

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild



GAZETTE

October 2006

The October meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will be held on Saturday, October 21, 2006, at 1:00 P.M. at Rockland House in Roscoe, NY. Allan Podell will be tying Comparaduns. If you saw his article "Porcupine Extended-Body Comparadun and Spinner" in the August *Gazette*, you will appreciate the opportunity to tie with Allan and get some help with your Comparaduns.

Three flies will be on the program: a Comparadun, a Comparadun emerger, and a Comparadun spinner. Bring The following materials to tie a size 14 Blue-Winged Olive:

	Comparadun	Emerger	Spinner
Hook:	Dry, size 14	Same	Same
Thread:	Olive 6/0 or 8/0	Same	Same
Tail:	Dun hackle or Microfibbetts	Brown Z-Ion	Same as Comparadun
Body:	Olive dubbing or quill	Same	Same
Wing:	Deer hair*	Same	None
Hackle:	None	None	Grizzly, trimmed

*Quality hair with few if any black tips

Mary Dette DVD Update By Ken Kobayashi

The Mary Dette DVD is close to being completed. It is approximately one hour and forty-five minutes long and shows Mary tying nine different flies at two different guild meetings. These sessions were videotaped by Peter Heller in August 2001 and October 2003. The plan is to sell this DVD to guild members for its cost of production, which will be in the range of \$5.00 to \$8.00.

I'd like to find out about how many guild members would be interested in purchasing a copy. This will help me determine how many copies I need to have made. The estimated price difference arises from different options in packaging. The lower cost is for the DVD and a simple plastic case, with black-and-white graphics on the actual DVD. The more expensive version reflects the additional cost of packaging in a standard DVD case with color graphics and chapter descriptions. In addition to letting me know if you're interested in purchasing a copy, I'd appreciate hearing your preferences regarding the packaging.

I know many of you have been waiting for this first DVD to be completed, and I'm hoping it will be ready for delivery in the first part of December. Thanks for your patience. I can be reached at: kenkobayashi@verizon.net.

The International Fly-Tying Symposium will be held on November 18 and 19, 2006, in Somerset, NJ. See the advertisement in this issue of the *Gazette*. Once again, the guild will participate. Tyers who have volunteered at the previous show will be contacted before October 10—we are continuing our policy of giving them preference. We always have a few slots left open and would encourage any member who has not tied with us previously to consider doing it. The symposium offers an opportunity to meet and tie with the very best tyers. As usual, the guild will provide a pass for each tyer on the days they tie. Contact Paul Murphy: E-mail pmurphy100@patmedia.net, or call after October 6 at (908) 879-7929, evenings until 9:00. We still have a couple of spots to fill.

The 2006 Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Picnic was held on August 19 at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum. Despite on-and-off rain sprinkles, attendance was robust, and in addition to the traditional hot dogs and hamburgers, picnickers enjoyed a host of contributed dishes, from home-grown tomatoes that actually tasted like tomatoes, to Joe Ceballos's yummy teriyaki chicken, to salads and a spread of desserts.

This year, casting-competition coordinator Gary Sweet not only added extra events, but contrived a “realistic” site for the competition—one where there were trees and brush to snag the errant back cast. In addition to thirty-foot casts to a target and distance casts through an elevated three-foot hoop, there was a fifty-foot-cast challenge and a competition for accuracy through the hoop.

The accuracy competition at thirty feet was won by Lisa Menard. Gary Moleon was the most accurate competitor at fifty feet. Galen Wilkins was the only person to put all three casts through the hoop while casting for accuracy to a target beyond it. And Floyd Franke proved that he can cast better one-handed than the rest of us using two by winning the competition for distance through the hoop. Everyone was delighted to see Floyd's determination to resume his regular activities following his January stroke.

The new Crappie Casting Award, in the form of a wooden fish of the same species, carved by Gary Sweet, was won this year by your editor, who confidently expects to retire the trophy in the fullness of time after subsequent competitions at future picnics. Joan Wulff was considerate enough to avert her eyes while he was achieving this distinction.

—*Bud Bynack*

A Look Back By Bob Osburn

I don't remember exactly when I began to tie flies, but I know I was in high school, so it must have been about 1945 or 1946. I do remember why. I was not a very good worm fisherman.

