



The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild GAZETTE



Volume 17, number 1

February 2014

The February Meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will be held on Saturday, February 15, 2014, at 2:00 P.M. at the Rockland House, on Route 206 in Roscoe, NY. This meeting will feature the **annual materials swap**. It is also the annual meeting for the election of officers and the delivery of committee reports.

Bring at least a few items that are earmarked just for swapping, while also feeling free to bring some things for sale. And don't forget the regular fly swap.

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. 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:

Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Membership, P.O. Box 663, Roscoe, NY 12776-0663

Do It Now!

The Annual Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Fly Tyers Rendezvous will be held on Saturday, April 26, 2014, 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 John Kavanaugh at flymank@optonline.net, call his cell at (973) 219-7696 and leave a message with your contact information, or contact him via his Facebook page. Flies of any type may be demonstrated. Come and tie and/or just hang out with some of the most talented fly tyers in the Northeast.

Tying Group—Sundays in March: This year, Bob Osburn and I plan to organize a fly-tying experience representing the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild. The program will be held at the Gander Mountain store on Route 211 in Middletown, NY, all five Sundays in March 2014, from 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M. There will be no charge for participation. Everyone is welcome, though it's understood that this experience is for those with some basic knowledge of fly tying.

The format this year will be different from years before. This will be more of a "democratic" experience, with each participant taking a turn leading the group in a tying a fly pattern of their choosing. The leader for that day will provide all materials for the rest of the group. It's expected that participants will bring their own tools. Come and join us.

—Bill Leuszler

The 2014 Anglers Reunion Dinner: Winter may seem endless, but Opening Day is just around the corner. The annual Anglers Reunion Dinner will be held on March 31, at the Rockland House on Route 206 in Roscoe, NY. Social hour at 6:00; dinner at 7:00. Please call the Rockland House at (607) 498-4240 for reservations.

The Divided Wing: Some Thoughts on Our Catskill Tradition

By Bill Leuszler

Winter is the time when many of us do the bulk of our tying. I felt a great deal of satisfaction yesterday knowing that my fly boxes were being refilled for the upcoming season, and I took pride in the look of the neatly divided wood duck flank feathers atop the size 12 94840s on my March Browns. But once the section for March Browns was filled, I had to pause and reflect a bit, because the wing that I had been tying so well, the hallmark of the “traditional Catskill dry fly,” was being tied to fish a body of water that was no longer a traditional Catskill river.

As we all have read, Theodore Gordon was greatly influenced by British fly-fishing traditions, a subject that in itself has filled thousands of pages. At the time when Gordon was living in Bradley, New York, the culture of British dry-fly fishing, at least the part of it that was available to him in writing, mirrored to a good degree the ideas of individuals fishing England’s chalk streams. This is best characterized in a note written by George LaBranche, cited in Paul Schullery’s *American Fly Fishing*:

Many things have been said recently in more or less permanent print about the personal relations of the late Mr. Theo Gordon and myself. I had the pleasure of corresponding with him for many years but met him but three times, twice appointments on the river. I considered him a great friend and companion. We discussed fishing naturally—and when I told him I was fishing the dry fly on any part of the water rather than confining my efforts to the still water of pools, or slow running currents, he told me I was belittling the theory of dry fly fishing. He agreed with G. A. B. Dewar and Halford that what I was doing was an affectation and that the dry fly should be used on slow moving water over rising fish only. I was upset more than a little, but persevered with my idea.

I have two small boxes of flies kept for the memories they represent: a dozen I bought at the Dettles’ shop in 1985 and a collection of “mayflies” I bought at an Irish shop when I visited there that same year. The flies on display at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum that Gordon actually tied are much closer in appearance to the Irish mayflies than they are to the dries that the Dettles tied. Gordon’s wood duck wings were not divided.

So while it is undeniable that Theodore Gordon contributed to the development of a uniquely American fly-fishing culture, that development was an ongoing process. It would be impossible for me to identify the specific moment that Catskill style of winging dry flies with divided wings came to look more of like what is seen in the work of the Dettles, the Darbees, and Art Flick, but we can see the beginning of this look in the work of Herman Christian, Roy Steenrod, and Preston Jennings. What was happening was a further adaptation of the evolving American culture of dry-fly fishing to specific local conditions. And the most notable difference between the two cultures was the rivers. At the time, all of the rivers in the Catskills were freestone streams. Catskill fly tying was adapting to our distinct environment.

