



The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild *Gazette*

Volume 25, number 6

November 2022

There is no meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild in November. Instead, the guild will be attending the International Fly Tying Symposium scheduled for November 12 and 13. The guild's December meeting will take place on Saturday, December 17. This will be a virtual meeting. Links for the December meeting will be emailed to all members as the date draws near.

President's Message **By Joe Ceballos**

For everyone who has put their fly rods aside and are pondering the passing season; I hope that it was a good one. For those who are still out on the waters, I wish you success, and more importantly, enjoyment. Fall blending into early winter can still present days of great fishing with Blue-winged Olives and caddis.

I know that February seems like a long way off, but February 2023 marks another three-year election cycle for guild officers, and I want to remind everyone that the positions open will be president, vice president, secretary/membership, treasurer, and editor. If you are interested in running for any of the aforementioned positions, please put together a short notice, and send it to the guild email: catskillflytyersguild@gmail.com.

Because we are currently without a treasurer, I have been assuming the treasurer duties. Though I'm willing to continue to perform the duties of treasurer if I'm president, it would be good for the guild if we have members running for treasurer and secretary.

The guild will have a table at the International Fly Tying Symposium that's taking place in Somerset on November 12 and 13. My sincere thanks to the guild members who volunteered and are giving their time to represent the guild. If you are attending the symposium, please stop by our booth and visit.

Our monthly meeting for December will be a virtual meeting on the third Saturday of the month. All members will be getting a link to the meeting via email as we get closer to the meeting.



Spent Blue from Ray Bergman's *Trout*. Tied and photographed by Tom Mason.
Hook: Daiichi 1180, size 14 Thread: Tan Wing: Grizzly hackle tips Tail: Blue gray rooster
Body: Dun quill Hackle: Blue gray rooster



Eagleville Covered Bridge Painting by Lois Ostapczuk

Eagleville Covered Bridge **By Lois Ostapczuk**

Is there any structure that's a more iconic symbol of New England and the northeast, than a covered bridge?

Our oldest son, Rob, recently purchased a house along the Battenkill River that is just a few minutes from the New York and Vermont border. Like his father, Rob is a fly fisher, and he's now feverishly working to make his newly acquired house the home of his dreams. The Battenkill, a noted trout stream that has been home to the likes of Lee Wulff, John Atherton, Lew Oatman, and many others, borders his property.

Within easy walking distance of his place is the Eagleville Covered Bridge, which crosses the Battenkill in Eagleville, New York. This covered bridge was originally built in 1858 by Ephraim W. Clapp, and it is included in the National Register of Historic Places. I painted the watercolor as a housewarming gift for Rob. It gives me great pleasure, painting for someone I love.

View more of Catskill artist Lois Ostapczuk's paintings by visiting:
<http://catskillwatersart.blogspot.com/2014/02/blog-post.html>

My Anal Fly Tying

Up on the Esopus



With Ed Ostapczuk

Where has 2022 gone? Days and months fell off the calendar like leaves from our denuded autumn Catskill forests. Except for minuscule Blue-winged Olives and some caddis, the bugs and famous hatches of the past trout season are now history. It used to be that I'd fly fish for trout from November through March of the coming year, mostly in the Garden State, on jewel-like wild trout waters. I had been doing such for over ten years. However, November is the arrival of my second season—my “anal” fly-

tying season. More than sixty-plus years of tying are now behind me. During that time, my efforts have evolved into a crusty, well-structured, focused approach, that's just plain anal. There's really no other way to describe it.

First of all, rarely do I ever tie flies during the height of trout season, because I'm spending as much time as I can outdoors, casting flies that were tied during the prior winter months. If I do occasionally tie during the season, it's because I've exhausted a particularly successful pattern, and more are required. For me, that's tying under undo duress. With the start of November, I'm searching for fun activities to help fill shorter and colder days. I thoroughly enjoy sitting by a wood stove, listening to soothing music, and tying flies while dreaming about the trout that they'll seduce in the months ahead. Typically, I catch far more (and bigger) trout while tying than I actually do streamside.

