



The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild GAZETTE



Volume 21, number 4

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary

July 2018

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Annual Picnic Is Now the Annual Outing

Mark your calendars for the July 28, 2018, Farmington River Outing. In another first for the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild this year, we're seeking to give guild members in locations outside the Catskills a chance to join with other members, enjoy lunch and fishing together, and perhaps explore new waters. Guild president Joe Ceballos and vice president Allen Landheer will be leading this event.

For this outing, on Saturday, July 28, we're bringing the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild to Connecticut to fish the upper section of the West Branch of the Farmington River, a beautiful fishery that holds brown, rainbow, and brook trout and salmon. The Farmington, Connecticut's only Wild and Scenic River, is a tailwater fishery with water temperatures cool enough for quality fishing even in the summer. The water is easily accessible and offers various types of fishing spots, from long pools, to quick riffles, to heavy water. Make a day of it by fishing in the morning, gathering for a streamside lunch, and fishing the late hatches in the afternoon and evening. More information will be sent via email and snail mail with specific times and location, but plan for a morning of fishing, a midday lunch, and then stay for the evening hatch!



Joe Ceballos with a Farmington brown.

We look forward to seeing more guild members from the Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Northeastern New York areas at this event. Out-of-staters can obtain Connecticut fishing licenses and the state's new trout and salmon stamp at UpCountry Sportfishing (see below), at any town hall in Connecticut, or online at: <https://ct.aspirafocus.com/internetsales>.

The local fly shop is UpCountry Sportfishing, 352 Main Street, Pleasant Meadow, CT, (860) 379-1952, www.farmingtonriver.com. Directions to the area also can be found on the fly shop's website.

The Farmington is within easy driving distance for some members, but if you'd like to arrive early or stay over after the July 28 event, area accommodations include the following.

The Hillside Motel, Route 44, Canton, <http://www.hillsidemotel44.com>, (860) 693-4951.

The Old Riverton Inn, Riverton, <http://www.rivertoninn.com>, (860) 379-8678.

Pine Meadow B&B, 398 Main Street, Pine Meadow, (860) 379-8745.

Legends on the Farmington, <https://www.legendbnb.com>, (203) 650 8767.

If you're a guild member, but live too far away to attend meetings in Roscoe, come see old friends and make new ones while enjoying the fishing on this scenic and productive trout stream.

Catskill Fly Tyers Guild at Whitewater Flies

We kicked off our first roving Guild meeting June 23, 2018, while attending the Whitewater Flies open house in Lafayette, NJ. Nicole March and Bob Hopken demonstrated various patterns throughout the day as people came through to visit. The guild had previously voted on moving some of the meetings to various locations to reach more members who can't make it to the Catskills. These new meetings will be more of an educational get-together, as opposed to the usual business meetings, so please keep an eye out for the next one.



—Nicole March

Catskill Fly Tyers Guild at the Roscoe Anglers Market

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild had a table at the Roscoe Anglers Market, on May 26, 2018. Two new members joined, and we sold hats and patches, as well as the next-to-last DVD of *Fly Tyers, Volume 2: A Guild Sampler*. Many thanks to Bill Leuszler and Misako Ishimura for staffing the table.

—Judie DV Smith



Phases of a Fly Tyer's Education, Part 3

Editor's note: in the last two issues 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. Here are some of the shorter ones.

Merrill "Doc" Katz

How long: Sixty-five years tying flies

First fly-tying book: *How to Tie Flies*, by E. C. Gregg

Fly-tying mentors: Joe Humphreys, Charlie Krom, and Keith Fulsher

Favorite fly-tying book: *Fly Tying*, by Helen Shaw

Mark Lewchik

How long: forty-three years tying flies

First fly-tying book: *Modern Fly Dressings for the Practical Angler*, by Poul Jorgensen

Fly-tying mentors: No direct mentor, learned through trial and error

Favorite fly-tying book: *Flies for Trout*, by Dick Stewart and Farrow Allen

Jim Slater

How long: fifty-five years tying flies

First fly-tying book: *Professional Fly Tying, Spinning, and Tackle Making*, by George Leonard Herter

Favorite fly-tying book: *What the Trout Said*, by Datus Proper

Ed McQuat

How long: Forty-eight years tying flies

First fly-tying book: Pattern sheets from the Fly Fisherman's Bookcase and Tackle Service

Fly-tying mentors: Learned fly tying directly from Cy Bria.

