The Voice of Spey

2019 Volume 3

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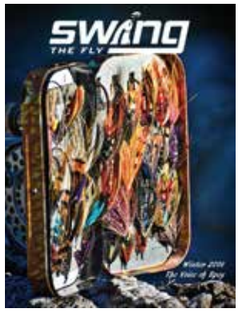

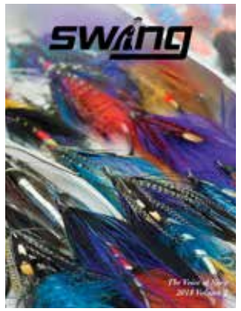
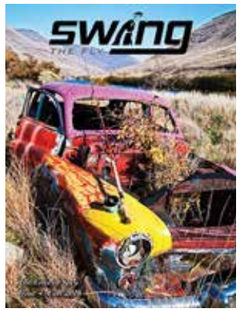

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Artwork by Cameron Scarth, see more in the Artist Spotlight on page 80.

Photo by Loren Irving


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While this grayling was sitting in the water waiting for it's release, the fly dropped out of its mouth and right onto the pectoral fin. I had my macro lens ready and took advantage of that fortunate coincidence, making a few pictures until the fish realized that it was free. Photo by Thomas Woelfle

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Loren Irving
Al Hassall
Glenn Chen
Steve Morrow
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Art Lingren
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Front Cover:
Rok Lustrik with my son Simon on his back crossing the river Soca, Slovenia in late October. The last day of the season and we had the river almost to ourselves. Photo by Thomas Woelfle

Page 3 Artwork:
Joker and the Thief
by Peter Donahower

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Facing page photo by Loren Irving

COHO NIRVANA

On the Alaska Peninsula

By Glenn Chen

For a die-hard anadromous salmonid angler, the endless conga line of chrome-sided salmon pouring upriver past me was a truly astonishing sight.

As I stood knee deep in the clear flows, I targeted a group of twenty-plus coho that were swimming closest to me. I cast towards the lead fish and swung my concoction of gaudy feathers and shiny tinsel on a tight line across the current, adding false strips to impart a tantalizing action. A pod of five salmon immediately turned and gave chase, and a stout 13-pound hook-nosed buck attacked, creating a huge surface boil as he savagely clamped his jaws onto the bright pink fly. I swept my Spey rod in a low arc to set the hook and he responded by immediately blasting across and down the river, followed by yards of backing that rapidly disappeared from the screaming Hardy reel.

I tried to palm the rim of the big Duchess to slow the vanishing coho but had to jerk my hand away as the friction from the click drag caused the reel to become too hot to touch. The faint odor of burning lubricant wafted towards my nose and the whirring handle was rapping my knuckles, a rat-a-tat sound accompanying the howl from the double click-pawls.

The fish finally halted his wild dash far below me; he violently shook his head as I tried to hold him in the swift current, my long Winston Spey rod throbbing while the taut line hummed in the heavy flow. Our détente lasted only a few seconds as the big buck then decided that fleeing back towards the vast expanse of the Bering Sea was the best way to escape from his unknown tormentor. Once again the Hardy sounded out in protest, and the rattling howl combined with sound of bones being whacked resumed and I began to wonder if I could ever land this out-of-control chrome torpedo. …

I struggled towards the shore and stumbled

through the shallows along the gravel bar as I attempted to give chase but found myself confronted by a steep drop-off with water beyond that was too deep to wade through. As I evaluated my dwindling options, the fish suddenly veered towards an enormous jam of downed trees. Foregoing caution, I performed a Spey harikari, bending my rod all the way to the cork fore-grip, my free hand wrapped around the Duchess in a desperate attempt at preventing the buck from gaining freedom amidst the ensnaring branches. The maximum pressure exerted by boron and nylon finally stopped him only a few feet from the submerged tangle; for what seemed like endless moments, neither of us gave any quarter, as the uncertain outcome of our battle hung in the afternoon sunlight shimmering atop the river's surface.

At last, the buck finally began to weaken, and I switched to a low sideways rod angle, adding a bit of slack line. The fish, sensing possible freedom, swam slowly towards me and away from the hazards. Nearly 200 yards separated me from my prize; I put the tip of the rod underwater, pointed it towards the fish, and commenced to steadily reel. By keeping all of the line in the water, it bellied below the fish, which then induced him to swim opposite of the pressure—upstream against the current. This technique—affectionately known as "Walking the Dog" and shown to me by my guide and good friend Trevor—can be very effective for landing fish that have run far downstream, especially when pursuit isn't feasible.

After making still more cross-channel dashes that took back a great deal of the line I had so painstakingly won, the coho salmon finally yielded, and I gently slid him into the shallows. I marveled at his enormous girth and the powerful muscles that were humped behind the gator-sized head. A coterie of parasitic sea lice hung down near the ventral fin, their dark color and long tails indicating that this salmon had been in the river for mere hours—hence the sheer strength and amazing stamina displayed in his bid for freedom. Taking care to avoid the sharp teeth that would be subsequently used in spawning ground battles with rivals, I removed the barbless stinger hook, and held him upright facing into the current. As his strength returned, he bid adieu with a bold sweep of his broad tail to resume his final journey.

It was the first week of September on the remote Alaska Peninsula, and our group of avid coho anglers had reunited to pursue vast numbers of anadromous chrome at one of the very best spots on the planet to entice Oncorhynchus kisutch with Spey tackle and swinging flies.

This was my seventh trip to the Sapsuk River and to APICDA's (*Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association)* riverside camp on the western end of the peninsula. We had arrived aboard an ultra-modern, Swiss-built Pilatus aircraft (chartered from Alaska Air Transit); our 500-odd mile flight from Merrill Field in Anchorage having taken us over snow-capped volcanoes, thrusting high into the skies along the west side of Cook Inlet and forming the tall backbone of the Alaska Peninsula. Vast stretches of rolling tundra pocketed with countless ponds and crisscrossed by waterways both large and small, along with glimpses of lonely beaches upon which the Bering Sea expended its fury during fierce storms, appeared below us through breaks in the thick clouds.

Our expert pilot—a former Navy flier who had made hundreds of landings aboard an aircraft carrier—touched down smoothly on the gravel airstrip in Nelson Lagoon. As clouds of dust billowed in the stiff wind, we taxied towards the greeting crew. Waiting for us were wonderful folks Merle, Sharon and Kenny, who were lifelong Aleut residents of this tiny Alaska Native village. Our gear was quickly offloaded, and as the previous week's anglers boarded the plane for their return back to Anchorage; they confirmed—to our delight—that the main run of coho salmon had indeed arrived in the river.

We enjoyed the comfort of Sharon and Kenny's house and were treated to their warm hospitality and a delicious steak dinner as we waited for the rising tide to flood the Lagoon. As evening approached, we launched and boarded APICDA's seaworthy vessel for the trip across the breezy estuary, with Merle piloting us across the choppy shallows. At the mouth of the Sapsuk, we were met by the smaller jet-powered skiffs brought downriver by the guides. I waved as I saw Mike and Trevor approach us, and joyful rounds of high fives and bear hugs ensued as we were reunited with our dear friends. We piled luggage, rod cases and mounds of provisions into the boats, then fired up the Yamaha outboards for the last leg up to camp, arriving at dusk to be greeted by our delightful cook Kathy.

After hastily stowing my gear, I hurried down to the river and headed to the top of Silver Tree—my all-time favorite swing run—to make a few casts in the remaining light. The first throw resulted in a bright 9-pound hen that somersaulted repeatedly across the water, with the 7-weight Winston Spey rod bucking and Hardy Bougle reel howling in response. I managed to hook four and land three more coho before the descending darkness reminded me to yield the river to the nocturnal bruins (whose large paw prints marked their passage on the very same trails traversed by us anglers). Back at camp, I re-secured the electric bear fence and took a hot shower before joining my companions inside our sturdy tents.

Early the next morning, my alarm rang just before the camp generator fired up. Grogginess dispelled by another shower, I sat down with Diana, Jerry, Mike, Mark, Kirk and Charlie in the warm dining tent to enjoy Kathy's delicious and hearty breakfast. Everyone was eager to begin the day's fishing, and I hurriedly finalized my gear preparation post-repast, determined to change my reputation of being the last person who showed up down at the boats!

The outboard motors on the skiffs were warming up as Mike and Trevor waited for us at the landing, and we cast off in the chilly dawn. Due to a series of early fall rains, the water levels were higher this year, and the guides opted to take us upriver where the silver salmon were more concentrated. We motored past typically productive spots such as the Mojo and Cabin runs, with the other group of Mike, Mark, Diana and Jerry (guided by Mike) electing to stop at the Weir Pool, while Trevor decided to start Charlie, Kirk and I at a spot further above.

Through polarized sunglasses, we saw pods of bright cohos holding at every deep run upstream of camp. It took only 10 minutes to reach our first fishing spot, and our initial casts resulted in hookups with chromers that leapt high above the water, bending our rods and yanking line against tight drags. Excited whooping, broad grins, and gleeful fist bumps ensued between all of us—how wonderful to be back in Coho Nirvana!

I have enjoyed catching every species encountered throughout my 50 plus years of pursuing Pisces with rod and reel. It matters not to me whether a four-inch bluegill or 200-pound yellowfin tuna has been hooked; every fish successfully captured continues to elicit the same excitement as that first, minuscule yellow perch that swallowed a dried minnow dangled off a Minnesota boat dock by a wide-eyed 5-year boy.

Coho salmon (Oncorhynchus kisutch, also known as silvers) are eagerly sought by Alaska fishers: their widespread distribution, willingness to strike, vigorous fighting abilities (which includes amazing aerial acrobatics and powerful runs) and fine culinary attributes make these fish a prized quarry.

I have been fortunate to live in the Great North —where salmonids are still relatively abundant— for nearly two decades, and I relish the opportunities to pursue every species of fish found here. Our waters host fishers from all over the world, and I continue to be puzzled by the reactions from other visiting fly anglers when the subject of Alaska coho fishing is discussed. My excited descriptions of constant action, accompanied by fierce swing grabs, tail-walking leaps and powerful downstream dashes by chrome sea-run fish elicit considerable interest—that is, until I reveal the quarry that I'm pursuing. An awkward moment of silence is then followed by the remark, "Oh ... you're just talking about ... silvers". Pitying looks are cast upon me, before my heretofore rapt audience dissipates; as they walk away, I just grin and say to myself, hey man, you don't know what you're missing...

The Alaska Peninsula's silver salmon runs occur later than most others, and these fish enjoy additional weeks of ocean feeding before commencing their final journey. Thus, compared to other systems with earlier returns, the average size of the adult coho caught here can be considerably larger - many are over 10 pounds, and our Sapsuk head guide Mike weighs silvers that exceed 16 pounds every season.

**Note: There are only two operators on the Sapsuk, and APICDA's camp is situated in the heart of the best water; each day's angling begins at first light within minutes of leaving the boat landing and continues until the evening—plus intrepid folks can keep fishing (sans guides) before and after dinner too. Perhaps there's a river somewhere in Alaska where you can find equivalent angling for silver salmon combined with comfortable accommodations and awesome service? If so, please tell me about another such Coho Nirvana!*

The Weir Pool is located just a few minutes by jet boat upstream of the Sapsuk Camp, and this amazing spot was jammed with thousands of coho during our visit. Each pass through with our swinging flies yielded dozens of fierce grabs, followed by swift dashing runs, frequent aerial displays and grinning anglers. There were so many fish present that the action here was non-stop, all day; one merely had to change to a different color or pattern to keep hooking fresh silvers.

While any flashy fly will catch cohos, we have found that ones tied with a heavy chrome cone head (3/8" or 7/16"size) and long wiggling tail (3"-4") seemed to be very effective on the Sapsuk. I modified one of Mark's patterns—the Sapsuk Chicken—which he used with deadly effect on these silvers; it was similar to a Dolly Llama but was made with webby saddle hackles (instead of a bunny strip) and sported a marabou collar plus lots of long tinsel. My version was named the Coho Pollo, and I found that all-pink, black and chartreuse, purple and white/chartreuse were effective colors; my favorite is made with a cerise marabou collar and a purple saddle hackle tail (nicknamed The Purple People Eater, or PPE). Each fly is tied "Intruder" style, i.e. using a hook-less shank that's rigged with an extended loop of stiff line, to which an octopus style hook is attached as a trailing "stinger".

Top water patterns also are effective, especially during the gray of early morning (or when clouds subdued the overhead light). As anyone who has used these flies on coho can attest to, it's electrifying to watch the fish stalk, then grab your faux offering on the surface. A low-profile "gurgler" pattern (with a foam strip back) typically produces more solid takes, compared to poppers made with deer hair or Styrofoam (as these bulkier flies tend to bounce off the fish's snouts).

During our daily trips above the Weir Pool, we had seen a section of river with oodles of coho jammed up along a steep bank. This particular run had been untouched due to the deep, soft mud on the nearside entry spot, which discouraged wading anglers. I finally decided that these particular silvers couldn't be ignored any longer, and I convinced Trevor to drop me off there before he anchored his boat at the next downstream corner.

A stout stick helped me to traverse the clinging muck along the bank, and to my pleasant surprise, the bottom grew firm (albeit deeper) as I

waded out within casting distance of the steadily rolling fish. Although my first throw fell short, I let the Coho Pollo swing across the river and saw a wake follow the fly before a big boil, strong tug and throbbing rod indicated that the salmon had taken it. Flashes of chrome emanated through the water as the minty hen shook her head back and forth, and she blasted off in a sizzling run towards Trevor's distant boat, grey-hounding atop the surface in a dazzling display of power and grace. The howl of the Hardy, combined with the deeply bent Spey rod and ripping noise of backing tearing through the current ... need I say more to stir the blood of any devout swing fisher?

After releasing the 12-pound hen, I continued to work my way down the fish-packed run and managed to hook dozens of additional silvers. Multiple coho eagerly chased my Pollo on every swing, resulting in scores of wildly leaping and madly dashing chrome-sided salmon until the hot action finally ceased. As I climbed back aboard Trevor's jet sled with icy feet and woefully sore arms, I was tired yet extremely elated by the astonishing angling I had just experienced during the past 90 minutes.

After coming to Sapsuk for a number of years, and hooking thousands of silvers here, I never get jaded, nor take for granted how amazing and special this place is.

I (and fellow addicts Mark and Charlie) decided to satisfy cravings for additional yanks by chrome salmonids every evening at the camp water. Due to the higher river levels, the cohos were holding in softer water, and I quickly learned that allowing the fly to swing all the way into the shallows below me, then letting it dangle for a bit, would result in hard takes—albeit I wasn't able to successfully pin many of these "hang down" biters due to my over-eagerness and lack of patience which resulted in too many whiffed strikes.

One holding lie close to camp, tucked against the near bank with an impenetrable mass of tree branches hanging a few inches above the surface, provided an interesting angling challenge. I finally solved this fishy riddle, which required a stealthy approach (keeping a low profile so as to avoid spooking the fish) and patient waiting to succeed.

Picture this: Yours truly hiding in the tall grass next to the bank, with the tip of my Spey rod sticking out over the water. I'm keeping the Pollo above the surface, with several feet of coiled line held in my hand, ready to drop it front of a coho when the opportunity presents itself. The group of bright silvers holding beneath the branches begins to bump each other, and a large buck with broad shoulders peels away from the bunched fish, seemingly annoyed ... he then re-positions himself a yard downstream of my rod, whereupon I release the fly, then gently wiggle it enticingly in front of him ... his jaws yawn open as he swims forward to eat my pattern ... I lift the rod, and the surprised fish shakes his head violently, then tears off across the swift current while I arise with numb legs and attempt to clumsily follow...

Earlier in the week, as I stood in the shallows along a gravel bar, I was pleasantly surprised to see the PPE Pollo disappear in a massive boil while it dangled from my Spey rod. Somehow —and in spite of being completely unprepared for this fortuitous circumstance—I managed to remain attached to the 11-pound chrome-sided hen, gratefully landing her after a spirited battle replete with body twisting leaps and tearing runs. Closer inspection of this unlikely spot revealed a short and narrow slot with soft water and just

enough depth for salmon to rest in, after negotiating the long, swift rapids below. I thenceforth made sure to swing my fly through this hidden lie every evening, which produced jarring strikes from the small group of salmon that were always holding there.

My last two days on the Sapsuk passed in a blur of Spey casts, protesting reels and acrobatic salmon dashing about. The Three Coho Amigos of Kirk, Charlie, and moi fished the lower end, working downstream in unison, and our triple-headers were announced by gleeful shouts of "Fish on!," "Fresh one!," and "There's no ho like coho!" (This last phrase borrowed from a slogan on our favorite Ray Troll fish t-shirt.) For three hours straight, I tried to make a swing without a grab, but failed to do so—there were so many eager biters. Nearly all of the fish were dime bright, and there were lots of double-digit sized silvers landed by everyone.

That evening, we took the opportunity to compliment our wonderful camp staff for all of their dedicated efforts during the week. I gave Kathy jars of homemade wild raspberry jam, and I augmented Trevor's après-guiding beverage supplies. We knew that our head guide Mike would turn 50 in a couple of weeks, and he had a broad grin as I presented him with a 9-weight Spey rod (a classic Sage "brownie") for his birthday, which would be put to good use during next year's chinook salmon season on the Sapsuk. Charlie added a beautiful filet knife (custom made by an Alaska craftsman), and all of us laughed at the pile of black balloons strewn about the floor of the dining tent, in honor of Mike's half-century milestone.

From my lofty vantage of the departing plane, I marveled at the vast waters of Illiamna Lake sparkling in the sun, and gazed longingly at Aniakchak volcano beneath us, vowing to someday float through the gorge carved by the river exiting from its lake-filled crater. The broad sand flats filled with delicious razor clams on the west side of Cook Inlet beckoned to me, and I felt an urge to ask our pilot to set us down next to one of those clear water systems flowing into the sea ... surely, there must be anadromous chrome in them worthy of seeking with a Spey rod and swinging fly...

Glenn Chen is from Alaska and has resided in the Great North for nearly two decades. Anadromous salmonids are the focus of his profession as a fisheries manager, and serve also as the primary quarry for his angling pursuits. He holds a Ph.D. in fisheries science from Oregon State University, and has worked as a federal biologist for more than 30 years.

