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The Annual Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Picnic will be held on Saturday, August 20, 2011, from noon to 4:00 P.M., at the Elsie and Harry Darbee and Matthew Vinciguerra Memorial Pavilion at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum, 1031 Old Route 17, Livingston Manor, NY.

Once again this year, instead of the guild supplying hamburgers and hotdogs, we're asking that everyone bring something to share and that some attendees bring a main dish—perhaps something like lasagna, baked ziti, or sloppy joes and hamburger buns. As before, bring your own plates and silverware and your own beverages. Guests are welcome, as long as we can plan for them. If you have questions about what to bring, contact Erin Phelan at jphelan@hvc.rr.com or call her at (845) 754-7456. If you're on Facebook, you can also find more information at <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=745849303&sk=wall>.

There will be a casting contest, presided over by casting-game commissioner Gary Sweet. Also, as in the past, bring a rod or two—cane, glass, or graphite—so people can play with each other's toys. In addition, for the fly swap and guild fly collection, bring two flies that are alike—one to trade and one for the guild—if possible in separate film containers.

Tyers Needed

We need tyers to staff the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild table at the Roscoe Hose Company #1 Outdoor Expo, September 10, 2011, Roscoe Firemen's Park, Gulf Road, Roscoe, NY, from 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. If you're interested in tying at this event, contact Judie DV Smith at judiedvsmith@yahoo.com or call (607) 498-6024.

Books with Traditional Dry-Fly Trout Patterns

By Dave Brandt

I know that there are many members of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild who own hundreds of books devoted to our sport, and there probably are others who would like to build or add to their libraries when it comes to resources for researching and understanding the traditions of fly fishing—particularly the traditions of the Catskill-style dry fly.

As someone whose angling library has gotten out of hand, I know just how much of a nuisance it can be to try to remember which book out of fourteen hundred might contain that certain odd pattern that you're trying to find. I used to look through the ten or twelve usual suspects—Bergman's *Trout*, Art Flick's *Streamside Guide*, and so on, the ones that most of us interested in these topics own—as well as through compendiums that have many patterns. If I couldn't find what I was looking for, I had to hunt for other titles that might hold patterns and perhaps interesting details about the special recipe I was seeking.

Recently, I decided to invest a little time in discovering, then listing, the titles that contain more several old dry-fly patterns—perhaps including unusual ones. You'll probably notice that I'm talking about good old-fashioned books, not the Internet. Granted, the Internet is a great tool and a serious time saver, but the few times someone has steered me there for historical information, the result has not been good. For now, I'll seek information about old patterns from the pages of the books that the old masters left us.

Editor's note: Dave Brandt's original list contained only author's names and titles. In preparing it for publication, I found that while the Internet may not always yield reliable information about traditional dry-fly patterns, it can help you find the books that do. Searching for publication information, I found that all these titles still are currently available in one form or another—either they remain in print or are available as used books or reprints. Some older titles are being reprinted by specialty houses. Publication information thus reflects what's available via Amazon.com and other online sources. I also tried to determine original publication dates, where relevant, although these may not all be accurate.

