



Volume 14, number 3

June 2011

**The June Meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild** will be held on Thursday, June 16, 2011, at 7:00 P.M. at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum Educational Building on Old Route 17 in Livingston Manor, NY. Allen Landheer of Stroudsburg, PA, will be tying a Gray Ghost. Al has been tying for thirty years and is an expert streamer tyer. His streamers are eye-catching beauties that he uses on his home water, the Brodhead, and everywhere else.

For those who would like to tie with Al, a materials list follows:

Hook: Size 6 streamer hook, 8X long  
Thread: Black, white for underbody  
Tag: Silver tinsel  
Rib: Silver tinsel  
Body: Orange floss  
Belly: White bucktail  
Underwing: Golden pheasant  
Wing: Gray hackle  
Beard: White schlappen and golden pheasant  
Cheeks: Silver pheasant, jungle cock

As the materials list suggests, this is a complex pattern. Join us and watch Al create a spectacular streamer.

### **Vote on the Guild Bylaw Revision**

A committee composed of Paul Murphy, Judie DV Smith, and Ed McQuat has completed work on a revision of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild bylaws, and in accord with the existing bylaws, which were adopted in May 1998, a quorum at the last meeting voted to submit the revision to the guild membership for approval. The current bylaws read: "The ballot must be returned within thirty (30) days of the mailing. A two-thirds vote of responding members will carry the amendment and will be reported at the second meeting following the mailing."

When you receive your ballot, although you have thirty days from the postmarked date to vote and return it, don't put off voting. The bylaws determine how the organization functions.

## The 2011 Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Rendezvous

The 2011 Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Rendezvous on Saturday, April 16, 2011, featured forty-two tyers demonstrating everything from saltwater flies shaped with UV-cured resins to classic Catskill patterns tied with traditional natural materials and everything in the way of tying approaches from Ed Engelman's *bricolage* vises made with found materials to Dave Brandt's Royal Wulff tied in the hand with no vise at all.

The tyers in attendance were: Howard Bartholomew, Demetri Bove, Dave Brandt, Vern-O Burn, Bud Bynack, Dan Caruso, Scott Cesari, John Collins, Sam Decker, Ed Engelman, Jim Froio, Fishy Fullum, Tony Giaquinto, Ralph Graves, Tristan Hall, Aaron Hirsh horn, Mike Hogue, Elmer Hopper, Morris Kashuba, John Kavanaugh, John Klemm, Ron Kozlowski, Allen Landheer, Jessica Lettich, Michael McAuliffe, Brian McKee, Gary Morison, Bill Newcomb, Safet Nikocevic, Mike Nutto, Bob Osburn, Bob Patlen, Lloyd Richards, Hank Rope, Jeff Sanders, Sam Scafidi, Mike Stewart, Gary Sweet, Ted Sypher, Joseph Watts, Lee Weil, and Leslie Wrixon.

Thanks to Leslie Wrixon for once again organizing the event, to Mike Canazon, Erin Phelan, and Judie DV Smith for keeping it going, and to them and to all who help clean up afterward. Special thanks go to Ken Kobayashi for again providing the professional-level lighting.



### Gut Snells and Brookies

There is a tiny creek that makes its way through one of the mountains not far from our Catskill summer house. It's like many small mountain creeks—cold year-round

from a steady replenishment of groundwater, with dark pools and numerous small waterfalls. The main attraction of its clear waters is, of course, the brook trout, "speckled beauties," as they were called long ago.

I don't fish this particular creek very often. It's far too fragile to withstand weekly visits. Instead, I choose to go there just one or two times a year, armed with an assortment of gear different from what I usually fish. In particular, the flies I carry to this place are tied a little differently, with a little more character than my usual imitations of stream bugs. These flies are of the wet variety and are tied on small blind-eye hooks with gut leaders attached.

