



Volume 14, number 6

December 2011

The December Meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild will be held on Saturday, December 17, 2011, at 2:00 P.M. at the Rockland House on Route 206 in Roscoe, NY. The featured tyer will be Ed Van Put, tying Art Flick March Brown and Hendrickson Nymphs the way Ed tied them for Harry and Elsie Darbee. To tie along with Ed, bring your tools and the following materials.

March Brown Nymph

Hook: Mustad 9671 or 3906B, size 10

Tail: Three strands from a cock pheasant center tail feather

Rib: Single strand of brown cotton thread

Body: Amber seal fur (or substitute), mixed with fawn-colored fur from a red fox belly

Wing case: From a short tail of a cock pheasant

Legs: Brown partridge

Hendrickson Nymph

Mustad 9671 or 3906B, size 12

Tail: Wood duck flank feather

Rib: Olive tying thread and fine gold wire

Body: Blend of gray fox belly fur, beaver, and claret seal (or substitute)

Wing case: Blue dun hen wing feather (substitute for blue heron)

Legs: Brown partridge

You can find discussions of these nymphs in *Art Flick's New Streamside Guide to Naturals and Their Imitations* (Lyons Press, 1969), pp. 121–23 and 118–20.

Danbury Show Report

The Danbury Arts of the Angler show went very well as far as the guild's booth was concerned, especially on Saturday. We had many visitors who asked questions about fly-tying methods. Bob Osburn had a constant flow at his station, where he tied away as usual. Bud Bynack and his extended-body fly (the Harry Darbee version) drew a lot of comments and questions regarding the location of the hackle and the body structure. Pete Peterson turned in another yeoman performance explaining tying methods and materials.

On Sunday, we had the pleasure of having a stellar performance from Grace, Hank Rope's granddaughter, who tied a variety of flies. We also had Pete do his usual teaching stint with a young man named Parker, who ended up making three separate visits to Pete's teaching vise. Parker ended up tying a number of flies under Pete's tutelage, including nymphs, streamers, and even an ant.

The new guild hat (see page 2) went over very well—we sold all eleven that we had and could have sold more. They all went by 1:00 P.M. on Saturday. We signed up four new members and seven renewals. We also sold some patches and DVDs. All in all, it was a success for the guild.

—Ed McQuat, show chair

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Hat

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild hat is now available. It's waxed cotton, one size fits all—\$15.00 to Catskill Fly Tyers Guild members only. Currently it is available only at guild meetings and at the guild table at the fly-fishing shows. The February 2012 *Gazette* will have more information about mail-order availability. The guild thanks Joe Ceballos for making this amenity a reality.



Growing Pains

By Dave Brandt

We haven't been around for four score and seven years yet, but the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild has survived nearly its first full score. These years have seen a lot of growth, with members joining from far beyond the immediate area of the Catskill rivers, especially from the New York metropolitan area and from New Jersey. Many of the more local members, which includes those who founded the group, are aging and not as active as they once were. Many of the newer members are younger and eager to help preserve the heritage of the Catskill fly tyers, but the number of would-be participants who need to travel a considerable distance to be with us for meetings or for other events has now far outgrown the number of us who live relatively close. This subtle and slow membership shift has increasingly prompted the question of how to make the meetings more accessible to more members.

Another part of the problem is that for about half the year, the half that is concurrent with the trout season, the meetings are at midweek. Many of our more far-flung members simply cannot be on hand during the week, especially if it is a toss-up between attending a meeting or fishing. The other half of the year is no bargain for the traveling members, either, because of the weather. Those weekend meetings are held at a time of year when driving any distance can be a downright pain in the . . . neck, or even dangerous.

In recent discussions with various members I've heard a few potential solutions to our meeting dilemma. Included were some that I would not care to see put in place. Keep in mind that I'm not trying to persuade anyone here, but rather to share some thoughts on this issue, mostly thoughts that I've heard expressed by others. What I'm hoping to generate with this article is input from you: INPUT FROM MEMBERS. If you have ideas on how we might please more members more of the time, please let me (us) know. (See the contact information at the end of this article.)

It would seem an easy answer for part of the problem simply to pick the same day for meetings all around the calendar. My first guess would be that Saturdays might work best for the majority of members, no matter how far they might travel. Sundays might be an option, too—I don't know.

Another suggestion was to establish a satellite group. This non-Catskill Catskill guild presumably would entertain members from the New York City and New Jersey areas. The group would probably be more or less independent, yet be affiliated with the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild. I have to say that this plan doesn't seem to me a good one. I, for one, would rather try a different way to get our large and growing group easily together more often.

