

# The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild



# GAZETTE

February 2008

**The February Meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild and Annual Materials Swap** will be held on Saturday, February 16, 2008, at 2:00 P.M. at the Rockland House on Route 206 in Roscoe, NY. The materials swap was originally conceived as just that—a potlatch for guild members. Money has been known to change hands, but swapping materials really is more fun. Rummage through your materials and come to Roscoe ready to trade.

Also, bring your vise and tie some soft-hackle flies for the Anglers Reunion, which will be held on Monday, March 31, 2008. We distribute a card with a fly on it stating that the Rockland House is the place to be and that the Anglers Reunion is sponsored by the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild. Bring two flies for the fly swap, too. This is also the annual meeting to elect guild officers.

## The Guild DVD Series

Ken Kobayashi is about to start putting together the next DVD in the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild “Fly Tyers” series. He’d like to get feedback from the guild to determine if there are particular tyer/fly combinations that members especially would like to see on this DVD. Please rank your favorites and e-mail him at [kenkobayashi@verizon.net](mailto:kenkobayashi@verizon.net), call him at (914) 332-1910, or write him at 300 S. Broadway #1F, Tarrytown, NY 10591. Here's the list from Ken's video log.

**Ralph Graves:** Light Cahill/Klinkhammer Style, Lake Erie King, Green Drake (various patterns), Coffin Fly, Brown Bivisible, March Brown Emerger, *Isonychia*.

**Tom Mason:** March Brown “Biggun,” Usual, CDC Blue-Winged Olive, Sulphur, Katterskill.

**Bill Leuzler:** “Dubbing Techniques, A Historical Perspective,” Hendrickson.

**Agnes van Put:** Lee Wulff Fly.

**Ted Patten:** Variant, Big Fluff Cream-Colored Emerger

**Larry Duckwall:** “Darbee Stories,” Bivisible, Spun Deer-Hair-Bodied Fly, Red Quill.

**Ken Zadoyko:** Black Stonefly, Extended-Body Soft-Hackle Caddis.

**Floyd Franke:** “Tying Philosophies and Techniques,” “Conceptual Elements of Fly Tying.”

**Keith Fulsher:** Thunder Creek Fly.

**Bob Osburn:** Usual, Snowshoe Rabbit Emerger.

**Dave Pabst:** Orange Cahill (Sulphur)—mentions “when I tied this for Mrs. Darbee,” *Isonychia* Soft Hackle, Au Sable Wulff.

**Allan Podell:** March Brown “PITA” (Pain in the Ass), Extended-Body March Brown, Standard March Brown, Sulphur Quill Body Comparadun, Size 32 Mayfly, March Brown Comparadun, Dark Cahill.

**Sam Scafidi:** Red Quill.

**Mike Hogue:** Mike's Spudler.

**Ralph Hoffman:** No description.

**Dave Brandt:** American March Brown, Flatwater Pale Ginger (from pp. 63–64 of Harry Darbee's book), Two other versions of the March Brown.

**Phil Chase:** The December 2007 guild meeting: Herman Christian, the Neversink, and the Bumblepuppy fly.

## The Fly Fishing Show East 2008: A Report

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild again was represented at the Fly Fishing Show East in Somerset, NJ. Our group of tyers is always exceptional, and this year they drew a steady audience to our table. Sometimes the spectators were three deep.

Tyers were Joe Ceballos, Kurt Huhner, Bud Bynack, Hank Rope, Elmer Hopper, Gary Morison, Paul Dolbec, John Kavanaugh, Darren Rist, Mark Romero, Misa Ishimura, John Collins, Brian McKee, Chally Bates, Andy Brasko, and Mike Stewart. They tied a variety of patterns—wet flies, dry flies, and nymphs—all very creative and beautiful and all representative of the guild's mission. Our tyers were particularly attentive to the youngsters who visited us. Some were invited to sit behind the table for a closer look, and a few may develop a permanent interest in tying.

Demonstrating tying is very different from tying quietly at home. Answering a question about how or why a certain technique is used slows down the process, but tyers enjoy explaining the skill they've developed. Other tyers often stop by with requests for our tyers to tie particular patterns, and our tyers always accommodate. We had individuals staying at the table for ten to twenty minutes to follow the creation of a pattern from start to finish.