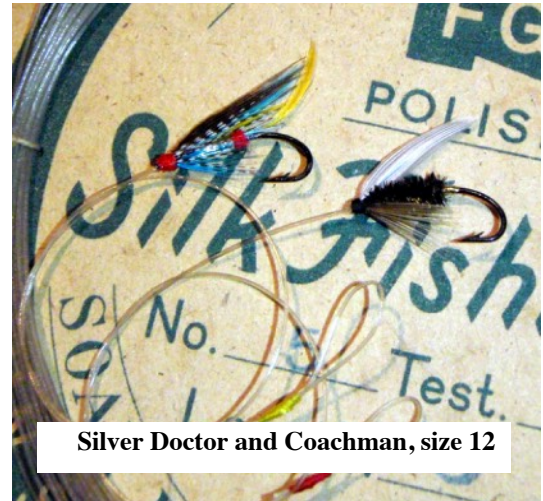
Before eyed hooks came to be, all flies, regardless of pattern, were tied with some sort of means to attach them to a leader. Some had small gut loops, but most trout flies had a short section of gut leader that was tied to the hook shank before the fly was dressed. With a loop at the end of the leader, changing flies was conveniently and efficiently done in a few seconds.

I carry only a dozen or so of these flies with me on my adventure, since the trout in this stream are neither plentiful nor particular, but when located, they are willing to strike at colorful offerings drifted through the clear water. Dressings such as the Coachman, Silver Doctor, Holberton, and Cassard are old and mostly forgotten, but these small native fish follow right in the footsteps of their ancestors and take these flies like a Delaware brown goes for a Comparadun.

Tying on blind-eye hooks is not much different from tying on the eyed style, but a few things to keep in mind are using a well-waxed thread and leaving room at the head of

the fly by using as few wraps as possible. With blind-eye hooks, you don't have the advantage of an eye against which to build up thread.

Hooks of this style are not easy to find, especially in the smaller trout-fly sizes. I have a modest collection of tiny japanned Sproat bend hooks that I use and a few boxes of bronzed blind-eyes in sizes 8 to 14, perfect for these small-stream trout. If you want to try your hand at these, though, you don't need to find antique hooks. Just clip the eyes off your standard trout hooks. Leader material can be made from mono tippet spools, eight to twelve inches long, with a hand-tied loop at one end. But I like to form a loop on silkworm gut leaders and bind it down with red thread for a cleaner-looking attachment point. Either way is fine.



Silver Doctor and Coachman, size 12

While you're tying the fly with the leader hanging out in front of the hook, it seems like it's always in the way. I form a circle with the leader, running the loop through the middle a few times to keep the leader in a small circle so it doesn't inhibit the tying of the fly.

When attaching the leader to the hook shank, it's advisable to run the leader material the full body length on the shank for maximum strength. I bind it down *under* the shank, just to the point of the hook. When tying the fly, try to finish the head with a tiny section of hook peeking out in front of the head. You do not want to have thread wraps on the leader itself without the support of the hook shank above it. This will eventually loosen the wraps, and the fly will start unraveling. I always finish the heads with a good coating of lacquer, either black or red.

While this may sound like a lot of trouble for a few flies used one or two times a year, the pleasure I derive from looking at those little treasures lined up in a wool wallet and the thoughts that come with casting them to those tiny mountain trout far outweigh the extra effort to produce them.

I am often asked whether I fish soft-hackle wet flies. To answer the question simply, yes. I believe that to be a genuine wet-fly fisherman, one has to understand soft hackles and fish them. Back in 1995, I purchased

*Wet Flies: Tying and Fishing Soft Hackles, Winged and Wingless Wets, and Fuzzy Nymphs*, by Dave Hughes, and this book was an eye-opener for me. I had been consumed with classic winged wet flies and never gave thought to or even cared about other styles of wet flies, such as soft hackles or flymphs. When I first opened this book and saw it did not have a lot to do with classic winged wet flies, I just placed it on the shelf in my library. A year later, though, I was going on a business trip and wanted to take a book along to read, and there it was on the shelf. During my flight to Dallas, I encountered the tying styles of the likes of Sylvester Nemes and Vernon S. "Pete" Hidy. This book led me to seek out more information on soft hackles.

