

# FLY LINES

Official eJournal of the  
BC Federation of Fly Fishers

ISSUE №26-1 | SPRING

## FLY TYING FEATURE

### MAYFLIES

Designing Dry Flies for  
Streams & Rivers

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## DESTINATION

### WINTER ON THE YAKOUN RIVER, HAIDA GWAI:

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### TROUT BY NAME, CHAR BY NATURE:

The Bull Trout Identity Crisis

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**Join Us!**

**TODAY IN OUR MISSION**

to conserve and protect BC's sport fisheries

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# JOIN THE BC FEDERATION OF FLY FISHERS TODAY AND PROTECT OUR FLY FISHING FUTURE FOR TOMORROW!



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



[www.flyfishers.ca](http://www.flyfishers.ca)

**Or join through the following  
BC Federation of Fly Fishers affiliated clubs.**

Club	City	Contact	Phone	Email
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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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## 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:

Photo:

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*Myles Armstead*

## President's Message

**"Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains."**

*Henry David Thoreau*

I would thank the writers who have contributed to the latest issue of Flylines. For Brian and me, producing Flylines is a labour of love, and we are fortunate to have wonderful contributors. This will be the first issue where I am just the publisher, not the president of the BCFFF. Brian and I will continue to produce Flylines for the membership, and we are looking for new content, so please feel free to reach out if you have some ideas.

In my seven years as President of the BCFFF, we have become a highly effective board which has achieved a number of significant things for conservation-minded anglers in British Columbia. It has also been a joy to work with some of the truly unsung heroes of the angling community.

I am excited about my new role with the BCFFF, and I also feel now that the time is right for the BCFFF to move forward under new leadership and a refreshed Board. Should you wish to contribute, please do not hesitate to reach out, as we are looking to recruit specific skill sets that complement the BOARD and its work in carrying out the mission of the BCFFF.

**Myles Armstead**

President of the BC Federation of Fly Fishers



*Brian Smith*

## Editor's Message

**"Fly-fishing is solitary, contemplative, misanthropic, scientific in some hands, poetic in others, and laced with conflicting aesthetic considerations. It's not even clear if catching fish is actually the point."**

*John Gierach — Dances with Trout (2010)*

Wow! Every issue we write and publish I say to myself "Is there another one out there?" Yes, there is, and with the support of our writers and followers, Fly Lines is a reality that feeds upon itself by the volunteers we enlist to get this done and published. Speaking quite humbly, our feedback from the membership and readers of Fly Lines online, social media and word of mouth is that it is an extraordinary example of what a small group of volunteers can accomplish. Our Membership Director David Mills spouts that "Fly Lines is the best volunteer magazine in Canada!" Myles and I thank all of you for those compliments!

In this issue, we pay tribute to the late, great artist and then President of the Haig-Brown Fly Fishers Pat George, who courageously battled cancer but passed from us this spring. Our history article is from the archives of Art Lingren, and pays homage to one of the great classic fly tiers, gentlemen and steelhead fishers of the last generation, Syd Glasso of Washington State USA.

Adding to this essay is my friend and Polar Coachman Flyfishers Past President Jeff Kormos, who writes an inspiring piece for our destination feature on Haida Gwaii's Yakoun River steelhead fishery, and how fortunate Jeff was to be able to live and tromp the trails and backroads of the Islands for several months this past spring while his wife was there taking a course. Some guys are just born lucky!

Also in this issue, we asked the question of some authors and steelhead gurus "Why Wild Steelhead Matter to Me", and we think you will enjoy their responses and superb photos of this precious trout! Wild steelhead, to me, are about all that is good in this World: Nature at its very finest and my favourite fish, trout, at their highest pinnacle. Who could ask for more?

Youth continues to be a big part of what we do and who we are as an organisation. The BCFFF is helping fund high school programs in many areas of the province: Campbell River, Kamloops, Prince George, Coquitlam to name a few, and many members volunteer their time where needed to assist in fly-tying lessons and outings.

Finally, at our AGM in Victoria May 23rd, hosted by the Haig-Brown Fly Fishing Club, we will be holding a silent auction. We won't be holding an ice-off auction because we can't expect our members, fly shops and gear wholesalers to come to the trough for us twice this spring. If you have used or new equipment, art pieces, boxes of flies, relics or skills to donate, or are willing to canvass suppliers for the BCFFF, please step forward and let us know. You can begin canvassing and collecting right now! Your auction contacts are:

Ken Marsh: [vikayakguy@gmail.com](mailto:vikayakguy@gmail.com)  
Brian Smith: [flyfishingnut47@gmail.com](mailto:flyfishingnut47@gmail.com)

Enjoy your magazine!  
**Brian Smith**, Editor

# Club News/Reports

TOTEM FLY FISHING CLUB

## Report Spring

By Lorenzo Cirillo

It was a momentous summer for the Totem Fly Fishers, as the club celebrated its 50th year of hosting its Dean River Safari. This year the club had five groups attending the Dean starting in late July. Fishing results were mixed, as some groups did better than others. There have been various club events to celebrate our milestone relationship with this iconic river. The club has ordered special commemorative clothing and hats for the occasion.

More notably, member and BCFFF Historian Art Lingren put together not one, but two fabulous books to highlight various aspects of the Dean trips. Firstly, he compiled a 124-page book titled *The Totem Fly Fishers' Dean River Safaris 1976-2025 Fifty Seasons*. The book is filled with 50 years of pictures showing the evolution of the Totem's Camp to methods of travel, guests and naturally, many shots of its iconic summer runs.

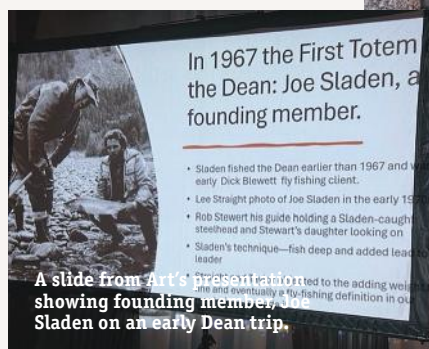
The second book titled *The Totem Fly Fishers' Dean River Flies 1969-2025*, is a compendium of the various types and styles of flies that members have been swinging through the waters of the Dean over the last 50 years. The flies are beautifully photographed along with the recipes for each. The book required a great deal of input from club members;

as Art writes, "While putting this book together I enjoyed many discussions with people about flies and fly-fishing techniques. We all have our opinions on how to best dress a fly, why a fly catches fish or why a fly needs to be fished in a certain way." The book is an invaluable source of information and anecdotes.

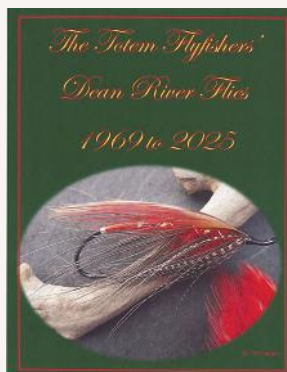
Both books were presented by Art at our October general meeting, along with a slide show to flesh out even more of the historical significance of this part of our club's storied past. The club owes a great deal of gratitude to founding members Joe Sladen and Lee Straight, and to Bob Taylor for establishing this wonderful experience that so many of our club members and guests have enjoyed over the last fifty years!



Magic hour on the Dean



Dean 2025



Cover Dean River Flies - Lingren



Group 1 member Ben Gehrke with a stunning Dean fish



#### POLAR COACHMAN FLYFISHERS

## Polar Coachman Report

By Jeff Kormos, President

Club members enjoyed a variety of fly-fishing opportunities over the last few months in the north, as the smoky summers of the past were replaced by more humid and clean air. We instead experienced a drop in our drought level rating and more precipitation than the three previous summers combined. It was a welcome trade-off given recent weather history. We took our summer hiatus from our regular business meetings and fly-tying nights, but maintained the BX Pub lunch meetings for those around wanting to talk all things fly-fishing. With a shorter break than years past, club members were busy growing the club, planning and executing events, contributing to conservation and supporting local science.

This year, due in part to the club's connection to local high school fly fishing curriculum, we instated a discounted membership fee for prospective junior members to encourage more youth to get involved with the club. The Executive put together a schedule of events for the

year ahead, and worked all summer to get guest presenters scheduled for regular business meetings. Members can expect to see a mix of new and familiar guests as we return from the summer meeting hiatus. We updated presenter gifts this year with a Polar Coachman-branded engraved compass, which we are hoping our guests will appreciate. Our executive is also working on increasing the club's digital footprint this year by updating our web and social media presence. This should pay off in time to promote our first ever screening of the Fly Fusion Trout Tour in November.

The club will host a Christmas potluck at the hatchery again, hold the annual photo contest, and have its AGM in December. As we get together again to conduct club business this fall, I'm encouraged by the camaraderie, generosity and good nature of the members of the Polar Coachman Flyfishers. With every passing season we seem to take on just a little bit more, and have an incredibly fun time doing it!

#### HAIG-BROWN FLY-FISHING ASSOCIATION

## Report

By Ken Marsh, President

The past few months have involved a significant transition for this 48-year-old organization. In May, one of the club's most stalwart supporters, Pat George, died of cancer shortly after completing his second stint as president. Pat assumed that role after the COVID epidemic had significantly diminished our membership, and worked hard to re-engage members. Pat was also a strong supporter of the BCFFF and the Pacific Salmon Foundation.

Since Pat's passing, the club has rejuvenated its executive with Ken Marsh assuming the presidency and newcomers Joanne Williams and Scott Nuendorff joining the executive as Vice-President

and Secretary respectively. Joanne hosted a very nice summer BBQ at her spacious property in North Saanich.

Since resuming meetings in September, the club has welcomed several new members, many of whom are younger than our general demographic. In September, we shared reminiscences of Pat George and in October we welcomed Michael Barr, 1st VP of the BCFFF to share his involvement in BCFFF steelhead conservation efforts. Meanwhile, several members are involved in the revision of the club's Cowichan River Map necessitated by last year's rains which significantly altered parts of the river's course. The sales of the map have contributed significantly to the club's conservation fund. The club is also in conversation with a Victoria senior Montessori school about providing some fly-fishing instruction in the New Year.

In early October several members of the club, organized by Margaret Greenway, joined the Annual Fall Coho Fish-out at Miracle Beach just south of Campbell River. Although the weather was great and fish were present at times, they were very close-mouthed! As one member noted: "No fish were damaged by club members in this exercise."

In mid-October, the club enjoyed (really!) a very rainy fish-out to the Sooke River with several members experiencing the power of chum salmon, though the seals in the river probably enjoyed at least equal success. The Coho, however, continued to elude us. The club is looking forward to a presentation on coastal cutthroat in November and a Christmas celebration in December.

# Club News/Reports

## LOONS FLY FISHING CLUB

### Report Spring

By Rick Boswell

In early summer the Loons held a successful online auction to raise funds in support of our BCIT Endowment Fund. All items were gifted to the club by the late Skip Young. The vintage items ranged from Sage Rods to Hardy reels in addition to spinning gear, bait casters, salt and freshwater gear and of course flies. All the things that if you knew Skip, had a place in his angling arsenal. Tight Lines Skip.

Our planned summer trip to the lower Skagit became a great breakfast outing at Ricky's in Hope. Great food, coffee plus many stories made for an enjoyable morning. When we arrived in Hope, we realized the smoke from a couple of live fires was not dissipating, and one of the fires had jumped the Skagit valley road overnight. Discretion being the better part of fly fishing in the mountains led us to cancel the rest of

the outing. Next year will be better.

We had a good turnout for an early season fish-out on the Harrison. The weather was overcast, with only a couple of fly fishers on our part of the river. Amongst the group several fish were landed, one being a very nice wild Coho. It has been a while since the club has been up that way, and we pencilled in a return trip next year. Only thing to look forward to now is our annual Christmas Party.

## OSPREY FLY FISHERS OF BC

### Osprey Report

By Bruce Brandhorst, President

The Ospreys held Spring-Summer fish-outs at Corbett, Tunkwa, and Knouff Lakes. We were happy to see that the trout in Knouff had recovered their healthy forms, alleviating our concerns about overstocking. In early August we went to Tunkwa Lake. Although its renowned hatch of bomber

chironomids did not happen, other bugs were hatching. In September, we fished the Skagit River. The road to Ross Lake has now reopened, and is considerably improved. The river now has a range of rainbow trout size classes, and apparently fewer bull trout. A fish-out at Corbett in early October provided some excellent dry fly fishing and great weather.