An idea that would seem to work for that would be to hold maybe one of every four or one of every three meetings outside the Catskills, in a spot that would be midway between the densest metropolitan membership and our Catskill home. In fact, when I'm done with writing this article, I'm going to be sticking pins in a map, hundreds . . . or at least dozens of them . . . to get a view of what might be a good compromise meeting location. If we have members in a promising-looking location, they might be asked to locate a specific meeting place. This effort would be useful only if the idea of occasional meetings in someplace other than Roscoe has any support from members. This is why it is imperative that we get your input—your thoughts on this predicament.

Also, we are approaching our twentieth year in need of a treasurer and, as of February, a secretary. As many of you know, Erin Phelan is poised to retire as the guild's secretary. She will be sorely missed, having done so much to keep us operating for the last couple years. A name was suggested to me during a recent thirst-quenching get-together after the last show, and I'm hoping that it might be worked out. This is a hint to John Collins and John Kavanaugh to follow up with their potential candidate.

It also has been pointed out that there are other areas of guild activity that could stand improvement. We need to be better able to man booths for various local events. In some cases, these are events in which we once participated, but for the last couple of years, we haven't been able to muster the help.

In addition to teaching and promoting fly fishing and fly tying, it is my hope that we can become a bigger asset to the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum and partner with them more frequently. We do have in fact many goals in common, so why not adopt more common means to an end that we all want . . . great fishing in the Catskills?

To respond to the issues raised here, you can contact Dave Brandt by phone at (607)433-2924 or by mail at 239 West Street, Oneonta, NY 13820. E-mail responses to budbynack@verizon.net will be forwarded to Dave.



CJ's Flies
With "Catskill John" Bonasera

Bugs Out: Imitate Insects with Your Tying Materials, Don't Feed Them

Now that the trout season has legally ended, many of us get our fishing fix by passing the time refilling our boxes, creating new and re-creating old patterns. Many of us tie year-round, but some use the winter months to do the bulk of their tying and break out the materials for the first time since last spring. If all has gone well, everything is as it was when packed away last year, but sometimes you get an unfortunate surprise, and you find your materials have been harboring pest insects.

Not much in life can frustrate a tyer more than seeing his or her cherished and sometimes irreplaceable materials destroyed by tiny insects that seem to have no reason to be on this earth other than to eat our feathers and fur. These critters can really ruin your materials, and if the conditions are right, they can do it remarkably quickly. Furthermore,

if the materials were stored for months at a time, you could find nearly everything infested and unusable upon first inspection.

There are many ways to protect your materials—you probably have heard them all: mothballs, flea collars, cedar chips, and so on. Some actually work, some do a partial job, and some don't do anything. What we need to do is make sure the pests are located, dealt with, and removed, then protect our stuff so they don't return.

If you don't have an attic full of materials, and you tie regularly, you will find infestation problems right away. Like many of us, I tie year-round, and I like to think I use my materials so often that I don't give the bugs a chance to take a chomp out of anything, let alone set up house in my storage containers. However, I also have been keeping up a regimented routine to ward them off. Proper storage is part of it, but we will cover that later.

Introducing new materials is where the danger starts. Hunters, shows, estate sales, and trading with friends all pose a risk. Any and all newly acquired materials must not be introduced into your collection without a cleansing. Materials should be washed in warm, soapy water, dried, and placed in a "quarantine" container, something strong and airtight, with a heavy dose of a bug-killing agent. Mothballs and cedar chips will ward off insects, but they do not kill them. I have used a few different store-bought bug killers with good results. Pet flea collars, either whole or cut up in pieces, do a good job, but a product called Hot Shot No Pest Strip is very effective in killing both live bugs and/or their eggs before they can do damage. Moth crystals made from paradichlorobenzene also kill bugs, but this material is dangerous to both humans and pets, and the clinging odor makes the tying experience less than pleasurable.

Leave the newly acquired materials in your quarantine container for at least a month in a room-temperature environment. Keeping it in the garage in cold weather can put the eggs in a dormant state, and a month may not be enough time to eliminate them.

After you are confident your new materials are clean, it's time to introduce them to your collection. To keep the collection clean, a less drastic, but equally important routine must be followed. Now that there are no pests, you only need to keep them from reintroducing themselves. Cedar is a good bug deterrent, as well as whole cloves and the above-mentioned bug strips and flea collars. That and regular inspection will keep everything safe until you break out the vise again.

