



# The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild GAZETTE



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**The January 2015 Meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild** will be held on Saturday, January 17, 2015, at 2:00 P.M., at the Rockland House on Route 206 in Roscoe, NY. Ed and Judy Van Put will be giving a PowerPoint presentation that describes the various differences between hatchery trout and wild trout. In addition, Ed and Judy will discuss how light and foods play a role in the coloration of individual trout and will also include an age/growth analysis, comparing wild trout from Willowemoc Creek with wild trout from the Delaware River. How old is a twenty-inch fish? Come and find out. There will be many fish pictures, and by the time they are finished, viewers will better be able to distinguish hatchery trout from wild trout. Ed also will answer questions, not only about the program, but about trout fishing in the Catskills in general, fish, or any other subject about fishing.

Judy and Ed Van Put are past employees of New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Bureau of Fisheries. Judy was a fish-and-wildlife technician for five years, and Ed was a principal habitat/fisheries technician who worked for the department for forty years. Judy has been a member of the New York State Outdoor Writers Association for about twenty years and has written two fishing columns for newspapers in the region, "Streamside," for the *Towne Crier* and "Hook, Line & Sinker" for the *Catskill Mountain News*. Ed has written many articles on trout fishing in the Catskills, and has authored two books, *The Beaverkill: The History of a River and Its People* (1996) and *Trout Fishing In The Catskills* (2007). In the fall of 2015, a new edition of *The Beaverkill: The History of a River and Its People* that will include additional text and artwork and twenty-five fly patterns with links to the Beaverkill. Both are recipients of the New York State Council of Trout Unlimited's Professional Communications Award, Judy in 2005, and Ed in 2009.

## Danbury Show Report

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild once again had a very good presence at the Arts of the Angler show on November 15 and 16 in Danbury, Connecticut. The guild tyers who sat in the hot seats were Pete Peterson, Bud Bynack, Merrill (Doc) Katz, Hank Rope, and yours truly, Ed McQuat.

As usual, we imparted a lot of tying hints and information to the many visitors we had to our booth. Pete did his usual fly-tying instruction for children, using the vises, lights, tools, and materials he had set up on the public's side of our table. All took away with them one or more fishable flies that they had tied themselves. Bud demonstrated his unusual in-the-lap tying method and some of his tying tricks and materials usage. Doc showed his expertise at the vise and around materials as he fashioned his very presentable wet flies. Doc also kept us amused with his anecdotes, fishing and nonfishing. Hank provided us with a very pleasant surprise: his granddaughter Grace, who tied alongside Hank, demonstrating that some of Grandpa's ability has rubbed off on her.

We had twelve members renew memberships and also signed up four new members. We sold a few patches and some of our *Fly Tyers Volume 2* DVDs and a few T-shirts.

Thanks to all of the tyers who once again made my job of arranging the guild's booth easy. And I would like to express my appreciation to our two main ladies for their support: our secretary, Judie DV Smith, for stocking and supplying me with the box of goodies for the show and Erin Phelan for her assistance with badges and arrangements in preparation for the show.

—Ed McQuat



*CJ's Flies*  
With "Catskill John" Bonasera

## Cabin Fever

It's been two months since I have donned waders and felt the wet cork grip of a fly rod and the slippery, muscular form of a trout in my hand. These off-season columns are hard to write, because the inspiration I get all spring and summer is not so easy to come by when preparation for winter consumes my spare time. Cutting and splitting firewood is a mindless task and far removed from the smells, sights, and sounds of the Catskill waters.

The beginning of the 2014 trout season started off this year just about the same as it always does for an excited, part-time Catskill resident like me. I get cabin fever really easily. Weeks before the first trip up, I imagine that it's been so long since the trout have been disturbed by any anglers that they should be anxious to take flies, put up a fight, and be returned to their chilly waterways. This, however, is never the case. Opening Day in the Catskills, for me, at least, is probably always going to be a day when I do a lot of walking, casting, searching, and wondering and very little if any catching and releasing. This has been my experience since my first Opening Day in 2003, yet for some reason, I never recall it being that way until I am standing on the snow, streamside, looking into the 32.1-degree water and wondering how trout can even move, let alone chase a fly, in conditions like that.