We toured the new hatchery near the Coquitlam dam, operated by the Kwikwetlam First Nation, which hopes to re-establish the sockeye run on the Coquitlam River for which it is named.

We have resumed our meetings and methods sessions after the summer break. Andre Stepanion demonstrated how to tie some of his simple but effective coho flies. Members presented reports on their fishing activities over the summer, and we viewed the film *Salmon Secrets*, concerned with the threat of open-net fish farms to wild salmon populations.

## CARIBOO CHILCOTIN FLY FISHERS

### Report

By Paul Carnes

Winter blues is beginning to creep in on us in the Cariboo, but the members will get rejuvenated when fly-tying starts in the New Year. Our members had a great fish-out at Lorin Lake; fish were caught and lies and stories told around the campfire. This past summer was a tough one for fishing outings in the region because of extreme heat and wildfires, which kept the members at home and out of the bush. The cooler fall weather finally got us off the couch and into the lakes, where fishing was good this year.

During July, some of the club members participated in a steelhead tagging program on the Dean River, which continues to be the river of dreams for most steelhead fishers, and deserves to be studied and respected as such so it can be sustained as BC's best catch and release river.



KAMLOOPS FLY FISHERS

## Report

By Len Piggan

We already have eighteen members signed up for our winter rod building class. Our “show and tell” for rod builders took place October 5th and our first session starts on December 3rd. A new addition is the “Grandparent” fly rod, fly line and reel. We’re hoping to introduce younger people to rod building by having a club member bring a son/daughter/niece/nephew/grandchild and have them build a rod together. It’s a really good starter setup (I have casted it, and it’s great) and is better quality & price than what we had for sale at Wholesale Sports when I worked there.

Elections are in November, and our website Kamloops Fly Fishers Association is up and running, which has brought us several new members. There will be some fine tuning going on for a while, and we recently were verified for Google Sheets, where all of our executive communication and documents will be stored. This is a positive project moving forward, along with our website redesign initiatives.

We conducted our first membership survey, and that information will be available for the executive to help plan our programs. We are also in the process



Sheldon Guertin draw items for September



Sheldon Guertin draw items for September

of upgrading our bylaws. Is anyone else doing this, and can offer advice?

Fish-outs have been held at Pass, Leighton & Lac Le Jeune Lakes. Our annual ice fishing fish-out will be held on January 10th 2026 at Lodgepole Lake.

Our second raffle is in full swing, featured with Sheldon Guertin making a net and rod case. It is going well, with \$340.00 already raised. Mike Doutaz has offered to build a fly rod for the winner of the raffle, with a January to May

2026 time period for completion. We are now doing two raffles a year, and we reimburse donors for their costs. These are being well received by our members.

Our next lesson of Fly Tying 101/ Method Session will be held Oct 22nd and the topic is “balanced leeches” using head turner and slotted beads. Harold Braun will talk about fly-fishing the Thompson River at our November session.



Lac Le Jeune fishout

FLY REEL  
TECHNICAL DRAWING  
No. 7/11



CANADA  
EST. 1867

MOUNTAIN RIVER  
TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY  
Scale 1:25,000

Explore  
Respect  
Learn



THE GREASED LINER  
CLASSIC WET FLY  
PATTERN No. 4106



SCALE 5:1

FLY ROD  
COMPONENTS

HANDLE  
REEL SEAT



ANK  
GUIDE



FLY



# Gleneagle Secondary School



The 2025–26 school is off to fast start (as it always is), and the Gleneagle Fly Fishing program is looking forward to another eventful year! As in previous years, the first semester is run as a club where students attend weekly meetings after school to learn essential fly-fishing skills such as casting, tying, knots, and fish identification. It is such a gratifying feeling when students complete their first fly. The following day is filled with the students finding you in the hallways to tell me about showing their fly to family members, and in some way inspiring a chain of events that usually includes visits to local tackle shops.

By Lorenzo Cirillo,  
Educator

At our recent parent/teacher interview night, one of the parents led off the meeting with “Thank you so much for running your fly-fishing club! I can’t tell you how excited Elliot is about this program!” Mom related how her son is a very detailed-oriented fellow, and loves all the details that are a part of fly tying. It is easy to forget all the esoteric details involved in fly fishing when we have had 40 years of passionate growth.

We hope to visit some of the local rivers this fall as well as the Fraser Valley Trout hatchery for our outings. The only downside of fishing for salmon in the fall in the Lower Mainland are the insane numbers of people, and some of the typically unethical elements that comes with it.

The second semester begins in late January and this semester sees my Fly-Fishing 11 fully accredited course run daily. As with previous years, all skills are covered as well as deep dives into entomology, conservation issues, ethical responsibilities as anglers and a myriad of phenomenal guest speakers. In the past we have carried out four different full day trips where students experience moving and still water fly fishing experiences. Hopefully, we can expand on this. It would be nice to arrange an overnight trip to the Interior for some Kamloops area fishing in the Spring. I just need to find a resort that would be willing to accommodate us and offer us a bit of a break on rates. If anyone out there has an idea or a tip, feel free to email me at [lcirillo@sd43.bc.ca](mailto:lcirillo@sd43.bc.ca)

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the ongoing support of the various

organizations, clubs and individual donors that keep my program so vibrant. Thank you to the BCFF for their financial support as well as my own club, the Totem Fly Fishers. Individuals that made generous donations of fly-tying materials and gear include: Osprey Fly Fishing Club members Clifford Olson (RIP), and Bill Chatt. Long-time friend and fly fisher Bill Haggarty, for his donations of fly-tying materials and rods. Fellow Totem member Ben Gehrke for a class set of fly boxes and some cool Lagartun swag for door prizes. Thank you all for your generous support!



## Carihi Secondary School

**As leaves turn to hues of amber and gold, the Carihi fly fishing program embarks on its next Fall season. This program welcomes back some of our seasoned anglers, as well as welcomes new anglers to the world of fly fishing, and is thriving thanks to the generous support from our community and local organizations.**

By Katherine Mulski, Educator, Carihi Fly Fishing Program Campbell River, BC

A special thanks goes out to Cecil Henley for donating additional 10wt rods, which have been instrumental in enhancing the students' learning experience. These rods have allowed our young participants to explore the art of fly-fishing more fully, casting their lines with newfound confidence and skill.

We are also deeply grateful to Chris and Rand from the Campbell River Fish and Wildlife Association for their unwavering support and expertise in fly tying. Their guidance has inspired many of our students to master the intricate craft of tying their own egg patterns, a crucial skill for any aspiring angler.

Earlier this year, generous financial grants from the Campbell River Salmon Foundation and the Campbell River Community Foundation enabled us to update our inventory of waders and wading boots. With over 85 students participating annually — divided into two cohorts of 26–28 students each in the Spring and 28 students in the current Fall cohort — this upgrade ensures that all participants stay dry and

comfortable as they learn the ropes of fly fishing.


The Fall cohort is immersed in a true fisherman's autumn, applying their learning to the rules and regulations of the freshwater salmon season. Students have delved into the intricacies of targeting Coho jacks and cutthroat trout, while respectfully observing the life cycles of spawning pink salmon and early coho.

Our keen group of anglers has quickly embraced the fly-fishing lifestyle, complementing their hands-on experiences with literary insights from Haig-Brown's *Fisherman's Fall*. This blend of practical and theoretical knowledge enriches their understanding of the changing seasons along the Quinsam River.

Looking ahead, students will delve into the science of reading Hydrometric Graphs, a critical skill for any serious angler. They will also have the opportunity to learn about salmon anatomy through an engaging dissection session led by Deb Cowper, the DFO Education Outreach Educator.

As the season progresses, we are excited to watch





our young anglers grow in skill and passion, supported by a community that values education, conservation, and the art of fly fishing.

In our first six weeks of semester start up, anglers have been busy learning:

- First Peoples concept of interconnectedness as it relates to conservation and the local fisheries here in Campbell River
- beginning casting practice
- exploring salmon regulations, retention and non-retention rules and general fishing ethics
- learning basic trout and salmon identification with materials provided from BC Freshwater Fisheries
- learning to tie fly-fishing knots such as the double surgeon, loop-to-loop connection and improved clinch knot
- participating in fun cooperative games to solidify our community of anglers working together

- beginning the journey into fly-tying including tie patterns for Coho and hungry cutthroat trout
- explore and highlight folks of influence and importance in the culture of fly fishing
- salmon life cycle and habitat

Anyone interested in presenting to our crew of anglers, whether it be a fly-tying demo, fishing stories, casting clinic and many more possibilities- we welcome you! Remote presentations can work too!

Tight Lines!

Please contact Dr. Mulski via email at: [katherine.mulski@sd72.bc.ca](mailto:katherine.mulski@sd72.bc.ca)

Please follow our fly-fishing journey on Instagram at: [@carihiflyfish](https://www.instagram.com/carihiflyfish)

or on Facebook using the search for: Carihi Fly Fishing Program



#### YOUTH SECTION

## D P Todd Secondary School Prince George

**The Dead Pine Collective was established in 2018 to meet the needs of students at the school, and since then it has grown into a program that runs across the school district. There are three main parts to the Collective: History and Wilderness Knowledge (H.A.W.K.), Sr. Dead Pine, and Dead Pine Trapping.**

Ian Tanner,  
Teacher

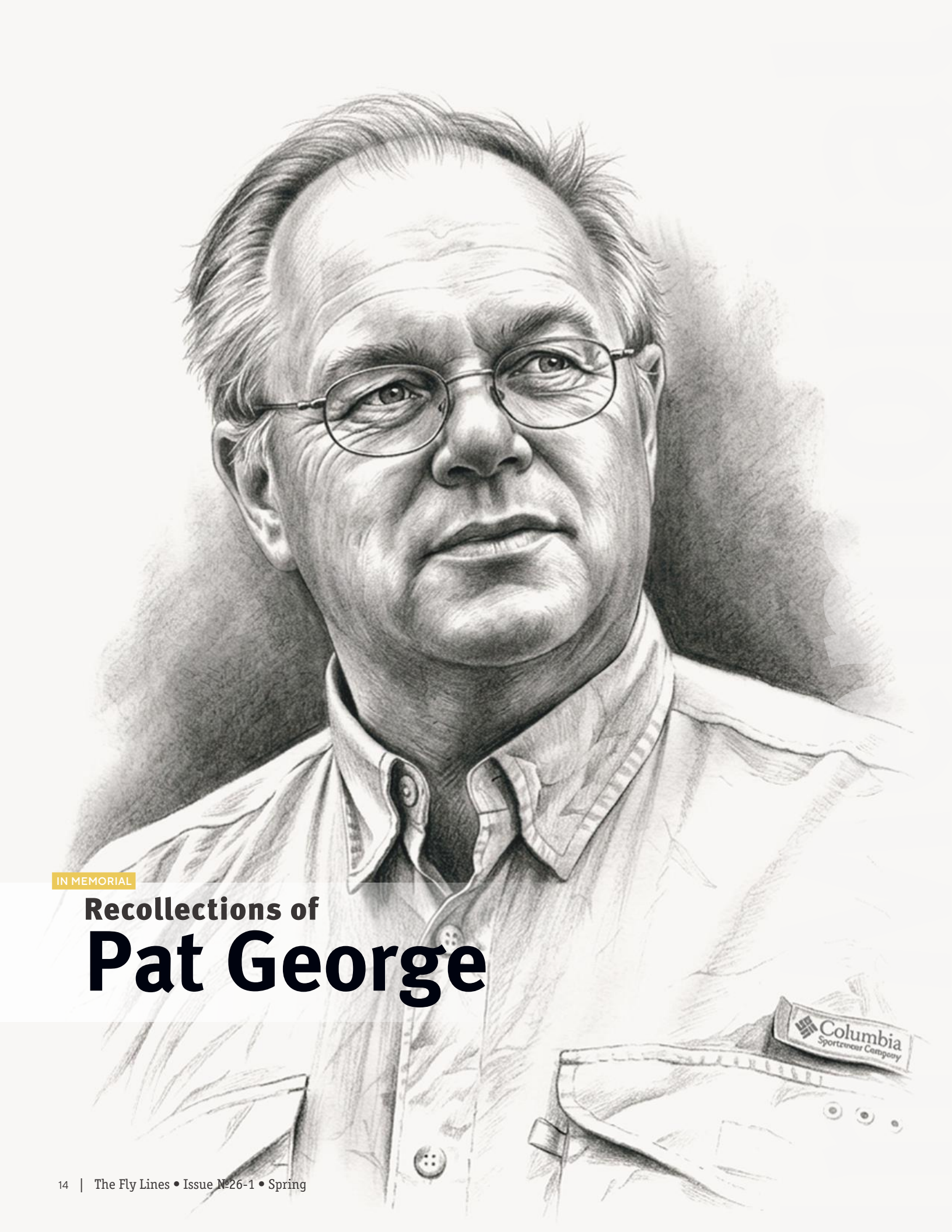
**H**.A.W.K. is a grade 9–10 high school course. We have a full class of students (app. 30 per year) all day for a full semester; they can earn credits in seven different classes. We take the students outside for hiking, fishing, camping and canoeing and base our lessons and projects on these activities. We also teach the BC C.O.R.E. hunting course, in which we take the students to the gun range and get them hands-on with a variety of firearms.

