

pense que vous l'êtes aussi.

Il y a en France plusieurs fous
américains : Chino (n°1), Beall,
Jack Hemingway, qui s'occupent
aussi de monter tous les charmes
de ses deux filles entre deux parties
de pêche. Malheureusement la pêche
n'est pas bonne en France. Les pêcheurs
sont 3 fois trop nombreux. George
Beall a de la chance, il vit dans la
région la plus intéressante. J'ai
aussi la chance de vivre près d'une
des plus belles rivières d'Europe, la Loire,
et de la pêcher plusieurs fois par semaine.
J'ai 49 ans, marié, une fille de 24 ans.
Je suis médecin (pédiatre).

J'écris des livres comme sport intellectuel.
Mais mon plus grand plaisir après la pêche,
c'est la fabrication des canots en bambou.

Toutes mes amitiés

J

Besençon, le 5 mai 84

Cher M^r Proper,

Excusez moi, je suis un peu
écrivain, mais je n'ai jamais effié
à taper à la machine à écrire.

J'allais vous écrire, sur les conseils
de notre ami G. Beall, quand j'ai reçu
votre lettre.

Je connais un peu la littérature
américaine. J'ai lu Schwiebert,
Wulff, Morinero, Kreh, Bergman,
McClene, Thomson, Coombs, Thornton
Hewitt. J'ai aimé surtout 2 livres:

- Steelhead Paradise de Fenelly.
 - Angling for Atlantic Salmon, de
Woods.
- Ces livres sont merveilleux.

Mon livre de chevet est "A Master Guide to building a bamboo fly rod", et j'ai construit moi-même des cannes pour moi et quelques amis.

Je me réjouis de recevoir votre livre. Je vous dirai ce que j'en pense avec franchise.

Je suis actuellement occupé à corriger les épreuves du Répertoire des Mouches Artificielles Françaises, 2^{ème} édition. La 1^{ère} édition datait de 1975. Je vous en enverrai un exemplaire dès sa parution.

J'ai aussi écrit en 1981 un livre consacré à une seule rivière, "Le Loue". Cette rivière n'a, je crois, jamais été pêchée par aucun Américain. J'en ai une traduction en Américain faite par un ami, Robert Chino, qui est général américain de réserve, marié

à une française et vivant en France sur la côte d'Azur. Si cela vous intéresse je vous ferais lire cette traduction. J'ai très envie d'en tirer à mes frais 300 exemplaires et je me demande si j'arriverais à en vendre 100 aux U.S., et comment? L'édition française est de 1000 ex. et coûte environ 30 dollars.

J'ai toujours désiré aller pêcher aux U.S. dans le Montana: Yellow Stone, Silver Creek, Henrys Fork etc... Mais j'aime aussi la pêche au saumon et je n'ai jamais eu d'argent pour consacrer au poisson d'argent. Cette année, mon projet est la rivière Karluk en octobre (brrr...!) pour la Steelhead. (Alaska).

Comme vous voyez, je suis fou. Je

J. P. PEQUEGNOT

19 rue de la CASSOTTE

F. 25000 BESANCON

le 19.6.84

cher monsieur Proper,

J'ai reçu votre livre et j'en ai lu la plus grande partie. Je me suis rendu compte que nous avons beaucoup de préoccupations communes, et la même façon d'aborder le problème de la mouche. Je pense que c'est la façon la plus féconde, mais il est inévitable qu'elle déplaie à certains esprits, comme la critique de *Itly Fisherman Magazine*, qui n'a rien compris.

Je vous envoie la nouvelle édition (2^e em) de mon *Répertoire des Mouches Artificielles Françaises*. Vous verrez l'importance que tous les monteurs français donnent au design et l'importance que personnellement j'attribue à l'élimination des phénomènes de capillarité dus au bas de ligne à proximité immédiate de la mouche. Je vous demande de lire attentivement le chapitre "mouches esquissées" (fore and aft) et de bien considérer le dessin du "petit pont" (little bridge).

Mon ami Robert Chino, américain (général de réserve) qui vit en France près de Nice est en train de traduire ce livre en Américain. Dès que son travail sera terminé, je vous enverrai une copie de la traduction. Je chercherais un éditeur américain mais sans grand espoir. Si je n'en trouve pas, je ferais le livre en américain ici, en France, à mes frais.