Another way to go is an "organic" mixture that my good friend and fellow guild member Frank Audino told me about. It's a recipe for a bug repellent that smells good, and he has been using it forever with success. It's a combination of spices and herbs, crushed, mixed, and wrapped in cheesecloth. A few of these golf-ball-sized repellent sachets in each container will keep your treasured furs and feathers safe.

The list of materials is tansy, yarrow, peppermint (for a pleasant odor), wormwood root, rosemary, cloves, pennyroyal, and bay leaves. All are dried, crushed, and mixed in equal parts. Frank raves about this concoction and recommends it as a healthy way to protect materials.


As far as the storage of materials goes, many forms are available. How much material you have and the space you have to store it dictate what is the best way for you. The casual tyer may be able to get by with just a few shoebox-sized containers of materials, while really serious tyers may need a public storage unit! I like to use large plastic sweater boxes, which I line with cedar closet liner and add a few cut-up bug strips in each one. It is important is to have them as airtight as possible. The less air that gets in and out, the better, because whatever repellent you have protecting your materials will last a lot longer if the air doesn't move around in them.

Organizing your materials in user-friendly storage is a whole topic of its own. I have my materials stored by fly types: all the dry-fly materials in marked containers, wet-fly materials in others, and salmon-fly stuff in others. This makes it easier for me, because when I go from one type of fly to another, all the materials for those patterns are in the same place. An even more efficient way would be to have everything in material-specific containers, such as dry-fly hackle in one box, winging material in another, and so on. This requires a little more time and space, but is ultimately more organized and makes it quicker to find things.

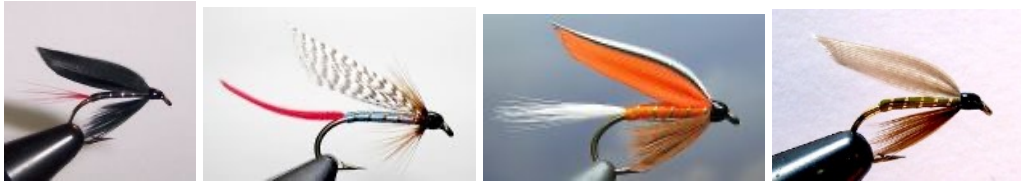
Now that the tying season is here, enjoy the winter and making the flies you'll fish next year. Store your materials safely, and the only bugs you will see will be popping out of the water on your favorite stream.

Editor's Note: As this issue of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Gazette was about to go to press, I got an e-mail from Andy Brasko asking to take a sabbatical from "The Wet-Fly Corner" column, with family business understandably taking precedence over the time and effort it requires. Andy says, "I hope that somewhere down the road I will start writing again. Please take care and give all my guild family my best."

The Wet-Fly Corner
 With Andy Brasko, a Genuine Wet-Fly Fisherman



There will always be space in the Gazette for anything Andy Brasko wants to contribute, and we all thank him for the stunning flies and useful information he has shared with us since the column's inception. What follows is a gallery of some of the lovely wet-fly patterns that Andy has tied and presented here.



Black Prince
Hopatcong



Blue Professor



Fontinalis



Greenwell's Glory



Winged Wet Weenie



Montreal



Parmachene Bell



Phillies



Romaine

Sally

Telephone Box

Thunder

In the February 2012 issue, look for the first of another series of columns devoted to the Catskill fly-tying tradition.



Al Brewster: A Magician with Feathers, Silk, Steel, and Cane

Al Brewster was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2012 Federation of Fly

Fishers National Conclave. Below is a letter composed by Cape Cod Trout Unlimited member Wayne Miller that was instrumental in bringing Al's story to the FFF. It's reprinted here thanks to guild member Howie Strathie and Cape Cod Trout Unlimited.

Albert Brewster was born in Providence, Rhode Island, on February 9, 1917. His grandfather and father fostered a love of the outdoors that included hunting, fishing, and gardening. To supplement his family income, Al commercially fished for eels and put food on the table through his outdoor activities. He also learned to take enjoyment from these, becoming an excellent trap shooter and growing flowers in addition to vegetables. His major transformation in fishing occurred through his friendship with Pap Hinman and Harold Gibbs. He met both Pap and Harold through their mutual interest in gunning. Pap was a local plumber and a member of many of the same sporting clubs as Al. Harold was director of the Rhode Island Fish and Game Department and was a member of many of the same clubs. Harold is widely recognized as one of the initiators of saltwater fly fishing. Through Harold, Pap, and other members of the South Seekonk Rod and Gun Club, Al was introduced to fly tying and fly fishing, starting him on his lifelong love affair with all things to do with fly fishing, whether it be in the salt or fresh water. The gun club had a Sunday night get-together, which gradually evolved into a fly-tying session. Rube Cross was a guest at one of these sessions, dazzling Al and the other members with his tying skills. Al still has the fly that Rube tied at that meeting. His friendship with Rube started that evening and continued for years. He and Harold were instrumental in starting the Rhody Fly Rodders. The organizational meeting of the club took place in Al's house in Riverside, Rhode Island, and Al was the first president of the organization. The club became the third affiliated club of the fledgling Salt Water Flyrodders of America, headquartered in Cape May, New Jersey. As president of the Rhody Fly Rodders, Al was a delegate to the FFF.

