



Volume 15, number 1

February 2012

The February Meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will be held on Saturday, February 18, 2012, at 2:00 P.M. at the Rockland House, on Route 206 in Roscoe, NY. This meeting is the annual materials swap, combined with the annual meeting mandated by the bylaws.

In addition to bringing whatever materials, books, gear, or other items you'd like to swap, please tie a half dozen or a dozen flies and bring them to the meeting to donate to Casting for Recovery. The January meeting devoted to tying flies to donate to this organization was snowed out, and we need to do our part to support it. If you can't attend the February meeting, you can still send flies to Hank Rope, P.O. Box 122, Big Indian, NY 12410.

The Annual Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Fly Tyers Rendezvous will be held on Saturday, April 21, 2012, from 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. at the Rockland House on Route 206 in Roscoe, NY. Please join us for a day of camaraderie, reunion, and fly tying. If you'd like to tie at the Rendezvous, contact Leslie Wrixon, Fly Tyer Chair, at lesliewrixon@yahoo.com or (508)733-8535. Flies of any type may be demonstrated. Come and tie and/or hang out with some of the most talented fly tyers in the Northeast.

The 2012 Anglers Reunion Dinner will be held on Saturday, March 31, 2012, at the Rockland House, on Route 206 in Roscoe, NY, sponsored by the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild. There is a social hour beginning at 6:00 P.M., and dinner is at 7:00 P.M. Contact the Rockland House at (607) 498-4240 for dinner reservations.

Also, join us fishing at Junction Pool on Sunday, April 1, the opening day of the fishing season in New York. It can be chilly, so dress accordingly.

Memberships Renew in February

And this is 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. For renewals, 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, P.O. Box 79, Wurtsboro, NY 12790

Couples can join at the same single-member dues rate of \$10.00.

Do it Now!

Message from the President

This “Message from the President” follows the last one closely because of my disappointment at having received only five responses, three to me and two to Bud, to our request for comments on the issue of meeting times and places as it concerns our outlying metropolitan-area members. Five, as compared to sixty-five responding to comments on the change in bylaws, is not many. It would seem that we don’t have as big an issue with making our regular meetings more accessible as I thought.

For now, though, we will be having all our regular meetings on Saturdays, doing away with midweek meetings during the summer months. I’ve heard, over time, from a few New Jersey members that distance and travel time precluded them from making meetings regularly. I’m wondering now if it’s only a few who might like to see some changes made, but this change should at least help to make any meeting more doable for many members. I’m sure we will be refining this more in the coming months. To that end, your comments and suggestions are still invited. Please keep in mind, though, that, as I was recently reminded, we are the *Catskill Fly Tyers Guild*.

Turning to cast upstream, we have a situation that has come up from time to time, beginning with our meeting fly swaps years ago. One member, in particular, felt strongly that any flies offered had to be Catskill flies. That also went, of course, for any flies to be demonstrated at our meetings. When the smoke cleared, there had been no “official” stand taken, and my own sense was that Catskill flies might be gently suggested as swap flies and as demonstration models. I’ll add here that this was before my time at the helm. It made sense then, and it still makes sense to me, that this be a suggestion and not a hard-and-fast rule.

Let me give some examples of where it might be to our advantage not to impose such strict doctrine. If Poul Jorgensen were still with us and wished to enlighten the group with tips on dressing full-dress Atlantic salmon patterns, or if Lee Wulff, back in our formative years, were to sit down to show us just how he created the first White Wulff . . . would any of us squawk, insisting on a Hendrickson instead? Would we tell any beginning tyer, young or old, who had not yet mastered any real Catskill patterns, but would volunteer to help us at some public event by coming and investing a few hours at our booth and tying some Woolly Buggers, “Thanks, but no thanks”? I would hope not.

I would think that there may be times when Catskill flies should not be made the mandatory fare. What do you think? Is it time for an official ruling on this matter, or might we cut a teensy bit of slack?

Amid the most recent turmoil, our vice president and yours truly held a quick confab and sort of decided that it might be all right to affix a bead or perhaps even tie a fly that was destined for a steelhead’s maw if a nice display of Catskill flies was on hand at events such as a fly-fishing show to suggest to newcomers and other interested parties what a Catskill fly looks like. We didn’t use those exact words, of course, but why not let the people who kindly volunteer to help at these shows have a little tying freedom? If you were there helping to man our booth and a group came in, stopped, and asked if you would show them how one ties a Gray Ghost, wouldn’t you rather help them, maybe interesting them in one or two new memberships and two hats, than tell them you couldn’t help and they should instead go inside and ask Mike or Donnie. We’ll talk about all this later at meetings, I’m sure.

