

FLY LINES

Official eJournal of the
BC Federation of Fly Fishers

ISSUE No24-3 | FALL/WINTER

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TODAY IN OUR MISSION

to conserve and protect BC's sport fisheries

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VOICE WILL PROTECT
AND CONSERVE
THE FUTURE OF FLY
FISHING IN BRITISH
COLUMBIA**



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The BC Federation of Fly Fishers (BCFFF) is a registered, non-profit society whose main objective is to promote the conservation of the fishing environment in British Columbia. By networking with similarly minded clubs, organizations, businesses and individuals, the BCFFF provides a voice that reflects its members' and the public's concern for the future of BC's natural resources.

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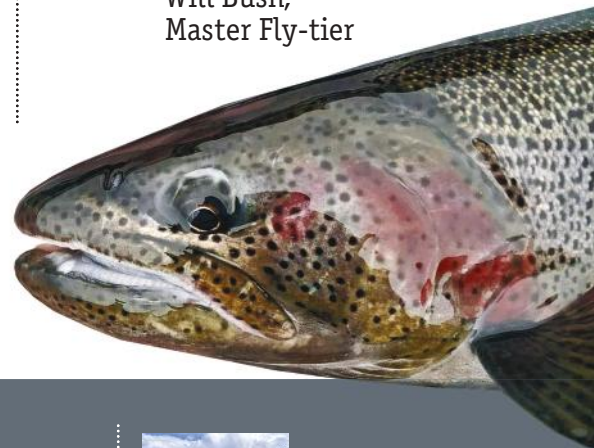
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BCFFF MISSION, VALUES, VISION

Mission: We are a federation of individual anglers and fly-fishing clubs. We advocate cooperatively with governments and other organizations throughout British Columbia for the sustainability of fish, their habitats, and quality angling

Values: We believe that fly fishing increases personal well being, encourages high environmental appreciation and knowledge, and instills commitment to achieving positive conservation outcomes

Vision: Ensuring a future that sustains accessible, quality angling in British Columbia



Cover Photo: "Wyatt Grice"

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Myles Armstead

President's Message

"And the sun took a step back, the leaves lulled themselves to sleep and autumn was awakened."

~ Raquel Franco

Fall is my favourite time of year to fish because of the return of wild salmon and steelhead to our rivers and beaches. Every year in August or September, to prime myself for the upcoming season, I will spend an evening or two rereading Roderick Haig-Brown's *A Fisherman's Fall*. As a boy, my Dad would take me fly-fishing to the Island, and later to the Thompson river, and these childhood memories made a lasting imprint on my mind.

This year was different, as I spent most of it in Wales chasing trout and grayling while visiting my sister. Fisheries in the UK are strictly managed and are often run by a syndicate or some type of consortium, which control their accesses. By doing so, in spite of the challenges many of their fisheries faces, they have been able to preserve some wonderful angling opportunities in spite of pollution and a dense population. On many waterways there are strict catch and release limits and gear restrictions, which helps protect fish and preserve quality angling.

Here in B.C. fisheries management has been more open, and more of a "gold rush" mentality due to our relative resource abundance and low population. We saw this management approach on the Skeena this year, with an unexpected reasonable return of steelhead. There are no catch and release limits or "keep-them-wet regulations," and some anglers will continue to hold fish out of the water despite science to the contrary — looking for their "hero" shot! Personally, I think we can do so

much better than this. We all need to ask ourselves as "angling conservationists:" "what can I do to ensure that more fish reach their spawning ground."

The BCFFF has been very busy on a number of fronts. Our partnership with the Kitselas First Nations continues to evolve and develop, as we help support their transition to more selective fisheries. We are also actively involved in supporting a science-based approach regarding the Skagit River, and the possible introduction of non-native pacific salmon to the B. C. portion of the watershed, where the Skagit River originates, from Washington State tribes. This is an evolving issue, and I encourage you to read the article that well know biologist and steelhead angler, Bill McMillan has written on this topic for this issue of *Fly Lines*.

This spring we will be holding our first "Ice-Off Auction" to help raise conservation funds for the BCFFF. If you have any items to donate, or wish to support the auction in another way, please reach out to Brian or myself, and we will be happy to discuss. As always, if you wish to play a more active role in the BCFFF — please do not hesitate to reach out to the board. We have seen an incredible growth from new members over the last year, and our board continues to evolve with new dynamic directors. These are exciting times for the federation as we continue working to preserve and protect fish and angling opportunities in British Columbia.

Myles Armstead

President of the BC Federation
of Fly Fishers



Brian Smith

Editor's Message

Welcome to our fall/winter edition, again packed with love, history, extraordinary photos and good vibrations for the trout we live for. We could not do any of this without the support of our clubs and direct members. It is very heart-warming for us to see the quality and generosity of members and guests giving freely of their time and resources to make Fly Lines possible.

Summer is a slow time for our clubs, who usually don't meet until September or October, and are busy organizing their fall/winter programs. What we are seeing is a rejuvenated focus on youth, with our clubs' putting efforts into teaching the younger generation what it means to steward and care for fish and, subsequently, the environment that they must foster after we "old guys" have departed. This brings me to a poem by Walt Whitman, penned in the early nineteenth century, which I would like to share with you:

*"I think I could turn and live with animals;
they are so placid and self-contained.
I stand and look at them sometimes
half the day long.*

*They do not sweat and
whine about their condition.
They do not lay awake in the dark
and weep for their sins.*

*They do not make me sick
discussing their duty to God.
No one is dissatisfied, not one demented
with the mania of owning things,*

*Not one kneels to the another, nor to his
kind that lived thousands of years ago,
No one is respectable or industrious
over the whole earth.*

*So they show their relations to
me, and I accept them,
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince
them plainly in their possession."*

Our focus this issue is cutthroat beaches and rivers, and steelhead rivers. Who won't get a kick out of our cover photo of Wyatt Grice, age 12,

with a fine steelhead in hand? Kudos to his father Jesse, who has taught Wyatt proper handling of his precious cargo! And, who better to write about our rivers and beach fishing than Art Lingren, Craig Orr, Rob Brown, Pat (Patches) Demeester and Rory Glennie? A welcome newcomer to the writing and fly-tying field is my friend Mat Ferraro from the Polar Coachman Club in Prince George. Mat has guided all over BC, has a degree in Fisheries Biology, is working on his Masters degree in fisheries and is a super keen fisherman and fly tier. When I saw him tying exquisite size 18 Adamses at one of our fly-tying nights, I just knew he wouldn't resist my flirtations to bring him aboard. All of these experts are masters of the rod, word and vise in our fishy world. We are so fortunate to have these spirited people working with us to produce a great magazine!

Our Conservation feature is non other than one of the great icons of our sport Bill McMillan, well-known Washington State steelheader and life-long passionate conservationist, who once again stands up for the Skagit River, a revered Lower Mainland watershed with its upper sources beginning in BC and ending at the Pacific in the U. S. Please join Bill and the BCFFF in our plight to keep this majestic water in its present state. The Skagit has seen enough degradation by industry in our generation!

The BCFFF's partnerships with First Nations come to the forefront with a celebration we enjoyed by invite from the Kitselas Band of Terrace. Michael Barr, Bob Moody and Myles Armstead report and update us on the Kitselas program to make selective harvesting a reality in their territory, a fishing method the BCFFF believes strongly is the salvation for captured steelhead releases.

Enjoy your magazine.
Brian Smith, Editor

Club News/Reports

KAMLOOPS FLY FISHERS

Report Autumn

By Len Piggin

Our fish-out plans for fall are: September 14th Rossmore Lake, September 29th Duffy Lake and October 10th Red Lake.

We are also organizing our annual bone fishing trip to Mount Pleasant Lodge in the Bahamas to take place November 20th to December 3rd. Check out those flats



on google maps (sat mode)!! As usual, KFF has lots of activities planned for members in the next year. Our Fly Tying 101/Method Sessions will be held at The Fly Shop at Domenic's 461A Dene Drive. Sessions will be at the usual times 6:30pm to 8:30pm. On September 24th Todd Oishi will be presenting on Loch Style fishing and tying flies for the same, October 23rd Brandyn Dixon from Domenic's will tie dragon fly patterns and lastly November

19th Rick Passek will present on the water boatman and tie its patterns. At each session we do a draw for the flies.

Our monthly dinner meetings will continue at the Shanghai Mandarin Restaurant except for December, which will be held at the Curling Club, and for entertainment we



have our Fly Trade/Swap.

Membership approved the producing of our own calendar for 2025. This is the first time we have attempted this. We will be purchasing 100 and selling them for \$20.00, using it as fund raising venue for the club.

We have another fly shop open in Kamloops, Casting Loops Fly & Tackle In Valleyview, joining Domenic's and Surplus Herby's, giving us lots of good selection for the members.

THE LOONS FLY FISHING CLUB

Report Summer

By Rick Boswell

As I look back on the year, it seems like it was a long summer. Our President's Fish-out at Knouff Lake was wet, cool, and yet, a lot of fun. Our outings at the Upper Skagit, Thompson and Lower Skagit rivers were all worth the effort of getting there, and all were memorable, as they still bring together old friends and new stories. Fish were caught, tales were told, and good friends became better ones.

We are looking forward to the fall salmon season, and the club is planning outings to the Harrison and Squamish systems. Newcomers are welcome! If you are interested in learning more about the club and/or attending either of these outings, get in touch with us! Go to loonsflyfishingclub.ca for more info.

KALAMALKA FLY FISHERS CLUB

Kalamalka Fly Fishers Report

By Bob Tait

Kalamalka Fly Fishers have not been very active in the community during the summer, most of us trying to catch up on some time on the water hunting fish.

We did set aside some time to help out at one of our annual projects, when about 24 of our members and some spouses spent Sunday July 25th with folks from the Kingfisher Salmon Hatchery during the kids Learn to Fish program.

Members helped kids at the pond catch the stocked trout, learn to tie flies, learn to cast a fly line, and we also included a session on river safety. Several members manned the fish cleaning station, and provided photos of the kids with their catches. A long day, and a lot of fun.

In August, we conducted our first "Ladies Only" event. On the 18th, we had 10 ladies registered for a day-long Learn to Fly Cast. It was a fun & successful day, with the ladies learning basic casting techniques, false casting, the haul, and how to shoot line. By the end of the day, most ladies felt very comfortable casting, and there were even a few who were able to progress to the 'double haul'. We look forward to running another session in the Spring.

We kicked off the fall season with a Club BBQ with burgers and hot dogs supplied by the club, salads and deserts supplied by members.

It's now time to starting planning our Winter and Spring programs!

TOTEM FLY FISHERS CLUB

Fall 2024

By Lorenzo Cirillo

The Totem Fly Fishers club has had a busy schedule of events over the last number of months. In early May, a number of club members and some guests attended our Peterhope Lake outing. As usual, we were dealing with early spring weather and, at times, temperamental fish. Most success was found unsurprisingly on chironomid patterns, mostly fished in deep water. One member landed some superb kokanee on a deeply fished chironomid. In early June, several members made their way further north to Big Bar Lake. This outing has also proved challenging in the past with high winds making the lake unfishable at times; however, this year the weekend was spectacular, with blue skies and t-shirt fishing temperatures. Along with the favourable weather came some very positive fishing, and we landed some nice fish, but all those present agreed the average size of fish was smaller than in years past.

Lastly, the Totem's annual Dean River camp is the club's main event of the year. The first group flew in at the end of July, where this year's five groups of four anglers will cast their flies into this fabled river in search of summer run steelhead. As of the writing of this article, fishing has been reasonable for most groups, but to be fair it is the experience of the helicopter flight as well as being surrounded by the magnificent coastal range in a true wilderness camp that brings our members back year after year.

As fall approaches, Coho and cutthroat outings on local waters will be our focus. As well, resumption of our meetings will be a time to share our experiences from our summer fishing forays.

Tight lines to all!

A group of well fed happy Totem anglers at our Saturday night barbeque at Big Bar Lake. The Totem's Dean River camp for 2024.

A lovely Dean River summer run.

THE OSPREY FLY FISHERS CLUB

The Osprey Fly Fishers of BC

Fall Report 2024 by Bruce Brandhorst

The Osprey Fly Fishers have paused monthly meetings during the summer, but have gathered the members together for several multi-day fish outs during the early season. In May the club visited Corbett and Tunkwa Lakes, and in June a large group of us travelled to Knouff Lake, where we experienced good nymph and attractor fishing for medium-sized fish. Some members slipped over to nearby Community and Badger Lakes, where they caught larger trout than Knouff gave up. In August we travelled to Cluxewe Resort on Vancouver Island, and enjoyed superb beach fishing for pink salmon, which have made an impressive comeback. A few coho and Spring salmon were also landed. In September, we

will fish the Skagit River, where the road to the lower river has reopened after over two years of closure; however, the river has changed course a lot after it's flooding, which eliminated some of our favorite spots, so expectations are unknown.

The club presented its occasional Outstanding Member Award to Peter Chatt for his service to the club and the BC fly-fishing community. Peter is a worthy recipient. He has taught fly-tying to many people, unselfishly donated materials from his vast collection, and created productive fly patterns and early dubbing mixtures for sale long before they became widely available to the public.



POLAR COACHMAN FLYFISHERS CLUB

Polar Coachman Flyfishers report

By Jeff Kormos, President

I am writing this update from 41 thousand feet heading back to Prince George from a quick long-weekend trip to Whitehorse, reflecting on the events of the past few days, and pondering the greater meanings of life's rhythms and cycles. It was a jam-packed weekend that included a celebration of life for a close

personal and family friend — the father of one of my closest childhood friends, and then the 70th birthday of my own father. Before getting on the plane today, my friend and I enjoyed a couple of hours of arctic grayling fishing on a local river, in a spot I've all but forgotten about. After we each caught a dozen or so grayling, and ▶

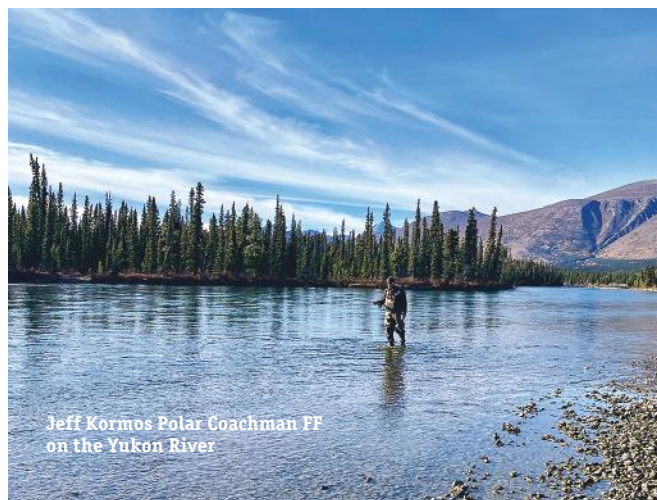
Club News/Reports

▶ as we were leaving, I thought to myself, "Damn, the Polar Coachman members would love this!"

Reflecting on the summer and our regularly scheduled break from normal club activities, it is apparent that our members never really break from promoting our mission and ideals. We had some great conversations about upcoming freshwater fishing regulation changes, and were able to offer a couple balanced, and well thought out proposals. We are incredibly fortunate that our members and club are often contacted to provide input into local regulations, conservation efforts and scientific studies. In addition, we had a couple of members return to a BC women's outdoors program, where they demonstrated how to tie some longtime favourite patterns, including the woolly bugger and woolly worm, Carey special and tom thumb. Already in the plans for next year, an intermediate demonstration to build upon the skills of those who participated in

the beginner sessions of the past couple of seasons. We are grateful to have members who are so dedicated to sharing their passion for fly-fishing and tying. And true to their nature as ambassadors of the club, they recruited a couple of new members for their efforts. Good job fellas!

The Executive met recently at our long-standing unofficial second clubhouse, the BX pub, to plan for the upcoming year and our first gathering in October. Topics of our lively discussion ranged from finances and revenue generation to putting more effort into a committee structure to plan and implement the range of activities we all enjoy throughout the year. We are also experiencing some turnover among the most senior and active club members as life's rhythms and cycles take their efforts away from the club. We are going through the arduous process of filling the void left by their departure. Their service to the club will no doubt be missed, and near impossible to replace.



However, their comradery, spirit and knowledge will be missed even more. Rather than pine over what we're missing, I'd like to celebrate our good fortune to have had our life's cycles overlap, and the shared experience of our club's table to bring us together. I guess that's one of the positive externalities of fly-fishing.

This autumn I would like to offer the club, and all the clubs of the BCFFF this: Let's take a little more time to reflect and celebrate all of life's moments. New and old friends, family,

milestones and losses, adversity and good fortune, big or small, are all worth celebrating. Its one of the things I love the most about fly-fishing: it's a continuous cycle of reflecting and celebrating. I really want to make space this year for our members to reflect and celebrate both the meaningful and mundane parts of life. After a funeral, a birthday and a cold morning of fly-fishing I realize that we often mistake the latter for the former. In fact, they can change as quickly as life's rhythms and cycles. Skål!

COMOX VALLEY FLYFISHERS

Report

By Dean Hodgson

The months of April and May saw many of our club members chasing sea-run cutthroat along the local ocean shores, but then we quickly turned to our lakes, as waters warmed and the bugs started to pop. Fishing was excellent in our stocked lakes, with some exceptional trout fishing (for the Island) being had at two of the enhanced

lakes, Reginald and Rowbotham. Limited success, however, was reported by those of us who fish Beavertail Lake for stocked Kokanee. We managed to trick a few on pink handlebars and the App fly, but we really haven't got that dialed in yet, so our efforts there continue.

In July the pinks showed up off our shores with a vengeance. We had a prolonged stretch of outstanding pink salmon fishing off the beach, the best that I can remember. When the fish turned up the river after

a little taste of rain at the end of July, it was a sight to behold.

The Campbell/Quinsam Rivers were loaded with salmon, with wave after wave of fish passing upstream. It is the very best fishery for children; the fish are feisty enough to provide them with a good tussle, yet small enough for them to handle. Better yet, they then they get to take their very own salmon home to eat! Although the river is crowded with fishers, the atmosphere is very friendly and cooperative, and of course a fish

every cast makes it easy to be generous.

The steelhead fiends among us are anxiously waiting for rain to raise the levels and lower the temperatures of Zippermouth Creek, where we hope to entice one of those summer ghosts to take a waking fall caddis.

September in the Valley means Coho on the beach, and that's where we are at right now. Depending on the amount of rain we get, there should be fishable numbers off the beach well into November.