However, two significant events have occurred since the time when the Catskill style began to be codified, and each influenced fly design and construction. The invention of plastic and the incorporation in synthetics into fly-fishing tackle transformed the sport. But more importantly, three of our favorite rivers changed. The establishment of conservation flow releases from the New York City reservoir system in the 1970s essentially changed the Delaware from a marginal trout fishery to a

world-class fishing destination. The stories of the Esopus and the Neversink are much harder to summarize. However, for the most part, the conditions that now exist on any of these three rivers did not exist in the Catskills when beloved patterns such as the Light Cahill, March Brown, and Hendrickson came into being. Prior to the 1970s, all of the rivers were subject to the forces of nature, and in the case of the these rivers, they were also subject to the arbitrary decisions of New York City's reservoir managers.

There is no doubt in my mind that the popularity of many of the newer patterns seen in our local shops has a great deal to do with where people are going to fish in the Catskills. This is not due to a rejection of the "Catskill style," but in fact yet another attempt to adapt to changing conditions. That process of adaptation is itself part of the Catskill angling tradition.

Tailwater conditions greatly influence the quantity and type of insect life present in a river. Constant flows of relatively cold water have created habitat in the slower sections of these rivers that once would have been relegated to warmwater species by May. Thus, a combination of factors has led many of us to look elsewhere for patterns that are more effective on tailwater conditions.

Because our favorite rivers have changed, we are adapting the Catskill style to new environments. I hope that in the future, the Catskill style will continue to evolve, even as we recognize that each river or lake in the Catskills has its own unique characteristics. I also hope that members of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will be more receptive to ongoing contributions made to the Catskill style. By continuing the development of the Catskill dry fly, we are contributing to the development of a uniquely American fly-fishing culture, just as Theodore Gordon did in his day.

Looking Back Upstream



Angler's Cove: Crossroads of New York City's Fly-Fishing Culture, Part 6

As a young man, guild member Merrill Katz was lucky enough to find himself working at a fly shop in Manhattan—Angler's Cove—frequented by most of the major figures in East Coast fly fishing and American angling literature. In an ongoing series of conversations, I'm asking him to recall what the angling scene was like in New York in the mid-twentieth century and some of the people he encountered at the Cove.

Bud: So who else passed through Angler's Cove?

Merrill: Well, there was Steve Gardello, a native of Brooklyn's Bay Ridge section, who was employed in the printing trades in Manhattan. We originally met at Angler's Cove in the mid-1960s and became friends. Steve was and is an outstanding tyer, and he was one of the folks who tied special orders for the Cove. He also tied flies for the Kaniapiskau River fishing camps in New Labrador (northern Quebec).

In 1968, Steve and I got together and planned a brook trout fishing trip to the Kaniapiskau River. The going price was \$50.00 per day, a ridiculous price by today's standards, and we were given a 50 percent discount because the water we were assigned had just been leased from the government of Quebec. We were alleged to have been the first Caucasians to fish that water. The brook trout fishing was spectacular, and ouananiche (landlocked salmon) and lake trout provided an added bonus. As I fished that water, I imagined what the Northeast's native trout fishing must have been like when the United States was in its infancy. I have extremely fond memories from that trip. I just finished perusing Ed Van Put's *Trout Fishing in the Catskills*, and it reminded me that I experienced Catskill brook trout fishing about a hundred and fifty years too late.

Steve knew New York City very well and had an uncanny knack for ferreting out unusual fly-tying materials. Steve and I rode up to Harold Campbell's place on Seaman Avenue in the Bronx and purchased a lifetime supply of bantam rooster capes. And Steve popped into the Cove one day and pulled out a batch of silver monkey skins. This was an excellent material for certain hair-wing Atlantic

salmon flies, and I was happy to acquire one. On another occasion, he produced a number of top-grade silver pheasant skins, a must-have feather for tying Carrie Stevens's famous Ghost series. Steve definitely helped me to build my inventory of exotic materials.

Bud: Sounds like you guys didn't target just trout.

Merrill: Trout, salmon— we wanted to experience it all. I spoke with Steve just this last June, and he was quick to tell me that the streams of Westchester County, the Croton watershed, and the Catskills no longer exhibit the fecundity we grew to appreciate.

