

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild



GAZETTE

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The October meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will be held on Saturday, October 17, at the Education Building of the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum, 1031 Old Route 17, Livingston Manor, New York, at **1:00 P.M.** Note that inductions to the Fly Fishing Hall of Fame will take place at 3:00 P.M., so **the regular starting time of 2:00 P.M. has been moved up.**

John Kavanaugh, a key tyer at our fly-fishing show appearances for a number of years, will be tying two patterns: the East Branch Delaware Adams and an extended-body Green Drake Spinner. For those who will want to tie along with John, the following is a list of materials.

East Branch Delaware Adams

Hook: Mustad 94841, size 10 or 12

Thread: White or tan 8/0

Tail: Moose body hair

Body: White polypropylene

Wing: Grizzly hen hackle tips

Palmer hackle: Light or sandy dun

Collar hackle: Light. or sandy dun and grizzly

Extended-Body Green Drake Spinner

Hook: Mustad 94840, size 12

Thread: White or tan 8/0

Tail and body extension: White saddle hackle

Main body: White dubbing or polypropylene

Wings: Grizzly hen hackle tips

Collar: Two grizzly hackles

—Paul Murphy

Catskill Fly Tyers Guild DVD *Fly Tyers, Volume 2: A Guild Sampler*

I've been working on the second volume of the Fly Tyers DVD series, and I hope that it will be ready for sale shortly after Thanksgiving. It's a compilation DVD, tentatively titled *A Guild Sampler*, and will feature numerous guild tyers, with each fly tyer doing one fly. It possibly will end up being a two-disk set, because some of the segments, such as the one featuring Larry Duckwall tying a Bivisable, are over thirty minutes long, but his running commentary, including comments about Elsie Darbee, are not something to miss. Some of the other tyers will be Ralph Hoffman, Tom Mason, and Dave Brandt. There is a nice segment with Agnes Van Put, with Joan Wulff sitting next to her. Watch for further announcements concerning availability, ordering, and price.

—Ken Kobayashi

Fly Plate Winner

The winner of the most recent Catskill Fly Tyers Guild fly plate raffle is Mike Sankowich. Mike lives in New Jersey and bought the ticket at the Somerset Fly Fishing Show.

Raffle tickets for the fly plate from the 2008 Catskill Fly Tyers



Guild Rendezvous will go on sale in November. It's a big one, with forty flies—the largest that Ted Patlen has ever framed.

—Judie DV Smith

United Fly Tyers Fiftieth Anniversary Gala

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of United Fly Tyers, the country's oldest fly-tying club. UFT's periodical, *Roundtable*, was the first and at one time the only publication dedicated to fly tying. Since 1959, the UFT has attracted not only national, but international attention. The public, along with members past and present, are invited to United Fly Tyers Fiftieth Anniversary Gala on Sunday, October 25, 2009, from 5:00 to 9:00 P.M., at the historic Longfellow's Wayside Inn, Wayside Inn Road, in Sudbury, Massachusetts, 01776. The evening's speaker will be Jim Krul, director of The Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum in Livingston Manor, New York, and the gala will feature door prizes, raffles, and special events. Dinner, with a cash bar, is \$40 per person; tickets must be purchased in advance. Checks payable to United Fly Tyers may be sent to P.O. Box 2478, Woburn, MA 01888. For more information contact Leslie Wrixon at (508) 733-8535 or on-line at lesliewrixon@ityeflies.com.

—Leslie Wrixon

2009 Guild Picnic Report



The food, as usual, was fantastic, and a select gathering enjoyed a hot summer's afternoon of fun. A casting contest broke out, with Tom Mason taking the honors in the accuracy competition, followed by Joe Ceballos, Dave Brandt, and Galen Wilkins, in that order. The distance competition was won by Jeff Phelan, followed by Dave Brandt, Joe Ceballos, and Al Ampe. Consult your recipe books, hone your casting skills, and mark the third Saturday of August 2010 on your calendars for next year's event.

(Left: *Caddis* helps Jeff Phelan cast.)