YOUTH SECTION

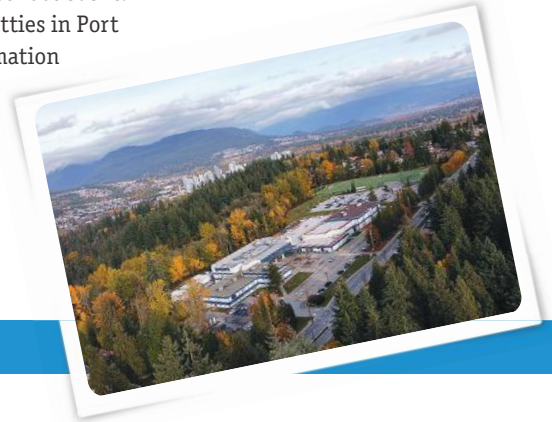
Charles Best Secondary Port Moody

By Matt Sokol

Our class met today for the first time and will kick off the year with a Salmon BBQ as a welcome back and return to school event. We will be fishing the salt water beaches for some cutties in Port Moody, and as events occurs, I can send pictures and information

September events so far:

- Salmon BBQ week one
- Archery Wednesdays
- Salt Water Cutts on Tuesday/Thursday
- Boater's Course Online
- Charles Best Field and Stream



YOUTH SECTION

Fly Fishing & Mental Health:

It is Not Just About the Fish

By Mattias Olsson-Schmidt

Students in the Carihi Fly Fishing Program are not only learning the skills and competencies needed to begin or continue their success out on the water as fly anglers, but the program also encompasses an English 10, English First Peoples 11, or an English 12 credit for their academic needs. As a part of written responses to Indigenous literature, a variety of media such as podcasts and online articles; students were asked to analyze their own experiences with fly fishing and mental health in response to an article written by Melissa Ceren for Midcurrent last year.

Fly fishing is more than just catching fish. It is a way of living with yourself; just you and the waters. To be able to design your own fly, dupe the fish believing it is an insect, bring the fish in and decide not to take its life; but to release the fish to continue its journey or be caught again. As I see the fish swim away and knowing that I had properly handled the fish is more rewarding than keeping the fish.

Fly fishing is not about the sport. It is a valuable activity, "because of

the way it feels. Peace, connection, simplicity, excitement, and mystery-it just feels right," as explained by the author Melissa Ceren (2023). There is more of a connection between the angler, the fishing rod, and the fish. For many, fly fishing is a way of disconnecting from stress, responsibilities, and society. A time out fishing is like a mini vacation, "there is no cell service, internet, angry people, or tailgating cars" (Ceren, 2023). The only sounds to be heard are the birds singing, the running water, and the



line of the fly rod dancing in the air. From my experience, many of my fish outs have been fishless, which I have fished without regret. Saying that, I would share that I have learned more from fishless days than I have from those I have scored a catch.

In fact, I would even say fly fishing is a form of therapy, heading out to the river early in the morning. Fog on the river, the sun shining through the trees, “without even knowing it, you are practicing a mindfulness therapy technique” (Ceren, 2023). Focusing on finding the perfect pool to see that little silver sliver of shining bellies in the dark. In my experience, getting out onto the water to fly fish is an effective way to reset after a long week of work.

Fly fishing is not only a sport, but therapy for many. It frees emotions and memories through the lines cast across the shallow waters of the rivers and lakes we relish spending time on. The answer to all, to travel back to where it all starts, is nature.

Author Mattias Olsson-Schmidt is a recent graduate of Carihi Secondary School working full-time as an Apprentice Technician and fly-fishes as often as possible. You can follow the literary and line casting journey of fellow students on Instagram @carihiflyfish

Exciting Updates from the Carihi Fly Fishing Program

by Dr. Katherine Mulski

Fall brings the best of the best for our fisheries here in Campbell River, from tide to the rivers, and to the lovely still-waters. While anytime is a good time to be fishing, leaves are changing daily on the Campbell, and I am reminded to pull out Haig-Brown's Fisherman's Fall as my yearly literary revisit.



In the last week and a half, our anglers have been busy learning about several important concepts and skills:

The First Peoples concept of interconnectedness as it relates to conservation and our local fisheries here in Campbell River.

- Beginning casting practice while working to overcome the stubborn “wrist” movement.
- Exploring salmon regulations, including retention and non-retention rules, and discussing general fishing ethics.
- Learning basic trout and salmon identification using materials provided by BC Freshwater Fisheries.
- Mastering essential fly-fishing knots, such as the double surgeon, loop-to-loop connection, and improved clinch knot.
- Participating in fun cooperative games

to strengthen our community of anglers.

- Eagerly awaiting the arrival of tying kits and materials ordered from local fly shops to start tying patterns for coho and hungry cutthroat trout.
- Highlighting influential figures in the culture of fly fishing.
- Understanding the salmon life cycle and habitat.
- Preparing for an upcoming salmon dissection with DFO Community Education Coordinator, Deb Cowper.



**THE FIRST PEOPLES CONCEPT
OF INTERCONNECTEDNESS AS IT
RELATES TO CONSERVATION AND
OUR LOCAL FISHERIES HERE IN
CAMPBELL RIVER.**

Additionally, we anticipate that our group will participate in the Sea to Stream program, where we will learn to raise salmon eggs until the semester 2 cohorts can release the fry back into the very fisheries we will be fishing in just a few short weeks.

We also welcome anyone interested in presenting to our crew of anglers — whether it be a fly-tying demo, fishing stories, a casting clinic, or other possibilities. Remote presentations are welcome as well!

Thank you once again for your support. For any inquiries or to express interest in presenting, please feel free to reach out to me via email.

Tight Lines!

Dr. Katherine Mulski

Educator, Carihi Fly Fishing Program
Campbell River, BC

Follow our fly fishing journey

Instagram: @carihiflyfish

Facebook: Carihi Fly Fishing Program

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61561027829461>

Gleneagle Talons Fly Fishing Program

By Lorenzo Cirillo

It is always a huge adjustment for a fly fisher to return back to work in a school. You have had two months to pursue fish in amazing locations, and then reality hits you on September 3rd!

Thankfully, I have my fly-fishing program to relieve some of the shock. Going into the 2024–2025 school year here at Gleneagle Secondary, I will run my fly-fishing club after school as an extra-curricular. Students will learn skills around tying flies, casting a fly rod, knots and some fish identification. I also try to work in two or three outings on weekends to try their newly-learned skills. The club portion of the year is a teaser to interest and entice students to register for my Fly Fishing 11 accredited course in the second semester.

This leads me to my second semester, which has a full complement of 30 students registered for my Fly Fishing 11 class. I have already had a number of the students tell me how excited they are for the class, and we are only in the first week of school. Similar to last year, I plan on having a full slate of amazing guest speakers for the class. Last year we had such speakers as The Gilly contributing writer Peter Caverhill, plus noted BC Outdoors writers Gillian Steele and Tom Johanssen. We also had guest tyers Rudy Morzanowski from Totem Fly Fishers, and a former student of mine and now fishing guide, Gavin Lau. As well, we had some legends come into the class and share their knowledge: Joe Kambeitz tied his Squamish Poacher with the class, and Art Lingren tied and talked about the history behind the Doc Spratley and the Carey Special. It will be hard to top that line up this year.

We did four outings last year; I expect to do the same this year, and to the same locations. My problem with taking full classes is that local rivers in the lower mainland are so heavily fished that I do not want to impose on the angling public with thirty bodies parked and trying to find spots to fit in. I must include a shout-out to the Fresh Water Fisheries Society in Abbotsford and the program they run there. I have taken my groups there for the last fifteen years to fish in

their ponds, and each and every experience has been fantastic. The kids are almost guaranteed to hook up on something, and they learn so much about how to play a fish, and then release it safely. As well, their interpretive center and displays are always a hit. I am looking forward to getting my class there again.

As you can see, we had a busy year, anticipate another this year, and hopefully will continue to build on previous years successes. We are always looking for donations or financial support to keep our program growing. If this is of interest to any BC fly-fishing clubs, please contact me at lcirillo@sd43.bc.ca Tight lines to all the other clubs and school programs out there!

A great day on Whonnock Lake in belly boats and canoes. Among our very special guest speakers/tyers was Art Lingren demonstrating how to tie a Doc Spratley.

Some great prizes were awarded at our year end wrap up party. Franky won a hand made wooden fly box.

I HAVE TAKEN MY GROUPS THERE FOR THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS TO FISH IN THEIR PONDS, AND EACH AND EVERY EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN FANTASTIC. THE KIDS ARE ALMOST GUARANTEED TO HOOK UP ON SOMETHING

Lukas was fortunate enough to win four Art Lingren tied Doc Spratleys at our year end wrap up celebration.

Students really enjoyed learning how to prepare fish for smoking.





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The Greased Line

By Art Lingren

Introduction to the Pacific Northwest

When I switched to fly fishing for steelhead in 1979, I read Haig-Brown's "Summer Steelhead" chapter in the 1947 trade edition of *The Western Angler* and caught my first steelhead from the Thompson using a single-hand rod, a floating line and a Doc Spratley fly tied on a low-water hook. I fished with a floating line for steelhead on many summer-run rivers after my Thompson success using the greased line technique. Shortly after, in the early 1980s I did buy a copy of *Greased Line Fishing for Salmon*.

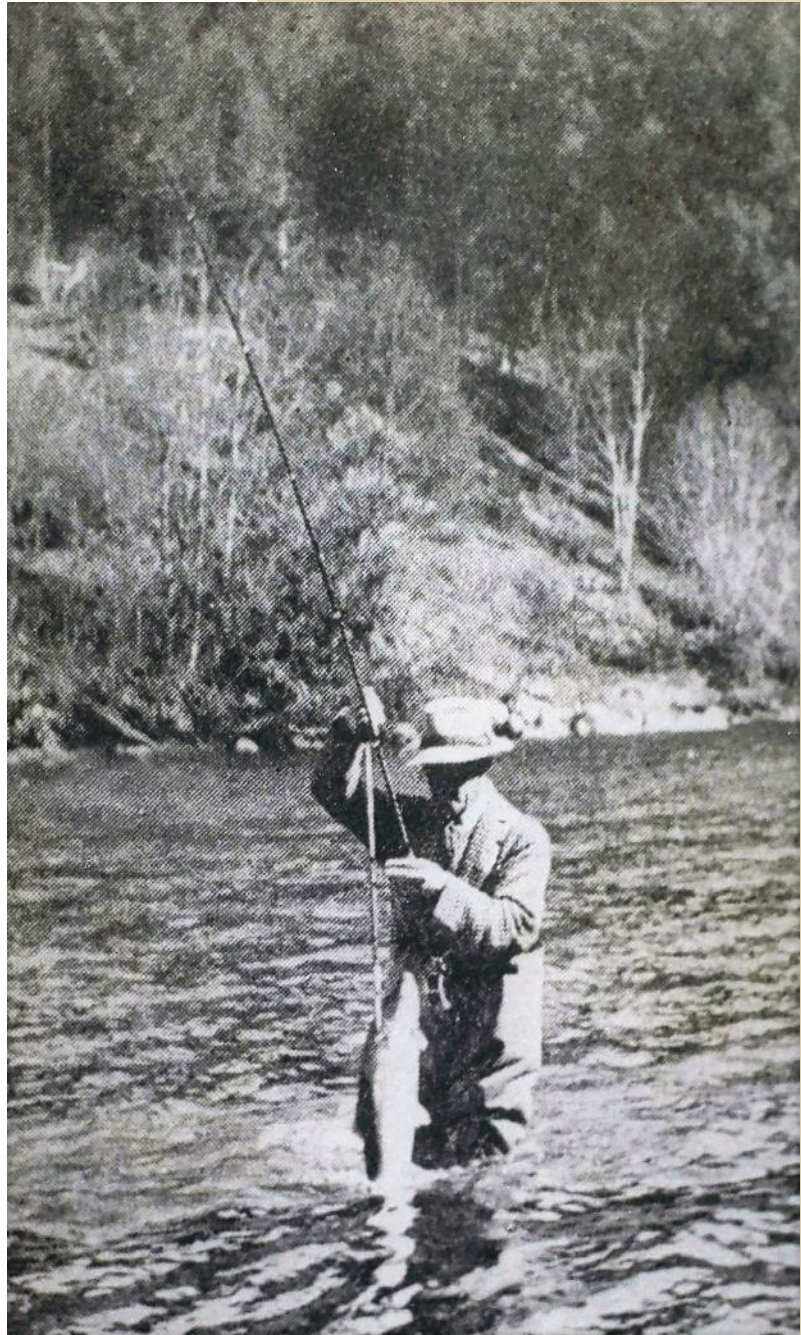
Jock Scott's book *Greased Line Fishing for Salmon* was published in 1935, Roderick Haig-Brown in *A River Never Sleeps* when he was writing about major developments if fly fishing included A.H.E. Wood's greased line method of fishing for salmon. Haig-Brown writes that:

Jock Scott's book is good, and the usefulness of the method goes far beyond the catching of Atlantic salmon; it is deadly for our western steelhead in low water and often deadly for difficult trout in almost any water. (p. 336 *A River Never Sleeps*)

General Noel Money Stamp River — he used a 13-foot two-handed rod for most of his steelhead fishing. Haig-Brown introduced him to the greased line technique using single-handed rod and a small size 7 silver-bodied fly on an August day in 1939.

By the time, *A River Never Sleeps* was published in 1946 Haig-Brown was well acquainted with the greased line technique. He had the idea of writing this book in September 1942, by March 1943 he had fifteen chapters written. Which ones we don't know and he continued writing the book when he had time serving in the Canadian army from 1943 through to 1946. In March 1946 he had back surgery and at that time he was reading proofs of *A River Never Sleeps*.

He was fishing with General Money on the Stamp River not too many months before Money died and he introduced Money to the technique. In my notes of General Money from scrapbook number 3 in UBC Special Collections Money noted in the 1939 year that he used greased line with Haig-Brown. About that day Haig-Brown writes:





"A River Never Sleeps", book

It was on one of the last days I fished with him. . . that he caught a fish in his pool by a new method. It was an August day, and the river was very low— too low, the General said, someone had closed the gate at the dam and made a drop of a foot or more during the night. I was almost glad because I had planned to fish the greased line anyway; the low water and the hot bright day were perfect for it. The General said he just wanted to sit in the shade and watch; his doctor had warned him a few days earlier that he must show his heart a little consideration.

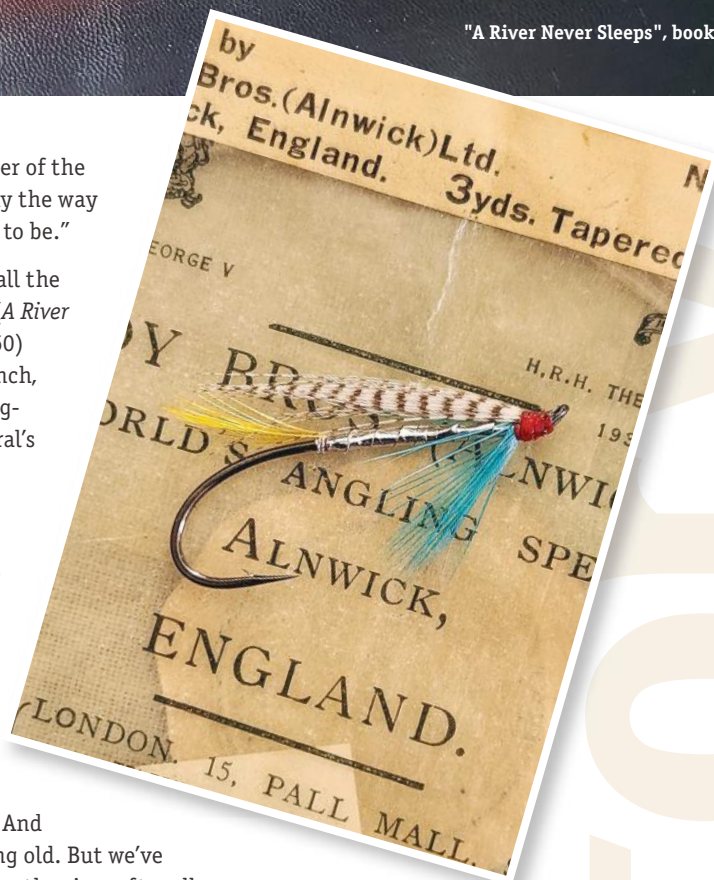
So, I started down with a greased line and a tiny silver-bodied fly that I had tied the night before. I fished carefully, by the book, casting slack line well across, lifting the belly of the line each time before the court could draw it on it, holding the fly right up under the surface in a slow, easy drift all the way across. The fish came again as I reached the kidney stones and came as a good fish sometime does to the greased line, with the long slashing rise that threw water at foot into the air. For once I did the rest of it right — pointed my rod straight downstream, held it well into my own bank and let the delayed pull of the belly of the line set the hook. When the General gaffed him, he said with something like awe in his voice, "Look at that fly. Right in

the back corner of the mouth, exactly the way it is supposed to be."

That was the best of all the days we had together. (*A River Never Sleeps*, pp. 159, 160)

Later after having lunch, they switched rods, Haig-Brown taking the General's two-hander and Money used Haig-Brown's greased line setup. Money worked the pool down and was into a steelhead using the new technique and after landing the fish Money says, "That's wonderful sport. We should have tried it long ago." And later he said, "I'm getting old. But we've found something new for the river after all these years." (p. 161 *A River Never Sleeps*)

Haig-Brown used the technique before he introduced General Money to the method and the greased-line technique has had its followers to this day. Haig-Brown mentioned that he dressed a silver-bodied fly to use on the Stamp River. Haig-Brown, as he mentioned in one of his books, was not an enthusiastic fly tier but tied out of necessity. In Jock Scott's book the Silver Blue is the only silver-bodied fly on his list of recommended flies. It is a relatively easy tie so it may have been that fly Haig-Brown and General Money used that day?



The low-water Silver Blue

GUEST FEATURE

Peter Broomhall:

by Craig Orr

The Exact Man

Those fortunate enough to have rubbed elbows with the extraordinarily- accomplished Pete Broomhall quickly learn he is a fisherman, gentleman and scholar.

Pete is a man who has fished more rivers in BC than many have even heard of. And for nearly 80 years. It's not surprising that, growing up in North Vancouver, he spent much time traipsing the Seymour and Capilano rivers. Sure, lots of people in the mecca of the Lower Mainland have fished both. But how many who fished the Cap before it was dammed in 1954?

And fished it lots? With flies? Pete's prolific Capilano stories paint a picture of a once-amazing river chock full of amazing fish — coho and steelhead, mostly. And so many stories, packed with rich detail of a thriving river with thriving fish on the outskirts of a burgeoning city, and but a handful of oh-so-lucky anglers. As a listener to Pete's stories, one alternates between awe at his recall of specific fish, conditions and dates, and tears thinking about what we have all lost.

So much loss. As a keen observer, with a still steel-trap recall, Pete may well be BC's foremost authority on what fish and rivers and angling opportunities we once enjoyed but can now only barely imagine. As a conservation biologist, I'm also continually intrigued by Pete's stories on how many salmon and steelhead runs have been "compressed" by a variety of impacts — that is, the loss of early and late parts of many individual runs.

Explorers and icons like Pete have such tales. Tales recounted with sharpness and passion. He was, not surprisingly, in the first group of Totems to fish the Dean in 1976, along with angling legends Ozzie Shaw and Jim Kilburn. He graced the river another 32 times, amassing amazing stories on fish and the river, including one of





READING MAKES A FULL MAN; CONVERSATION A READY MAN; AND WRITING AN EXACT MAN

landing a steelhead estimated at nearly 30 pounds.

He started fishing the once-famous and prolific Thompson River in 1953, the year I was born. And for decades, Pete made a regular fall migration to fish fabled Skeena tributaries, always stopping along the way to chat with a myriad of friends.