Sr. Dead Pine is an extension of H.A.W.K., which is open to students in Grades 11 or 12 and has app. 30 students per year. It is run in much the same way, with the same students being in the course all day for a full semester. As the students are older the projects are more complex, but with the same hands-on, land-based focus.

Dead Pine Trapping takes small groups and full classes out for the day on the trapline, but with a focus on bushcraft, foraging, recognizing animal

tracks and signs, and shelter building. We also take full classes and small groups out ice-fishing for the day during the winter season. It is a chance for many students to participate in and experience outdoor activities that they might not otherwise have. During this year's ice fishing season, we had between 500 and 600 students out on the lakes with us. We see at least that number again during the spring and fall trapping season, and in the early summer when we take groups out river fishing, doing archery, gold panning, and foraging for wild edibles.

As part of both classes, we teach basic fly-tying, and also take fly-fishing equipment on our trips. During these trips we teach the basics of fly casting and fly selection to those students who are interested. We also teach the students the regulations, as well as how to properly deal with their catch, from cleaning to brining and smoking, as well as grilling over a fire or cooking it at home as part of a more complex meal.



IN MEMORIAL

# Recollections of Pat George

## Remembering Pat George

By Mike Edgell

**I first met Pat George in the 1980's when we were both at U Vic. Pat had graduated in the early 70's with an Honours Bachelor in Fine Arts, and then joined UVic's Department of Visual Arts. By then Pat was a noted graphic artist, and his work in sculpture, photography and especially silk-screen printing had earned him a national and international standing.**

Since 1968 he had exhibited and shown in Canada, the USA, Europe and Australia. He was a member of North West and World Print Councils, and of the Nootka Printmakers, with his work as a printmaker shown in major private and exhibit collections globally. His artistic work was, from the outset, driven and reflected by his concerns with the relationship between human behaviour and the environment, his commitment to conservation of the natural environment, and his love of fly-fishing and its environs. Pat retired from UVic in 2004 after 30 years in Visual Arts, but those concerns and love continued and further developed for the rest of his life.

A long-time member of the H-B FFA, (especially as a repeat president and member/chair of the conservation committee), Pat has left a huge footprint on BC's fly-fishing community. He contributed his artwork so generously in many ways to support PSF, BCFF and others. His knowledge of fly-fishing environs was encyclopedic – willingly (and often hilariously) shared. He was a great admirer of, and drew much inspiration from Roderick Haig-Brown – curating a Legacy exhibit at U Vic's Maltwood Museum in 2001. He was a compulsive collector of fly-fishing gear, and a deep well of concern and knowledge of local and regional conservation issues. And of course, as an artist, he could not be other than a fastidious tier of beautiful flies (he was fascinated by the work of Megan Boyd).

Those that were fortunate to know Pat and see him as a friend will forever hold him in their hearts – he will never be replaced.

## Pat George – A Truly Wonderful Character

By John Braybrook

**Pat George was a very unassuming person, but if he met you once you were a friend for life. In all the years I knew Pat, I never heard him say a bad word about anyone, unless you were an Oak Bay bylaw officer. Oak Bay bylaw seemed to be a good place for Pat to get all his frustrations aired. I think that he and the bylaw officers had a lot of fun poking at each other. Anytime I met with Pat he had a good story about his battles with Oak Bay. There was never a bad word about anyone else.**

I met Pat at UVic, where we were both working, about 25 years ago. I had to phone him about some equipment he needed, and during the discussion I mentioned that I was going to go fishing at Thuya Lakes. We talked fishing for a few minutes, and then I forgot about the discussion. The next day Pat showed up at my office with a box of hand tied flies for me. We became best of friends and enjoyed many years of fishing together. He and I caught and released hundreds of fish from various lakes and rivers around the province. He was always smiling and joking even when the fishing was off. We spent every winter planning trips to the Interior, and tying flies to suit the locations we were targeting.

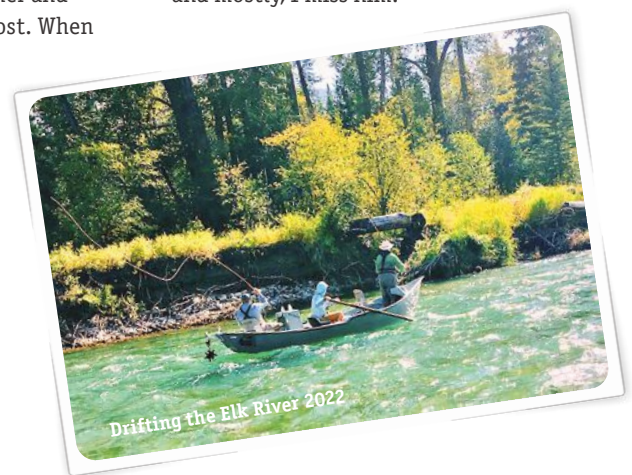
Pat was a prodigious fly tier. We would meet weekly over the winter, where he would knock off five flies to my one while regaling us with story after story. The fly-tying sessions would often include dinner and drinks. He was a great host. When we tied flies, he always invited a few members of the Haig-Brown club to join us, and he did this for many years.

He was a very good artist and his artistic skill rubbed off on his fly-tying. He loved to tie colourful flies; his selection of chironomids

had every colour of the rainbow. I often teased him, saying that fish don't want art, they want bugs. We enjoyed tying flies together, and every year we tied hundreds of flies for various charity auctions, and for friends who were joining us on our fishing expeditions. I know that a lot of fishing buddies caught a lot of fish using our flies.

Pat was well known for volunteering his time and skills. Not only did he tie flies for various charities, he also sat on organizing committees. He donated his art, he framed pictures, he designed and printed advertising posters. He did this every year for the Pacific Salmon Foundation, Golf for Kids and the Peninsula Streams fund raisers.

If you asked Pat for something he never said no. He was a one of kind person, a wonderful character, and a joy to know. I miss his infectious laugh, his stories and mostly, I miss him.



## Remembering Pat George

By Ken Marsh

**I first met Pat in 1997 when I moved from the Lower Mainland to Victoria, and joined the Haig-Brown Fly-Fishing Association. It seemed a rather elegant name for a fishing club, but I soon found that it worked to live up to its association with Roderick Haig Brown.**

Pat was president at the time, and the club had just finished an ambitious project of re-publishing Haig-Brown's *Pool and Rapid*, which was beautifully bound and printed, including illustrations contributed by Pat. It was a lovely piece of work.

Over the years I got to see many more examples of Pat's skill as an artist and fisherman, as well as his generosity as a club member and a human being. Many posters were produced for club and BCFFF events, as well as contributions of original art for auctions and boxes of elegantly tied flies. Contributions also went to other organizations such as the Pacific Salmon Foundation and Trout Unlimited. On a personal note, I recall him making an effort on many occasions to take one of the oldest club members fishing when the gentleman was no longer able to launch a boat on his own. If you had the good fortune to spend a few days on a special trip with Pat, you could be awarded a piece of his art to commemorate the trip.

Given his broad involvement in the world of fly-fishing, his connections within BC fly-fishing were significant. He always had a crowd around him at BCFFF annual meetings, and wrote one of encountering Haig-Brown and his wife in person at an art course in Florence, Italy.

Pat served at least two terms as president of the HBFFA, and was a unifying force. He was twice awarded the club's Wrixon award for his contributions. Following the COVID years, which decimated the membership of the club, Pat assumed the presidency and worked to re-energize it. Among his strategies was re-instituting a summer barbeque, which he hosted at his home along with his wife, Janette. Here he was able to show-off the barbequing skills that made him such a great companion on overnight

fishing trips. His salmon was excellent.

As the years wore on, I had several longer opportunities to fish with Pat. In addition to club outings, many of which he organized, there were BCFFF meetings at Corbett Lake where he and his lake-fishing pal, John Braybrook steadily took fish on chironomids, while I could never quite find the right formula. I did a little better on trips to the Kootenays, fishing the Elk, Fording, Michel and Wigwam Rivers with Pat and other HBFFA members. He had a great spirit of adventure. On one occasion, we bounced around the backroads of the Elk Valley searching for an access point to the Wigwam River. After getting directions from local hunters, we found a VERY rough road leading downward to the river. Resisting advice to walk down, off he went in his truck, with some of us walking ahead to guide and remove hazards. Amazingly, we made it out without a tow after some excellent fishing.

I have talked about Pat's kindness, generosity and concern for conservation, but I feel obliged to recognize what I would describe as his "raffish" side. There was a kind of Jack Nicholson quality to his grin that made you think he was appreciating the earthy side of a comment or situation. Despite his appreciation for the finer things in life, he could enjoy the mundane. As his grandson noted at Pat's memorial service, "he enjoyed staying up late to watch a "spaghetti western" and sip a glass of good Scotch".

Pat's down-to-earth practicality and good humor made him an excellent president for the Haig-Brown group, and his concern for the club's well being and the BCFFF continued to near the end of life. One of his last tasks was assuring that his donations to the BCFFF "Ice Off" auction were delivered to the buyers. He ended his Haig-Brown presidency

## Pat George

By Dave Lock

**Pat was primarily an artist. He approached everything he did with an artist's mentality.**

He had an image to work to whether it was tying a fly, designing another poster to satisfy another request, creating an image for a print, or cooking a meal.

Pat never seemed to be without a sketch or notebook. There must be thousands of them stored somewhere, with bits of images and information that would later become part of his artistic output, or energetic support for an organization. Although he was a great photographer, by drawing something he was recording his emotional perception of the object.

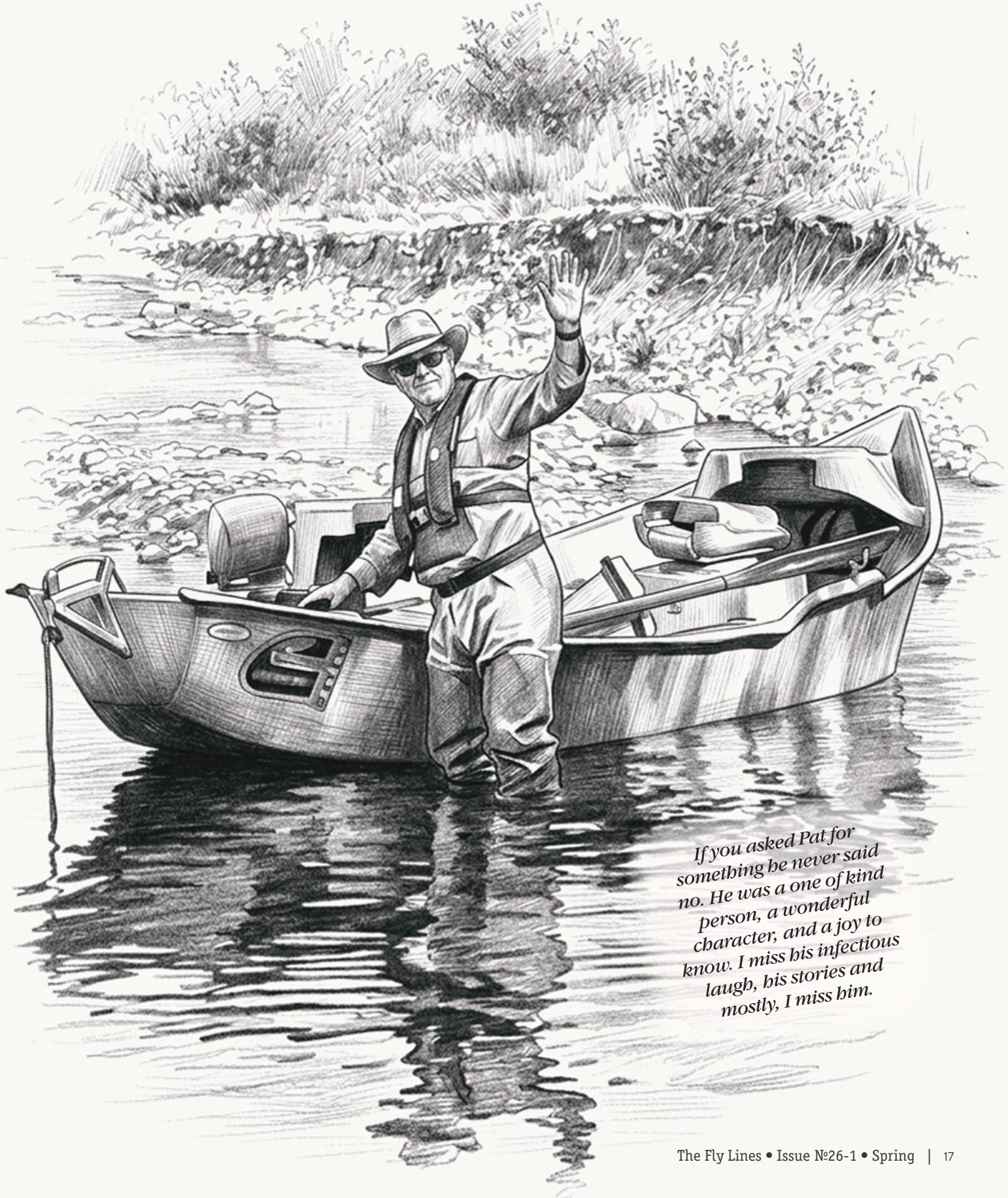
His fly-tying showed it. Thread wraps were placed precisely. Materials selected were more than just the properties of colour and size. They had to meet the requirements of art in motion and within his sense of what a fish would perceive.