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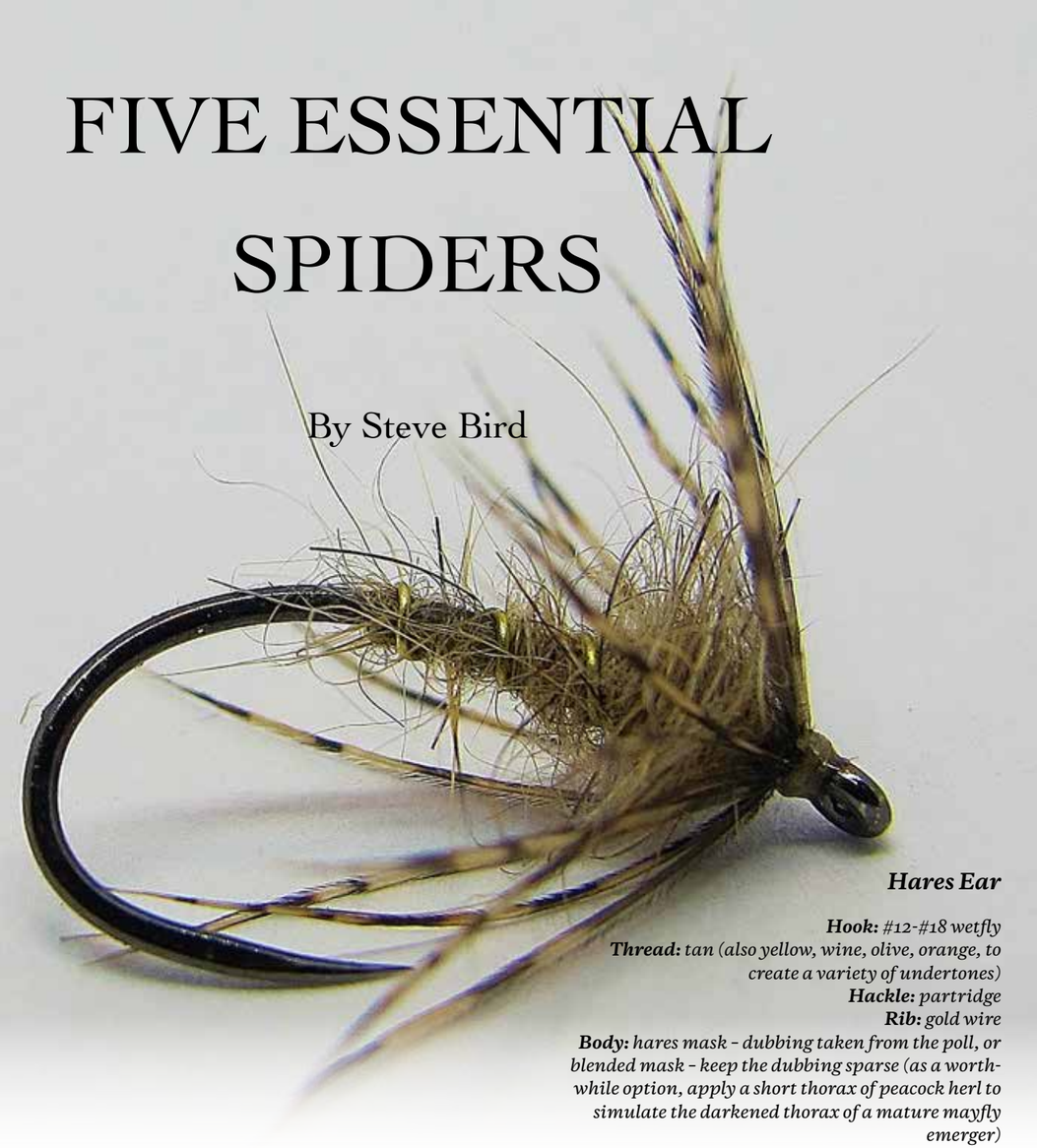
FIVE ESSENTIAL SPIDERS

By Steve Bird



Hares Ear

Hook: *#12-#18 wetfly*
Thread: *tan (also yellow, wine, olive, orange, to create a variety of undertones)*
Hackle: *partridge*
Rib: *gold wire*
Body: *hares mask – dubbing taken from the poll, or blended mask – keep the dubbing sparse (as a worthwhile option, apply a short thorax of peacock herl to simulate the darkened thorax of a mature mayfly emerger)*

It is the season of wee flies; most things trout are eating, most of the time, are quite a bit smaller than your four inch Intruder or doll-eyed Manly Pig-O-Reno. Often, even your Micro-Intruder will be viewed by selective trout as ... well, intrusive. For that reason, the serious trouter will want to carry some small stuff in the kit.

There is no small fly design more elegantly simple, effective and suited to a swung presentation than a Yorkshire style spider. Though some are tied to imitate specific insects, most are simulative and serve to cover all phases of the hatch: nymph, emerger, cripple or drowned adult. A small assortment of spiders will fish for the spectrum of sedges, mayflies and smaller species of stoneflies we're liable to encounter onstream.

Spiders can be effective fished deep with a sink tip, rigged singly, with two or more on a cast or as a dropper fished with a larger type of fly. A deep-fished softie can be killing during a pre-hatch; but the spider design really comes into its own swung on visibly feeding trout, presented on a full floating line and 12' to 15' leader.

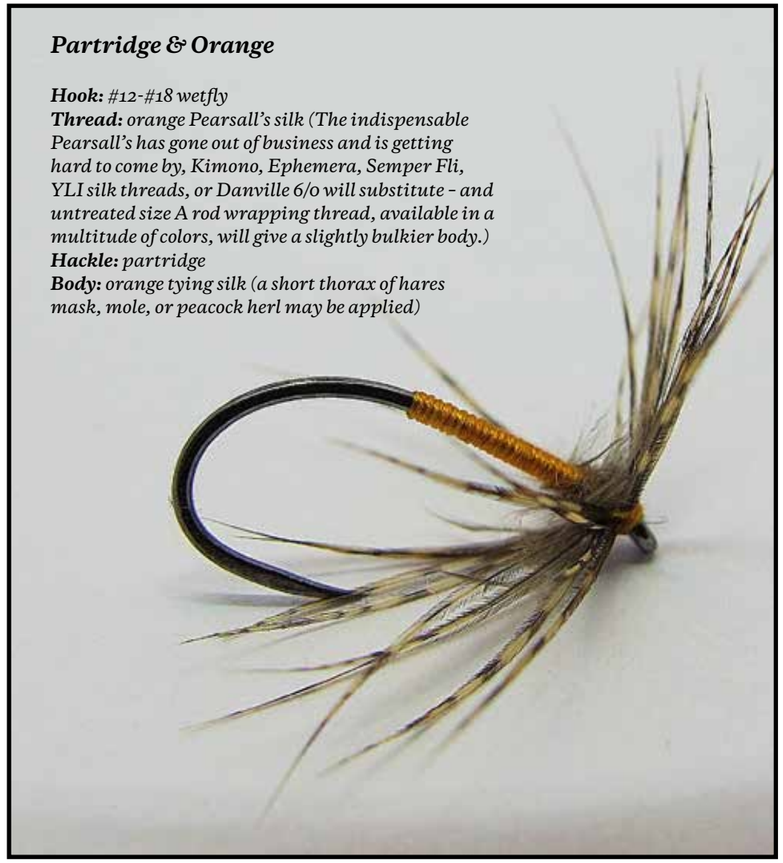
My leader is comprised of an 8', 20 lb test fluorocarbon butt section nail-knotted to the casting line, spliced to a 2' section of 12 lb test fluoro,

a rigging ring tied to that and mono tippet fastened to the ring. The fluoro butt gives surface penetration, and a mono tippet is more flexible and durable in the light line required for small flies. I like 4 lb test Maxima for the tippet, generally, and will use 6 lb test if I can get away with it or if required (as is the case with my home water, the upper Columbia).

When swinging spiders over visibly working fish, I try to position myself so that the fly is drifting into the feeding trout not quite at the point it will accelerate into the swing. Keep the rod tip low enough to maintain contact with the fly. As the bait enters the sweet zone activate it with short pulls on the line or slight pumps of the rod, causing the hackle to pulse. Not too much—don't want to make the fly appear unnatural or aggressive. Try to apply just enough movement to animate it. The fly is your puppet on a string, make it dance and jiggle enticingly, not crazily. (Flies tied without beadheads animate better.)

Partridge & Orange

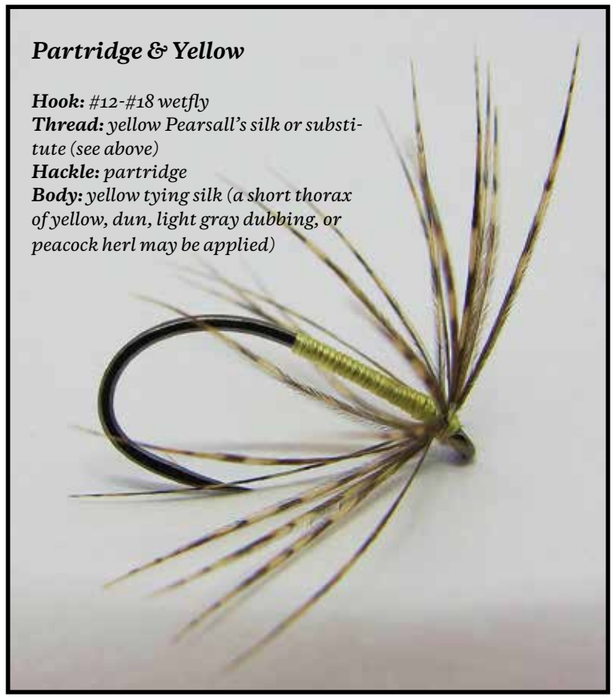
Hook: *#12-#18 wetfly*
Thread: *orange Pearsall's silk (The indispensable Pearsall's has gone out of business and is getting hard to come by, Kimono, Ephemera, Semper Fli, YLI silk threads, or Danville 6/0 will substitute – and untreated size A rod wrapping thread, available in a multitude of colors, will give a slightly bulkier body.)*
Hackle: *partridge*
Body: *orange tying silk (a short thorax of hares mask, mole, or peacock herl may be applied)*



I prefer to tie wetflies on straight-eye hooks or hooks with slightly turned eyes, as these track and hover best. Unless fastened with a Turle or loop knot, a turned-eye levers the fly off-kilter, causing it to tip and 'screw' in the current. I don't use a loop knot to fasten flies smaller than #10, as I don't want to bulk up the wee fly with a conspicuous knot. I seldom fish smaller than a #12 or #14 when swinging softies with a two-handed rod, preferring to do as the Yorkshire purists do and simply tie smaller on the hook, in the Clyde and Tummel style. A #12 model with a very short shank works well for this and is a good choice when fishing water where larger trout may be encountered and you want some iron to hold them—and the larger hook weights the fly for better surface penetration.

Partridge & Yellow

Hook: *#12-#18 wetfly*
Thread: *yellow Pearsall's silk or substitute (see above)*
Hackle: *partridge*
Body: *yellow tying silk (a short thorax of yellow, dun, light gray dubbing, or peacock herl may be applied)*



But aren't trout hook shy?...

Well... Yorkshiremen will tell you: ***"The trout sees what it wants to see."***

The patterns presented here are well-traveled and proven. Old-school anglers will know them,

Pheasant Tail

Hook: *#12-#18 wetfly*
Thread: *black, brown, orange or yellow*
Hackle: *partridge*
Rib: *fine wire*
Body: *cock ringneck pheasant tail swords, twisted with a tag of the tying thread and wound as a chenille (this one is killing dressed with a short thorax of peacock herl)*

Partridge & Peacock

Hook: *#12-#18 wetfly*
Thread: *black (also yellow or wine, and the spectrum of thread colors will create enticing undertones)*
Hackle: *partridge (Try brown, grizzly and black)*
Rib: *fine wire, your choice*
Body: *peacock herl – twisted with a tag of the tying thread*

shake their gray heads and smile. Versions of these have been in use for at least a couple hundred years for good reason. They are essential, workhorse baits, indispensible through the season of wee flies.

Dressings

Materials of the previously shown patterns are listed in the order tied in.

I prefer to hackle spiders and wetflies using the Skues/Leisenring/Hidy method(above): the hackle tied in first, by the butt, concave side up. When the body is completed leave the tying thread hanging far enough behind the hook eye to accommodate two turns of hackle; bend the hackle back perpendicular to the hook shank, then wind two full turns back to the thread position; make a full turn of thread over the hackle tip and cinch; then wind two or three turns forward through the hackle to the hook eye and finish. Trim away the hackle tip or leave it for a wing.

This method leaves no trim in front of the hackle, allowing a small, neat head. The tying thread wound through the hackle binds the stem and holds the spring-loaded hackle perpendicular to the hook shank, where it should be for best action. If a sparser hackle is desired, pull the barbs from one side of the stem and proceed the same way, with two full turns. If the hackle feather has too thick a stem to tie in by the butt, use the same method, except tie in by the tip. As a general rule-of-thumb: if the hackle feather is wider than it is long, tie in by the tip.

Steven Bird is a poet, guide and fly designer. In addition to his published poems and fiction, he is author of the book, ***Upper Columbia Flyfisher***, writes the online ***Soft~Hackle Journal*** and is a contributing editor for ***Swing The Fly***. He is also a contributor to ***The Drake***, and ***California Fly Fisher***. Steve lives with his wife, illustrator, Doris Loiseau, beside the upper Columbia River in NE Washington. He has been described as a 'neoclassicist', but it is only an affect resulting from nearly constant isolation.

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BIG, FLOATING, TOPWATER BUGS

By Steve Morrow

At the end of every season on the Dean, my boss would fly out for a week and let us take over the lodge. We would stockpile Scotch, invite friends and pay special attention to the conditions—as if we had a say in the weather. I always planned my first fishing day in advance: where I'd begin, how I'd fish, even where I was gonna get 'em. I even forced myself to hit the tying bench.

If you know me, you know I'm not big on tying flies. I'd rather be waterboarded than sit still for an hour. At the end of a tying session, the area looks like I turned a shotgun on 300 flamboyant game birds.

If you know me, you also know about the Dean Squid. A fly that checks off all the right boxes for my lack of patience. It's a five-minute, intruder-ish bug with only three materials and some flash. I would present it to clients who needed that extra edge. In reality, it was quick and dirty, and I tied them for everything because they were simple and they worked.

Our first free day after the 2010 season started with a bang. There wasn't a soul on the river except our party and the weather was perfect—low, clear conditions and a swarm of fish arriving fresh from the salt. We didn't do much skater fishing in tidewater back then, but on this day, we crushed lice-covered steelhead on dry lines and 4-inch-long sub-surface squids. The occasional fish would blow up the surface, and we'd erupt in excitement. I'd been working there for years but never had such an experience.

That night, over a giant glass of Oban and foggy with liquid courage, I strapped a big chunk of orange foam to the head of a pink squid. It looked ridiculous, but the next day was my best day of violent topwater action in my life. I'm not sure how many I caught because I brought the scotch along, but it was the beginning of an obsession with big, floating, topwater bugs.

But the Small Ones Work too!

Yah, the small surface bugs certainly work. On the upper Dean, a small, tan Pom Skater was pretty tough to beat. While on the Skeena tributaries, Bulkley Bees would get blown up eight times in a row. Often, I would downsize to a #10 elk-hair caddis to get the final eat. I love fishing the small stuff. However, there are times when the big bug just gets it done.

We woke up to a September deluge not uncommon on the Bulkley. Clay banks and alpine creeks had started to puke brown and the river had taken on a milky hue. My client, a gem of a guy from Arizona, had landed his first two steelhead ever the day before. The trip complete, after recounting the episode around the riverside breakfast table for the sixth time, he proclaimed, "I'm skating today." Looking out at the home pool and explaining the diminishing odds, I still sympathised with him. My personal decision to go fishing, or often not, depends largely on the skating conditions. If he wanted surface action, that's what we were going to do.

I don't need to tell you very much about the millions of casts and uphill battles we endured that day or about the way everything seemed hopeless right up to the frothing boil. I won't because it'd be a lie. For the first run, we chose an oversized knockoff of the Pom Skater that I tie on a tube and call a Flash Pom. As if the giant size of the body or the #1 owner hook doesn't attract enough attention, I add flash—like, lots of flash. This day, it swam maybe five times before a hefty fish took us for a ride through the swollen flow. We never landed that one, but shaking hands with her proved good enough for both of us.

How to Fish the Big Bug

I fish the big bugs like any skater except maybe a little faster. I've always felt like you can fish a large floating fly quickly and force fish to react. I'll square my cast to the current, choosing big sweeping swings over those slow ones close to the bank. Pitch it cross stream, count to one to develop tension, mend the line, and hang on.

If you've ever watched steelhead eat a fly from a high bank and waited for the line to come tight, you know that they often have the fly before the angler realizes it. With a skater, however, even a bump is an exciting visual; keeping your cool is a must. Despite a fly going in a fish's mouth, striking is a recipe for disaster. Instead, we are taught to wait until everything comes tight. With big bugs, it's even more important to wait for the tension because such a large offering can be quite the mouthful.

How About that Follow-Up?

Using a clean-up fly in conjunction with a big bug often is a deadly combination. I've skated a Floating Squid behind a friend fishing a Pom Skater on the Thompson and blown one up. After unsuccessful boils on the pink monstrosity, switched to a Pom Skater to try again and hooked up. Sometimes fish just need that first nudge and the big bug is perfect for the job.

Where to fish them?

I would fish the big bug where there are no wit-

The Flash Pom

Hook: HMH thick wall small tube
Thread: 6/o black UniThread
Body: black spun and trimmed deer hair
Wings: black deer hair
Back: black foam
Flash: crinkle mirror flash or salt-water natural

The Dean Squid

Hook: HMH thick wall, small tube
Thread: 6/o Red UniThread
Body: UV crystal chenille, pink
Wing: pink ostrich
Back: red foam
Flash: saltwater natural

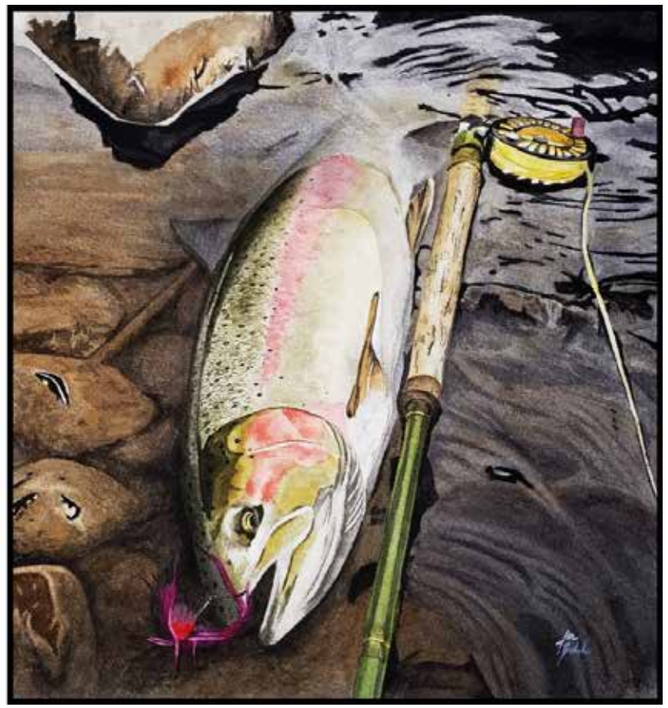
nesses! Floating a fluorescent chicken (or at least half of one) won't get you on the cover of Purist Anglers Monthly and your Instagram post should have the fly removed from the frame and caption that limits details to "skater fish"—nuff said. All kidding aside though, they are extremely versatile.

Versatility is the big bugs strongest trait, and water conditions that aren't typically productive on top are now in play. To me, it's like choosing the right club for the shot. When fish are sitting underneath heavy, frothing water, a big silhouette often gets the job done. Out in the middle of the river, they excel because it's a large visual target—for you and the fish. They work in colored water because they have a larger profile and in tide water because they seem to be shocking enough to get a reaction from a traveller. My favorite application, though, is in deep water—where skating seems foolhardy, but the disruption proves too tempting.

Steve Morrow grew up in British Columbia and has been an avid fisherman all his life. With a background in fisheries science, he pursued a career as a biologist before deciding the guiding life was for him. For the last 15+ years he could be found working anywhere steelhead and chinook make a stand. He is a co-owner of Epic Waters Angling and resides in Smithers, BC.

Do you want your fish up on the wall?

Internet search the name on the tail to find out how...



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TIPPETS

By Sean Dahlquist

The golden pheasant and closely related Lady Amherst pheasant are some of the fly tier's most indispensable birds, offering a wide array of distinctive feathers from head to tail, many of which have no substitute. Luckily, these birds are fairly easy to raise on a commercial scale and in aviaries so they have been readily available to tiers at reasonable prices. If for some reason the accesibility of these feathers up and vanished, we fly tiers would be in a world of hurt! Both of these spectacular birds are of the genus Chrysolophus, which comes from the ancient Greek word meaning "with golden crest." Although golden pheasants and Lady Amherst pheasants look very different, they actually share similar feather characteristics. Shimmering crests are used as tails and toppings on salmon and steelhead flies. Crimson flank feathers are perfect for wings and collars for Spey and prawn patterns. Their beautifully mottled tails are well suited for strip wings on Dee flies as well as being a staple material in a majority of classic Atlantic salmon flies, not to mention the more modern Intruder-style patterns. But perhaps the most versatile plumage on these feathered mosaics is their remarkable barred tippet feathers.