Trips to the also once-productive Big and Little Qualicum rivers, the Nanaimo, and many other Island rivers were a regular thing for him of sheer joy — and lots of fish — when he was but 19. If you listen to Pete for any length of time, you'll be astounded to learn how much fishing and adventure any "mere" mortal could manage to cram into his

19th year on this planet.

And did I mention scholar? Pete joyfully intersperses fishing tales with lessons on English literature — a subject he taught for many years at Langara College. With little difficulty, he can dissect the complexities of Shakespeare's masterpieces, or the first modern novel, *Don Quixote*, among other classics. He might just as easily go off on a tangent of his favourite poets, like Emily Dickinson (*Tell all the truth but tell it slant — Success in Circuit lies*). As you'll find out here, he can also write some fine poetry of his own.

Pete is one of the most complete men you can be lucky enough to meet. As testament, look no further than the 16th/17th lawyer, statesman, philosopher and master of English language, Francis Bacon. Bacon once claimed, *"Some books are to be tasted; others swallowed; and some few to be chewed and digested."* Pete, the hungry, voracious and critical reader: check.

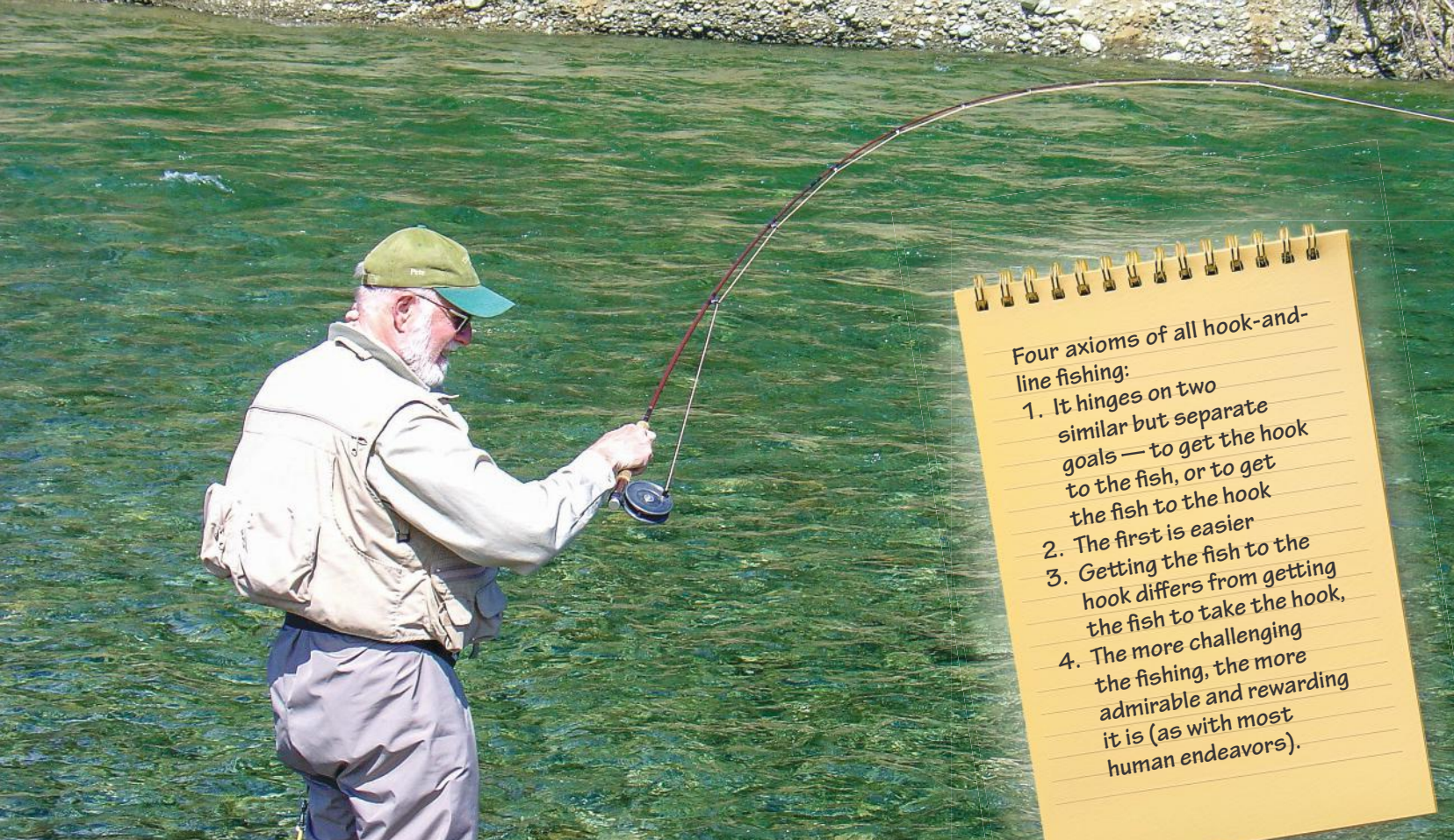
Bacon also classified people based on three levels of mental and personal achievement. According to Bacon, *"reading makes a full man; conference (conversation) a ready man; and writing an exact man."*

In other words, reading informs, conversation (conference) further prepares a person to handle various situations and personalities, and writing forces a person to articulate their thoughts precisely, fostering exactitude and clarity.

Pete, the exact man: check. Not only a ravenous reader and story teller, he is an accomplished writer. His 1976 satires, *The Genuine Imitation Plastic Steelhead*, and *The Lawyer and The Angler*, remain but two of his classics. But he will also be the first to admit he prefers editing to writing. And his editing prowess has been a boon to oh-so-many aspiring writers he has taken under his wing.

Quite simply, most say he is the best editor they have ever seen put edits to paper. His editing is not for the faint of heart, though. Or for those stuck at *"good-enough-writer-not-in-need-of-competent-experienced-editors-and-improved-writing-skills."*

Pete's editing makes one carefully examine one's writing competence and progress, continually. But for those humble



Four axioms of all hook-and-line fishing:

1. It hinges on two similar but separate goals — to get the hook to the fish, or to get the fish to the hook
2. The first is easier
3. Getting the fish to the hook differs from getting the fish to take the hook.
4. The more challenging the fishing, the more admirable and rewarding it is (as with most human endeavors).

enough, willing to admit they don't know as much as Pete about sentence structure and grammar (including the power of verbs), one can become a much better writer under Pete's patient but critical eye.

Pete: The modern and improved version of Francis Bacon. Teller of tales. Accomplished angler. Writer, reader and editor. Critical thinker.

Need more proof? Just ask the many politicians and fisheries managers who have been at the receiving end of Pete's wit, writing and passion for fish. For years, Pete was the main letter writer for the Steelhead Society in its heyday of wild fish advocacy. He regularly dissected the self-preserving thinking of many muddled folk in blistering yet reasoned missives that did much to reform fisheries management and conservation practice and policy. And he usually wrote a complete and polished letter (or two), ignored at one's peril, during each directors' meeting. "Here you go Mr. President, you might want to send this one."

What Pete has contributed to fish conservation is evident in much of his writing, editing and speaking, and in the vast and selfless amount of time he has given as a volunteer in conservation groups

such as the Steelhead Society, and the Watershed Watch Salmon Society, including as co-founder of the latter group.

Pete also saves more than his share of critical thinking for the sport of angling. It's perhaps not surprising that his long pursuit of fly fishing — including the use of a double-handed rod dating back over 40 years — has honed his thinking not only about fish, but anglers.

He once penned four axioms of all hook-and-line fishing:

1. It hinges on two similar but separate goals — to get the hook to the fish, or to get the fish to the hook,
2. The first is easier
3. Getting the fish to the hook differs from getting the fish to take the hook,
4. The more challenging the fishing, the more admirable and rewarding it is (as with most human endeavors).

Perhaps point 4 is why he has long preferred dry flies. Dry flies to many represent the epitome of fly-fishing challenge — and reward. The encounters on top are often multiple until the fish commits (or not), and often spectacular as well, adding much to the total angling experience.

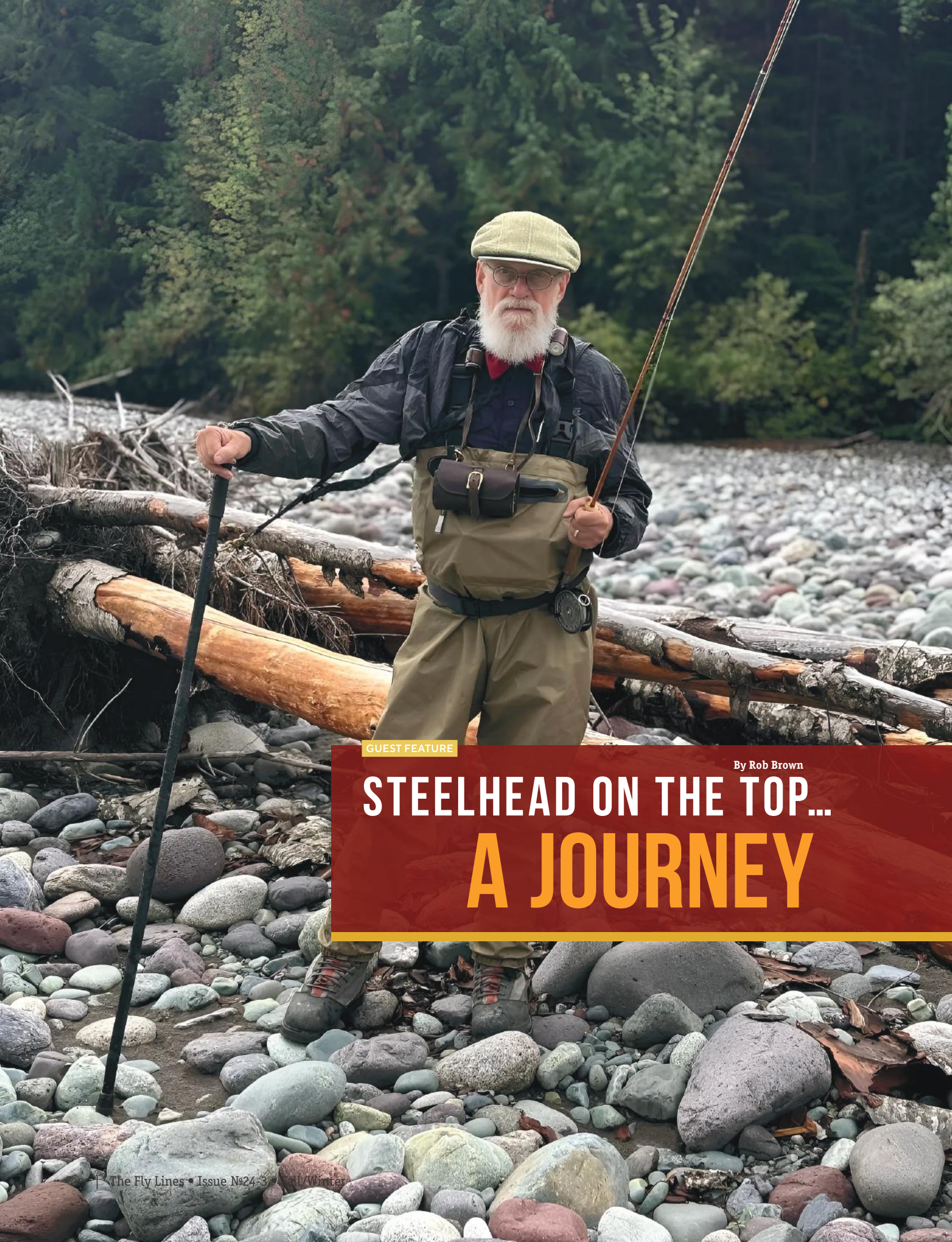
To Pete, challenge and reward are crucial aspects of becoming the complete man. But not only challenge.

What we might all seek in our lives, according to Pete, also includes sufficient remuneration, and sufficient autonomy. Many academic studies on the pursuit of happiness back his views on remuneration. At some point, earning more and more money fails to further increase happiness or well-being. Sure, you need to have enough (sufficient) to get by, but having buckets of money does not equate to ever-rising levels of happiness. One needs more than riches to be happy. Some find happiness in philanthropy, for instance. But also in the joy, the sense of purpose, of having satisfying careers and other pursuits, like fishing. Sufficient autonomy to pursue a chosen and challenging profession, and fishing, and pursue both in the way that is most individually rewarding.

Thus: sufficient autonomy, sufficient remuneration, sufficient challenge.

Such are just some of the wise words of the modern exact man, Peter Broomhall, honed by nearly 90 years of passion, experience, critical thinking, and patient teaching.

Francis Bacon would approve.



GUEST FEATURE

By Rob Brown

STEELHEAD ON THE TOP... A JOURNEY

When I arrived in Terrace in the mid 1970's, there were only a handful of fly fishermen hunting steelhead on the Skeena and her tributaries: the Chapplow brothers Roy and Ed; Finlay Ferguson; Ray Tank; Ted Rawlins; and Fred Hall, who all fished the fly exclusively. For other anglers a fly rod was an afterthought, a tool to be used for cutthroat trout in the spring, and lakes in the summer. Serious salmon and steelhead fishing was done with gear rods, with a float and roe, and lures cast with long, stout rods and spinning reels or Abu Garcia Ambassador reels loaded with twenty-pound test Maxima.

From Bait to Dry Flies: Evolution of Steelhead Fishing

Even the aforementioned dedicated fly-fishers, all of whom grew up fishing bait and lures, rarely used a floating line, believing the only way to fish steelhead was to get one's fly as close to the bottom as possible. To do this was a daunting task then, owing to the fact that sinking lines of the time were at a primitive stage of development. Most were yellow with a green sinking tip which it's manufacturer, Scientific Anglers, labelled high-speed, high-density fast-sinking line. The tips came in a variety of lengths, and simply did not live up to their billing. Many of them had bellies that sank more quickly than their "high-speed" tips, forcing fly fishers to use heavy irons and weighted flies to get their patterns to the desired depths.

Over time the sinking rate of the Scientific Angler lines improved but these lines were never pleasant to cast; they sucked all the joy out of casting a fly which, after all, should be a graceful endeavour.

For twenty-five years my wife and I would spend a week and sometimes more at the Stellako Lodge, where we would recharge our batteries; me, by fishing rainbow trout with dry flies; Karen, by reading and relaxing. I'd first read about the superb trout fishing there in an essay by Roderick Haig-Brown I had come across in compilation of pieces written by famous anglers, *Masters of the Dry Fly*, about their favourite dry-fly fisheries. This fishing with a long leader and free-floating fly was so enjoyable that I began wondering if it was possible to use the same or similar approach for steelhead? Haig-Brown alluded to

it his books, and I had read articles by Bill MacMillan and Bill Bakke in old editions of *Salmon, Trout, Steelheader* that told of providing steelhead to the surface with waking flies.

On one of those early Stellako trips, I watched an angler pick his way around a run filled with huge boulders and persuade a pair of magnificent trout to snap up his oversized Tom Thumb. We met on the trail later and walked back to campsite together. As it turned out, he was from Smithers; his name was Gary Wray, and he had a jet boat he used to fish the Bulkley back in the days when few other people did. When I asked what patterns he liked for steelhead, he showed me a box full of what he and his friend Soji Inouye called Sofa Pillows. They had a tail of red deer hair and a body of tightly wrapped badger hackle, and bore little resemblance to the Sofa

water column, their flies were closer to the top that they were to the bottom.

"Stellako and Bulkley: Encounters with Masters

That fall I acquired a couple of books that convinced me fishing for steelhead with dry flies, even in the colder rivers of more northerly latitudes, was a reasonable proposition. The first of these was a scholarly work simply titled *Trout and the Fly*, co-authored by John Goddard and Brian Clarke. Much of this illuminating work, dealt with how trout actually saw their surroundings. I can no longer find the book in my disheveled library. I suspect it was given away with an enthusiastic testimonial to an angling buddy, but I still recall how the authors had implanted cameras in stream bottoms in their zeal to

STEELHEAD ARE MOST OFTEN VERY CLOSE TO THE BOTTOM, SO IT SEEMED TO ME THAT THE BEST PLACE TO PUT A FLY SO THAT IT COULD BE READILY SEEN BY FISH POSITIONED THIS WAS RIGHT ON, OR VERY NEAR THE SURFACE

Pillow patterns I'd seen in books.

When Gary generously invited me to join him in Smithers for a weekend fishing the Bulkley with Soji and him, I jumped at the chance. The fishing was good as was the company. I watched attentively as Gary and Soji fished their Sofa Pillows on ten-foot sinking-tip lines and realized that, given their buoyancy when swimming through

discover how trout appended their environment. They wrote of "mirror" — that part of the river just beneath the surface that reflected the stream bottom — and the implications this had for the colour of flies we anglers were showing to fish. Somewhat skeptical, I went to the local pet store, looked up eye level to the bottom of a large aquarium and beheld a "mirror" as



Parachute Adams

Hook:	standard sizes 10-12
Tail:	mixed brown & grizzly hackle barbs
Wing:	white calf tail, posted
Body:	hare's ear dubbing
Parachute:	mixed brown & grizzly
Comment:	All around mayfly or caddis pattern. Use when a hatch is on.



Summer Muddler

Hook:	curved 3x long, sizes 6-8
Tail:	golden pheasant tippet feather
Wing:	Lady Amherst dyed orange
Body:	gold Mylar
Throat:	red schlappen
Head:	spun deer hair
Comment:	Rob's muddler variation. Grease head well, and fish in the surface film.

described by Goddard and Clarke.

Did this have anything to do with why purple, pink, and fluorescent orange patterns provoked more strikes on dark, peat-stained streams like the Lakelse, Kitwanga and Kispiox rivers, where black fly patterns seem to get more attention on granite-filled streams like the Zymoetz?

More important for my quest to find out whether dry fly steelheading was a viable option, was the two Brits' description of how trout optics worked. According to them, fish apprehended their watery worlds through an inverse cone; therefore, as they rose in the water column, they saw less and less of the "mirror" and the surface; whereas, trout with their bellies close to the river bottom had the widest view of the surface and their adjacent surroundings. This made sense, as anyone who has done a lot of dry-fly fishing will confirm — when trout are feeding actively during a hatch, it is easier to get closer to them.

Steelhead are most often very close to the bottom, so it seemed to me that the best place to put a fly so that it could be readily seen by fish positioned thus was right on, or very near the surface.

For me, the other profoundly influential book was Trey Combs's *Steelhead Fly Fishing and Flies*. My copy is the 1976 edition, and poured myself over it. I was intrigued especially by pictures of classic Northwest steelhead flies, tied mainly by Harry Lemire, and the instructive drawings by Jeff Dayne that showed how to cast and fish all manner of flies on every kind of line.

In *Steelhead Fly Fishing and Flies*, Combs makes a clear distinction between dry flies, as those patterns fished dead drift upstream in the classical manner, and damp or surface flies, that are skated atop the surface of the river or partly submerged, and wet flies fished below surface at various depths with floating lines and long leaders or sinking lines. These are useful distinctions I have always used, since

they are more precise. Over the years I've had many anglers tell me they'd caught fish on dry flies, only to learn that they had actually caught fish with waking flies, or a pattern fished an inch or two under the surface.

