Fishing Spring Creeks-- Part III
Sight Feeding and the 'Take'
by Matthew A. Supinski

During sight fishing the angler must concentrate on the fish with a peripheral feeling or sense for where the imitation is at any given time. If the imitation is clearly visible, which is rarely the case, the more to one's advantage. However, except perhaps for streamer patterns, our small sleek, deep-drifting imitations are often hard to detect. Thus setting the hook, once any suggestion by the fish's behavior is given and assumed to be a take, will greatly increase one's success. Though I highly recommend the use of the modern styrofoam strike indicators to increase one's perception of a take, they are often useless on the clear, placid, spring creek waters. These conditions which are conducive to long, selective inspections of the imitation by the trout, usually allow the trout to accept and eject the offering before the strike indicators dimple, if they dimple at all. As a result, the art form of sight fishing, perhaps the most demanding technique a fly fisherman can develop, is often the only method applicable when fishing these waters by sub-surface means. Mastering the skills of a careful approach with a low profile, understanding the dynamics of the stream's current, developing a delicate and accurate casting style, having good eye-hand coordination, and understanding the behavioral peculiarities of a feeding trout, takes time and perseverance. However, it is time well spent.

Recognizing the behavioral characteristics exhibited by a trout in a 'take' situation is often half the battle. The following are important indicators to look for:

a) Quick horizontal movement to either side, forwards and lateral.
b) A slow-steady backward glide.
c) Quick jaw motion during opening and closing of the mouth. (Relatively easy to detect due to the white mouths of salmonids.)
d) Quick pulsating of the pectoral, dorsal, and ventral fins.
e) Rapid gill pulsations.
f) Quick semi-circle motion by the trout.
g) Quick, upward motion.

When sight nymphing with crucean or true nymph patterns, two different methods must be understood and applied. In pursuing a large, holding trout that has not displayed any pattern or suggestion of feeding, it is extremely important to deduce whether this behavior is due to the fish being spooked by your approach, or rather due to the fish just resting. If, as a result of waiting for a period of time and observing its behavior, you conclude that the fish is resting but alert, an induced presentation of your nymph is often effective in triggering the trout's reflexive, 'search and destroy' programming.

Pioneered by the British angler Oliver Kite, a student of Frank Sawyer, the swimming motion imparted to the artificial, by raising the rod slowly and causing the upward movement of the artificial, attracts the focus of the trout, which is often focusing

on many objects simultaneously as a result of its 180 degree vision capability. The same principles are used in the famous Leisenring Lift. In the induction methods, the action alone is often the most important ingredient in triggering a response, regardless of whether an exact or suggestive pattern of the imitation is used.

However, the more difficult situation arises once a clear pattern of acceptance to the naturals has been detected. For example, if the trout is feeding consistently on cressbugs, a narrow 4-inch feeding lane will usually develop, usually in relation to a specific sub-surface current flow which is most likely working its friction against a specific moss-covered rock or vegetation patch, spinning-off the over-populated crustaceans downstream. In this situation, not only must you naturally drift your imitation through the narrow, 4-inch boundary at the proper depth, but do so completely drag free. This often rules out the use of split shot and other drag instigators, i.e. strike indicators, heavy tippets, too much built-in weight, etc. Trout often build up a specific wariness to split shot, especially on gin clear, spring creek waters. Is is thus necessary for the angler to tie in weight to his or her nymph patterns in order to achieve the proper drift speed and neutral buoyancy at specific depths. Tying several patterns with different percentages of weight will allow you to experiment with your local conditions and trout lies.

Of course, the ultimate in sight fishing is to watch your imitation drift along, drag-free, right into the waiting mouth of the trout. Water clarity, depth, tricky cross-currents, and the age-old deterioration of human vision make the ideal situation less likely. However, those with good eyesight can greatly increase their perception by the correct use of color in their imitations. Fishing somewhat lighter patterns against dark stream bottoms, and vice versa, will help you track the imitation much better.