Fly-Tying Class

Members of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will be leading a fly-tying class at Gander Mountain, Route 211, Middletown, NY, on the four Sundays of March, 2012 from 1:00 to 3:00 P.M. The class is open to all those interested in strengthening their fly-tying skills. It is expected that those attending will already have basic fly knowledge and will bring their own tools. All materials will be provided by the instructors, and there will be no charge for participation in the class. Spread the word when anyone asks about the availability of fly-tying lessons.

However, we are in great need of volunteers to help with this class. If you can lend a hand, please contact Bob Osburn at (845) 294-5813 or Bill Leuszler at (845) 733-6759.

Ralph Hoffman's Black Bear

Editor's Note: In this issue of the Gazette, we're delighted to welcome a new column by Ed Ostapczuk on Catskill flies and the Catskill angling tradition. Those who know Ed also know his devotion to the history of fly fishing in the Catskill Mountains, the heritage of those who made it, and the rivers that continue to give it life. Ed speaks from a very clear sense of place—hence the title. However, his experience, knowledge, and expertise span the region and its rivers—the Beaverkill, Willowemoc, and Delaware, as well as the Esopus, including their smaller tributaries, where Ed stalks brook trout with his favorite cane rods. We look forward to sharing Ed's knowledge and enthusiasm for the entire Catskill angling heritage as seen from up on the Esopus.

Up on the Esopus



If ever there was a Catskill trout stream made for swinging wet flies, it would have to be the Esopus Creek, at least in my opinion. When the Shandaken Tunnel is open, many times the river is big and bold, full of pockets, runs, and riffles where a well-placed wet fly might reward the fly fisher with a wild, silver-sided dancing rainbow. And the Esopus has a wet-fly historical bent: two of its most famous fly tyers were known for their wet flies, though they tied other flies, for sure.

Perhaps the most famous of these is the late Ray Smith. While I never met him personally—he died some ten days before a mutual acquaintance arranged for us to meet—I am familiar with some of his patterns and even have a few wet flies that he tied.

The other renowned Esopus fly tyer who immediately comes to mind is the late Ralph Hoffman, whom I did know. Ralph was a member of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild and a featured tyer on the Guild's DVD *Fly Tyers, Volume 2: A Guild Sampler*. I met Ralph a long time ago through our local Trout Unlimited chapter. Ralph was quite involved and supportive of it. Folks attending TU meetings held at the Boiceville Inn would gather round Ralph each night, trying to absorb the pearls of wisdom he willingly shared. And whenever Ralph demonstrated fly tying, the chapter meeting would be packed. He was generous with the chapter, often donating flies he tied for our annual dinner and auction, at which I served as the auctioneer. His flies always brought in a tidy sum during the course of a live auction; I don't ever recall his selection of flies selling for less than one hundred dollars, and often more.

I learned quite a bit from Ralph—different tying techniques and various wet-fly patterns that he created. One such pattern is Ralph Hoffman’s Black Bear, a wet fly he often used at night, on point with another wet-fly dropper. It’s an easy fly to tie and an effective one to fish. Ralph tied it on a size 8 Mustad 36890 hook. Before you ask me why that hook style, I once asked Ralph that question myself and honestly have forgotten his answer—but he had one. The man didn’t do things without reason.

Ralph Hoffman’s Black Bear



Thread: Black
Hook: Mustad 36890, size 8
Tail: Red calf tail
Body: Chocolate brown wool
Wing: Black bear

Photo: Ed Ostapczuk

Fortunately for me, I have a bunch of Mustad 36890 hooks from the days when I tied hair-wing Atlantic salmon flies, and I still have chunks of black bear that Ralph gave me. At more than one TU meeting, Ralph brought in excess pieces of fur and deer hides to share with other tyers present.

I recall one TU meeting at which I regret that I hassled Ralph privately about fishing this fly and not doing well using it. I could see what I said about his pattern upset him, and I meant only to kid him a bit. But as I told him in later days, I have experienced many a wonderful outing on the Esopus, swinging this pattern as the point fly. I can vividly recall several overcast midsummer days swinging a pair of wets, the Black Bear included, on the Esopus below Phoenicia, between the Rawson Hole and Mother’s Pool, picking up ’bows and browns alike along the way. Then there was the last day of a trout season many years ago, fishing the upper Esopus, upstream of Peck Hollow, when a small wild rainbow took this fly and was the last trout I touched that year. But perhaps my fondest memory of using this pattern involves a fish I never caught. It was during the 2005 season. Almost the entire year’s fishing on the Esopus was lost due to record flooding that occurred in early April. The Esopus ran red most of trout season, but on the eve of August 2, I finally got up the nerve to try the creek again. I swung two wet flies below Five Arches, downstream into the legendary Chimney Hole. There I hooked what might have been my best fish of the season. It cleared the water three times with the Black Bear in its jaw, but my leader didn’t hold. I ended the evening with a few small trout, happy that I did, but I couldn’t help but wonder what ate my Black Bear.