Provoking steelhead to accept flies fished dead drift is the most rewarding and rarest of feats in steelheading, if for no other reason than it requires a smaller river with pools and glassy tail-outs filled with willing steelhead that are not easily spooked. Etched in memory, for example is a preternaturally warm September day when Mike Whelpley and I hiked many miles down the Nogold Creek Valley, then up past Many Bears Creek to a breathtakingly beautiful stretch of the upper Zymoetz, a few miles below Treasure Creek. There were no logging roads then, so our trek was made less grueling by hiking along game trails that wound through old growth forests.

The trip had to be made in waders, as the valley had many bluffs and canyon stretches that forced us to make more than a few tricky wades to the opposite side of the river to avoid dangerous climbs. Making matters worse was the fact that our waders were Seal-Dris, seamless latex waders of Oregonian manufacture whose stocking feet we'd cut off then welded onto flat-soled gum boots with contact cement. Seal Dris were delicate. They tore spectacularly. To prevent this, we wore Pioneer brand rain pants over top them, thereby adding another layer of non-breathable clothing.

After a few miles of walking, we would slip into the river, soaked in sweat, and luxuriate and reinvigorate as the cold water chilled the perspiration inside our clothes. Finally, we reached a series of long clear pools set against a back drop of stone walls, old forest and the jagged, snow-capped Telkwa mountains.

We linked arms and made the wade through the chest high waters. As I dipped the cup from my thermos in the river and took a drink, then

assembled my rod, Mike took out his camera and waded to a large boulder far down in the pool's tail. By the time I reached the head of the pool, a hatch had begun, a complex one of large Mayflies and large dark brown Sedges. As I slid into the pool there was a large blue spot in the middle, about halfway between where Mike was leaning against the rock in the bailout, looking through his Canon.

Then there was a large bulge, this one unmistakably made by a big fish.

"Did you see that?" Mike yelled enthusiastically. "Those are fish rising!"

"I see them; they're after those bugs." I called back.

Then there was another deliberate rise, and another.

"Get them." Mike ordered, steadying his camera as he squinted into the view finder.

I clipped off the wet fly attached to my tippet. Fortunately, I carried far too many fly boxes in those days. I found a grey parachute pattern of Montana provenance called a Gulper Special and tied it to my tippet.

There were at least four steelhead rising for those insects. I fished them as I would trout on the Kitimat or Stellako, moving slowly upstream and drifting my fly over them without drag. As Mike captured my exploits on Kodachrome, I rose and hooked six fish over the course of the afternoon, managing to release half of them.

Depleted, I sat on the bank and urged Mike to give it a go. He did, but with a waking fly, one built along the lines of Harry Lemire's greased liner, but with a hot orange body of polypropylene yarn he called the Float Chaser, in honour of those rare winter steelhead that had a predilection for attacking our balsa floats, apparently prompted to do so by their hot orange tops.

To our surprise, the waking fly moved only one fish, but when Mike switched to a free-floating Humpy/Tom Thumb contraption and started drifting my remaining Gulper Special, we both began

hooking steelhead anew. We concluded that that the pair of pools must have been plugged with steelhead, and that those fish clearly preferred drifting approximations of the indigenous aquatic insects in their environment.

In the ensuing years, I have come across rising steelhead clearly provoked to do so by insect hatches. More than a few times, but it was rare, and the conditions had to be near perfect: clear, shadow-covered water and, of course, a steady hatch of insects.

It seemed obvious that these fish were not feeding on these minuscule insects for sustenance, but that the explanation for their predation was probably due to the reawakening of behaviours learned during their juvenile years. Steelhead bound for the inland waters of Skeena have been shown to spend many years in fresh water before embarking on their lengthy migrations to salt water. During those long fresh water stays, juveniles are sustained by feeding on trout diets, so it's not a stretch to suppose that those innate feeding behaviours are still carried by returning adults to their natal streams so many years later.

Hatches are frenetic affairs, so it's not hard to imagine a steelhead being triggered by caddis rising through the water column by the hundreds, then bouncing off the "mirror" in some cases, and bursting through it in others.

Exploring with a free-floating fly when there's no hatch or visible fish is simply too ineffective and too tedious. In the absence of hatches, I've found the surface fly is the best and most enjoyable way to fish. When I returned to the Stellako the year after my trips on the Bulkley with Gary and Soji, I brought along an arsenal of surface flies I had dressed during the winter. Among them were a few bombers, those highly-packed cigar-like flies invented by Reverend Elmer Smith for the Miramichi River in New Brunswick. The good Reverend was apparently prompted to tie the Bomber when he



Steelhead Bug

Hook: curved short shank sizes 6-10

Body & shell-back: circular foam tubing

Wings/ legs: deer hair, split & tied under

Comment: Waking fly designed by Pete Soveral, Washington USA



Soji's Sofa Pillow

Hook: light wire turned-up-eye steelhead sizes 4-10

Body & shell-back: polar or deer hair dyed red

Wings/ legs: badger hackle(s), tightly palmered over hook shank



Steelhead hen taken on the Top
Photo by John Hagen

saw a child catch a sea-run brown trout using a deer hair mouse imitation.

I handed them to Gary, suggesting that he fish them at the end of a floating line and with a lengthy leader. He looked at the zany bug skeptically and thanked me. By that time, I'd put away all my sinking lines and made a commitment to fish for steelhead with flies on or near the surface. And the good Reverend's bomber had done well for me!

The next time I saw Gary was when

Doug Webb and I were doing a drift on the Bulkley River from Telkwa to Smithers. There was almost nobody doing that at the time, and the fishing we had with our Greased Liners was excellent.

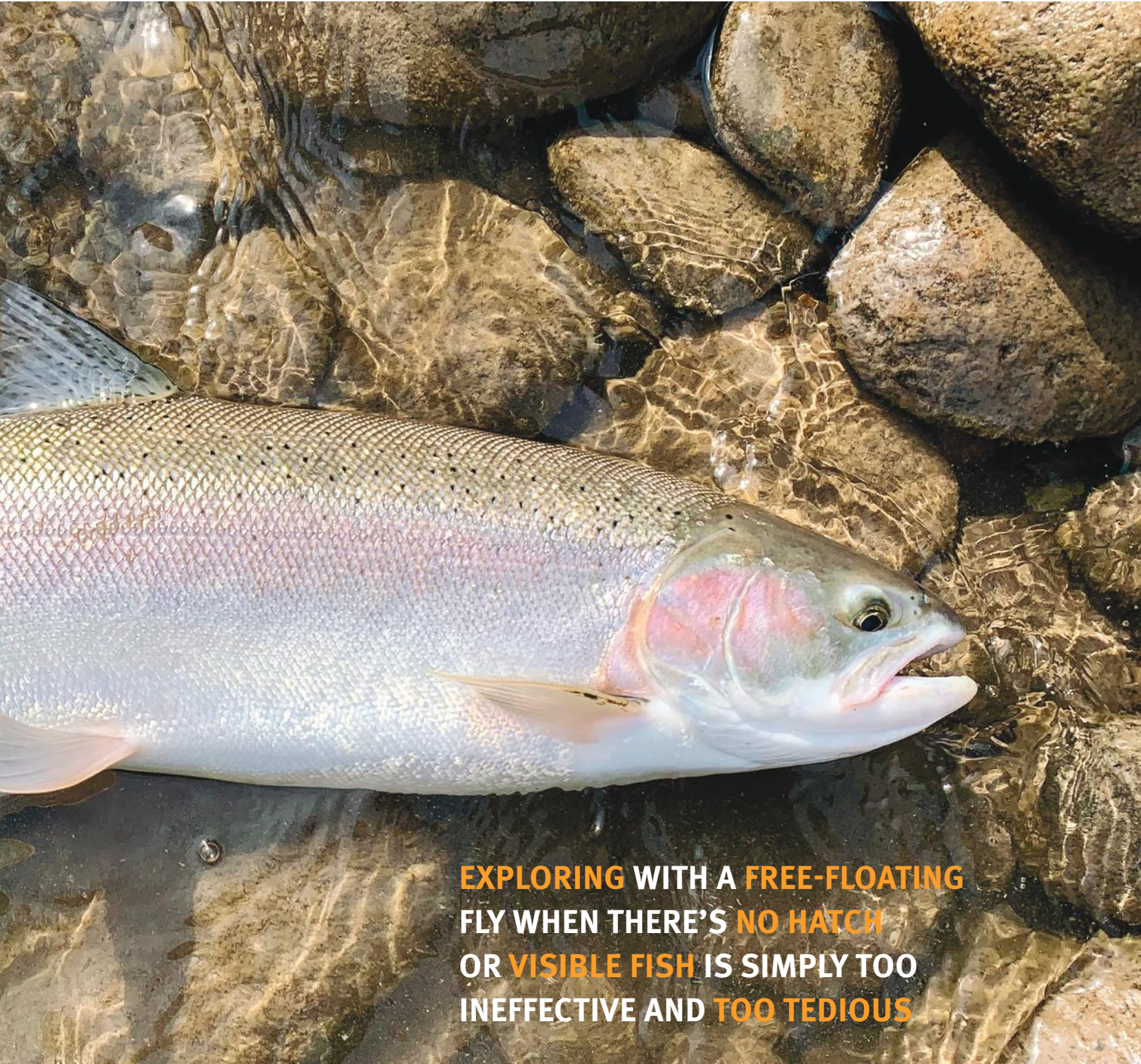
"You know that goofy fly you gave me?" asked Gary.

"The Bomber, yeah."

"Soji and I had been fishing all day and not doing much, so I put on that thing and two fish came for it on the first drift."

I nodded.

Doug and I began fishing the Kispiox in September. This was considered early by most fly-fishers, many of them Americans who had been fishing the stream for years, anglers like Bob York and Faye Davis, who arrived in October when the water was considerably colder and the large Kispiox fish were more reluctant to be persuaded and fought sluggishly. This prompted Peter Broomhall to characterize the Kispiox as the home



EXPLORING WITH A FREE-FLOATING FLY WHEN THERE'S NO HATCH OR VISIBLE FISH IS SIMPLY TOO INEFFECTIVE AND TOO TEDIOUS

of those world's largest and laziest steelhead. The fly lines of choice were generally fast sinking ones: traditional patterns, bright and tied on heavy irons.

I persuaded Doug that we should try the same surface patterns and fish them just as we did on the Bulkley, Clore and Copper but that we should fish them earlier in the season. We did that and were shocked to find that the Kispiox fish were in no way reluctant to rise up and swallow-bite into our surface

flies, and that they fought like hell.

Innovations in Fly Design and Spey Casting

I ordered my first two-fisted fly rod from the House of Hardy in 1982. It was a 15-foot brute rated for a 10-weight fly line, and to complete the outfit I bought a large Hardy Salmon #1 and filled it to the maximum with a 40-yard double-tapered fly line.

The impetus for ordering this beefy

carbon fibre pole was to make fishing with the fly on the Kalum River in the winter possible. We were forced to put away our single-handed fly rods in winter because the guides iced up. With use of Vaseline, one could prevent this happening as often on a gear rod. After reading that British anglers picked up the prodigious lengths of line and put them out again without having to shoot line through the guides on the double handed poles,



Grantham's Sedge

Hook:	standard dry fly 2x long sizes 6-8
Extension:	piece of weed whacker or tennis line, colour brown with felt pen
Body:	dubbed brown seal fur (heavy)
Wing and head:	elk hair
Comment:	Famous steelhead dry fly designed by Ron Grantham.

Some worthwhile instructions for tying in Rob's words:
 "Post: piece of string for restringing a tennis racquet or the smallest diameter of weed whipper line slightly longer than the hook shank, both ends rounded after melting them with a lighter. Tie post to hook shank so that it extends past the hook eye.
 Dub the body with brown/olive seal fur
 Build the wing atop the post and trim to form a head"

I reasoned we might be able to fish flies in the Kalum River when the land was so cold that the warmest place to stand was in the river.

Casting the fifteen-footer overhand was easy to master, but I wanted to learn how to Spey cast. Bill Cunliffe and Noel Money were fishing them as, I think was Bob Taylor, but they'd fallen out of fashion for decades until Mike Maxwell and Art Lingren began a revival. I phoned Art, who was a friend, and he generously sent me an instructional video tape of famed British Angler Hugh Faulkus demonstrating how long rods should be fished. That tape and the best book on Fly casting ever written, John G. Lynde's 34 Ways to Cast a Fly, helped me master Spey casting. I once asked the late great Lee Straight if he knew Lynde. Lee said he did indeed, and that Lynde was an extraordinary fly caster who, with his wife, gave extraordinary exhibitions on how to cast single and double-handed rods of bamboo and greenheart.

The weight of the latter, especially when armed with a large winch would have made my Hardy seem light in comparison, but I soon found out that, when one followed Lynde's instructions as set out in his book, how a relatively small man could accomplish such a feat without sustaining injury. Lynde could do everything set out in his book and describes it in clear, easily understood prose.

Prior to the explosion of two-handed rods in steelhead fishing that came out of the US, Doug Webb and I fished the Skeena and its tributaries for years without meeting anyone else with one. Our experiments with winter fishing after we learned how to splice fast sinking lines to our 40-yard double tapers, was a success. And, they were a boon when fishing surface flies on the Skeena proper, for the simple fact that they enabled us to cover so much of water.

Turbidity obviously has an effect

on dry-fly and surface-fly fishing, though I have risen fish in conditions where I could only see a half a metre into the river. Water temperature has a profound effect on fish activity. I used to carry a thermometer, and fish up-top with confidence if the river was 40 degrees Fahrenheit or above. In my desire to simplify, I no longer do, using indicators like shelf ice and "feeling the cold" even when wearing long johns under wool pants, as crude indicators when to put on a wet fly or just get out of the river and go home.

After over 55 years of fishing flies for steelhead on or near the surface, I've learned to simplify. I have only one Spey rod and it's 11-feet long. I seldom use it, preferring my two favourite bamboo rods: a Phillipson taper built for me by Bob Clay, or an 8-foot-3-inch bamboo built by and given to me by Ron Grantham. Both are six weights, and are balanced beautifully by Hardy Perfect reels. I pack a fly wallet of my own design built by the master saddle maker Don Horsefield in his Telkwa shop, which is inspired by one built by Bill McMillan, and featured on the cover of my well-worn copy of Steelhead Flyfishing and Flies I mentioned earlier. The wallet hangs around my neck for easy access, and two old film canisters hang from the strap. One carries fly floatant, the other parachute Adams dry flies.

Inside the wallet are pockets for a couple of packaged leaders and on the back is a pouch for two spools of tippet material. On the inside are two strips of shearling which contain my indispensable flies, like Ron Grantham's Sedge, the most innovative and effective steelhead pattern I've encountered.

Ron and I were discussing surface flies on the way to the weekly Totem Fly Fishers Thursday lunch when he told he had a pattern I had to see. A few weeks after I arrived home, a package came in the mail. I pulled out the packing and was mystified to

discover a brown prescription pill bottle bearing a label that read "Prescription for Rob Brown: Use as required as required for relief of angling boredom. Grantham's Sedge". Inside the bottle were three meticulously-tied brown greased liners, except they weren't Greased Liners; their wings were tied on pieces of plastic weed whipper line so that they were set forward much further than the wing on a greased liner. Ron had invented a waking fly that could not be sunk — in fact, his sedge tended to ride higher in faster flows. The concept was simple but brilliant. Naturally, fly fishers quickly realized, as I had, the incredible versatility and utility of Ron's sedge, and, much to his chagrin, began calling his brainchild the "weed whacker fly"

I fondly remember the day when Yvon Chouinard, a master of innovation, went fishing in the middle reaches of the Zymoetz and I showed him Ron's sedge. He instantly appreciated the design, and was floored by how ingenious it was.

could be on the then numerous runs above the Copper-Clore confluence, what Bill called "the little Copper".

Also in my wallet are a few Blue Mosques, another lazy man's bomber spun of black deer hair with a hackle consisting of a couple of turns of dark blue marabou, gussied up with a few stands of blue Flashabou tinsel.

Finally, my wallet has a few Wintle's Wizards, simple flies tied on standard wet fly hooks that consist of a deer hair tail, scruffy black seal's fur body and a couple of turns of grizzled hen hackle. I like that fly's simplicity and its history. The same pattern is also referred to as the Spade Fly, by Trey Combs, who credits its invention to Bob Arnold. I was good friends with Bob Taylor, an excellent fly tier. Bob was friends with both Arnold and Wintle, and fished the Stillaguamish with both of them. When I asked Taylor about the controversy over who actually invented the pattern, Bob said all he knew was that

PROVOKING STEELHEAD TO ACCEPT FLIES FISHED DEAD DRIFT IS THE MOST REWARDING AND RAREST OF FEATS IN STEELHEADING, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN IT REQUIRES A SMALLER RIVER WITH POOLS AND GLASSY TAIL-OUTS FILLED WITH WILLING STEELHEAD THAT ARE NOT EASILY SPOOKED

I use the string used to restring tennis rackets as per the recommendation he passed on to me by Ron before he passed so unexpectedly. It's the only surface fly I use and the only one I need.

If I think if the situation calls for it, or I'm tired of tracking the passage of waking flies in fading light, I go for my fly wallet and pluck out a Summer Muddler, inspired by the bushy creations of Kitimat's Bill Burkland, who showed me how effective they

it was "conceived under the influence."

I operate under the over-arching principle that if you go out to the steam and come back without learning something, it's time to find an alternate pursuit. To that end, I've spent the years since the turn of the century trying to find out if nymph fishing is perhaps the most effective approach to angling summer steelhead. However, that is the subject for another article.