La version française que vous recevrez est une auto-édition. Je fais tout: j'écris, j'imprime, j'édite, et je vends. Tout cela, bien entendu à titre de passe-temps, mais je n'ai encore jamais perdu d'argent. C'est pas gagné beaucoup non plus! J'aimerais que quelques américains connaissent mes livres.

En Octobre, j'irai en Alaska pour essayer de prendre une steelhead dans le Kasiluk. Je suis curieux de faire connaissance avec ce poisson.

Je ferais aussi volontiers un voyage en Amérique pour le Henry's Fork, Yellowstone et... dans une année à venir.

Je suis aussi un amateur de livres américains en référence. Je possède 1 Payne 2 Young 1 Bedford 1 Cornicelli-Garrison, 1 Leonard circa 1910.

Excuse me, I do not know type writing.

Sincerely yours



1914 N. Johnson St.
Arlington, Va. 22207
Sept. 22, 1984

Dear Dr. Peregoud,

Many thanks for your Repertoire. It arrived just before my trip to Montana, and I took it along with me. I have just returned and apologize for not writing sooner.

Some of the flies, including certain of your own, impress me as extremely original and useful. As you are aware, there are no flies like them in the English-speaking world. I would gather from your book that French anglers, taken as a whole, have shown more interest in design factors and less in flies that are strictly imitative in the traditional sense.

I share your concern with the names (or worse yet numbers) given to some of the French flies. They might attract more interest if they had descriptive names. "Fore-&-Aft", for example, describes a fly with accuracy and economy, whereas "Mouche Exquise" describes a state of mind -- though a pleasant one. Nevertheless, I applaud your practice of searching for origins and using the name assigned by the originator, when he can be found.

Obviously I have not yet been able to digest the entire book and put it to work. It takes a long time to give flies an accurate test. So far, however, these four especially interest me:

1) The Assassine worked well for me on a small Montana stream with medium-fast water and moderately difficult trout. The soft partridge hackle seemed to allow fish to be hooked firmly, perhaps because it collapses. Americans have not paid enough attention to this feature, and a number of our flies do not hook fish well.

2) The Gloire de Goumois seems brilliant, but I have not used it much yet.

3) The Cul de Canard is one that I have been experimenting with for a couple of years. Sometimes it works very well, but I have not really figured out when to use it.

4) Your version of the Exquise/Fore-&-Aft has been more highly developed than mine. I used it with some success on my difficult spring creek. I'm especially interested in your idea of holding the tip of the leader above water. In the very small models I used, however, I was not able to achieve this reliably. Perhaps I should try a bigger size. This excellent fly has been neglected here.

With your permission, I will cite your book and some of your flies in the column I write for Fly-Tyer magazine. Will send you the result. Don't know whether the publicity will do you any real good: my guess is that Americans will not pay enough attention to books that are not in English. At a minimum, though, I'd like to extend the credit your ideas deserve.

Thanks again, and best wishes.

Yours,
Datus

le 28.9.84.

Dear M' Proper,

Je reçois votre lettre et je suis heureux que mon Répertoire des Mouches Françaises vous ait intéressé.

Not because they are fancy but good designs

Je ne suis pas surpris que ce soit les mouches "alstroës" qui vous ont intrigué.

Les meilleures tailles pour les Mouches Exprimées sont 14 et 16. Si on respecte bien les directives de montage le "petit pont" est résolu à tout coup.

Le "Cul de Cendré" sert à prendre les poissons très

difficiles, par exemple ceux des parcours No Kill!

Je suis heureux que vous me citiez dans les colonnes de Fly Ties Magazine. Je ne suis cependant pas un grand monteur, comme il y en a eu en Europe et en Amérique. Je ne suis pas très potant, ni très adroit pour faire des mouches sophistiquées, et c'est pourquoi mes mouches sont simples!

like this

Maintenant, je fais des mouches pour l'Alaska. En outre, je vous fais quelques exemples de mes mouches et je vous enverrai aussi des exemples de mouches françaises plus élaborées.

3 shapes as in previous

action

La traduction du Répertoire par R. Chino est terminée. Désirez-vous que je vous communique une copie? Si oui, répondez-moi au plus tôt et je vous l'envoie. Je lis votre livre mais j'ai souvent des difficultés

pour comprendre certains phrases. La langue est
moins simple que celle de mes deux livres de
chevet qui sont Steelhead Paradise de Fenelly, et
Angling for Atlantic Salmon de Woods. Mais
je ne désespère pas de faire des progrès!