Duly noted, there's a highly regimented process involved before this enjoyable undertaking begins. I have a small binder containing various patterns, plus lists upon lists of different flies tied and utilized since the early 1970s. The lists show different flies that a particular trout season started with, and how many I ended with. There's detailed information on the flies used, and how many need to be re-tied. In other words, it's an inventory list of all my flies. If, after a couple of seasons, various patterns were not used at all, they get eliminated from future consideration. On the other hand, if certain patterns were totally exhausted, then the number of those flies to be tied is increased.

There's also the matter of inventorying my tying supplies, and reordering materials and hooks that are in short supply. There's nothing more frustrating than sitting down to tie a dozen flies of a particular pattern and not having an essential material. That is to be avoided at all costs.

Once these matters are taken care of, flies *must be tied in a particular sequence*. First, streamers and bucktails are tied, then nymphs, then wets, and finally—my dry flies. And, further subdividing the category, the dry flies have their own individual order. First I tie classic patterns, then tiny stuff, and finally the brook-trout dries. I love those brook-trout dries, but sadly, they mark the end of a tying season, and I start hoping for a short window to the beginning of a new trout season.



Copious notes and boxes of sorted materials awaiting the author at his tying desk.

There's a fundamental reason for this highly structured approach. I believe it was the late Dick Talleur who espoused the properties of thread control in tying. He suggested that you should begin tying flies using heavier threads to instill muscle memory in your fingers, then gradually tie with finer thread materials. So perhaps what I'm doing is not so "anal" after all. However you chose to tie your flies, I wish you the best of luck in the days ahead.

A New Resource for Water Conditions

I'd like to share a new USGS application that enables anglers to access real-time water data. It's called waternow@usgs.gov. Users are given a quick mini-report of current water conditions that is based on the USGS Real Time Water Data website. You can text or email the site number listed on the website with a specific parameter defined in the app. Rather than repeat here all of the available information, interested readers can click on the following link: <https://www.usgs.gov/mission-areas/water-resources/science/waternow>

In the Footsteps of Giants

A few weeks ago, I was invited to fish the DeBruce Club water. The DeBruce Fly Fishing Club has two-and-a-half miles of the pristine upper Willowemoc Creek, flowing through forest and field, with a steep mountain backdrop on the far bank for much of the river's length. It's as picturesque as a mountain stream can be, with turns and eddies everywhere, waterfalls spilling into it, and plenty of fish-holding structure. The creek winds along DeBruce Road for most of its length, making it somewhat difficult for me to drive, because my eyes are constantly drawn to pretty, flowing waterways.

Around midway through this private property, the clubhouse stands. The front door is remarkably close to the pavement, no doubt because of the road's widening over the years, but a giant evergreen almost completely blocks the view of the clubhouse from the street. It was here that I met my friend, after I had followed him from town. You enter the clubhouse in the back, where the wide porch steps greet you in a cozy and practical way. There are many useful things here for fly fishers: rocking chairs, pegs in the wall to hang fly rods, a very old shelf near the door with cutouts to hang boot-foot waders, and a handmade relic with triangles cut into it to catch the heel of your wading boot for easy removal without bending down. It's all very practical for a fly-fishing club porch, and it looks very well used. I paused for a moment before entering behind my host. Looking from the porch toward the stream, you can see two ponds that are spring-fed and cold. I was made aware that a handful of twenty-four-inch rainbows swim unmolested in those ponds.

Upon entering the clubhouse, I found it to be a bit cramped, with a narrow walkway throughout its full length. The wooden floors were pocked with marks from studded wading boots, but I felt like that made the floors even better than if they were smooth and polished. The house had comfortable furniture, and a well-stocked fly-tying desk near the door. Off to the left were more doorways, each with a plaque inscribed with the names of past, distinguished members. When my host told me to pick a room to put



my things, I chose Sparse's room. The room of author Sparse Grey Hackle (Alfred W. Miller) has to have some good mojo in there.