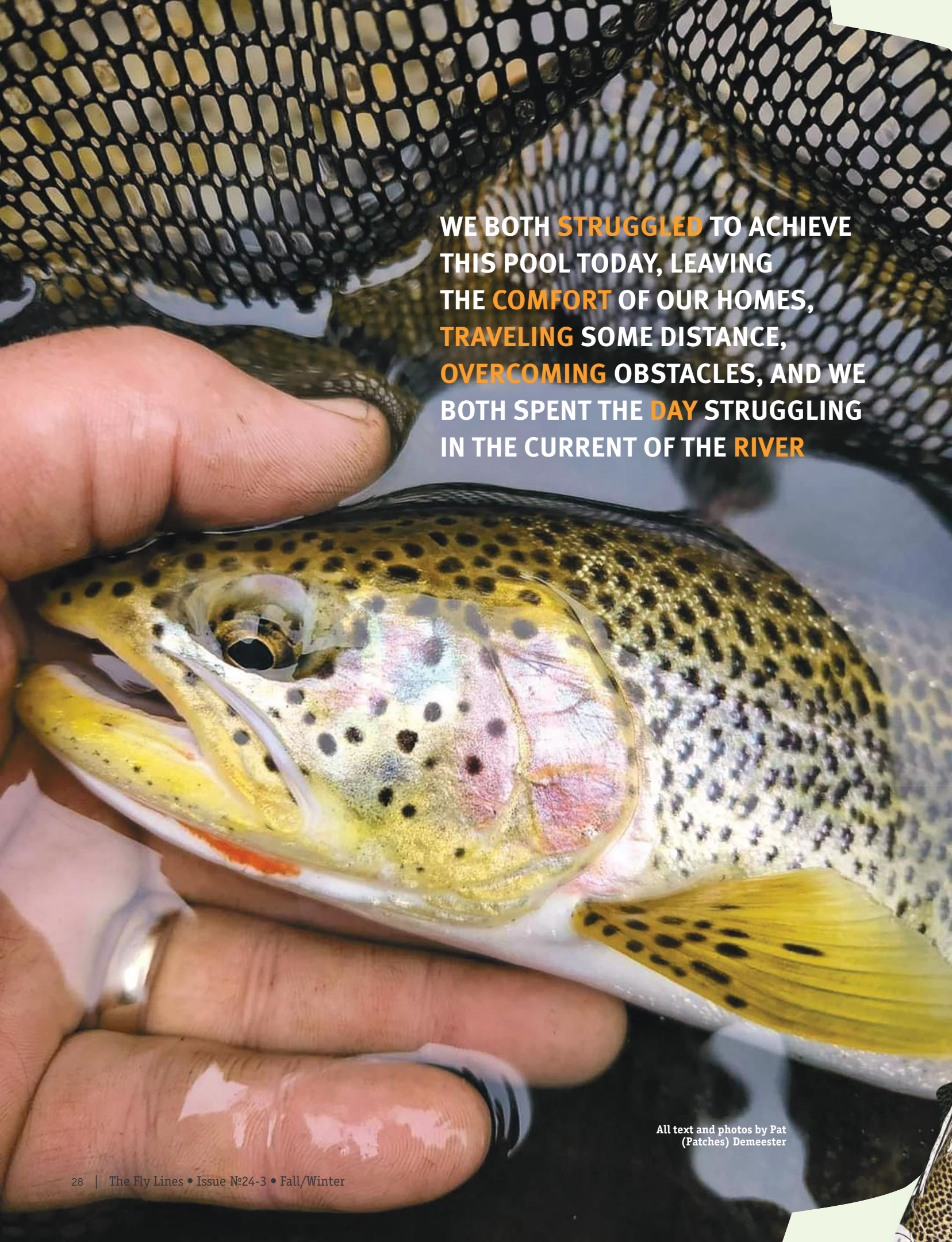
Bomber

Hook:	3 x curved dry fly sizes 6-10
Tail:	deer hair
Body:	spun deer hair
Hackle:	badger, palmered through body
Front post:	foam strip
Comment:	A good variation is black deer with grizzly hackle, black post



Green Machine

Hook:	standard dry fly 2x long sizes 6-10
Thread:	chartreuse
Butt:	gold tinsel
Body:	olive deer hair, spun
Hackle:	badger, palmered over body
Throat:	guinea, dyed olive



WE BOTH **STRUGGLED** TO ACHIEVE
THIS POOL TODAY, LEAVING
THE **COMFORT** OF OUR HOMES,
TRAVELING SOME DISTANCE,
OVERCOMING OBSTACLES, AND WE
BOTH SPENT THE **DAY** STRUGGLING
IN THE CURRENT OF THE **RIVER**

All text and photos by Pat
(Patches) Demeester



GUEST FEATURE

THE CROSSING

A Short Story by
Patches (Pat)
Demeester

I find myself breaking through the thick brush, careful not to get stung in the small field of devil's club, then stumble out into an open area, under the canopy of an ancient, old growth hemlock at the river's edge. I have achieved a new section of the river, a few hundred feet above the run that I could see in the canyon from the logging road that is now quite high above me. Looking back up the cliff and elk trail I have traversed I am sure this will be the same path I will need to make my return later. I mark the location with the big Hemlock standing tall on the water's edge.

As I step out into the river channel, looking downstream I can see the river pushing hard to my side, below where it begins to embrace the impassable bluff that rises from the bank. Here, the flows of a thousand seasons have scoured out a long run, fashioned with a deep dump at the head that leans on the granite shelf at its greatest depth, and then continues as a long path

for some 100-feet or better. I study the belly of the run, with its smooth, steady, walking-speed- water around 4-to-8 feet deep which will surely hold the fish I seek. The tail-out has many good size boulders; all could hold a fish...

I will need to cross and position myself at the head of the run to achieve the cast that I believe will connect me to a fresh salt fish coming upstream from the early morning tide. This thought will help me as I cross the river to be in place to fish this new gem I have discovered. I see the depth and flow, and wonder if I will be able to cross? The water is crystal clear, with a color of blue that only comes from melting

ice. It is deceptively deep, and is swift and cold.

The first step takes me knee deep as the gravel washes out from under my feet in the swift current. I can feel the ground beneath my boots loosen, pebble after pebble, which retreat downstream as I make my advance. I feel the river's strength, but I must push forward. The waist-deep current is refreshing; I can feel its cool waters pulling at the material of my waders as if to say... "Let me in!"

The river, never ending, always descending, winding, turning, bending as it runs to the sea, just as does a child, running to a mother's embrace.

The waters now pull me downstream, lapping up around my heart, as the now chest-deep waters are in control. I surrender to its will, and begin my decent through scattered, large boulders; my toes touching one, then another. A quick connection to firm bottom provides a false sense of control as the current takes grip of me, and I have only these brief moments of grounding to influence my direction.

I have surrendered control to the current and am now moving swiftly downstream, but not totally of my own accord. I feel as if I am a skated dry fly on the surface, held back with slight pressure to create a wake. I look down at my footing, and see I am moving at a slightly slower pace than the leaves and debris sweeping around my feet. Everything here is moving in a constant downstream pilgrimage to meet the sea. Everything except the very thing I seek, the fish that, in an act that could be described as defiance are constantly pushing the boundaries laid out in front of them by the watershed itself, using the river as a path to achieve their life's goal.

As do I...





Big mature male

WE MET ONE ANOTHER IN A MOMENT OF SURPRISE, FOR WE ONLY CAUGHT A BRIEF GLIMPSE OF EACH OTHER, AND WE BOTH FOUGHT OUR BEST FIGHT

Bouncing and bobbing, I am shuffling toward the objective of reaching the far bank, and, better than half-way across, I pull into the lee of a bear-sized boulder, and instantly feel the release of the river's grip. It's here I can gather myself and once more claim my footing. Around my feet I can see several small trout, also finding refuge from the flow: hunting, viewing, tasting everything that passes by in the fast outside current. I watch one, a small cutthroat I think,

gladly accept the gift of a caddis larva I have dislodged from the stones with my feet.

I take a breath...

Just then, a dipper lands on the boulder, and, bobbing up and down with excitement and singing her song, she flutters over the next piece of water

that lays out in front of me. She lands on the far shore, as if to beckon me to continue. I'm almost there...

I move out into the flow, and begin the steelheader's waltz downstream, once more in waist deep waters. I am swept closer to my destination, and in much slower current I can keep a good footing; the river shallows swiftly as it becomes the depth of my knees. I feel a great weight, as the full extent of my body that is no longer weightless in the water now requires a strength I struggle to find.

I stumble in the substrate under my feet as it once again becomes fine and loose. My legs are weak from the crossing and will take time to recover. I have cross-quartered my way down, and find myself in place where the water is good, and a fish might take up position.

I loosen 10 pulls from my reel and toss a quick few at my feet as I approach. The well-greased Steelhead Bee bobs in the shallow riffles, nothing. I put a cast well above the best water, and watch the little yellow bug bob around under no pressure of the dead drift. I stretch out the drift as long as I can, both to control the line as a dead-still drift; also, not too far, as I want to witness the take of the fly.

Just as the feeling that I have loss of control of this, and feel I can no longer control the drift, a small wake appears behind the bee with the drag that is starting to occur, and I see the classic V- shape of the currents pull on the fly towards the shore. I start to think of the crossing I have just endured, and the view from the dippers position in the sky what I looked like skating across the flow, only half under my own control

I re-focused from my mind's eye, back to the dead drifted fly. Just then I see the rise of a good fish, as it has come up from the bottom in full confidence. Totally lacking all suspicious intent, he rises up and exposes the length of his jaw as he takes the Bee in no more than 3-feet of water.

In this moment it's clear this is a large buck of a good weight. The set feels good as I let the line tighten after the take. I lift the rod slowly and take the time necessary, making sure the comes to the corner of the mouth for a good purchase of the hook. Realizing the trickery, he takes to the depths swiftly, holding along the length of the vertical granite wall for a moment, and does not reappear for a time, and then he breaks water 3 times in a row, showing the bright colour of a fresh salt fish. A band of charcoal grey overlaps his still ocean-bright sides. The massive tail of a big buck covered in calcium rays is the last I see of him, as he heads down stream at an incredible

pace, my reel screaming and lurching towards the eyes of the rod as the click and paw is at maximum mechanical abilities, trying to keep up with the line as it discharges with such zeal. Damn! I lose the rubber match in the shake of his tail, and watch the backing leaving my reel at an unfathomable rate. Running to keep up, I see he has made the length of the run already. WOW...

So, a fish like this, fresh from the sea, and in this run for but a passing, purposeful moment in time? With zero idea of the value of its surroundings, this fish had spent no time holding in this fast run. He just left the safety of deep, open waters of the chuck on this last of high tides. This run holds no safety in his mind. He only understands true value of the pools and runs below, and the beloved salt water home he has just left. In this moment of panic, he wants to retreat to the ocean, his safe place. And he is headed there with everything he has! He has hit the white water and left the run. My heart sinks as my chances fade. The line falls dead as he is taken me around a boulder some 50-feet away, and my tippet is frayed to the breaking point. Utter loss is the feeling that floods over me for but a moment. Damn!



And then, a feeling of great satisfaction comes over me as I accept my defeat. I smile and load my pipe and I sit on the beach, and think over the battle and ponder of my tactics, angles, and play. I'm satisfied — I fought well, I have been bested by a worthy opponent, I have been out- played.

We both struggled to achieve this pool today, leaving the comfort of our homes, traveling some distance, overcoming obstacles, and we both spent the day struggling in the current of the river.

We met one another in a moment of surprise, for we only caught a brief glimpse of each other, and we both fought our best fight.

And it was wonderful.

GUEST FEATURE

THE DIPPER'S DANCE

By Patches (Pat) Demeester

A dipper dances in the softer flow
as the river is gliding by.
She sings a song that trout all know
as the sun sets from the sky.

And in the morning as day returns,
as the river is gliding by,
the trout, with of little concern,
are feeding in their lies.

It is then I cast; for the plan is set,
as the river is gliding by,
for I see a trout I've never met,
who is pondering my fly.

I hear the dipper sing her song
as the river is gliding by.
I see the trout rise before too long,
never moving shy.

His chin comes up and then returns
as the river is gliding by.
He shakes his head, for now he learns
he has taken in my fly.

The trick is played, the hook-up strong,
as the river is gliding by.
He's pulling line, and before too long,
leaping clear and high.

I lean to him and make a wish
as the river is gliding by,
for always bow unto a fish
who is aiming for the sky.

Through sticks and logs he was wound
as the river is gliding by.
The way to freedom is never found,
but forever he did try.

I bested him, and here he lay
as the river is gliding by.
I lean to him and softly say,
"I cannot tell a lie."

The dipper sings her song aloud
as the river is gliding by;
sweetest thing to my ear,
but you have caught my eye!

Taken back by such a sight,
as the river is gliding by,
you are free again, and to our delight,
we can call this fight a tie.

A Steelhead Sink or

Virgin's Dilemma Skate?

By Mat Ferraro

Day 1

I must admit, when I was approached to do this article, I was a steelhead virgin. Now, upon writing it, that status has changed. Several flies were tied and several more stories were considered before settling on two steelhead patterns, the Burnt Chicken (wet) and Greased liner (dry), that were tied and employed on my first successful steelhead trip. On a side note, no steelhead trip should ever be considered unsuccessful, and in this context, success is defined by the act of hooking, landing, and releasing a steelhead.

A colleague of mine, and Local Smithers Legend, Rob Maurer, suggested I head to town a day early to do some fishing before heading North for my next work shift in the field. Rob and I had met on a work trip in March 2024 and discussed doing exactly this, so when the opportunity presented itself, I enthusiastically jumped on board. Due to a cancelled trip to the salt chuck to target Coho, I decided to compensate for my loss by spending an extra day on the Bulkley system. Two days in steelhead paradise, here I come.

As I do before any fishing trip, I began to seek as much information as possible about the waters and species I am targeting. My quest for new knowledge began with an on-stream chat with another fishy colleague, Ciara Sharpe, whilst electrofishing in remote Northern BC (I'm a fisheries biologist). Long story short, I emerged from that conversation enthralled with the prospect of dry-fly fishing for steelhead, and had decided that I wanted to tie a steelhead dry fly for this article. Deciding on and tying the fly was the easy part; the

writing part, however, didn't come so

easy. My knowledge of dry-fly fishing for steelhead is quite meagre and I felt that a how-to article describing something I don't know how to do wouldn't be as authentic as a good old anecdote about poppin' my Steelhead cherry.

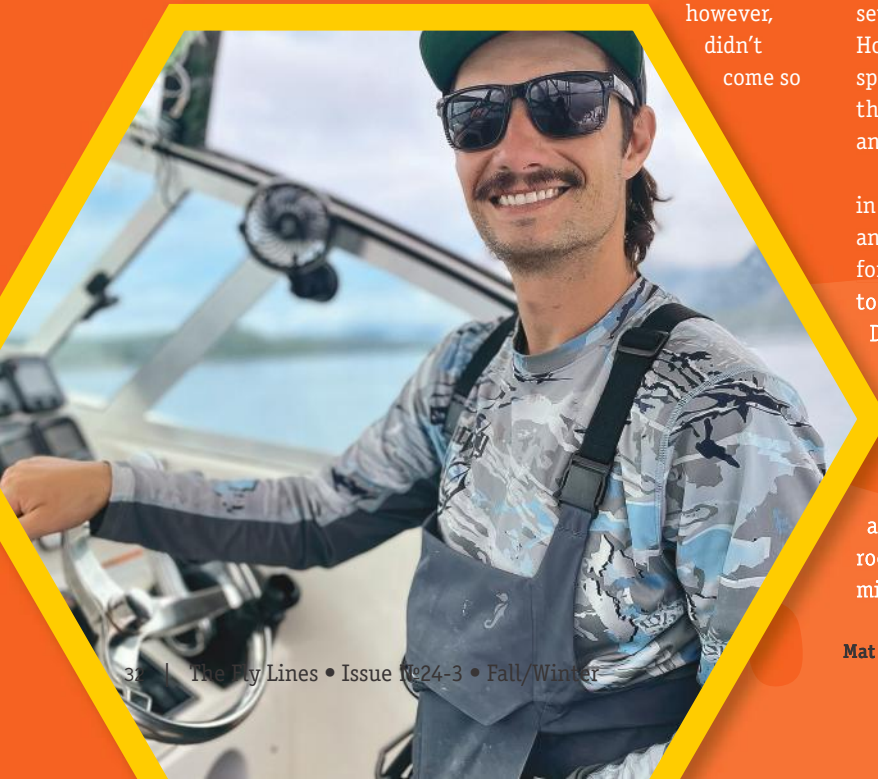
A few days before my steelhead trip, I was in the office with my colleague, Kevin Rossi, and the conversation drifted towards fishing, as it usually does with fish biologists, and before Lunch-time, we had decided that Kevin was to join me for a day of steelhead fishing on my compensatory outing to the Bulkley System: two steelhead virgins looking for an intimate connection with the fish of their dreams. The night before the big day, we decided on the Morice, because both of us had fished the river before, and we knew of some productive water. My spot was a quintessential steelhead run that I fished in October, 2022 where

I hooked and lost a steelhead, so of course there would be one there again, right? An important note here is that I hooked that steelhead on the Burnt Chicken, a classic steelhead wet fly. Kevin's spot was lower down on the system where he had fished earlier that week and felt really good about. Kevin

and I met at the A&W in Houston, grabbed a quick road stand-off ho-humming first. In the end, spot on the river several guides were. However, we missed the spot and hastily concluded that fate had now decided for us and bee-lined it to my spot up-river.

and I met at the A&W in Houston, grabbed a bite and skedaddled up the forest service towards the Morice. A classic Canadian took place in the car with lots of and about which spot we should go to we decided to start at a lower as it was early in the year, and in the area a few days prior. turn off for the lower

Upon arrival, there were no vehicles in the parking lot area, no other bank anglers, and no other jet boats cruising by. All good signs for the elusive angler, but also brought slight doubt to our minds as the lower system had been quite busy. Despite my infatuation with catching a steelhead on a dry-fly, my yearning to simply catch a steelhead was stronger. My rod was already rigged for swinging wet-flies and I couldn't resist the urge to put on the fly that hooked me a steelhead in this very spot two years prior — on went the Burnt Chicken. The run looked beautiful, and was much longer than I remember, definitely enough room for two anglers, so Kevin started up high and I started at mid-point. The pinks were in thick, and we were concerned of



Mat Ferraro

them becoming a nuisance, but they proved not to be an issue. Upon inspecting the bank-side vegetation and depth of the water, I was a little concerned that I only had a single-hand fly rod. Thirty to forty feet was all I could roll cast but the water I could cover looked pretty juicy: walking speed, riffled surface, knee to waist depth, submerged boulders, and a few nice buckets.

Not more than fifteen casts and a few steps down from where I started, my swing was abruptly interrupted, I lifted my rod and the line started zinging. "I'm on" I yelled confidently as I didn't think this was a Pink. The fish ran hard downstream and set the hook deeply on its own. I looked down at my screaming reel and was nearly into the backing so I took off downstream, and then it happened: the steelhead revealed itself erupting from the water with a surface-shattering breach topping out at a meter above river shaking its head, violently attempting to shake the hook. It was the initial breach that bested me two years prior so when the fish stayed on post-breach, I was relieved — slightly. I still had a lot of line out and no net on me. I'm sure Kevin saw that I was on, but it would be challenging to tell what I had, as he was several hundred meters upstream. Once I felt in control, I looked upstream, and saw Kevin scrambling towards the net, hooting and hollering words of encouragement. In our conversation afterwards, he said he saw the breach and knew to hustle down to me. After the breach, the fish held strong, did a few more runs, albeit shorter than the initial run, and was in sight in the shallows after a few minutes. A few splashy, suspenseful moments later, the fish was in the net — a bright 8–9-pound doe of healthy proportions. Many anglers postulate that the perfection of steelhead lies in their strength, beauty, resilience, and ability to thrive both fresh and saltwater environments. I can now confirm, from experience, these speculations are true and BC Steelhead are of a truly impeccable stature. By days end, we had fished another run, I caught and landed one smaller steelhead and Kevin hooked and lost another. Three steelhead hooked on day one, and I still had

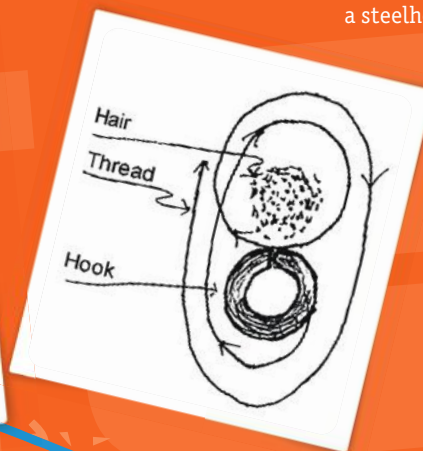
another full day in steelhead paradise!

