



The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild GAZETTE



Volume 18, number 3

May 2015

The May 2015 Meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will be held on Saturday, May 16, 2015, at **1:00 P.M. in the Wulff Gallery at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum**, 1031 Old Route 17, Livingston Manor, NY. Joe Ceballos will be demonstrating a quick-and-dirty Coffin Fly pattern using Trigger Point Fibers: “Spinner Wing” for the wing and tail and “Pale Spinner Wing” for the body. Deer hair or moose also can work for the tail. Other materials are just a black marking pen, size 8 2X-long dry-fly hooks, and clear Danville’s Ultra Fine Monofilament thread.

Honorary Member Election

To honor the contributions that Bob Osburn has made to preserving and carrying forward the traditions of fly tying in the Catskills, members of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild have elected him to an honorary lifetime member of the guild. Bob joins Mary Dette Clark as a recipient of this honor.

The 2015 Fly Tyers Rendezvous

The Fly Tyers Rendezvous, sponsored by the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild, held this year on April 11 in the Wulff Gallery of the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum in conjunction with the annual First Cast celebrations, was a great success. Attendance by both tyers and the public was up, with new faces and old friends present on both sides of the tyers’ tables, and the light, airy space of the gallery is just made for tying. The silent auction made \$485, benefitting the Educational Programs Fund. If you didn’t make it to the Rendezvous, these are some of the items you missed in the auction: Ray Bergman hooks, and Art Flick postcard to Harry Darbee, other books and DVDs, flies tied by Ralph Graves and Dave Pabst, flies tied by current guild members, a Rube Cross letter to Harry Darbee, and collectible flies, including a Lew Oatman streamer and a Elsie Belle fly tied by Larry Duckwall.

Thanks go to John Kavanaugh for chairing the effort and to Judie DV Smith, Joe Fox, and Nicole Seymour for their contributions—in fact, to all who chipped in to make this event a success. Special thanks go to Ted Rogowski.

This annual event is one of the high points of the year for the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild. Watch for the date next year and make plans to attend.



Flies for Heroes

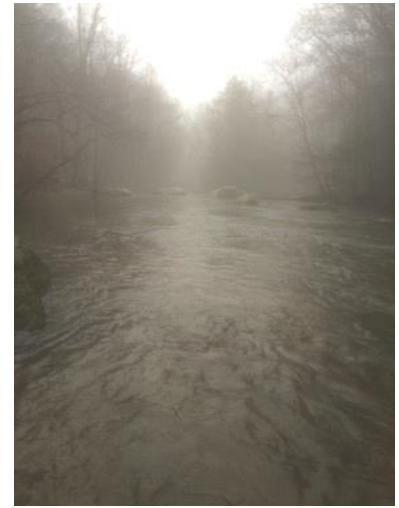
Come join in a fun tying event, with all flies donated to Project Healing Waters. Bring some materials and tie your favorite patterns. There will be food and drinks for sale, with the proceeds also going to Project Healing Waters.

Spaces is limited for this event, so please RSVP to John LoSapio at (386) 747-0040 or e-mail jnlosapio@gmail.com.

June 27, 2015, 1:00–5:00 p.m.

Cincinnati Lodge #3, 39 Maple Avenue, Morristown, NJ 07960

The first person to guess the river in New Jersey in this picture wins a prize at the event.



—John LoSapio



Sawyer's Killer Bug

I try to make these *Gazette* stories related to the Catskills, but I am going to stray from the norm this issue and address a material used to tie the simplest of flies. The story behind it is as interesting as the fly is effective, and while it has no direct connection to the Catskills, trout don't discriminate against flies born overseas.

Most have read about Frank Sawyer, and his Pheasant Tail Nymph has been taking trout since he first tied it over sixty years ago. One of the unusual things that Sawyer did was to use wire for his nymphs in lieu of thread. This was a benefit when tying nymphs for the obvious reason that wire is heavier than thread—and also, Frank had lots of wire.

The Sawyer fly that stirs up so much interest, enthusiasm, and sometimes controversy is his Killer Bug. Almost no fly is simpler than the Killer Bug, consisting of no more than a hook, a strand of wire, and a length of yarn. While this sounds like a fly anyone can tie, tying it as Frank did poses a problem. The yarn material used on this pattern has been out of production since 1965, and finding it is challenging.