His image of what was to happen was organized. On one fishing trip to south-east BC, we arrived at our accommodation. Pat's first objective was to get his bread maker to the kitchen, add the ingredients and start it up so we had fresh bread for dinner. We had fresh bread throughout the trip!

Pat's story wouldn't be complete without something of his love for cars. His last project was the restoration of an Alfa Romeo convertible, like the one in *The Graduate*. He had done other restorations in the past, but this was special. He described it to me as his grandson's university education. It was both a challenge and a pleasure for him to create another very personal artistic legacy. That legacy is stunning in every way, as was Pat George.

about a month before his death.

He was a wonderful contributor to the world of British Columbia fly-fishing and salmonid conservation, and I appreciate the opportunity have this recognized.



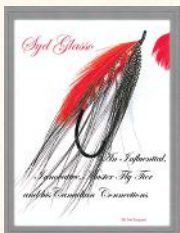
*If you asked Pat for something he never said no. He was a one of kind person, a wonderful character, and a joy to know. I miss his infectious laugh, his stories and mostly, I miss him.*



HISTORY ARTICLE

# Syd Glasso Flies

Syd Glasso c. 1960s



**Editor's note: the following document is the introduction by Art Lingren to his book (2021) "Syd Glasso – An Influential, Innovative Master Fly Tyer and His Canadian Connections"**

In his 2002 book, *Spey Flies & Dee Flies*, John Shewey gives due credit to Syd Glasso for developing and introducing Spey-style flies in the Pacific Northwest. Glasso, a Forks, Washington schoolteacher and principal, was one of those quiet-spoken, modest fly fishers whose fly tying and fishing skills ranked second to none in the steelhead community. Glasso dressed his first Spey-style fly back in the early 1950s and in the following years developed a number more for his backyard rivers. A master fly dresser who spurned recognition, but I would like to believe that he would be flattered at the influence he has had in dressing not only Glasso-type Spey flies but other elegant flies we tie and swim through the water to entice steelhead.

In reviewing the few Pacific Northwest fly pattern books in my library from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, Glasso's flies did get some recognition. The early 1960's edition of Patrick's Fly Shop book *Pacific Northwest Fly Patterns* included only the dressing for the Sol Duc. The first edition of *Flies of the Northwest* (1965) by The Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club included the dressing for four flies dressed by Glasso with a black and white picture of the flies. In the third edition (1974), produced in full colour, there were no Glasso flies. Glasso's flies were complicated patterns and time consuming to dress. Back in the 1960s the few fly fishers that fished winter steelhead sunk their flies to entice strikes from bottom-dwelling steelhead. The deeper you

fished a fly the better but also the more likely you would get hung up on a rock or sunken snag and must break off the fly. Not nice to have to break off a fly that took many minutes to dress and with rare to obtain materials such as heron.

As more fly fishers started to fish for winter steelhead with a fly, they looked for simpler less complicated and easier to tie patterns. If you were a commercial tier you wanted something that was quick to tie, yet effective. Many of the steelhead flies of that era had a tail, body of silk floss, chenille, or tinsel, a hackle throat, and a hair wing. Glasso used heron hackles on some of his flies and that was a feather not easy to get, especially the black feather from mature birds. Sometime in the 1970s heron was classified as an endangered species and could not be sold in USA and Canada. Glasso also liked seal

fur for bodies, and it was another fly-tying material that was prohibited from sale in the USA as was polar bear. In the mid-to-late 1980s there was a resurgence in the fly-tying craft and substitutes for banned items were found. For example, when I started tying my Black Spey, I had very few black heron feathers. I found that on a cape of the ringed-neck pheasant there were a few large rump feathers with long enough fibres and dyed black made a good substitute. Blue-eared pheasant became a good heron substitute but dyeing feathers black is a real pain in the butt for an amateur like me. Later in the 1980s golden pheasant capes were dyed in many colours – black, hot orange and purple to name a few. I found the longer fibre rump feather an excellent black heron substitute.

Trey Combs in his two 1970s books

included Glasso flies. In "Winter Fly Fishing," *The Steelhead Trout* (1971) Combs included a black and white picture of six Glasso dressed flies. Combs says:

These flies tied by Syd Glasso are among the most beautiful in steelheading (p.157).

Combs did not include fly dressings, and the black and white picture does not do justice to Glasso's flies. Combs corrected that in *Steelhead Fly Fishing and Flies* (1976). On page 80, color Plate VIII he has ten Glasso-dressed flies. Even though the flies are not large, you can see that they are dressed by a master fly tier.





FLY TYING FEATURE

By Brian Smith

# Designing Dry Flies for Streams & Rivers

**In the world of fly-fishing authors like me, more literature has been written about mayflies than any other insect on earth.**

I do not think, however, the subject of mayflies, their life cycles or the fly patterns which can represent them can ever be exhausted because they are such an intimate topic for those fly tiers that choose to spend their lives imitating them. All of the flies designed for mayflies during the last two centuries: the Cahills, Variants, Quill Gordons, Adamses, Wulff's et al will still catch fish as well today as they did fifty, one, or two hundred years ago. What is still relevant and most important

today in our more heavily-fished, competitive waters continues to be the size and colour of the fly, and the impression of the insect that fly tiers impose on their hooks.

Modern fly-tying materials like Antron's, synthetic dubbings and exaggerated flash materials have tried hard to displace natural furs and feathers of the "golden" age of fly-tying. It will likely take another generation of fly-tiers to

do so, but I have confidence that "new" is not generally better than "old", and patterns that have endured the cycles of modernism will be around one hundred years and more after my generation is long gone.

### Body & Wings

Over the past ten years or so I have expressed and designed my mayflies with extended abdomens of dyed or natural deer

MAYFLY  
TAN "PARACHUTE"  
STYLE





# Part 2 **MAYFLIES**

hair in the corresponding colours of their genera.

Except for Tricos, I use this style for all of my mayfly ties whether rivers or lakes, and I believe it is the most important “trigger” I use to imitate them. For simplicity, I have narrowed my colours down to these: natural tan, natural mule deer grey, dyed rusty brown, dyed olive-grey and dyed olive-green, and use UTC70 denier tying threads to match these colours, or a contrasting thread if required (i.e. bright yellow for an olive-green drake). I prefer medium coarseness and lengths deer hairs for abdomens, and blend and dye my deer hair colours with Rit All Purpose Dye available at Michael’s.

For my mayflies’ wings I also use

natural light brown or grey mule deer hair depending on the tie, but I use the short, fine leg hairs of the animals, and will assemble the wings on the hook upright and spread-out, or posted if I am going to hackle a parachute-style fly.

Over the past five years I have been experimenting with Raffia for wings, and really like the look of it for patterns I use in slow-moving water like soft water of glides, pools and back eddies, where I might also use a traditional parachute or thorax hackle on my flies. Raffia-winged mayflies are deadly when tied “spent” with no hackles to imitate dying mayfly spinners, i.e. Tricos and BW0s! In the Fly Lines Spring 2024 issue page 38–39, I illustrate the steps to tying Raffia wings on a mayfly dun. In this issue, I will demonstrate how to tie Raffia wings for a “spent” spinner, mayflies that have died on the water after mating.

## **Thorax & Hackle**

Thoraxes on mayflies are best represented with a darker-than-abdomen sparkly, spikey dubbing like Hareline Hare’s Ear Plus, which is a blend of rabbit fur and Antron. The sparkle makes the fly look “wet”, and is another enticer to get the trout to strike your fly. The colours I use to highlight my abdomens are: 04HET2 Dark Hare’s Ear for grey, 04HET5 Red Brown for rust and brown, 04HET6 Olive and 04HET10 Olive Brown for olives.

Hackles are a moot

point on mayflies. I think when the hackle is eliminated, especially on river patterns, trout get a better “look” at your un-hackled fly if it lies in the current film instead of riding on it. Fish see the extended abdomen and the profile of your fly more clearly, and will react more suddenly to a specimen pushing water, rather than tickling it with a hackle. This is another reason to tie mayflies with natural hair which floats, like good deer hair.

## **Hook Selection**

Your hook choices for mayflies are important. Dry fly hooks of 1x fine wire are essential to tying patterns which will float in the surface film. These can be purchased in 1 or 2x lengths depending on the mayfly you are tying. Read the editor’s note below, and go to our website ([www.flyfishers.ca](http://www.flyfishers.ca)) to study Danie’s photos, which will help you decide mayfly colours and whether to use a long or short-shanked hook. Generally speaking, I use Mustad R43 or Twin Teck DF200 hooks in sizes 12 to 16 for most of my mayflies, switching to Tiemco 101’s for hook sizes 18 to 22 when I wish to tie little Tricos or the chunkier Blue-winged Olives. Tiemco 101’s are barbless, 1x long and have a straight, large eye which, in a small hook, is easier to get your 5 or 6x leader through when stumbling around in the river. Orvis “Big Eye” hooks are nice hooks also, but hard to find in our fly shops.

Editor’s note: If you wish to see some good photos of mayflies, which will help you in choosing the colours and shanks for mayflies you are tying, the Danie Erasmus article “The Top Mayflies of BC Streams” of Fly Lines Issue 24–2 Spring 2024 will give you insight into the various colours and species of mayflies – just match the colours and sizes!



FLY TYING FEATURE

# Mayfly Tan "No-hackle"

By Brian Smith

## Pattern Recipe

<b>Hook:</b>	Dry fly 2x long Mustad R43 #14-16
<b>Thread:</b>	UTC 70 tan
<b>Tail:</b>	Moose hairs shank length
<b>Abdomen:</b>	Deer hairs tan 6-8
<b>Wing:</b>	Deer hairs light tan or brown shade
<b>Thorax:</b>	Dubbing, Hare's Ear Plus 04HET7
<b>Note:</b>	For "Parachute" style use the same recipe, and use a medium dun or light brown hackle.



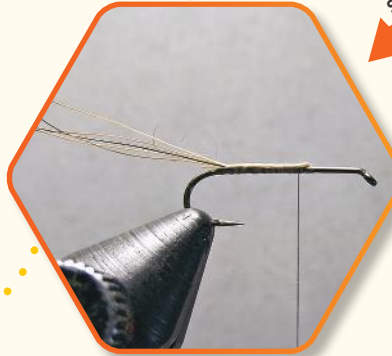
MAYFLY TAN "NO-HACKLE"

START HERE

## Tying instructions

**1** Tails: Attach 4-5 moose hairs to the shank of your hook @ app. 3 eye lengths behind the hook eye. These should be full shank length and extend beyond the hook bend.

Step 1



Step 2a



2b

Abdomen: Now reverse your hook in the vise, take a firm grip on the abdomen and moose hairs (and don't let go of them until this step is completed), and continue to wrap in 5 turns around the deer and the moose tail hairs, then return in 5 wraps back to the shank. Now return your hook to the normal fly position in the vise and continue wrapping in 5 wraps back to the tie-in point.