It's fall, which is my favorite time of the year to get out and fish. I love how the trees explode with color. There's a little nip in the air, pumpkins are being harvested, and you can look forward to a cup of hot spiced apple cider with a cinnamon stick after a good day on the stream. It's a good time to pause and reflect, too.

As I sat in my den, pondering what fly to write about this month, I got to thinking about how tying wet flies is an art in itself. For example, this year's Rendezvous inspired a lot of us to create a wet fly for the Town of Rockland's Bicentennial, and a lot of good-looking flies were created and submitted. And when you look at the plates in Ray Bergman's *Trout*, with all the beautiful wet flies that were painted by Doctor Burke, you can see creativity, art, and, yes, flies that were tied to catch fish. But as a wet-fly tyer, I feel there is more to these flies than just fishing.

At times, I sit at my bench and create new patterns that are destined for display purposes only —flies that mean something to close friends, flies for corporations, flies for family members, and flies just for myself. I have also created flies for AT&T and for the Dallas Cowboys, and I'm currently working on one for Walt Disney. The fly that I am posting this month was inspired by the world champion Philadelphia Phillies.

The Wet-Fly Corner

With Andy Brasko, a Genuine Wet-Fly Fisherman



It also marks my venture into tying Atlantic salmon flies. There are numerous skills used in tying of wet flies that are also used in tying salmon flies, and my passion for tying wets has led me to take the next step in my tying evolution, to move on to these lovely, but more complicated ties. I never thought that I was good enough to do so, but in fact, the things I've learned while tying wet flies have prepared me to go to the next level. Creating compound or married wings, wrapping floss, tying beards or full collars, working with multiple color schemes, using a variety of many different materials in the fly, using less thread so the fly is not bulked up, and, of course, artistic expression all are a part of tying both wet flies and salmon flies. So if you tie wet flies, think about taking the next step and moving on to the next level of the art and craft of fly tying.

No, I'm not abandoning wet-fly fishing and tying. There will be many more articles to come in "The Wet-Fly Corner." I just wanted to show that there is another side to me and to the techniques that go into tying wet flies. I hope that some of you will take the time to try tying this fly. Perhaps you, too, will see that you are better tyers than you give yourself credit for. Or maybe, if you're a Mets fan, you'll be inspired to tie a fly with a different color scheme. . . .



Photo: Annie Brasko

Philadelphia Phillies

Hook: Mustad 3906, size 6

Thread: White Danville 6/0 for the underbody and black Danville 6/0 for the head

Tag: Gold Mylar tinsel, size 16/18

Tail: Two quill segments of red duck quill, over (married to) two quill segments of white duck quill, over (married to) two quill segments of blue duck quill

Tip: One strand of peacock herl taken from the eye region

Body: Two strands of white Danville floss, tied in at the back and wrapped forward together at the same time.

Rib: One strand of Danville floss rolled to look like rope as it is wrapped forward. Without rolling it, the floss would lie flat.

Beard/False hackle: White and red schlappen (hen saddle preferred)

Wing: Three quill segments of white duck quill, over (married to) three quill segments of red duck quill, over (married to) three quill segments of white duck quill, over (married to) three quill segments of red duck quill, over (married to) three quill segments of white duck quill, over (married to) three more quill segments of white duck quill

Head: One soaking coat of Griff's Thin, two coats of Griff's Thick.

Tying Notes

If you want the head on this fly to be jet black, use one coat of Black ProLaq after the head section listed in the pattern is completed and dry. The head is formed via a whip finisher. Danville tying thread can be spun counterclockwise for right-handed tyers to get the thread to lie flat. This is just a little trick that was shown to me to form these neat heads.

The Shape of the Hook: Simple? Not Anymore By Red Quill

There is a dearth of standardization in the fishing-hook industry worldwide. The lack of standards from one maker to another has been a result of the explosion in the number of hook manufacturers in recent years. As a result, confusion in the nomenclature of hooks, which was once confined to the products of a relatively few manufacturers, has blossomed in the past two or three decades. I'm talking here just about hooks that are to be used for fishing flies. Flies that are tied for presentation purposes or displays? Well, the sky's the limit there. Go ahead and use those handmade irons for those framed feather-wing salmon flies. Express yourself! But when it comes to flies for fishing, creative anarchy has its drawbacks.