A very grand river-and-fieldstone fireplace takes up nearly one third of the opposite wall facing the bedrooms. It was already crackling with a fire when I got there, adding to the ambiance and rustic feel of the surroundings. My plan, however, was to fish, but I didn't want to be too pushy, as it wasn't my place to dictate the schedule. We first had some "business" to attend to: meeting the great-granddaughters of George Cooper, who once owned the general store right up the street. He later sold it to Mahlon Davidson. It was recently restored and upgraded by new owners, and now functions as Davidson's General Store, with a slightly modern touch, but still holding to the history and feel of the early to mid-1900s.

The meeting ended up taking longer than we expected, but not in a bad way. We spent a few hours looking at old photographs, papers, and hearing stories of when the granddaughters, now in the later stages of their lives, used to go up in the summer to camp nearby and to swim in the Willow. Where they camped was private property back then, too, but it was a different time, and the girls were able to enjoy the club without being asked to leave. My friend was going to cook dinner at the club, and a few of our friends from the general store showed up for the meal.

The entire time, all I could think about was getting into a pair of waders and stringing up my cane rod. All of the socializing was fun, and we really enjoyed the company, but we were at The Club! The trout were waiting; the leaves were starting to fall, and we might've been looking at the last fishing trip of the year. We wanted to get out there.

We decided on fishing the first thing Sunday morning. It would be cold, as the current temperature was already in the low forties, and it wasn't yet even dark. But, first thing Sunday morning, we'd be going.

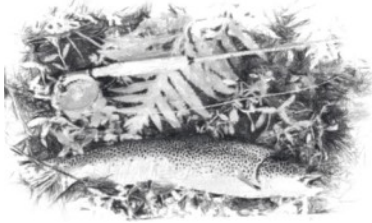
I set my alarm for 6:45 AM. I was up at 6:00. I put some wood on the fire to get it going again. Peter was getting up and getting ready. It was finally here—fishing in the same water as Sparse Grey Hackle—and I could almost taste it.

All geared up, I walked briskly, straight back to the stream. My wading boots were crunching on the frosty ground, and the sun started to peek over the mountain. The closer that I got to the creek, the clearer I could hear moving water. At the tree line, I was only about ten yards from it. Taking the fly off the hook keeper, it was all that I could do to not start false casting from the woods before I even saw the creek. I got closer. Just beyond the bushes, I could see the sparkling of water. And there they were. Right in front of me, as plain as the nose on my face. In about twelve inches of water, I saw two of them. One was twenty feet downstream from the other, slightly offset, but both were easy to see in the cold, clear flow.

I just stood there watching. Lifting the leader to my teeth, I bit the fly off of the tippet, and stuck it in the felt pad dangling from my vest. I reeled in and popped apart the two sections of my eight-foot Leonard copy. As much as I was looking forward to that moment, I can not and will not cast into a stream with fresh trout redds in plain view.



Casting Catskill Cane



With Mark Sturtevant

Stretching The Season

October has always been a favorite month for me, though the emotions traditionally had more to do with hunting. My love of the outdoors was forged early, under the tutelage of my father, and I believe there is no finer month to be about in the woods than October. I am still a hunter, though I have long since abandoned the old, all-consuming fervor that used to guide my precious time, so I can now enjoy the gifts of autumn. As my passion for the pursuit of game has lessened, my passion for angling has grown.

My Octobers are now a bittersweet time. I still love the uncanny beauty of the forests and mountains ablaze in the afternoon sunlight, but I begin this loveliest of months knowing that my angling season is drawing to its close—and I count the days. Let me be perfectly clear as to my concept: my understanding of *angling* is that angling is *fly fishing*, and fly fishing is wholly entwined with the magic of the dry fly.