Un groupe de Français est revenu d'Alaska
pour la pêche de l'Inconnu (Sheefish). Ils ont
trouvé ces fameux poissons et en ont pris... plus
de 100! jusqu'à 40 lb.

Dans l'espoir de vous lire, recevez mes sentiments
très cordiaux

Pequegnot

le 12. 5. 86

Cher Ami,

J'ai reçu de Robert A. Chino un catalogue de N. Lyons avec mon livre annoncé pour janvier. C'est une confirmation agréable.

La saison a été très mouillée en France jusqu'à présent. Les rivières ont été la plupart du temps impétables. Mais maintenant il y a des moules de mai. J'ai pris dans la Loire plusieurs poissons de $1\frac{1}{2}$ à $2\frac{1}{4}$ lbs.

En ce qui concerne les heckles et leur âge, je ne suis pas tout à fait d'accord avec vous. Plus le heckle est ancien, plus les grosses animaux

qui l'impregnent sont rancies et
desséchées. Les fils deviennent courts.
La tige centrale casse au fin de montage
ce qui est une petite catastrophe.

J'utilise à la fois des hackles oméniens
et des français. Les hackles oméniens
(Metz, etc...) sont longs, solides, rigides.

Les hackles français de caps de pêche
ont une tige et des fils plus fines
et on y trouve de l'iron blue très foncé
qui manquent aux génétiques hackles.
ces derniers sont dans l'ensemble trop
clairs. Je n'ai pas pu en trouver encore
d'assez foncés.

Mais tout ceci n'est que détails.

Je vous signale la mort récente
d'Armi Devaux, un monteur très réputé
en France pour ses montages en perche
inversé :



Bien cordialement

JM

123 Route de St Pee
64600 Anglet
France

22/3/86

Dear Datus,

I had a request recently from a fellow member of the Anglers' Club, for information on trout fishing in Portugal. As I know very little about Portugal, never having been there, I suggested that he - Ian Mackay - get in touch with you.

I hope you won't mind.

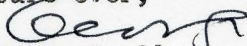
Just back from New Zealand, where I had a great season, best ever weatherwise, and one of the best for fishing. I was with Don Barrer and a friend of his, Bob Berls, at the end of my stay. Alas for them, the weather soured at that point and I haven't yet heard how they made out.

Now have a photo copy of Basurto's Dialogo, but it's rather fuzzy and had to decipher. I also have a report of the presence of XO. rhenana in the upper Aragon. If this is confirmed, it would be the first sighting of this magnificent may fly in Spain.

Did I tell that I found out from Petersen's book on Bergara the meaning of "pita ciega"? A localism for "nightjar", "nighthawk".

I am hoping to get to Montana in late summer or early autumn this year and do look forward to meeting you.

Yours ever,


George Beall

1914 N. Johnson St.
Arlington, VA 22207

26 Feb, 1986

Dear Dr. Pequegnot,

Thanks very much for your letter with the hackles, the Devaux flies, and the Bresson fly. I have delayed answering till I could get around to some fly-tying.

I like the Guy Plas hackles. They resemble, in physical characteristics, two old Chinese necks I had -- one grizzly and one red. It seemed to me that flies made from those hackles would catch fish when nothing else would, and I often used one red and one grizzly hackle together. The effect was much like that of a rusty dun. I thought, though, that the main point was not the color but the behavior of the hackles. They curved gently backwards, rather than standing out stiffly, and they gave a sparse, filmy effect. One day I plan to write about this, and I am delighted to find that similar hackles are highly prized in France.

I mention my old hackles because I have not, of course, had a chance to fish with the French hackles yet. But they give the same effect.

I have not measured the hackle barbs yet but would guess that they are much thinner than the Metz-type hackles. The stalk also seems much thinner. I would have guessed that the suppleness of the barbs resulted from the fine diameter. You say, however, that it is important to get fresh hackles from a living bird of one year or more. Have you actually kept hackles for a period of years and compared the old with the new? I ask because I have used very old hackles and found them still apparently as good as new. Frank Elder also kept hackles from young and old birds and found no difference. (You should have his book if you do not already.) Perhaps Elder and I were not looking for the same qualities. I'd be interested in your findings. There seems to be some mythology in the hackle business everywhere. If the cells in hackles are already dead, how could they know whether or not they come from a living bird?