In my possession I have several wet flies that Ralph Hoffman tied, including one Black Bear. These are treasures for sure that will never see a trout stream.



Caddisflies: The Other TroutFood

I never paid much attention to caddisflies in my fledgling years of fishing and tying flies. All my efforts were focused on mayflies, *Art Flick's Streamside Guide*, and tying with wood duck flank feathers. I was aware of caddises, even saw them often enough while fishing, but never considered them a viable source of trout food.

All this changed one afternoon when I was heading back to Pennsylvania after a morning in the Catskills opening up our summer house. I always take the scenic "stream route" when heading both up to and back from the summer place, and as I was leaving Jeffersonville and turning onto 17B, I glanced down at the large man-made pool below the Stone Arch Bridge on Route 52. The normally placid pool was pocked with tiny bulges, and a pod of trout was cruising in the slow water, picking off insects at an alarming rate. I nearly crashed the car skidding off the roadway to get a better look, and when I made it to the water's edge, I could see the flashing of trout just under the surface and an occasional splashy rise. I didn't see one single mayfly dun on the surface, but I soon realized that the trout were keyed in on caddisflies.

I ran back to the car, fumbled to assemble my cane rod, and strung it up while simultaneously running back down the stream. A quick search through my flies made me realize I didn't have a single caddis imitation. I hastily chose a smallish Neversink Skater and flogged wildly for about ten minutes, sight fishing to the numerous moving targets I had before me—no takers, not even a long look. It was apparent they were taking the emerging caddises on their way up through the water column and wanted nothing to do with my dry-fly imitation. Soon the air was filling up with adult caddisflies, and by the time I finally tied on a tiny Coachman wet, the trout seemed to disappear, either from me beating the water to a froth or from them being filled up on what they really wanted. In my haste, I had chosen the wrong pattern at the wrong time, but I did learn a good lesson on the selective feeding of trout and have since been a little wiser in what I tie and carry.

The wonderful thing about caddis emergers is the speed at which they move, because they are very vulnerable, as most insects are at this stage in their life cycle. Trout get a little careless when their food is not moving at stream-current speeds, and they hastily try to "catch it while they can." Because of this, an exact imitation is not as important as presentation, and even if you're off on color or size by a small margin, you can still have excellent action.

As I mention all the time, I like to carry a minimum number of flies, and to imitate an emerging caddis, I like a simple pattern tied to enhance what I consider to be the trigger components of a caddis that is making its quick trip to the water's surface: a simple dubbed body in olive, brown, or black, a dark thorax, and some longish fibers to imitate legs and antennae. Sometimes I even add a bead to get it down quickly so the emerger can



Photo: John Bonasera

move from the very bottom of the stream upward.

Here is a decent generic pattern that can be altered in size or color to match the naturals as closely as you feel necessary.

Hook: Curved pupa hook, any size

Thread: To match natural

Body: Dubbed fur, ribbed with thread of complementing color

Thorax: Roughly dubbed fur, darker than the body

Legs: Soft-fibered feather, either wood duck or partridge

For the adults, I like an old pattern invented and tied by Leonard Wright, called Len Wright's Skittering Caddis. This fly is easy to tie, durable, and as light as air, making it a perfect impressionistic pattern for skittering, skating, and dancing on the surface. This fly is so dainty in composition, even a slight breeze will move it on the water, making appear like a real caddisfly.

Here's the dressing for Len Wright's Skittering Caddis.

Hook: Light-wire dry-fly hook, sized to match the natural

Thread: Black

Body: A stripped peacock quill or hackle stem to match the natural

Wing: Three small bunches of hackle fibers, one on each side of the hook and one on top, to extend just beyond hook bend. Again, color to match the natural

Hackle: Wound at head, color to match the natural

It's great fun to fish a skittering dry fly to trout taking caddisflies on top, and though I get many misses and light hookups fishing flies with movement, it is as much fun watching all the commotion as it is actually hooking the fish.