The yarn, Chadwicks Reinforcing and Mending Yarn, was sold on cards for home use, because back in the old days, folks were more interested in repairing things than in buying new ones. These cards came in hundreds of colors, with a number designation specifying the color. The color 477 was Sawyer's choice for the Killer Bug, a fly tied initially for grayling and named by Lee Wulff. The color of yarn when wet was much like the shade a freshwater shrimp, and the grayling loved it.

When something works really well, be sure to buy a lot of it, because it's certain to be discontinued. Such was the fate of Chadwicks color 477. While you can still find full and partial original cards of this yarn in places, the cost is prohibitive. One card sold some time ago for \$190.00 on eBay.

Today, though, we have less expensive options, and some folks have really done their homework to find a suitable replacement. In recent correspondence with friends, I was given what I consider an almost perfect shade of yarn to replicate these flies. It has almost the exact coloration and texture of



Chadwicks 477 and can be purchased easily in large quantities: Berroco Ultra Alpaca Fine, color 1214, Steel Cut Oats (sorry about the typo in the picture). Dye lots vary slightly, with some slightly more reddish than others. The yarn is made in Peru and available from several sources on-line.



Once you've acquired the suitable substitute yarn, tying the fly is simple. The hook is affixed in the vise, and the yarn is tied in at the head using reddish copper wire. Frank Sawyer would pirate this wire from small electric motors, and today, we can do the same or simply purchase it from a supplier of fly-tying wire.

The wire is wrapped to the back of the hook, and the yarn wrapped over this, then back to the head and again back to the rear of the hook, where it is lashed down with the wire. Three layers of yarn build the body to the proper size, and the reddish wire underbody helps give the fly the proper look

when wet. I use a two-turn whip finish and lacquer the wire when done.

These flies when wet look like a baited hook. It's almost criminal how tasty they appear. The thing I love most about this pattern is that it was conceived using materials that were readily available to Sawyer and that it produced a very killing pattern. Making do with what he had is something Catskill folks have been doing all along, so I guess there is a little connection after all.

More on the Fly Called the Dutchman

By Dick Smith

In the 1980s, I had an auto repair business in North White Plains, in Westchester County. An older gentleman came in one day with an equally older station wagon, which he said had a shake in the steering wheel. I suggested we take it for a ride to see what it felt like, and while I was climbing in, I looked in the back and saw a rod tube, waders, and a fishing vest. I asked the obvious question, and he said yes, he was a fly fisherman and fly tyer and had been since he was a young man. We talked about where he fished—the Amawalk and the West Branch of the Croton, which I fished regularly. The road test lasted longer than was really necessary, and the fish stories were interrupted only by the shaking of the steering wheel. When we got back, I suggested balancing the front wheels, and he agreed. When I was finished, he asked how much he owed me, and I said, "Try it out, and if the problem is resolved, tie me a couple of your favorite flies." We shook hands and talked about meeting on the Amawalk.

A week later, he came back in, said the shake was gone, and gave me a dozen dry flies. He said they were a pattern I may not have heard of called the Dutchman. There were actually thirteen flies in all, the odd fly being one he was tinkering with and that he called the Flying Dutchman. The dozen flies were the same as the Dutchman that appeared in Ed Ostapczuk's "Up on the Esopus" column in the March 2015 *Gazette*, but I can't for the life of me remember what the Flying Dutchman looked like. I saved most of the flies, including that Flying Dutchman, but unfortunately, they were in my trailer at Twin Islands Campsite when it went downstream in the flood of 1996.

I don't know if anyone has heard of this variation of an already obscure fly. (He may have shared it with other anglers), but I thought I'd bounce it off the members of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild and see if anything comes up.

Ed Bendl, an Adirondack Legend

This *Gazette* piece will transport readers outside the mythical Catskill “Blue Line” while remaining within the confines of the Empire State. Edward M. Bendl (August 21, 1921–August 28, 2009) was a true Adirondack legend. During World War II, he served in the U.S. Army Air Corps and afterward worked for General Telephone. During the 1960s, he also worked for the Fulton County



Sheriff's Department and held other jobs. Then, in 1988, he opened Ed's Fly Shop along Great Sacandaga Lake in Northville. This quaint little white building on State Highway 30 sold everything a fly tyer and fly fisher could ever need. For many years, I drove past his shop on the way to our Indian Lake camp, but finally had the good fortune to stop several times before it closed. The place was small and tight, packed with fly-fishing items where only Bendl knew where to find them. It was truly a one-man shop.