Many moons ago, when a whole lot of today's old-timers were just discovering the world of fly tying, things were simple. Mustad hooks were about all there was. We kept it simple because we really had little or no choice. Sure, there were various English hook brands available: Partridge, Seeley & Allcock hooks (once the products of fine old English companies, now being manufactured in the Orient), along with a few American and French brands, but you really had to seek them out, because the general run of mail-order catalogs usually had only Mustads available. In the 1960s and 1970s, for mail-order sources, we mostly just had Herter's and the nascent Cabela's. Herter's had Mustads and their own brand of hooks, and Cabela's stocked only Mustads. As a result, most of us grew up in fly tying using those "traditional" Mustad hooks. Even your local fly shop—if indeed you had one back then—probably stocked only Mustads. A few shops, such as like Stoddard's in Boston and William Mills in New York City, might have other brands, but those places were not exactly around the corner.

And there was a Mustad hook for every use: dry flies, wet flies, nymphs, and streamers. That was really about it for your day-to-day fishing—just four categories. Sure, there were always those "special" types around: kirbed hooks, sneck bends, salmon doubles, and the like, but for everyday use, we used these four styles 95 percent of the time. The flies we produced caught fish, too . . . as countless thousands of other tyers have discovered from the beginnings of the craft until about twenty-five years ago. Then things began to change.

There was a renaissance in the hook field when the Japanese hooks came along. All of a sudden, there were "chemically sharpened" hooks—supersharper little buggers that would bite into your fingernail with little to no pressure. We also got hooks prebent into then-exotic shapes, the likes of "swimming nymphs," "fly body hooks," "scud hooks," and "hopper hooks." And we began to see those previously little-known and, yes, little-used, ring-eye hooks (which, by the way, you can get today in either horizontal or vertical flavor). We now could obtain hooks that were 5X-long, 2X-fine, 3X-short, 2X-stout, and almost everything in between for our arsenals. We tried wide-gap hooks. And forget bending down your barbs—we now could get manufactured barbless hooks. Partridge even went so far as actually to make a pointless hook, with an eye on both ends. Remember? No? Well, I kid you

not, as Jack Parr might say. (Remember Jack Parr? If not, this remembrance of things past may come as new news.)

But, as tyers and anglers, are we any better off today? I don't think so. Choosing hooks is certainly more confusing, and the results are not always better. Before the hook explosion, when tying a Lead-Wing Coachman, say, we would have chosen a Mustad hook designed for wet flies. The biggest problem was what size. Simple, eh? We used this hook because, yes, it was all we had, but it also turned out killer patterns. Just look at Ray Bergman's *Trout* and Andy Brasko's columns in this newsletter. In any case, there are now many, many wet-fly hook choices, but unless you are a tying fanatic with either a gimlet eye for differences in dimensions or access to a micrometer, this is not always a good thing. There is just no easy way to compare hooks, no good way to know what a given hook size really is, no standard of comparison. As a result, the flies you tie can come out looking all wrong.

I recently bought some size 30 Gamakatsu dry fly hooks (C12-BM) in a futile attempt to relive my fly-tying youth—that is, to see if I still could see hooks that small. I could, but I noticed that they are a sort of a . . . well, a wide-gap hook. A wide-gap 30? Now in my opinion, these might even be better fish hookers (and they may even be easier to tie a pattern on) than Mustads . . . but are they a true size 30? *Not in my book!* Why, they look like miniature circle hooks. The shank is actually a tad shorter than the gap. The body of the fly tied on one of these will be less than an eighth of an inch long, but the gap is way out of proportion to the body. They are all gap and eye! The finished fly does not begin to fit my notion of a size 30 dry fly—and probably not yours, either. I mean, I could tie a size 30 fly body on a size 24 hook and call it a low-water pattern, but would it be a true size 30 fly? Nah . . . I don't think so.