Before long, though, the ground starts warming as the sun stays out a little longer during the day, and with warming ground comes warming water. With warming water come mayfly and caddis hatches, and the next thing I know, it's the middle of spring, there are reports of epic days on-stream, and the early season fruitlessness is moved back to that unused section of my brain that exhibits itself only on Opening Days.

The 2014 season was a good for fishing. Though there was hardly any snowpack in the woods around the streams before the season started, we had consistent rainfall through much of the "good" part of the summer. My little town received a little *too much* rainfall in the late spring, and a heavy two-day rain washed debris down from the mountain, clogging culvert pipes and backing up the water over the roads, flooding basements and leaving a trail of damage that the residents felt for months afterward.

Flooding notwithstanding, the streams cleared, and the fishing resumed its normal pace. I even had a little time to test some new water. New water is always exciting, though it pays to do a little homework before allotting a full day to fishing it. I spent the first half of the morning walking upstream, mostly through frog water. I did happen upon a log jamb that likely held fish, but I couldn't cast into it, and even if I could, I certainly couldn't have retrieved a fish from it. The second half of the morning I spent walking back.

In the evening, though, in an attempt to salvage the day, I headed northward to a familiar stream, and getting there with about forty-five minutes of daylight left, I positioned myself in the prime run, with a pool below me and a fast riffle above. I drifted flies through the sweet spot and hooked a fish on nearly every cast. March Brown spinners danced high above me, caddisflies clumsily flitted below me, the shadows started lengthening across the stream bank, and the sun turned from yellow to orange. The sky turned purple, and when I retreated from the water, I sat on a flat rock and watched the evening turn to dark.

While any time on the water is time well spent, there are some times you simply will never forget. It is the memories of those times that alter your thinking during wood-cutting times, the "trout-colored glasses" that keep you yearning to fish, even if it is Opening Day and 28 degrees and snow is lining the banks.

For now, when cabin fever strikes, I reach back into the recesses of my mind and relive those times from last spring and summer, both productive and not so productive, that make this sport so enjoyable. And while I think of that, I will be filling empty slots in fly boxes and maybe stocking a new one to pass the winter nights away as we prepare for 2015.

It won't be long now—Opening Day of trout season!

## A Long-Standing Catskill Tradition: Dette Trout Flies

The Dette Trout Flies Web site proudly proclaims “Established in 1928, Dette Trout Flies is the oldest family run fly shop in the world, now in our 86th year. Our mission has always been, and always will be, to supply the fly fishing community with the finest products and service.” Without doubt, this family has established a long-standing and cherished Catskill tradition.

Eric Leiser wrote an excellent book on the family, *The Dettes: A Catskill Legend*, and Mike Valla has covered the family in his writings. My goal here is solely to share some photographs of flies tied by several generations of Dettes. And I must apologize up front for my photography of these flies, which are mostly under glass in prized shadowboxes.

I began wandering the Catskills in 1969 as a young wannabe fly fisher, and I quickly was fascinated by the history and beauty of these rivers. It wasn't long before I wrote to Walt and Winnie Dette to order a half dozen trout flies I could use as dry-fly models for my own tying. It's been a very long time since I ordered those flies from Walt and Winnie, but I believe their shadowbox contains the following patterns, from left to right below: a Gray Fox, Cream Variant, March Brown, Gray Fox Variant, Light Cahill, and a Blue-Winged Olive.

### *Up on the Esopus*



With Ed Ostapczuk



Much later, at a Trout Unlimited annual banquet, I outbid other attendees and secured one of Mary Dette's famous Coffin Flies.

And finally I got to know Joe Fox, ordering a half dozen trout flies of shadowbox quality from him. From left to right below: a Quill Gordon, Delaware Adams, March Brown, Quack, and a Conover. All these flies are treasured possessions, along with my autographed copy of *The Dettes*, signed by Eric Leiser, Walt, Winnie, and Mary Dette.



Though I treasure the history and mystique of Catskill mountain fishing and its famous trout patterns, I don't often use traditional dry flies to match seasonal hatches. However, one pattern that I tie and often use for wild brook trout found in pristine places is the Conover, a favorite Dette pattern of mine. And I couldn't think of fishing the Esopus Creek's famous *Isonychia* hatch with a few Quacks. It's all about keeping a valued Catskill tradition alive in pursuit of wild trout.