Having fished for brook trout in Rhode Island's streams and lakes, it was only natural that Al would apply his new skills to his freshwater fishing pursuits. Rube Cross

introduced Harold Gibbs to the Catskills and to many of its famous fly tyers. Harold in turn fostered Al's interest in the Catskills. The FFF conclave in Roscoe eventually brought Al to the Catskills and led to the beginning of a long friendship with Art Flick. Al and Art spent many hours at the vise and in the stream together. During his time with Flick, he met and tied and fished with many of the names that are legendary in American fly fishing. His stories of time spent with Walter and Winnie Dette, Harry and Elsie Darbee, Poul Jorgensen, Lee and Joan Wulff, Ernie



Schwiebert, and others closely associated with that time and place can entertain for hours, if not days. Al attended most, if not all of the early FFF conclaves that were held in Roscoe and Lake Placid, New York, and participated with that informal group of devil-may-care fly tyers, The Attitude Adjustment Bug Builders.

With his good friend the late Walter Burr, he was instrumental in the success of the early days of the United Fly Tyers organization. For years, he tied commercially for Orvis and Hunters, forging a new set of friendships, memories, and stories. After his retirement and move to Cape Cod, Al continued to be devoted to fly fishing and tying. He was one of the founding members of the Cape Cod chapter of TU while continuing his activities with the FFF and UFT. During this time, his circle of friends expanded to include the next generation of fly fishing notables, including Kenny Abrams, Mike Martinek, the late Jack Gartside, Dave Whitlock, and the late Warren Duncan, among others.

Al is one of the most generous people. He devotes hours to teaching fly fishing and fly tying, taking special pleasure in introducing children and women to the sport. He can often be seen at charity events and fund-raisers, holding court with a mesmerized audience while teaching the fundamentals of fooling fish with fur and feathers. At ninety-four, he has slowed down, but not stopped. He was able to get out and fish last year, fooling a three-plus-pound rainbow at a local fishing club with one of his Brewster's Demon flies. Every week, he shows me a new feathered concoction that he has dreamed up and wants me to try either in the streams or in the ocean. Al is truly a treasure and deserves this honor from the FFF.

Howie adds: If you look closely at the picture, right about ear level on the wall behind him is a fly plate with the flies laid out in the shape of a cross. Those are flies that Rube Cross gave Al years ago. An absolutely gorgeous fly-plate of Flick flies is out of sight in that photo. The same for Warren Duncan flies. Al is now ninety-five but still manages to get around and, on occasion, even tie up a fly or two.

Book Review

Better Flies Faster: 501 Fly-Tying Tips for All Skill Levels

By David Klausmeyer. Published by Headwater Books/Stackpole Books, 2001; \$24.95, softbound.

In *Mr. Natural Does the Dishes*, an R. Crumb poster based on a comic from 1971, as Mr. Natural begins that task, he's muttering, "Gripe grumble" and "Mumble bitch gripe." But then he gets into it, *really* gets into it, ends up whistling a tune, and after inspecting a gleaming glass, he declares, "Another job well done!"

Mr. Natural isn't the only philosopher to notice that doing things well appeals to something deep in human nature. Not only do we take pleasure from a job well done, we take pleasure from contriving ways that enable us to do it with skill, ease, and success. That's why how-to books strike a nerve, well beyond filling any immediate need actually to find out how to do something. And that's why collections of tips on ideas and techniques for doing a job well—books like Dave Klausmeyer's *Better Flies Faster*—can positively make that nerve tingle.

We're not *Homo sapiens*, the argument goes, not a species defined by wisdom (a proposition that any student of history could doubt), but *Homo faber*, a species defined by our desire to make things and by the techniques we develop to do so. The pleasure we feel in making things is of a piece with the pleasure we feel in contriving better ways to make them. It is one of the things that fulfils us.