But Steve had a burning passion to fish for Atlantic salmon, and he was among the group of Cove regulars who traveled to the Miramichi or other Canadian rivers each fall to fish for *Salmo salar*. And Steve was always fond of streamer flies, and we fished them successfully for ouananiche in 1968. The Chief Needahbeh was one of his favorite streamers. The bond we formed during that 1968 trip has lasted across these many years. Steve currently owns and operates a salmon fishing camp on the Miramichi. He tells me that the sea-run brook trout fishing is outstanding. The possibility of casting to sea-run brook trout coupled with Atlantic salmon causes me to believe that I will be visiting Steve in New Brunswick in the not too remote future.

Chief Needahbeh

Hook: Mustad 3665A or Tiemco 300

Thread: Black

Tag: Narrow silver tinsel

Tail: A section of red duck or goose wing feather

Body: Red silk

Ribbing: Narrow flat silver tinsel

Wing: A red saddle hackle on the outside of two yellow saddle hackles

Throat: A red saddle hackle tied as a collar after the wing has been applied

Cheeks: Jungle cock, rather short

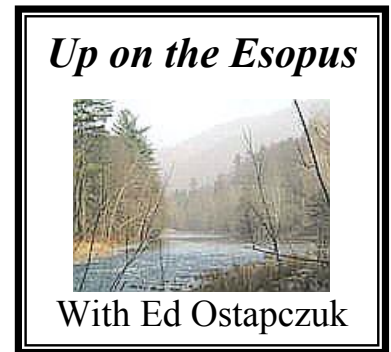


Phil Chase and the Catskill Clipper

I've known Phil Chase a long time, He's a first-rate gentleman and the most ardent river conservationist with whom I have ever made acquaintance. Used to be I'd read his outdoors column in the Middletown *Times Herald-Record*, the only reason I ever brought the newspaper. Then one evening during the winter of 1974-75, we met at the Antrim Lodge when Catskill Waters was formed. Chase, Frank Mele, John Hoeko, Alan Fried, and others were spokes in the wheel of this ad hoc environmental organization, which brought about hard-fought 1976 water-release regulations governing river flows downstream of New York City's Catskill reservoirs. Though years have passed since then, and we've drifted our separate ways, we have maintained some contact with each other.

Chase's list of credentials is impeccable. He taught science and coached sports at Port Jervis High School, where he is a 2009 inductee into its Alumni Hall of Fame. Using his science background, in 1970, as a member of the Theodore Gordon Flyfishers, Chase developed the Water Watcher Program, whereby volunteers sampled stream metrics on a monthly basis. Chapter 4 of J. Michael Migel's *The Stream Conservation Handbook*, "Streamside Surveillance," tells the story of this program and has several photos of a young Phil Chase. For several years, I sampled conditions on the Esopus Creek as part of the program.

But there's much more to tell, and it won't all fit below. Chase was a Federation of Flyfishers Man of the Year and in 2003 recipient of the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum's Lee Wulff



Conservation Award. In 2009, he was named a Hero of Conservation by *Field & Stream* magazine. The same year, the New York State Senate passed resolution J548-2009 recognizing Phil for his lifelong dedication to protecting the Delaware River watershed. This resolution fittingly noted that “Philip Chase has stood constant in dignity, good grace and humor, and has earned the respect and admiration of his colleagues.” Chase was also recognized as the Tri-County Sportsman of the Year. The list goes on.

Several years ago, Phil and I fished the Esopus Creek together. As afternoon light faded into evening shadows, Phil stood in the head of the Chimney Hole, fishing his Catskill Clipper—a hellgrammite imitation. I watched this angler work magic, catching rainbow after rainbow with a smile on his face the entire time. Well, years passed, but I never forgot that outing, so I inquired about the Clipper. In a February 2011 e-mail, Chase supplied pattern and tying information. The correspondence also had stories about big browns it had seduced from his beloved Neversink and the night that Doc Cinberg lost “the biggest trout he ever had on” while fishing the Delaware with Chase and his Clipper. Chase noted that he first tied and fished his Catskill Clipper in the “early 1980s.”



Hook: Tiemco 200R, size 8 or larger
Thread: black
Weight: Lead wire
Tail: Black marabou
Body: Woodchuck dubbing
Head/collar: Fine black deer hair

Tie in a marabou tail roughly the same length as the body. Wrap lead wire around the hook shank from the tail up one-half to two-thirds its length, to the beginning of a head. Eliminate the woodchuck guard hairs with white tips to create a brown dubbing of fibers about half an inch long.