The Guild had fifty-four sign-ups, including sixteen new members. That's far more than we've sign up at Somerset in the past few years. This year, our table was on the main floor, while in the past, we've been in the lobby, and it people may hurry through the lobby and are less inclined to stop and watch when we're there. We also have been playing the Mary Dette DVD on a laptop, and that's an attraction.

It was a successful show. Thank you tyers! But also we have wonderful support from people who quietly work to pull the event together: Al Ampe, who delivers the table, chairs, and backdrop the night before the show opens and has our space ready to go on Friday morning, then knocks it down Sunday afternoon and stores for the next event; Judie Smith, who keeps the backdrop up to date and presentable, but more than that, makes all the arrangements with the show for our space, keeps us supplied with brochures, orders the tickets for the tyers, and arranges for the power supply at our table—lots of details that go unnoticed; and not really last, John Kavanaugh, who brings his great display of Catskill flies, which always draws interest. Thank you all for a great effort.

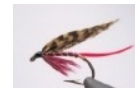
—Paul Murphy, Show Chair

When Paul Murphy first introduced me to Don Bastian at the International Fly Tyers Symposium in 1998, my eyes widened the way that children's do on Christmas morning. On that table, I saw a

Parmachene Belle, a Scarlet Ibis, and one fly in particular that I thought was incredibly elegant, a fly that I never seen before—the Yellow Sally. This fly is just a plain, simple yellow fly with some gold Mylar for a rib and tag. Yet it looks like it belongs to a millionaire.

### *The Wet-Fly Corner*

With Andy Brasko, a Genuine Wet-Fly Fisherman



It was late May 2004 when I first attended a gathering of fellow fly fishers in the Catskills for Bug Week. I arrived in Roscoe Sunday afternoon and was thinking about where to fish and what to use. So I drove up to the Covered Bridge Park on the Willowemoc and set out to fish on classic Catskill waters. I started out with a March Brown wet fly and had no luck. About forty-five minutes later, it started to rain. I donned my rain gear and kept fishing. I wasn't about to let a little rain ruin my day and my good mood.

The rainstorm lasted about fifteen minutes, then the sun started to shine again. I noticed on the far side of the stream that a yellow insect somewhere around a size 6 to 10 was coming off the water. I decided to cut off the March Brown and thought this might be the time to try a Yellow Sally. Sure enough, on the third swing, a violent strike drew my line taught. I landed and released a twenty-one-inch Brown. I was going to stop fishing, thinking it couldn't get better than this. But I decided to keep going. I moved about ten feet downstream and made another cast. I drew another violent strike and landed another brown eighteen-to-twenty-inch range. I fished for about another hour or so and picked up some smaller browns here and there moving down the stream. Later that night, while sitting with a group of fellow anglers tying flies, I was able to tell my story and relive the day's events. It times like these that I cherish so. The Yellow Sally was of course a size 6. Did you expect any other size fly from me?

## **The Yellow Sally**

Hook: Mustad 3906, Size 6

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

Tag: Size 16/18 gold Mylar tinsel

Tail: Paired yellow goose primary wing quills (four segments)

Body: Two strands of yellow Danville floss wrapped from back to front

Ribbing: Size 16/18 gold Mylar tinsel

Beard/false hackle: Yellow schlappen

Wings: Paired yellow goose primary wing quills

Head: One coat of Griff's Thin, two coats of Griff's Thick, one coat of black ProLac

Note that you may use paired duck quills dyed yellow, as well. I prefer to use goose because it will tie more flies in size 6 than duck. If the Griff's Thick appears too thick, I thin it down with Griff's Thinner. The same holds true for the ProLac. I have thinned down my ProLac three times in two years. I still am using the same bottle that I had got from Don Bastian six years ago.