One of the reasons why Rube Goldberg devices are funny is that they're wildly ill-contrived means to simple ends. One of the reasons why *Better Flies Faster* is fun, whether you tie flies or contemplate learning to do so, is that it's full of ways to do that job well—or to do it better. Its appeal to what makes us who we are is hard to resist.

Dave Klausmeyer is the editor of *Fly Tyer* magazine and thus in touch with both the current state of the art and most of its most prominent contemporary practitioners. For this book, in addition to having “swiped ideas from others when they weren't looking,” as he puts it, he asked eighty-four, other excellent fly tyers for tips on, yes, how to tie better flies faster. In fact, of the eighty-four, eleven are or have been members of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild. For the most part, the ideas aren't attributed to a particular person, and like many good ideas, several of them have occurred to others seeking better means to a given end.

Nor do they target at a particular kind of tyer, and that's one of the most important strengths of the book, along with its copious illustrations, Klausmeyer's always lucid photographs. The subtitle promises fly-tying tips for all skill levels, but the book isn't organized that way. It's true that the book begins with a chapter called “Getting Started,” but even though that chapter does in fact contain some basic tips for beginning tyers, it also contains things that even intermediate and advanced tyers need to be reminded to do every time they sit down at the vise, or things they may not have thought of doing, or information they may not have known, including, for example, the number of hackles found on a Keough Tyer's Grade cape, laboriously counted by A. K. Best. And it begins with “The First Rule of Fly Tying,” which I bet even expert tyers routinely violate: Wash your hands before you start tying. It prevents discoloring light-colored materials. (Washing them afterward isn't a bad idea, either. Mom was right—you don't know where that stuff has been.)

Likewise, the remaining chapters—on materials, tools and tool tricks, dry flies, wet flies and nymphs, and big flies (streamers and saltwater flies)—contain plenty that a beginner needs to know, but also a whole lot that will provoke an “Aha!” from anyone who has been tying a while and who will recognize neat solutions to a host of problems, interesting suggestions for materials and sources, and a broad spectrum of clever contrivances for the easy and successful completion of many tasks, from the routine to the frustrating.

In short, although many books aspire to provide something for everyone, precisely because this one is a collection of a lot of different particular ideas, it actually does. I thought I should provide some representative examples of the promised tips for all skill levels, so when reading *Better Flies Faster*, as I took notes, I tried to distribute things that appealed to me into the categories “Beginner,” “Intermediate,” and “Expert.” But those categories don't really apply here, because the information is offered without

any such categorical hierarchies. Its audience is *Homo faber* as fly tyer or would-be tyer, plain and simple. And what I put in each category turned out to be pretty arbitrary. I'm enough of an aging hippie to take fairly seriously the whole "Zen mind, beginner's mind" thing, and I have no idea where the line between "intermediate and "expert" is, since no matter how good you think you might be, you always know someone who's better, or who does things you can't do or haven't tried, or maybe just who taught you what you know.

What I got instead of examples of what I thought others in the different skill levels would find interesting was a Rorschach ink-blot-test report on the particular kind of tyer that I am right now — a list of basics that I need to recall more often, a list of things that struck me as good things to try to remember in the future for the specific kind of tying that I do, and a list of things that I absolutely want to try, because they're solutions to problems that have been bugging me lately. Not only may your results vary, it's certain that they will, because there is indeed something here for everyone who ties flies or aspires to do so, but what each reader sees will be what he or she most needs to see. As I said, that's one of the book's principal strengths.

One of the best answers to the question "Why tie your own flies?" is that it's fun. It's fun because we humans are the kind of critters who have fun making things and fun thinking up and using better ways to make them. *Better Flies Faster* will help anyone, of any skill level, get into it, *really* get into it, and be able to say, like Mr. Natural, "Another job well done!"

For Sale

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild DVD *Fly Tyers, Volume I, Mary Dette*

\$8.00 plus \$3.00 shipping. Contact Judie DV Smith, 16 Park Avenue, Roscoe, NY 12776 or darbeel@juno.com.

Scientific Anglers fly rods:

1 8-foot 4-inch 7-weight
2 8-foot 3-inch 5-weights
1 9-foot 6-inch 9-weight
\$50.00 each

Pflueger fly reels:

1 Pflueger Supreme 577 DA with case, \$80.00
2 model 1492s, \$30.00 each

Contact Bob Osburn at (845) 294-5813



The Fly Fishing Show

The Garden State
Convention Center
Somerset, New Jersey



January 27, 28, 29, 2012

Show Hours

Admission

Friday: 10:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.
Saturday: 8:30 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.
Sunday: 9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

Adults: \$15 for one day
\$25 for two-day pass
\$35 for three-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!



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.