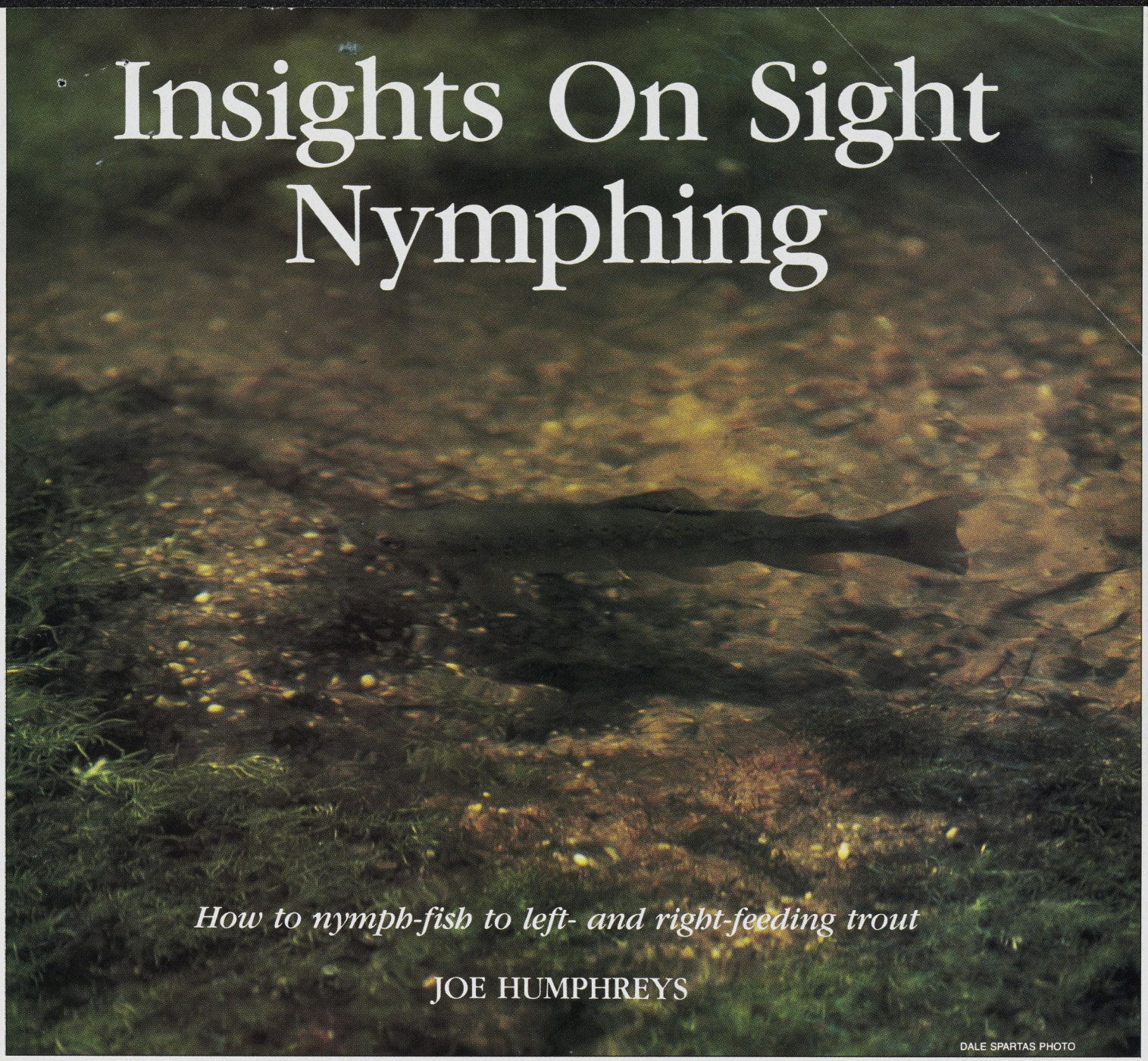
In fishing the sculpin and leech patterns on spring creeks, one must disregard the classic methods of streamer presentation. The common mistakes made by streamer fishermen on spring creeks can quickly be summed up by the following:

a) Imparting too much motion to the imitation, often with rapid, unnatural, upstream jerking, either for strike detection purposes in blind situations, or from over-exuberance.
b) Casting to the center of the run, lie, or pool.
c) Not enough weight to keep the pattern down on the bottom during the retrieve.

