



Volume 13, number 5

October 2010

The October meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will be held on Saturday, October 16, 2010, at 2:00 P.M. at the Rockland House on Route 206 in Roscoe, NY. “Catskill John” Bonasera will be tying and talking about the history of the Cinberg and the Bivisible.

John modestly writes “I am relatively new to the sport/hobby, maybe nine years’ worth,” but anyone who has seen John’s work knows that what he has achieved as a tyer in that time exceeds what many of us have done in a lifetime. He continues: “I just frequent a few fly-fishing Web sites, mingle with the boys, and get together with them as much as a guy with a wife and two preteenage kids can. I have tied at the Catskill Fly-Fishing Center and Museum on numerous occasions, Clearwater Junction events since the first one, and small get-togethers during the year. I make scratch-built cane rods, and the ferrules and hardware—everything but the snake guides.” He also is an avid scholar of the Catskill tradition. Bring your vise and tie along with John. We’ll have materials for those who need them.

The Cinberg

Hook: Size 14 dry fly

Tail: Brown or ginger tailing hackle

Body: Tan fox fur

Hackle: Brown or ginger dry-fly hackle

Collar: Wood duck flank, one or two with even tips

The Bivisible

Hook: Size 12 or 14 dry fly

Hackle: Brown dry-fly hackle

and white dry-fly hackle

Note: Because of the November Danbury and Somerset shows, there will be no November meeting. See the calls for tyers to work the shows on page 2 and the ads for the shows at the back of this issue.

Ted Patlen to Receive Poul Jorgensen Golden Hook Award

Before his unexpected death in November 2004, master fly tyer Poul Jorgensen was working with award-winning sculptor and artist Bud Wertheim on a new award for fly tying to recognize a tyers who have made a contribution to the art through education, promotion, new techniques or tools, new materials, publications, or instruction. He wanted to recognize contemporary tyers, not historical figures. After Poul Jorgensen’s death, Wertheim completed the project and used Poul’s likeness on a cast medallion (very much against Poul’s wishes) to create the Poul Jorgensen Golden Hook Award.

Ted Patlen will be presented with the Jorgensen Golden Hook Award on Saturday, October 9, 2010, at Kings Catering in Livingston Manor, NY. This dinner will follow the induction of

the 2010 class of the Fly Fishing Hall of Fame: Louis Rhead, Jack Gartside, John Randolph, and Art Lee. For more information, call the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum at (845) 439-4810, e-mail flyfish@catskill.net, or go to www.cffcm.net.

Tyers Needed

The Arts of the Angler Show, Danbury CT, November 6 and 7, 2010. The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will again staff a booth with our usual setup, including vises for instructional purposes under the direction of our Instructor in Chief, Pete Peterson. If you would like to help, contact Ed McQuat, the show chair, at 31 Pine Mountain Road, Redding CT 06896, (203)544-8014, or edmcquat@optonline.net. Let him know which day(s) and times you would like to tie.

The International Fly-Tying Symposium, Somerset, NJ, November 20 and 21, 2010. The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will have a table at the November Somerset show. A few slots remain open. If you'd like to tie at the symposium, contact show co-chair John Collins at (908) 319-4592 or flyjcfish100@msn.com.

4H Basic Fly Tying Course. Fly-tying instructors for the Orange County 4H Basic Fly Tying Course to be held at Gander Mountain, Route 211, Middletown, NY, starting on January 13, 2011. For further information, please contact Bob Osburn at (845)294-5813.



Poachers

Letter from Edward R. Hewitt, 48 Gramercy Park,
New York 10, NY, June 19, 1944

My dear Mrs. Darbee:

Since you were here poachers got into my place and stole most of my trout from my ponds and pools. They must have taken 4000 in all. It is plain that I cant raise fish here any more to stock the stream as I cant afford such losses and I can afford a night watchman even if I could get one. I am going to dismantle all my ponds now and cease raising fish. If the local population want it this way they can have it. I may buy a few fish to put in the stream if I get enough Rods but this is doubtful. The thing I mind most is that they took all my Norwegian salmon which cost as much to bring over and raise I have only two or three left. This loss alone amounts to over \$500. I hate to stop raising trout an improving the fishing but there is nothing else to do. I can get what fishing I want anyway without any stocking. I have certainly improved the Neversink fishing in the last dozen years quite a lot and this is a poor reward for what I have done for the River. We know who stole the fish but did not catch them.