Favorite fly-tying book(s): *Universal Fly Tying Guide*, by Dick Stewart, *Inside Fly Tying*, by Dick Talleur, and *Flies: The Best 1000*, by Randy Stetzer

On the Guild's Mission, Present and Future

By Bill Leuszler

Over the last few months, I have given thought to better identifying the role that the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild could play within the fly-tying and fly-fishing community. In this brief note, I would like to share some of my ideas.

First of all, I think a primary role we have as a group is offering instruction in fly tying. Historically, this has been done mainly by giving classes to beginners. Kids on the Fly is a good example of that effort. Yet little effort has been placed on teaching "Catskill" fly patterns in this context. It has been simply instruction in basic fly-tying techniques. This approach, from my own experience, is realistic, because development of basic tying skills are needed before a tyer can refine those skills in a particular area of interest, be it saltwater, salmon, or "Catskill" patterns.

Our monthly meetings, when a fly pattern is tied by a group leader, also offer instruction, both in the specific pattern, but also in specific and possibly more advanced fly-tying techniques with which the members may not be familiar. In addition, I believe this type of small-group presentation offers an opportunity for discussion about how and when the pattern is fished and whether anyone in the group has experience in fishing with the pattern in the Catskill region.

An additional purpose the guild can have is supporting the development of fly tyers who have the confidence to both teach and demonstrate fly tying. I have heard from many guild members that they feel that they are not "good" enough to do fly tying at one of the shows our group attends. I believe the guild can do a much better job in this area. We can give support and encouragement to our members, enabling them to develop more confidence, which is often developed only through experience.

In my opinion, not all of our members have enthusiasm for tying or demonstrating "Catskill" patterns. A number simply have an interest in fly tying, with the hope of developing better fly-tying skills and being able to go fishing with a fly they have tied themselves. At the same time, I believe our group has a responsibility to encourage the development of tyers who have the interest and skill to tie and fish both traditional and modern Catskill patterns. These fly tyers, I believe, are the ones most likely to promote the guild's mission, the continued recognition of "Catskill" fly tying as a unique regional style.

What Is a "Catskill Fly"?

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild's definition of a Catskill fly was established early in the history of the organization, in 1994, by a committee consisting of Martin Redcay, John Jacobson, Dave Brandt, Ken Mears, and Doug Fries and agreed on by the guild.

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild acknowledges any pattern known to have originated roughly within the Catskills, and to have been designed largely for use there, to be a Catskill fly.

This would include the famous Catskill "style" floating flies created by the pillars of the American fly tying fraternity, as well as the continually emerging dressings of contemporary Catskill fly tyers.



My First Fly: the Cooper Bug

Inspired by Nicole March and Bud Bynack in the last *Gazette*, I couldn't help but reflect upon my first trout fly—not the oversized wet fly with a thick chenille body that could rotate about the hook shank that I created from a Noll Fly Tying Kit, but my first real trout fly that caught fish. I knew it as the Cooper Bug.

Back in the 1960s, as a young wannabe fly fisher, growing up on the suburban streets of New Jersey, there wasn't much local fly-fishing knowledge to be had, much less someone to watch tie a fly. Well, there was one angler about my age, Jimmy Applin, the local teenage trout guru. He seemed to have secret ties with real trout men, anglers who fished with Orvis Battenkills. Indirectly, it was Applin who introduced my buddies and me to the Cooper Bug, but it was like pulling teeth to obtain this easy-to-tie fly recipe, one I think trout mistook for caddisflies and other aquatic insects. That's why I believe the Cooper Bug was so effective; it was generic in nature, simple, yet eloquent.