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- Joseph D. Bates, *Streamer Fly Fishing* (Stackpole, 1995)
Kenneth E. Bay, *How to Tie Freshwater Flies* (Winchester Press, 1974)
Ray Bergman, *Trout* (1938; many subsequent editions)
— — —, *With Fly, Plug and Bait* (Morrow, 1947)
A. K. Best, *A. K.'s Fly Box* (Lyons Press, 1996)
Francis E. Betters, *Fran Betters's Fly Fishing Fly Tying and Pattern Guide* (Adirondack Sports Publications, 1986)
William Blacker, *The Art of Fly Making: Comprising Angling and Dyeing of Colours with Engravings of Salmon and Trout Flies Shewing the Process of the Gentle Craft as Taught in the Pages with Descriptions of Flies for the Season of the Year as They Come Out on the Water* (1842 and 1855; Nabu Press, 2010)
William F. Blades, *Fishing Flies and Fly Tying* (Stackpole, 1980)
Gary Borger, *Designing Trout Flies* (Streamworks, 1991)
Reuben Cross, *The Complete Fly Tier* (1950; Freshet Press, 1971)
Harry Darbee, with Mac Francis, *Catskill Flytier: My life, Times, and Techniques* (Lippencott, 1977).
Donald Du Bois, *The Fisherman's Handbook of Trout Flies* (A. S. Barnes, 1960)
J. Duckett, *Fly-Tying Dictionary* (Cascade Tackle Company, 1950)
Family Circle Magazine, *Family Circle's Guide to Trout Flies (and How to Tie Them)* (Family Circle, 1954)
Art Flick, *Streamside Guide to Naturals and Their Imitations* (G. Putnam's Sons, 1947)
— — —, *Art Flick's New Streamside Guide to Naturals and Their Imitations* (Lyons Press, 1969)

Ira Gabrielson, ed., *The New Fisherman's Encyclopedia* (Stackpole, 1964)

Rex Gerlach, *Creative Fly Tying and Fishing* (Winchester Press, 1974)

E. C. Gregg, *How to Tie Flies* (A. S. Barnes, 1948)

Alvin Grove, *The Lure and Lore of Trout Fishing* (1951; Caven Press, 2010)

John Harder, *Index of Orvis Fly Patterns* (The Orvis Company, 1978; Plume, 1990)

Terry Hellekson, *Popular Fly Patterns* (1976; Peregrine Smith, 1977)

— — —, *Fish Flies* (Gibbs Smith, 2005)

George L. Herter, *Professional Fly Tying, Spinning and Tackle Making* (Herter's, 1975)

George P. Holden, *Streamcraft—An Angling Manual* (1919; Read Books, 2010)

Dave Hughes, *Trout Flies: The Tier's Reference* (Stackpole, 1999)

Preston Jennings, *A Book of Trout Flies* (1935; Crown, 1970)

Poul Jorgensen, *Poul Jorgensen's Modern Trout Flies and How to Tie Them* (Doubleday, 1979)

— — —, *Dressing Flies for Fresh and Salt Water* (Freshet Press, 1973)

— — —, *Modern Fly Dressings for the Practical Angler* (Winchester Press, 1976)

Lefty Kreh, *The Professional's Favorite Flies*, volume 1, *Dry Flies, Emergers, Nymphs and Terrestrials* (Odysseus Editions, 1991)

— — —, *The Professional's Favorite Flies*, volume 2, *Streamers, Poppers, Crustaceans and Saltwater Patterns* (Odysseus Editions, 1991)

Gene Kugach, *Fly Fisher's Pattern Book* (Stackpole, 2000)

Gary LaFontaine, *Challenge of the Trout* (Mountain Press, 1983)

Art Lee, *Fishing Dry Flies for Trout on Rivers and Streams* (1984; Human Kinetics Publishers, 1997)

Eric Leiser, *The Dettas: A Catskill Legend* (1992; Lyons Press, 1996)

— — —, *The Book of Fly Patterns* (Knopf, 1987)

— — —, *The Complete Book of Fly Tying* (Knopf, 1997)

J. Edson Leonard, *Flies: Their Origin, Natural History, Tying, Hooks, Patterns and Selections of Dry and Wet Flies, Nymphs, Streamers, Salmon Flies for Fresh and Salt* (1950; Lyons Press, 1989)

A. J. McClane, *McClane's Standard Fishing Encyclopedia* (1965; Gramercy, 1998)

Charles Meck, *Patterns, Hatches, Tactics, and Trout* (Vivid Publishing, 1995)

Keith E. Perrault, *Perrault's Standard Dictionary of Fishing Flies* (Kepcor, 1984)

Taff Price, *Fly Patterns—An International Guide*, 3rd ed. (Sterling Publishing, 1997)