The natural sculpin/leech lifestyle is one of seclusion and living on the perimeters. Hiding under rocks and vegetation, often near the shore and undercut banks, they are rarely seen in the main current flow and less likely to casually cruise right down the center of a choice primary lie, like we often foolishly fish them. This usually results in a spooked and confused trout, who is probably saying, "This is too good to be true, something is up here."

The natural sculpins usually scurry, hide, and rest. It is thus important for the angler to let his pattern rest on the stream bottom near a rock for short intervals, especially if you are aware that a large trout is occupying a nearby, adjacent lie. (cont>)

Insights On Sight Nymphing



How to nymph-fish to left- and right-feeding trout

JOE HUMPHREYS

DALE SPARTAS PHOTO

CASTING TO VISIBLE FISH, or sight fishing, is one of the most challenging forms of trout fishing. The thrill of presenting a fly to a fish that can be seen actively feeding is special, but success at the sight-fishing game requires use of the right tactics.

First, let's look at our quarry. If a feeding trout is not cruising, it will be feeding to the right or left. I must determine that *before* I make a cast. A trout usually lies where water velocity changes, and the current bringing the bulk of its food will either be to the fish's right or left. The greatest portion of food may be falling off the bank, thus the trout will work to that side, right or left. Underwater weed growth such as watercress and elodea harbors cress bugs, shrimp and nymphs. If the weed growth is next to the bank, the fish will feed to that side, or if the major currents are adjacent to the growth, the fish will position itself to feed on food dislodged from the weed growth. It may also move directly to the weed growth to dislodge and eat the food.

The same fish may change its location. It may have been feeding to one side, say to the left. Let's assume that you're about to cast and the fish moves, relocates and then feeds to the right because the currents bringing its food changed. As the trout moves, watch it. Wait until you see on which side the fish feeds and then make your cast.

Use the sun on your approach. If the sun is directly in the trout's eye, from over your shoulder, the fish can't see on that side. (Trout have no eyelids, eyelashes, eyebrows or polarized sunglasses. The fisherman has all of these aids and still can't see directly into the sun.) The position of the sun determines to which side the trout will feed. If it is blinded by the sun on one side, it *must* feed on the other.

Is this all bull or am I imagining things?

