore Gordon’s pool above the covered bridge and waited. About every ten minutes, a fish of some size broke the surface near the bank on the other side, just beyond the bubble line. I knew it was a trout, and its rhythm, though slow, was quite predictable. I tied on variation upon variation of a Blue Quill, Hendrickson, and caddis, all of which it either ignored or refused.

Along about four o’clock, I decided to give it one more try with something outrageously stupid. I had in my box this big fly that resembled a miniature bottle brush and that I had never used. I tied it on the same old 6X tippet I had been using. First cast: smash and gone, fish and fly — the Rat-Faced McDougall, the only one I had. I tried a couple more big flies, but the fish was no longer interested in my offerings. My day was over.

Sometime after that experience, I read a Harry Darbee story in which Harry had caught one of his first big trout in that very pool, perhaps one hundred years ago. Reading further, I learned that the Rat-Faced McDougall was a variation of Harry and Elsie’s hair-body flies and originally named by Judge Wiggins of Middletown the “Beaver Kill Bastard.” It says there that one day, as a friend of Harry’s was tying a few, a young girl watching asked him what it was. Not wishing to offend the young lady with coarse language, he asked the girl to give it a name. She said, “I think it’s a Rat-Faced McDougall.” The new moniker stuck, and the fly was marketed as such by the Darbees.

When I tie it in size 12 on a standard dry-fly hook it does remind me of a tiny rodent. The body can be fat or thinner. My friend Tommy Thomson told me once that he liked fat bodies. Tommy was a trout catcher, so I presume that his flies attracted their attention. Since that first encounter, I tied a couple of Rat-Faced McDougalls for the box, but never used them much.



Near the end of this past summer, though, I was fishing to very stubborn trout on the East Branch of the Delaware. As dusk came upon me, and as a last resort, I tied on ol' Rat-Faced McDougall, this time with a 5X tippet. On the second cast and drift, a big head broke the water and sucked it down. I had the big trout on for a few seconds until it slipped the hook. Oh well, half the fun is fooling them and knowing that I did something right, even if I didn't bring it to net. One of the neat things about this fly is that it is a beacon in the fading light.

I will always be intrigued by the effectiveness of this fly from that Beaverkill experience. I was alone, tired, cold, and frustrated. I'm occasionally a mystic, although not one to believe much in the supernatural guidance of our hands, but as I was pawing through my fly box on that lowering evening in so storied a pool, did someone whisper into my ear, "Try this one!"? I'm destined forever to wonder.

Here is the original pattern as given by Harry Darbee in his book *Catskill Flytier*.

Tail: Ginger cock hackle fibers  
Body: Clipped tannish-gray deer hair  
Wings: Cream grizzly hackle tips  
Hackle: Ginger cock

I tie these on 3XL dry-fly hooks, size 10 and 12—I use standard dry-fly hooks and mash down the barbs—with tan 6/0 thread. I find that winter whitetail deer body hair is best for spinning to make the body. Comb out the underfur. Tie it in and spin it in three or four clumps, leaving space on the hook for wings, hackle, and head. After the last clump, secure the body with a whip finish. Trim the body to bug shape to suit, taking a little more off the bottom to expose the hook. For the upright and split wings, I have used ginger or cree grizzly as well. And I've sometimes I've also used light cree grizzly for the hackle.

It's a challenging, but fun fly to learn to tie well. It's as much fun to fish it.

## The Unnamed Bucktail: Tales from the Beyond

In the last issue of the *Gazette*, I wrote about the Esopus Wulff and Bucky Sterns, a top-notch Catskill fly fisher and fly tyer and longtime Internet friend. Back in 2008, Bucky sent me a letter in response to an inquiry about an unnamed bucktail that Vic Sasse had given me. Vic is a retired New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Adirondack forest ranger turned fly-shop owner and a good friend. Years ago, when Sasse gave me the bucktail, he said it was a killing pattern for brown trout and of Catskill origin, but he didn't know the fly's name. I sought an answer to this piscatorial quandary, which eventually brought me Bucky's letter.

Dear Ed,

A fellow from Long Island (let's call him John) joined the DeBruce Fly Fishing Club in 1963, the year I became a member. He resigned in 1976, and I believe he's deceased. John wasn't a good fisherman. He was a great fisherman. Dry fly, wet fly, nymph, bucktail, or streamer, it didn't seem to matter. And I'm not talking about stocked trout. He did just as well in the high, cold water of spring before the club stocked and the quarry would be carryover browns. It was my favorite time, too.

John had one peculiarity, though. He was very secretive about the flies he used.

One morning, I returned to the clubhouse just after John and his friend. I asked the friend how they had done, and he answered John had caught and released 20 trout. When I inquired of the taking fly, he responded, "the fly he always uses."

### *Up on the Esopus*



With Ed Ostapczuk

Now I had heard about John's secret fly and had asked several times to see it. I was a fly tyer and wanted to copy the killer pattern. I had always been coyly rebuffed. But now I had my chance. John was in the kitchen having lunch, but had left his still-strung rod in the rack on the porch. So I took a peek, and there in the keeper ring was your mystery bucktail. The wool body looked a shade darker (the fly had been fished and was wet), but it had a red tail, a palmered coachman brown hackle, and a black bear wing. It was roughly dressed on a 6XL hook, a 6 or an 8. The fly you have (and I assume you got from Vic Sasse) looks like a Mustad 38941 hook with a sproat bend.

The butts of the bear hair were not covered with the working thread. The butts were tied down, and the fly was tied off under the butts at the eye. The butts were then trimmed flush with the eye. I think that's the technique Don Gapen used on the original Muddler Minnow.

John said he had gotten the fly from a Catskill old-timer who might have worked for or been friendly with the Shavers, who have the hatchery at Turnwood. The connection was not clear. John thought it looked like the stick-bait caddis that carpet the bottom of the Willowemoc in the spring. The black bear wing would lie flat along the back when the fly was wet. It was a fish taker, at least at the end of John's leader.

The fly didn't have a name. At least John didn't know of one. So I guess it will remain shrouded in mystery with other nameless patterns that spring from the fertile vises of local tyers, take trout regularly, and whose dressings are known to only a few.

### Bucky

Soon after this letter arrived, I received a second letter from Bucky in which he wrote, "It's OK to share the letter I sent yesterday."

Oddly enough, in another letter Bucky sent, he mentioned that he played high-school football with Vic Sasse back in the mid-1940s. Bucky was on the junior varsity at the time, while Vic was the varsity kicker who "routinely boomed kickoffs through the end zone." And one other interesting fact I rediscovered while sorting through Bucky's letters—he and another DeBruce Club member were fans of Ed Sens, whom I wrote about extensively in prior issues of the *Gazette*.

The pattern of the "unnamed bucktail" given to me by Vic Sasse is as follows.

Hook: Size 6 or 8 streamer hook

Thread: Black

Tail: Red hackle fibers

Body: Brown wool, palmered with coachman brown hackle

Wing: Black bear, sparse to medium

Note: the black bear in the fly pictured, supplied by Vic Sasse, was not tied exactly as Bucky described; otherwise the pattern is a dead ringer for the same fly. Over the years, I have caught Esopus Creek brown trout using the unnamed bucktail shown here, and Bucky's story resonates every time I do.