Bendl was an avid outdoorsman and an accomplished fly tyer. He was a member of the National Rifle Association, plus national bamboo rod and fly tyers' associations. In 2003, he published his autobiography: *Decent Man . . . Lucky Man: The Life and Times of Ed Bendl*. On the day I purchased my copy, I suggested to Bendl that what he really needed to write was a book containing his many colorful Adirondack streamer patterns. His response was, "You're not the first person to tell me that."

Though Bendl started tying flies in the 1930s, Perry Ehlers, another Adirondack legend and noted outdoor guide, would become his mentor. Ehlers ran Ehlers' Fishing Tackle shop on the Hudson River in North River, where a set of whitewater rapids are named in his honor. He was also the creator of the Chambers, a deadly streamer featured in a 1951 article, "For New York Waters" in *The Conservationist* magazine, along with flies by the Darbees, Dettles, Art Flick, Ray Smith, and others—the Catskill connection. Over the years, Bendl's own tying talents would become celebrated.

The autumn 2002 issue of *Fly Tyer* included an article on Bendl and his flies—"An Adirondack Original." He was also featured in several issues of *Adirondack Life* magazine. David Klausmeyer, in *Tying Classic Freshwater Streamers*, included two of Bendl's patterns, the Indian Puddle and the West Canada. Bendl's colorful streamers were sold individually mounted on small cards, wrapped in cellophane, and often stated "originated by," followed by Ed's signature with the date when the pattern was originated. If not yet, these flies will soon become collectible treasures.

Many, but not all of Bendl's streamers were named after Adirondack waterways. His patterns had names such as Lake George and Thirteenth Lake, as well as Blue Mountain, Ed's Special, Flower Land, Frankie G, Lithuanian Prince, Margo Smelt, Red Barron, Skip Jack, Canada, and Yellow Perch. Plus, he tied numerous well-known flies such as the Hornberg and Mickey Finn. Bendl tied his patterns both on a single hook and also as classic tandem trolling streamers. I remember asking him where his fly patterns were documented to which he responded, "Nowhere, but in my head."

Up on the Esopus



With Ed Ostapczuk

Edward M. Bendl was, in his own words, a regular guy, but very special in his own way. He didn't do e-mail and didn't use the Internet; he was down-to-earth and unpretentious. Yet he left a mark and made contributions to the wonderful art and craft of fly tying. Though a primary mission of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild is to keep Catskill tying traditions alive, just because Bendl lived outside the mythical "Blue Line," we should not forget about this man's contributions.

According to *Tying Classic Freshwater Streamers*, the dressing for Bendl's Indian Puddle is as follow.

Thread: Black
 Tag: Flat gold tinsel
 Body: Gold floss
 Rib: Flat gold tinsel
 Throat: Red calf tail
 Wing: Orange, yellow, and maroon bucktail, with strands of gold Krystal Flash
 Shoulders: Silver pheasant



The Overton Nymph and Olive Woolly Bugger By Glenn Overton

I developed this nymph in around 1972—I worked on it for four years. The glue on the back flattens the natural ostrich herl there. Then I trim closely on the belly with the scissors facing toward the inside bend of the hook, so



the herl sticks out the sides and the fly looks flat, top and bottom. In terms of size, really only one size works: size 12, 2X long. Any smaller or bigger is a waste of time. I experiment, and believe me, you need only this one size.

I used a Herter's 777 hook made by Sealy—it was the best hook made at that time. Using a 2X down-eye hook will work really well, too, but only in size 12. There are 10 winds of .020-inch lead wire. Elsie Darbee mostly used the same size lead wire. The tail is brown dry-fly hackle.

The hackle is four winds of dry-fly hackle, not folded back. I feel dry-fly hackle tickles the trout's mouth and, like a Muddler head, leaves a V underwater. Because of the glue on top, though, the fly sometimes swims upside down.

To fish this nymph, I usually cast across and quarter it on the swing. I never strip the line. Every ten to eighteen inches, I twitch the line by holding it in my left hand and twitching my trigger finger. Al Troth also used the same method when I visited him here in Montana.

As for the rod position, I hold the rod six to twelve inches off the water, pointed a little ahead of the line. I use the current to put pressure on the line. To cast to a rise, I have the nymph swing a foot in front of the fish and twitch the fly to force the fish to look at it and make it seem more delicious than a real one. I also twitch my dry flies to force the trout to look at them.