Jim Quick, *Trout Fishing and Trout Flies* (Countryman Press, 1957)

Richard Salmon, *Trout Flies* (Sportsman's Edge Press, 1975)

Jim Schollmeyer *Patent Patterns: 1,500 Unique and Innovative Fly Patterns* (Frank Amato, 2003)

Mike Shanks, *The Fly Tier's Craft: A Practical Guide* (Swan Hill Press, 1992)

Helen Shaw, *Flies for Fish and Fishermen* (Stackpole, 1989)

Harold Hinsdill Smedley, *Fly Patterns and Their Origins* (1943; Westshore Publications, 1950)

Larry Solomon, ed., *The Complete Book of Modern Fly Fishing* (DBI Books, 1979)

Harrison Steeves and Ed Koch, *Terrestrials* (Stackpole, 1994)

Randle S. Stetzer, *Flies: The Best One Thousand* (Frank Amato, 1992)

Dick Stewart, *Universal Fly Tying Guide* (1979; Alan C. Hood, 2007)

— — —, and Farrow Allen, *Flies for Trout* (Lyons Press, 2001)

Tom Stewart, *Two Hundred Popular Flies and How to Tie Them* (A. & C. Black, 1991)

William B. Sturgis, *Fly Tying* (1940; Charles Scribners Sons, 1968)

Dick Surette, *Trout and Salmon Fly Index* (1974; Stackpole, 1979)

- Bill Tagg, *The Art of Fly Dressing* (A. & C. Black, 1970)
 Dick Talleur, *The Fly Tyer's Primer* (Lyons Press, 1986)
 — — —, *Inside Fly Tying* (Stackpole, 2004)
 — — —, *Guide to Fly Tying* (Stackpole, 2000)
 — — —, *Talleur's Dry-Fly Handbook* (Lyons Press, 1992)
 H. G. Tapply, *The Fly Tyer's Handbook* (1940; Kessinger Publishing, 2007)
 Eric Taverner, *Fly Tying for Trout* (Seeley, Service, & Co., 1957)
 Mike Valla, *Tying Catskill-Style Dry Flies* (Stackpole, 2009)
 — — —, *The Classic Dry Fly Box* (Whitefish Press, 2010)
 John van Vliet, *The Art of Fly Tying: More Than 200 Classic and New Patterns* (Creative Publishing International, 2007)
 — — —, *Fly-Tying Techniques and Patterns* (Creative Publishing International, 1996)



Courtesy of Glenn Overton

I am always searching for new wet-fly patterns. While looking through Bergman's *Trout*, I came across a pattern that intrigued me from the start. When I first I saw this pattern, on plate 8 of *Trout*, I thought to

myself, "What a wonderful pattern to bring to life in my vise, then give it a try a fishing!" When I looked at the actual pattern recipe and saw the materials listed and colors called for, though, I thought to myself, "Who in their right mind came up with this color scheme — and why?" The fly I am speaking of is called the Thunder.

Off to the vise I went to tie up a dozen of this pattern, and when I completed the first fly, I sat back in my chair and caught myself admiring it. The colors blended together, and the pattern just seemed to flow from head to tail. So it's actually quite beautiful, but would it catch fish? I decided this fly had to be part of this year's field trials.

On the stream, I fished this pattern with much success from April through June. For some patterns, I find there's a time when the fly works best, and this success is repeatable over the course of a few years during the same time frame. I have also found that some fly patterns are best used as searching patterns. On the basis of only a half years' worth of data, this fly appears to fall into the latter category — it worked for the whole spring season, from April to June. I still have the remaining fall season to go with it, but thus far, I have given the fly a fair try, and it hasn't let me down.

I find that some searching patterns work for only short periods of time during the season, too, but throughout the entire spring, trout would smash this fly again and again. While the success rate of other searching patterns tends to taper off, this fly has remained a constant winner.