Photo: Annie Brasko

## **Tying Fan-Wing Flies**

By Joe Fox

Seventy years ago, the fan wing was one of the most popular types of dry fly. With the creation of the durable hair wing and the development of monofilament leaders, the delicate, mono-twisting fan wings lost favor. Currently, the fan wing catches many more fisherman than fish, while many of the fan-wing patterns forgotten, save for their mention in a few old tomes. The most popular of all fan wings probably would be Theodore Gordon's Fan-Wing Royal Coachman. Although Gordon popularized the fan wing, Frederic Halford is credited as its creator. The fan wing is tied in numerous styles across Europe and the United States—tied for both trout and salmon. What we will be focusing on is its appearance within the Reuben Cross style.

Although many different feathers can be used for a fan wing, duck breast feathers are commonly used, and there are some particular characteristics of these feathers that are important. By far the most important trait, and one that is almost always overlooked, is that you need a clean feather. Ducks are very greasy animals when skinned. Many times, skins or breast patches are piled on top of each other during processing or storage, covering the feathers with a thin layer of grease. Greasy feathers tend to lose their shape due to the fibers matting together. They also discolor and trap dirt and dust. Plucked feathers may not be as greasy as feathers on a skin, but unless they're cleaned, their color will not be as fine because of the dirt trapped in the tiny webbing fibers.

The remedy for this is soaking the feathers in a mild degreaser such as Woolite for an hour, rinsing, and repeating if needed. Then blow dry feathers on the skin or put loose feathers in a pillowcase that is tied off tightly and toss them in the dryer on a low, air-dry setting. Not only will the feathers be clean, but the drying process will fluff the feathers back to their natural shape.

Feather selection is another important consideration. First, check the stem for a curve or twist on the upper half of the feather. Feathers with curves and twists just make for a sloppy-looking fly and are harder to work with. If the stem is straight, check the tip for damage. The tips of the feathers on this fly are easily noticed, and even a feather that is perfect in every way save for a rough tip will ruin a fan-wing fly's appearance.

Now examine the feather's shape. This can easily make or break a good fan wing. A select feather has a fine, curved tip. The corners of the tip are slightly rounded, the sides of the feather are straight down below the corners, and when the fluff on the base of the feather is stripped off, there is a quick taper to the stem. Seldom do you find feathers that are perfect in this way, and this is only a guideline for sorting.

One way to identify a poor feather is to examine its dimensions when the fluff at the base has been stripped off. It should not be wider than it is tall when tied in—the feather should be clearly taller than its width. Finding feathers with those dimensions that can be difficult in the smaller sizes. Many times, these short and plump feathers have sharp corners or lack a straight edge before it tapers in. However, as long as the side edges are nearly the same length and there are no loose, long, unmarried stray fibers, the sides do not need a perfect edge to make a wonderful-looking fly. The lack of a straight edge can even add to the fan wing's delicate appearance.

Another very important aspect of the feather's shape is how much the feather curves. There is a kind of sweet spot. When tied in, the tip of a select feather should point straight out the sides and be parallel to the floor. An OK feather will have its tip point into the air. This is not the worst thing in the world. A feather with a tip that points to the ground does not make the nicest-looking fly and tends to make the wings look huge and too low. One last thing to check is that both sides of the feather are uniform.

Once you've selected your feathers, we come to tying technique. The fan wing seems daunting to many tiers before they actually try one. In fact, once you've selected two matched feathers, the technique used to secure them to the hook is fairly simple. Eric Leiser's book *The Dettles: A Catskill*

*Legend* has wonderful step-by-step drawings on pages 185 through 187 illustrating on how Walt Dette secured his wings. This following step-by-step procedure are based on the technique that Leiser describes.

The wing height should be the length of the hook minus the eye—a simple index card marked to that length will make life very easy. One thing that needs to be stressed is that the height of the wing is not the length of the feather, because the curve of the feather must be taken into account.

Take two matched feathers that have had the fluff stripped off and the tips aligned. Holding them by the tips, make the stems straddle the hook shank. With the stems leaning toward the eye and the tips of the feather leaning toward the bend, take two wraps around the stems and shank. At this time, make sure there is a small gap between the base of the fibers and the hook. This keeps any fibers from being tied down during the posting. Now take the feather and lean the tips toward the eye. This should start to pull the stems back. Fold the stems toward the bend and take two wraps behind the feather, securing the stems to the shank. The feather tips should now be almost straight up. At this point, the feather's stems should still be straddling the shank with a space between the wings.