Caddis season is not very far away. Try these patterns the next time you encounter a caddis hatch in the making.



Class

By Joe Watts

At one time or another, most of us have had the unpleasant experience of feeling that our precious space has been invaded while fly fishing. Perhaps it's a spot associated with fond fly-fishing memories, or maybe you're just having a nice little stretch of river all to yourself. Of course, there's the opposite experience, too, of being the innocent intruder. Either way, what could end badly also can end well, if you show some class and deal with others the way you'd like them to deal with you.

One day toward the end of the Green Drake hatch in early June, when the Coffin Flies were at their peak, I made a trip to a pristine area on the East Branch of the Delaware near Shinhopple. I had been at this spot once or twice in the last week already. In the midafternoon, not long after I drove up and parked and before I had rigged up, another guy pulled into the parking lot. He had his gear ready, and he went in ahead of me.

Bad situation, right? Wrong. He was courteous, for starters, and said he was a visitor from up north named Paul who wasn't familiar with the region. In return, I tried to be as helpful as possible—in fact, I told him he could take the spot right down the steep hill from the lot, and I would walk downstream a bit. By the time I had reached the bottom of the hill, he already had hooked a huge brown on an adult Green Drake imitation. I was fishing emergers when he landed another one—this one tremendous. I helped him with both releases and got some good photos, too. We ended up meeting and fishing together again later in the season, when I showed him some Catskill creeks, and he's going to show me some good Adirondack fishing on his home rivers, in return.

When evening arrived and Paul had to leave for his long trip home, I was still at the same spot. There were a few fisherman around, but there was plenty of room for all—it's a wide river, with several eddies and branches. Well, as I said, the hill down from where I parked is very steep—I was even thinking of one day leaving a rope tied there somewhere, as people have done in the past in various locations. Then I heard another car pull up.

Eventually, this guy bulls right down the hill like an ox. He looked around a bit, then walked up and down a bit. I waved and exclaimed, "Come on, plenty of room for all!" For the next three hours, the Coffin Fly spinner fall was on. It's always very pretty, but it's not always easy to land fish during these classic Catskill events. Toward dark, the late arrival and I were fishing close together. We seemed to be doing the same thing, yet as I was fully aware, he caught more fish than I did. Don't get me wrong, though. This guy had class, too. He was very quick to point out when I did have success.

So we're done now—it's dark, and it's time to get up that damn hill, which I know is rough, almost to the point that you need to crawl. Nope—he goes up as fast as he came down, in seconds and on two feet. He looked like he was probably about sixty, by the way.

Back up by our cars, he invited me to come over by the back of his vehicle. This dude was a character: beard, Hawaiian shirt, an old hat with some remnants of blue jay wings. He already had said that he had come from the Dettles earlier. It was obvious they were good friends. You may already have guessed, but his name turned out to be Ted Patlen.

Ted showed me the Coffin Flies he was using. On an extremely short, wide-gap hook, he had tied an extended body of white poly with Zelon wings and a simple black thorax—no tails. He even gave me a demo on how to tie the extended body—a twist method. He also gave me some of the material he used for the wings, which I certainly appreciated. I used the twist method later in the season, tying dragonflies for my local home warmwater lake. The back of his truck was meticulous. He definitely had organizational skills for tying on the road—quite a system of boxes. Ted told me that when he first got down that hill, a couple of fishermen had given him the "evil eye." But class usually trumps no class. He was just sharing with me what he happened to be doing, the same as I was before. I'm 100 percent certain that's the way to behave. I'm also certain that had anyone else met Ted in the same spot, the result would have been the same.

It wasn't until later that I heard all about Ted from Bob Osburn and Joe Fox. Bob told me that Ted can take a pile of scraps off the floor and create beautiful flies—that he's all about having fun and likes to tie his way. Also that he made the shadow box used for the collection of flies raffled off for the Catskill Fly Tyers Rendezvous. Joe told me that

Ted has been tying and fly fishing for over fifty years. Joe, too, said, “Teddy is all about the fun; he does his way, not how others do it.” Ted was presented with the prestigious Poul Jorgensen Golden Hook Award on in 2010 and is internationally known as “The American Ambassador of Fly Tyers.” But that day on the East Branch, I learned that we’re all ambassadors of fly fishing in one way or another. That’s why it’s important to show some class.

Book Review

Common Nymphs of Eastern North America: A Primer for Flyfishers and Flytiers
By Caleb J. Tzilkowski and Jar R. Stauffer Jr. Published by Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011; \$29.95 spiralbound.