Naturally a rich orange in color, golden pheasant tippets have been used for nearly two centuries by salmon and trout anglers for tails and tail veilings and on rare occasion wrapped as a hackle on segmented shrimp and grub patterns. Countless classic salmon fly recipes call for underwings or whole feather wings of tippets, featured most prominently on the iconic Ranger series of patterns. Lady Amherst tippets were also used to create beautiful wings on classic salmon flies such as the Lady Amherst or J.P. Traherne's Lange Syne and Evening Star. Steelhead and cutthroat anglers have long utilized golden pheasant tippet fibers for tails on wet flies, and the naturally pure white Amherst tippets, in particular, lend themselves well to being dyed in a rainbow of fluorescent colors. Mike Kinney's Reverse Spider is a pattern that he developed for sea-run cutthroat that calls for a collar of Lady Amherst tippets tied flowing outward and away from the body, which gives the fly incredible movement when fished properly.

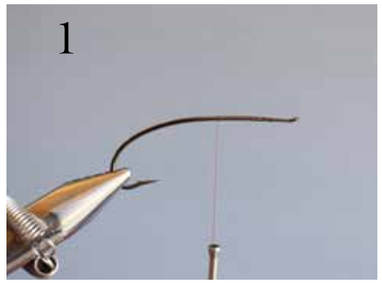
One thing that I have learned over the years is that not often, if ever, does one come up with something truly "new" in fly tying. That being said, when designing flies, I find great intrigue in taking the avenues least explored. A few years ago, I came across a photo of a seemingly complex steelhead fly tied by the legendary Dave McNeese that, like so many of McNeese's patterns, took some studying to understand exactly how he'd achieved the fly's unique look. I realized that the key to this brilliant pattern was the utilization of a large, dyed Golden Pheasant tippet wrapped as a Spey hackle —something I had never seen before. While flipping through Michael Radencich's 2012 landmark book ***Classic Salmon Fly Patterns,*** I discovered the "Drum Series" of salmon flies, attributed to Sandy and Alexander Irvine of Scotland and originated circa 1930. One of these patterns, the Drum Pheasant, sported a large golden pheasant tippet palmered like a

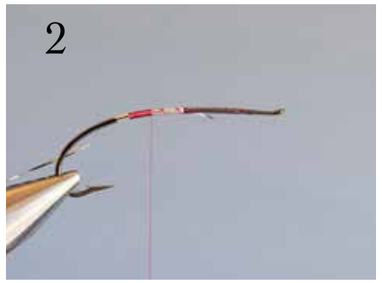
Amherst Speys tied by the author. The dyed Lady Amherst is used as a collar on the top fly and a hackle on the bottom fly.

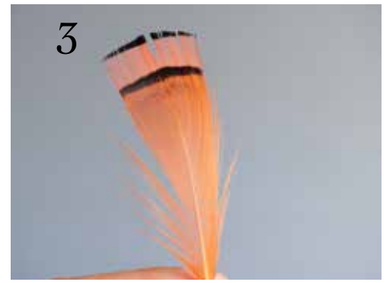
Spey hackle up the body from the second turn of tinsel. Another much earlier example which achieves a similar look in a different manner is the Tippet Grub, described first by George M. Kelson in *The Salmon Fly* (1895).

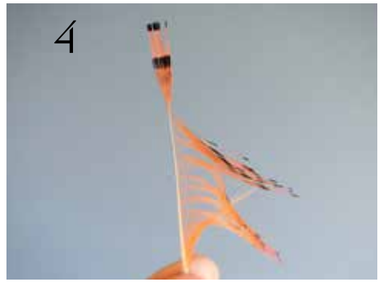
When experimenting with this technique I found that despite having a rather sturdy stem, both golden pheasant and Lady Amherst tippets are quite agreeable to work with as a Spey hackle or simply for collaring. The opportunities here are limitless. Tippet hackles really help to make a pattern stand out and the enticing action they possess in the water is sure to get some attention.

Tying a Steelhead Tippet Spey









Step 1 Attach thread and wrap down to the half way point of the body.

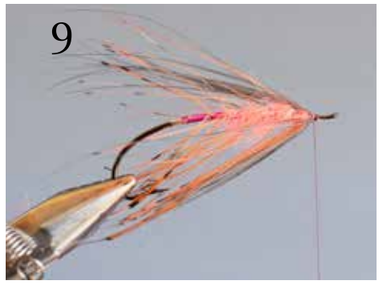
Step 2 Tie in a strand of fine flat silver tinsel and wrap it down and back to create an underbody. Next, tie in a another strand of flat silver tinsel for a rib. Wrap the thread up the body to secure the rib and stop at what will be the second turn of tinsel ribbing. This is the tippet hackle tie in point.

Step 3 Select a long fibered golden pheasant tippet.

Step 4 Prepare the tippet to be tied in at the tip by stripping off the fibers on the left side and stroking the right side fibers down.

Step 5 Tie the tippet feather in by its tip, and secure it with thread wraps up to the half way point.

Step 6 Tie in a strand of fluorescent cerise floss, and wrap down and back to create the rear body section leaving a strand of floss for your dubbing.



Step 7 Insert hot orange dubbing into the floss strand, and spin it to lock in the dubbing. Then, wrap to the head of the fly to create the second half of the body.

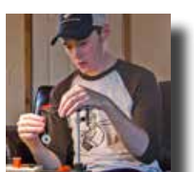
Step 8 Wrap the silver tinsel rib, followed by the tippet hackle and tie off.

Step 9 Wrap a turn of blue eared pheasant hackle for the first collar.

Step 10 Wrap a turn of waterfowl flank for the second collar.

Step 11 Select two hot orange rooster neck hackles, to be placed inside of two fluorescent purple grizzly rooster neck hackles for a wing, and tie in.

Step 12 Add a pair of jungle cock eyes, and whip finish to form a head.



Sean Dahlquist I live on Washinton State's Olympic Penninsula with my wife and our two beautiful children. My first introduction to fly tying was by watching my father tie colorful steelhead flies in the early 90s when I was a child. I started fishing in my teens with my best friend Nick Riggs. My home water is Washington's Stillaguamish River. Shorty after I began tying I became interested in steelhead Spey flies. This opened the door to learning about and falling in love with salmon flies, and fly tying has been an obsession ever since!

Liar

By Richard C. Harrington

It rang forever. I'd about given up, starting to compose a message in my head. But then the receiver rattled up, and I heard my mother's voice, "Hello?"

"Hi Mom!"

"Oh, hi honey! Oh, oh, and happy birthday!"

"Thanks, mom!"

"What are you doing today?"

"Working," I lied. "I have a bunch of stuff underway, lots going on—you know me, nothing's finished, but they're getting there. A few more weeks."

It was true, sort of. Work was scattered all around the studio. But I wasn't there. I fish on my birthday. But at 57, lying about it was a fairly new thing for me.

We chatted for a few minutes, catching up on my wife and kids, the grandkids—mine, her great grandchildren.

I watched the clouds slide over the river, the sun starting to light the canyon.

Is dad there? Of course I knew he was, he really can't go anywhere, but ... well, navigating parents, even at 57.

"Hey, Pop! Happy birthday!"

"Oh hi, buddy. Happy birthday to you too. What are you up to? Are you working?"

We have the same birthday, he and I. Everyone in the world thinks I'm his clone. But he doesn't, pushing the comparison away. I suspect it's because he realizes I'm more a replica of my mom, more motivated by curiosity than cash, by making rather than accumulating.

"How's business? How are sales?"

My folks always assumed I'd outgrow my fishing ... my paddling, camping, hiking, skiing and snowshoeing, dogs ... but especially, the fishing. They are children of the depression—anytime you're not working, you're wasting your time. Hobbies are for kids or people without adult concerns. Earn a bunch, establish security and retire early. I am my father's son, I work too much. Part by choice, part by necessity, but for my own reasons. I chose the less certain path, the chance to work with my hands and make stuff. The chance to set my own schedule, have time for adventure. Not what I was raised to do, or be. And I wasn't raised to fish.

But I don't have hobbies; I just have facets of my life, and they're all passions. We were in Alaska at the same time, they on a cruise, me working as a raft guide on a two week trip in the Brooks Range. My trip was no more appealing to them than theirs to me.

Ten years after my first Alaska trip, my 50th fell on a Sunday. Some folks don't work on Sunday, but when I called, I got the same thing—are you working? But that time, rather than guilt, it was suddenly clear to me, and I laughed ... to myself. And lied. Hell, why hadn't that occur to me sooner?
So on this day, like the last several of our birthdays, I told my father about what I was working on, the largest paintings that sell for the numbers he likes to hear. I don't get into the trying new things or the wandering around in my head that is the important part of my work. He wants to hear about the earning potential, not that I find paintings while I'm out fishing. We never fished, he had no interest.

He doesn't want to talk about himself as it goes to his health, and he has trouble hearing me these days. He soon gets irritated with the struggle and hands me back to my mom. Well, she says, don't let me keep you. Work hard.

I give them my love, and hang up. I do love them. They're my folks and fine people. And I'll work tomorrow, I think. Probably. But today, I start the truck, put it in gear and drop toward the river, out of cell range. After rattling my teeth on the corduroy for a while, I pull into a favorite turnoff, shut the phone off and slide it under the seat. I swallow the last of my coffee, stuff a beer and a sketchbook down my waders, lock the truck and slide and stumble down the steep path to the river.

There are big October caddis fluttering up from the stream-side grass, the clouds reflecting on the broken surface. I hitch my muddler and make a short toss to the seam of the eddy below. I make a few more casts, lengthening until the head is out, then I ease into the river. The cool water slides around my legs, I feel the pressure of submersion, the push of the current and a sweet, gentle upstream breeze. I strip off some more line, set an anchor and let a cast fly so my bug will skate a smooth, greasy-looking slick of water.

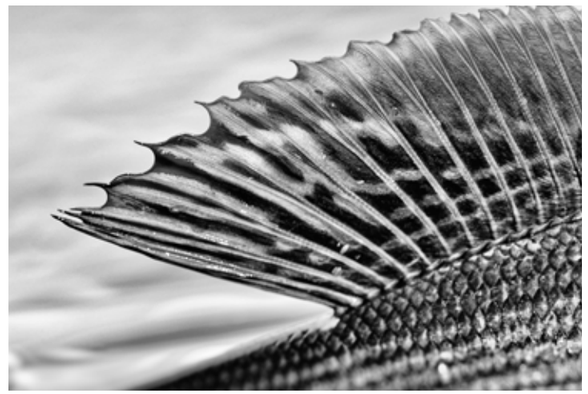
A soft upstream mend, and I feel the quiet pull of the swing. I can't help but smile. Happy birthday to me.

Richard C. Harrington While in college many years ago, Richard Harrington spent more time chasing fish than studying, and has paid for it ever since by painting pictures for a living. He is the president and sole member of the South Lima Steelhead Society, but will fish for just about anything to fill the time waiting for fall.

A SWING FOR GRAYS
AND
A REFLECTION ON THE OLD DAYS

by Thomas Woelfle

A location like the Kaitum in Sweden helps. The magic word is Tjuonajokk—a fishing camp in Swedish Lappland, reachable by helicopter and a dream for all grayling anglers. It is like the old days at my home rivers. Here, my son Simon fights a nice one.



I have a very deep love for grayling. Growing up in Munich, Bavaria, I was lucky to start my fishing when there were so many grayling in our rivers words cannot describe. I recall their gorgeous dorsal fins dancing in the water as they moved side to side to get a nymph, or even better, when they used the second wave to move up from the bottom to the surface to pick up a fly—the kiss of a gray.

An old saying was that on some rivers you were able to cross the river on the backs of the grayling. Due to dams, lots of birds like cormorants and other issues created by humans, the population declined from the late 80s until now. But we still have some nice places and rivers where you can find them, even in a city like Munich. Last fall I caught several with a small soft-hackle swung through the surface film, and that gave me hope. And, of course, my mind went back to my childhood and to all the grayling I've caught in my life.

In those times, my buddies and I (we were young, very young, please forgive us) hit the river Isar as little poachers. We learned how to appear and disappear silently to and from a river. We started with worms, grubs or, even better, some caddis larva stuck on the hook. At the tender age of 13, I fished for grayling at the river Drau in Austria with a special cheese called Enzian Schmelzkäse. I caught huge grayling with it.

Those times are long over. As kids we were all so enthusiastic, eager just to be out at the river fishing—fishing, fishing, fishing and nothing else. My mom always worried that I would end up married to a fish. "Thomas there is something else in life too! And please ... if you date a girl ... don't talk about fishing so much!" I made it but still talk a lot about fishing.

I now realize that the first step into fishing needs no fly rod...just a stick, line, hook, bait and the eagerness for it. The rest will come. My friends and I have all had the same evolution. We all started as described, and I am happy that I have stories to tell from my childhood at the rivers, lakes and the sea.

In Italy, for example, I would just sit the whole day at the pier, fishing for mullets or anything that swam by with the meat of mussels. My parents had to drag me away from the water just to get me to the dinner table. Now, my friends and I all are dads and have families of our own, but we are all still keen fly fishermen. It is more relaxed now; we have our stories, our fish, and we love what we do. And I think that is a big step towards happiness, not ruining your passion with the pressure of success or the size of the fish. It is the fishing we are after. This higher, faster, bigger thing—I see a lot of danger in that progression. I enjoy the silence of the river, the peace and tranquility and the the luxury we have to flee from our daily sorrows. When I stand in the river I forget about everything, I am free. Some hate that I leave the smart phone in the car.

I RECALL THEIR GORGEOUS DORSAL FINS DANCING IN THE WATER ...

Social media is everywhere, and when my son and I landed in the camp in Sweden the first question was: "Dad where is the WLAN! I have no connection here!"

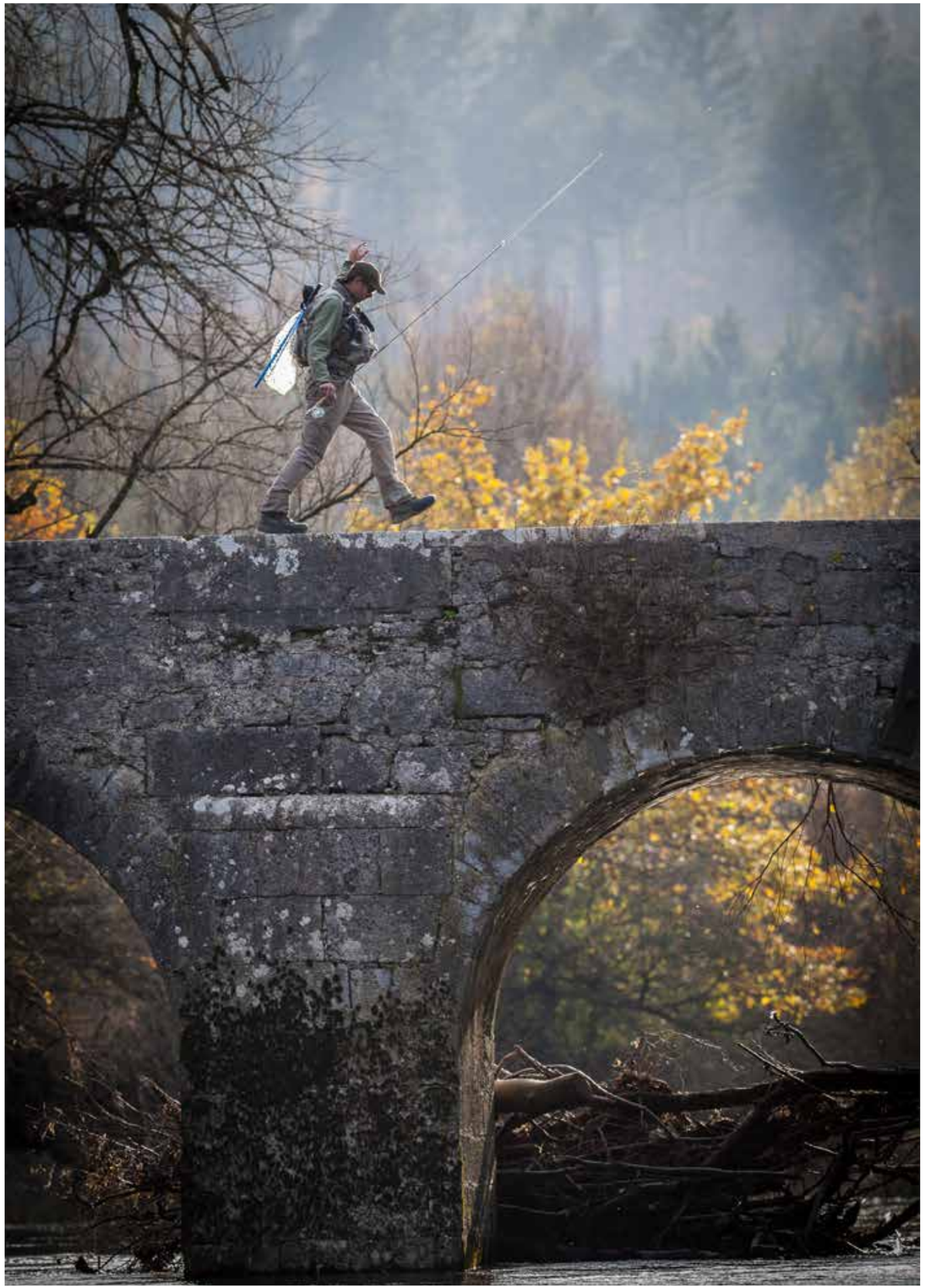
Well, my answer was: "That is the plan, my son!"

"What, no Fortnite for 4 days???"

Yes four days of no ... I repeat it ... no connection to the worldwide web. You should have seen the look and big question mark in his eyes. He survived with a few grayling, a visit in a classic sauna, a jump in the river and a barbecue. Later, he actually forgot about the connection to the web. He was connected to nature now, or at least until we reached the airport in Stockholm again. Back to reality and I have to live with it.

My childhood was different. When I got my first car, a small little Italian Fiat, I took every chance I had to drive to a river. In the late 80s and early 90s, when the US army had some military basis in Munich, I met a major who fished with the fly, and he was my connection to the foreign world. He got me all the U.S. fly fishing magazines, and this was the way I learned english ... with a little help from school. I read all the major books that came out at that time and started my century in Montana. Just a car, gas, food and fly fishing equipment.

"Away from the WLAN (internet)"
-Thomas Woelfle



The eye of the gray, formed a little bit like a pear. Usually, grayling in our rivers are surface orientated and they can take a close look at your fly. They come up to the surface so beautifully to "kiss" the fly. A lot of fishermen call them the lady among the salmonids.

Below: A big healthy grayling, around the magic 20-inch-mark from the river Isar, upstream from Munich. In the late 80s and early 90s it was quite common to catch fish like that.

"Hey ... I can do it all by myself." Simon with a grayling from Swedish Lappland. He gave me a bright smile I usually only get to see when he shoots a goal in soccer or has done an outstanding dribbling move.

My son, Simon, checking the selection. Lots of dry flies in the box but he finally picked a small CDC wet. To swing a fly slowly is a perfect way to teach kids how to handle a fly rod.

I slept in or beside the car, in a tent or, once in a while, in a motel to get a shower. I spent weeks there and usually came home with not a single dollar in my pocket. A long, long time ago, but I fished my way through all the major hatches at all those famous rivers in the West, and I told people about my Bavarian rivers and the grayling back home.

In my mind, the grayling always remain, they are my childhood; I know you cannot bring back the old times, but the memories and a few fish remain. There are beautiful rivers in Bavaria, Austria, Slovenia and Scandinavia—where the grayling are common and, for me, one of the most beautiful fish to catch on a fly.