I get excited with a new wet fly that I find to be beautiful works so well at catching fish. Give this fly a chance in your vise and as part of your wet-fly arsenal. I will report again on it in the next year or two, when I've gathered more data. Have a great summer, and don't forget to get ready for the upcoming fall season.

The Wet-Fly Corner

With Andy Brasko, a Genuine Wet-Fly Fisherman





Thunder

Hook: Mustad 3906, size 8

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

Tail: Golden pheasant crest

Body: Two strands of Danville black floss, wrapped from back to front only

Rib: One strand of Danville orange floss

Beard or Full-collar hackle: For beard, yellow saddle hackle; for full-collar hackle, yellow hen cape

Wing: Paired guinea hen quills

Tying Notes

Yellow saddle hackle feathers can be substituted for the tail. I prefer golden pheasant crest, though—it just makes a prettier-looking fly. The floss ribbing should be constantly twisted while wrapping it around the body. The twisted floss gives the fly nice definition, however, you can lay the floss flat for the rib, if you prefer. When tying in the guinea hen wing, make sure the head's thread base is at the same height as the black floss body. This will make it easier for you to get the wings to set in any style you prefer.



With "Catskill John" Bonasera

Attractor Dries

The summer months are great for picnics, outdoor concerts, and cookouts, but for trout fishing, well, they are not so great. Extended periods of hot weather, low water, and the

general lack of mayfly hatches puts a serious damper on both the fish and us. While one can still find sport, provided the water temperatures are safe for fishing—that is, safe for the fish—I am not a big fan of foam ant and beetle patterns. They work, and I don't have a dry-fly purist's problem with them, but they just don't have that *classic feel* to them.

The saving grace for people who enjoy fishing a more traditional imitation is the attractor dry fly. High-floating, durable, easy to see, and just plain fun to tie and fish, attractor dries are just the thing when all the mayfly nymphs are waiting for cooler temperatures to hatch.

There is something about fishing an attractor dry that just goes well with summer, too. It's kind of a more laid-back way to fish. You don't need to preen it or dress it, you can get a little careless with your casts, it's easy to follow in the drift, and the trout seem to really like them.

The place where they shine, though, is on the smaller headwater streams. Here, trout are always looking for a meaty something to justify their having to chase food, and nothing spells "meaty" like a heavily hackled floating imitation. This is really fun fishing, not technical at all—just cast around to likely spots and try to pound some fish up.

The old standbys have always been the Wulff series of flies, Humpies, or Trudes—anything with a hair wing or tail, or preferably both. On a few of the streams I frequent all summer long, there are small stoneflies in yellow and green popping up during the day, and the trout are obviously on them.



For this reason, I tie a modified Royal Coachman in both yellow and green to try to key in on those particular insects. I just substitute some of the materials in the right colors, but keep with the tried and true shape and style.

Unfortunately, one of the things that makes these flies so good can also inhibit hooking fish, especially small-stream fish, and that's the heavy hackle collar. To combat this, rather than stick with the proportions of hackle that's one and a half times the hook gap, I use hackle one size smaller to expose the hook point. I have found that with smaller trout, the hackle is so dense and stiff that they don't get a good enough grip on the fly, and you feel them, but don't hook them.

I fondly remember one occasion a few years back on Fir Brook. I was walking up on a long pool, and I saw a little native take something on top. Having already tied on a size 14 Royal Wulff, I aimed above the rise and immediately had a fish come up to take the fluffy imitation. It was a little too much for him, though, and it popped right back up. Then another fish hit it, about three feet from the first. This trout also didn't get hooked, and rising back to the top, the fly was hit by yet another. Four trout took this fly under the water, and the hook point never made its way home.

I first thought that the hook was broken at the bend and I was casting a blank, but after I ran leader through my hand to hold the fly, I realized the hackle was so dense it actually blocked the point, making it virtually impossible for these fish to be hooked. While I really enjoyed watching the whole thing unfold and having four fish take this fly on one drift, the ultimate goal, after all, is to *hook them*, so I changed my hackling approach to suit these smaller trout. I have found that the smaller hackle doesn't noticeably affect the flotation.