I didn't realize that this simple pattern had such an interesting and complicated background. Doing research for this piece, I Googled variations of "Cooper Bug" and found related, but sometimes conflicting information. It seems to be called by different names, to have various dressings, and perhaps different creators, depending upon the source one chooses. Some folks referred to the pattern as the Doodle Bug, others the Devil Bug. Ray Bergman's *Trout* lists a Cooper Bug, as does Donald DuBois's *Fisherman's Handbook of Trout Flies*, but they are not the same pattern. Some sources mistake the Cooper Bug for a dry fly known as the Tom Thumb, though they record the slight variations. Terry Hellekson's *Fish Flies* lists this pattern, as does H. G. Tapply's *Sportsman's Notebook and Tap's Tips*. Tapply refers to this fly as "the amazing trout bug," a simple deer-hair bug with Down-Easter roots. Tapply's version of the recipe is the exact same pattern that I tied for decades. Tapply's son, William, reiterates his father's findings in *Every Day Was Special* in the chapter titled "Old-Time New England Trout and Salmon flies." Evidently H. G. Tapply acquired his first Copper Bug from Bob Elliot of Maine, who had written a lengthy *Field & Stream* article popularizing the pattern outside of New England.

Both of the Tapplys and Hellekson, plus a few Internet search hits, assert that Jack Copper of Maine originated this pattern back in the 1930s. He is said to have created the fly to represent caddis that brook trout were taking in a pond. Cooper applied for a patent on the recipe, which was denied due to its close resemblance to Orley Tuttle's Devil Bug. I even located an article from the *United Fly Tyer Roundtable* magazine written by Jack Cooper titled "The Cooperbug" from around 1959. The funny thing about that article is that Cooper wrote the pattern's body used chenille or wool, while the Tapplys cited peacock herl, which is what I used. As I said, background information on this pattern is somewhat muddled.

Several of the above references, including Jack Cooper's, suggest the fly can be fished as a dry or wet/nymph. In fact, Cooper wrote, "My bug is unusual because it is all three: a dry fly, a wet fly, and a nymph and is very effective in all three manners." In all the years that I've fished it, I used it only as a submerged pattern. If one wishes to fish it as a dry fly, a lighter-weight dry-fly hook should be used.

Here is the Cooper Bug pattern as originally taught to me.

Hook: Mustad 38941, size 14

Thread: black

Body: peacock herl

Back and tail: Natural brown deer hair tied over the body, clipped at the eye of the hook



Up on the Esopus



With Ed Ostapczuk



New Water

I recently returned from a four-day fishing trip. It's been twenty-two years since I had four days off in a row—my wedding and honeymoon in 1996 was the last time. And I didn't fish even one of those days!

It was a destination trip, but not to Patagonia or New Zealand. Instead, a friend and I fished a river in the Catskills, one we wouldn't normally fish simply because it was out of our normal zone: the Esopus Creek.

We arrived in Phoenicia on Friday morning, checked into the rental home in town, and after a quick tour of the place, immediately got back into his truck to hit the river. A lot of planning on his part made the trip enjoyable. As the old saying goes, time flies when you're having fun, and when fly fishing is involved, it travels at light speed. He had mapped out the entire fishable water, studied the aerial photos, situated us close to places where we could get lunch, and since cell service was totally nonexistent, saved all these maps on his phone so we could access them from anywhere.

New water holds a certain appeal, but it also can make an angler anxious. When fishing familiar water, you can make the trip as hard or as easy as you want. If pressed for time, you can immediately head to the most productive areas, where you had success in the past, or you can start somewhere else and end up there. Either way, you know you're likely to catch a few fish.

A new stream has its obstacles. Access, good water, local bugs and hatches—all the things you know well on your regular haunts appear to be a mystery. Is the water high or low? Are we fishing good areas or frog water? What's the wading like? These things and more were gnawing at me as we headed to our first planned stop.