When I returned home, I sat down at my bench and tied a few — Partridge and Greens and Partridge and Yellows. After looking at these flies, I thought, "Why would a fish want to take something so unenticing?" So I fished with them halfheartedly, caught a only fish

## *The Wet-Fly Corner*

With Andy Brasko, a Genuine Wet-Fly Fisherman



or two, and never gave these flies a try again. And later, when I met Don Bastian, my focus on classic winged wet flies halted my research and experiments with soft hackles.

About five years ago, though, I had the pleasure of meeting Mark Liebertone, who is a genuine soft-hackle wet-fly tyer and fisherman. I had the pleasure of watching Mark tie and felt in awe of his beautiful, well-tied soft hackles. I wanted to learn more about what I had been missing. Mark first pointed me to back to Vernon S. Hidy and thus to James Liesenring. From there, I rediscovered Sylvester Nemes and discovered Roger Fogg. My eyes finally were opened to this style of tying and fishing. Today, I keep Dave Hughes's *Wet Flies* next to Ray Bergman's *Trout* to remind myself to keep an open mind about other types and styles of wet flies.

The fly for this issue of the *Gazette* is a soft-hackle wet fly (actually, a flymph, in my opinion) that I came up with last year at my bench. When I did so, I did not follow a pattern or read about other patterns like it, but I do not claim to have "created" it, because there probably are others out there that are similar. I sat down at the bench with the thought of tying a Hare's Ear Nymph, then thought that would be boring and decided to make a soft-hackle wet fly or flymph out of it, instead. It turned out to be easy to tie, buggy looking, and looked like it should catch fish. The name came to me right away: the Honey Bunny, after the materials that I used to put it together.

On the South Branch of the Raritan, the fly turned out to take fish like it was going out of style. I landed ten browns and missed four others. I posted the fly and my success on a few Web sites that I visit, and I fished it from June through late evenings in July and August with much success. A fellow angler from the Web sites tied them in size 14 and reported that he did quite well with them on the Pequest. This fly has continued to be a good producer for me and I want to share it, now that it's time to start fishing with it. It's a simple and effective pattern that is a great fly to tie, to fish, and to introduce you to the world of soft-hackle wet flies and flymphs. Give this fly a try and have a great summer.



Photo: Annie Brasko

### **Honey Bunny Soft-Hackle Flymph**

**Hook:** Mustad 3906, size 8

**Thread:** White Danville 6/0

**Tail:** Guard hairs from a hare's mask

**Body:** Natural hare's ear dubbing

**Rib:** Oval gold tinsel

**Thorax:** Natural hare's ear dubbing, loosely spun

**Soft Hackle:** Honey dun hen cape

**Tying Notes:** The tail can be longer if one desires. The ribbing can be done with a size 16/18 gold Mylar tinsel (I prefer oval tinsel because it blends into the body nicely and doesn't produce a lot of flash, which can spook fish). The fly can be tied down to a size 16. The honey dun hen cape is tied in and wrapped four times from the middle of the thorax to the head. The head is completed with one soaking coat of Griff's Thin and two coats of Hard as Hull head cement. To get this fly to look like the one pictured, remember to keep it simple, buggy looking, and not too overdressed. This is the time of the year to start fishing this fly, which has already started taking fish for me in the 2011 season.

## *Looking Back Upstream*

## **Google Ngrams and Fly-Fishing History By Bud Bynack**

A few months ago, I got an e-mail from guild member Bruce Corwin about a tool developed to make use of the several million books of all kinds that Google has scanned into its massive database. As the folks at Harvard University's Cultural Observatory put it, Google Ngrams are "capable of precisely and rapidly quantifying cultural trends based on massive quantities of data." That includes trends in fly-fishing history.