Keep these flies in mind the next time you're at the vise or standing in your favorite stream. They are really enjoyable to use.

Looking Back Upstream

“Dear Mr. Darbee” A Letter from Herm Christian

Dear Mr. Darbee

Feb 4, 1950 Neversink NY

Your letter of Jan 30th came and thanks a lot for sending the hook. It is not quite big enough. I looked on the box and the hook I have been using is 1/0 Model Perfect. Yes, I have a letter from Mr. Miller and he said he will come here to my house on Feb 11th to get some facts about Mr. Gordon. I shall be very glad to meet him and his friends. The Roads around here are also bad. I guess all of the side Roads are bad. I want to come over sometime to get a few things. But I don't know when I can get away, I have some log cutters working and I have to measure the logs when they come out of the woods and I don't ever know when they are going to be here.

I fancy the Trout have got along just fine so far this winter. Hope we don't get any real cold weather from here on. The big Ice Jams don't do the Trout or Bugs any good. Do you have any Model Perfect Hooks? You were looking for some last year. I have a Phone now so in case you want to call me some time the No is Liberty 576W2. Thanks for writing and best Wishes. Christian.

—Archival material courtesy of Judie DV Smith

Many Thanks

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild wishes to express its gratitude to Ken Mears and his wife for addressing, stamping, and mailing the meeting notices in months when the *Gazette* does not appear. Only those who have some something similar know what a contribution they have made to keeping guild members informed. So: many thanks from all of us.



Book Review

Trout Lessons: Freewheeling Tactics and Alternative Techniques for the Difficult Days
By Ed Engle. Published by Stackpole Books, 2010; \$29.95 hardbound.

One of my gripes about fly-fishing books that deal with angling tactics is that most just repeat the fundamentals: drag-free drifts, mending, casts from upstream to downstream, matching the hatch—all the basics. Almost all contemporary fly-fishing books do this, in one way or another, since even fly-pattern books tend to have “how-to-fish-it” sections. Repeating the basics is helpful for beginners, of course, but if you’ve fished for any time at all and/or have read a few of these books, you probably are familiar with all these tactics, try hard to employ them when you fish, and actually succeed in

doing so at least some of the time. They are what's considered normal practices in modern fly fishing. They're the way we all usually fish.

They don't always work, do they? It's possible not only to try to do everything right, but actually to fish in precisely the way it's said one must fish in order to succeed, and still get skunked—often while being laughed at by rising fish.

Ed Engle's *Trout Lessons* is not like all those other books. He begins it thus: "My intentions when I started writing *Trout Lessons* were pretty straightforward. The plan was to give fly fishers some ideas for those days on the river when the usual stuff didn't work." But fairly quickly, as he thought about how he actually fishes, he realized that for him, there is no such thing as "the usual stuff." He's a very successful angler, after all, the storied companion of John Gierach and A. K. Best and a guide who gets clients into fish in the highly technical angling of the Colorado tailwater fisheries. Writing the book made him confront the fact that, as he puts it, "I wasn't always the hard-core, match-the-hatch, drag-free-drift fly fisherman I thought I was." *Trout Lessons* doesn't just supplement "the usual stuff," it broadens the definition of "the usual." He believes that fly fishing isn't a set of prescribed "normal" practices. It's whatever fly fishers do that works.

The match-the-hatch, drag-free drift approach works, of course, but so do a lot of angling tactics at odds with the prevailing conventional wisdom. As a guide, Engle appreciates the utility of indicator nymphing—it gets even rank beginners into fish—but as an angler, he thinks that it's more important to fish nymphs without an indicator in order to develop a sense of when a fish takes a subsurface fly, because "more than anything, it's a way to adjust your thinking to where you're more open to the most subtle clues on the river." That kind of open-mindedness is the underlying approach that Engle advocates.