So before you read of some esoteric hook in a pattern bible or magazine article and decide to purchase a hundred or so, let me warn you that the hook is merely the armature on which you build the fly. And said hook should be not overtly apparent to the fish, if at all possible. The old Mustad low-tech styles accomplished this fraud very, very well indeed. My suggestion? Hoard your money to buy some grade-A, number-1 necks and forget about jumping around from hook *maker*, to hook *designer*, to hook *style*, to *hybrid bendage*. Remember the good old KISS adage: Keep it simple, stupid!



Fran Betters

By Bob Mead

Fran Betters has lost his fight with heart disease. In the past year, he had valiantly battled back from the brink of several eight counts, but his opponent was relentless, and on Sunday morning, September 6, 2009, it knocked him down for the final time.

For the last half century, his name has been synonymous with fly fishing in the Adirondacks. No self-respecting flyrodder on a pilgrimage to the West Branch of the Ausable River would even *think* of putting a wadered foot in its storied waters without first stopping in at the Evening Hatch to pay homage to the High Peaks gatekeeper—fly-tying guru Fran Betters. To forego this ritual would be the equivalent of a devout Catholic visiting Rome on Easter Sunday and skipping the pope's blessing.

Those who have not fished the Ausable in the past few years might be confused by the words "Evening Hatch." It is the name of Fran's new establishment, just a couple of long casts down and across the road from his original Adirondack Sport Shop, where he had tied and sold flies for more than forty years.

The new shop has a North Country museum quality about it, with its mounted wildlife, artwork, and glass counter display of old reels and lures. But the main attraction was always the man sitting behind the jury-rigged U-shaped tying area composed of short, narrow tables, well placed in the center of the room so that avid apostles could gather around him. Once there, they'd be treated to a seemingly endless string of stories about the old days, jokes, and tips on where to fish and what fly to use. Fran's heart may have been stressed, but to the end, his mind was as quick as ever. While he talked, he turned out flies as smoothly as one pulls a tissue from a Kleenex box. He would stop now and again to make eye contact with someone who had asked a question or to emphasize a point with his hands, then would continue tying without missing a beat. It was a rare day when one could sit and chat alone with Fran for more than ten uninterrupted minutes.

Though health problems prevented him from wading his beloved river the last couple of years, his guides kept him well informed of water conditions, hatches, and where a big fish could be found. He really didn't need a lot of updated information, though, because the river in its bed of granite is resistant to change. The hatches, too, remain constant, and big fish are always found in the best lies. Only in the upper flats, where sandbars appear and disappear, is there ever any noticeable change.

Like the river, Fran changed little over the years, until his battle with congenital heart disease slowly began taking its toll. He no longer tied tens of thousands of flies each year, but as recently as this past July, his arthritic fingers were still magically turning bits of fur, hair, and hackle into graceful Ausable Wulffs, buggy-looking Haystacks, and, while perhaps not quite so high on the aesthetics list, extremely effective Usuals—all three patterns known all over the world, patterns that work as well today as when he originated them.

Fran began fishing the Ausable seven decades ago with his father and his father's friends, icons the likes of Ray Bergman, Lee Wulff, Jack Smith, and Bill Phillips, all of whom camped in the "Notch." Bergman, especially, offered tying tips and fishing advice to the young Betters.

Since that long-ago tutoring, Fran amassed his own legacy of tying techniques and solid fishing advice, all the result of countless hours of experimenting at the vise and exploring the river—and all of this lore and knowledge he casually passed on to the eager ears of those who watched him tie. His place in the annals of fly tying and fly-fishing history has long ago been assured.

On October 4, an on-stream ceremony of the celebration of Fran's life was held—on the West Branch of the Ausable, naturally.