I also find Bresson's Peute to be fairly attractive, oddly enough -- rustic but sober. And I was interested in Devaux's way of forcing the duck hackle forward.

I have Jacobsen's book on the document of Astorga, but found it incomplete -- missing a few of the vital words, like longareta. I'll keep an eye open for his books on fly dressing.

Since discovering the duck oil-gland hackles, I have been experimenting (inconclusively) with those of the pheasant and some other birds. They look interesting. Perhaps someone in France has already tried them.

Yours,

Datus P.

it will probably be only mildly interesting. Hence the appeal of the book is somewhat limited. If you don't have occasion to restore an old cane rod, the chapter "New Life for Old Bamboo" will prove less than riveting.

Such limitations, however, can be construed as a weakness in design only if the book itself is regarded as "cover-to-cover" reading. Considered instead as reference material, the very specific "how-to" articles constitute the book's great virtue; I can think of few anglers who would not have occasion to consult portions of this book during the course of a season or two.

It would be interesting to see some enterprising editor or publisher follow Engerbretson's lead here and assemble a more comprehensive fly fishing reference book. Such a "technical encyclopedia" might contain information about procedures that most anglers perform occasionally, but not often enough to become thoroughly familiar with the details: resoling waders, for instance; or splicing fly lines; dyeing fly tying materials; tying certain specialized knots; and so on. A book of this type would extend what Engerbretson has begun: a convenient, accessible collection of the kind of practical information that fly fishermen use.

In this respect, *Tight Lines, Bright Water* is an unusual book. Though it sometimes entertains, its primary purposes are to inform and instruct, and the book does so with skill, clarity, and precision.

Ted Leeson
Corvallis, Oregon

FRENCH FISHING FLIES

By Jean-Paul Pequegnot
Published by Nick Lyons Books,
31 West 21st Street,
New York, New York 10010
Hardbound, \$18.95

French Fishing Flies is a translation (by Robert A. Chino) of Dr. Jean-Paul Pequegnot's 1984 book *Repertoire des mouches artificielles francaises*. The introduction to the English version is by Datus Proper.

To some, *French Fishing Flies* may be a disappointment since it is not a detailed list of fly patterns nor is it a how-to book filled with fly tying methods. For example, under Bonnenfant, Pequegnot writes:

"The famous salmon fisher, Lucien Bonnenfant, used flies in which the general structure was like British models, but whose wings were partially or totally replaced by a pinch of badger hair.

"Badger, donkey, or mule hair has been popular for a long time along the banks of the Allier, where Bonnenfant carried out most of his exploits. Today the British use tube flies for salmon fishing, plastic tubes furnished with a cone of hair and armed with triple hooks. While I must deplore, in passing, the use of such inelegant things as treble hooks for fly fishing, I admit that, in general, fur has a greater attraction for salmon than feathers. This is no reason for regret because flies can be quite as handsome when made with fur as with feathers. This superiority of hair is not limited to salmon. It seems to me that it is equally good with nymphs and wet flies for trout."

This I consider to be too brief a treatment of the subject. For me it raised many questions. As far as I can recall it's the first reference I've run across to the use of donkey or mule hair for salmon flies. What do the flies look like? How sparsely or heavily dressed are mule wings? How long are donkey wings? How are these materials used in nymphs? Where can I buy some? Yet I doubt if I would have found *French Fishing Flies* as interesting or stimulating as I did if it had followed the usual format of fly tying or fly pattern books. Such books are but reference books, books to be consulted as one consults a dictionary.

Datus Proper explains the major contribution *French Fishing Flies* makes to the literature of fly fishing when he writes in the introduction:

"For most of us, the important thing about this book is not that it is French but that it is one of the few works of any nationality on the design of trout flies. The author did not simply collect French fly patterns. If he had, he would have produced an interesting curiosity, but he would not have sent many Americans to their fly-tying vises. The best patterns evolve around local insects, and when transplanted to another environment, the patterns are often abandoned or modified—as happened with the Blue-Winged Olive, of which nothing is left (in America) except the name. *Good design, on the other hand, is universal*. That is as true of trout flies as of aircraft, furniture, and your wife's blue jeans. And design is why this book has as much to do with the Henry's Fork as with the Risle.