Even if you’re not a committed hatch matcher, it pays to have some idea what the fish actually are eating, especially when sitting at your vise, away from the bugs and the stream. *Common Nymphs of Eastern North America* stands out from other angler’s entomologies for a couple of reasons. Its authors are a professor of ichthyology at Penn State (Stauffer) and an aquatic ecologist with a Ph.D. in wildlife fisheries science (Tzilkowski). They have access to technology for photographing trout food that goes well beyond the usual macro photography, as well as professional expertise in the current state of trout streams and their inhabitants in the Northeast. Consequently, the book offers photos of bugs, parts of bugs, and bugs in their habitats that are much more detailed than the photos one usually gets. And because studying these bugs and their habitats is what these guys do for a living, they have a lot to say about the way the bugs behave and about the relationship between the presence of certain insects and the health of the ecosystems where they’re found. They also offer some simple hatch-matching patterns to go with the entomology. They construe the term “nymph” in the broadest sense and include discussions of hellgrammites and “other aquatic arthropods,” as they put it, including crayfish. Maybe because the topics of mayflies and caddisflies have been pretty well worked over, I found the chapters on stoneflies and true flies (Diptera) most useful, but there’s a photo of an *Isonychia* nymph that’ll knock your socks off.

—Bud Bynack

December Meeting: Ed Van Put’s Darbee Nymphs

Catskill Fly Tyers Guild members who haven’t attended meetings sometimes wonder what they’re missing. At the December 2011 meeting, Ed Van Put demonstrated tying Art Flick March Brown and Hendrickson Nymphs the way Ed tied them for Harry and Elsie Darbee. Here are the results, but to hear Ed’s talk, you really should have been there. (Photos Courtesy of Frank Salt.)

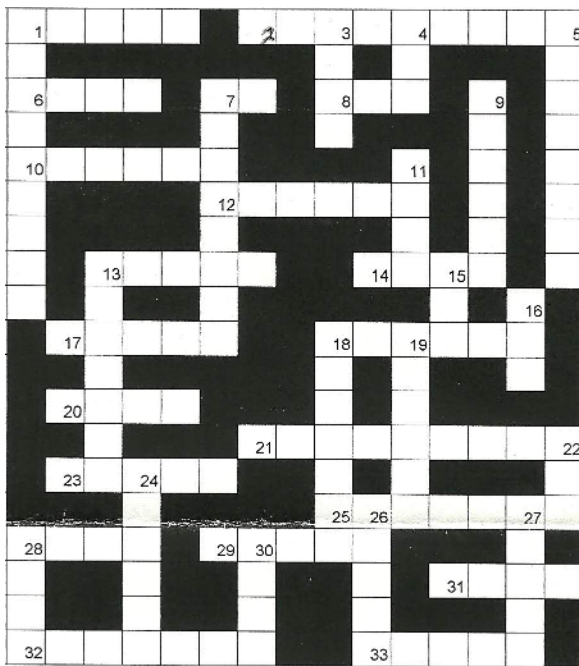


Darbee March Brown Nymph

Darbee Hendrickson Nymph

Fly Tyers' Puzzle By Allan Podell

Win! Win! Win!. The first one to mail Allan Podell a completely correct puzzle will win two dozen dry flies tied by him. Send puzzles to Allan Podell, 100 Glenn Avenue, Elmira, NY 14905.



Across

1. Silk or rayon
2. Make of thread
6. Older ribbing material
7. Type of glue
8. Series of salmon patterns
10. Son of a king
12. Mammal for dubbing
13. Aquatic insects have 2 or 3
14. Large hairy mammal
17. Male duck
18. Neck feathers
20. Prey
21. Green Drake spinner
23. Part of a hook
25. Old hook manufacturer
28. Not true trout
29. Large aquatic insect
31. Holds dubbing
32. _____ Minnow

Down

1. Incorrectly called "aftershaft"
3. Early body material
4. Bitter-tasting insect
5. *Subvaria* (m)
7. Fuzzy body material
9. Hackle or mammal
11. Neck
13. Atlantic salmon pattern
15. Caddis hair
16. Not a rooster
18. Developed "super grizzly"
19. Light, Dark, or Dan
22. Long-haired mammal
24. Atlantic salmon pattern
26. Can be applied to a wound
27. Beetle pattern
28. Way to attract fish
30. Steelhead pattern or hammer wielder



The Fly Fishing Show

**The Lancaster
County Convention
Center**

**February 18 &
19, 2012**



Show Hours

Saturday: 9:00 A.M. to 6:00 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



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.