Yours truly.

Edward R. Hewitt (signed)

Courtesy of Judie DV Smith, who notes "I copied this exactly the way he typed it."

Roscoe Firemen's Outdoor Expo

Thanks to the tyers who participated in the Roscoe Hose Company's Outdoor Exposition on September 25, 2010: Michael Stewart, Brian McKee, Bud Bynack, and Tristan Hall.

—*Judie DV Smith*

The Catskill Mountains By Alberto Calzolari

Editor's Note: This article appeared in the December 2009–January 2010 issue of the Italian fly-fishing magazine Sedge & Mayfly (<http://www.pipam.org/GEA/Default.htm>). It was translated by guild member Gian Andrea Morresi and edited by guild member Fred Lord and Marjorie Morresi.

At the end of last issue's installment, the author was on his way to Roscoe, accompanied by Ted Patlen . . .

As we get closer to Roscoe, Ted slams on the brakes. We're in front of the Darbees' old house, which still has the old chicken cages in the rear. Then from afar I glance at the house where Walt and Winnie Dette operated from for years. Although it now belongs to another owner, the store's sign has been kept, as if it were a historic relic (well, it actually is). As I said before, the day was really hot, so it was still better to wait a few hours to hope for a hatch or a little surface activity. I had all the time I needed to do something else I'd absolutely been wanting to do: visit the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum. The organization, which lies by the banks of the Willowemoc, was born in 1978 to preserve the tradition and the heritage of the Catskills. What's found there deserves an article all of its own.

We're back in the car. After a brief break to buy a NY State fishing license, Ted drives toward downtown Roscoe. Driving along the Willowemoc, he stops in front of a little white house that has a sign that leaves little doubt as to where we are: it's the home of Mary Dette Clark. Here, still, is a little fly shop where Mary keeps selling flies and tools. There is also still the corner where her mom, Winnie, and her dad, Walt, tied flies for years.

Mary is a sweet lady of almost eighty, still as sprightly as ever, with a sense of humor and always wearing a smile. She stopped tying commercially a few years ago, but still ties a few flies, only upon request and for collectors. She's left her business to her grandson, Joe Fox, who carries on the tradition of his grandmother and great-grandparents, managing the store and tying flies in the Catskill style.

My encounter with Mary was most assuredly the most emotional event of the day in the Catskills, for Mary is part of the history of this area and is the last interpreter of the old generation. She's the last true representative of a bygone era, perhaps the last true "lady fly tyer" after the loss, in 2007, of another great lady, Helen Elizabeth Shaw, famous American fly tyer.

I still had a remnant taste of the coffee I'd had at Mary's house when the first trout "accepted my invitation." I was happy, and so was Ted—perhaps even more than I was. This is his river, the Beaverkill. He knew that the sudden heat would have produced hatches. If the heat had been more within the average, there would have been little hope for us. The rivers of the Catskill are at their best from the end of May to the beginning of July; afterward, the summer heat drives anglers elsewhere or limits their fishing to the evening hours.

As I stood with my feet in Cairns Pool, I enjoyed the swarms of caddisflies that fluttered and moved upstream, helped by a light breeze.

The Beaverkill is considered one of the U.S.'s most famous rivers. It was fished since the end of the 1800s and was also the cradle of the ideas and of the basic concepts of conservation, stocking management, and catch and release. Initially inhabited by the native brook trout, it now has a fishery of rainbow and brown trout, both stocked and wild, like most streams in the East. The fishing pressure is considerable, especially in the most famous pools, but all one has to do is move a little to find a certain level of solitude. These famous pools are marked by signs that mention the name of the individual or of the family after whom they are named. These are the families that have donated the land to create public access, such as the Cairnses, the Barnharts, or the Ferndons, or they are famous persons who loved to fish here, such as A. E. Hendrickson.