This can be dyed black, if so desired. Wax the thread and create a dubbing loop, spin the woodchuck, then wrap the body. (Note: Before doing this, I always cover the lead with neutral-color floss and apply head cement.) Tie in small clumps of stacked black deer hair to form a V-shaped collar; tighten the thread, but do *not* spin the deer hair. Then add additional clumps of deer hair to build a head by spinning it and packing it around the hook. Trim this deer hair into the shape of a hellgrammite head. Whip finish and apply head cement. Also apply a drop of cement to the head to prevent rotation. Justin Askins’s book *The Legendary Neversink* has an illustration of Chase’s Catskill Clipper.

Perhaps this prominent river conservationist was onto something special with the use of woodchuck in his Catskill Clipper. Noted fly-tying author and materials expert Eric Leiser has been a huge proponent of woodchuck for years. In *Fly-Tying Materials*, Leiser dedicated several pages to how to skin a woodchuck properly. And Mike Valla’s latest book, *The Founding Flies*, devotes quite a bit of ink to Leiser’s admiration of woodchuck as a fundamental tying material. In fact, Valla quotes Leiser as saying that “it is the most desirable piece of fly tying material I own, other than basic rooster necks.”



This much I promise myself and pledge to Chase: I will fish the Catskill Clipper on the Neversink in 2014, and even on the mainstream Delaware if I find my way there. And thank you, Phil for all you have done for our Catskill rivers.



Tailwater Dries

In the beginning, all the Catskill streams were freestone streams. It wasn't until the middle of the twentieth century that the State of New York built the dams that flooded land in and around a couple of freestone rivers, and that created a different kind of angling experience in these mountains. While the dams were controversial, one thing that can't be denied is that a steady supply of cold water changed the fishery. Normal summers would warm lower sections of freestone streams to unsafe levels for trout, but tailwaters have allowed year-round trout growth due to cold water, healthy aquatic life, and more stable water temperatures.

The classic Catskill dry flies we all have come to love date from a time before these tailwaters were created. Their big, stiff hackles and skimpy bodies are perfect for fast water, but in the flat pools of the tailwaters, where trout can be more selective because there is a more varied and generous food supply and because they have more time to look a fly over before committing to a take, a more accurate representation of a mayfly dun was needed.

The Comparadun, originated by Al Caucci and Bob Nastasi, probably has accounted for as many tailwater trout as any other dry fly fished on flat water. The deer hair wing silhouette, body riding low on the surface, and split tail leave a footprint on glassy water that very closely imitates the naturals. The other distinguishing feature of this pattern is the use of "spectrumized" dubbing—rabbit fur dyed in primary colors and blended to match the shades of insects. The concept of using the three primary colors of red, blue and yellow and adding white to soften the blend gives the tier the ability to match any bug to which trout are attracted.

As with most proven patterns, some new versions have grown from the basic Comparadun design. CDC is sometimes used for the wings, especially on smaller sizes, and the mink tail guard hairs originally used for the tailing are sometimes replaced by Micofibbets or, in the case of the Sparkle Dun, Z-lon is used to imitate a trailing shuck. The basic design is such a winner because it can be taken for a dun, emerger, or cripple—even a spinner in the waning light of evening. The upright wing forces it to land properly, and the durability and floatability of deer hair makes it last a long time when the action is feverish.



If long, slow pools of the tailwaters are your thing, the Comparadun series is for you.

David Martin of Sparks, Nevada, a tyer of realist flies, died sometime during the night Saturday, January 25, 2014. He was a carver of birds and animals and sold the carvings at one of the big outdoor stores: Bass Pro Shop, Cabela's, or L. L. Bean. He took to the easel and painted wildlife for a while and later yet built longbows.

He was married and had two kids, later divorced, and after some years met Beckie. They lived in an RV and traveled the West. He gave up the other arts and took up tying realistic fishing flies because it was something they could do together. His flies appeared in the Fly Shop catalog in California in the early 1990s, along with his picture. They were paid an average of \$4 for each, and they sold for around \$8 each.

After Beckie dropped to their RV living room floor, dead of a brain aneurysm, about five years ago, David was quite depressed for a long time. I spent many a night on the phone and conversing in e-mails trying to get him back into tying and writing. He finally came out of it enough to create some new flies, some of which were pure art, like his "Dragon" fly, an actual dragon tied on a fly hook. He made some DVDs of his patterns and wrote articles for *Fly Tyer* magazine.