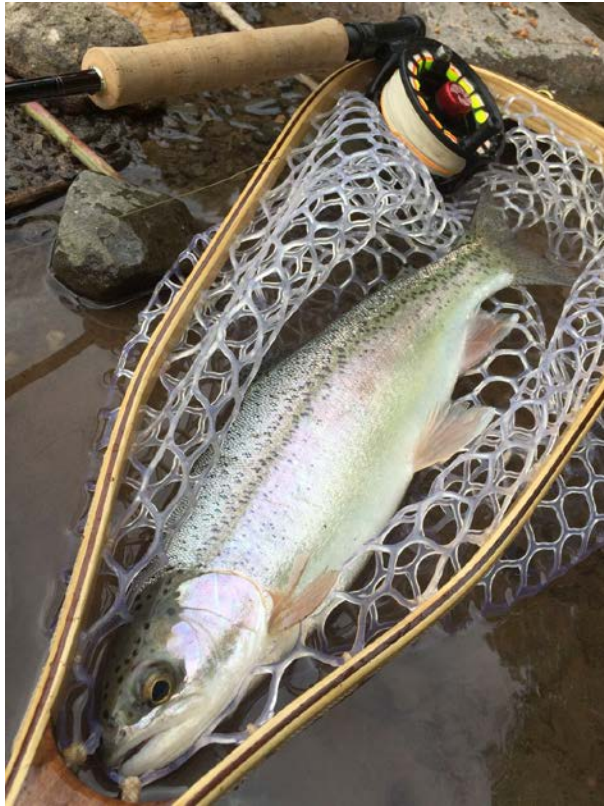
Arriving at the water, we were surprised to see the size of it and the volume. It hadn't rained in a while, and reports of the stream being at half its normal flows had us concerned, but it was all we could do to wade across this waterway without being carried away. And the views, the towering mountains of the Catskills that we don't normally see on the western side—I was in awe. As expected, the river was off-color, but not in the way a stream can be in high water. It was just cloudy enough so we couldn't see the protruding rocks that tripped us up the entire time.



And the trout were everywhere, mostly small rainbows, the 10-to-11-inch variety, that zip around and jump a few times when hooked. It seemed as if the trout were almost at the level of overpopulation, but compared with catching nothing . . . we were pleased.

After Day One, it was surreal to think we had three more days of the same: fishing without limit, no time constraints, no place to be but the next bend in the stream, the next pool or run, and the anticipation of the "big one." We fished the popular pools and a lot of the not so popular areas, too, even hitting some tributaries along the way in search of the elusive brook trout.





We fished in bright sun, pouring rain, and every condition in between, early to late, and by the fourth day, we were tired and weak. At one point, my buddy said, as we were crossing yet another fast section of “wadeable” water, “Is this water getting faster, or am I getting more tired?”

A few notable events happened on this trip. I watched a large moth that was flying low over the water almost get grabbed by a large trout in broad daylight. The fish came completely out of the stream, straight up, with his tail exposed, just missing the moth by a fraction. Old E. R. Hewitt was right all along: these trout do take large fluttering bugs in the air.

I also learned that when you do finally hook a fish that tapes out in the high teens, you don’t let it run into white water, or you risk your life—or at least your dry clothes. Fortunately, it ended well, but there were some tense moments when that fish took to the rapids.

The best thing of all, though, was that we made a deal to do this every year. An annual fishing trip . . . that’s something to look forward to.

Book Review

The Orvis Fly-Fishing Guide

By Tom Rosenbauer. Published by the Lyons Press, 2017; \$24.95, softbound.

Here’s a thought experiment. Suppose you want to write a book about everything—not about every thing there is, fortunately, because by adding something to everything, everything would change, and you’d have to keep starting over, to infinity. But suppose you want to write a book about everything involved in a particular subject, with the added qualification that you’ll be explaining everything to someone assumed to know nothing—or rather, nothing about that subject.

That’s the daunting task that Tom Rosenbauer has taken on not just once, but three times, first in 1983 and then again in 2007 and 2017, for the complicated and diverse subject of fly fishing. Everything does change, of course, even in a sport with long and enduring traditions, and there have been good reasons for revising and updating the work in consecutive editions, including the increased rate of change exemplified in the gap between recent revisions. A long article could be written about changes in the sport over the past thirty-five years by comparing the contents, both written and graphic, of the three editions.

The principal changes that Rosenbauer himself mentions for this edition tell a lot about the present state of the sport, because they reflect what he believes needs to be added to “everything” at the present moment. Among “techniques that have become more widespread in the past ten years,” he highlights “competition or tactical nymphing” and “fishing with very large streamers.”

The first of these has emerged from a development—competition fly fishing—that many anglers, and not just stuffy traditionalists, deprecate as an incursion into the sport of an element of our culture from which fly fishing has always been a refuge. But as angling methods that can be adopted or shunned, these nymphing techniques are now indeed an established part of everything about fly fishing as it is currently practiced. And that it is now possible to fish very large streamers reflects the quite

extensive changes in rod design and use (including the increasing prevalence of two-handed rods) and in synthetic fly-tying materials that have made possible big flies that don't cast like a wet hen.