2c

Abdomen: Trim the ends of the deer hairs, leaving the moose hairs extended. Add a drop of Super Glue to the blunt point.

Step 3



Step 3a



Step 3 (top)



2a  
Step 2a-1

Abdomen: Take 8-10 tan deer hairs, stack them, and tie them in at the same point as above for tails. For length, they should be a few cm's shorter than the moose hairs, which will ease in trimming them after finishing the step. Allow them to spin around the shank. Take 5-6 wraps of thread over the abdomen to the rear of the hook shank.



Step 2a-2



Step 2b



4

Thorax: Make a dubbing loop in front of the wings, apply 2 wraps behind the wings and two wraps in front, tie off, finish the head, and your mayfly is complete.  
Tip: After finishing, I spray all of my dry flies I tie with a silicone boot spray, which really helps float them longer.

3

Wings: Take a pencil-width cut of short tan-tipped deer hairs, stack them if needed, clip and tie them in no longer than the tie-in point to the bend of the hook shank. Too long, and they will flop over in the water. Shorter is better than longer. Tip: when tying deer hair wings to the shank, align them rearwards to the bend, take 3 firm but not tight turns on the butts, then tighten fully with 8-10 turns in front and behind the wings. Now take several turns of thread through the wings, which will spread them nicely.

Step 4





START HERE

### For the "Parachute" Style

1-2

Follow Steps 1 & 2 of the Mayfly No-Hackle

Step 3a



3b

**Wings posted:** You want to post the wings by pinching them and making 8-10 turns of thread up the base of the wings to form a foundation for the hackle to be applied.

Step 3b



3a

**Wings:** Follow Step 3 instructions above, but for the last sentence.

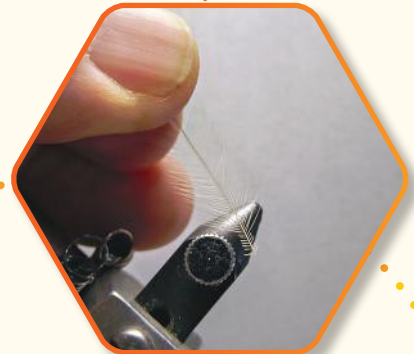
Step 4



4

**Thorax:** Make a thin dubbing loop in front of the wings, apply 2 wraps behind and 2 in front of the wings. Tip: I like to finish my head wraps at this point, which, when I finish the fly, I only need to do the final whip turns of thread, and I don't need to fight with hackle to do so.

Step 5a



5b

**Hackle:** Attach the hackle flat side down to the post foundation, wrap the hackle up the post 3 turns and back down 2 turns, and then tie off the hackle on the post. Finish the head.

5a

**Hackle:** Choose a size 12 dun hackle (1 size larger than the hook size) and trim the butt end to form an anchor for your thread wrapping.

Step 5b



Top View



MAYFLY  
TAN "PARACHUTE"  
STYLE

FLY TYING FEATURE

# Mayfly Trico "Spent" Spinner (Male)

By Brian Smith

## Pattern Recipe

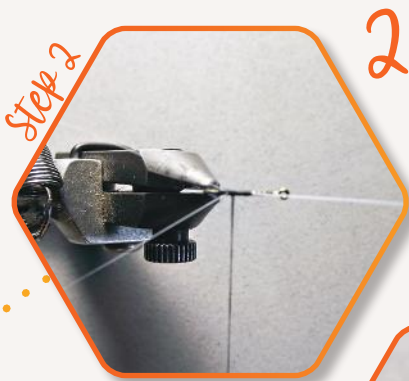
<b>Hook:</b>	Dry fly Tiemco 101 # 20-22
<b>Thread:</b>	UTC 70 dark grey
<b>Tails (2):</b>	Mayfly tails grey split, 1.5 x shank length
<b>Abdomen:</b>	Black stripped marabou quill stem
<b>Wing (2):</b>	Raffia grey, tied spent
<b>Thorax:</b>	Dubbing, Hare's Ear Plus 04HET4
<b>Note:</b>	For the "female" spent spinner, use olive abdomen & thorax



MAYFLY TRICO "SPENT" SPINNER (MALE)

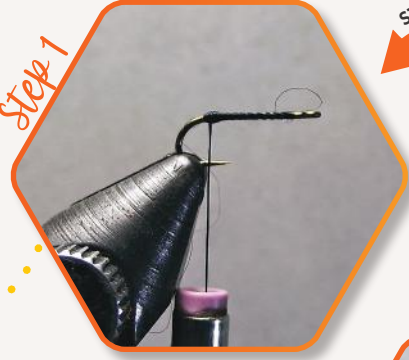
### Tying instructions:

Note: I am demonstrating on a size # 18 hook for ease of instruction. Generally, a Trico is tied on sizes 20-24 hooks.



Step 2

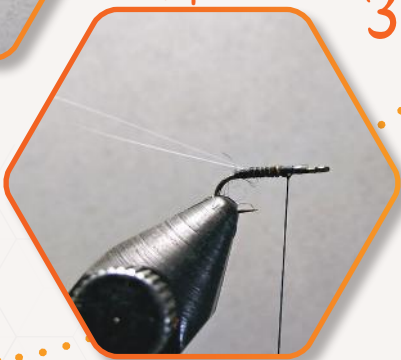
**2** Tails: Attach the mayfly tails. They should be long, 1.5 times shank length. Put a thread wrap crosswise between them from the rear of the butt, which will split and spread them outward.



Step 1

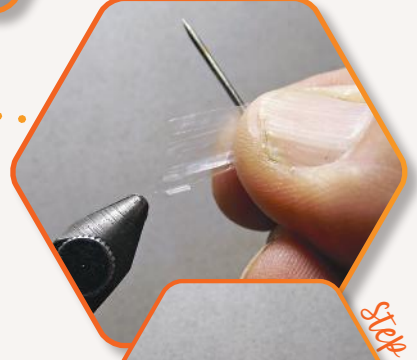
START HERE

**1** Butt ball: Attach tying thread and form a small, short thread ball at the end of the shank. This will allow you to split the tails easily.



Step 3

**3** Abdomen: In front of the butt, attach a stripped black marabou quill stem and wrap it up the shank to the 2/3-point, 2 eye-lengths behind the hook's eye. Tip: When tying with marabou, always keep your leftover stripped quills in different colours; they make excellent abdomens on small flies!



Step 4a

**4a** Wings: Cut a strip of gray Raffia 1cm wide x 3cm long. Double it over a bodkin.



Step 4b

**4b** Wings: Hold both together as one piece and, with scissors, trim one side of both wings to a rounded, angled shape. Tricos have wings that are the full length of the shank plus some, so keep them dominant, but not so bulky that the fly cannot be cast.

**5** Thorax: Form a thin dubbing loop of black Haretron in front of the wings, tie off with 1 turn behind the wings, 1 figure-8 across for each of them, and 1 turn in front. Cement and finish the fly. Apply a spray coat of silicone, let dry, and go fishing.

Step 5

**4c** Wings: Now open the wings, attach them and position them to the shank 2 eye-lengths from the hook eye, rounded sides to the rear, with figure-8 wraps. Tip: First, put one loose wrap across the wings from behind the wings to the front of the hook, then position the wings and tie off.



Step 4c



Trico Female

DESTINATION

# Winter on the *Yakoun River, Haida Gwaii:*

## Reflections of a steelhead bum in training

By Jeff Kormos

**I'm a pretty lucky guy. Whether you believe we make our own luck, or whether you think that things just happen for better or worse, the fact remains: I've experienced my fair share of good luck, especially on the river bank. I've only ever caught steelhead with flies, and specifically, flies I tied myself.**

**H**owever, it appears more impressive than it actually may be. It took me a long time to get that first tug, and then longer before I got one in the net. It was longer still before I had multiple fish in one season, and then in one day. My journey to catching a steelhead actually began long ago, while watching early YouTube videos of these magnificent long and beautiful casts made by anglers with double-handed rods, from my then home in Edmonton during the early days. Perfect loops unfolding on the water, screaming reels and violent bursts of acrobatic energy breaking through the surface, while

anglers squealed with glee at their predicament. I wanted to *do* that. Little did I know that by the mid-2010s, I would have my chance while living in Prince George, getting to know the Bulkley and Morice systems and learning to use a double-hand rod. I landed my first steelhead during a spell of mild temperatures in November 2017 while swinging a black Hoh-Bo Spey fly through a high and dirty tail-out on the Morice. I loved it, all of it. I didn't get any instruction on the water, but I did get a lot of useful advice and tips from people who had fished those waters religiously. I also had a good fishing buddy who was as intrigued by steelhead as I was.

Yakoun River



**COLOUR WAS INCREDIBLE AS IT HAD A PROPER RED BAND ALONG ITS SIDE AND BELLY WITH DARK GREEN COLOURING AND SPOTTING ALONG ITS FACE AND BACK**

Smiling with Steel

Since then, the urge to get out and catch a steelhead has only gotten greater, and the life of a steelhead bum has become even more appealing. My good buddy and I now dream every year of putting in just a few more days on the rivers each season, until we find ourselves on the water for all of the autumn action.

#### **The Yakoun River**

Even though there are plentiful fishing

opportunities throughout spring and summer, the fall is what I look forward to the most, because my focus never really strays from steelhead. The winter doldrums are always the hardest, so when I got the chance to spend the coldest months on Haida Gwaii (did I mention I'm a pretty lucky guy?), my steelhead bum dreams felt a little closer than I had ever imagined. And so began my routine: one day every week I traveled from the North

Beach in Masset through Port Clements, on my way to explore new waters. Finally, a chance to fish through the winter and catch a steelhead. Doldrums be damned!

I had actually fished on Haida Gwaii once before when a friend brought me out for a few days. The Yakoun River is a small to medium-sized freestone river on Graham Island that carves its way from the Skidegate plateau north where it flows into Yakoun Bay, near Port Clements.



Forest Stand

It can be accessed from both Daajing Giids and Port Clements through a series of radio-controlled forest service roads. The forest is a beautiful storybook setting where Sitka spruce and giant cedars stand tall, covered in bright green moss that extends across the forest floor. The tree canopy lets in just enough light to give it that magical feel described in fairy tales and old-world folklore. Alders line the river banks, many proudly displaying the

evidence of errant casts, providing a clue to the types of flies and gear used to fool steelhead into battle by anglers past.

Trails that wind along both sides of the river are shared by anglers, and presumably deer, raccoons and black bears which make their way along the banks in search of food. I explored about 10-kilometers of easy to medium difficulty access, with numerous spots to park and find one of the many riffles,

runs and pools that conceal migrating steelhead and coastal cutthroat alike. Fish are fair game to angling pressure for about the first 40-kilometers of road access from the salt. Once they move into the final 13-kilometers downstream of the lake they get to rest, unbothered by catch and release angling, until they spawn in May. During my stay in Masset, the Yakoun was classified waters and a steelhead stamp was required on my



## THE YAKOUN WILL NO DOUBT GET ME THROUGH THOSE AWFUL DAYS UNTIL THE FALL STEELHEADS RETURN ON THE SKEENA SYSTEM INLAND

license. I did have one friendly encounter with BC Conservation Officers, who were working hard to ensure that the public can enjoy this niche winter pastime.

Angler pressure was fairly light through the early winter, though I often ran into people fishing the banks, or guides drifting with clients,

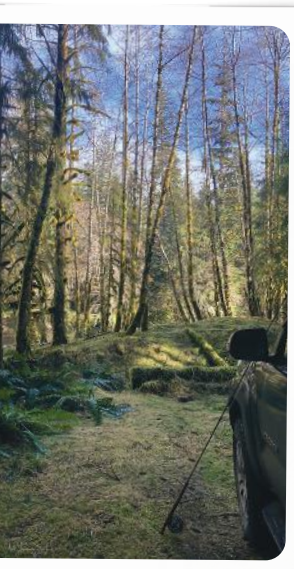
all seeking their chance at hooking into a beautiful, fresh steelhead. The proximity of such a small river to the ocean meant that fresh steelhead were rolling in with the tides. Timing was key to intercepting these fresh fish, though there were many coloured-up fish who still battled like they entered the system only hours before. Given the small size of the water and the many overhanging alders, often partially covering prime resting spots, I opted to fish with lighter gear in addition to the double-handed rods and large arbor reels used on bigger steelhead rivers on the mainland. Two setups were key to really dialing in my swing game.