• By 'design,' I mean that Dr. Pequegnot explains each fly's structure and how it affects behavior on the water. (I never understood how the peculiar architecture of the Mole Fly was supposed to work until I read his description of the *Pont-Audemere*, a derivative dressing.)

• He appraises other fly-tiers' contributions as fairly as his own. (This gives us a wide range of alternatives from which to choose.)

• He discusses the advantages and disadvantages of each structural change, without excessive reverence for the mythology of

the matter. (By this kind of analysis, he has developed the old Fore-&-Aft Fly more highly than anyone else.)

• He uses color as an element in design, but rarely as the leading element. (The male and female Panama are color variations, and you should not miss the author's comment on 'fishermen *seriously* comparing the relative merits of the two sexes.')

• Most of his favorite flies share an elegant simplicity. (Check the sedges.)

• Of pretense there is none. (It is unlikely that old Simonet was trying to prove anything when tying the featured *Grise a Corps Jaune*, but he made a dry fly with one hook, one feather, and one piece of thread. I hope someone thought to carve that on his tombstone.)

"Finally, Dr. Pequegnot's materials are few and natural, so that you can reproduce most of his favorite flies anywhere, any time, even if you are reading this in 2187. All this adds up to good flies—not just French flies."

French Fishing Flies is also an historical document which makes a significant contribution to the recorded history of our sport. A great many French fly dressers (before now unrecognized by English language books on fly fishing) are named along with the flies they developed to meet their needs and suit the rivers and streams they fished. Collectors of flies who read this book will have new worlds to explore, new fly dressers to locate and contact in the hope of obtaining examples of their work.

American fly dressers who have grown smug about the quality of hackle now being produced in this country may be surprised to know that the French also produce superb hackle. On this subject Dr. Pequegnot offers the following:

"Let us stop for a moment to consider hackle. An unlimited passion for really top quality hackle is a characteristic of French fly fishers. This obsession is very highly developed in the Limousin region where many fly fishermen of the countryside have one or more 'fishing cocks,' precious animals that furnish the rare natural gray hackle (blue dun), and that are never killed. For a French amateur, the idea of sacrificing a good cock in order to harvest the hackle is inconceivable. This would be like killing a bird that produces feathers of gold. Some of the animals cost a veritable fortune. And the cost of their freshly plucked hackle makes the price of an entire American cape, at sixty-five dollars, seem very cheap indeed. Between French fly fishermen, there is no gift more appreciated than a few really exceptional hackles."

And:

"This fly is one of the *Ondines* (Water Sprites), a series of 122 original patterns created by Guy Plas. An important quality of these flies is that their hackles come from

the Limousin fishing cocks that Guy Plas breeds and raises with such extraordinary care. This hackle, which is very expensive, has probably never been equaled anywhere else—and I say this with full knowledge of the superb quality of top American necks. A visit to the farm of Guy Plas would be interesting for any fly tier. Each of the selected cocks is treated like a king and each has his private domain. He is allowed to live out his regal life paying only a tribute of some hackle twice a year. No leses majeste here.”

Does anyone out there have the address for Guy Plas?

Dr. Pequegnot's *French Fishing Flies* is a small book (125 pages) which can easily be read from cover to cover in a single evening, a book which I found difficult to put down. After I had finished the book I was disappointed that there was not more. Now I find myself dreaming of how I can utilize some of the ideas and concepts introduced by Dr. Pequegnot in my own steelhead flies. How can I mix soft and stiff hackle? How can I use ostrich in streamers? Can I catch a steelhead on the *Soufflacul*? What about the Spanish style of winging? Will steelhead respond to a sedge cone?

Alec Jackson
Kenmore, Washington

THE METZ BOOK OF HACKLE

By Eric Leiser, Nick Lyons Books
31 West 21 Street, New York, NY 10010
1987, paperback, \$12.95, 117 pages

The Metz Book of Hackle is a practical book for beginning and intermediate fly tyers focusing on the fishing qualities and tying characteristics of hackle. Leiser will get little or no argument about his assertion that hackle, particularly rooster hackle used to tie well-floating imitative dry flies, is the key component in fly construction. As he puts it: “Fly tyers, like pack rats, collect anything and everything that might possibly be used to construct a fly. There is one item, however, that brings out the worst in the best of them and that is that ultimate prize—a rooster-hackle cape harboring feathers of the most elusive shades, the stiffest of fibers, and a full range of related hook sizes.”