Day 2

For many fly anglers, dry-fly fishing and steelhead are considered in the upper echelon of our sport. Fortunately, for us in Northern BC, we can use the former to target the latter in many world-class Skeena tributaries.

On day two, Rob and I decided to target some Coho in the morning and transition to steelhead fishing in the afternoon. The morning was a success. Now that I had a few steelhead on the board, a Coho in the bag, and an accomplished local angler guiding me, it was time to tie on the Greased Liner start skating. The runs we fished boasted perfect characteristics for the dry fly angler, but despite our efforts we did not rise any steelhead to the dry fly. I did, however, gain a better understanding of the process of skating dries. I'm by no means an expert, but I can relay what I learned. Initially, I fished the fly with a loop knot, but the fly soon became water logged and required vigorous false casting to dry it off. To remedy this, I gave the ruffle hitch knot a go, and it worked wonders to keep the fly on the surface and increased the wake produced by the fly. Please see figure XX for instructions on how to tie and fish the ruffle hitch. The other thing I learned to improve the wake of the fly is that water speed dictates your casting angle from shore. In slower water, I found a 20–25-degree angle from shore permitted a more pronounced wake, but reduced the swing length when compared to a 45-degree angle. In faster water, a 45-degree angle facilitated a great wake and maintained a longer swing length — the best of both worlds. In no circumstance did I find any benefits to casting at angles greater than 45 degrees from shore while fishing dries. In faster, deeper water, when swinging wet flies, I often cast between 45–90 degrees to get the fly deeper before it begins its swing. All runs will fish different and require different techniques, but the above techniques are a small example of how changing a small detail such as the angle of your cast from shore can improve your chances of catching a fish. Despite not catching any fish, I was confident, after some experimentation, that I was presenting the fly properly and fishing it effectively. My belief is that presentation trumps fly choice in most situations, and fishing a fly properly should take priority over changing a fly. Before I trail to far off on my discourse of techniques and fly-presentation, I should finish the story.

My stats after three days of steelhead fishing show two landed steelhead and one lost steelhead, that's an average of a steelhead a day — not bad. I may not have had to work as hard as some to get my first steelhead, but I am more than certain I will experience the vicissitudes of steelheading at some point in the future and couldn't be more pleased with the prospect. No longer a steelhead virgin, I left Smithers anticipating my imminent return to experience the grandeur of raising one to the dry.



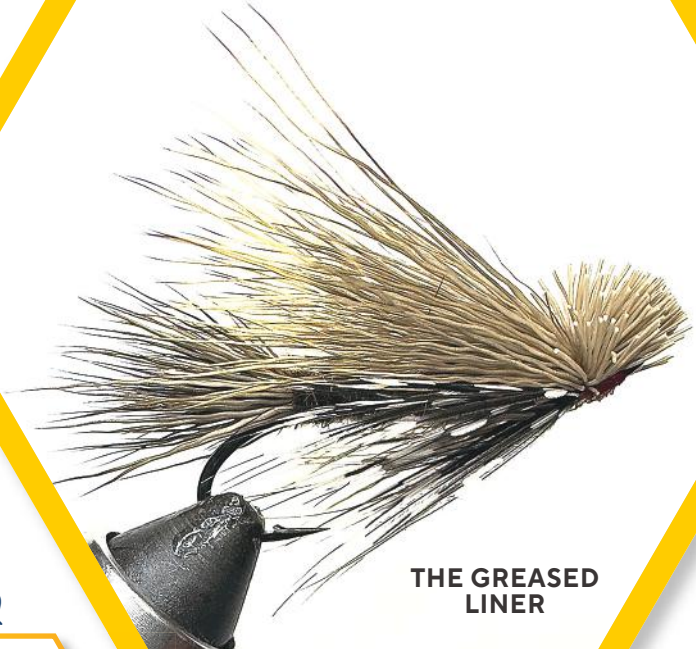
FLY TYING FEATURE

The Greased Liner

By Mat Ferraro

The dressing:

Hook:	steelhead up-eye sizes 2-6
Thread:	UTC 70d or Uni 6/0 red thread
Tail:	moose hairs
Body:	dark brown squirrel dubbing
Throat:	spotted guinea fowl
Wing:	natural deer body hair (stacked)



THE GREASED LINER

3 Pinch a decent portion of dubbing and roll it into a long slender noodle and set aside. Form a dubbing loop with the thread and apply dubbing wax to the loop before inserting the dubbing into the formed loop.

TYING TIP. Lash the bundle to the shank, using a pinch wrap to prevent it from spinning, and finish with loose wraps to prevent the thread from flaring the tail. Trim off any hairs that flare too much.

4 Using your favorite dubbing spinner, spin the dubbing loop to get a tight dubbing noodle. Wrap the noodle forward and tie-off, leaving two hook-eye-widths of space before the hook eye.

Step 3-4



Step 1-2



1 **Tying instructions:** Dress the hook with thread to prevent the deer hair from slipping around the hook shank.

2 For the tail, cut a pencil width portion of deer hair from the hide; stack, and tie-in as a bundle, forming a buoyant underbody, and a tail that is about as long as the hook gap.

5 Select a saddle hackle feather with long fibers and peel of the fluffy aftershaft feathers, exposing the stem. Cut off the lower, thicker feather stem leaving a 1/4 inch of thin, supple stem to tie-in with.

6 Tie in this hackle feather at the exposed stem with the natural curvature arcing upwards; palmer 1-3 turns whilst stroking feathers back, and tie-off. Trim excess feather as close as possible, and wrap to cover the exposed stem.

Step 5-6



8 Whip finish and apply head cement or your preferred finish.

Step 7-8



7 Cut off a slightly smaller portion of deer hair for the wing. Stack the hair, measure the length so the wing extends to the end of the hook, and tie-in about one hook eye width from the eye.

TYING TIP. To prevent the deer hair from spinning around the hook shank, lash the bundle down with a loose pinch-wrap, and then take two wraps solely around the base of the deer hair bundle. (See Figure). Now you can begin to wrap around both the bundle and the hook shank to secure the bundle, and then flare the deer hair to form a head on the top of the hook shank.

The Burnt Chicken

By Mat Ferraro

The dressing:

Shank:	straight eye streamer hook size 2/0 2x long with hook removed (alternative: 25mm black intruder shank)
Thread:	6/0 red
Trailing wire:	black Beadalon 0.015in
Trailing hook:	hot pink Spey blood quill marabou
Body 1:	purple UV Polar Chenille
Body 2:	UV Diamond White Gel Core Fritz
Body 3:	purple UV Polar Chenille
Collar:	hot pink Spey blood quill marabou
Lateral Line:	grizzly hackle (no. 2 grade dry fly cape)



Tying instructions:

- 1 Cut off hook point with sturdy side cutters (wear safety glasses and cut off away from your eyes). Dress shank with thread.
- 2 Cut a section of trailing wire long enough that you can form a loop that extends 1 1/4 inches behind the end of the shank.
- 3 Tie trailing wire on the top of the shank, forming a loop that extends 1 1/4 inches behind the shank such that both strands are flat on the top of the hook and won't twist around the shank from thread tension. Add superglue to the thread wraps and wire and let dry for 30 seconds.

TYING TIP: Tie the first layer with low thread tension to prevent the trailing wire from twisting around the shank. Increase thread tension for subsequent layers.

Step 4



- 4 Tie in polar chenille, wrap 4-6 turns toward while preening the long fibers backwards. Tie off the polar chenille while holding the long fibers back.

Step 5



- 5 Select a long marabou feather with a fine stem and long fibers. Tie marabou to shank about 1 1/4 inch from the tip of the feather and wrap 3-4 turns (or until the stem gets too thick) while preening the marabou fibers back.

TYING TIP: Marabou stems can be fragile at the tip, so make sure to tie in about 1/4 inch of stem moving the thread towards the hook eye. Also, be careful while wrapping to not break the stem.



Step 6

6 Expose a 1/4 inch of the core of the diamond chenille and tie in, using the exposed core section to minimize bulk. Wrap forward 4-5 turns and tie off



8 Repeat step 5: "Select a long marabou feather with a fine stem and long fibers. Tie marabou to shank about 1 1/4 inch from the tip of the feather and wrap 3-4 turns (or until the stem gets too thick) while preening the marabou fibers back."



Step 7

7 Repeat step 4: "Tie in polar chenille, wrap 4-6 turns toward while preening the long fibers backwards. Tie off the polar chenille while holding the long fibers back"



9 Select two long, thin hackle feathers of similar length and width from your cape. Measure one feather so the tip lines up with the back of the trailing wire loop, and hold the feather at this tie-in point. Expose a 1/4 inch of stem by removing fibers from both sides of the stem on the the butt-end side of your measured tie in point. Cut off the remaining section of butt end, and tie the hackle feather in on the near side of the shank using the exposed section of stem. Remove any excess stem

Step 9-10 Finished



10 Repeat step 9 on the far side of the shank. **Tying Tip** If you have a rotary vise, its much easier to rotate the fly 180 degrees so the far side is now your near side.

11 Secure hook onto trailing wire using a loop-to-loop connection with the hook point facing up. This prevents snags and facilitates hook-ups in the fishes' upper jaw

12 Apply head cement of your preference.



Kitselas First Nation

celebrates return of the fish wheel

On August 21, 2024, Kitselas First Nations leadership shared its immense pride in the successful return of a traditional selective fishing model – a fish wheel – to serve its community food fishery.

The day featured a community education session to help understand why this salmon stewardship initiative and what was learned in this first year after an absence of several decades. “We exceeded expectations”, said David Hansen (K5T CEO). That evening, Kitselas leadership hosted a smaller gathering with supporting partners to get better acquainted and explore a continued, collaborative future. BC Federation of Fly Fishers President Myles Armstead and Board member Bob Moody attended, together with the Steelhead Society of BC and SkeenaWild. “Kitselas First Nation holds salmon stewardship among its highest values, and partnerships are an important way to help us achieve that”, continued David Hansen.

The fish wheel operated through July and August 2024 and proved its ability to not only catch significant numbers of desired species (i.e. sockeye) but also potential to release unharmed non-target (e.g. pink salmon) or at risk species such as Chinook and Steelhead. Steelhead was repeatedly highlighted as a species requiring greater attention. “These results pave the way to a future where selective fishing becomes the dominant, sustainable practice”, says Myles Armstead. “And it’s an excellent opportunity for First Nations and NGOs to work together, not just on selective fishing”.

An evaluation of 2024 is underway, and that will inform a plan to guide the next several years. The BC Federation of Fly Fishers will be proudly assisting with that work across logistical, funding, and communications fronts. “We are grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with Kitselas First Nation, and we commend their leadership for change”, says Myles Armstead.



THESE RESULTS PAVE THE WAY TO A FUTURE WHERE SELECTIVE FISHING BECOMES THE DOMINANT, SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE

PICKING A FISHING BRAIN

Picking a Fishing

Brain

with Art Lingren

Len Piggott



Through most of his adult life, Art Lingren has been actively involved in the fishing community and has traveled to many places in the Pacific Northwest as well as Argentina to fly fish for steelhead, trout, char, and salmon. Throughout more than four decades he has been involved in fisheries conservation activities. He is a member and a past president of the Totem Flyfishers, British Columbia's oldest fly-fishing club, an honorary member of the Loons Fly Fishing club, a long-time member and a past president of the British Columbia Federation of Fly Fisher (BCFFF), a Life Member of the Haig-Brown Kingfisher Creek Society and he served many years as a director of the Steelhead Society of B. C. Currently he is the historian for the BCFFF. During nine out of the past 35 years Art spent six years editing the Totem Topics and three years editing the BCFFF Fly Lines, receiving critical acclaim.

In 1995, he was awarded the BCFFF's Angul Award, given to British Columbian fly fishers who show an appreciation for the "ancestry of our fly-fishing heritage and the excellence surrounding its development as both an Art and a Science."

In 1999, Art was inducted into the

British Columbia Sport Fishing Hall of Fame. Later that same year, the Federation of Flyfishers, an international Montana-based organization, chose Art as the 6th recipient of their prestigious Roderick Haig-Brown Award. The award is presented to an author of a book, books or a combination of articles and books that embody the philosophy and spirit of Roderick Haig-Brown including: a respect for the

MY FAVOURITE ROD FOR STEELHEAD IS MY MEISER SPEY ROD, 13'-6" 8/9 WEIGHT



Art's 4 Answers



1. ONE RIVER in the world to fish, and what fish?

"The steelhead, and preferably summer-runs because I don't like fishing in cold weather any longer. The Thompson River was a favourite for many years, and its fish were some of the bests. Unfortunately, the run has fallen on hard times, and the river has been closed for years, but I still think of those screamers I hooked every now and then. The picture is of the Meiser rod and a Dean River fish."

2. Having ONE ROD to fish that place with, what would you choose?

"My favourite rod for steelhead is my Meiser Spey rod, 13'-6" 8/9 weight."

3. Having ONE REEL to put on that rod, which one would you choose, and what line?

"The first reel I bought for steelhead back in 1979 was a Hardy St. John, but a few years ago I obtained a Hardy Dural St. John, and that is the reel that I use with the Meiser rod."

4. Having ONE FLY to use, which one would it be?

"Without doubt, Lingren's Indispensable, as I have used it on nearly 90 waters and successful on 36 or so for steelhead."



ethics and traditions of fly fishing and an understanding of rivers, the inhabitants and their environments with an emphasis on things natural, concern for the whole, the philosophical side as opposed to just plain fishing. In 2003 he was inducted into the BC Steelheading Hall of Fame. In November 2003 he was given the Garry Weir Award in recognition of outstanding contribution to the Totem Flyfishers.

In 2007 Art was the recipient of the Washington Fly Fishing Club's Letcher Lambuth Angling Craftsman Award. As provided in that club's bylaws, the purpose of the Letcher Lambuth Award

"is to perpetuate the memory of Letcher Lambuth and honor his many important contributions to the knowledge, art, philosophy and techniques of fly fishing, and to encourage and recognize significant similar contributions by others. It shall be presented from time to time to outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions emulating that tradition." In 2011, Art received the Canadian Fly-Fishing Museum's Jean-Guy Cote Award in recognition of his fly tying books and dedication to that craft.

Over the past four decades Art has written 27 fly-fishing related books.

DESTINATION

Cutthroat Heaven

Text and Photos by:
Rory E. Glennie

In today's beach fishing scene not much is really new. We stand upon the shoulders of our great forebears and strive to elevate the practice of fly-fishing off the beach to the next level. In the early 1900s fly-fishers like Roderick Haig-Brown in Campbell River and General Noel Money in Qualicum Beach were early pioneers of casting a fly to salmonids in the estuaries and near-shore salt waters. Although fly patterns may have changed considerably since those early days, the challenge and allure of fly fishing off the beach remains the same. That portion of East-Central Vancouver Island bracketed by Haig-Brown in the North and Noel Money in the South offers some outstanding beach fishing opportunities.

Several rivers and countless fish bearing streams and piss-trickle brooks spill into the salt-chuck along this portion of coast. So many so that it seems this whole expanse, over ninety-two kilometers long, is one elongated estuary. This egress of fresh water into salt is a vital component in the lifestyle of many flyrod worthy fish. For some it is a seasonal attractant, for others a comfortable home; mainly Pink salmon and Coho salmon during their inbound migrations, with sea-run Cutthroat trout pretty much all year 'round. Those three species are

the fly fisher's typical quarry. And, as beach bound fly-fishers, we are fortunate indeed that so much of it is open to us through free access across public land.

A Favourite Fish

Sea-run Cutthroat trout may be found thriving throughout this coastal area. Some locales rank more prominently, perhaps, than others when it comes to consistently offering good fly-fishing opportunity. Sea-runs are known to be enigmatic wanderers, at least within their home territory. One part of a bay

may be lively with cutt's while some other portion may seem barren, then conditions inexplicably switch around on a change of season or simply on a tidal exchange. It pays to be flexible in one's fishing plans when it comes to sea-runs; hunt and peck, search around, move locales until fish are found. Without some favourable sign of cutties being there, seldom is it fruitful to plant one's boots in a single place for an extended period. Cutt's jumping clear of the water, small baitfish erupting in a frizzle at the surface or rise rings left by surface

feeding trout are sure signs of sea-runs below. Even during salmon season sea-run Cutthroats will be present. During this time they tend to show most often very close to shore, sometimes in water less than knee deep. These cutties are often observed but rarely intentionally sought, as anglers are geared up for salmon, both in tackle and mindset. As a bycatch to the salmon fishery a hookup with a stray cuttie provides a brief interlude to the serious-minded business of salmon fishing... harumph. To encounter a salmon

fly fisher intentionally seeking cutties when there are larger fish to fry is rare.

The vast majority of sea-run Cutthroat trout living in this area are wild, naturally spawned fish, therefore, a catch and release only regulation is in force. The exception being, a few hatchery produced, fin-clipped trout are out there. This allows for a small harvest opportunity of these marked fish. The ratio of marked to wild cutt's is very low and the out-planting of hatchery fish is a localized affair, so catching a harvestable sea-run is, in my

estimation, infinitesimally small. Be sure to understand and follow current angling regulations for the areas being fished. Updated saltwater fishing regulations for this region, Area 14, can be found at: <https://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/rec/tidal-maree/a-s14-eng.html>

In the Fly Box

Fly pattern selection for sea-run fishing off the beach should be simple. Afterall, cutt's are largely ruled by their stomachs; if it looks good enough to eat, they will

SMALL BAY WAS EVEN CROWNED “CUTTHROAT HEAVEN” BY NOTED AUTHOR ARTHUR MAYSE, AS IT WAS SUCH A CONSISTENT PRODUCER OF NICE SEA-RUNS.



strike at it. That does not mean that every grab will become a hookup. Cutthroats have an infuriating habit of hitting prey to stun or taste it then come back to actually mow it down. Sometimes that happens in a flash. Other times one hit and miss is all she wrote as the fish senses the fake and refuses to eat. Simply control your reaction to a hit. Let the fish hook itself. And, retrieve your fly all the way back to your boots, as cutt's are notorious for the forever follow.