Three little wet flies. I call 'em glitter wet flies. Just a thin body of pearl mylar tinsel, thorax of loose Ice Dub and one or two turns of a partridge hackle, and you have a fly that imitates a lot of different food. I always use them when it is hard to figure out what the fish are taking since these flies imitate a lot of different aquatic insects. This fly works really well during caddis hatches—reminds me of Gary Lafontaine's great book Caddisflies, where he described the glittering gas bubble that caddis use to rise and emerge to the surface.

Thomas Woelfle resides in Munich, heart of Bavaria. Most of the time you can find him on rivers near the Alps, fishing for trout, grayling and everything else that has fins. During the winter months he fishes hard for Huchen, similar to Taimen. But it is a hard game since you have to spend an awful long time to get one. It is only slightly easier with Atlantic salmon in Norway where he tries to fish every summer...

The Spirit Fly

by Art Lingren

Not so long ago, Charlie Brumwell, Steve Hanson and I were sorting through Ron Grantham's fishing room and in one of the drawers I spotted a small plastic box containing a fly with no documentation. I picked it up and said to my friends, "That is Syd Glasso's Spirit Fly."

Glasso gave the fly to Bob Taylor sometime in the late 70s or early 80s. (Glasso died in September 1983.) With the exception of the Spirit Fly, Taylor had all of his Glasso fly collection mounted by magnets in a framed plaque. The flies were easily removed for photographing, which I did four times from the late 80s until the last photo session in 2003. The Thunder and Lightning fly that Taylor got in 1979 was in the plaque and took up the last of the space, leaving the later-obtained Spirit Fly alone in Taylor's collection. Ron Schiefke and I helped Taylor's widow dispose of all his fishing stuff. I had wondered what had happened to his Glasso flies as he had quite a few and they were not there. Later, a friend told me that Taylor sold his fly plate with the Glasso flies to a collector. I had assumed that the Spirit Fly was part of that sale.

On one of our Bella Coola trips a few years back, Ron and I were talking about Taylor, maybe because it was Bob and I who decided in the early 2000s to return to this same river to fish after a 15-year hiatus. Taylor's Glasso flies came up and, in particular, the Spirit Fly. Ron confirmed that Bob sold the collection but that he gave Ron the Spirit Fly. Thus, when I found it in Ron's stuff, I wasn't surprised to come across that fly. On my last visit with Ron, a couple of days before he died, we shook hands as I left and he was trying to get some words out about his fishing things. I had a hard time figuring out what he said, but Ron's wife said he wanted me to help dispose of his stuff. I expect knowing that I would find the Spirit Fly and see that it got a good new home, along with many other of his fly-fishing possessions.

The Spirit Fly is so photogenic that I wanted to get some more pictures of it before it moved on to its next home. In addition, I did a search of my slides database for Glasso and found an October, 1993, slide of The Spirit Fly. I had used a Hardy gut leader package as the backdrop and replicated that picture, but I also took some using a white backdrop. My Sprit Fly pictures, taken later in 2003, indicate that it was Blacker's Spirit Fly. In his book ***The Art of Fly Making*** (1855), written and published by "Blacker, Himself," as it says on the book title page, there is a painting of the Spirit Fly with text opposite:

I shall name this THE SPIRIT FLY, in consequence of its numerously-jointed body, its fanciful, florid, and delicate appearance. Its colours will be found most enticing to the fish, and is the sister fly to Ondine, in "The Book of the Salmon" by "Empemera." (p. 105)

Ron, in another Ziplock bag, had a note saying the Sprit Fly was valuable and to look after it. I followed up with Diane Grantham about what to do with this fly and suggested donating it to the fly fishing collection of Western Washington University in Bellingham. Syd Glasso lived in Forks, Washington, where he taught school and fished the Olympic peninsula rivers with his exquisitely crafted steelhead flies. I would like to think that Glasso would appreciate the gesture of donating his Spirit Fly to Western Washington University.

Glasso's Spirit Fly, valued at approximately $2,000, was donated to Western Washington University's fly fishing collection.

Art Lingren is a Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada born and raised fly fisher, fly tyer and author of nine British Columbia-related fly fishing books. He is a member and past president of the Totem Flyfishers, a past president and historian of the British Columbia Federation of Fly Fishers, and an honourary member of the Loons Fly Fishing club. He is primarily a steelhead fly fisher but does fish for other cold water fish species as well.

CAN YOU SUPPORT A HATCHERY PROGRAM?

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WILD STEELHEADERS UNITED

By Dean Finnerty

There are no easy decisions in the world of steelhead conservation and management, but some issues are more difficult than others. Hatchery and wild fish management is perhaps the most divisive issue in steelhead culture. We, at Trout Unlimited's Wild Steelhead Initiative, believe the science behind hatcheries having a negative impact on wild runs is solid and critical to guiding management of wild steelhead. We also believe there is a role for hatcheries, as long as we strike a balance by taking steps to minimize harm from those hatcheries and by ensuring there are also streams for wild steelhead that are free from hatchery effects.

We've dubbed our strategy the "portfolio approach" to managing steelhead rivers: those rivers with the strongest remaining wild populations and the best remaining habitat should be managed to maximize the abundance and diversity of wild steelhead. Rivers without these qualities or with low potential for recovering runs of wild steelhead should be managed for hatchery supplementation to provide angling and harvest opportunity. Similar to the diversity of life histories that we see in wild steelhead populations, we believe that a portfolio of management strategies within and across watersheds could benefit wild steelhead populations while still providing important recreational opportunities.

The upper Willamette River in Oregon is one place where the portfolio approach to managing wild and hatchery steelhead could be successfully applied. In the last century, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers installed a series of dams and reservoirs intended to control winter flooding in the densely populated lower Willamette Valley—and never considered fish passage at these dams. Some 1,500 miles of suitable spawning habitat was lost.

We know that native summer steelhead never existed in the upper Willamette, while spring Chinook salmon, winter steelhead, pacific lamprey and sea-run and resident cutthroat have been here for eons. Nonetheless, a "mitigation" hatchery below

Dexter Dam has been producing summer steelhead for decades. In the late 1990s the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife began releasing Dexter hatchery steelhead smolts at public access points like parks and boat launches from just below Dexter Dam to the confluence with the McKenzie River. Thus, one of the region's most popular summer steelhead fisheries was created—the Town Run, as it's become known.

Today, the Town Run and its hatchery summer steelhead provide an economic engine that benefits area guides, tackle and fly shops and other local businesses. It provides an angling opportunity that otherwise would not exist in this stretch of the Willamette for many months each year. It also takes some pressure off of other popular summer steelhead fisheries that have a "wild" component. Places like the North Umpqua, Deschutes and Siletz rivers, and their native summer steelhead, all benefit from reduced angling pressure when anglers choose to pursue the hatchery steelhead in the upper "Willy." This reach of the Willamette, between Dexter Dam and the McKenzie River, is a great example where hatchery supplementation should exist.

Within the Willamette watershed, other rivers including the Molalla and North Santiam still have high quality habitat for wild steelhead and escapement levels higher than most winter steelhead tributaries in the basin. The North Santiam has some of the best remaining habitat of any wild steelhead river here. Yet high levels of potential hatchery introgression put the wild steelhead population at risk. An abundance of caution is needed in managing these populations if these wild fish are to persist. We recommend adopting the the following policies; (1) continue hatchery summer run releases in the South Santiam, but eliminate recycling of hatchery summer steelhead because it contributes to very high levels of hatchery spawners in the river; (2) increase the bag limit from three to four hatchery summer steelhead per day to increase harvest levels and reduce potential spawning; and (3) increase funding for improved monitoring of hatchery summer steelhead and subsequent modeling to estimate the extent of hatchery effects and inform future management decisions. There are other policies that we would like to see discussed specific to the N. Santiam and Molalla … no more hatchery fish in the North Santiam?

Keeping wild steelhead populations strong and recovering wild runs in rivers with the requisite habitat should be the priority for all of us who love these fish. On the other hand, having hatchery fish available for angling opportunity in places where they will have little impact on wild populations, either due to degraded habitat or because wild fish never existed there, is a good use of those waters.

The portfolio approach to managing steelhead rivers means we can have our steelhead cake and eat it too. Rivers such as the Molalla and North Santiam should be managed for wild steelhead. Since hatchery fish undermine wild runs through competition for food and shelter and by weakening genetics, these waters should not be stocked with hatchery fish. The upper Willamette, however, between Dexter Dam and the McKenzie River is well suited to management as a hatchery summer steelhead fishery, so long as the fishery is appropriately managed to minimize risk and impacts on wild winter populations downstream. There are other watersheds from Alaska to California where the portfolio approach to steelhead management is being applied—and others where it could be applied.

FORESTRY:

And the Common Good

By Conrad Gowell

Fishing has been tough lately, not because there are not fish to catch or because the conditions are unfavorable, but because I don't much feel like angling. I still love the connection to fish I feel through a rod and reel, but there is something larger and more dire tugging at me.

Anglers' hearts sink when they meet the timber cruiser on the road into their favorite section of river. We know what this means. Pleasantries hang awkwardly in the air. We look at our feet and kick rocks. The slope down to the water is steep, we think, and the roots of old growth stumps that hold this hillside together are rotting.

The next time out, a brush clearer has taken a 10-foot swath from either side of the road. New gravel has been laid down. We know what comes next.

The damage will unravel over months, years, decades and centuries to come. You're supposed to feel helpless—the forces of extraction are at work. It's not the fault of the person standing before me, or the people who will operate the machines that will turn these trees into commodities—I don't blame them. I feel a responsibility to ensure that this familiar scene doesn't continue unchallenged.

In the eyes of the state, this is perfectly legal. While the 80-degree slope above Trib 1 is classified as a "High Landslide Hazard Area," it supposedly doesn't pose a downslope public safety risk. Under the Oregon Forest Practices Act—the weakest logging regulations in the Pacific Northwest—downslope coho salmon, threatened with extinction, are not considered. At least not yet.

In January, United States District Court Judge Michael W. Mosman heard oral arguments in a lawsuit to protect fish from harmful clearcuts in Oregon state forests. Five plaintiffs—The Center for Biological Diversity, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, Institute for Fisheries Resources, Cascadia Wildlands and Native Fish Society—argued that the current boundary between fish habitat and upslope logging is insufficient. Judge Mosman agreed. However, hoping to better understand where and to what extent his rulings would apply, he asked that the complaint be made more specific and refiled.

The fate of Trib 1 remains in flux. It's hard to convey the beauty of this little stream using the legalese of the courtroom. I wish I could show Judge Mossman the tangled western red cedars, buried under stream cobbles, that form the tailout where coho, chinook and steelhead come every year to lay their eggs. Those trees provide a home to pacific giant salamanders, tailed frogs, pacific lamprey, signal crayfish and a myriad of other aquatic species.

When you spend time around forests and water, you understand how habitats are formed—the hundred years it took for the tree to grow on the ridge, the landslide that uprooted the tree and deposited it in the stream, and the future floods that will push this tree downstream, into the estuary, and, finally, onto coastal beaches. The process is one that a diverse array of native species have come to depend on. It has been disrupted now for three generations and is at risk of a fourth.

Our understanding of forests has been warped by the commodification of trees, in the same way that our relationship to fish is skewed by hatcheries. Industrial logging has no use for the inextricable relationship between trees, fish and rivers. It's story is one of cheap labor and maximum board feet—an ugly alchemy that converts an ecosystem's richness into shareholder profits. Is this the best that Oregon can do?

At the state capitol in Salem, a quote is etched into the marble to the left of the entrance:

> *"A free state is formed and is maintained by the voluntary union of the whole people joined together under the same body of laws for the common welfare and the sharing of benefits justly apportioned."*

Inside the capitol, however, forestry is a hot potato. In a state that allows unbridled campaign contributions, the money that industrial logging gives to our representatives is in a league of its own. Many Oregon lawmakers maintain tacit ties to timber. Any bill that challenges the industry is quickly killed.

There is hope. Among the members of the Oregon Board of Forestry, there are fewer direct conflicts of interest than ever before. And recently, the board directed the Department of Forestry to take a second run at a Habitat Conservation Plan for state forests in order to prevent logging from impeding recovery of threatened coho, marbled murrelet and spotted owl.

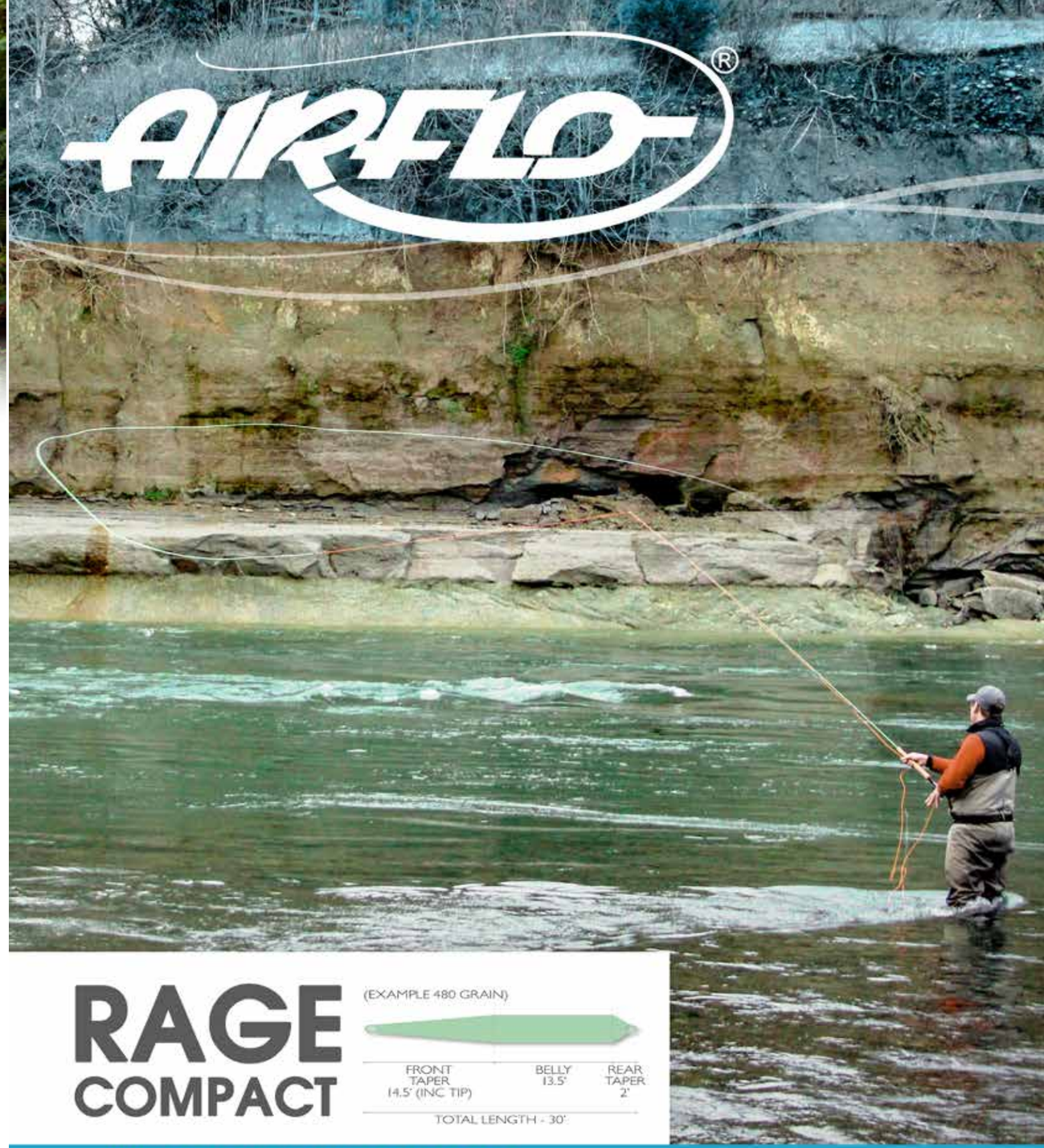
We were there, pointing out the degraded standards by which we judge our responsibility to the environment. Citizens, too, have more power than they may know. Oregonians can petition the Board of Forestry to identify and protect resource sites for listed species. This has never been done for coho salmon, even though they have been listed under the Endangered Species Act for almost a decade. If people want the rules to change, we will need to change them.

Shortly after Oregon became a state, timber cruisers went through the rich forests of the Oregon Coast Range. The richness included the species present in the watershed. There was a seemingly limitless abundance of salmon, trout, lamprey

and more—and a seemingly limitless abundance of trees.

Looking across the landscape now, roadbuilding and logging are causing more frequent landslides, debris torrents, and chronic sediment problems. The impacts on native fish, amphibians, and other aquatic species are acute and often lethal.

Our natural resources are being drained, and the profits from the damage is exported elsewhere. How much damage has industrial forestry also done to our drinking water? What impact has it had on commercial, recreational and tribal fishermen and women? How many more rotations can our hillsides take? Is this in the interest of the "common welfare," as the capitol wall suggests? I am certain it is not.



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INSTANT BACKING

By William "Rick" Fielder

A STEELHEAD WET FLY STYLE

Mecca Island- Deschutes River-Circa 1992

The intense September sun crested the Deschutes river canyon, blinding me with its morning rays. Peering downstream, directly into the orb, I was straining to focus on the figure wading back to my boat. It's a long wade from the Mecca Island riffle back up to where I had dropped anchor and I could hear heavy breathing and the sounds of wading boots on the gravel. I wondered what was up. Jim hadn't been down river very long and I usually brought the boat down to him when he was finished fishing the run. My mind was racing with questions and possibilities.

As Jim moved into the shade of the island's trees he came into focus. He was wading hard with his fly line and backing trailing behind him. To my relief, he had a huge smile on his face. When he stopped to catch his breath our eyes met. He let out a loud, "Yee Haw!" Then shouted out, "I've got a name for your new fly—Instant Backing!"

Jim had been a fishing client of mine for over 10 years, so I knew I could trust his fishing report and information. His short session had been exceptional. He had hooked and landed two fine steelhead and each had gone into the backing. The third steelie had nearly spooled his reel—it was almost out of backing when the fish jumped, snapped off the fly, and made its escape. Jim was an elated steelheader and he wanted more. He was coming back to the drift boat for a fly fishing pit stop—a new fly, a quick snack, a shot of whiskey and a little rest. I liked the new name he had given my fly and was excited to hear how well it had worked.

The Instant Backing fly came about by accident, as many new creations do. One of my clients had some great action on a traditional wet fly I had tied. Over time the fly had become well-chewed. A prominent piece of tinsel had pulled loose and was hanging on the side of the fly. This

loose-tinsel fly was producing and became "the fly" on that three-day trip. The client and the fly were on a hot streak, it seemed like wherever he threw it he got a take. He was having a fantastic time and his every-spot action had moved him to become unabashedly confident. At the pinnacle of his swagger he announced that he would follow his fishing partner through a run. He predicted that he would clean-up after him. To our astonishment, he did—hooking a steelhead that took with a screaming run immediately after his friend had finished fishing the tail-out. The fish took right in front of the exasperated buddy, who stood dejectedly in the river, looking on as the fish ran into backing. The guy was in "the zone" and had one of those trips we all wish for—more than 20 steelhead brought to the hand in three days. At the end of the trip he remarked, as he stuck the fly into the Hall-of-Fame spot on the brim of his hat for safe keeping, "Rick, you should really tie some up just like it." "That sucker works!"

A few days later I was prepping for upcoming trips and tying flies. His comment about tying some loose-tinsel flies rang in my head. So, I tied up some new flies placing loose-tinsel in where jungle cock is often tied as cheeks. At first, I called it the" T.S.W" (This-Sucker-Works), as the client had referred to it. But, I was never happy with the name.