Other changes that reverberate in different ways with the state of American culture at the present moment are the addition of "a much needed chapter on conservation and giving back to the resource" and "more images of young people and women." It used to be possible for fly fishers of every stripe to agree on the obligation to act as stewards of the nation's natural resources, but we now need to be reminded of it. And of course, as Rosenbauer says, "Fly fishing has gone way beyond the bastion of old men smoking pipes and drinking scotch." The "energy and innovation this new demographic has brought to it," he believes, has inaugurated "truly the most exciting period this sport has ever known."

If you've ever tried to explain anything about fly fishing to someone who knows nothing about it, and most fly fishers have, you know how difficult it can be. (An old neighbor, an immigrant from Hungary, told me that when he was in the army there, if they wanted fish, they just used a hand grenade.) Rosenbauer understands that simply knowing what he's talking about isn't enough and that simply writing well about what he knows (itself something that is too rare) isn't enough, either. He is a devoted student of the rhetoric of explanation—of techniques for making complex things clear for those new to such understandings. The effort should serve as an example for anyone faced with the task of explaining something—let alone everything—to those interested in any aspect of the sport. As he puts it in the introduction:

In the nearly fifty years that I've been involved in the fly-fishing business, I've always listened carefully to novices, both in my years as a fly-fishing instructor and afterward. Producing and hosting a TV show on introductory fly fishing, building an online learning center, and thousands of questions for my podcast have bolstered my sense of what kind of information today's fly fishers need. And I've studied how-to books on photography, cross-country skiing, kayaking, and even books on macroeconomics or foreign policy, for ideas on how to present a complex process to the uninitiated. When I find someone who can explain in an elegant way a topic unfamiliar to me, I'll go back and study his or her approach again and again. So if you're new to fly fishing, I'm thinking of you.

He's also thinking of "the reasonably proficient fly fisher," who can use the book as a reference, and indeed, there are things such as the diagrams for tying angling knots that I find useful to have on the self, since whatever proficiency I might be able to claim doesn't include knot tying—I am both a klutz and someone deficient in spatial imagination.

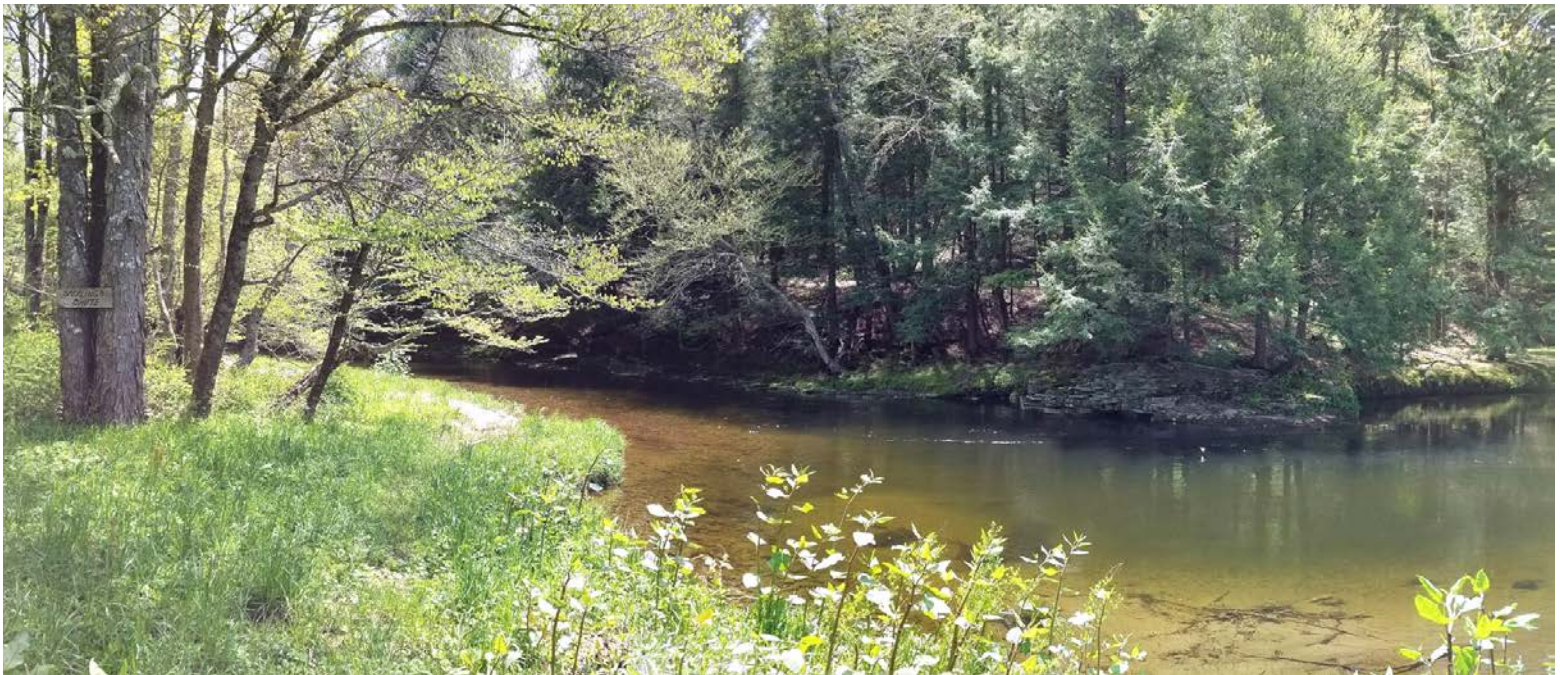
So what is "everything" as laid out with such exemplary clarity here? The fifteen chapters begin by covering basic definitions of terms and gear, dealing with how fly fishing is done (and how it differs from what most novices may already know, spin fishing), rods and line sizes, lines and reels, gear and accessories, and leaders and knots. That's all pretty rudimentary. But then comes an exposition of fly-casting technique, one of the most difficult subjects to explain via the written (or spoken) word, followed by a discussion of flies and the naturals they imitate, as well as fly selection, topics about which whole libraries exist. How to fish streams and still waters, how to fish for steelhead and salmon, and saltwater fly fishing all get covered, as do striking, playing, and landing fish, care of tackle and gear, and finally, stream etiquette (yay!) and conservation, along with "giving back" via such organizations as Project Healing Waters.