Bill Lewis had a sporting-goods store in Goshen, NY. He took me under his wing and taught me worm fishing. Bill could catch a trout in a bathtub on a worm. Once, and only once, I beat Bill. We were headed to Fir Brook. At Grahamsville, we needed gas. Bill stopped at a gas station and was going to sleep until the station opened. I went fishing in the brook across the

road. I amazed myself by catching and killing ten trout before waking Bill. Needless to say, we did not get to Fir Brook that day. Another day, we were on a small brook in Sullivan County. Bill was on one side, and I was on the other. We came to a spot where a tree leaned over the brook on Bill's side. Bill went under the tree, and I heard a noise I had never heard before. As I waded across the brook, Bill was trying to get his waders off and cursing at the same time. A snake had been lying on a tree branch and had fallen into his waders. Enough said!

When I was in the navy, two sad things happened. Bill died, and Herter's closed shop. G. L. Herter was a very opinionated fellow, but his prices were affordable, and the quality of materials was pretty good. One thousand hooks could be purchased at less cost than 100 hooks today. I still have a good amount of those hooks.

Like you, I have gone through all the phases of being a fisherman, and now I just desire to catch a fish on my terms. More important than catching a fish are the good fishing buddies I have had over the years and the wonderful waters we have fished.

One fellow must have every gadget Orvis ever made. He actually rattles when he walks. Another I *have* seen catch a fish, but as soon as he goes around the bend, he claims that he just knocks them dead, and most of them big ones. Nick once had a chinook try to climb a tree on Johnson Creek. Tom and I found a wild raspberry patch on the Gunpowder and really chowed down. One of my grandsons developed a death grip on a fly rod, fishing some brooks that run into Lake Ontario. I could go on and on, but I won't.

I am sure you have similar memories. They are more important than the fish caught.

Drop Your Vise

By Bud Bynack

Hold your hands out in front of your face. Try to keep them there for ten minutes. It's not easy, is it? Your arms get tired quickly, your back aches, and if you were trying to do something delicate—tying a size 20 Blue-Winged Olive, for example—the motor control in your fingers would likely deteriorate. Yet that's what in effect you're doing if you tie the way that most tying benches are set up. If you use a C-clamp vise, there's really nothing against which you can rest your arms and nothing against which to brace them in order to stabilize your hands and support fine finger movements. If you tie on a pedestal vise, as many do, you can move it away from you and brace your forearms on the edge of the table. That helps, but it's also a good way to encourage repetitive stress injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome, as I've heard tyers such as Bob Popovics have discovered.



Now drop your hands into your lap and rest your forearms on your legs or on the arms of your chair. Takes a load off, doesn't it? Your hands are in a natural position for doing fine work, and your arms are unstressed.

A well-known West Coast fly tyer, Darwin Atkin, long has advocated positioning your vise so that you can tie with your hands and arms in this much more natural position. Atkin originated several steelhead patterns—the Bright Ember, Dark Ember, Chiquita,

Daisy, Pole-Kat, Streaker, and Sun Burst—and has received numerous awards from the Federation of Fly Fishers. Among them, in 1982, he received the Buz Buszek Award “for significant contributions to arts of fly tying” (Art Flick received it the next year), and in 1987, five years before Catskill Fly Tyers Guild founding member Larry Duckwall also was similarly honored, he received the Charles E. Brooks Memorial Award. (“It would be nice if each year's winner had a unique, spicy personality,” the FFF criteria for this prize declare.)

This approach to tying may not actually be an innovation. In the long history of angling with a fly, the fly-tying vise is itself a fairly new development. Tyers in the age of Dame Juliana Berners or Charles Cotton did not have expensive, precision-machined instruments for holding hooks while tying. Because tying flies in one’s fingers once was the norm, in the manner that Dave Brandt now demonstrates at fishing shows, it was likely that people would tie in whatever way was most comfortable, and holding your arms out in front of your face all the time is definitely not comfortable. I’d speculate that Atkin’s in-the-lap approach is actually closer to the practices of the past than we with our shiny, whiz-bang rotary vises would think. Everything old is new again.