The upper Beaverkill, fed by a vast network of brooks and cold springs, forms the main stem after the union at Junction Pool with another historic river, the Willowemoc. It is here that I insisted that Ted and I try to fish the last few evening hours, even though the trout were rising joyously on the Beaverkill. (The two rivers are only minutes apart.)

The Beaverkill finishes its course in the East Branch of the Delaware. The Delaware, which has an East and a West Branch, is a large river, wide and almost entirely wadeable. The hatches are consistent and often mixed, making angling not an easy thing. Chironomids, caddisflies, and mayflies hatch at the same time, testing anyone's patience. But the difficulty is easily rewarded by pleasant surprises. A while back, Al Caucci told me that in the East Branch of the Delaware, the trout of average size that one catches are among the largest of anywhere in the United States. The Esopus, the Neversink, and the Schoharie complete the picture of the most famous rivers of the area. However, there also are a myriad of tributaries, of small and medium-sized creeks, any of which is so rich and teeming with fish that it would be enough to make many of us happy.

Any one of these rivers and streams would have stories to tell, stories and dreams of men and women from a bygone era. But water and its flowing are timeless, and the tradition continues, kept alive by folks that have found one more reason to live here, folks that love and protect this region and its rivers. There are still many characters that feed the tradition of the Catskill and its flies. I've been privileged to meet two in particular: Dave Brandt and, recently, Mike Valla.

Dave is a wonderful tyer who dedicates much of his time to teaching this tying style at various shows throughout the nation. I particularly adore his Wulffs, which he ties exactly as Lee Wulff taught him many years ago, when Dave tied for him and Lee's wife, Joan. What I can't stand about Dave is that he's darn good at pool and that every game with him is a sure defeat for me.

Mike instead is a true connoisseur of the history and tradition of the flies of the Catskill, which he has brought together in a wonderful book titled *Tying Catskill Style Dry Flies*. Stupendous photographs frame a most interesting text, which leads the reader through the history of the river, of characters and flies, materials and tying techniques.

Mike was lucky enough to have been welcomed by the Dettles like an adopted son and from them was able to learn the art of fly tying, sitting between Walt and Winnie while still only a teenager. Through the years, he maintained a wonderful friendship with Mary. Not only does Mike's work teach us about the history and tradition of these flies, but it reminds us that these are not obsolete models, but flies that are still effective and most topical. Perhaps their fame has been obscured, especially in Europe, by the indiscriminate use of CDC and by its undeniable ease of use. Perhaps they are flies that ask for more attention to proportions, materials, and tying techniques, but they still remain unsurpassedly beautiful and elegant.

Now it's getting late. The cold and darkness that have fallen on the Willowemoc forcefully tear me away from the water. Inner peacefulness and tiredness slowly replace the excitement of the day. As we make our way back to New Jersey I maneuver a hamburger with one hand and the umpteenth cup of coffee as Ted drives and grants himself another cigar. In the darkness, beyond the hills, to my left and not far from there, is the area where once was the Leonard factory; to my right is the town where the famous Woodstock concert took place. Between the sacred and the profane.



Variants and Spiders

One of my most treasured possessions is a size 12 Dun Variant with a short piece of leader attached to the hook eye. It wasn't tied by anyone famous, and it didn't play a part in any

battle with a huge Catskill trout—it was found in a hemlock branch dangling over a beautiful pool on Mongaup Creek. It was years ago, and while I had decent luck in this stream fishing the pocket water, this long, deep pool had me beat. To place fly and line gently on this placid area of the stream without spooking the entire pool was not something I was able to do, so I would instead just stand there and take in the beauty of it all.

Above a huge, car-sized boulder on the far bank and smack dab in the deepest section of the pool, I noticed a sparkle in the overhanging hemlock. I recognized it to be a broken leader, and since I am always interested in what other anglers tie to their leaders, I waded over to the mountain of a rock, climbed up, and untangled the fly and 4X tippet section from the branch. Hung up in that branch, overlooking that gorgeous pool, was the most exquisitely tied Dun Variant I thought I would ever see. The hackle looked as if it came from one of Harry Darbee's dun roosters, the body a perfectly tapered Rhode Island Red quill, and the tail long and stiff . . . it was perfect! I couldn't believe someone would even fish such a masterpiece, let alone leave it in a tree!