Little by little, his health deteriorated, leading to numerous stints in the hospital for blood transfusions, because his bone marrow no longer produced the blood cells needed to survive. Agent

Orange exposure during his days as a paratrooper and then in the Green Berets in Vietnam was the culprit, and it didn't help that he inherited the degenerative heart disease that claimed his father's life.

David was an amazing, inventive fly tyer. The last few years, he was working on a book that was to include a few other tyers of realistic flies. He didn't want it to be strictly a pattern book—more on theory and technique than actual complete tying sequences. But the publishers just wanted a “how to tie” pattern book, and his writing languished. Recently he wrote an article for the lure collectors' club magazine on early tyers of fairly realistic patterns. He concentrated on Louis Rhead and Charles Kellman. Somehow his text was edited and published under another writer's name.

He based nearly all his flies on deer hair, mono, and regular thread, often using tiny bits of tissue paper laid on a coat of Flexament, then painting it when dry. His earlier fishing flies were simpler. Wings were made by spreading Flexament (which he made himself by mixing Goop and naphtha) on a rubbery plastic material, then laying in bits of fine mono for the veins, letting it dry, peeling it off, and trimming it to shape.

The early flies that he and Beckie produced in what he called an assembly line were tied to fish. They would later be found on the secondary market, priced at hundreds of dollars.

As his flies became more artistic, they took much more time to tie, and he produced fewer and fewer. He battled continuing bouts of depression each time he became ill and spent time in the hospital. We set up Skype so we could tie together, and more than a few times. I watched him tear apart a fin on his lion fish or an eyelid on a frog because it wasn't exact enough to suit him.

We had many friendly arguments when I would try to convince him to use hackle or feather stems for legs, rather than mono, and sometimes he did. We'd chuckle later over how the end result looked the same.

The inventive mind of David Martin will create no more. The flies and techniques he gave the fly tying world will live on and assure his legacy. Check out some of his work at <http://realisticfly.blogspot.com>.

—Bob Mead

Question: Dave Brandt wants to know what hooks Catskill Fly Tyers Guild members prefer for tying New England streamers—not trolling flies, but classic streamer flies: maker, model, and favorite sizes. You can buttonhole Dave at a meeting or fly-fishing show, call him (607)-433-2924, or even attempt to get him to read an e-mail at texas38@stny.rr.com.

Vise Wanted

My name is John Pirrello. I'm from Enfield, Connecticut, and I collect fly-tying vises. I am in search of a Pamola Lathe vise. If anyone has one or knows of one that may be for sale please let me know: cell, (413) 896-7927; home, (860) 741-0420; e-mail, johnpirr@gmail.com. Thanks.



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.



SGM Fest and Tie One On

Shannon's Fly & Tackle and Dette Trout Flies invites you to the 4th annual **Sparse Grey Matter Fly Fest** on Sunday, February 23, 2014, from 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. All are welcome to come tie flies and/or watch some of the area's finest tyers. This is an informal gathering of tyers and fly fishers and a great way to spend a cold Sunday in February. There is no charge, but donations are gladly accepted. Food and beverages are available.

Location: The firehouse on Main St. in Califon, New Jersey.
For more information, go to www.sparsegreymatter.com.

At **Tie One On**, at Barbagallo's Restaurant, 6344 East Malloy Road, East Syracuse, tyers scheduled to participate include Dave Brandt, Shawn Britton, Brad Buzzy, Joe Ceballos, Pat Cohen, John Collins, Kevin Compton, Mike Heck, John Kavanaugh, Isak Kulalic, Allen Landheer, Jessica Lettich, Tim Mahar, Bob Mead, Vern O. Burm, Ted Patlen, Mike Schmidt, Steve Silverio, Rich Strolis, Harold Thomas, J. W. Trout, and Gerald Zazzera. Silent auction to benefit the Iroquois Chapter of TU, Project Healing Waters, Hope on the Rise, and Casting for Recovery. Donation of \$10.00 at the door; kids under 16 free. For more information, visit www.Iroquoistu.org, www.detteflies.com, www.tieoneon.us, or the Iroquois Chapter of TU Facebook page.



Iroquois Chapter TU & Dette Trout Flies
present the third annual
Fly ~ Tying Rendezvous
Saturday, March 22nd, 2014 9am to 5pm
Featuring special guests Kelly Galloup and Paul Weamer
presentations by
Kelly Galloup, Paul Weamer, John Shaner, Walt Geryk



The Fly Fishing Show



Lancaster County Convention Center

Lancaster, Pennsylvania

March 1 and 2, 2014

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

Regardless of the weather, the show will go on!