## **“Dear Mr. Darbee”: A Letter from George Grant**

George F. Grant, 2212 Harvard Avenue, Butte, Montana  
December 7, 1946

Dear Mr. Darbee:

Thank you for your letter of November 20th. I will be very pleased to send you some of our strictly Western Style patterns. As a fly-dresser I am sure they will be of interest to you, and I think, too, that some of the patterns, if they are not too large, will be useful on your eastern streams.

During the past season I operated a tackle shop at West Yellowstone, Montana, which is at the west entrance of Yellowstone National Park, and the demand for flies was so great that I ended the season without a single stock fly. However, I am building stock now and will send the flies to you as soon as they are available. There will, of course, be no charge for these flies as I am more than happy to send them to you.

Was glad to note that you and Mrs. Darbee were given the national recognition that you so richly deserve in the May 1946 issue of “Fortune” magazine. It was a very authoritative article and I thought the color plates were the best I have ever seen. With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours, George F. Grant (signed)

*Archival material courtesy of Judie DV Smith*

## **Book Review**

### ***Cowboy Trout: Western Fly Fishing as if It Matters***

*By Paul Schullery. Published by Montana Historical Society Press, Helena, 2006; \$17.50 softbound.*

The thrust of this collection of essays is summed up in its subtitle: *Fly Fishing as if It Matters*. Paul Schullery considers the history of the sport of fly fishing in the American West as having as much to tell us about our attitudes toward society and the environment as, say, agrarian practices there or multiethnic settlement patterns. “Fly fishing intersects the greater western story in so many ways,” he writes (p. 222). As such, Schullery claims, its history merits inclusion among the objects of professional historical inquiry and reflection.

“The historians among us, having in recent decades called into question all the grand, stereotypical Wild West images, still show strong fidelity to certain topics,” he notes, including emblematic battles such as the Little Bighorn. But as Schullery documents in chapters on angling in the early days of Yellowstone National Park on expeditions carried out by gentleman-naturalists, some of whom were the military men escorting the parties, there was an “intense and widespread interest” among “career military men not only in hunting and fishing, but also in conservation. How did that happen and why did it work?” (p. 223). This gesture, seeking to call attention away from the grand narratives to the illuminating details of what actually happened in the relations between angling history and the history of the West is characteristic of much of the book

Seeking to open questions such as these, Schullery has obvious affinities with the New West historians whose demystifications he cites, and in a chapter called “*A River Runs Through It as Folklore and History*,” he himself demystifies that emblematic piece of modern angling literature. But in many ways he is a more traditional kind of historian, tracking down the first person to cast a fly for Yellowstone cutthroat trout, for example. And he is also a fly fisher and intends for fellow anglers to be part of his audience. That means he sometimes must explain to anglers, who already know that fly fishing matters, what he might expect the historians already to know—and it also means that he sometimes must explain to historians what fly fishers do and why they are so passionate about it. Overall, he tacks easily between these two audiences without annoying either and to the edification of both.

As both an angler and a historian, for Schullery, history is prospective, not just retrospective. Fly fishing matters because it helps illuminate questions that concern us today and tomorrow. Perhaps the best example of the prospective component of Schullery’s work is the title essay, “Cowboy Trout.” A survey of the history of the introduction of nonnative trout species into the waters of the West—and beyond—leads to a consideration of the emergence and claims of the current movement to preserve and to restore populations of native fish by eliminating introduced species. Illuminating such issues certainly backs up Schullery’s claim that in the history of the American West, the history of fly fishing indeed matters.

—*Bud Bynack*

## Obituaries

**Francis “Frank” H. Thompson, Jr.**, of Maryland, passed away in September. Frank Thompson was born on January 7, 1933, in Washington, D.C., and was raised in Virginia. He was a longtime member of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild, as well as a member of the Federation of Fly Fishers (life member), the Fly Fishers’ Club of Harrisburg, PA, the Potomac Valley Fly Fishers (Frederick, MD), the Creekside Anglers (Morgantown, WV), the Antietam Fly Fishers (Hagerstown, MD) • the Free State Fly Fishers (Annapolis, MD), the Brotherhood of the Jungle Cock (MD), the Brotherhood of the Jungle Cock (NY), the National Capital Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum, the Pennsylvania Fly Fishing and Museum Association, the Maryland Fly Anglers, and the World Fly Fishers of Japan. He taught fly tying to members of congress, generals of the United States Army, and children as young as five years of age.