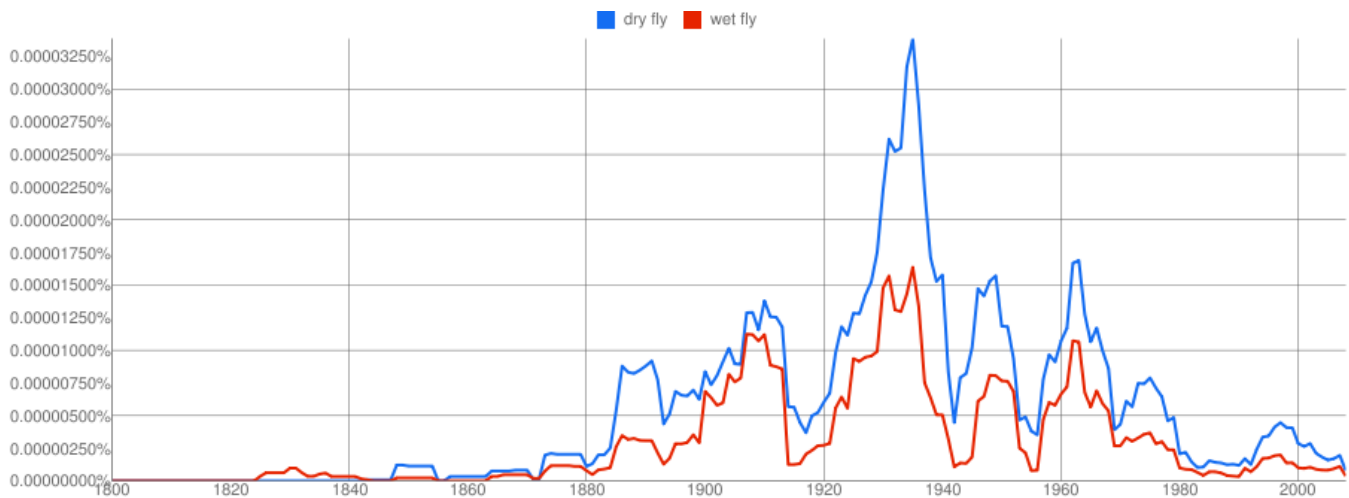
Ngrams "enable you to examine the frequency of words (banana) or phrases (United States of America) in books over time. You'll be searching through over 5.2 million books: ~4% of all books ever published," the creators claim. You can search different collections of books (called "corpora") in American English, British English, Chinese, French, German, Hebrew, Russian, and Spanish. Basically, you just go to <http://ngrams.googlelabs.com> and type in the term or terms you want to track, separating multiple terms by commas

Bruce wrote: "I did a test using the word 'dryfly.' It was common usage in the early days to combine the two words. . . . The results correspond nicely with Gordon's writings. In addition, if you click on the year periods listed at the bottom of the chart, you are taken directly to the scanned books that are included in the results, where you can browse the pages or read the entire volume."

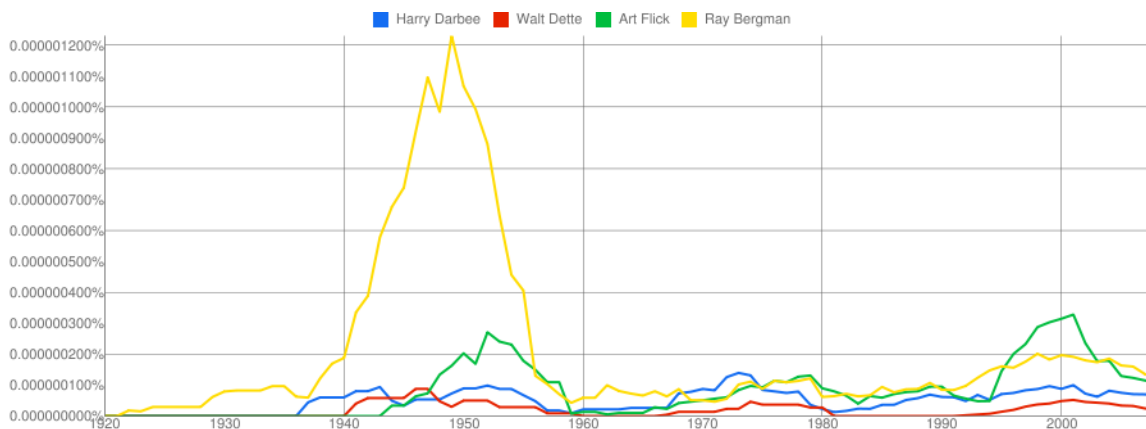
I decided to track the phrases "dry fly" versus "wet fly" in American English and then in British English from 1800 to 2008, the most recent date that the site allowed. Then I tracked "Harry Darbee," "Walt Dette," "Art Flick," and "Ray Bergman" from 1920 to 2008 in American English. Here are the results. I'll leave you to ponder them and to play with other terms using the site. Warning: don't forget to blink, eat, or sleep occasionally. This site can get addictive.