### Gear and Flies

I brought my Guideline Elevate 12-foot-7/8 wt. paired with the Guideline Halo 79DH reel. It's spooled up with the Airflo Skagit FIST 540 grain line, paired with a range of 10-foot tungsten sink tips from T-8 to T-18. As a fairly short rod, it was easy enough to pack it along the riverside trails, and over logjams and other obstacles I encountered when exploring

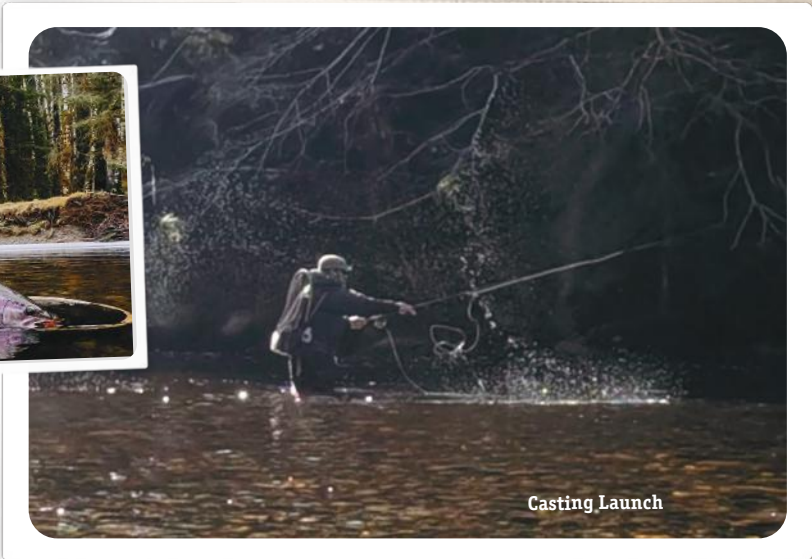
new waters. This setup also managed to cast this clunky line combo as far as I ever needed, despite my intermediate skill level. The sealed drag on the Halo reel was reliable while battling hot fish, and especially on some of the frostier mornings. This was my dredging stick. The triple density line and heavy T-tips swung low and slow through the faster moving, deeper sections of the river, and kept tension well through the entirety of the swing. For deep and fast water, this setup put the fly where the fish were.

The other setup, and by far my favourite, is my lightweight and versatile Guideline LPXe Switch 11-foot-7/8 wt. paired with my Danielsson Original 2W Reel. I've spooled up the reel with a Scientific Anglers Spey Lite Integrated Skagit 300-grain line and a range of 5-foot' tungsten sink-tips from T-8 to T-14. This rod is a Scandinavian design, meaning that its 7/8 weight designation is equivalent to that of an American single-hand rod (whereas an American switch weight is equivalent to a Spey weight). A handle below the reel extends in and



Tools of the Trade

out of the reel seat so that the rod can be used as a proper single-or-double-hand. The reel does not have a traditional brake system, nor a click-n-pawl style overrun protection. Instead, there is a set of six rollers that can be tightened in unison to put pressure on the inside of the spool to limit overrun while remaining incredibly sensitive to the lightest tug on the fly. It can be a knuckle buster if you're not careful when palming the spool, but it remains a workhorse and a very durable fly reel. They are manufactured in Sweden by the Danielsson family, and still a unique, high-quality piece of fly-fishing engineering. This setup allowed me to work on my switch, Skagit and even Scandinavian style



casts, as the short head and sink-tip was light enough to snap around in tight casting areas, and also precise enough to put the fly just under the many billowing alders along the riverbank.

The flies I used were of two styles or traditions. I tied a number of small intruders in classic bright steelhead colours such as red, pink and orange. The

other style, and the one I predominantly fished, were Scandinavian-style hair wing streamers between two and three inches long. I tied these in a wide variety of the same colours, and with white polar bear wings as well as matching red, pink and orange fox hair wings. These flies were easy to cast on the lighter setup, but still held a large enough profile for

Port Clements  
(British Columbia, Canada)

Yakoun River

Yakoun River

**... AND I WILL BE BACK  
ONE DAY, TO APPLY WHAT  
I LEARNED, AND ADAPT TO  
WHATEVER CONDITIONS THE  
YAKOUN CAN THROW AT ME**



dredging in the deep and fast currents. All of these flies were tied on shanks with stinger hooks. I used mostly small (15mm-25mm) shanks with #4 barbless hooks. My red Scandinavian-hair wing was my confidence fly, and the one I kept going back to after trying other colours begrudgingly.

### **On the Water**

Using lightweight gear has its advantages, but there are also some solid limitations. In a run that I consider among the best swing waters on the Yakoun, a particularly fresh fish attacked my fly almost instantly after it hit the water. It went for a quick dart upstream, cart-wheeled out of the water, turned and belined back towards me. I reeled like hell and reached for the sky trying to keep up tension as I chased him towards myself. Surely, at the sight of my legs, and quite suddenly, the fish bolted for the bottom of the run and the line peeled and overran the spool,

sort of exploding in my hand. I stripped what line had left the guides as fast as I could, adding to the bird's nest of line wrapped around my hand, the rod and reel. We still had tension! It appeared that this fish was happy to hold in the deep for a minute, so I started pulling the line off the reel, untangling the line from the rod, the reel and itself. It still held. With all of my line right down to the backing laying in a mess in the water around me, I started to re-spool, still standing in the river, squeezing the line between the rod and my forefinger and pleading aloud for the fish's continued cooperation. When I finally got the line back on the reel, I tightened up the tension screw (perhaps a little overzealously) and tried to get the fish back under control, but it suddenly burst downstream. It only ran a few yards before making an abrupt stop followed by a couple of big head shakes. And then, there was no tension. Immediately, I reflected on the absurdness of the past



**THE TREE CANOPY LETS IN JUST ENOUGH LIGHT TO GIVE IT THAT MAGICAL FEEL DESCRIBED IN FAIRY TALES AND OLD-WORLD FOLKLORE**

few moments, both thrilled from the fight and baffled by the outcome. That fish had rested up easy in the current while I fumbled around with my line and by the time I was ready to try and land it, it had recovered and was ready for round two. It beat me fair and square, but what a battle!

After a bit of a cold snap in early February, I was able to cross the river in an area that was previously inaccessible from the higher flows earlier in the winter. I followed a trail upstream and

arrived at a series of logjams which were pooling water, thus protecting access to the bounty below. I went over, through and around massive piles of wood as they blocked access to a promising curve in the river's path. However, about forty minutes into searching for that next piece of prime swing water I finally came to the end of my journey upstream. The water flattened out and further passage would have required some pretty gnarly bushwhacking. Backtracking,

I was left with maybe two or three small pools just past the logjams. I looked around, disappointed in my prospect of finding a new run, and resigned to the hopelessness of swinging a fly through a pool that might barely hold a fish. Across the river, there was a short, but steep clay embankment. Below the clay overhang, there was a tree down causing a slight riffle and a small depression in the riverbed. There was maybe two yards between the tree and the shore across



Moss Covered Forest Yak in the Back

from me, and suddenly a swirl on the surface. *“No way that was a steelhead”*, I thought, as I unhooked the fly from the stripping guide and pulled out enough line to make a cast towards the swirl. It wasn’t a long cast, but I had to get it over the tree without hanging up on it. I managed to put that fly right on top of the still rippling swirl from that stealthy breach. The line went tight and the surface of the water exploded as a 12-pound buck smashed the fly. Luckily it jeered downstream, and away from the tree it was hiding under. There wasn’t really anywhere it could run, given the very small pool and shallow outflow, so after a couple of good pulls and head shakes, I was able to get this fish into the net relatively quickly, despite my switch rod being tested near its limits with a fish of this size and stature. The colour was incredible as it had a proper red band along its side and belly with dark green colouring and spotting along its face and back. I quickly measured its weight while it was cradled in the net and took the obligatory grip n’ grin

with my camera propped up on a rock in the tail-out of the pool. It took little effort to revive and release this fish, as he darted back towards the tree as soon as he felt my grip loosen. I couldn’t help but figure that he’d been through this before, which made catching him even more special, as I had just about given up hope moments ago. What are the chances he would give up his position at the same time I merely glanced towards the water above him? What incredible fortune!

### Lessons Learned

I was incredibly fortunate to spend the winter on Haida Gwaii, and even luckier to get to fish the Yakoun River during the winter steelhead migration. I do not have a lot of experience with steelhead to begin with, so this was an incredible opportunity to improve my skills in reading water, and to get to know the feel of the fly, and how it swims in different types of runs, pools and tail-outs. I also carefully considered how I handled fish in this system, given the wide range of temperatures and flows. The small size and variety of water was

certainly suitable for fishing a swung fly, but other methods could have been productive as well. I stuck to my guns though, and really put in the effort to improve my swinging technique. It paid off more than I could have hoped for and made for some extremely satisfying days on the river. Every cast and every run, riffle, pool and boulder brought another great opportunity to do battle with a quality steelhead. Patience and hope were rewarded more than careful planning and consideration, although the rituals of preparing for a day on the water were, in and of themselves, worthwhile pursuits. The satisfaction of swinging a fly for steelhead on the Yakoun will no doubt get me through those awful days until the fall steelheads return on the Skeena system inland. I will take these reflections and learnings and apply them to the upcoming steelhead season with gratitude and humility. And I will be back one day, to apply what I learned, and adapt to whatever conditions the Yakoun can throw at me, should I be so lucky.

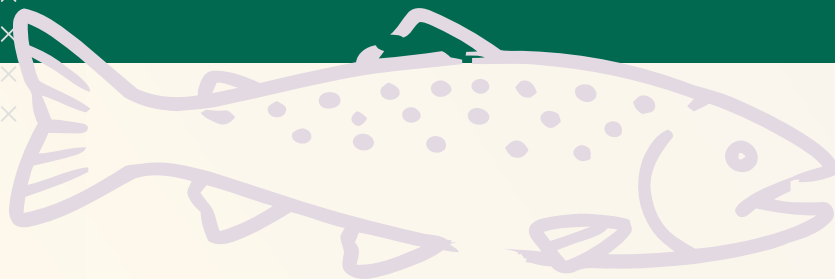
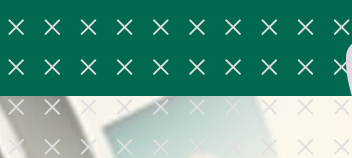
# Red-Dressed Scandi Hair-Wing Stinger

1. Attach the wire to the hook by running the looped wire through the shank eye, and doubling back along the underside of the shank, leaving a tailing loop a few millimeters longer than the hook. I wrap the thread along the entire length of the shank both over and under to secure the wire tightly.
2. Fold a few strands of Krystal Flash over itself and attach to the back end of the shank. The flash should extend to the end of the wire loop.
3. Tie in the tip of a schlappen feather along the near side of the shank, and secure the flat braid along the shank's underside.
4. Wrap the flat braid until a few millimeters from the shank's eye, and then palmer the hackle with three or four wraps towards the eye, covering the flat braid at the eye with one more wrap.
5. Repeat the Krystal Flash folds on the top side of the shank, this time extending to approximately where the hook's bend will be when attached to the wire.
6. Cut and brush out a small clump of fox hair, and attach above the Krystal Flash. It should extend up and along the top of the shank to the hook's bend.
7. Tie in two strands of Flashabou, high and slightly towards each side, extending just past the wing underneath.
8. Tie in a few wraps of the guinea as a collar.
9. Complete a small, neat head with the thread, and then add a coat of UV head cement.

## Red-Dressed Scandi Hair-Wing Stinger

<b>Hook:</b>	Owner No Escape barbless #4
<b>Thread:</b>	Red Uni 140D
<b>Tail:</b>	Red Krystal Flash
<b>Body:</b>	Red flat braid
<b>Shank:</b>	Waddington 1.5mm
<b>Stinger Loop:</b>	Black AFW Surfion Micro Ultra 1x19
<b>Hackle:</b>	Red schlappen
<b>Under-wing:</b>	Red Krystal Flash
<b>Over-wing:</b>	Red fox hair
<b>Flash:</b>	Red Flashabou
<b>Collar:</b>	Red guinea fowl





” Wild steelhead are one of Nature's wonders. My pursuit of wild fish has taken me to many rivers in some of British Columbia's most scenic and wilderness settings and my life has been so much more enriched by wild steelhead.”