Dressing an "Instant Backing" Style of Fly

Hook: choose to suit
Thread: match body color
Tag: silver holographic tinsel
Tail: dyed pheasant fibers or dyed pheasant crest
Butt-under wrap: silver holographic tinsel
Butt-over wrap: micro midge diamond braid (creates glow)
Rib: double thickness silver holographic tinsel
Body: seal dubbing
Hackle: died grizzly saddle
Collar: died pheasant, one size bigger than hackle
Wing-under flash: Angel Hair
Wing: polar bear or substitute
Wing-over flash: pearlescent mirror flash, 4 to 6 strands
Cheeks: doubled-over tinsel cheeks (placed like jungle-cock)
Head: red, or matching pattern

After Jim's experience and his enthusiastic pronouncement, the fly got its name, Instant Backing.

I quickly realized that the Instant Backing was more of a tying style than a specific fly. I started tying all of my steelhead wets in this style.

I have tinkered and modified this style and a recipe has evolved. I've fished the Instant Backing style all over the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia with excellent results. Additionally, my custom fly order clients have reported excellent results worldwide, wherever streamer-style flies are fished. The additional glow of the body material and "pop-factor" in the flash wing makes the Instant Backing a style you should include in your steelhead wet and streamer box.

William "Rick" Fielder has been swinging surface flies for steelhead in hallowed Pacific Northwest rivers since the early 1970s. As a bi-vocational educator, his split career allowed him to pursue his passions: teaching elementary school in winter and working summers as a professional fly tyer, casting instructor and guide in Bend, Oregon. He hails from Corvallis, Oregon and currently lives in Boise, Idaho, where he chases surface steelhead as often as possible.

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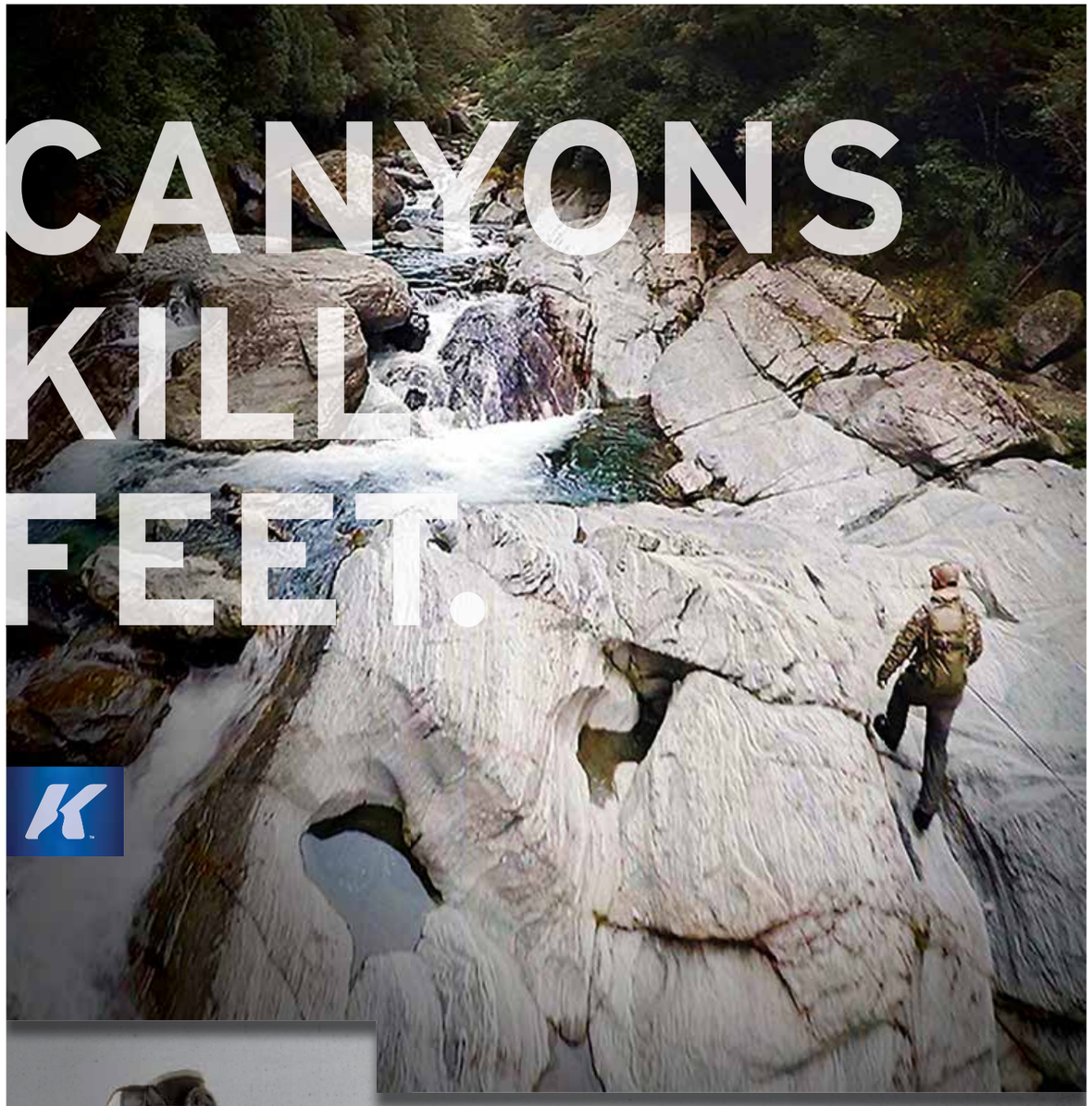

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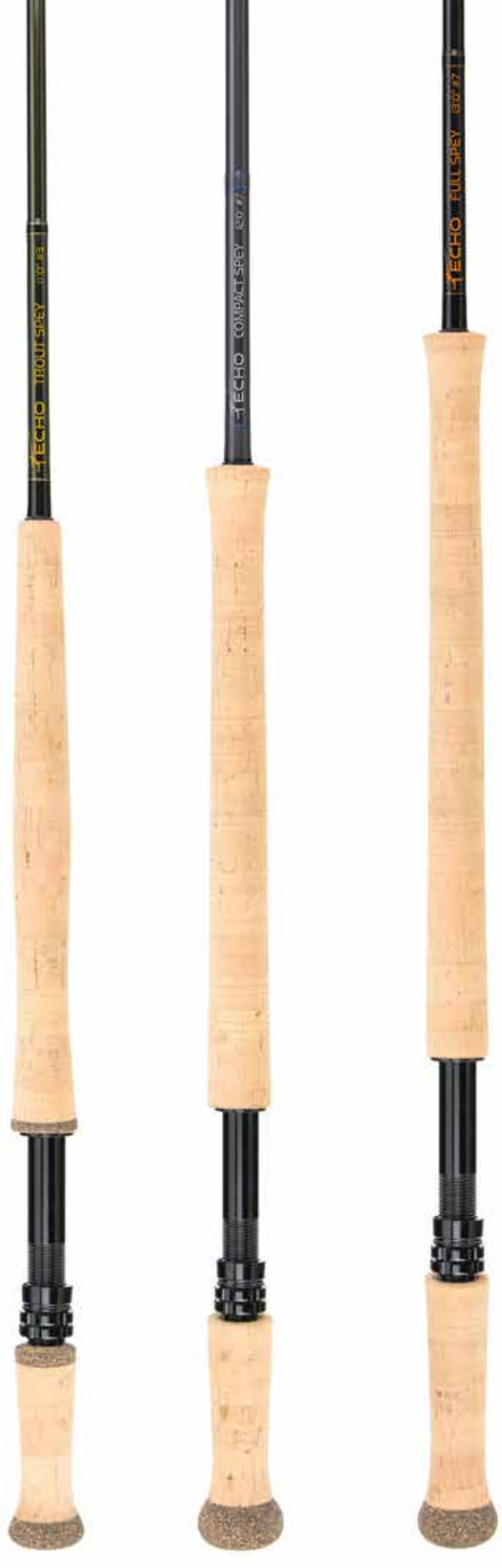

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SMALLMOUTH

ON THE SWING

By Rick Kustich

A smallmouth bass was the first gamefish I ever caught. It wasn't big, only about nine or ten inches, but to a very young boy it was quite the trophy. Although my big catch occurred over fifty years ago, I still remember it quite vividly. I was much too young to fish the swift waters of the Niagara river alone, so my Mom would take me to the end of our road to fish off an old cement pier during summer vacation. I was fortunate to have so many family members that helped forge my life-long passion for fishing.

Chasing smallmouth is something that I have fit into my fishing schedule every year since my first catch. The pursuit began with bait and moved into spinners and jigs. By the age of ten I had developed a successful jig making business, selling to members of a local fishing club along with a neighborhood tackle store. My uncle voluntarily served as my head salesman.

Once my fishing morphed exclusively into fly fishing, casting baitfish and crayfish fly patterns to smallmouth quickly followed. I learned to appreciate the aggressive feeding behavior of a smallmouth that is often combined with a sense of cunning and caution. Smallmouth can provide action anywhere in the water column and the excitement of a big bass stalking a popper on the surface before engulfing the fly will never get old.

In the Great Lakes region, smallmouth often move up the rivers and streams entering the lakes each spring to feed and spawn. Their arrival typically coincides with the waning of the of spring steelhead fishing as a few straggler chrome fish continue to enter and spent steelhead drop back out. Almost by accident, while spring steelheading, we found that smallmouth are suckers for a swung fly. Their heavy grab and strong fight can fool you into thinking you are connected to a broadsided steelhead. I'll admit to initially being disappointed at times after realizing that I hooked a smallmouth instead of a steelhead. But never forgetting my roots and life-long fascination with this species, I appreciate and embrace every opportunity to tangle with this sought-after game fish.

Throughout the East, Midwest and even western parts of North America there are numerous rivers that host significant smallmouth populations. Many of these rivers are of a size that can be covered by swinging techniques. Spey fishing for smallmouth provides a great opportunity to work on your casting while employing a range of techniques. Properly covering smallmouth structure has its own set of challenges and rewards. Fly fishing for smallmouth has gained popularity in recent years and fly shops such as Schultz Outfitters in Michigan and others have built successful guiding operations around fly fishing for smallmouth bass.

EQUIPMENT

My preference is to use a rod that matches up best with the size of a smallmouth to fully enjoy

the connection and fight. Lighter switch rods are my first choice for most waters with the exception of big rivers where longer casts can be beneficial. For big rivers, a light twelve to twelve-and-a-half-foot rod built for a six or seven weight will still match up well to a stout smallmouth while handling a range of tips and flies. Swinging for smallmouth can be the perfect situation to breakout the one-hand Spey rod allowing for more versatility in techniques and a connection to the fish that is similar to fishing a single-hand rod. But be sure the chosen rod has sufficient backbone as a big smallmouth will put up a strong battle.

Skagit lines offer the most versatility when swinging for bass since tips and weighted flies are often required to cover specific holding structure. Floating heads looped to a running line will work well in most situations but a floating head and running line integrated into a single line has its advantages when stripping the fly all the way back to the tip. A loop at the front of the head or full line allows for easy exchange of sink-tips for quick sink-rate adjustments to match various water types. And don't forget the floating tip—in lower summer flows smallmouth can be quite active on the surface. A full floating head with an integrated front taper may be preferred for surface fishing.

I tend to use longer leaders when fishing for smallmouth than when rigged for steelhead or salmon. It seems that keeping the fly further away from the tip results in more grabs. My leaders will typically be four to six feet in length and even longer in very clear conditions. A weighted fly allows the offering to sink at a similar rate as the tip even when utilizing a long leader. When using a floating line or tip, the leader length is about nine to ten feet. Smallmouth seem to be tippet shy, especially in clear water conditions. While I don't use fluorocarbon much in my swing game, I have found it to be a benefit in clear water or for smallmouth that receive heavy fishing pressure.

TECHNIQUE

The swing approach is typically about water coverage without the need to make precise placements of the fly. But when pursuing smallmouth accurate casts to specific structure can really count. Make sure that the line, tip, and fly turnover straight with little or no slack in order to get the fly swimming immediately. Since I often use a weighted fly when fishing for bass, my basic casting stroke will incorporate a continuous or sustained anchor to keep the fly on the surface. Throwing good energy into the D-loop and using a heavy bottom hand on the forward stroke generates line speed and assists in turning the weighted fly over with a straight leader. Touch and go casts are efficient when using a floating line or tip and a surface fly.

Structure and bait are the two factors I think about when trying to locate smallmouth in a river. Smallmouth relate to a wide range of structural elements for both security and to find sources of food: logs, brush piles, drop-offs, ledges, reefs, boulders, weed beds and even man-made structures such as break walls and pilings. It is best to focus your efforts in and around water that contains a sufficient amount of these elements. This may cause you to cover water a bit differently than you might if fishing for steelhead or salmon. Extra focus should be placed on the best structure, you might skip past other water that has less features. And when you find a fish focus on that area. Smallmouth have a tendency to school up and if you find one chances are you will find more.

Smallmouth have a wide pallet and can adapt to various food sources. Shiners, crawfish, leeches, aquatic insects and a wide array of other baitfish can all be part of a smallmouth's diet. It is to your advantage to have a working knowledge of the basic food sources of the water that you fish, which will assist in locating bass at different times of the year. There are instances when smallmouth leave the safety of a piece of structure to chase bait in small ravenous packs. This often entails chasing bait to the top and feeding on or just below the surface, creating the perfect opportunity for swinging a surface fly.

I HAVE GENERALLY FOUND THAT MAINTAINING A SLOW, DELIBERATE SWING SPEED PRODUCES MORE RESPONSE FROM SMALLMOUTH THAN ALLOWING THE FLY TO SWING TOO QUICKLY.

The presentation of the fly for smallmouth typically begins with targeting specific structure. This may require dropping a cast along a log-jam, tucking the fly up underneath an overhang or sinking a fly along a jagged ledge. Getting to the structure may require reaching the proper depth. Colder water conditions typically keep smallmouth positioned close to the bottom. Bass focused on bottom dwelling food sources such as crawfish will also be positioned low in the water column. In rivers, smallmouth often use the softer current along the floor to rest while using less energy. Utilizing the proper tip and weighted fly, along with a large mend or two immediately after the cast, will assist in gaining that proper depth.

Simply allowing the fly to swing out while managing the speed through mending or soft adjustments to the belly of the line is a productive approach for smallmouth. Like most predators, the fleeing meal entices the fish's instincts to chase. I have generally found that maintaining a slow, deliberate swing speed produces more response from smallmouth than allowing the fly to swing too quickly. When fish are in the mood for a very slow presentation I may use a combination of upstream mending and pointing the rod tip at the opposite bank. This approach reduces swing speed by changing the angle of the swing—the fly is held back spending more time in each current lane as it travels across the river.

A straight swing isn't always the most effective way to entice a smallmouth; adding action to the fly may be required to gain interest from a reluctant bass. A short, sharp strip or even a quick bump with the line hand makes the fly dart and move in a way that can get the attention of a smallmouth. After the strip, the line can be released back to maintain the same length of line or stripped again to effectively shorten the swing path. Both methods can be effective and I prefer a lengthy interval between strips since smallmouth will often eat on the pause.

A slow crawling retrieve can also be used with the swing and can be an effective approach for fish that are not reacting aggressively. This approach combined with a fly that has the hook point riding up can really work the bottom layer of the water column.

Be sure to put extra effort into the hang down, especially when the fly swims into good structure at the end of the swing. Slowly working the fly with long strips until the head is at the tip of the rod or even into the tip can be quite productive. It makes sense to vary the retrieve as short, sharp strips can also be productive. With either approach, pausing between strips typically works

best.

Adding some action to flies fished on the surface is also preferred. With the rod pointed slightly up moving the tip back and forth and then pausing gives the fly a twitching motion. A short, quick strip and pause also creates a similar movement. I generally anticipate the smallmouth engulfing the fly while at rest.

An important thing that I learned from pursuing smallmouth with a single hand rod is fly placement, along with the retrieve and fly movement, is typically more important than the fly pattern. When swinging for smallmouth, varying the presentation can make all the difference when the fishing is slow.

Smallmouth tend to eat a fly differently than what is typically experienced with a steelhead or salmon. While some grabs will be powerful, many others will be quite subtle and feel as though a slight weight has been added to the end of the line. This type of grab should be met with a firm strip while slowly raising the rod into a deep bend. The strip set is a much more effective way to bury the hook into a smallmouth than setting with the rod. If the fly is pulled from the fish's mouth during the strip set, it should remain in eye sight of the fish where it may be eaten again, however, a big rod set pulls the fly from the smallmouths' view.

ONE OF THE MOST ENJOYABLE ASPECTS OF FLY FISHING IS THAT THERE IS ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW TO KEEP IT FRESH.

I maintain a deep bend in the rod all through the fight. If a smallmouth gains any slack during the battle it can easily throw the hook. Maintaining a deep bend helps in keeping the line tight if the fish quickly changes directions.

FLIES

Smallmouth flies tend to fall into two categories – imitative or suggestive. Imitative patterns incorporate the color and size of popular food sources. Fly patterns that are suggestive have good movement in the water but are not typically tied to represent a specific food source. In the spring I catch smallmouth on almost any of my main steelhead flies that incorporate marabou, rabbit strips, Arctic fox or other materials that move well in the current.

When specifically targeting smallmouth on the swing, I rely on standard bass patterns that I also use when stripping flies with a single-hand rod.

The Clouser Minnow developed by Pennsylvania smallmouth guide and expert Bob Clouser is a go-to pattern. It is a very versatile fly that can be tied in various sizes and color combinations to represent a wide range of natural bait. It also reminds me of tying the hair jigs that I first constructed as a kid. The dumbbell eyes on the top of the shank allows the hook to ride up and varying the size of the eyes assists in controlling depth and sink rate. I tie this pattern with bucktail and also synthetics such as Farrar's Flash Blend.

Another realistic fly that has a great swimming action while swinging is Blane Chocklett's Game Changer. This pattern is tied on a series of small shanks to assist in creating an incredible swimming movement. It can be tied with feathers or a range of synthetic materials or brushes in colors and sizes that match up with the natural bait in a particular river.

A variety of sculpins, marabous, woolly buggers and bunny buggers are also effective for smallmouth and easy to tie. I typically use dumbbell eyes to control depth and properly cover the structure. Using ample materials on these patterns provides a good silhouette and movement in the water. I sometimes add rubber legs for additional action on the swing and strip.

Deer hair, foam head or painted wood head poppers, divers and gliders combined with flash, feathers, bucktail and rubber legs all work with a swinging fly approach. These style flies can be swung and twitched to give the appearance of a wounded, struggling food source. Mike Schultz's Swinging D pattern can be used on the swing while providing an enticing action, as its diver-style foam head will break the surface with a short strip.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of fly fishing is that there is always something new to keep it fresh. Swinging flies for smallmouth has added another fun and captivating layer to the swing game.

Rick Kustich is a fly fishing author, photographer and instructor. In 2013 he released his fifth fly fishing title, ***Advanced Fly Fishing for Great Lakes Steelhead***. Rick's work has appeared in numerous publications. He has also spent time as a fly fishing guide, shop owner and book publisher. After traveling extensively to experience the finest fishing throughout North America and beyond, he continues to find that some of the best fishing often exists in one's own backyard.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

with Cameron Scarth

I've always had an interest in art and the outdoors. From an early age I connected to the skills of drawing and painting. Soon after I began university at OCAD in downtown Toronto, I stumbled my way into a job at a wilderness resort on the west coast of Vancouver Island for my summers.

I discovered fly fishing there, under the tutelage of a very close friend who introduced me to the wild and wonderful creature that is the steelhead. I slowly worked my way up through the ranks of guides, and after seven seasons on the island, I decided to move north in pursuit of a gig guiding anglers for Steelhead in Skeena country. I ended up with a job at Babine Norlakes, and guided a couple seasons on the Dean with BCWest.