DALE SPARTAS PHOTO

PAUL BLANKENHORN PHOTO

Presentation

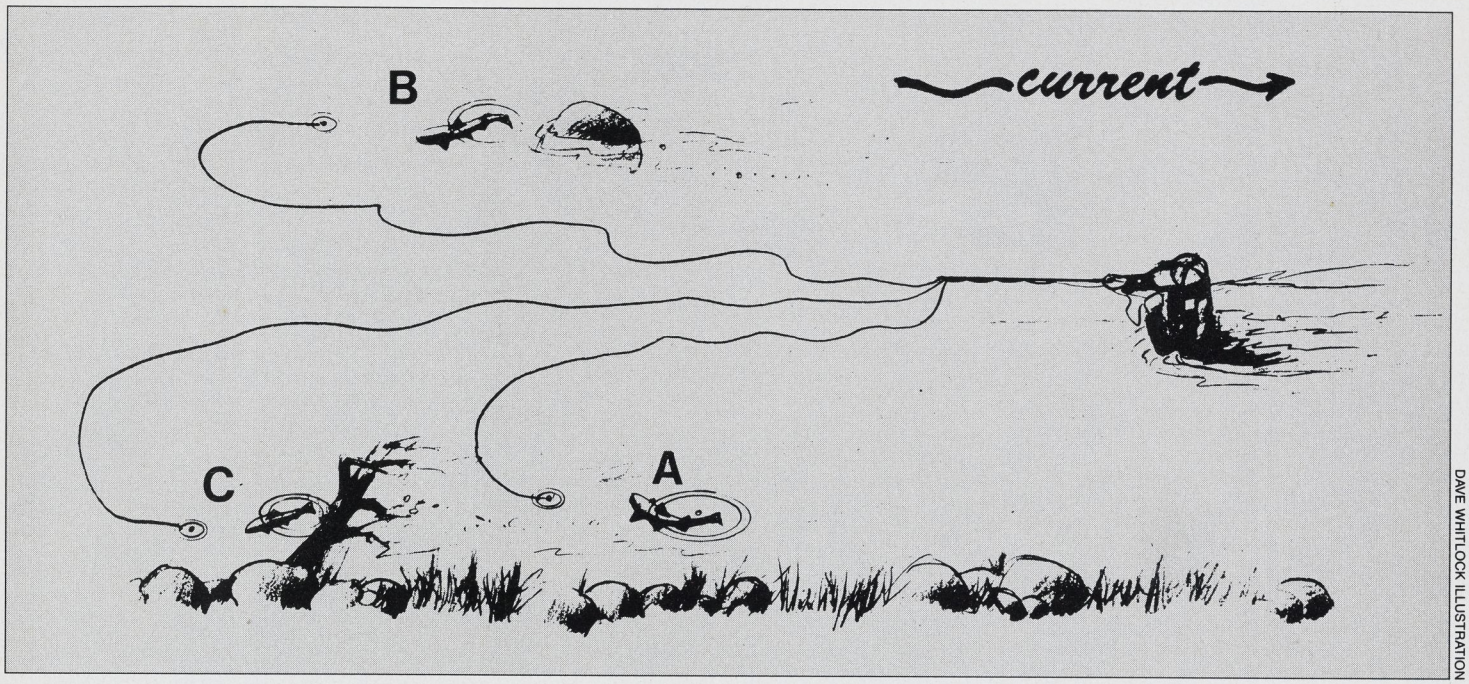
WHEN YOU'VE DETERMINED to which side the trout is feeding, time your cast during those instants when the trout is not turning, lifting or chasing but has undivided attention for your nymph. And don't cast too far above the trout: It gives the fish too much time to examine the fly, particularly in slow-moving water. Also, if your nymph is heavily weighted, it will sink below the trout's field of vision before it drifts to the fish. The speeds of the currents dictate how far above the fish you should cast. Speeding currents and velocity changes lift and drop drifting naturals, and such fast-drifting nymphs are moving targets for trout, requiring quick take/no-take decisions. Trout that have been fished over can be lightning fast when taking and rejecting food, sometimes ejecting an imitation from their mouths instantaneously.

The fish give basic cues that can help you to strike. One of them is the movement of the trout to the nymph—when a trout nosedives for a nymph, it usually turns at the instant it picks up the nymph. When a trout turns, it has probably picked up your nymph—strike by lifting your rod tip! The flash of a trout's flank as it turns also signals your time to strike. Other trout movements that indicate times to strike include: The fish moves off to the side, lifts, or increases its tail movements when moving to the nymph. The opening of a trout's mouth as it moves in the direction of your nymph is also a cue to strike. And remember: Trout don't grab, they *inhale*. You must give the trout time to inhale the nymph when its mouth opens. You can strike too swiftly. With experience, you'll determine the correct timing.

Not only must you know the side to which the fish is working, you must judge the *depth* at which he is working. Is he staying on the bottom or lifting off the bottom to take? To get your nymph to the trout as naturally possible, the amount of weight in the fly and the length of the tippet you use should be tailored to the trout's feeding behavior and the depth and speed of the water in which he is feeding. Often you'll have to adjust (lengthen or shorten) the intermediate sections of your leader to get the right (natural) drift. This will take practice and experience in reading water types, but tailoring your leader to match water conditions is the key to successful nymphing.

For a bottom-feeding fish in deeper water, you may have to lengthen your tippet, go to a smaller tippet diameter, add a heavier nymph, or add weight to the tippet. The deeper the required ride of the fly to reach the fish at its feeding depth, the closer you must slide the weight to the nymph. If you want the fly to rise, go to a lighter-weight nymph and slide the weight farther away from the fly. If the fish is lifting, tie on a light-weight nymph that sinks slowly in the short distance it will travel, or use an unweighted pattern for a natural drift, just under the surface or in the surface film. You must be flexible and innovative in your presentations, tailoring them to trout behavior and water conditions.