I learned about this approach to tying from another West Coast tyer, Jay Murakoshi, who in turn learned it from Darwin Atkin himself. Jay tied commercially for many years, mostly big saltwater flies. (Dan Blanton has said that Jay ties his Whistler pattern better than Blanton does himself.)

I’ve seen Jay use various setups to put the vise in the correct position. I’ve even seen him at shows tying with the vise on what looked like a snare-drum stand from a drum kit. But for some time, Dyna-King has offered an offset vise mounting that allows you to move the vise away from the tying bench toward you, and Jay and his angling partner, Ken Hanley, have been simply flipping this over and using it upside-down, which is the setup I use.

It works. I get less tired, have better control of my hands in this much more natural position, and I can place a wastebasket underneath the vise to catch the clippings, dropped hooks, and dripped head cement that otherwise would end up on the floor. I can also mount a tying background in the line of sight without obscuring the rest of the bench. You get used to the different sight line quickly, although to see the fly in the conventional side-on view, you need a rotary vise. The setup looks a little weird, but then, as you can see, I tie on a Dyna-King Sidewinder, so I’m not afraid of weird. You might want to drop your vise yourself someday.



Book Review

The Benchside Introduction to Fly Tying, by Ted Leeson and Jim Schollmeyer
Frank Amato Publications, 2006; \$45.00 hardbound in spiral format

When I started tying flies, all I had to go on were the voices inside my head, telling me what to do. This was not the result of a peculiar angling-related psychotic break, the product of

one too many days of being skunked. Instead, it came from hanging around the Fly-Tying Theater at the International Sportsmen's Exposition shows in Portland, Oregon, and later in San Mateo, California, for several years before I scratched the itch to become a fly tyer. There I had listened intently and even began taking notes as, each year, Lefty Kreh demonstrated three or four ways to tie a Woolly Bugger—three or four ways that were different each year, each variation entailing some wrinkle based on what in retrospect I know to be a basic fly-tying technique. There I heard Wayne Luallen discourse about thread-management techniques. There I heard André Puyans lecture on the proper proportions of a nymph and dry fly. There I watched and listened as a variety of world-class fly tyers demonstrated pretty much everything you'd need to know to tie a halfway decent fly.

What took me several years (not to mention all those parking and admissions fees) to accumulate is now available in *The Benchside Introduction to Fly Tying*—available in one of the traditional ways that the voices of those who know what they are talking about enter the heads of those who would learn: as the written word, accompanied by illustrations—in this case, by Jim Schollmeyer's photography, which has become the gold standard for fly-tying illustrations. They illustrate every move here with a total absence of ambiguity, aided by the excellent production values of Frank Amato Publications. These augment Ted Leeson's equally lucid prose, which advises and teaches without being dogmatic.

The question of how to begin actually afflicts everyone who desires to do something new. In fly fishing, as in most enterprises, the learning curves vary from individual to individual. Some, for example, learn to read water while fishing spinning lures or bait, while for others, the stream's structure and the relation of fish to it is a new language that needs to be studied. Casting has its own learning curve, and most of us seem to be content with stopping somewhere along it, but it's not really something you can learn from a book, however much books might help correct faults as you progress.

So how about fly tying? How to begin? When you wanted to learn to cast, you probably took some lessons, maybe (gasp) even practiced on a lawn or casting pond, before going angling, but fly tying is a little different. As soon as you're doing it, you're really doing it. Sure, you can take classes, but right from the start, you're tying flies, not just practicing. Anything you tie, you can fish—and should, because it's part of the process of figuring out how to do it right, or at least how to do it better.

But when you go home from the class and tie, you're pretty much on your own. Leeson and Schollmeyer have a solution for that problem. The whole point of this new book, a re-envisioning for beginners of their masterful *Fly Tier's Benchside Reference to Techniques and Dressing Styles* (Frank Amato Publications, 1998), lies in the term "Benchside" in the title. They're there beside you—or inside your head, as you read the text—with advice about virtually all the fundamental techniques of fly tying as you tie 53 fly patterns, including most of the classics that should be in anyone's fly boxes.