I was ready to dump the entire contents of my fly box to make room for my new-found treasure, but I had a small film container and used that, instead. When I got it home and looked at it more carefully in good light, I could see right away it was tied by a person who took great pride in his work. The body was counterwound with white thread, so that when varnished, it would disappear while still giving it the reinforcement to last through more than one trout, and the tail had just enough barbs to make the fly stand proud without adding bulk.

Since that day, I have become a student of the Variant-style



Dun Variant
(Photos: John Bonasera)

fly. I have read all I can find on them, filled my fly boxes with them, and am on a never-ending quest to acquire the materials to tie them. They really are a practical dressing to use, with no wings to throw them off balance, long fibers to help flotation, and a footprint that matches many things on which trout feed. Anyone who has flipped through Art Flick's *Streamside Guide* will find he was a big fan of long-hackled dries, and Ray Bergman speaks fondly of them in his books.

This style of fly has been around a very long time. Using oversized hackle is nothing new, but these flies are still popular today because they are trout magnets. They are perfect for imitating the large mayflies without the bulk and weight of a long, heavy hook. As I write this, we are still seeing *Isonychias* on the Catskill streams, and a Variant-style fly is a great choice for imitating these insects.



Brown Spider

Sometimes I hear guys say things like, "I would tie and fish them more, but you can't get the hackle for them." While this is true in a way, because modern breeding has slowly eliminated the long, somewhat sparse barbs and has given us a shorter, stiffer, more densely barbed feather, you can still tie an "old school" Variant using Chinese and Indian capes. Keep in mind that what was a great hackle in 1970 is a soft, webby feather today. Those overseas capes have really good tailing and hackle as long as you pluck it from the sides of the cape, and it's what most people used back then anyway. Not to mention it's still easier to find and a lot less painful to buy than a "new" cree cape. The added bonus is you are not loading this fly down with lots of materials, so a hackle that's "poke your eye out stiff" isn't a necessity.

In some of the old fly catalogs, the terms "Variant" and "Spider" are used interchangeably, while the dressings are the same. However, a Variant typically has a body, while a Spider does not. While Flick liked using short-shanked hooks for his Variants, a standard-length hook is fine if you want to use a quill, tinsel, floss, or dubbed body. A Spider would be tied with a tail and hackle only, maybe fronted with a softer feather from a partridge or guinea hen or with a white hackle for visibility.

The dressings for Variants and Spiders are many, and this style of fly lends itself to experimentation. Almost any combination of hackle would work, and mixing hackles also gives a lifelike appearance to your flies. If you're like me and don't carry three or four hundred flies with you, sticking to a few dressings doesn't leave you out of the action, either. I have been using the Dun Variant in a few sizes all year, and when the fish are taking on top, it does a fantastic job. Even in heavy water, it's hard to dunk, and if it does go under, a quick false cast dries it easily.

To tie these flies, select hackle that is two to three times what you would use on a standard dry fly. I already use one size up on my "standard" dries, and with the Variants, I go as large as four sizes over. Whatever you choose to do, keep in mind you can't substitute one of these flies for a size 14 Gray Fox without going up in leader size. For a size 12 Variant, a 3X tippet will be about as small as you can use to turn the fly over. While that sounds like a thick piece of mono for dry-fly fishing, I have not found it to be a deterrent, and the added ability to land fish more quickly is a plus.

I will list a few dressings that I have used, some are common and some not so much.

Dun Variant

Hook: Short-shank or standard fine-wire
dry fly, size 10 to 16

Tail: Dun fibers, long

Body: Rhode Island Red stripped quill

Hackle: Dun, 3–4 sizes over standard

Multicolored Variant

Hook: Short-shank or standard fine-wire
dry fly, size 10 to 16

Tail: Cree fibers, long

Body: Gold tinsel

Hackle: Cree, 3-4 sizes over standard

Brown Spider

Hook: Short-shank fine-wire
dry fly, size 10 to 16

Tail: Brown fibers, long

Body: Palmered brown hackle

Hackle: Brown, fronted with white,
3-4 sizes over standard

Gray Fox Variant

Hook: Short-shank or standard fine-wire
dry fly, size 10 to 16

Tail: Ginger fibers, long

Body: Light ginger or cream stripped quill

Hackle: Light ginger, dark ginger
and grizzly mixed

When carrying these flies to the stream, a slightly larger container should be used to keep the hackles from getting distorted. I use a six-compartment clear box that's one inch tall, and can fit three or four flies in each compartment.