The intense guiding seasons don't afford a lot of time to paint but there is a tremendous amount of inspiration that comes from spending time in these places. My painting

time was relegated to the winters, where cold days were spent creating art and fly tying, and the warmer days were spent chasing fish near Terrace.

My art has always been a reflection of the other passions and obsessions in my life, but fishing, in particular, has been a rich source of inspiration. I think that because there are so many fleeting moments in our sport, there is a huge desire to preserve those moments—whether it's a moment spent staring at the mountains as our fly swings through a broad tailout or the way the light hits the trees and reflects the scene on the water in front of us or the beauty of the fish we pursue. Ours is a pursuit of beauty. I'm trying to distill these moments.

-Cameron Scarth

Find more of Cameron's work at:
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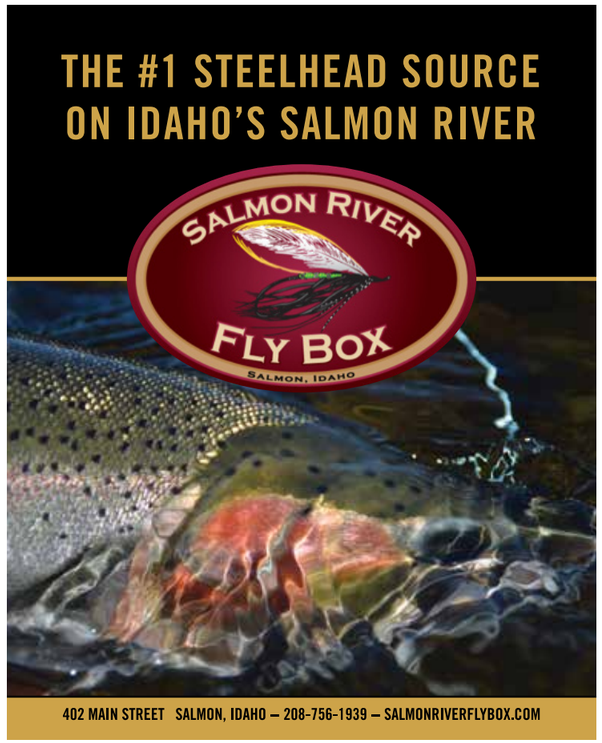

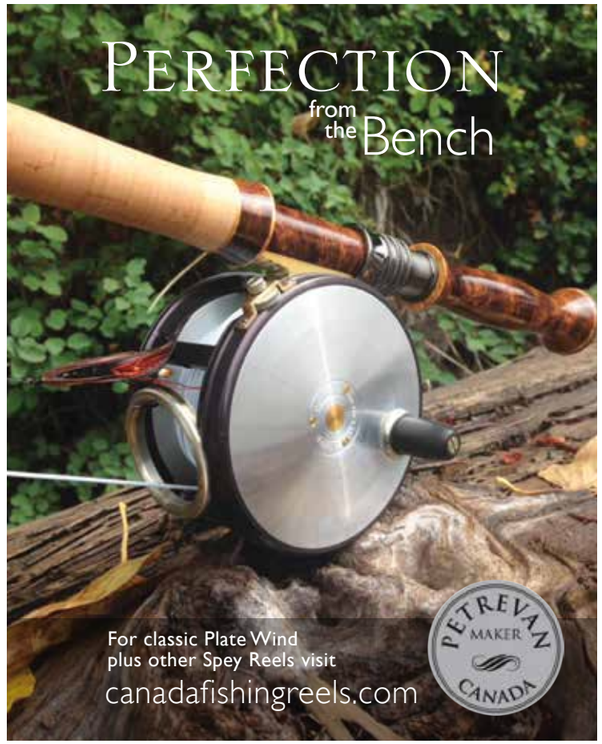

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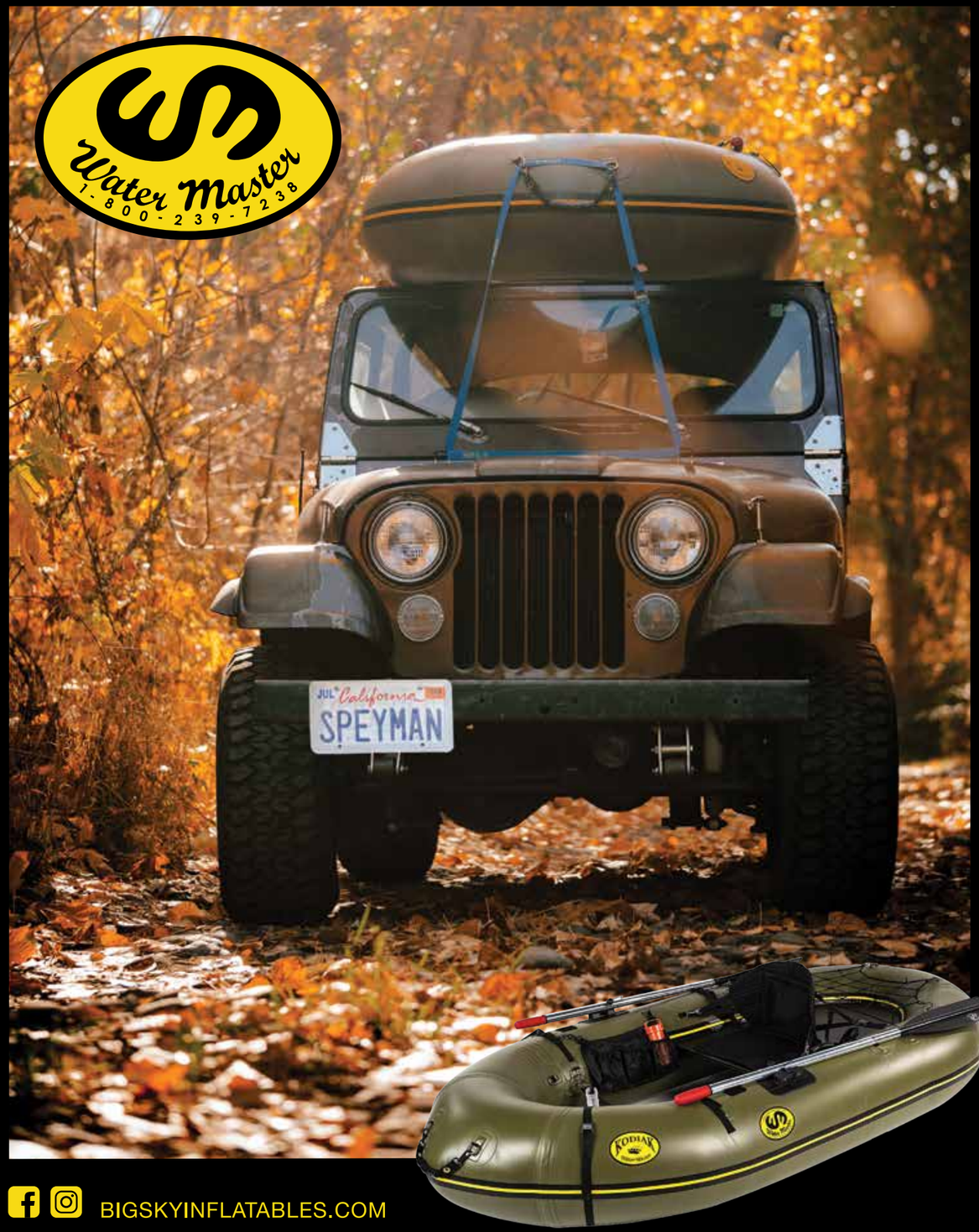

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ATLANTIC SALMON FISHING IN MICHIGAN

History & Recent Developments

By Dr. Wally Balcerzak

Almost a mile long and a half mile wide of rocks, boulders, gravel, fast current and clean, cold water - the Saint Marys rapids—combining to make ideal habitat for all species of salmonids. What a beautiful and wonderful fishery—home to three species of Pacific salmon, resident trout and steelhead in addition to our target quarry—the magnificent Atlantic salmon (Salmo Salar). Michigan has persisted in efforts to raise and stock Atlantic salmon for over thirty years in the St. Marys and elsewhere; this story begins with the how and why.

BACKGROUND

Currently Michigan is the only state in the Great Lakes region actively involved in developing Atlantic salmon sport fishing opportunities. Efforts have been ongoing since the establishment of the Aquatics Research Laboratory (ARL) at Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. For over thirty years the lab has been managed by Roger Greil, who worked collaboratively with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), sharing his insights and findings.

The original Aquatic Research Laboratory (ARL) was established over 40 years ago at the east end of the (then) Edison Sault Electric hydroelectric power plant at the conjuncture of Lake Superior and Lake Huron.

The most unusual aspect of the lab is that it is provided with 270 gallons per minute of pure Lake Superior water that flows beneath the facility. The supply is virtually unlimited and it flows through the lab continually. This water is gravity fed, untreated Lake Superior water that retains high oxygen levels throughout the year, crucial for the hatchery's rearing activities.

From the onset the ARL was a joint venture, with space (and water access) donated by the power company and supported by faculty and staff at LSSU and the MDNR. During the early years the ARL raised various fish species and conducted water quality monitoring. In 1984 the ARL began work with the MDNR to develop a program of rearing and stocking Atlantic salmon into the Michigan waters of Lake Superior, and the first fish stocking was carried out in 1987.

By 1990 there were numerous reports of mature Atlantic salmon being caught in the St. Marys River. Over the years the ARL continued to learn more and more about these majestic game fish. Most years have resulted in the successful stocking of 30-40,000 yearling Atlantics directly into the waters of the St. Marys River.

Dr. Rod Hanley, LSSU President, say that an emphasis on freshwater ecology has long been a focus at LSSU. Intuitively, this makes sense as LSSU is uniquely located at the confluence of three of the five Great Lakes—Superior, Michigan and Huron.

Hanley says There have been a large number of LSSU graduates who were trained at the hatchery and now make up a large portion of the fisheries staff of the MDNR. After all, very few hatcheries are run by students, perhaps no other hatchery is run by undergraduates. A high percentage of MDNR fisheries staff will retire in the coming

years—LSSU wants to continue to send well qualified candidates to carry on the fine work of the MDNR fisheries programs.

Roger Greil, Director of the CFRE Hatchery, says the initial push for the hatchery was to promote tourism and recreation in the area and to stimulate the local economy. The partnership that fostered the development of the Aquatics Research Laboratory (ARL) was a three-way cooperative effort by Lake Superior State University (LSSU), the host facility (originally Edison Sault Electric Company, now Cloverland Electric Cooperative) and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR).

The MDNR provides professional support for the fisheries program, food for the fish and help with anything to do with the fish, which are actually the possession of the MDNR. LSSU provides for Mr. Greil's salary, provides the ARL with a budget and financial support and the students needed to run the hatchery. The main goal of the hatchery is training students. The by-product of this training is the production of fish that are available for stocking.

There are challenges in working with students while running a production hatchery. The major challenge is the continual training of students each year, sometimes twice per year. Rather than having full time staff that may stay several years, there is a constant need to train new students. The ARL is a small facility and there are no MA/PhD candidates in lead roles at the facility. The undergrads are involved in the entire operation. Despite challenges, Roger is proud of the CFRE hatchery's success. He looks out the door of the lab and sees anglers pursuing these mighty game fish.

The MDNR has recently expanded the Atlantic salmon program using state hatchery facilities. These additions allow for a greatly increased capacity over what can be accomplished by the ARL alone. The question was, can Atlantic salmon be raised on a larger scale to increase the opportunity to fish for Atlantics in other waters of Michigan? After a number of years, at times faced with disappointments, the answer is yes, MDNR hatcheries can successfully rear and stock large numbers of Atlantic salmon.

By combining the production of the CFRE hatchery, which releases approximately 30,000 yearlings annually, along with the expanded capacity from the MDNR hatchery system, which will add 180,000 yearlings, the fishery will now stock over 200,000 yearlings annually. Fish are

Photo courtesy of John Giuliani

stocked at the CFRE hatchery and also at three other locations in the Lake Huron basin: the Au Sable River; the Thunder Bay River and the harbor at the Port of Lexington.

THE FISH

One hundred Atlantic salmon are weighed and measured every two weeks from each container (raceway) to help determine food needs and fish density. During the egg taking and fertilization process, each female is paired with one male and all eggs are checked for bacterial kidney disease before they advance in the rearing process. At least 100 pairs of salmon are spawned every year. Originally the majority of the eggs were obtained from a landlocked strain of Atlantics from West Grand Lake in Maine. Since 2003 the hatchery has used their own returning fish as brood stock for the egg collection and fertilization process.

Roger says Atlantic salmon are a good species for training students about the hatchery production of fish for stocking into Michigan waters. Atlantic salmon were initially selected because they were not established or present in any great numbers in the upper Great Lakes. While challenging to rear, these fish are excellent for training students in hatchery production. During one calendar year students can gain experience rearing fish for the entire 18 months of their hatchery life, from egg taking all the way to releasing yearling fish in the St. Marys River. This is because there are actually two year-classes of fish present at times during the year. In raising Atlantic salmon, the year begins with egg and milt taking from mature fish returning to the hatchery area. Eggs taken in November, 2018 will be nurtured through the entire rearing process until June of 2020. This timeline gives students all the experiences from egg taking to the release of yearling salmon, in one calendar year.

Atlantic Salmon egg-taking operation. Dr. Wally Balcerzak photo

Atlantics are a good species for teaching all phases of hatchery production but you have to treat them right. Roger told me that Atlantics are more fragile than other salmon species. He tells the students, "If you give them an excuse to die, they will take it!" He has learned the hard way that these fish must have an optimal environment at all times. It's imperative to minimize stress. Fish are reared at a much lower density than is typical for Pacific salmon. Raceways are kept covered as much as possible. Efforts are made to control water chemistry to keep gases at safe levels for the fish. Whatever they can control, they do control, to minimize stress. Any necessary changes are made very gradually, to facilitate successful adaptation.

Atlantic salmon do not tolerate environmental changes very well. They were extirpated from most of their natal streams on the East Coast in the 1880s. The MDNR was able to be very patient with Roger's program, there were many problems and disappointments early on. If production had been a higher priority, they would probably be raising a different species by now. Thankfully the powers that be were patient with the process, it has resulted in enormous benefits.

WHY STOCK ATLANTICS IN THE GREAT LAKES?

Randall M. Claramunt is the MDNR Lake Huron Basin Coordinator—in charge of the fisheries programs of the entire Lake Huron watershed. He says the MDNR has recently decided, after careful consideration and programmatic research, that the time is right to expand Atlantic salmon fishing opportunities in Michigan waters, and in particular the Lake Huron watershed.

In recent years the Lake Huron food web has been dramatically altered. This has been due to a number of invasive species entering the ecosystem, which has toppled the predator/prey dynamic and has forced changes in sport fishing opportunities. To manage this challenge, one strategy has been to increase predator/prey diversity with the aim of hopefully increasing opportunities for anglers, albeit necessitating some changes in angler behavior, given the changes in dynamics. Atlantic salmon are particularly suited to be part of the solution to these changes in Lake Huron. They are unique among salmon in that, like steelhead, they can and do often survive their initial spawning run and may repeat the migration process. They can linger in their spawning grounds then return to the big lake before returning to spawn again the next fall. Of course, this is unlike Pacific salmon that always die after spawning. Atlantics are also more flexible in their dietary preferences and may feed on invertebrates as well as feed on the bottom—where the round gobies (another invasive species) are now feeding on all the zebra and quagga mussels now proliferating in the lake.

Since these mussels have invaded the Great Lakes, they have altered the food web. Instead of large schools of pelagic bait fish (alewives) roaming and feeding on zooplankton, the mussels have outcompeted alewives for food. Gobies feed at the bottom on these mussels. Atlantics can, and have adjusted to these changes and are feeding on the gobies, as are lake trout and walleye. King salmon haven't been as adaptive and their numbers have declined along with the alewife population.

Given all of these changes, the time was right to make more Atlantic salmon available to help fill the void. So, stocking efforts were begun on an exploratory basis 20 years ago. Since 2015 stocking activity has expanded lake wide, and the timing was perfect to increase the availability of Atlantic salmon. When the dominant king salmon were present in great numbers due to a plethora of alewives, there was no room for Atlantics.

When did the MDNR's Atlantic experimental expansion become an official program? For close to 40 years the hatchery at LSSU has successfully reared Atlantics, though some years have been met with setbacks. But Roger Greil, the directors and the students have kept learning about these magnificent fish. There has also been exploratory stocking of Atlantic salmon in inland lakes over the years. As a result of all these experiences, a great deal of information about Atlantics has accumulated regarding rearing, feeding, fish health and stocking success. The data on returns has been impressive and show that expansion ef-

Many Midwest steelheaders will have trouble as old habits tend to die hard, that was the case for me. Especially in the beginning or for the first trip, a guide is a worthwhile expense. Guide John Giuliani with his fresh 20 lb. Atlantic salmon, July 7,2018.

Emailjohngiuliani123@gmail.com or call 906-203-9112

forts have been successful. Atlantic salmon are now a major predator in Lake Huron, making it an easy decision for the MDNR—they now have an Atlantic salmon program, it is no longer exploratory.

Recent returns of mature fish have been exciting. Many returning to spawn are over 30 inches in length, which my walleye/steelhead gauge says is a fish weighing about 10lb. Awesome eh?

THE FISHING

The St. Marys River is extremely unique—it is the outflow of Lake Superior water into Lake Huron. The deep, clear Superior providing cold, gin-clear water year-round. Two-handed rods are ideal when fishing this large river system.

John Giuliani has been guiding on the St. Marys for over 30 years, basically for the entire length of the Atlantic salmon program. John says steelhead in the fall are hard to beat—they are fresh from the lake and feisty as they can be. But Atlantic salmon caught on a swung fly are the supreme fly fishing experience. They jump repeatedly and make strong runs, landing them often requiring a great deal of finesse. There are plenty of differences in fishing for St. Marys' Atlantics as opposed to steelhead. Steelhead and Pacific salmon tend to hug the bottom, so the most effective presentations are those that place the fly or lure right in front of the fish's nose. Atlantic salmon look up, so often the most effective fly presentation is with a long leader and floating fly line, to keep the fly near the surface, even in fast water. John says, in recent years, more and more clients come prepared to fish with two-handed Spey or switch rods, which are particularly effective as opposed to single hand rods in the St. Marys Rapids.

Atlantic salmon spawn in the fall, usually around the first week of November. However, bright fish can and do show up in the river much earlier. John hooked, fought and landed a chrome bright 20 lb. Atlantic just last summer. The battle took place in the rapids on July 7, 2018. I asked John about harvesting or retaining fish. His opinion was that though there is some natural reproduction, the fishery is quite dependent on the annual stocking program, both at LSSU and by the MDNR. As a result, there is really no harm in retaining a fish and they are said to be delicious. John says the fishery is strong and the future looks good for the Atlantics in the St. Marys River.

One way that Atlantics in Michigan differ from ocean run Atlantics is that John believes that in the transition to fresh water the ocean run fish stop actively feeding, the strike then is just a reflex. The St. Marys salmon continue to feed actively after entering the river—there is no transition from fresh to salt. So, caddis patterns, minnow imitations and traditional Atlantic salmon flies all are effective.

CONCLUSION

Atlantic salmon are here to stay in the waters of Michigan. It's a success story, dedicated professionals have worked hard on this major accomplishment. The fishery is thriving and great catches are being reported for all stocking locations. For me, the St. Marys River is special. It's big water and as John's catch of last year can attest, it yields big fish. The rapids provide ample opportunities to fish with a Spey rod, and depending on the time of year and which fish are present, you may have opportunities to fight and hopefully land an Atlantic salmon, a steelhead and either a pink or king salmon, potentially even in the same trip!