**Art Lingren,**  
Author, Conservationist

“Wild steelhead connects you to something primal and wild in an increasingly tame world. If you've ever fished, hiked a stream, or simply valued knowing untamed places still exist, wild steelhead embody that. Their disappearance means your rivers are broken.

Maybe you'll never catch one, but knowing a fish can journey 10,000 miles from your local creek to the ocean and back gives your home landscape epic scale. When the last wild steelhead vanishes from a river, you lose a neighbor that's been there for millennia, and a piece of what makes your place worth calling home.”

**Brian Bennett,**  
Wild Steelhead Coalition

“What fish represents the best of the best of British Columbia's broad array of fish species? Which one is the consummate example of diversity and resiliency? Which one lives in the most scenic rivers bisecting valleys bounded by spectacular, majestic mountains? Which one commands such respect that it attracts anglers from the four corners of planet earth to apply the most ineffective gear ever in pursuit of a fish they only seek to touch and send home? Which one is the ultimate barometer of our collective ability to protect and sustain natural environments? Wild steelhead perfectly exemplify all of the above. Their future is what matters.”

**R.S. (Bob) Hooton,**  
Author, Retired  
Fisheries Biologist

“Wild steelheads are shaped by their environment, through natural selection, until they fit perfectly within it. All the diversity of body size, run timing, and behaviours among wild steelhead are their genetic and physiological responses to Mother Nature's directives. As a steelhead angler, I cherish this diversity. It is deeply satisfying to me each time I learn more about the fish and about how and where they may be fished for. As a biologist, I also understand that this diversity is essential to the long-term survival of steelhead populations. A bright future for steelhead angling, therefore, depends on our respect for wild steelhead and the wild places that support them and drive their uniqueness.”

**John Hagen,**  
Independent Fisheries  
Biologist, Steelhead Bum

CONSERVATION

# WHY WILD STEELHEAD MATTER TO ME?





“Steelheads are more than fish; they are a symbol of resilience and connection. These fish tie me to the rivers, my family, and a way of life rooted in respect for nature. Every cast reminds me of the balance between conservation and tradition. For my family, steelhead represents a legacy passed down through generations, a bond with wild rivers and shared values. Advocating for the protections of steelhead means safeguarding not only an iconic species but the traditions that unite families and communities. Every effort I make ensures future generations can experience the same wonder and responsibility we cherish today.”

**Jessie Grice,**  
BCFFF Director, SFAC Rep  
Skeena-Smithers

“Wild steelhead matter to me because they are simply more than a fish; they’re threads in the tapestry of the Pacific North West, symbols of wild resilience and guardians of healthy rivers. They remind me that the world is still wild, still sacred, and still worth fiercely protecting. They are the heartbeat of living water and a keystone fish species, so in the places where wild steelhead thrive, so do our watersheds and land.”

**Kate Watson,**  
Educator, Guide,  
Conservationist

“Wild steelhead once mattered greatly to me because I spent so much time trying to catch them, but old age and infirmity have reduced those adventures to memories. Nevertheless, wild steelhead DO still matter to me, because I believe their magnificent presence and inspiring life history make them a vital, irreplaceable part of our Northwest way of life.

Therefore, if you call yourself a Northwesterner, you *have* to love wild steelhead.

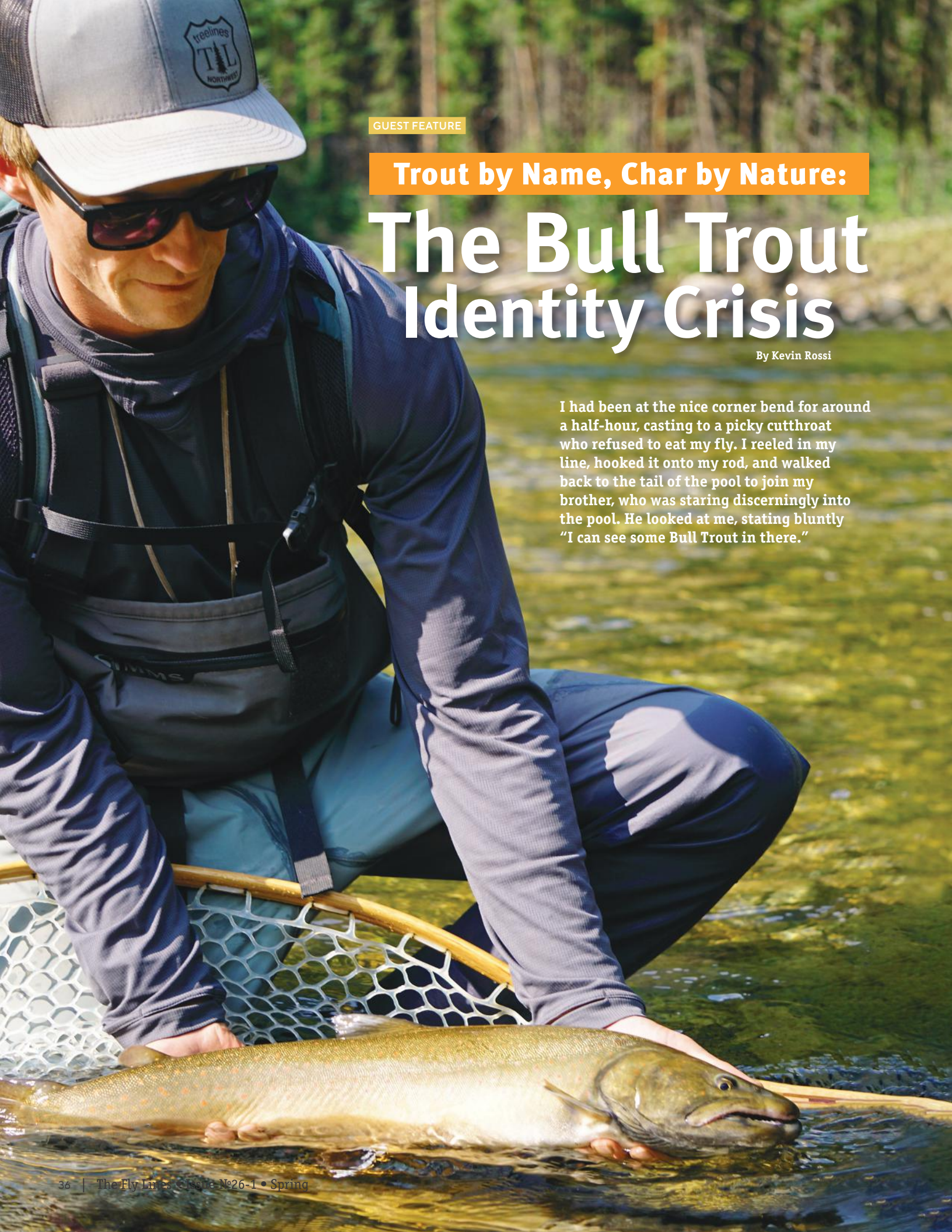
And if you’re fortunate enough to catch one, just pause briefly to admire it, then release it very carefully!”

**Steve Raymond,**  
Author, Northwesterner,  
Conservationist

“To me, wild steelhead embodies all that is splendid in B.C.’s natural history. What these fish lack in numbers they excel in diversity and sheer tenacity. They have evolved in the face of myriad conditions, both saltwater and freshwater, each population finely honed to secure its survival and pass on its genes. Steelhead have perhaps the most diverse life histories of all Pacific salmonids, and we are unlikely ever to replicate this complexity through technology. My hope is that wild steelhead go beyond the holy grail they represent for many an angler and are recognized as a majestic component of the province’s biodiversity legacy.”

**Sue Pollard,**  
Senior Biologist, Freshwater  
Fisheries of BC





GUEST FEATURE

Trout by Name, Char by Nature:

# The Bull Trout Identity Crisis

By Kevin Rossi

I had been at the nice corner bend for around a half-hour, casting to a picky cutthroat who refused to eat my fly. I reeled in my line, hooked it onto my rod, and walked back to the tail of the pool to join my brother, who was staring discerningly into the pool. He looked at me, stating bluntly "I can see some Bull Trout in there."

# “if you know, you know”

I perked up and began pondering the pool, at the same time saying “You know, I prefer the name Mountain Char.” My brother chuckled “Mountain Char, eh... Don’t most people just call them Dolly Varden?” So began a conversation familiar to many anglers – why do some people call them Dolly Varden and other people call them Bull Trout?

As far as I was concerned, the real question was why no one was calling them by what they really ought to be named, which is char, not trout. I guess most people aren’t concerned with the difference between a trout, and a char. However, I think *not* using the name char is a disservice to this group of fish, and partly responsible for explaining why many anglers have no idea what a char is, yet everyone, including non-anglers, know all

about the over-revered trout.

Regardless of what we were calling them, my brother was right about the char in the pool. In fact, there were far more than one, now that I looked closely. At least

five; hell, maybe ten! I looked at my brother and said “Let’s stick the go-pro in there.” I grabbed the go-pro, stuck the mount as far into the pool as I could, scanning in all directions, then pulled it out. I then carefully examined the footage on the tiny 2” screen.

The tiny screen revealed to me a pool FULL of large, orange-bellied, beautiful char. There were at least 40, tucked neatly into the most subtle, seemingly unremarkable pool. Call em’ what you want, but that much meat in one pool will leave a lasting impression on anyone. And to this day, I’ve never forgotten that spot. And each time I’ve returned since, the char has been there, hiding in plain sight...

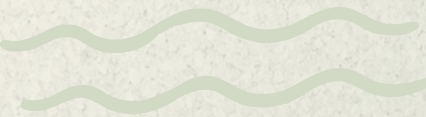
## What’s in a name, anyways?

Years before all this happened, I remember reading a Jim McLennan book, *Trout Streams of Alberta*, in which Jim described the western char species known as the Bull Trout (*Salvelinus Confluentus*). This was the first I had learned about the species. I remember one thing in particular – Jim didn’t like the name, Bull Trout. After reading his arguments, I agreed with him. I’ve thought of it a heck of a lot ever since then,

### Kevin Rossi

Kevin is a 30-year-old fly-fishing fanatic, with over a decade of fly-fishing experience in the wilderness of BC and Alberta. Kevin has been writing about fly-fishing for 10 years and has taught many friends, family, and clients to fly-fish; there is nothing Kevin loves more than sharing his passion for this sport with others. Kevin is a graduate of the Wildlife and Fisheries program at the University of Northern British Columbia and currently works as a fisheries biologist based in Smithers, BC. Kevin’s focus as a writer is to capture the magic of fly-fishing and inspire respect and appreciation for all of nature, while promoting conservation of native fish and wild places. More of Kevin’s work can be found on his website, [www.bushwhackersflyfish.com](http://www.bushwhackersflyfish.com).





and I can tell you nothing has changed my mind since.

For starters, Bull Trout aren't trout at all, rather members of the fish genus known as char, cousins to the Dolly Varden and Arctic Char. Why not adorn them with a name that pays homage to their char ancestry? Or else a name that reflects the grandeur of the environments they live in, rather than an arbitrary comparison to a... Bull? I can think of very few similarities between a sleek, powerful fish and male bovine. Surely, Mountain Char, or Western Mountain Char would be a more fitting, more interesting, and more scientifically accurate name for a fish synonymous with pristine mountain rivers?

For now, that species continues to don the common name, Bull Trout. So then why do so many people call them Dolly Varden, or Dollies?

Some of you might now be saying *"I thought Dolly Varden and Bull Trout WERE the same thing?"* This is technically more accurate than calling a Bull Trout a trout. Until quite recently, Dolly Varden and Bull Trout were considered the same species— it was only 40 or so years ago when DNA and morphological analyses revealed them as two different species.

For this reason, Bull Trout are often referred to incorrectly as Dolly Varden (and why old timers are off the hook for not making this distinction). I will admit that, when it comes to names, Dolly Varden is at least quite memorable. Apparently, they were named after by a character named 'Dolly Varden' from the Charles Dickens's novel, *Barnaby Rudge*, who wore a colorful, patterned outfit. I can understand the ongoing misnomer, given this memorable backstory.

Dolly Varden (actual Dolly Varden, that is) are remarkably similar to Bull Trout, despite diverging from a shared common ancestor around 5 million years ago. Dolly Varden has a distribution in BC that is more northern and primarily coastal (although there are a few exceptions). They tend to have a face that is blunter, a maxilla that does not extend as far past the eye, and for those who need to be certain, fewer branchiostegal rays than Bull Trout.