The breadth of material that Rosenbauer covers here is really something. One of the paradoxes of writing about everything, though, is that doing so inevitably entails choices involving not just what to foreground and background, but what to include and therefore what to exclude. Because the intended audience principally is newbies, the long and engrossing history of the sport and the compelling interest of its literature get little emphasis—you don't need to know about Dame Juliana Berners or Izaak Walton's milkmaids in order to learn how to cast. And Rosenbauer apparently thinks newbies don't need to know how to tie a Bimini Twist, since he says it's beyond the scope of the book, although I've heard of individuals who even use Biminis in their panfish leaders.

However, it's not just the skill with which this book achieves its ends and its comprehensive scope that are noteworthy. It also is noteworthy that it *is* a book. A lot has changed in the world of media since the original iteration of *The Orvis Fly-Fishing Guide* in 1983. As Rosenbauer notes, there are “podcasts and thousands of YouTube videos,” and there is “a wealth of written information on blogs and websites available to the novice.” Such resources are “an essential part of anyone’s education today,” he writes. “But it becomes clearer each year that reference books like this satisfy the learning needs of most people. It’s said that young people today read physical books at the same rate as baby boomers. This book will provide a sensible jumping-off point for a sport that is simple in purpose, yet often amazingly—and quite wonderfully—complex in execution.”

That is exactly what it does. *The Orvis Fly-Fishing Guide* deservedly has become a classic of modern angling literature in the ubiquitous genre of how-to books. Orvis employs a number of people as fly-fishing guides around the world, but as the iterations of this important book have demonstrated over the years, *the Orvis fly-fishing guide* is Tom Rosenbauer.

—Bud Bynack



When you sit down to tie a fly, you take a seat at a very large, very old table. As you go through the magazines, books, and videos—taking and ignoring advice, learning tricks and shortcuts, discerning and taking sides in old debates, then picking and choosing a pattern, a style, eventually even an aesthetic stance—you participate in a long, complicated, and apparently endless conversation over those and many other matters. You join not merely a club, but a guild.

—Paul Schullery, *Cowboy Trout*



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@verizon.net or 69 Bronxville Road, Apt. 4G, Bronxville, NY 10708, (914) 961-3521.