### **Dry Fly vs. Wet Fly, American English**

### **Dry Fly vs. Wet Fly, British English**



### Harry Darbee, Walt Dette, Art Flick, Ray Bergman



## Book Review

### *Matching Major Eastern Hatches: New Patterns for Selective Trout*

By Henry Ramsay. Published by Headwater Books/Stackpole Books, 2010; \$24.95 softbound.

How things have been done tend to determine how things are done, and local and regional traditions color everything from tackle preferences to how flies are designed and how they're fished. The stereotyped difference between the tweed-clad East Coast angler smoking a pipe and fishing cane on the Beaverkill versus the tie-dyed-T-shirt-clad West Coast angler smoking something else and fishing a two-handed graphite rod on the Truckee is an exaggeration, but both images point to the influence of different traditions. The ghosts of Bill Schaadt and Polly Rosborough whisper somewhat different things than the ghosts of Theodore Gordon and Ray Bergman.

The ghost who whispers to Pennsylvania angler and fly tyer Henry Ramsay is Vincent Marinaro, the author of *A Modern Dry-Fly Code*. Ramsay credits the influence of a number of tyers, but the basic orientation of the book is established by its first chapter: "CDC Thorax Duns and Modernizing Marinaro."

The word that Marinaro most often whispers to Ramsay is "light." This is not a new concern (Gary LaFontaine emphasized it), and Ramsay also focuses on color, profile, size, and imitating natural behavior, rather than on exact, but lifeless imitation, but like

Marinero, especially for flies fished on or in the surface film, he stresses the use of materials that, whatever else they contribute, also result in realistic light patterns when the fly is on the water. For Ramsay, that means the liberal use of CDC (cul de canard)—even a whole lot of it as the winging material on a caddis dry fly—and of various synthetics that were unavailable to Marinero and that often are seen as anathema by traditionalists.

However, this is not *A Postmodern Dry-Fly Code*. Ramsay covers imitations of all the forms of aquatic insect life, from nymphs and pupae through emergers, adults, and mayfly spinners, plus ants (no beetles or grasshoppers, though). Although the book works its way through the Eastern hatches, as advertised, Ramsey lays out the rationale for and the tying steps to produce what are really a series of basic fly designs and their variations, conceived to imitate the nymphal, emerger, dun, and spinner forms of all the various sorts of mayflies — clingers, crawlers, burrowers, and swimmers — as well as the stages of the all the caddisflies and stoneflies. He includes the often-maddening exhortation to match the colors of the flies hatching on your own streams — a chicken-and-egg problem, if there ever was one: If I thought I knew what that was, I already would have done it, but on the stream, when I actually can find out, it's usually too late. But Ramsay is a compulsive hatch matcher.

You can probably fish nothing but black Woolly Buggers and catch trout, but sooner or later, selective trout get the attention of most fly fishers and fly tyers, and tying effective imitations becomes either a grudging necessity or an all-out obsession. *Matching Major Eastern Hatches: New Patterns for Selective Trout* has lots of interesting approaches to doing just that. There are recommendations for specific materials that achieve the kind of light patterns that Ramsay desires (Frosty Fish Fiber for spinner wings, Medallion Sheeting and CDC for wings on emergers), plus design elements such as realistically shaped Thin Skin covered with epoxy, Mike Mercer style, for nymphal wing pads, and the elimination of those long, long tails on Trico spinners because they cause too much drag. Some approaches, such as building extended bodies out of foam on a needle mandrel, have been seen before, but I'm itching to try his recipe for large articulated mayfly nymphs such as the Green Drake and *Hexagenia limbata*.