In some ways Leiser's book is an American counterpart to Frank Elder's *The Book of the Hackle* (Edinburgh, 1974), although *The Metz Book of Hackle* is more of a practical fly tier's book than the informative British study. Many fly tyers will know Leiser from his *The Complete Book of Fly Tying* (1977) and his extremely useful *Fly Tying Materials: Their Procurement, Use, and Protection* (1973). *The Metz Book of*

Hackle is, in many respects, an extension of the latter book.

The Metz in the title of Leiser's book is, of course, Buck Metz, who is the source of Leiser's technical advice on hackle. As one of the first and one of the dominant mass producers of genetically-engineered domestic necks, the Metz operation is a logical choice on which to base a relatively short book on the hackle currently available to the fly tyer. Although Leiser does mention in passing Hoffman, Hebert, and CQH hackle, there is no attempt in this book to compare the competing brands of genetic hackle in terms of their fishing qualities and tying characteristics. (For an example of a start at comparing brands of hackle, see Ted Leeson's “A Breed Apart: Genetic Hackle—A Comparative Look” in the March 1987 *Rod & Reel*. Leiser does offer a very useful discussion of the qualities, uses, and limitations of non-genetic imports, differentiating among Indian, Chinese, and Philippine necks. His interest here and throughout is in helping the tyer stretch his hackle dollar and his hackle supply.

The first three chapters of *The Metz Book of Hackle* seem to be aimed at the relatively new fly tyer. Leiser presents a brief technical description of the structure of a hackle feather, the range of hackle colors and their relation to fly patterns, and advice on judging the quality of capes. Most of this material is similar to what is found in good fly tying books. Except for the unexplained significance of four micro-photographs of hackle stems—a flirtation with getting more technical than is necessary perhaps—Leiser's advice is well-informed, clear, and always oriented toward some practical aspect of tying flies for particular purposes. Leiser reprints Buck Metz's method of judging the quality of a cape, especially interesting in that Metz and his wife Sandy personally grade the necks the fly tyer buys from Metz. Leiser also offers a brief chapter on “Storage and Protection of Hackle,” a useful re-emphasis on his advice about protecting fly tying materials from insects and vermin in *Fly Tying Materials*.

The heart of *The Metz Book of Hackle* is the book's longest chapter, the title of which—“Getting the Most Out of Your Hackle”—is the point of Leiser's book. How much of what Leiser discusses will be new to a given tyer will depend, naturally, on his or her experience, but I suspect most intermediate tyers will gain something from Leiser's tips. And although Leiser is interested in helping the tyer stretch his hackle resources, he never does so at the expense of the quality of the finished product. Leiser discusses mixing colors and grades, sizing, tying with troublesome hackle, using saddle hackle and hackle tips, and selection of tailing. He briefly discusses dyeing capes, but here I don't think brief treatment is

adequate. The tyer interested in dyeing should consult Leiser's more extensive chapter on this subject in *Fly Tying Materials*. There is a useful section on winding hackle and on adjusting fly proportions and hackle style to stream conditions.

Leiser also discusses folding hackle for wet flies, and in his chapter on hen hackle details the Defeo method of throat hackling wet flies and the Harvey method of winging flies with hen fibers. In keeping with the tactical, fly tying emphasis of the book, Leiser concludes with a chapter detailing five of his “fly patterns in progress” (some new, some variations on established patterns) where he demonstrates the creative application of hackling technique and material use. Well-illustrated with a combination of Richard Harrington's drawings and Matthew Vinciguerra's photographs, *The Metz Book of Hackle* is a useful, inexpensive book for the tyer looking for practical advice on getting the most for his money when buying hackle and on making the best use of the hackle he does buy.