During this next step, the posting of the wings, the tier has a lot of control over how the wings lay in. Using clockwise and counterclockwise turns, the tier can adjust the feathers to keep them straight, which is important during the first wraps. Once the posting is finished, the wings should be locked together.

Bring the thread up to the wings above the shank and take five counterclockwise turns around the stems of the feathers. None of these turns are taken around the hook shank. Once these turns are made, chances are that the feathers will twist in the direction of the thread wraps. To remove the twist, take a wrap around the shank and then take clockwise turns around the stems. These clockwise turns will turn the wings back, removing the twist. Most of the time, it, too, will require five turns, but, depending on the feather, it can take more or fewer wraps. Once the feathers are untwisted, stop wrapping clockwise turns and, on the shank, wrap back over the stem butts to where body will meet the hackle and clip the excess butts. During the whole posting process, the thread should never go between the feathers. This will only hinder them from aligning.

Tying the rest of the fly is no different from tying most any dry fly until it comes to wrapping the hackle. When hackling a fan wing, the wings can get into the way, so when you wrap the hackle forward, lean the wings forward a little to keep them out of the way. When the hackle gets to the front, lean the wings back. This helps prevent the hackle from messing up a wing, but leaning the wings too far could kink the stems, weakening them.

The fan wing was once tied in dozens of patterns. The most noted are the Royal Coachman, Lady Beaverkill, Rube Wood, Yellow May, and Queen of Waters. Almost any pattern can be made into a fan wing, though. Quill Gordons, Hendricksons, Cahills, Red Quills, March Browns, or any wood-duck-winged fly can be tied as a fan wing by using mallard flank dyed wood duck, a very common practice, since the flank feathers on wood ducks themselves do not exhibit the proper color in smaller sizes. Flies with gray duck-quill wings require white breast feathers such as wood duck or mandarin breast feathers that have been dyed the proper shade of gray if the pattern is to be tied as a fan wing. Although the concept of making existing patterns into fan wings may sound new, it has all been done before. It is something different to try while we wait for the trout season to start again.

## Looking Back Upstream



## How to Do a “How To”

By Eric Leiser

*Editor’s Note: With Eric Leiser’s reflections on his writing career and his advice to prospective angling authors, based on his long experience, we initiate what we hope will be a regular column, written from issue to issue by different contributors who reflect on the Catskill angling tradition and the history of East Coast fly tying and American fly fishing—“Looking Back Upstream” toward the headwaters of these currents. Everything from Catskill history, to personal reminiscences, to reflections on the present and the future from the perspective of the past will appear here. We hope members will be inspired to contribute—and not be too daunted by Eric’s advice. The Gazette, at least, welcomes all who want to contribute.*

Writing, like fly tying, is a craft. The more you work at it, the better you’ll be, especially if you follow a few basic rules and you’re willing to learn. When my first manuscripts were accepted for publication, they were returned shortly thereafter with editorial hieroglyphics on every page, in addition to penciled remarks such as “Unclear,” “Please rewrite,” “What do you mean by this?” and other notations—all this before they went to the copyeditor for grammar, spelling, and syntax. I probably learned more about writing reasonably clear English from comments made by both my editor and copyeditor that I derived from books such as E. B. White’s *Elements of Style* and others—not that books such as White’s and others won’t assist you in putting together your “how to.”

However, describing the tools and materials and movements and processes involved in teaching someone to tie flies does not require you to be Papa Hemingway. It does necessitate that you know your subject better than those who are looking to you for expert advice. In this instance, *you* are the expert. Lefty Kreh once facetiously remarked that “an expert is anyone with a slide show more than fifty miles from home.” Don’t even try to be an expert, though, unless you have the knowledge to answer most questions, or you’ll embarrass yourself.

On the other hand, the reason to venture into the world of “how to” is that you have something to say that needs to be said. If you have a better way of tying the Adams or a more effective way of presenting it, we are all ears. If you wish to tell us about a new dynamite creation of your own . . . go for it. There is always something new to be learned. Lefty Kreh (that man again), while holding a seminar, was demonstrating the best way to tie a certain knot. A young lad in the audience stood up and said, “Mr. Kreh, I think I know a better way.”