*Matching Major Eastern Hatches: New Patterns for Selective Trout* taps one of the principal roots of modern East Coast fly fishing and draws out fresh approaches and techniques that still reflect the concerns that anglers chasing selective trout on East Coast streams must address. It's worth a look— even for cane-waving Beaverkill traditionalists who shrink from modern innovations and materials.

## **Captain Edgar Humsjo's Journey into the World of Fly Tying**

*Ed Humsjo passed away in September. Here is a little something for the newsletter.*

*—Hank Rope*

Ed Humsjo had his first introduction to fly tying as a member of the Fresh Water Anglers of Long Island. The Anglers have property in Riverhead, Long Island, with waters inhabited by largemouth bass and other warmwater species. The club also has property in Livingston Manor, located on the banks of the Willowemoc Creek, that is, on prime trout water. With such a varied fishery, the fly-tying lessons given by club members included bass bugs and streamers for bass, as well as dry flies and wet flies for trout.

Ed was an eager student and spent most of his time tying bass bugs for the largemouths and even more bugs for the smallmouth bass in Princeton, Maine. We traveled to Maine for smallmouths every June for years. Ed would never go Down East

without his fly-tying kit. Ed had one fault: Only fly rods were allowed in camp. No spinning rods were allowed in Ed's boat.

Purchasing a camp on the Beaverkill in Cooks Falls led to his obsession with tying the perfect Catskill dry. Although not a founding member, Ed was one of the first to join the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild. Every Saturday, when we could get away from work, we would be at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center, located above the movie house in Roscoe. He was there to learn all he could about Catskill flies. I was there for Agnes Van Put's cookies. Best of all, I got Ed's rejects. His rejects were all great fishing flies, but not up to his standard.

Ed began taking lessons from another perfectionist, Dave Pabst, and that marked the end of my free flies. If the flies Ed was to tie for homework were not up to Dave's standard, out came the razor—hence, no more rejects.

Ed moved to the Keys, which meant a whole new world of tying for him. Bonefish and tarpon were his new quarry. Perfection was still his goal, and he searched far and wide for streamer feathers that met his standards.

A gentleman to the end, in September, Ed stepped off an elevator to make room for a lady to enter. He tripped and severely injured himself. I will spare us the details of what followed and only say "Farewell, old friend."

*Late note: Innovative fly tyer Shan Stalcup has passed away at age forty-eight.*

### **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](mailto:darbeel@juno.com).

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One 7-foot Phillipson kit rod, 2 piece, 2 tips, all sections equal and correct length. One tip has a repair wrap, but is solid and fishable. Brown wraps over impregnated cane, professionally wrapped w/Phillipson skeleton reel seat. Condition very good to excellent. Medium-crisp action with DT 4-WF5, ready to fish. With cloth bag and Champion aluminum tube: \$150. Contact Dick Smith, (607) 498-6024 or [darbeel@juno.com](mailto:darbeel@juno.com).

### **Upcoming Show Dates**

**The Arts of the Angler Show**, Danbury, CT, November 12 and 13, 2011

**The International Fly Tyers Symposium**, November 19 and 20, 2011, Somerset, NJ

**The Fly Fishing Show**, January 27, 28, and 29, 2012, Somerset, NJ

**The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Rendezvous**, April 21, 2012, Roscoe, NY

### **Asked and Answered**

**An Occasional Feature, with Al Himmel**

**Q:** Is the fly tied with urine-stained fur from a diabetic fox better than a fly tied with fur from a sugar-monger animal?



**A:** Is a fly tied with synthetic dubbing made from West Texas crude better than a fly tied with synthetic dubbing made from North Sea oil?

☞ The Rockland House ☛

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild wants to express its appreciation and thanks to Tom and Marea Roseo, proprietors of the Rockland House, for making the facilities at that establishment available for the guild meetings and for their continued support. Please reciprocate with your patronage.



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](mailto:budbynack@verizon.net) or 69 Bronxville Road, Apt. 4G, Bronxville, NY 10708, (914) 961-3521.