Dr. Wally Balcerzak—since retiring from the private practice of psychology in 2015 Dr. Wally Balcerzak has devoted more time and energy in pursuing his passion—stream fishing for steelhead and salmon. These pursuits have included fishing many streams in the Western Great lakes region, as well as streams on the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska. He often writes articles about these adventures and many have appeared in Salmon, Trout, Steelheader and the Great Lakes Angler magazines. Recently Wally has become an enthusiastic supporter of Atlantic salmon rearing/ stocking programs managed by fisheries professionals in the state of Michigan.

LABRADOR

By Jerry Darkes

It is thought that the name Labrador comes from one of the early Europeans to reach its shores, the Portuguese explorer, Joao Fernandez Lavrador who arrived there in 1499/1500. It was also applied to several areas meaning “land of the laborer.” Regardless, getting there and fishing requires plenty of labor by both guides and anglers to be successful. Part of Canada’s newest province, Newfoundland, Labrador is the easternmost part of North America.

Geologically, Labrador is part of the Canadian Shield and is made up of some of the earth’s oldest rock. The climate is a combination of polar and subarctic. Depending on where you are, the landscape is that of boreal forest or tundra. Plant and animal diversity are low. The human population density is around a half a person per square mile.

We flew out of Wabush, near the Quebec border. The Canadian Iron Ore Company has a significant mining operation there. One of the world’s largest hydro-electric projects is on the Churchill river, forming Smallwood Reservoir. At over I million acres and with 1800 miles of shoreline, this is one of the largest man-made reservoirs in the world.

Our final destination was the McKenzie River Lodge at the outlet of Andre Lake. The McKenzie is a relatively short 30 miles in length, flowing into the Smallwood Reservoir. Landlocked salmon and brook trout migrate up the river into Andre Lake and its headwaters that include the Quartzite and Comeback Rivers. We were there to interrupt that journey.

This is a physically demanding place. The wading was among the most difficult I’ve ever encountered, with hard, angular and slippery rock. Metal studs or bars are a must, as well as a good wading staff. You need to decide which is better, having wind—which makes fishing harder, but keeps insects away—or do you want less wind and more bugs? I would opt for the wind.

Swinging and skating flies produced plenty of fish—brook trout of all sizes, pike when you got into slower water, lake trout (even in August they were in the shallows) and the very elusive landlocked salmon. Various baitfish patterns worked, but there are definite lodge favorites.

Mouse patterns and traditional Bombers drew fish to the surface.

Switch rods and longer single-hand rods in seven to eight weights were ideal. I used an Airflo Streamer Switch line most of time with various poly-leaders and light sink-tips. These were adjusted depending on the type of fly and current speed being fished. Water levels were high due to a late spring, so fish were spread out.

The lodge takes four to six persons per week. You need to bring everything for the week along when you fly in. The guides are very knowledgeable and among the hardest working I've seen anywhere. The land is harsh and unforgiving. The fishing is challenging. I'll be going back.

Jerry Darkes has five plus decades of fly fishing experience in both fresh and saltwater. His travels have taken him to a variety of fly fishing locations around the globe. Darkes is recently retired from nearly 30 years as an on-road sales rep for a group of well-known fly tackle manufacturers. He plans to focus on fly fishing writing and travel. His third book, *Fly Patterns of the Midwest and Great Lakes*, should be on the market next winter.

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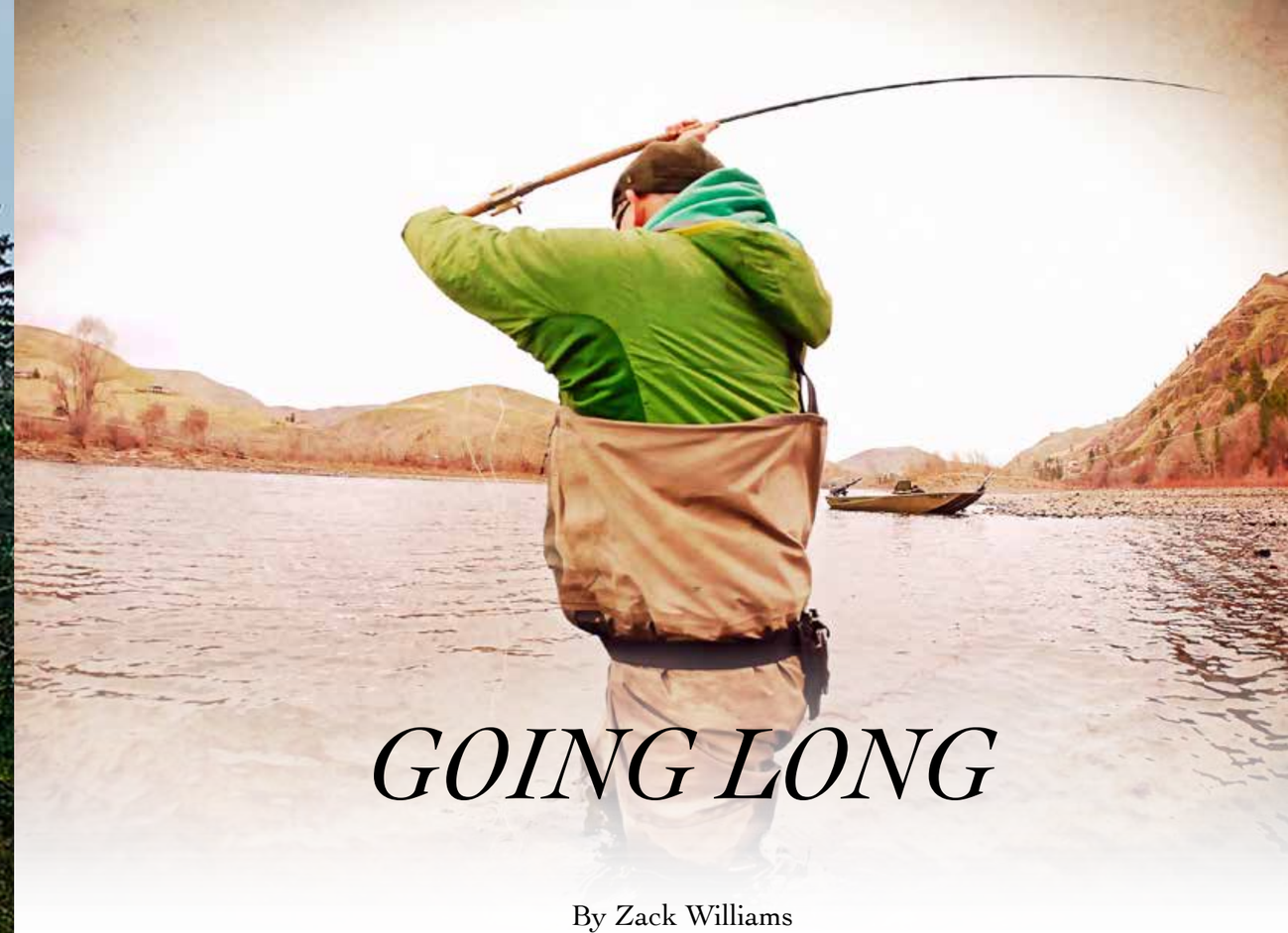


GOING LONG

By Zack Williams
Photos by Bruce Kruk

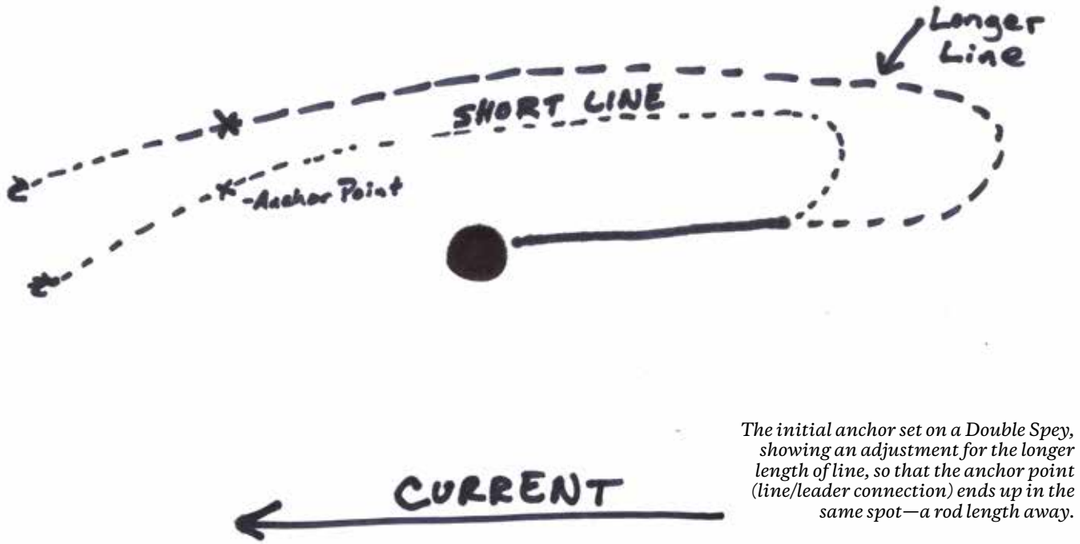
MAKING THE TRANSITION TO A LONGER SPEY LINE.

Trends in the Spey world come and go. What was once in vogue is soon outdated and replaced by something new and exciting or sometimes, something old and exciting. The short-line craze took the world by storm—Skagits, Scandis and so on—all the rage. Lines kept getting shorter. Well, to some extent, the tides have again turned. More and more disciples of the short line, who started and learned on them, have started to pick up mid-Speys and long lines in their growth as Spey anglers. It is exciting to see this desire for growth and knowledge within the sport, keeping things fresh and new. We are fortunate to have a plethora of line options available now, from ultra-short to long, you can choose to use any one on any given day based on conditions or whims.

But making a transition to a longer Spey line from a short Skagit or Scandi head can be intimidating. The first casts can feel like all work and no fun, many give up soon after. Understanding how to adapt your casting can ease the transition and bring new-found joy to your fishing.

The Anchor

Oh boy, here we go again. For those who have been with Swing the Fly from the start, the broken-record that is my casting advice continues to screech. Given that we have moved to a longer Spey-line, we need to make adjustments to place our anchor in the correct position—a rod length away.



The initial anchor set on a Double Spey, showing an adjustment for the longer length of line, so that the anchor point (line/leader connection) ends up in the same spot—a rod length away.

For waterborne-anchor casts (Snap-t, Double Spey, etc.), we need to move more line to get our anchor point—our point of reference (I like to watch the where my Spey line connects to my leader or sink tip)—a rod length away. On the Double-Spey, you will need to drag/toss your line further upriver to achieve this position. On the Snap-t, you need to add a little more "snap" on the under portion of the movement to achieve the correct positioning. This simple adjustment will take you a long way towards working a longer line. Stay smooth and watch your anchor straighten to your target on the sweep before beginning the forward stroke, and you'll be alright.

For touch-and-go casts, we again have more line to move. The key is going to be a clean lift (see below) and then getting a little longer with your rod tip path as opposed to going harder and faster. On the Snake Roll, increase the size of the "snake." On the Single Spey, well, see below, the lift is everything ... always.

The Lift

The first step in the Spey cast is perhaps the most crucial part ... and the most overlooked part. With a short line, a poor lift doesn't help, but it can be overcome ... because the line is short enough, there isn't much to lift off the water. Not so with the longer line.

The lift's role is to clear the line from the water's tension, so you can then cast it. On a good lift, the rod tip, starting at the surface of the river and pointing towards the line, very slowly climbs straight into the air, without creeping towards the caster. You should be watching the line "peel" from the water's surface. The peel should be gentle, if there is spray associated with it, you are going too fast. For that matter, do a nice slow lift, then assume you are still going too fast and again go half that speed. (If you want a visual reference, watch videos of six-time champion Gerard Downey at Spey-O Rama). The lift is complete when you see the end of your line start to move towards you, in time you will also be able to feel that it is "free" from water tension. Now you can begin your sweep, smoothly accelerating into a clean anchor; fire away with the same smooth stroke you have been using with every other line.

The Setup/Sweep

Long lines can be cast with a fairly compact forward stroke but a longer one will aid in moving the longer line without the feeling of having to "hit" the cast. Note: longer stroke means your rod tip moves a greater distance, not neccessarily getting your arms moving all over the place—keep your elbows tight to your body (in the box). Flattening out the sweep will finish in a better key rod position (more angle behind you—think 9:30 instead of 10 o'clock).

For touch and go casts, the benefits of drifting upwards before your anchor sets will be enormous—just remember to drift with both hands and not just the top! Resist the urge to hit the forward cast harder. Stay smooth and a let the rod work.

A Note on Tackle

Any Spey rod is capable of casting a properly matched Spey line. That said, some rods may be more suited to longer lines than others. A rod that has a stronger (stiffer) tip will be more capable of cleanly lifting the line from the water than a rod with a soft, flexible (weak) tip. (Hint: if you stick with Swing the Fly sponsors, you will be in good shape on rods.)

The old-adage was that a "long belly" line was at least five times the rod length. I'll be honest and say I don't give much thought to how my line and rod are defined. I prefer to stay under that 5x definition. So, for me, a line in the 60'-68' (4-4.5 times rod length) range is pretty comfortable on a 15' rod. For a 13' rod, I'd think closer to 50'-55'. Don't get too caught up in definitions or exact specs, if it works ... it works.

Making gradual steps up in line length is easier than big leaps. (For instance, jumping from a 15' Skagit to a 65' head might be very challenging, whereas a step from a 35' Scandi to a 50' head might be fairly simple.)

Making it Sing

Proceed at your own risk. Dialing in a rod and line combo can be one of the most rewarding, fun aspects of Spey casting. But it can cost your bank account a bit too. Be careful with the advice I give here and don't come calling if you ruin a line.

Many longer spey lines come as full, integrated lines, although some also come as shooting heads. Regardless, the absolute best performance will come as a head. The reason being: friction. Friction as you release line to shoot the cast changes the physics of the line in flight. A head with thin, slick mono shooting line essentially eliminates that friction.

If a line I like comes as an integrated line, I

Above: The best Spey caster in the world. Lots can be learned from watching Gerard Downey cast, whether you like a long line or a short one. A couple easy takeaways are: how effortless he makes distance look, there is no harder and faster involved, and he never looks rushed; his lift is the slowest on the planet—and his casts go the farthest.

Below: Bruce Kruk drifts both of his arms upward while watching and waiting for his anchor to touch down on a Single Spey. Notice how his bottom hand is out in front of his body, creating a good rod angle and longer forward stroke (as opposed to being in tight and underneath his top hand).

Joe O'Brien uses a nice, flat lower leg of his snake roll, helping the anchor land perfectly flat as opposed to crashing in a heap.

simply chop it into a head. If you have been casting it for a while as a full line, and know where in the line you typically like at the rod tip when you cast, a good guess would be to take that spot and cut 1' shorter for your head. It takes a bit of time and experience to become comfortable doing this, but advice an be found on the web (try poppysspeycastingforum.forumchitchat.com or speypages.com) that can help reduce the fear of making a mistake.

The best long lines, in my experience, all have rather thick bellies, short back tapers and long front tapers. If the line has a back taper that is visually longer than approximately 10' or so, I would probably put the brakes on and use as is rather than chop it. But, if it does have a thick belly and obvious transition to back taper and then running line, you can cut it at the back of that belly—eliminate the back taper—and create a shooting head. Add some 30-40 lb. monofilament and get after it.

This additionally gives the opportunity to really dial in your setup. Does the line feel a little heavy? Trim six more inches off the back at a time and cast it until you perfect the feel and performance you are after. Is it a little long for you? Maybe trim a little off the front. Be careful, do a little at a time and if you are unsure, put the brakes on.

Preparing for the lift: many Single Speys are in trouble before the cast has even begun. Care must be taken to keep the rod low and steady while retreiving the last few strips of line —bouncing the rod tip around creates slack —the enemy. Make sure your tip is touching the water and the line is dead straight and taught before you start the cast.

Notice how linear Bruce Kruk's elbows, hands and rod are here: He is casting a very long line with a long stroke length, but his arms are not moving all over the place.

Final Thought

Transitioning to the long line doesn't have to be scary. With the right adjustments, and yes, maybe a little practice, your progression as a Spey caster can continue with new-found rewards. And, no, you don't have to give up the short lines either.

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NOT Fishing for Salmon in Iceland

By Thomas J. Snodgrass

My son is 23, and he does not currently fly fish. He has in the past, though not with the obsessive zeal I bring to the pursuit. Four years ago, he found his own obsession: heroin. That's how we are together in Iceland, not fishing for salmon.

This is my third trip to Iceland. The first was a heady, last minute, three-day exercise in new-found-love and jet-lag, with my future wife. My second visit allowed for more time to fish. We'd were there for ten days, during which time we were married. My wife-to-be extended the offer of a few days on the water and I—wisely for once—demurred, preferring to signal that she was more important than a salmon. We were married beside a river holding sea-run browns, at the foot of the Snæfellsjökull Glacier: Jules Verne's portal to the center of the earth.

Though not a tragedy, as someone with more Spey rods than close friends, two trips to Iceland without fishing for Atlantic salmon stings a bit. I've stood on the banks of the West Ranga, the Fossá and the Langa Rivers, and I haven't so much as wet a line. I offset that disappointment with the fact that there are still fishable numbers of Atlantic salmon in Iceland, and that I still have my son.

Addicts mark their sobriety the way new parents track their baby's age: in years, months and days—with less detail as the time gets longer but with no less attachment to its preciousness. I've got over twenty years. My son just got his two-year chip. I'm far more proud, protective and cautious concerning his time than I am of my own, but I am forced to accept the terrifying reality that his sobriety is his own, over which I have no control. My third trip to Iceland is with my son to celebrate his two years of sobriety ... and the fact that he's still alive.

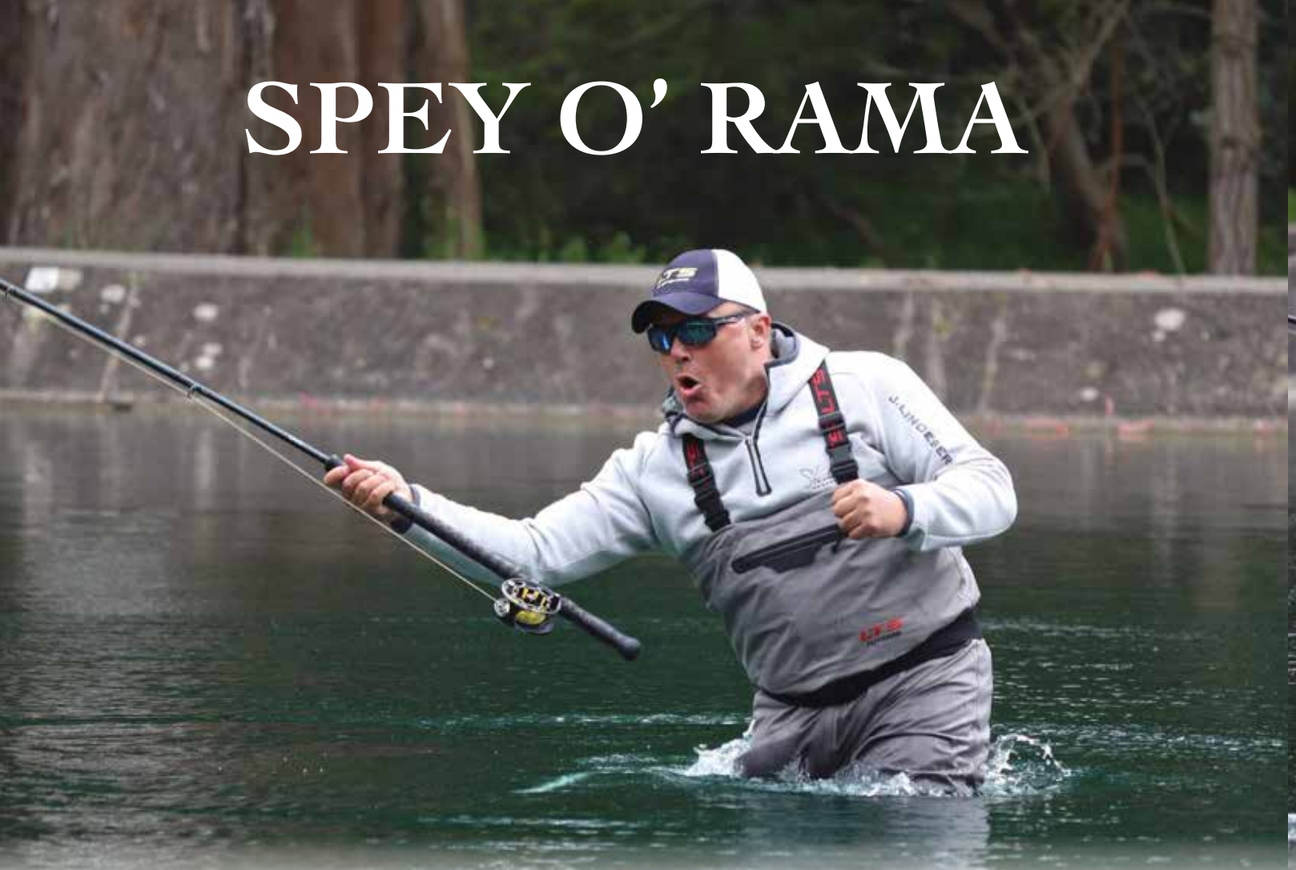
Iceland, after hearing so much about it, is his choice. His spring semester has concluded with a summer job waiting, and it's too early in the year for salmon. We drove to the river in a tricked-out Land Cruiser with balloon tires and three feet of ground clearance, and as we crawled along I watched my own beautiful boy gaze gently out the window, realizing that a world without him in it would be as hard and barren as the passing lava fields that make up so much of Iceland's brutal landscape. The loss of the planet's anadromous fish would be no less final.