“Come up here, young man,” answered Kreh.

The youngster did and proceeded to demonstrate the twists and turns for an improved version of a familiar knot. Kreh turned to the gathering and said, “Forget what I just showed you. . . . This is a much better way.” The lesson, of course, teaches us that no matter how much we know, there is always room for something new or for a new twist on something old.

Whatever you have to say, the text for any “how to” should be written in such a manner that the reader understands clearly what you are trying to say. Don’t take *anything* for granted. During the writing of *The Complete Book of Fly Tying*, my editor, Angus Cameron, often admonished me that “if you assume they already know that part of the process, it won’t matter to those who do know it. However, for those who don’t know it, it may make all the difference. Not all novices will be able to read your mind.”

Other bits of advice that this astute editor, mentor, and friend constantly would reiterate included: “Remember, I want to know where the thread is during the entire process” and “I want you to

write the text in such a manner that a reader can tie a fly by reading the words alone. . . . When you've done that, we'll add the photos and illustrations." Whew! That is easier said than done. And yet with simple, down-to-earth use of the English language, it can be accomplished. You must be precise in describing every movement of the thread and material to be lashed to the hook shank. Don't just say "Bring the thread to the eye of the hook and wind the tinsel (or hackle, or whatever) to the thread." Tell the reader if the tinsel is wound in connecting spirals or open spirals. Don't say "Add a bit of lead wire so the nymph can be fished deeply." Always tell the reader how many turns of wire are required and the size of the wire needed for proper balance for the hook size being used.

Even if you are a proficient or even a professional fly tyer with a solid foundation of experience behind you, don't—I repeat, *do not*—write about patterns that you have not tied or tried. During the writing of *The Book of Fly Patterns*, my wife, June, often peeked into my den (an extra bedroom), took one look at my cluttered desk and the piles of reference books and catalogues overflowing from shelves and onto the floor, sighed, and left, remarking "I will be *so* glad when you finish that book."

Most good writers, whether working on a novel or a documentary, will spend as much time researching it as they do writing it—if not more. I suggest you do the same. During the course of my adventures (and misadventures) at the vise, I often referred to the writings of others—not to copy them, but to add a bit of color or related information to my text. At one point, my library of reference works, such as A. J. McClane's *Fishing Encyclopedia*, Joe Bates's *Streamers and Bucktails*, and others filled two shelves. I know that some collectors have tomes in the hundreds, but the titles in my library were selective. If collecting books is your bent, by all means, go for it. If you just want the information, your local library probably can supply it. If the information that you find in these reference or tying books is helpful to you, *give the author credit*. We all learn from others and, in turn, pass what we know on to others. That's what it should be all about.

The excuse I used for the mess in my den was the simple fact that most of the eleven-hundred-plus recipes in the book had to be tied by me. While I was able to beg and borrow a fair number of patterns from friends, other tyers, and, in some cases, retail outlets, I had to tie a majority of the listings, just to make sure they were correct in detail, material make-up, and construction sequences. That took a lot of research.

Another reason for my tying most of the flies listed was that I had to make sure that I did not mislead the novice (or advanced tyer) reading the book. *The Book of Fly Patterns* covers details of categorized patterns and procedures. For example, it explains and shows, step-by-step with text and illustrations, how to tie the Dark Hendrickson dry fly. Then, when you arrive at the winging procedure for such patterns as the Quill Gordon, March Brown, or Light Hendrickson dry flies, you are referred back to the Dark Hendrickson to see how this type of wing should be constructed. Relationships to pattern and procedure, whether for wings, wing cases, streamer wings, bodies, hackle or folded hackle, or what have you continue throughout the text in this way, so that no matter what pattern you look up in the index, you are also forwarded to sections containing not just its description and the type of hook or thread used, but the methods of tying applicable to the particular fly. So I had to know what I was doing.

Once you have written your "how-to," put it aside for a day . . . let it rest. Then pick it up again and read it. You will be surprised how your mind will suddenly turn editor, changing and improving what you have written. And when you've completed your project, have a good friend or someone with good language skills go over it. It's surprising how another pair of eyes can come up with something you've missed.