Mike Hogue recalls: “Frank might have been one of the kindest, gentleman I've ever known. I say ‘gentleman,’ because when I think of that term, he comes to mind. Frank was an avid tying-tool collector, and I think he had almost every tying tool ever made. I know because I sold quite a few of those to him. He also loved cane rods, and I am told his collection of rods was quite fabulous.”

**More on Dave Pabst**, from Bruce Corwin:

I didn’t know Dave Pabst well. I would always “chew the fat” with him when he was working the counter at what is now the Beaverkill Angler in town. I took this shot of him in 2005 when I was still in contact with Glenn Overton (Overton's Wonder Wax). Here's Glenn’s note back. (Note that Glenn wrote in a language all his own.)

Bruce. It wonderful of you sending me a picture of David. I can see we all change over the last thirty years but what never change in David pictures is kindness of his eyes. There is I see the dear friend I knew. . . . it was a very special time for us both. The laughter and smiles we shared is so unforgettable but the pictures you have sent reconnected those special days.



# The Hjorthårspuppan (Deer Hair Pupa)

By Niklas Dahlin

At the beginning of my life as a fly tyer and fly fisherman, I was at my father-in-law's cabin up north in Mittådalsvallen, Funäsdalen. There was an awesome collection of old fishing and hunting magazines in the cabin—a treasure for a guy like me, who had just found the world of fly tying. In one of the magazines, I found a really interesting little fly—interesting at that point for me because I had the materials to tie it: the the Hjorthårspuppan, or Deer Hair Pupa. The fly looked pretty simple to tie, but it turned out that I'd bit off more than I could chew. I managed to tie a few that held up, but I realized that there's more to fly tying than just the materials.

A few years later, I was fishing the Idsjöströmmen, a great grayling stream. I meet a few guys there at lunchtime, and we talked about what flies to use. They told me that for the upcoming evening fishing, there was only one fly that worked—yes, the Deer Hair Pupa. They showed me a fly, and I recognized the pattern, so I took out my vise and made a batch. It was easier now than it had been a couple of years earlier. Later the same evening, the caddis started to hatch, and the hatch was enormous. We had caddis all over the place. My expectations were sky high, thanks to the stories I'd heard earlier in the day. I was pretty tired from a long day of fishing, but suddenly, I got a tremendous strike. I couldn't do much in the fast stream, but I put as much pressure on the fish as I could, and after a great fight, I landed my biggest grayling so far, fifty centimeters—just under twenty inches. Since that day, this fly has always had its place in my fly box, and come to think of it, it is one of the flies that has given me most of my fish, at least this season.

The fly doesn't look like much, but in the water, it is actually very imitative. As I stood in a river this summer, suddenly I saw a big emerging caddis swimming toward me. I immediately stopped fishing and focused on the little bugger for as long as possible. After this lesson from the real thing, I now tie my Hjorthårspuppan with a slightly thicker body and thorax than before. Another lesson learned was that the caddis pupa was anything but freely drifting, so while I still fish the fly that way, I give it some movement now and then. I do not use floatant on the fly. I want it to soak up water so it lies in the surface film, not above it.

The Hjorthårspuppan as I know it, with a deer hair body and a thorax of hare's ear, comes from the vise of Mats Hagberg. Unfortunately, he passed away 2012, only fifty-six years old. Mats grew up in the far north, in Luleå. He was a media guy, in television. In 1994, he was one of three media guys who made the film *Från fjäll till kust* (From the mountains to the sea), which was shown on Swedish television. One of "the three amigos," Gunnar Westrin, who today is one of our biggest fly-fishing stars, told me that he and the guys had wicked fishing in the river Piteå with the Hjortpuppan, as they called it back then. It's interesting how a fly changes its name over time. I actually have some friends who call the fly the Mullbänken, which translates into English quite strangely—it's slang for the tobacco we Swedes put under our upper lip so we can be real he-men. "Dippin' snuff" is what American cowboys call it.