Standing in the Varma River with my son watching from the bank, I lay out some line and attempt to knock the rust off my double haul. My son laughs, and he gives me a hard time when I blow my back-cast. I tell him I love him—which sounds a lot like "eat shit."

I realize that he is an exquisite reminder that the future is unwritten and an apt metaphor for our forests and fisheries and the struggles they face. That the things we love—people, anadromous fish and the wild places that sustain both—sometimes require only enough help to allow their resilience to enable their survival. That the window for that help is of often brief and the margin slim, and if missed or misjudged, the loss may be irreparable. I also start thinking about a fourth trip to Iceland.

SPEY O' RAMA

2019 RECAP



Norway's Jarle Strandberg finished strong, in 6th place, his best SOR showing. Photo by Kate Watson

On the women's side, Mia Sheppard returned to action after a several year hiatus, and took 2nd place with limited practice. Photo by Kate Watson

The top Spey casters in the world all solidified their standings in 2019 at Spey O' Rama. Whitney Gould won her 7th women's title, Gerard Downey captured his 6th men's open title and, last but not least, Martin Kiely captured his 3rd senior title.

36 men competed in the open division, along with nine women and 12 seniors. Men's qualifying is Saturday, where the top 10 advance to join the seniors and women competing in Sunday's finals. Each caster gets a two minute warmup and then six minutes to complete each of the four required casts. Three attempts of each cast are allowed and the longest of each is tallied towards the total score. A 40 degree angle change, deep water, and swirling winds add to the challenge.

More info can be found at www.ggacc.org/spey-o-rama

	Caster	Left		Right		
		Snake	Single	Snake	Single	Total
SENIORS	*Ireland* Martin Kiely	149	163	150	169	631
	Serbia Milos Vasiljevic	137	138	141	156	572
	Korea Jeon Lee	129	143	130	134	536
WOMEN	*USA* Whitney Gould	133	129	134	133	529
	USA Mia Sheppard	120	132	126	128	506
	Canada Kara Knight	113	129	128	136	506
MEN'S TOP 10	*Ireland* Gerard Downey	182	178	169	191	720
	Norway Tommy Aarkvisla	163	168	179	185	695
	USA Zack Williams	187	162	170	169	688
	Wales Steven Pugh	168	163	174	169	674
	USA Greg Bencivenga	164	165	161	167	657
	Norway Jarle Strandberg	162	160	175	143	640
	Russia Sergey Kluev	153	153	164	159	629
	Norway Vidar Ness	177	158	154	134	623
	Scotland James Chalmers	152	141	172	155	620
	Russia Vadim Utrobin	170	83	153	153	559

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Purchase with a Purpose

By Travis Johnson

In modern society we are inundated with sales pitches every direction we turn—yes, even in Spey fishing.

They are a ton of great products on the Spey market. There are more quality rods available now than any time before. The thing is, the basic underlying principles of what makes a good rod still haven't changed. So, where in the mountains of the latest and greatest equipment have the gains been made?

There are now rods and lines designed for exact water types and even specific runs and extremely short heads designed for hard to handle places. Where we once learned to adapt and become well-rounded casters and anglers, we now simply spend $1500.00 and all those problems are expected to take care of themselves. Are we better anglers for it?

The needs for specialized equipment has its appeal. I understand the principle more from a golfing standpoint, but the latest and greatest hasn't helped me there either. What I would like to suggest is having a plan for what you need ... and why you need it. If you wish to buy equipment purely based on desire, fair enough. But what about purchasing equipment based on a purely utilitarian view? How often will the new purchase help? How much use will it get? How much of the year is it a viable application? These are what I ask myself. I can also tell you, based on my impulse golf purchases, that no amount of money can replace solid technique and practice.

For a sound, well-rounded equipment purchase, in today's Spey world, a 13' 7wt is tough to beat. Pair it with a modern head system that contains a floating head for surface work and light sink poly-leaders (Scandinavian or mid-belly head), and then add a mid-length Skagit line of 22-24' for deep sunk work. Spey rods under 12' lose power and distance. When we go over 14' they can become cumbersome on smaller streams.

Consider the rivers you fish most often. How big are they? What is the average casting distance needed to fish the largest percentage of water? How many rivers do you fish? How often do you travel for your steelhead fishing?

Those questions in mind, I would rather buy a 13'6" rod for versatility than a 12'6"—based on the amount of water either could fish well. When it comes to reels ... you're on your own. Reels are jewelry for men. We don't buy them rationally so it can't, and doesn't need to, make sense.

I am not saying that all these amazing, modern, highly advanced and technological advancements in carbon and plastics don't have their place. Rather do you have a place for them?

Editor's Note: Travis Johnson's new book, "Contemporary Thoughts on Modern Spey Casting," is available at http://speyfishingoregon.com/

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SPEY FLY NO. 15

The Black Heron from A.E. Knox

By Kate Watson

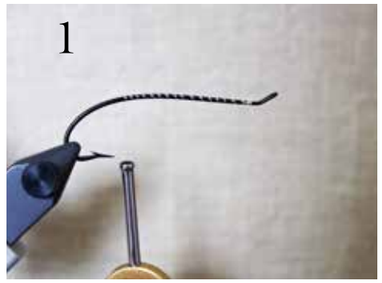
A.E. Knox, who penned ***Autumn's on the Spey*** in 1872, was a British amateur naturalist, author, sportsman and country gentleman who also assisted in founding the British Ornithological Union. ***Autumns on the Spey*** has been revered by Spey anglers, salmon anglers and classic tyers for its unique list of sixteen early Spey flies. It is a book largely based upon letters written by Knox to his friends about his autumns spent Speyside at Gordon Castle along the River Spey. There he recorded, in elegiac penmanship, his adventures as a salmon angler when the Spey was silvered with salmon. He recounts changing landscapes around the river, red deer stalks and delves into naturalism.

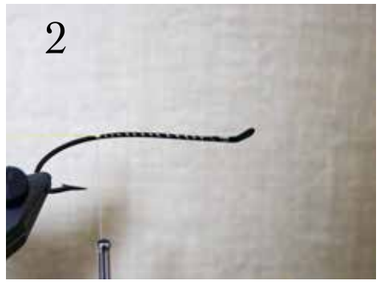
Unique to the time, Knox had classified these sixteen Spey flies into four categories: Kings, Speals, Reeachs and Herons. Perhaps it was his time spent while researching zoology for his many articles, his time building an eminent Sussex bird collection or founding the Ornithological Union that inspired a class system within Spey flies; however, these flies were soon surpassed by the next generation of gaudy Irish patterns from Kelson and Hale. Spey flies were believed to hold peculiarity, with no practicality outside their home rivers by the time the gaudy-era eclipsed the Speys and Dees.

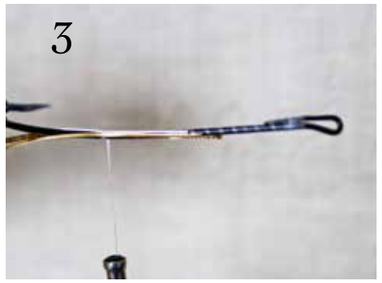
At that time, a Spey fly was distinguished by its unique use of natural Spey cock hackles, wound in by the butt and wrapped up the shank of the fly. Today, we no longer have access to Spey cock but rather use Heron or a characteristically similar hackle. As tying progresses, taking from the old world and combining with the modernities of new dyes and ever-changing styles, a new class of "Heron" flies evolved in the Pacific Northwest; classic tyer Syd Glasso inspiring a modern recipe for using long, heron-hackled ties.

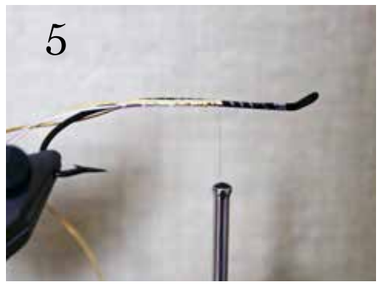
Also known as Spey Fly no. 15, the Black Heron was part of Knox's sixteen Speys. The dressing is as follows:

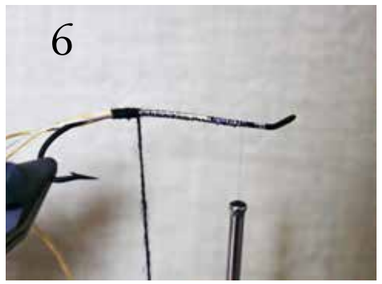
Hook: Partridge CS10/01
Ribs: Lagartun medium gold flat real metal tinsel (I used their embossed flat tinsel), medium gold oval real metal tinsel and medium silver oval real metal tinsel
Body: Berlin wool
Hackle: black heron or substitute
Wing: bronze mallard











Step 1: Lay your thread wraps down the hook shank until you are aligned with the point of the hook.

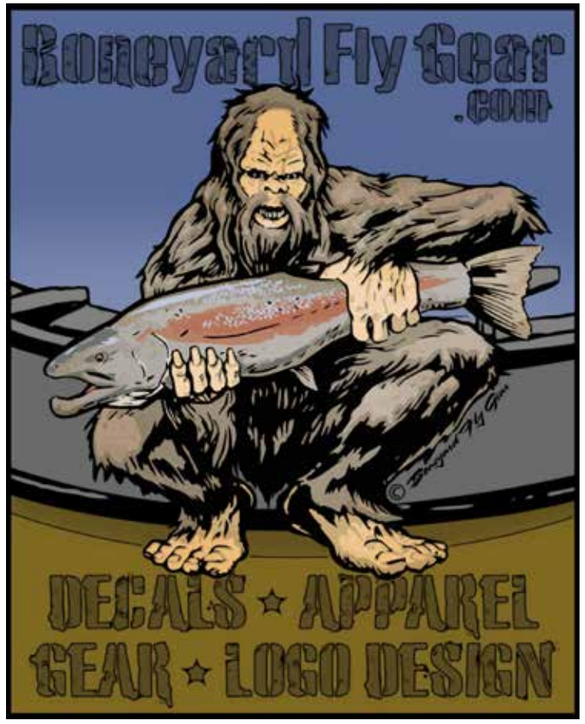
Step 2: Tie in your gold flat tinsel on the front side of the shank with a few wraps to hold in place.

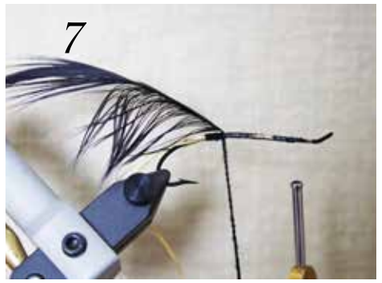
Step 3: Underneath the body of the fly, tie in your silver oval real tinsel. Flush beside that, tie in your gold oval tinsel a few wraps to hold in place.

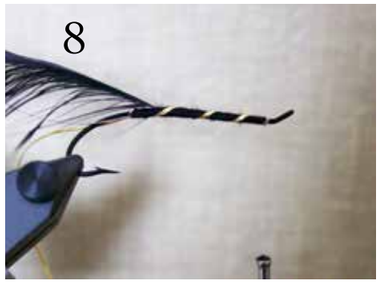
Step 4: Using widely spaced wraps, wrap up the body of the shank to tie all tinsels in place, making sure they do not move around the shank of the hook.

Step 5: Bringing your thread back to your initial starting point while tying in the flat tinsel. Tie your black wool in along the bottom of the shank.

Step 6: Leaving your thread at the return eye, start wrapping your wool up the shank of the fly until you reach where your second turn of tinsel will be (for me, it is usually eight wraps of wool).







Step 7: After those eight turns, tightly hold your wool so it does not unspool, and tie in your prepped hackle by the butt end—keeping in mind that you want to tie your hackle in with the natural convex shape over the back of your vice. (Prior prep work of your hackle includes peeling any unwanted fibres off and soaking the rachis if too stiff and dry.) Continue wrapping your wool up and over the return eye and tie off.

Step 8: Wrap your flat gold tinsel up the shank spaced evenly apart and tie off.

Step 9: Follow your flat gold with your oval gold tinsel with your wraps evenly spaced apart.

Step 10: Wrap your hackle, tucking it in behind your gold oval rib, and tie off. Or, counter wrap your hackle over the top of the flat and oval tinseled ribs—keep in mind that this pattern does not have a collar, so you need to accommodate an extra wrap or two of hackle up towards the eye to act as a collar.

Step 11: Using a bodkin, begin wrapping your last tinsel, your silver oval tinsel, up the body making sure not to trap any fibres from your hackle and tie off.

Step 12: Prep your mallard for your roof, by peeling back any unwanted webby fibres and cutting two even slips from a right and left pair.

Step 13: Using your fingers, manipulate and shape the hackle to flow downwards such as a shrimp's legs would be, by pressing the hackles against the side of the shank. Change your thread here to a black finishing thread.

Step 14: Cut each slip of mallard again, into ¼ & ¾ pieces (keeping the rachis on). Stack the right feather with the shorter ¼ slip underneath the larger ¾ slip, and tie onto the backside of the fly.

Step 15: Do the same for the left feather, by cutting it into ¼ & ¾ pieces and stacking the shorter piece under the larger piece, and tie onto the frontside of the shank.

Step 16: Check that the ends are even, and mallard roof keels up like the bottom of a boat would.

Step 17: Begin to cut the rachis (ends) off one at a time as close as possible to your thread wraps to allow for a small head.

Step 18: Using your black finishing thread, create a small tapered head and finish with a dot of glue and a clear resin.

Step 19: Snap it into your Wheatley box, and swing it through your favourite run.

Kate Watson Conservationist, wildlife steward, guide, fly casting instructor, competition caster and avid learner on all things historical and contemporary. Kate grew up in a hunting lodge in Northern British Columbia, which inevitably made her fall in love with everything wild. She was introduced to two handed rods and became enamoured with the Northwest steelhead culture. She eventually took to long lines and classic flies, blending tradition and contemporary techniques.
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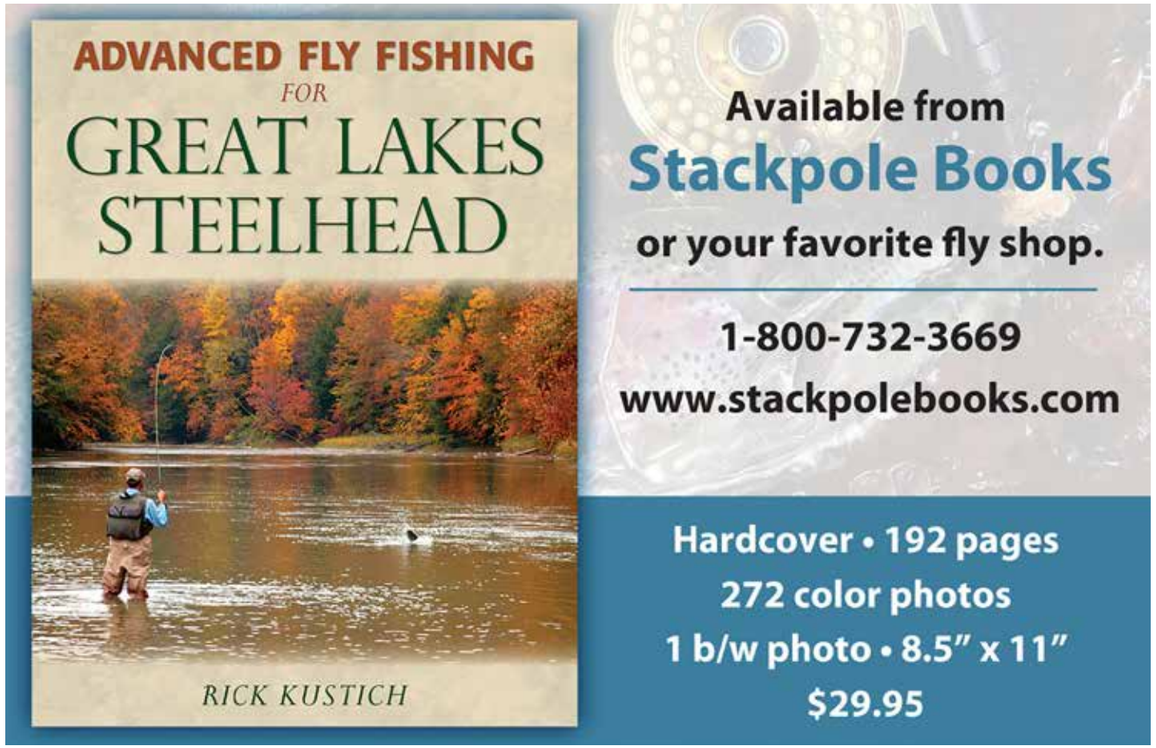

Anthropocene Memories

By Steve Bird

Contemplating Tung Po's poem & the peace is broken
The rumble of an approaching wave & a fighter jet making the daily border run vaults
from behind the ridge hunting low
Tilted to a diving arc the jet claws down the smoky sky &
roars down the swollen river course – pines on the bluffs
turning red from the beetles

The river writhes bearing the loosened detritus of country ragged &
worried at the edges –

Traumatized landscapes & topsoil of the Pend Oreille & Flathead valleys

The wracked & splayed medusas of upended roots carried on the spate's
silver tipped shoulders

A fallen tamarack

A drowned mouse

An emptied & crushed beer can & a spent condom

The severed jawbone of a slaughtered wolf inching
over bottom stones

Secret poison & the quicksilver dream of a tiny mayfly – the stained river
a canticle of heartbreak whispers hinting shadows passing like the
memory of fish – like the muscle memory
of arms & hands

Resurrection lays hidden asleep beneath the shifting silt

Everything passes

And who resists the ambiguous torrent even knowing?

Sidestepping a dreadful dream
Careful to conceal my executioner heart
Repeating a gesture
I lift the rod & hurl an offering to the dazzling void

Artwork by Doris Loiseau

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