The folk-Zen, posthippie-wisdom aspects of that mind-set, which sometimes emerge in Gierach's work, are most evident in the chapter on fishing small, clear mountain streams. Stealth is important when approaching spooky trout in these streams, as is reading the water where fish lack the obvious lies that characterize bigger water, but Engle argues that these are just a few elements of "a kind of all-around awareness or presence" that fishing such waters helps an angler to develop. That includes *not fishing* as a way of catching the biggest trout in small streams: "I decided that a careful, stealth approach wasn't going to be enough" to avoid spooking these fish, he writes. "The only solution was to not move at all for a while, especially when I came to water that I thought might hold a larger fish"—waiting "fifteen to thirty minutes" or "as long as you can stand it" before making a cast. The text, which is illustrated throughout by photos of Engle, Best, and Gierach in various settings, at this point has a lovely photograph of John Gierach, sitting by a small pool on a mountain stream, very intently doing nothing.

Mostly, however, *Trout Lessons* advocates doing things that you usually might not do, or at least might not do deliberately, because willingness to do so is the sort of mental orientation that leads to success on the stream. As he writes in the chapter on attractor flies, "it's all about definitions, but in fishing, a definition is nothing but a mind-set." Consequently, "if we broaden our definitions of attractor pattern fishing, we'll find that we can actually fish match-the-hatch imitations like we would a traditional attractor fly when there isn't a hatch, or fish smaller versions of traditional attractor patterns in match-the-hatch situations." One result, in the case of fishing flies as attractors, is a series of tactics such as Splash and Crash, Plop and Drop, Slap and Dap, Drag and Nag (Engle likes two-term names), and the use of the Sudden Inch pioneered by Leonard Wright.

Chapter by chapter, *Trout Lessons* thus broadens the definition of "the usual" approaches. In "Tight-Line Tactics," he notes that the traditional approach to fishing wet flies was well established by the 1970s with the addition of the Liesenring Lift and Pete

Hidy's method of swinging subsurface flies. Engle instead emphasizes tight-lining *dry* flies—dapping, high-sticking, and waking. And in the chapter on fishing meadow streams, he discusses going beyond fishing terrestrial patterns such as grasshopper imitations and fishing streamers close to the bank.

The chapter on fishing high water and run-off-swelled streams really opens up the conventional approach. In such situations, the conventional definition of how to fish is simple: don't. Go tie flies, take up golf, run for political office—just don't even think about fishing, because the fish are hiding and the water is opaque with mud. Engle has not only thought about fishing high water, he's developed ways to do so effectively.

The open-minded approach also obviously pays dividends in the chapter "Catching Difficult Trout," which of course are not necessarily the largest trout, just the most challenging, an approach that Engle redefines, following E. R. Hewitt, as "catching a trout the way you want to catch it." And open-mindedness is the theme of the chapter called "Oddities," a compendium of things that just plain work, whether we know why or not, including fishing sunken dry flies, fishing Catskill spiders, and adding blue accents and flash to flies, even if no such color appears on any natural being imitated.

This is not a book that advocates "thinking outside the box," to use that trite phrase. Its message is that there is no box: Go fish—and keep your eyes and your mind open.

—Bud Bynack

Obituary

Edwin T. Johnson was born in Opstead, Minnesota on September 6, 1919 and died on May 7, 2011 in Heber Springs, Arkansas. He was preceded in death by his wife, Elsie. Ed and Elsie made their home in River Edge, New Jersey, until Ed retired in 1985. They then moved to Walton, New York. During Ed's retirement, Ed and Elsie spent summers in Walton and Two Harbors, Minnesota. Ed and Elsie chose Heber Springs, Arkansas, for their winter home. Ed had many hobbies and interests. He was an accomplished fly fisherman, played the accordion, and enjoyed amateur geology. He also painted agricultural scenes and covered bridges. A good friend of the Darbees for many years, he fished with them in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and on many local streams in the Catskills. He was a member of many fishing organizations and a longtime member and big supporter of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild.

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.



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