One of the fun parts of fishing wet flies for me comes from my field trials of various patterns throughout the season. This month's fly was a pattern that I just about

had given up on. I pick only a few new patterns each year to try and to see when they work the best. This month's pattern failed me in the opening of trout season in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and still would not produce in the middle of the season, so I thought, "Oh well, maybe it's a fall and late fall pattern." But no—again no luck. I just could not figure out why this pattern would not work. It seemed to me like it would be a fish catcher. Then winter arrived, the streams froze over and I happily relaxed and enjoyed the tying season.

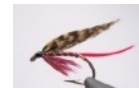
In late February—almost March—some warmer days arrived, the streams for the most part were flowing, and cabin fever struck. I needed to get out and fish. I decided that fishing the South Branch of the Raritan River in New Jersey will be the cure from my winter doldrums. So I tied on a Hawthorne wet fly—no luck. Next, a Black Prince—again no luck. I must have gone through about seven wet-fly patterns. So I looked in my fly box and in desperation decided to try this month's pattern—the Hopatcong. On the fourth cast, I felt a quick shake, then the line went dead, so I cast in the same area again and this time was rewarded with a ten-inch brown trout.

Now, this fish might have been small, but it was special. Catching it achieved two goals. I never catch trout this time of year, so it was special because of that. But it also led me to discover when the Hopatcong will work.

I fished this fly the next day and for a few weeks into March and continued to be successful with it. I never caught large trout or large numbers of fish on this pattern, but I would always catch three to five trout per outing. I also learned that this fly is fished best in size 6 and that I had to make sure that the fly was presented to the fish slowly and deep. In

The Wet-Fly Corner

With Andy Brasko, a Genuine Wet-Fly Fisherman



order to achieve, I had to do a lot of line mending. Any drag on the line would cause the fly to speed up and ruin my chances.

This pattern has worked well for the past four years, from February through about the beginning of April, whenever the weather allowed me to get out and fish, usually fished as a searching pattern as part of a three-wet-fly rig. It stops working about the end of April, though. It has gone back into field trials to be fished in smaller sizes and perhaps as a size 14 midge throughout the season.

The Hopatcong is found in Ray Bergman's *Trout* on plate 4. It's one of those patterns that looks only so-so there, but when it comes to life in your vise, it's just a little gem.



Photo: Annie Brasko

The Hopatcong

Hook: Mustad 3906, size 6

Thread: Black Danville 6/0

Tail: Two segments of paired scarlet duck quills over (married to) two quill segments of paired yellow duck quills

Body: Size 14 silver Mylar tinsel

Ribbing: Black saddle hackle, palmered (five turns)

Beard/false hackle: One extra turn of the black saddle hackle, palmered

Wing: Paired dark brown mottled oak turkey with a jungle cock eye on both sides

Head: One soaking coat of Griff's Thin, one coat of Griff's Thick,
and one coat of Hard as Hull cement.

Tying Notes

For the ribbing, you can use a hen cape feather from Whiting. The trick here is to strip the fibers from one side of the racus. If you use the whole feather unstripped, it ties in too full and hides the body. For show flies, I prefer to use true silver metal tinsel from Lagartun. I prefer this over Mylar because these flies were tied with metal tinsel a long ago, and it gives the fly a truly classic look.



World's Largest Show For Fly Tying
The 20th Annual International Fly Tying Symposium

November 20 and 21, 2010

Doubletree Hotel
Atrium Drive, Somerset, NJ

SATURDAY: 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

SUNDAY: 9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

ADMISSION

ADULTS: \$15.00 SATURDAY

\$12.00 SUNDAY

WEEKEND PASS: \$20.00

CHILDREN UNDER 16: FREE