Christopher Camuto
Earlsville, Virginia

HAVING EVERYTHING RIGHT

Essays of Place

By Kim Stafford

(1986 Western States Book Award

Citation for Excellence)

Confluence Press, \$14.95

Lewis-Clark State College

Lewiston, Idaho

Distributed by Kampmann & Company,
Inc., 9 East 40th Street, New York, New
York 90016

Fly fishing has always inspired deep respect for place, for the sense of being somewhere and understanding it and feeling its power. Learning to read—water, weather, animal and insect life, local history—carries the sport far beyond the mindless economy of meat for the table, stories for the tavern. A.H.E. Wood, as rendered by Jock Scott, had his Dee's Cairnton water, Roderick Haig-Brown the Campbell River, and others, like Enos Bradner on the Kispiox and General Noel Money on the Stamp, honored these places by becoming, for us and others, symbols of them.

Portland poet and essayist Kim Stafford's recent, and highly praised book, *Having Everything Right, Essays of Place*, celebrates and is awed by the sense of place to be felt in the Pacific Northwest. No, it's not a book about fishing, about how to tie knots or special flies, or about ways to tighten your loops—though one of Stafford's best essays, “River and Road,” takes as good a look at the Siuslaw River as could be had. Instead, Stafford's book seeks to

Datus -
IN case you haven't seen
this.
Are you surviving the Montana
winter?
N. be

Fly Fishing Magazine January 1988

FRENCH FISHING FLIES

By Jean-Paul Pequegnot
Published by Nick Lyons Books,
31 West 21st Street,
New York, New York 10010
Hardbound, \$18.95

French Fishing Flies is a translation (by Robert A. Chino) of Dr. Jean-Paul Pequegnot's 1984 book *Repertoire des mouches artificielles francaises*. The introduction to the English version is by Datus Proper.

To some, *French Fishing Flies* may be a disappointment since it is not a detailed list of fly patterns nor is it a how-to book filled with fly tying methods. For example, under Bonnenfant, Pequegnot writes:

"The famous salmon fisher, Lucien Bonnenfant, used flies in which the general structure was like British models, but whose wings were partially or totally replaced by a pinch of badger hair.

"Badger, donkey, or mule hair has been popular for a long time along the banks of the Allier, where Bonnenfant carried out most of his exploits. Today the British use tube flies for salmon fishing, plastic tubes furnished with a cone of hair and armed with triple hooks. While I must deplore, in passing, the use of such inelegant things as treble hooks for fly fishing, I admit that, in general, fur has a greater attraction for salmon than feathers. This is no reason for regret because flies can be quite as handsome when made with fur as with feathers. This superiority of hair is not limited to salmon. It seems to me that it is equally good with nymphs and wet flies for trout."

This I consider to be too brief a treatment of the subject. For me it raised many questions. As far as I can recall it's the first reference I've run across to the use of donkey or mule hair for salmon flies. What do the flies look like? How sparsely or heavily dressed are mule wings? How long are donkey wings? How are these materials used in nymphs? Where can I buy some? Yet I doubt if I would have found *French Fishing Flies* as interesting or stimulating as I did if it had followed the usual format of fly tying or fly pattern books. Such books are but reference books, books to be consulted as one consults a dictionary.

Datus Proper explains the major contribution *French Fishing Flies* makes to the literature of fly fishing when he writes in the introduction:

"For most of us, the important thing about this book is not that it is French but that it is one of the few works of any nationality on the design of trout flies. The author did not simply collect French fly patterns. If he had, he would have pro-

duced an interesting curiosity, but he would not have sent many Americans to their fly-tying vises. The best patterns evolve around local insects, and when transplanted to another environment, the patterns are often abandoned or modified—as happened with the Blue-Winged Olive, of which nothing is left (in America) except the name. *Good design, on the other hand, is universal*. That is as true of trout flies as of aircraft, furniture, and your wife's blue jeans. And design is why this book has as much to do with the Henry's Fork as with the Risle.

- By 'design,' I mean that Dr. Pequegnot explains each fly's structure and how it affects behavior on the water. (I never understood how the peculiar architecture of the Mole Fly was supposed to work until I read his description of the *Pont-Audemmer*, a derivative dressing.)

- He appraises other fly-tiers' contributions as fairly as his own. (This gives us a wide range of alternatives from which to choose.)

- He discusses the advantages and disadvantages of each structural change, without excessive reverence for the mythology of the matter. (By this kind of analysis, he has developed the old Fore-&-Aft Fly more highly than anyone else.)

- He uses color as an element in design, but rarely as the leading element. (The male and female Panama are color variations, and you should not miss the author's comment on 'fishermen seriously comparing the relative merits of the two sexes.')