If a trout refuses your fly, go to a smaller fly, change the pattern, or both. A smaller tippet diameter can



DAVE WHITLOCK ILLUSTRATION

The angler in the illustration above fishes to three trout taking nymphs in shallow water. The fish at A and B are feeding to the right, while the fish at C feeds to the left. Recognition of a trout's left or right feeding preference is crucial when sight nymphing. In the photos on the opposite page the author fishes to a feeding fish after he determines to which side it is feeding; a fish rises for nymphs (inset photo).

make the difference—you need no less than 6X (.005″) for the most sophisticated feeder in the clearest water.

And consider this—a refusal may be the result of an unnatural drift, not your choice of nymph. Improper tippet length and poor leader construction may have caused the unnatural drift. The natural, no-dragging drift of a nymph is just as important to fooling trout as the drag-free floating dry fly.

Let me illustrate this with an anecdote. One summer morning, while fishing a low, clear spring tributary to a larger limestone stream, as I slowly worked my way upstream, I spotted a trout silhouetted against the white sand and gravel of the stream bottom between patches of elodea. The casting approach with the nymph was like fishing a dry fly—short forward stroke, check the cast high, drop the elbow and then the rod tip. The casting stroke was short. The trout saw the nymph on my first and second cast but did not take. I won't stay with a trout that doesn't take when I've made a good cast and got a good drift. I'll look for another since each cast after that first one reduces my chances of a take. If I have a nymph with which I'm moving fish, I'll work it over as many trout as possible and I'll catch twice as many fish by not wasting time on any single trout.

A trout surfaced ahead. Had it not surfaced, I would not have seen it—the fish blended perfectly with the underwater weed growth. I threw some slack into the leader to change the depth and get a natural drift. My leader was stiff mono except for the last two feet of soft tippet material. The line straightened, even most of the leader straightened, but not the tippet, and I had control of line and leader from rod tip to nymph. The trout moved over. I tightened, lifting the rod tip sharply to hook and land a scrappy foot-long brown trout.

Checking the cast and changing levels gave me drift time—the cast and the leader complimented each other. A leader that is too long (11 feet or more) is too tough to handle when sight fishing—you have neither leader control nor accuracy.