Only a small selection of fly patterns are required to be successful in fishing for cutt's off the beach. Many were fashioned by folks who immersed themselves in fly fishing the East-central portion of Vancouver Island. These three old time favourites will entice sea-runs



Driftwood Beach Access



Beach Fire Rules

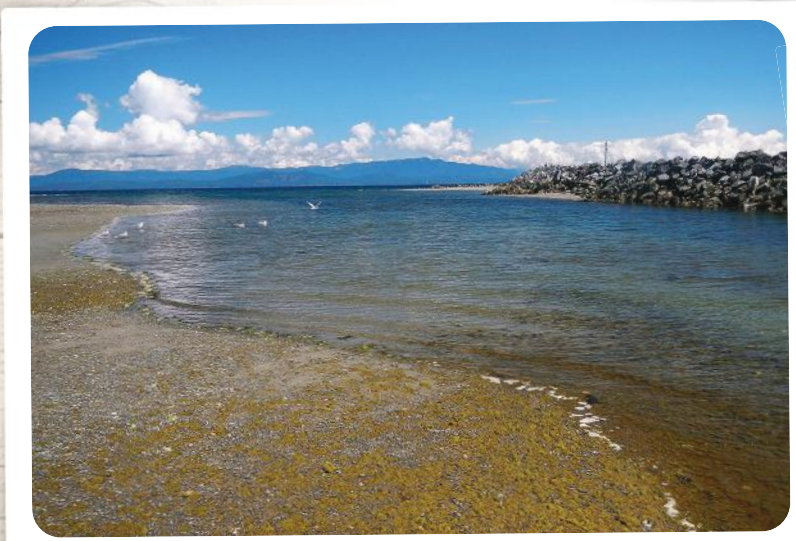
- 50cm/20" or smaller in diameter
- below high tide line
- bucket of water by fire
- put out with water NOT SAND
- no driftwood - salty wood releases harmful chemicals when burnt

Oyster River Fire Department
250-830-7155
oysterriverfire.ca



KEEP FIRES TO NO MORE THAN 50 CM WIDE





today as well as ever they did when first dressed, forty plus years ago. They are, in no particular order of importance; Tom Murray's Rolled Muddler, Jim Kilburn's American Coachman, and Art Limber's Wizard fly. Two are outright baitfish imposters; sticklebacks and needlefish. The other one, simply a catch-the-eye trigger-the-strike-response attractor pattern... all deadly effective. This trio of wet flies are usually tied on hook sizes ranging from size twelve to size eight. Nowadays, made barbless per regulation.

Some sea-run Cutthroat aficionados have taken to casting out flies which float or at least stay in the surface film. Retrieved with a slow stripping in of the fly line these floaters create an enticing vee-wake. This technique will draw the attention of a fish from quite some distance. The mounting anticipation and thrill of witnessing a slashing surface strike is an experience not soon forgotten.

Fly patterns incorporating some closed-cell foam for buoyancy are legion. One of the best and oldest patterns is Jack Gartside's Gurgler. This particular pattern has migrated from fishing the US East coast for Stripers to the East-central coast of

Vancouver Island for sea-run Cutthroats. That journey has proven fortuitous and has spawned many offshoots of that fly style, including patterns incorporating a trailing "stinger" hook to catch short striking, tail nipping fish.

For the most part these days flies are dressed on stainless steel hooks to help combat corrosion buildup. However, regular bronzed standard steel wire hooks will last years when taken care of properly. Just be sure to wash and air dry them thoroughly before storing.



K.I.S.S. Tackle

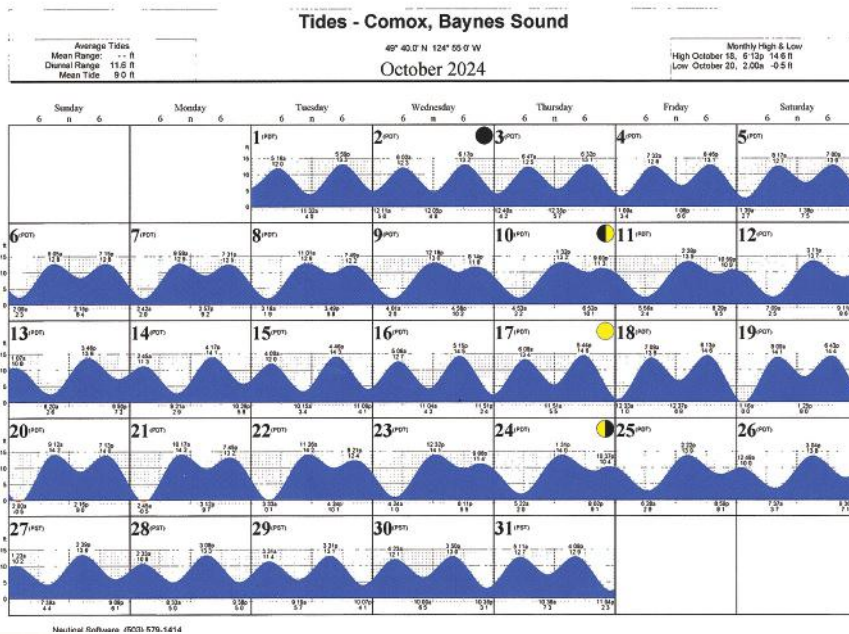
For the most part a floating fly line is warranted. Usually sea-runs are willing chasers and will move to a fly whether that be in mid water column or at the surface. Scrubbing the bottom is seldom if ever necessary. If sculpins become a regular catch, that is a sure sign the fly is fishing too deep and/or too slowly.

On occasion, to keep one's fly in the taking zone longer, an intermediate sink rate line may come in handy for getting below the surface chop on a windy day. Leader/tippets need not be anything special. Total length; about as long as the rod, tapering down to 4X (6lb.) or thereabouts will be fine, as for the most part, sea-runs found here are not giants. Leaders need not be a special factory tapered type.

A simple handtied leader/tippet combo ending in

the desired breaking strain will do just fine. It is an angler's choice whether to go with fluorocarbon or regular nylon™ leader material. Saltwater has a different refractive index than freshwater, so leader shyness in fish is less a factor there than in lakes.

This is trout fishing, albeit in saltwater, so quality fly rods of say five, six or seven weight, commonly nine or nine-foot six long, should suffice. As usual, fly reels sized to mate with the fly rod will work. For typical sea-run fishing some backing line is required, but not a whole bunch more than you would have wound on for Kamloops trout fishing in big lakes. Unless you have shelled out for specialized saltwater rods and reels make sure all your gear is corrosion resistant, or at least given a thorough warm soapy water scrub-down, dry-off and, as necessary, relubrication after each outing. Remember, your used flies require this desalination process, too. Do not put used flies back in with their virgin counterparts or, through sublimation, you will soon have a box full of crusty flies.



Timing

Tidal influence plays a major role on where sea-runs may be located. Obviously, when the tide is out and certain areas are high and dry there will be no fish there. But, given the right stage of a high tide, when that same area becomes inundated, it may well provide a temporary banquet room for sea-runs. Critters taking shelter in the boulders and seaweed in these areas exposed at low tide become free moving food items for trout when once again

covered by water. As tides ebb and flow so does the movement of cutt's. Locating sea-runs over various tidal stages can be a lifelong challenge. Some folks favour an incoming tide, others an outgoing. Most put no stock in fishing a slack tide. Sea-run Cutthroat trout are more active in moving water. And, there is no substitute for ground-truthing; actually getting out there to observe and probe for oneself, keeping a log of successes and failures, building a memory bank of data to help guide future outings.

A tide guide, whether that be online or in hard copy, presents the mathematically



generated predictions of tidal rise and fall at various locations. For fly fishers purposes one tide table works well enough for the general area. Ambulatory anglers do not require the precise information that say, boaters do to stay safely out of shallow areas. A few minutes off here or there on exact timing of high or low tide is inconsequential. It is the trend that is important; is it rising or falling? The tide table for Comox-07965 supplied through the Government of Canada website at: <https://tides.gc.ca/en/stations/07965#> works well enough for this general area. Print it out and take it along. Doodle on it, jot down notes, record findings on the day's outing, anything to help build useful fishing location data. Sea-run Cutthroat trout are enigmatic creatures and regularly confound our best assumptions about them. Possessing a store of information to help locate them lessens the perplexity.

Getting There

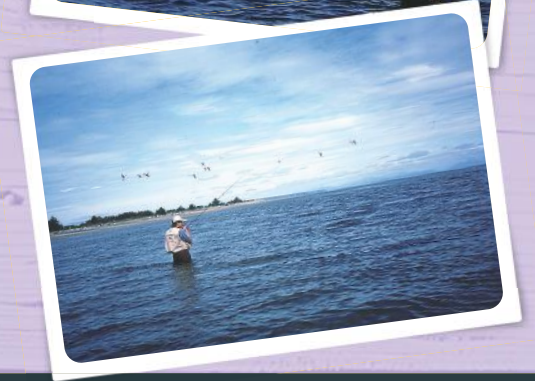
Highway 19A roughly follows the coastline through East-central Van Isle. In some places the highway abuts the shoreline, so beach access becomes self-evident. As well, many side roads exiting the highway lead down to the beach, or fairly near to it. There may be a few twists and turns along the way, but eventually you will reach the beach. Many access points are at the terminus of gazetted road right of ways. Others are a bit more obscure, due to lack of trail maintenance. Becoming familiar with these areas is easily accomplished through flying around in GoogleEarth™, or by utilizing other mapping software.

As a directional aid for its members the Comox Valley Flyfishers Club has produced a compact beach access guidebook; *Beaches of Comox Valley (and beyond)*. That book contains fifty-two pages of detailed colour maps, a table of GPS coordinates for beach access points and a deadly dozen species-specific fly patterns photos for fishing off the beach. The book is spiral-bound so it lays flat for easy viewing, heavy-weight pages are coated for ease of

wiping clean. Many new members had been requesting this information, so the CVFF club responded accordingly. This little guidebook should prove its worth over many seasons of fishing off the beach.

The Forward Cast

Some futurists predict there will be more restrictions and angling closures on more rivers and streams due in part to effects of worsening climate and fisheries decline. Access to many little lakes has become more restricted due to many of them being behind security gates on forest company roads. Thankfully, for us fly fishers, salt water beaches remain an open year 'round opportunity to pursue some enjoyable fishing, albeit with some necessary species harvest restrictions. Even so, casting into the briny with your feet planted in the surf is a venture into the realm of plentiful possibility. Perhaps the reward will be in the effort itself.



CUTT'S JUMPING CLEAR OF THE WATER, SMALL BAITFISH ERUPTING IN A FRIZZLE AT THE SURFACE OR RISE RINGS LEFT BY SURFACE FEEDING TROUT ARE SURE SIGNS OF SEA-RUNS BELOW. EVEN DURING SALMON SEASON SEA-RUN CUTTHROATS WILL BE PRESENT. DURING THIS TIME THEY TEND TO SHOW MOST OFTEN VERY CLOSE TO SHORE, SOMETIMES IN WATER LESS THAN KNEE DEEP





CONSERVATION

THE “NEW” TROUT IN TOWN

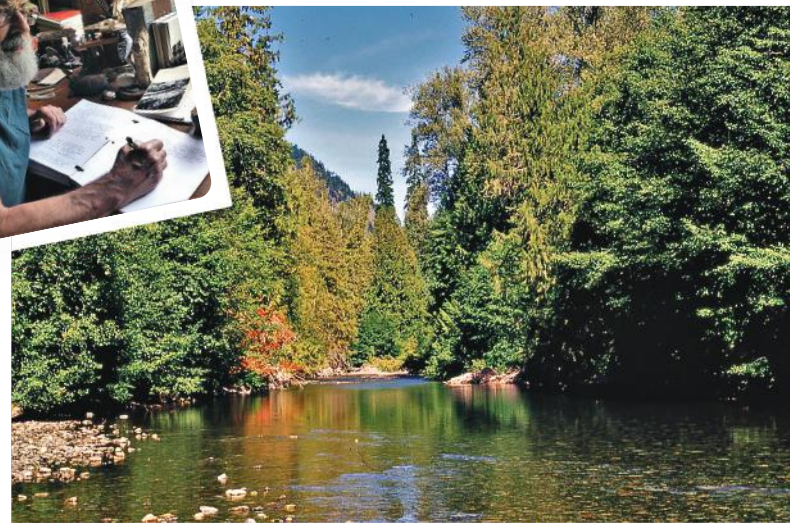
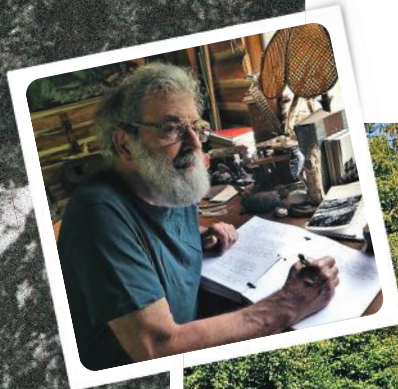


Charlie Thomas

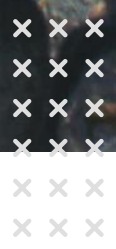


The Upper Skagit River provides the Lower Mainland population center of British Columbia with the opportunity to experience rainbow trout consistently ranging from 12–18 inches (30.5–46 cm), with a few up to about 20 inches (51 cm), as well as the occasional large bull trout, the rare Westslope cutthroat and Dolly Varden. However, there is a significant threat regarding the future for what this notable sport fishery provides. The potential is to lose at least two, and maybe four of the native wild trout, or at a minimum greatly reduce their population sizes and distribution in the remaining basin above Ross Lake.

The three Skagit River dams operated by Seattle City Light (SCL) are up for relicensing. This time it is not another threat of raising Ross Dam, as nearly occurred with planning that began in the 1960s. Subsequently, a great public uproar occurred on both sides of the border in the 1970s, until a Skagit River Treaty Agreement was signed in 1984 between Canada and the U. S. This was initiated by a British Columbia logger, Curley Chittenden, who was hired by SCL to supervise the logging of the forest where the reservoir would be in the 1950s, as the dam was previously raised to where Ross Lake ends today (Olason 1989). Curley initially agreed with the pro-Ross Dam economic benefits for both



- ▲ Bill McMillan
Upper Skagit River in British Columbia (September 2001)
- ◆ 9-meter waterfall just above Ruby Creek entry to the Upper Skagit prior to Ross Reservoir (Sept. 1936)

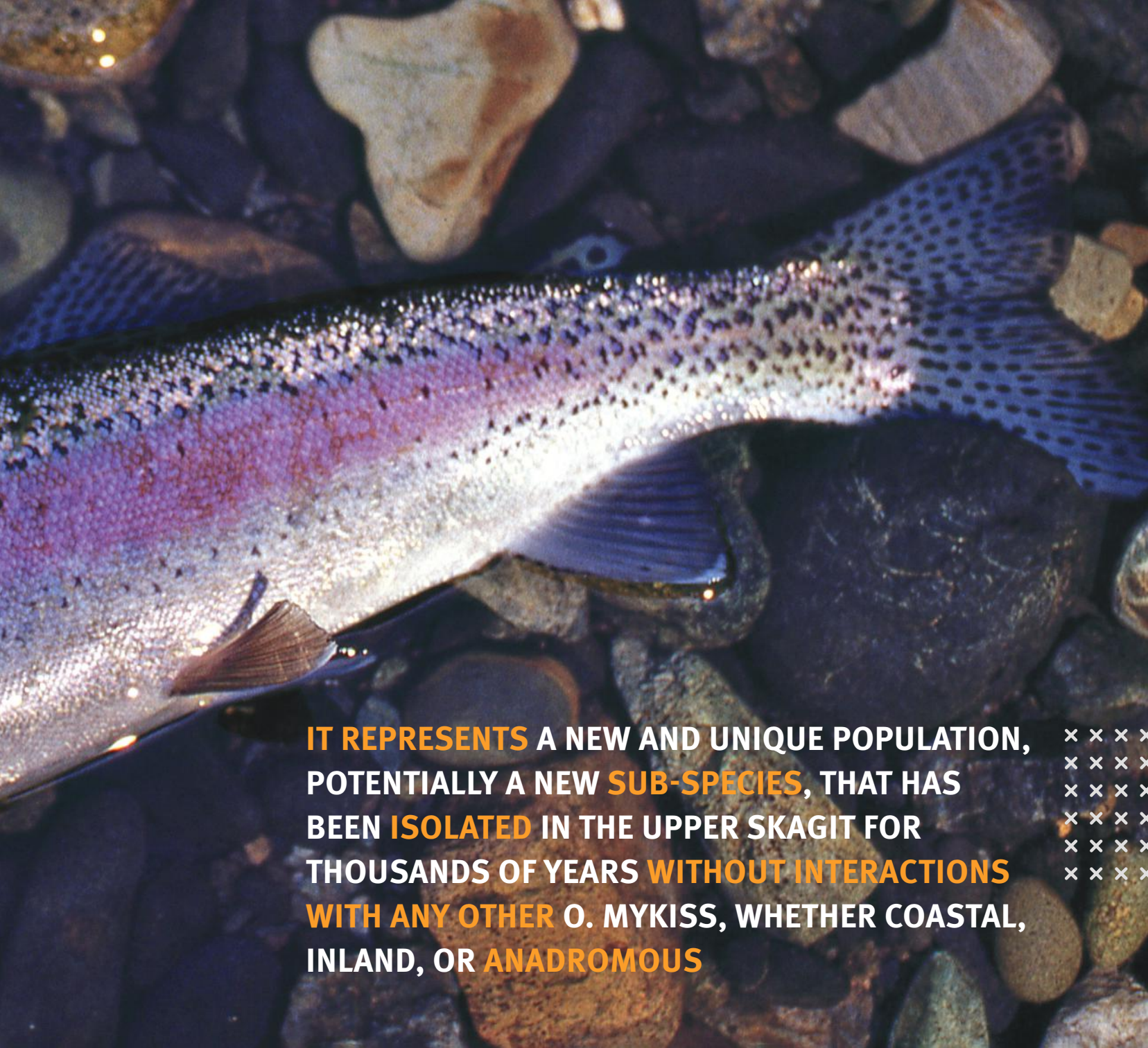


B.C. and the U.S., and willingly logged the planned reservoir bottom. However, this all changed when he astutely recognized that part of the forest that he was hired to remove in the 1960s with the new Ross plan consisted of Ponderosa pine — an eastside tree, typically not west of the Cascades (anonymous 2008). It represented a uniquely located ecosystem of both westside and eastside characteristics (Lepofsky et al. 2003). He effectively raised the alarm of what B.C. was about to lose if the plan proceeded with flooding of what remained of the Upper Skagit Valley. The activism from B.C. soon

▲
17-inch “Cascadia Trout” with typical “lake red” sides (sampled in September 2001, note difference to below)

spread to environmental advocates in Seattle as well, and with representation of both Canada and the U.S. through the International Joint Commission (IJC), the plan to raise the dam ended with the 1984 agreement. It was British Columbia that initiated the Ross Dam environmental backlash that resulted in the intact Skagit Valley as it remains today.

The new threat as part of the dams’ relicensing process is thus far a tentatively agreed plan to transport Chinook, steelhead, coho, and bull trout from below the dams to above Ross Dam. The only significant spawning destination for these fish is



IT REPRESENTS A NEW AND UNIQUE POPULATION, POTENTIALLY A NEW SUB-SPECIES, THAT HAS BEEN ISOLATED IN THE UPPER SKAGIT FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS WITHOUT INTERACTIONS WITH ANY OTHER O. MYKISS, WHETHER COASTAL, INLAND, OR ANADROMOUS



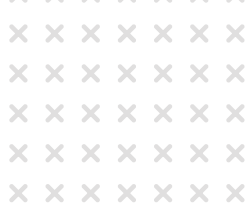
in British Columbia's remaining Skagit Valley. The discussion has largely been a secretive process, excluding public participation, other than to send concerned comments to the U. S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). All comments to FERC are part of the public record accessible at the link provided after this article. Thus far, the planning agenda has been driven by participants noted for supposed expertise related to fish and dam considerations from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), North Cascades



Bill McMillan

National Park (NCNP), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and representatives for all three Skagit Basin tribes. Rick Taylor of UBC has been included to represent British Columbia. Unlike some, he has represented the science well — but he seems alone in B.C. representation from what little view the public has into this.