When gathering information for the Hjorthårspuppan, I came across an old pattern by Paul Young quite similar to it, the Straw Man. This fly also has a spun and clipped deer hair body, but it has hackle as a thorax, instead of dubbing. Lars Wiberg of Denmark also has a similar pattern. His fly has the same shape, but is made entirely of deer hair.

It isn't hard to tie the Hjorthårspuppan if you are used to spinning deer hair. If not, it will be a bit tricky in the beginning, but with some practice, you'll be knocking them out by the dozen in no time. My version of the fly is somewhat different from the original. As I said before, I tie it with slightly thicker body, and I have replaced the hare's ear dubbing with a blend of squirrel and SLF. I think the fly is buggier with the squirrel, and the thorax is shinier with the SLF. I most often tie the fly in size 14 and 16, which covers my own fishing.

## The Hjorthårspuppan (Deer Hair Pupa)

Hook: Partridge Patriot SLD

Thread: 8/0—I use Textreme Power Thread and Textreme Standard, from Italy

Body: Deer hair

Thorax: Dark brown Squirrel SLF



1. For spinning deer hair, I use a strong Dyneema thread. Secure the thread quite far back on the hook and wind it back to the beginning of the bend.

2. Make two loose wraps around the first bunch of deer hair, then pull down gently and start to tighten the thread so that the hair starts spinning. When I have tightened the thread, I wind the thread in two or three firm wraps crosswise through the deer hair and let thread hang while preparing the next bunch of hair.

3. Spin a second bunch of deer hair the same way, then push the bunches together by holding a firm grip behind the first bunch and pressing the hair backward. I use my forceps, but there also are tools suited for this on the market.

4. Continue to spin deer hair on the hook until it is three-quarters full. On a size 14 Partridge SLD, I use three or four bunches. Finish spinning the



deer hair with a couple of whip finishes. 5. Now it's time to give the body its cigar shape. I first cut the hair to rough shape with my scissors.

6. Then I use a lighter to burn off the deer hair and get an even shape on the body, I am quite careful. It's easy to burn up the whole thing, so easy does it. Just move the lighter quickly



over the body, and you will be fine.

7. You don't want it to look like this. →

8. Now take a brush of some kind and brush the burned surface.

9. Attach a standard thread. I personally like to give the fly a distinctive head, so I use thread with a bright contrasting color. I have persuaded myself that by doing this, the fly gets a hot spot. It's mostly for the fly fisher, of course. To create the thorax, I dub the thread quite tightly. I need five or six centimeters (around two inches) of dubbing rope.



10. Wrap the dubbing rope from the hook eye toward the deer hair body, giving the fly its final shape.

11. Whip finish. As a last touch, give the head a layer of lacquer for a durable finish.

*This article originally appeared in Swedish in a Swedish angling magazine. Photos by Niklas Dahlin.*

## A Reminder: Guild Memberships Renew in February

If you receive the *Gazette* by the U.S. mail, check the date to the right of your name on the envelope to see if you need to renew. If you receive the *Gazette* by e-mail, your renewal date should appear next to your name on the address line. Membership is only \$10.00 per year. Couples can join at the same single-member rate of \$10.00. Send a check, your current address and phone number, and, if you wish to receive the *Gazette* by e-mail, your e-mail address to:

Bill Leuszler, CFTG, P.O. Box 79, Wurtsboro, NY 12790.

# The Garden State Convention Center



## Somerset, New Jersey

January 23, 24, 25, 2015

### Show Hours

Friday: 10:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.  
Saturday: 8:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M.  
Sunday: 9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

### Admission

**Adults:** \$18 for one day  
\$28 for two-day pass  
\$38 for three-day pass

**Children under 5 free, under 12: \$2**  
**Scouts under 16 in uniform: free**  
**Active Military with ID: \$10**  
Cash only at the gate

**Regardless of the weather, the show will go on!**

**AND**



## The Fly Fishing Show



### Lancaster County Convention Center

## Lancaster, Pennsylvania

February 28 and March 1, 2015

### Show Hours

Saturday: 9:00 A.M. to 5:30 P.M.  
Sunday: 9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

### Admission

**Adults:** \$15 for one day  
\$25 for two-day pass

**Children under 5 free, under 12: \$2**  
**Scouts under 16 in uniform: free**  
**Active Military: \$10**  
Cash only at the gate

**Regardless of the weather, the show will go on!**