As spring flirts with life sometime in March or early April, I am found stalking riverbanks, searching for something that I cannot find. I am seeking the light—the magic of angling—and I will walk many miles before that light glimmers at last and anoints my long-tortured soul. I close each season with the same endless search, grasping at any wisp of hope for one more day.

A month ago, I bade summer farewell on a warm and bright afternoon, taking little fish that slashed at my dries. Autumn arrived immediately with a decided temperature change, inaugurating my annual quest to stretch the season.

I fished a cold, rainy afternoon, finally accompanied by my dear friend John for our first outing together this season. A very special trout came to hand that day, as I christened a fine, vintage Leonard rod that had come under my care. We have a history, that trout and I, one that finally turned out in my favor after multiple episodes where the fish had proved the victor. I have no doubt that John's company brought me good luck!



The author battles an old foe during a cold autumn rain. Photo: John Apgar

October began with low water, stalking the wide expanses of the Delaware River. Though I hoped for *Isonychia*, it would be tiny mayflies that I would find, so I added more Hebes and tiny Olives to my vest, continuing the search during long, bright, gorgeous afternoons. Some of those afternoons would bring the magic of engagement with our Catskill wild trout, while others would provide a scenic walk and time for thought. There is a joy simply felt in walking along the river, the colorful leaves of the forest sheltering the quiet places from on high.

Reaching mid-month, I greeted the chill each morning with increased worry, as I knew that all would soon slip away. My walks led me to discover fewer flies hatching each day as the temperatures dropped in our rivers. I stood one afternoon in the middle of a wide expanse of river, with mist in the air and the clouds mingling with the trees on the mountaintops. I could feel the magic, the glory of the season building to a climax—a grand farewell!

I noted a soft rise along the far bank, and suddenly the surface was filled with tiny Olive mayflies! I was captured by the spell of autumn's last blessing. The trout and the bedeviling currents challenged me, and I was lost in the grandeur of the game. When it was finished, a pair of twenty-one-inch browns had come to hand, a wonderful gift from the rivers of my heart.

I have thrice returned to the scene, but that blissful outcome has not been repeated. The last trout the river gave me was a beautiful Delaware rainbow, one of only a handful of rises I found that day after the grand finale. The river grows colder, and in my heart I know that the season has passed. It left me in glory, standing spent in bright water, consumed with joy.

Still, I am loathe to surrender to the inevitable. A brief warming trend teases; the sun warms my bones as I walk riverbanks, and I hope beyond hope for just one more day...

Winter shall overtake the landscape, and I will still be walking. Blued steel and walnut will replace vintage bamboo and nickel silver. There will be days when I'll walk rivers as opposed to mountain trails, but the experience will not be the same. Swinging sunken flies gets me out upon the rivers whenever winter opens a window, but it is not the angling which feeds my passion. In some way, it is my attempt to pay homage to the rivers, to visit them as a traveler without expectations.

As I stand here, admiring the glow of winter sunlight cast upon the bare trees, I give thanks for the many times these bright waters have ignited that all-consuming passion. I look forward with hope for the gift of another spring, another season, and hope that I will be found worthy of both.



Autumn draws to a close on the Delaware River. Photo: Mark Sturtevant

Mark Sturtevant can be followed on his blog, *Bright Waters Catskills*: <https://brightwatercatskill.art.blog/>

The Fly Tyers Roundtable

By Tom Mason

On September 24, the Fly Tyers Roundtable was held at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum. The Roundtable was an exciting and different kind of fly-tying event, sponsored by the CFFC&M, Mid-Hudson Trout Unlimited, and the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild.