Bull Trout are the more common char species across most of the province. There is agreement amongst scientists that there are two distinct lineages of Bull trout— interior and coastal— which likely diverged when they became separated



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**SAGE**



**“I THOUGHT DOLLY VARDEN  
AND BULL TROUT WERE THE  
SAME THING?”**

during the most recent ice age. Both lineages persisted through two glaciations and Bull Trout on both sides of the continental divide colonized new habitats as glaciers finally receded, establishing the species widespread distribution seen today, encompassing the majority of BC.

Essentially, when it comes to the two species and where they are found in BC, Bull Trout can be everywhere, Dolly Varden is mostly in coastal drainages and more common as one goes north, and while they do look almost identical, can successfully breed together, and occupy virtually the same niche, they are not the same species. Like most fish ecology, it's complicated.

### **The Same, But Different**

The difference between these two species becomes clearer once they occupy the same streams. When both Bull Trout and Dolly Varden are present together,

Dolly Varden will live a 'stream resident' life-history, maturing at a small body size while feeding on aquatic insects. The Bull Trout, however, will take on a migratory life-history, growing very large on a diet that mostly consists of other fish. In the absence of the other, both may take on either form. Making matters even more confusing is that they may also hybridize and produce offspring that are, put simply, somewhere between the two species. These hybrids essentially got the wrong end of the evolutionary bargain— not as good at being stream residents, not as good at being migratory piscivores. Just ill-adapted hybrids, caught in an evolutionary battleground. However, a few of these hybrids do survive to reproduce, infusing their hybrid genes back into both gene pools. These interactions can lead to interesting hybrid fish in areas where the two species overlap. So technically, it is possible for a fish to be both a Bull Trout and a Dolly Varden.



**THROW SOME RESPECT ON THEIR NAMES— WHICHEVER ONE YOU CHOOSE**

## Migrants on the Move

Now that we know what a Bull Trout is, and what its not (or at least appreciate the finer nuances of the conversation) lets discuss what makes them so interesting, both from an angling and ecological perspective. Much like the Pacific Salmon of the west coast, Bull Trout are migratory and capable of homing over vast distances to their natal stream. Many populations travel hundreds of kilometres to return to the pristine headwaters where they were born and lived as juveniles. This often involves herculean efforts to ascend waterfalls and cascades that no other fish species can pass. These migratory Bull Trout are the ones that most anglers like to target; well, because people like catching big fish. Some migratory Bull Trout live entirely in streams, making migrations between large mainstem habitats and spawning tributaries, whereas others live primarily in lakes, and only migrate and hold

in streams for a short time each year, usually for spawning. In some cases, Bull Trout will take on a stream resident life-history, living their entire lives in a single stream or reach and only achieve a modest size compared to their migratory counterparts.

The largest Bull Trout in the province are associated with large lakes and reservoirs. The ability to live in both lake and stream environments is a key trait that has allowed them to persist in regions of BC where vast and diverse stream networks have been flooded by reservoirs, such as the Koocanusa Reservoir, Arrow Lakes Reservoirs, and the Williston Reservoir. The Bull Trout that live in these bodies of water are likely some of the biggest in the world, offering some truly unique angling opportunities.

## Finding and Catching Large Char

One of the key things to understand about Bull Trout, and likely most migratory salmonids, is that





they are more than a collection of cells in water. They have brains, which means they have motives for being where they are. These motives might not be as straightforward as one might think.

Bull Trout are social creatures and, as migratory populations begin moving into streams in July and August prior to spawning, their motives are often not things like habitat quality or prey availability. Their motives are likely more similar to teenagers at a high school dance. They want to check out their potential dance partners from afar, while simultaneously make every effort they can to catch the attention of those potential dance partners. Bull Trout this time of year are “strutting their stuff,” so to speak. This results in a behaviour known as staging, where Bull Trout

group up in the weeks before spawning, forming large congregations of fish. The locations for these gatherings are not random – they are seemingly passed down from generation to generation.

Finding these aggregations is they key to catching migratory char. The problem many anglers run into is they focus too hard on the habitat, such as deep pools, without realizing the behavior isn't really driven by habitat. Staging areas are not always the deepest pools, or the obvious spots. They are typically quite subtle. If you're exploring a new system for the first time, you may need to cover a whole bunch of good-looking water to find the one or two spots where they are grouped together. As the old adage goes, “if you know, you know.”



**THESE FISH SURVIVED TWO ICE AGES, COLONIZED SOME OF THE MOST INHOSPITABLE LANDSCAPES ON EARTH, AND REGULARLY ASCEND SHEER WATERFALLS, SIMPLY TO EXIST**

This behaviour can also leave Bull Trout vulnerable to exploitation, especially if the staging areas are nearby easily accessed roads. So, with that in mind... if you *do know*, be careful who you tell.

Bull Trout really should not be targeted beyond mid-August, as by this time most adults will soon be spawning. Peak spawning usually occurs around the first week of September (earlier for northern populations) and is finished by mid-September. With this said, it should be acknowledged that within a Bull Trout population, there are sub-adults who are not yet mature, as well as mature fish that may forego spawning. So, just because a Bull Trout is caught in the fall, doesn't mean it was a spawner. But if you see a very large fish in a very

small stream, you can safely assume it will spawn soon, and you should probably leave it alone.

Bull Trout have high survival following spawning, and this post-spawn period can provide excellent fishing, as fish returning to their feeding and overwintering grounds following spawning often have voracious appetites. For this reason, there is typically good fishing for Bull Trout in large mainstem habitats in October and November as fish returning from a number of spawning tributaries all partake in a feeding frenzy in preparation for a long winter.

Early spring can also provide excellent fishing for migratory Bull Trout, particularly in natural lakes which support spawning salmon. Bull Trout that live in the lake or adjacent rivers will often congregate at

A large bull trout is being held in a stream. The fish has a prominent reddish-pink tail and a body with a mix of brown and silver scales. The background shows a shallow stream with many smaller fish, likely minnows or darters, swimming in the water. The water is clear, and the rocks are visible at the bottom.

**MIGRATORY BULL TROUT ARE GEARED  
TOWARDS EATING FISH, SO STREAMER  
PATTERNS THAT IMITATE PREY FISH ARE  
THE KEY TO CATCHING LARGER FISH**



lake outlets in early-spring to gorge on salmon smolts migrating to the ocean. This can lead to excellent Bull Trout fishing at lake outlets using smolt patterns.

### Presenting the Fly

Migratory Bull Trout are geared towards eating fish, so streamer patterns that imitate prey fish are the key to catching larger fish. With that said, there has been a growing movement of anglers targeting bull trout with ultra-large, double articulated monster streamers with gaudy foot-long hunks of rabbit strips. These likely work very well in certain settings (lakes, mainstem habitats with lower visibility, etc.). However, there is a point where bigger, and flashier, isn't better.

I will acknowledge the argument that bigger fish eat bigger fish and therefore if you want to catch the biggest fish, you should use the biggest fly. My counter argument to this point is that Bull Trout have eyes. Very good eyes, in fact. If you use flies that are too big, with too much flashy stuff, there is a higher chance a fish might recognize the disturbance as artificial, whereas a smaller fly with more natural fibers is less likely to arouse suspicion. Plus, who wants to cast a foot long strip of wet rabbit fur that weighs a pound?

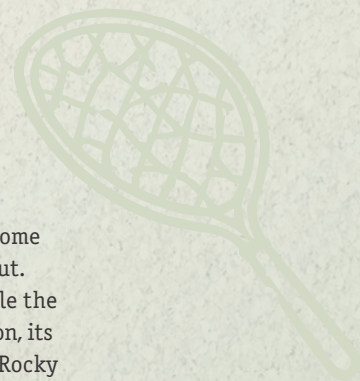
I prefer to keep it simple. A simple bucktail

streamer (or similar) is my go-to fly for Mountain char. Another that works well is an olive double bunny— simply two small strips of rabbit tied onto dumbbell eyes. This fly works well in deeper more turbulent waters. My preference is for natural materials and limited accessories. A streamer 10 cm in length tied on a medium (#2–6) hook is usually more than enough to attract the attention of the largest fish. Of course, maybe my aversion towards casting grossly oversized flies has prevented me from truly catching the largest fish. I'll never know.

### Strippers and Swingers

When it comes to char fishing, there are strippers, and there are swingers. Both methods are effective, and stripping can often be necessary in deeper and slower water, whereas a true swing might work best in large mainstem habitats. The best method, in my opinion, is to set a gentle downstream swing angle, and make, small, twitchy strips as the fly swings through the meat of the pool. The resulting line tension will help you set the hook, while the strips will help get the fishes attention and induce a strike. Using a sink tip to help get your fly to an appropriate depth will help you catch fish, especially as the summer progresses and





Bull Trout become less focused on feeding. If you are moving a fish, but can't get em' to bite, try different patterns of stripping with different amounts of pause. If a fish has touched your hook and won't return, try changing your fly to a different style or color. Or, better yet, try taking a nap – this rarely fails.

When targeting Bull Trout, use stout tackle – a 6- to 8-weight rod, strong leaders, and heavy tippet. These fish fight hard and often lurk near snags, so be ready for a battle. This will also help reduce fight time and ensure the fish can swim away happy, with no jewellery.

### British Columbia's Bull Trout Hotspots

BC's landscape contains hundreds of rivers and lakes harbouring healthy populations of migratory Bull Trout and Dolly Varden. However, finding these fish requires research and a willingness to explore off the beaten path. Here are some iconic destinations that offer anglers the best shot at catching a trophy Bull Trout:

- **Kootenay River/Koocanusa Reservoir:** The Kootenay River/Koocanusa reservoir and its tributaries are legendary for Bull Trout. These rivers weave through mountain valleys and offer classic streamer fishing in breathtaking surroundings. The Kootenay River, in particular, is known for excellent Bull Trout fishing in the late fall.
- **Columbia River/Arrow Lakes Reservoirs:** The mighty Columbia and its tributaries, particularly in the Arrow Lakes region which

has been impounded by dams, holds some impressive lake dwelling and Bull Trout.

- **Upper Fraser River tributaries:** While the Fraser itself is better known for salmon, its colder tributaries in the Cariboo and Rocky Mountains offer excellent Bull Trout fishing for large river-migratory Bull Trout.
- **Upper Peace River/Williston Reservoir:** Northeastern BC is home to some of the most pristine Bull Trout habitat in the province. Bull Trout that inhabit BC's largest body of water, the Williston Reservoir, can reach epic proportions.

### A Final Word, for Chars Sake

I want to make it clear that pretty well everything I've stated in this article about Bull Trout, from a fishing perspective, also applies to Dolly Varden. But they are DEFINITELY not the same thing. Perhaps adopting a new name, Mountain Char, will help you prevent further confusion.

I hope you learned a thing or two about this species (or the two species) and are excited to catch a char next time you hit the water. But do not forget: these fish survived two ice ages, colonized some of the most inhospitable landscapes on earth, and regularly ascend sheer waterfalls, simply to exist. Throw some respect on their names– whichever one you choose.

### Bull Trout Conservation

Bull Trout, despite being widespread in the province, are susceptible to human impacts, including industrial development, angling exploitation, and habitat fragmentation. The sensitivity of the species means every angler targeting Bull Trout must be a steward for their health and longevity. Here are some ways you can help protect this remarkable species:



#### 1 Practice Ethical Catch-and-Release:

Use barbless hooks, handle fish gently, keep them in the water, and release them quickly. Know when to put the rod away. Avoid fishing during spawning times or when water temperatures rise above 15 °C.



#### 2 Support Habitat Protection:

Get involved with local conservation groups, donate to habitat restoration projects, and advocate for strong environmental regulations at provincial and federal levels.



#### 3 Respect Regulations:

Follow all regional regulations and check the regulations for the specific body of water you intend to fish.



#### 4 Spread the Word:

Share your knowledge and passion for the species. Teach new anglers about the importance of stewardship, and celebrate Bull Trout not just as a sportfish, but as a symbol of pristine wilderness.



# Bankside in June

Poem by Myles Armstead

*Y*ellow breasted chats busy themselves in shaded brush  
Osprey spy through glass for  
River trout  
Who longingly look up at a grey day sky  
River washed jewels

That wait

Then sip

May flies

In amorous ecstasy orgy above  
Bull-bat acrobatics, greet the night  
Sipping supple sedges silhouetted  
Under moon light  
Till dawn colours the canyon walls  
While painted ponies sip stream side  
Before sweet grass and shaded sleep

Sun struck silver dollars  
Strands of silk  
Arms reach out  
And share its frothy milk



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