- Most of his favorite flies share an elegant simplicity. (Check the sedges.)

- Of pretense there is none. (It is unlikely that old Simonet was trying to prove anything when tying the featured *Grise a Corps Jaune*, but he made a dry fly with one hook, one feather, and one piece of thread. I hope someone thought to carve that on his tombstone.)

"Finally, Dr. Pequegnot's materials are few and natural, so that you can reproduce most of his favorite flies anywhere, any time, even if you are reading this in 2187. All this adds up to good flies—not just French flies."

French Fishing Flies is also an historical document which makes a significant contribution to the recorded history of our sport. A great many French fly dressers (before now unrecognized by English language books on fly fishing) are named along with the flies they developed to meet their needs and suit the rivers and streams they fished. Collectors of flies who read this book will have new worlds to explore, new fly dressers to locate and contact in the hope of obtaining examples of their work.

American fly dressers who have grown smug about the quality of hackle now being produced in this country may be surprised to know that the French also produce superb hackle. On this subject Dr. Pequegnot offers the following:

"Let us stop for a moment to consider hackle. An unlimited passion for really top quality hackle is a characteristic of French fly fishers. This obsession is very highly developed in the Limousin region where many fly fishermen of the countryside have one or more 'fishing cocks,' precious animals that furnish the rare natural gray hackle (blue dun), and that are never killed. For a French amateur, the idea of sacrificing a good cock in order to harvest the hackle is inconceivable. This would be like killing a bird that produces feathers of gold. Some of the animals cost a veritable fortune. And the cost of their freshly plucked hackle makes the price of an entire American cape, at sixty-five dollars, seem very cheap indeed. Between French fly fishermen, there is no gift more appreciated than a few really exceptional hackles."

And:

"This fly is one of the *Ondines* (Water Sprites), a series of 122 original patterns created by Guy Plas. An important quality of these flies is that their hackles come from the Limousin fishing cocks that Guy Plas breeds and raises with such extraordinary care. This hackle, which is very expensive, has probably never been equaled anywhere else—and I say this with full knowledge of the superb quality of top American necks. A visit to the farm of Guy Plas would be interesting for any fly tier. Each of the selected cocks is treated like a king and each has his private domain. He is allowed to live out his regal life paying only a tribute of some hackle twice a year. No leses majeste here."

Does anyone out there have the address for Guy Plas?

Dr. Pequegnot's *French Fishing Flies* is a small book (125 pages) which can easily be read from cover to cover in a single evening, a book which I found difficult to put down. After I had finished the book I was disappointed that there was not more. Now I find myself dreaming of how I can utilize some of the ideas and concepts introduced by Dr. Pequegnot in my own steelhead flies. How can I mix soft and stiff hackle? How can I use ostrich in streamers? Can I catch a steelhead on the *Soufflacul*? What about the Spanish style of winging? Will steelhead respond to a sedge cone?

Alec Jackson
Kenmore, Washington

J.-P. PEQUEGNOT

19, Rue de la Cassotte

25000 BESANÇON

le 1. 2. 88.

Cher Ami,

Le décès en décembre de notre ami Robert Chino à Arlington est un événement douloureux pour tous ceux qui connoissaient cet homme.

Pour moi, c'est un désastre, car je ne maîtrise pas assez bien l'Anglais pour entretenir des relations suivies avec les U. S.

Malgré les bonnes critiques, mon livre French Fishing Flies a eu une très faible diffusion aux U. S. Je pense qu'il a intéressé seulement

quelques érudits et esprits curieux.
C'est là l'essentiel. Je n'en attendais
guère de bénéfice matériel.

Cette année, comme les deux années
précédentes, je vais pêcher le saumon à
Anticosti, rivière Jupiter. L'île d'Anticosti
est très peu connue, même dans la
littérature américaine. Pourtant, vous
pouvez être sûs qu'elle offre la plus
excitante des pêches à la mouche, où
pue ce soit dans le monde à ma
connaissance. I have said "fly
fishing" and no "salmon fishing."
C'est mieux que l'Islande, où vont les
Américains, parce qu'on pêche à vue
et que les saumons montent sur
de petites mouches sèches. C'est mieux
que l'Alaska parce que c'est des vrais
saumons et qu'il n'y en a pas trop.

Bonne année 1988. Yours 