This also works: when crossing a stream, I leave out twenty to thirty feet of line to help my balance. You wouldn't believe how many times a trout will grab the fly then.

This isn't just another nymph. It copies so many insects in most streams and will even work on the big Gray Caddis hatch. In the 1970s, anglers on the Beaverkill and other streams in that part of the state claimed there are just two nymphs to use: the Hare's Ear and the Overton Nymph.

As for the Olive Woolly Bugger, years ago, Doug Swisher came to fish with Barry Beck using Matuka-style streamers, but Barry had him use this Woolly Bugger, and I couldn't believe how well it worked. I asked Barry how the Woolly Bugger was tied, and he told me it was tied like an olive Woolly Worm with a marabou tail. Back then, we had to dye our own hackle and marabou, so here I go, using olive Rit dye. Well, it faded and turned to a bronze olive color, so I went to a Veniard olive dye using Metz dry-fly saddle—no web. I felt this dye was way too green and too bright, but that made no difference at all.

I used a dry-fly salmon hook, size 4, because at that time, it was the only thin-wire hook that could hold a bigger fish. The red thread represents the gills of a small fish that is trying to escape, as seen by behind. The thread is rod-winding thread, the only thread that will stay red when wet. The olive body is olive rug yarn. The marabou tail is stiffer marabou tied flat, like a small fish tail, to swim like a small fish. The dry-fly hackle is tied in reverse, with gold tinsel forward. That is real French metal tinsel from Herter's. The collar in front is another hackle a bit larger than the body hackle, several winds, so it leaves a V wake underwater, again like the head of a Muddler Minnow, so a trout can center the take.

On the Beaverkill, it will take many night feeders during the day, usually fourteen to over twenty-two inches. In the midsection of Cemetery Pool on the Beaverkill, I have seen the same fish hit this fly three times on a chase. The third try, I hooked him—about a fifteen-inch brown. I then hooked half a dozen browns within an hour and a half, nothing smaller. I fish it the same way that I fish my Overton Nymph: I use my trigger finger to twitch the fly on a downstream, quartering swing, never stripping it. I also tie this Woolly Bugger in all white and all black, the same size, but olive is the best for the Catskills.

I've actually had people call the game warden several times on the Beaverkill because I was catching too many of the larger trout. After he checked my car for worms and fish and checked my fly to see if I had some type of bait on it, he started laughing and invited me to lunch.



Book Review

Tying the Founding Flies

By Mike Valla. Published by Headwater Books/Stackpole Books, 2015; \$24.95 softbound.

Some might think that tying flies is a very individual thing, even a solitary pursuit, with every tyer sitting alone at home behind a vise or maybe in the cab of a pickup next to a stream, using whatever skills they have to craft an imitation of what they hope will fool a fish, either someday or during the hatch that's occurring at the moment. But that's not really correct.

No tyer ever ties alone. For one thing, the craft of fly tying has a long tail, historically, stretching back not just decades, but centuries, and anything a tyer does today is in some kind of dialogue, explicit or implicit, with what other tyers, past and present, have done before. As Paul Schullery writes in *Cowboy Trout* in a quote I often use in the *Gazette*,

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.

Tyers also tend to gravitate toward each other, bonding over sources for materials, sharing techniques, and just enjoying the company of others who share a somewhat arcane, but all-absorbing interest in this aspect of what those who are not part of the fellowship of the long rod already regard as somewhat arcane. I belong to a club, ostensibly a fly-fishing club, in which the actual fishing occurs mostly as reminiscences of trips past, recalled during meetings that more often than not are simply “open tying nights.” We sit around, tie favorite patterns, gossip and remember, and share flies and tips for tying them.

Mike Valla has written important books that illuminate the long tail of fly-tying history in the United States—most notably, his recent, authoritative work on the “archetypal” patterns that have shaped the ways that flies have been tied here, *The Founding Flies: 43 American Masters, Their Patterns and Influences* (Headwaters/Stackpole, 2013). That work, like his earlier *Tying Catskill-Style Dry Flies* (Headwaters/Stackpole, 2009) and a series of “classic fly box” books published by The Whitefish Press, has furthered today's conversation with the tyers whose work has led to what we tie and fish today.