Pat Crisci of TU had the idea of an informal gathering of tyers, to not only tie flies but also to have an open forum to discuss and exchange information, ideas, and stories about anything to do with fly tying. Pat's idea was embraced, and a plan was set in motion. We gathered in the Wulff Gallery at 11:00 AM, and began the day with open fly tying and demonstrations, which included the Roundtable guest speakers and several members of TU and the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild. At 1:00 PM, Pat Crisci and Joe Ceballos introduced the Roundtable panel, which included fly tyers and historians Del Mazza, Ed Van Put, John Shaner, Dave Catizone, "Catskill" John Bonasera, Seth Cavarretta, and Tom Mason. Also participating was Ward Blade, who was taught to tie flies by Roy Steenrod as a young boy when he lived in Liberty, NY, close to the Steenrod home. We had a lively discussion about the early days of Catskill-style fly tying, favorite flies, fly-tying techniques, materials, and hackle, with lots of questions from and interaction with the attendees. It was an excellent forum for exchanging ideas, and for the younger fly tyers to learn and hear historical stories from some "veteran" fly tyers.



Discussing tying. Photo by Cookie Caloia

The Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum was the perfect venue for the event, as it is the mission of the CFFC&M to preserve the history of fly fishing in the Catskills and educate the next generations of anglers. Anthony Magardino, president of the center and museum, agreed that this was just the type of event that keeps the life of the center going.

During the day, a fly was collected from each tyer in attendance, and a group photo was taken. The flies and photo will be mounted and framed in a shadowbox built by Peter Leitner, and it will be donated to the CFFC&M as a future fundraising item.

The session went into overtime, beyond 4:00 PM, and ended with everyone agreeing that it was a fun, lively, informative event that absolutely must be repeated—possibly biannually. If you missed this one, stay tuned for the announcement of the next Roundtable.

Thank you to Pat Crisci, Joe Ceballos, Anthony Magardino, the staff of the CFFC&M, and all the tyers for their part in making this event possible and successful.



Group photo by Martha Mason



Tom Mason leads a tying demonstration at the Roundtable event.



More tying at the Roundtable.
Photos from Cookie Caloia

Recent Meetings of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild

The guild held monthly meetings in September and October, each with a tying theme. The topic for September was spinners, and several members attended the outdoors meeting, under the shelter of the Darbee/Vinciguerra Pavilion on the grounds of the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum. Everyone tied and shared their favorite spinner patterns, and some new tricks were learned as Mark Sturtevant and John Apgar each demonstrated their unique techniques for splitting tails. It was a great day to be tying flies while breathing fresh air on a beautiful afternoon in the Catskills.



Aaron Miller tying a spinner



Andrew Sanders tying a spinner



And here's their results!



A chillier October day saw the guild meeting inside, tying flies centered around a theme of tying your past season's most productive patterns. See that empty chair in this photo? That chair is for you! The December meeting of the guild will be virtual, so no matter where you are, you can grab a seat at the table and join in.

Membership in the guild

It's fun to share, and if you're sharing this issue of the *Gazette* with friends who are not currently members of the guild, please encourage them to join the mission of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild by becoming members. The cost of dues remains \$20. New memberships and renewals are both accomplished by using the following link: <https://cftg.limitedrun.com/> or by visiting our website at catskillflytyersguild.org.



This newsletter depends on all guild members for its content. Items from nonmembers are welcome at the editor's discretion. Your articles, cartoons, paintings, photographs, reports of information, and bits of whatever else is interesting and fun are vital to this newsletter. Send submissions to Chuck Coronato, coronato3@verizon.net or 412 Highland Avenue, Wyckoff, New Jersey 07481 (201) 723-6230



As mentioned on page one in the President's Message, the guild will have a table at the International Fly Tying Symposium that is taking place this upcoming weekend. The dates are November 12 and 13. The times are from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Saturday, and from 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM on Sunday. Admission is \$15.00 on Saturday, and \$12.00 on Sunday (cash only on both days). Children under sixteen are admitted free of charge.

Location: DoubleTree by Hilton Somerset Hotel and Conference Center, located at 11200 Atrium Drive, Somerset, NJ, 08873

Make sure that you stop by and visit the guild's table if you're going to the symposium!