I've been fortunate to have great writer friends such as Bob Boyle and John Merwin who again and again remind me that "writing is rewriting." I've watched Boyle not only change sentences around to get a better flavor from the words, but reposition entire paragraphs to obtain the best effect . . . and this procedure never ends as you strive to achieve a well-written text. Before the advent of the



computer, repositioning paragraphs or adding new data was accomplished using the cut-and-paste method. If you don't have a computer or have one, but are afraid to commit your thoughts to it, get out your scissors and your glue. That kind of revision is important. However, word processors sure make it a lot easier.

Formatting also matters. Double-space your typed lines and leave at least a one-inch margin all around (top, bottom, and both sides) so your editor has room for comments and squiggles. If you are still writing by hand, use a lined canary pad and write your text using alternate lines for the script, again to allow your editor's poised pen to sneak in with remarks, questions, or suggestions . . . also leave some room on each side. Someone, somewhere will have to type your handwritten manuscript on a computer, and it needs to be legible.

If you are writing an article for an angling or fly-tying magazine, try to be concise and to the point. Print space is valuable to such publications, and publishers would like to see a goodly portion of it devoted to advertising. Of course, it is your contribution and those of others writing "how to's" or stories of their adventures that sell the magazine to the public, but it is the revenue from ads that keeps them in business. So keep your piece crisp and to the point, without meandering.

Should your endeavor be a full-length book, you will have more freedom for digression, but make sure that the liberties you take are pertinent and related to your subject. While describing the process of tying the Stickleback Streamer, a fly you've originated, it's fine to relate how well it did on the Switchback River in the Himalayas. On the other hand, however exciting they may have seemed to you, don't take up too much space talking about the great movies you saw on Tibetan Airlines.

When what you have written is as complete as your knowledge of the subject and the revisions that you have made or that others have suggested can make it, send it in to the publisher of your choice. Good luck.



## Obituary: Helen Shaw

Helen Elizabeth Shaw Kessler, 97, passed away on December 20, 2007, after a short stay at the Barnwell Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Valatie, NY. She was born on March 2, 1910, in Madison Wisconsin. She was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Hermann Kessler, in 1993. He had been the art director of *Field and Stream* magazine for thirty years. Helen began tying flies very early, while in high school. By the age of twenty, she had established a fly-tying business in Sheboygan. She demonstrated fly tying at the International Outdoor Shows in Chicago from 1939 to 1941. She was the only woman member of an all-men's fly-casting group in Chicago, The Grand O'Dawn Club. She then served in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC), rising to the rank of second lieutenant. When the WAACs ended, she returned home to Sheboygan and continued her fly tying. She married her husband, Hermann Kessler, on September 10, 1953 and moved with him to New York City. In 1953, she was the first woman to be given a luncheon by the prestigious men's club The Angler's Club of New York.

Helen Shaw Kessler was one of the first women to author books on the topic of fly tying. While she did the writing and tied the flies, her husband illustrated the process through still photography. This great collaboration produced three books: *Fly-Tying* and *Fly-Tying: Materials, Tools, and Techniques* in 1963 and *Flies for Fish and Fisherman: The Wet Flies* in 1989. Through the years, she also contributed to many articles and books by other authors, and many of her flies appeared in numerous publications. She was a life member of The Museum of American Fly Fishing in Manchester, VT., which her husband was instrumental in establishing, and an honorary member of the Catskill Fly Tyers



Guild. She was also a life member of The International Women Fly Fishers and an honorary member of the National Fishing Lure Collector's Club. A memorial service will be held in the spring.

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild *Gazette* is issued six times a year to members. Membership is only \$10.00 per year. For membership renewals, send a check, your current address and phone number, and, if you wish to receive the *Gazette* by e-mail, your current e-mail address, to:

**Bob Osburn, 3 Good Time Court, Goshen, NY 10924.**

**➤➤➤➤➤ Remember, memberships renew in *February* <<<<<<<**  
That's *this month*, folks



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.

**Note: New *Gazette* E-Mail Address: [budbynack@verizon.net](mailto:budbynack@verizon.net)**