They're there when you need them because of the unique and innovative design of the book. "Mount, stand up, divide, and post the wings," a typical recipe in any fly-tying book might tell you about tying a traditional Catskill-style dry fly. It might even have told you how to do all these steps, somewhere else in the book. The innovation in the design of *The Benchside Introduction to Fly Tying* lies in making the explanations and illustrations of the techniques involved in such a recipe available sequentially at the same time that you also work through and

execute the steps of the recipe itself. It's about as close as interactive multimedia is going to come to book publishing. The authors thank Tony Amato for suggesting the format and making it happen. Readers will, as well.

Here's how it works. After an introduction that sensibly and economically answers two of the basic questions that any would-be tyer might ask—"What on earth is all this stuff for?" and "How much of it do I really need?"—the book physically splits in half horizontally. The top half of the spiral-bound text contains step-by-step instructions for tying anything from a Gold-Ribbed Hares' Ear Nymph, to a classic Black Quill wet fly, to a Muddler Minnow, with its spun deer-hair head and collar. The bottom half describes and illustrates photographically the methods necessary to tie these flies—and indeed, almost any fly, although the focus here is solely on freshwater patterns, principally trout flies. So, for example, someone trying to learn how to tie a Muddler can both view the step-by-step procedure and, step by step, simultaneously view the techniques necessary for tying it, which are cross-referenced in the pattern, including how to prepare and mount quill wings and how to spin and trim deer hair, techniques that, when learned, of course apply to other patterns, as well.

Part of the brilliance of this idea is that it's nonhierarchical, as well as interactive. Of necessity, most how-to manuals begin with a simple pattern that may or may not be of interest to the student or relevant to his or her angling. Here, the student who follows the text's sage advice to pick a few patterns at first and buy just the materials necessary for tying them gets to select the patterns and methods most suited to the angling that the student actually does. If you're interested in learning to tie classic Catskill flies, you can focus on them, right from the start. If you're a stillwater midge fanatic, you can focus on them.

And if you're not a beginner, there's still plenty here that's of interest. For starters, if you tie, sooner or later you've been asked about getting started tying. The advice in the introduction here is an excellent primer worth repeating. (Carry scissors in your hand or put 'em down? Some do, some don't. Try it and see what you prefer.) And it's a pretty good pattern book in its own right. In addition to the usual suspects, there are patterns that you ordinarily don't always find in introductory tying manuals, including the LaFontaine Emergent Sparkle Pupa (and the techniques needed to tie that @#\$%^!* Antron overbody veil), Turck's Tarantula, a Petitjean Emerger (CDC hackling techniques), and more. Because the approach is based on techniques, there's bound to be something here that even an experienced tyer doesn't know, has forgotten, or needs to learn how to do better. And there's a lot of useful information, including a chart in the introduction detailing the appropriate size of beads and additional lead wire for nymph, streamer, and wet-fly hooks from size 2 to size 20.

Like many people, I don't fish enough to lose enough flies to *tie* enough flies to be really good at it, but let's indulge in a wildly hypothetical speculation. If someone were to ask me to teach a fly-tying class, I'd tell my students to buy this book as an integral part of the course. It sets a new standard in fly-tying instruction manuals.

—Bud Bynack

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

—Paul Schullery, *Cowboy Trout*

The International Fly-Tying Symposium

The World's Largest Show For Fly Tying

November 18 and 19 , 2006

Doubletree Hotel, Somerset, NJ

SATURDAY: 9:30 A.M.—5:30 P.M.

SUNDAY: 9:30 A.M.— 4:30 P.M.

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild *Gazette* is issued six times a year to members. Membership is only \$10.00 per year. New, first-time members also get a **FREE** copy of the booklet *Favorite Rivers, Favorite Flies*, as well as discounts on guild patches and pins. **WANT TO JOIN THE GUILD or GIVE A FRIEND a GREAT GIFT?** Just complete this form, then mail it and a check to: **Bob Osburn, 3 Good Time Court, Goshen, NY 10924** and indicate if it is a new membership or a renewal.

*******Remember, memberships renew in February. *******

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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, BBynack@cs.com or 69 Bronxville Road, Apt. 4G, Bronxville, NY, 10708, (914) 961-3521.