I was finally invited to attend one Zoom meeting this past January, due to having made my own personal comments to FERC and SCL in October of 2023, with considerable criticism of this secretive process. Although I merely listened and watched,

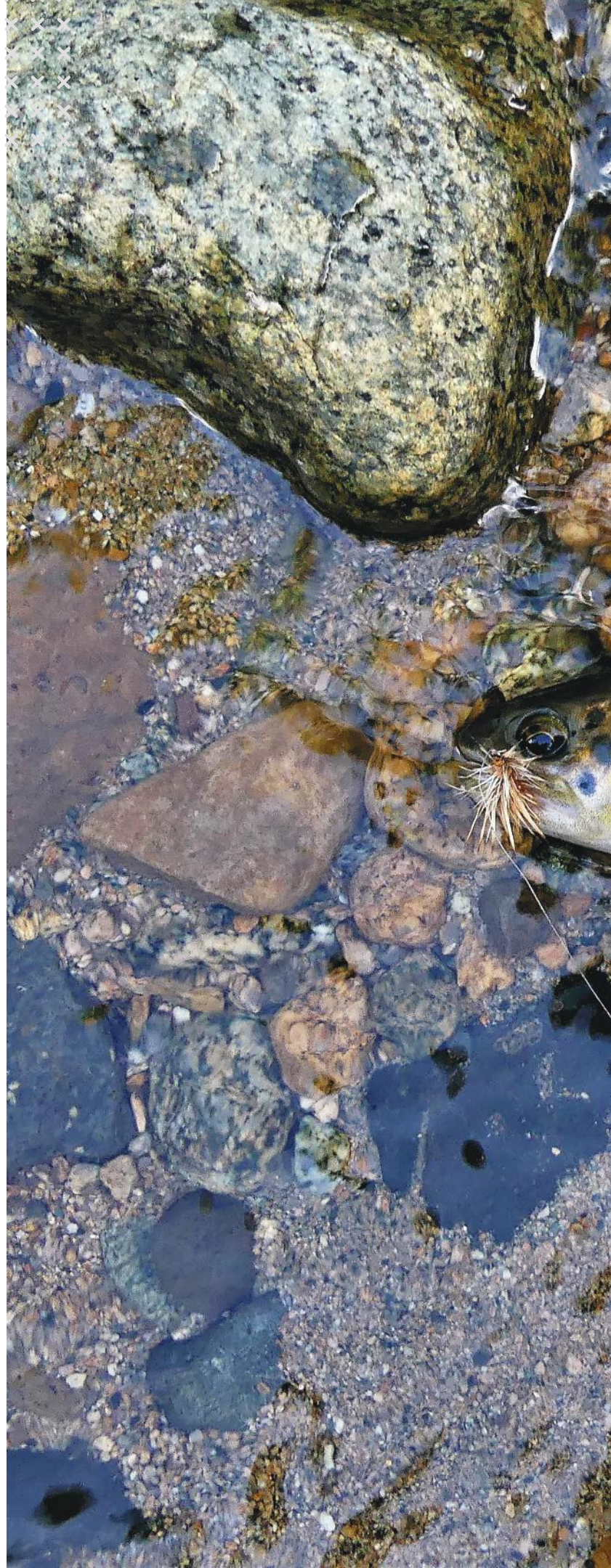


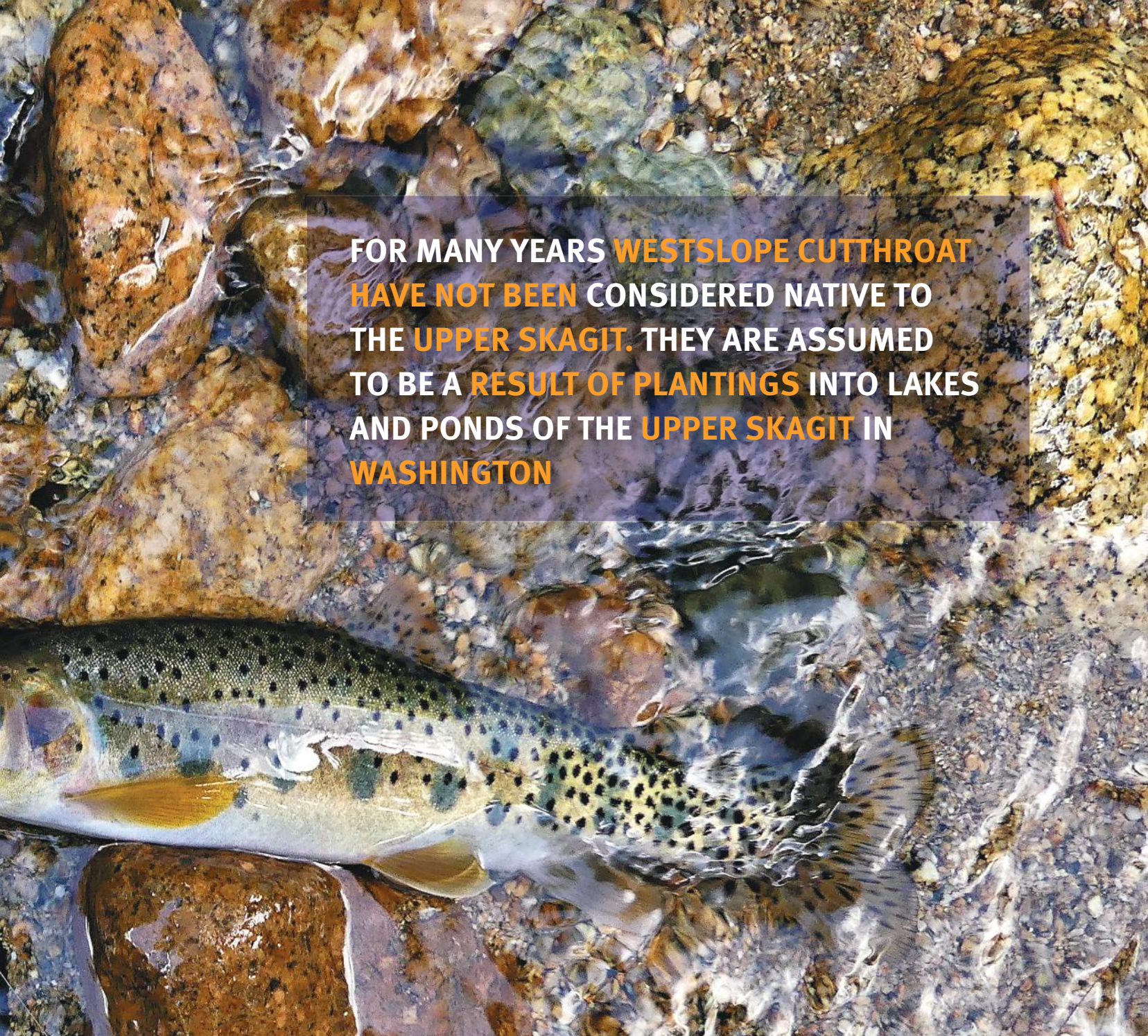
limited by my older computer constraints, it provided insight into how science is being ignored in the process, and instead seems to be on a preferred fast track that is politically driven. There has been no further invitation for me to attend.

However, I have kept in contact with the Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission (SEEC), which is composed of both B.C. and Washington members. It is the counterpart of what the former IJC importantly played in denial of raising Ross Dam. The SEEC has been carefully observing this process to date, including some concerning comments at times about the secretive nature of the process, and what limited part Canada has had to date. Also, Poul Bech of the B. C. Steelhead Society has been immensely helpful, adding his deep knowledge of the Upper Skagit and longtime experience as both an angler and biologist. Of particular importance, Poul made collections of numerous rainbows from several locations in the B.C. section of the Upper Skagit in the summer/fall of 2023. With Rick Taylor's help, there has been agreement that these samples will be genetically analyzed as part of the relicensing process. His samples also included two Westslope cutthroat, as yet unknown if they will be similarly assessed for genetics. The ultimate question to be answered is: will the B.C. rainbow similarly represent what has been found for the rainbow of the Upper Skagit on the Washington side?

This brings up the "new" trout. They are actually very old trout, but they are recently new to science. The upper Skagit native trout (including char) came to inhabit the Upper Skagit basin 12,000–16,000 years ago, during the retreat of the southern extent of the Cordilleran Ice Sheet. And/or, they may date to hundreds of thousands of years ago, depending on species, when the Upper Skagit was tributary to the Upper Fraser River, and before the Upper Fraser eroded through the mountains to the Pacific. Prior to that time, the Upper Fraser was at times also tributary to the Peace River, and/or the Upper Columbia River (potentially both at differing geologic eras).

This complex geologic history led to exchanges of waters that likely transported fish from one region to another, potentially multiple times. During this ice age melt period, there were ten breached divides where glacial lakes had outburst floods (Riedel et al. 2007). Some exchanged waters back and forth between the Fraser and the Skagit (likely at Silverhope and Sumallo areas), but most were from headwater areas of Similkameen tributaries of the Upper Columbia to Upper Skagit tributaries, and





FOR MANY YEARS WESTSLOPE CUTTHROAT HAVE NOT BEEN CONSIDERED NATIVE TO THE UPPER SKAGIT. THEY ARE ASSUMED TO BE A RESULT OF PLANTINGS INTO LAKES AND PONDS OF THE UPPER SKAGIT IN WASHINGTON

potentially from headwater tributaries of the Methow River. However, those fish transported long ago have remained disconnected from the Lower Skagit, isolated by a waterfall of ~30-feet (over 9 meters) a mile or two above where Ross Dam was built, if they even got that far. Prior to the dams, the Skagit below Gorge Dam was a tumultuous two-mile stretch with at least two high velocity flow areas, combined with massive boulder drops that both historical and ethnographic records indicate prevented anadromous passage. However, there are also a few historical accounts that perhaps some years a few Chinooks and steelhead did pass as far as near Diablo Dam, but with no evidence of further ascent in any recorded account.

▲
9-inch probable Westslope cutthroat (sampled at Upper Granite Creek of Ruby Creek, September 2023)

The geologic history was initially identified as the reason why Upper Skagit bull trout were found to be unrelated genetically to Lower Skagit Basin bull trout. Instead, they were founded by Fraser River populations, as genetic analysis revealed by Smith et al. in 2019 (Rick Taylor of UBC had provided Fraser River samples to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington).

Subsequently, in 2022 sampling was done for rainbow, bull trout, and Dolly Varden at numerous tributaries of all three Upper Skagit dam reservoirs as limited to Washington. The findings were presented in January of 2023 at the lone relicensing meeting I was invited to attend (Cramer Fish Sciences 2023). Unexpectedly, the rainbow trout from all but one of



16 locations sampled were neither the Washington coastal subspecies (*Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus*), nor the inland subspecies of Columbia Basin redband trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss gairdneri*). The Upper Skagit rainbow genetics distinctly differed from these known sub-species. If this continues to hold true, it represents a new and unique population, potentially a new sub-species, that has been isolated in the Upper Skagit for thousands of years without interactions with any other *O. mykiss*, whether coastal, inland, or anadromous. The recent B.C. collections by Poul Bech are vital with the need for further genetic confirmation, or not. Rick Taylor has coined a term to designate these unique fish as determined to date: the "Cascadia Trout."

The lone outlier of the rainbow sampled was from a small tributary of upper Gorge reservoir, Pyramid Creek, that genetically aligns with coastal rainbow. A 1938 plant of two unidentified trout species at its headwater lake could have included hatchery rainbow of coastal origin, a fact which needs to be better determined. (Sampling at or near Pyramid Lake might better determine this.)

The first Upper Skagit rainbow collected and described was by George Gibbs on August 13, 1859 during the British/U.S. Boundary Surveys:

12 inches long; small irregular spots on back down to medial line; back black; sides bluish with a black edge behind; anal fin to caudal also spotted below the medial line; sides as far back as anal fin a broad streak of lake red; dorsal and caudal with black spots; adipose olive with a few distinct rounded black spots, also interruptedly black on the edge; dorsal and caudal dark greyish brown and without spots or very few near the belly; ventral and pectoral light reddish; back dark brown approaching black, with bluish reflection; operculum reddish; belly yellowish red; head short and blunt; partly spotted on the top, snout, and pre-operculum; tail slightly truncated.

It was initially determined to be a new species at the time, *Salmo Gibisii*, but the location was wrongly indicated as written up by George Suckley (1859). It was confused with another trout collected by Gibbs on the Yakima River. I have since suggested a potential new subspecies scientific name, *Oncorhynchus mykiss Gibisii*, to honor its original collector and description.

Dolly Varden trout were collected at 12 streams in the Upper Skagit. Thus far, it's not known if they are present in B. C. They are native, are rare in Washington, and are not known to occur in the Lower Skagit anywhere. However, Eastern Brook trout were long ago introduced into the Washington section of the Upper Skagit basin. There has been hybridization between Dolly Varden and Brook trout, and also between Dolly Varden and bull trout. This complexity of hybridization is concerning, but pure specimens still do remain.

For many years Westslope cutthroat have not been considered native to the Upper Skagit. They are assumed to be a result of plantings into lakes and ponds of the Upper Skagit in Washington. At two locations they were eradicated, without doing genetic analysis to determine if this is the actual case or not. I have sampled several tributaries of Ruby Creek of the Upper Skagit which do not have headwater lakes, as limited to past hatchery plants. Probable Westslope cutthroat were found at each. In 1859, the Custer expedition into the Upper Skagit reported a significant catch of "black speckled trout" between the two



▲ 15-inch coastal rainbow typical of the Lower Skagit River (sampled at the Cascade River of Skagit, September 2014)

Beaver Creeks that now drain into Ross Lake. Were they Westslope cutthroat? For many years they were called Montana blackspots. Despite hatchery plants of Westslope cutthroat at the Pend Oreille River basin in Washington, all but one of nine tributaries sampled remained genetically distinct from each other, with no relation to the hatchery stock. The major threat to Westslope cutthroat, however, has long been noted to be introduced rainbow, which hybridize and eventually overtake their habitat, not the other way around. There are also historical references to cutthroat in the early B.C. sporting literature referring to the Upper Skagit, but it is not clear where the exact location was, and if the information was accurate. Of interest, in 2018 Westslope cutthroat

were designated as a full species, no longer a subspecies of cutthroat — potentially another “new” trout in the Upper Skagit if genetics were to find they are not hatchery related. **It remains there is no commitment to find out, despite Dr. Patrick Trotter (cutthroat expert) providing a sampling plan as asked to do so.**

The uniquely distinct Upper Skagit resident salmonids will be transformed if anadromous fish from the Lower Skagit are transported to the Upper Skagit. The “Cascadia Trout” will be particularly threatened if introduction of steelhead occurs, due to spawning interactions and competition for habitat. There is the example of what has recently occurred in Oregon, when the trap-and-haul of steelhead from the Lower Willamette River to above Fall Creek Dam of the Middle Willamette River resulted in great loss of what had previously been a genetically distinct resident rainbow population, without any prior steelhead presence (Johnson et al. 2023). The transport of steelhead has resulted in the resident rainbow now reduced to but 8% of the *O. mykiss* population. The other 92% is now a complex mix of introduced steelhead genetics, and the previously isolated native resident population is essentially extinct. As well, bull trout and Dolly Varden of the Upper Skagit would similarly be threatened if bull trout from the Lower Skagit were to be introduced.

If Westslope cutthroat
prove to be of

native origin, not hatchery, they would also be threatened with hybridization by penetration of steelhead into their habitat.

Furthermore, a recent study on rearing potential for transported Lower Skagit steelhead was conducted at Upper Skagit tributaries in Washington. It was found that the colder water temperatures characteristic of Upper Skagit tributaries are below those of the Lower Skagit, which would greatly limit the ability to effectively rear smolts in a two-year cycle which is the Lower Skagit life history norm, with low anticipated productivity for steelhead. It represents a lose/lose proposition, leaving the Cascadia Trout population reduced, at best, and

Acknowledgments

With great appreciation to Pete Caverhill for the suggested title to this article (better than anything I would have come up with), and for his long commitment to protection of wild salmonids in his past Provincial management career, with our exchanges of information dating to the early 1980s; to Mike Willcox, who retired from B.C.’s Provincial management a couple years ago, but provided a great deal of help in locating resources for the Upper Skagit River before he retired; to Poul Bech, retired B. C. Fisheries Branch technician and BC Steelhead Society Director, for his great aid in better understanding the Upper Skagit River fish, and for his dedication to their protection; and to Ed Fleming, longtime angling friend and conservationist from Chilliwack who first introduced me to the fishing opportunity of Southern Mainland B. C. dating to 1980.

eliminated at worst, and with replacement by an alien steelhead population holding little promise.

Of brighter news, in latter June of 2024 the Nlaka’pamux Nation of the Thompson River of B.C. submitted comments to FERC regarding the Skagit dams’ relicensing program. They indicated their own important history of use in the Upper Skagit with no record of anadromous fish, but that resident fisheries in the area were important to their cultural heritage. They further indicated that no further planning for anadromous fish introductions to the Upper Skagit should be considered unless there is compelling evidence that anadromous fish ever reached there. In this regard, the Nlaka’pamux Nation is a natural ally for B.C. sport fishers and environmentalists to align with in a togetherness focused on protection of the resident native fish of the Upper Skagit — the “new trout in town” that is an important heritage for B.C. to protect as their own.

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Will Bush, Master Fly-tier

By Brian Smith

If you have ever delved into the art of tying Classic Salmon and Steelhead Patterns, you will soon learn that it is a very difficult task, one which requires infinite patience, resolution and many years and dollars to acquire the materials to tie them. I have gotten into it over the last fifteen years, but am no where in the class of Will Bush who, in my opinion, is a world class tier of the Classic flies of the 19th century and beyond.



The Carnegie The Carnegie
Classic Salmon Fly
All flies tied, presented and photographed by Will Bush.

In Will's own words, I offer the following, taken from Inspired Spaces on Instagram:

"I began tying flies at a very early age, well before I started fly fishing. After watching a gentleman tying at a Christmas craft fair, I became fascinated with the diversity of creativity you could accomplish with simple fur and feathers.

I was also lucky enough to have parents who supported my obsession from the beginning and my skills quickly improved. Growing up on a farm on the banks of the Similkameen River in southern British Columbia and having my family involved in a local fishing and hiking lodge, afforded me many opportunities to be on the water.

In my early teens I began tying classic salmon flies and after high school I began adapting them to fish for steelhead in BC's northern rivers. Nowadays I use classic salmon, Spey and dee flies almost exclusively to fish for steelhead. I guide part-time on the Bulkley River and have been published in various magazines and tie semi-professionally for various fly shops and individual anglers.

For the last twenty years I have been teaching fly tying and still hold regular classic salmon fly tying courses at Michael & Young Fly Shop in Surrey, BC. Fly fishing has been my life long passion, and I'm very fortunate to be involved with amazing companies and individuals who have a shared passion.

In addition to being a member of the Partridge PRO-Team and Lagartun PRO-Staff, I am also involved with Bruce & Walker North America. To learn more about me, please visit my pages on Instagram and Facebook."



The Napoleon



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