In *Tying the Founding Flies*, however, what we get is the way in which fly tying also is a personal, informal exchange among fly tyers. And the emphasis here is on the personal. Valla discusses twenty-one patterns, all mentioned in *The Founding Flies* and all originally created by the tyers covered there, but this is not a roundup of the usual suspects. There are plenty of other sources that anyone can consult to learn to tie a Quill Gordon, or an Adams, or a Griffith's Gnat.

Instead, the flies covered here are patterns that Valla likes to fish, or thinks ought to be better known, or just finds interesting. And he introduces them with personal reminiscences (he learned to tie at the knees of Walt and Winnie Dette) and remembrances about his angling past, including cutting classes to fish when he was in college, as well as with recollections about writing *The Founding Flies*, including the people he met and the new rivers he fished—not quite the gossip that my tying friends and I share, but not a comprehensive historical account, either, although he often carefully documents the provenance of a pattern. The person he is, after all, is an angling historian.

Reading *Tying the Founding Flies*, I imagined Valla sitting around a table with a group of old friends, each in front a tying vise, at his fishing camp near the Battenkill in New York—the place is named (inevitably) Vallahalla. Adult beverages are available, and the vibe is laid back. It's the afterparty, following on the publication of *The Founding Flies*, and Mike is talking about flies he likes, including a few unusual patterns, and demonstrating how to tie them.

Although Valla is originally a Catskill guy, the flies he presents here are from all over. The West is well represented, and indeed, he begins with Andy Puyans's A.P. Black Beaver Nymph. He also includes Polly Rosborogh's Casual Dress nymph, Buz Buszek's King's River Caddis and Western Coachman, and Don Martinez's Martinez Black (a nymph) and Whitcraft (a dry), along with Dan Bailey's Missoulian Spook, a hybrid of the Muddler Minnow and Theodore Gordon's Bumblepuppy streamer.

Classic Catskill ties of course get their due. Those of John Atherton, an artist who stressed "impressionism" in fly tying, as well as in painting, represent his approach to imitation with his Atherton Number One dry and Number Two nymph (it has a blue kingfisher or floss wing case), and Valla covers four classic dry-fly patterns that are not at all well known outside the ranks of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild—the Conover (originally fished as a caddis imitation); the Dark Coty, an early season dry popularized by Ray Bergman; the Firehole Number One, created by Bergman as a midge imitation, but effective as an imitation of many small mayflies; and the Woodruff, a pattern from the Dette shop in the 1930s.

There also streamers, including three that Valla thinks should be better known, originated by Lew Oatman on the Battenkill, now Valla's home water — the Golden Darter, Male Dace, and Shusan Postmaster — and the Llama, popularized by Eric Leiser and set apart by its use of woodchuck hair as a winging material.

There's a certain amount of nostalgia here, as is natural when one reminisces, and so Valla also covers Vince Marinaro's Jassid, the imitation of small terrestrials that uses a jungle cock feather as a body, and Chauncey Lively's black deer-hair Carpenter Ant, because "to end my association with the Carpenter Ant, in favor of a fashionable foam-tied creation, would be tantamount to abandoning an old friend."

But some of these patterns are still "fashionable" today, most notably Fran Betters's Usual ("What fly were you using to catch all those fish?" "Oh, just the Usual."), and some are flat-out buggy patterns that I'm itching to tie, especially the Michigan Stone, a Yellow Sally imitation with and a deer-hair wing and fore-and-aft hackles like a Renegade, and the lovely Martinez Black, with its wing case of emerald-green raffia, guinea-hen tail, and highly translucent body.

None of these patterns are all that difficult to tie—spinning a small deer-hair head on the Missoulian Spook and mounting upright and divided hackle-tip wings on the classic dries is about as technical as it gets—but this isn't really an instruction manual for fly tyers. It's a book for people who enjoy tying and who enjoy sharing tying with other people, learning things they didn't know about this perhaps arcane, but all-absorbing aspect of the sport. It's for people who enjoy the conversation. It's for people who have joined the guild.

—Bud Bynack

For Sale: Scott A4 9-foot 5-weight Fly Rod

Scott says of this rod: "A4 rods are smooth-casting high-line-speed rods with very low physical weights. They recover very quickly and cast flat, precise loops, yet load progressively and transmit feel extremely well." I've found that to be true—so much so that I've upgraded to a Scott Radian. This rod was fished last season, 8 times, max. \$295 firm, free shipping. Contact Bud Bynack, budbynack@verizon.net or (914) 961-3521.



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.