The Claret and Cree

By Alan Mark Fletcher

For many years, I have been fascinated by cree hackle, perhaps in part because it is so difficult to find a good cape. But I also think there is something magical about that mixture of three different colors on the same feather. I admit to having four cree capes and a saddle from several different commercial producers. By far the most brilliantly colored cape I obtained about fifteen years ago from Charlie Collins, of Pine City, New York.

Ten years or so ago, I developed a Catskill-type dry-fly pattern that I dubbed "Claret and Cree." The very first time I tried it, I was standing in a pool on the upper reaches of the West Branch of the Ausable River. As I was tying on a size 14 to see how it might do, I accidentally dropped the fly on the water. It drifted about five yards, a nice fish just slurped it in, and it was gone. "This might be a pretty good pattern!" I thought to myself, so I tied on another. I caught and released several more trout before I had to leave the pool.

I have successfully fished the Claret and Cree many times, from the Ausable and upper Genesee Rivers in New York to the McKenzie River in Oregon. In fact, it has become one of my staple

patterns. I always have a box of Adamses and a box of Claret and Crees, in assorted sizes and styles, in my fishing vest. Both of them are “go-to” patterns when there is no discernible hatch to match on a stream. Both are very productive in bringing trout to the surface.

Hook: Any dry-fly hook. I usually use Orvis or Daiichi Big-Eye hooks, ring-eye for standard ties and down-eye for parachutes.

Thread: Black, 6/0 or 8/0

Tail: Several fibers from a large cree hackle

Rib: Fine flat Mylar tinsel, gold side out

Body: Claret (wine) floss or claret fine wool yarn

Wing: light gray Hi-Vis, tied upright and not divided

Hackle: Cree, two hackles tied dull side facing each other for standard ties; one hackle, bright side down, for parachutes.

I entered Claret and Cree and Royal Coachman in the recent fly-tying contest sponsored by *Fly Tyer* magazine and administered by the Catskill Fly Fishing Center. For obvious reasons, I guessed that they would likely tend to favor traditional Catskill patterns. Well, I guessed wrong! Even so, there is really only one contest that has any significance: that’s the contest for a trout when the fly floats on water. The Claret and Cree catches fish. Tie it. You’ll like it.



World's Largest Show For Fly Tying
The 18th Annual International Fly Tying
Symposium

November 21 and 22, 2009

Doubletree Hotel

Atrium Drive

Somerset, NJ



SATURDAY: 9:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M.

SUNDAY: 9:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

Slide Shows, Exhibits, and Featured Tyers

The Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum
Presents
The Arts of the Angler Show

Saturday and Sunday, November 14 and 15, 2009
At the Ethan Allen Inn, at Exit 4 on I-84 in Danbury, CT

Not your ordinary fly show! Featuring seminars, clinics, classes, and vendors all related to fly fishing. It is simply all about fly fishing, and all proceeds benefit the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum. You will find everything related to fly fishing.

It's all here in an intimate and elegant setting.

Saturday, November 14, 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Special price fixe dinner available after the Saturday show at 5:30, plus a live auction of contemporary tackle and collectibles at 7:00 P.M.

Sunday, November 15, 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

Vendors will be providing everything you can imagine: the latest and finest in rods, reels, and accessories, classic and vintage tackle, equipment, books, fly-tying materials, collectibles, destinations, and guide services.

30+ of the finest fly tyers will be providing nonstop demonstrations over the weekend: Ralph Graves, Dave Brandt, Jay “Fishy” Fullum, Bob Mead, Jack Pangburn, Roger Plourde, Bruce Corwin, Bruce Marino, Leslie Wrixon, George Cherundolo, Greg Belcamino, Harold Williams, Bill Newcomb, William Hrinko, Peggy Brennan, Joe Soma, and others. . . .

Seminars, clinics, and fly-tying classes throughout each day. **Classes** (registrations, fees, and nonrefundable deposit required) include **Salty Flies** with Bob Lindquist, **Make a Mosquito** with Bob Mead, **Wood Duck Wings** with Dave Brandt, **Wet Flies That Work** with Ralph Graves, **The Reel Deal**, reelsmithing with Michael Hackney, and **Mounting Flies** with Ted Patlen

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