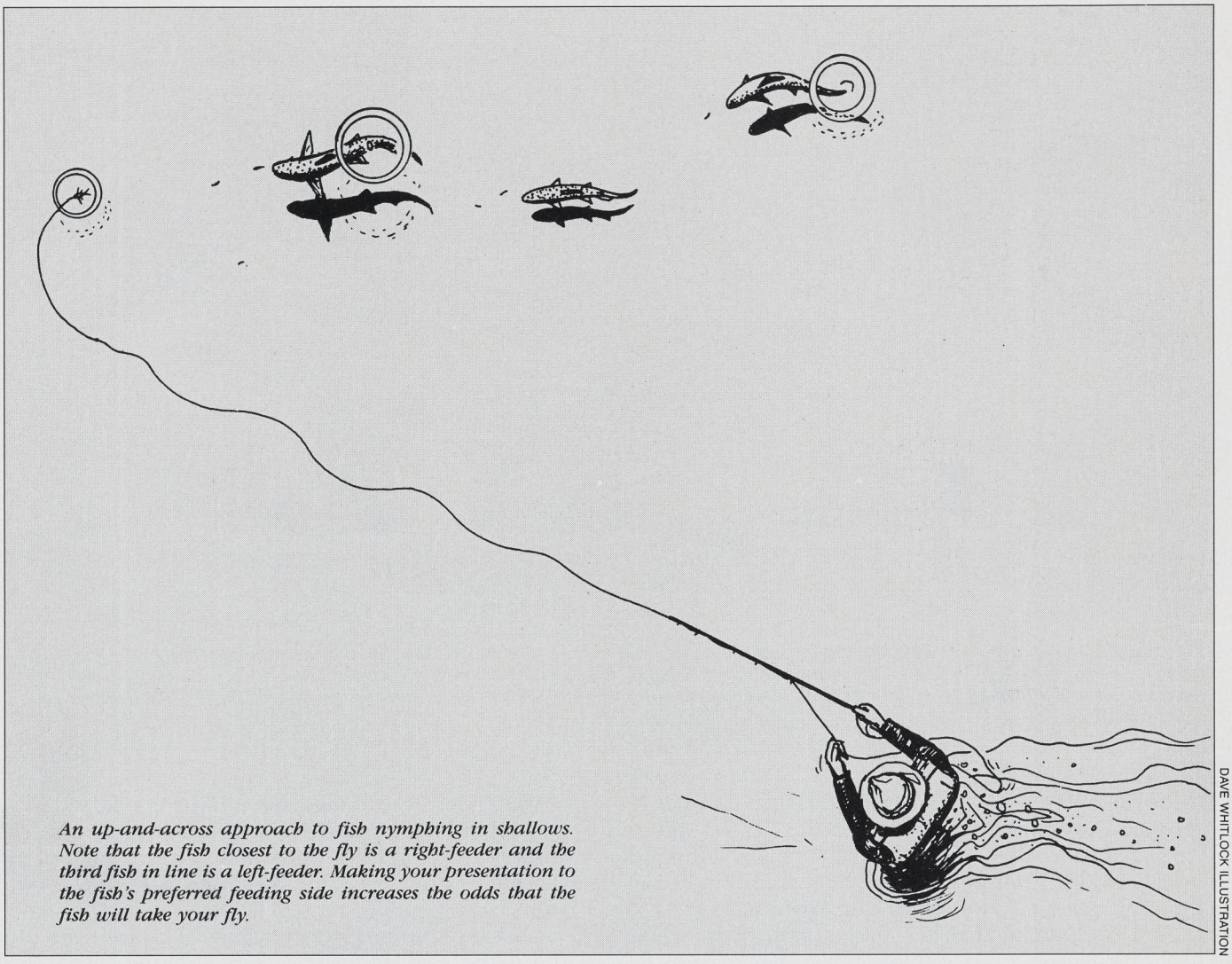
The Flexible Approach

THERE ARE TIMES when an upstream approach is impractical, and sometimes impossible. When downstream nymphing, the distance the nymph must drift, the depth and speed of the current, and the sink-rate of the nymph are all things you must consider to get a natural drift at the fish's feeding level.

The positive aspect of downstream nymphing is that the nymph, not the leader, drifts to the fish first: You don't line the fish when casting unless you make a bad cast.

Check the cast high with the downstream approach: Stop the rod tip high, pull it back, and then drop the elbow of your casting arm—this forms extra slack line and leader for an extended downstream drift.

Too much weight in the nymph or on the leader prevents a natural drift—the nymph can hang on the bottom and trout will not see it, or they will lose it. If the nymph becomes covered with weed growth or algae, a trout won't touch it.



An up-and-across approach to fish nymphing in shallows. Note that the fish closest to the fly is a right-feeder and the third fish in line is a left-feeder. Making your presentation to the fish's preferred feeding side increases the odds that the fish will take your fly.

DAVE WHITLOCK ILLUSTRATION

For an off-the-bank approach, consider a low profile approach—crouch to get as close to the fish as possible before you make a cast. A close approach improves casting accuracy and line control, and when fishing close, there are fewer currents to work around for a natural drift. Water clarity and fishing pressure dictate how close you can get.

The tuck cast is valuable in getting a nymph on bottom as quickly and as naturally as possible. To execute the tuck cast wait until you feel the pull of the weighted nymph and additional weight on the leader during the backcast. Then drift the rod forward until you see your rod hand out of the corner of your eye. With a sharp hand-squeezing action, push the thumb of your casting hand forward and slightly back and up on the forward casting stroke. This drives the nymph downward at the end of the cast. The nymph tucks under the line before it lands, giving it time to reach bottom and begin a dead drift before the currents pick up the slack line on the water and induce drag. At this point elevate the rod tip, pick up the slack line, and strip or hand-twist retrieve (depending on the speed of the current) until you feel the nymph on bottom. Remember that on most casting approaches the rod tip leads the nymph through the drift. With line control and your nymph on bottom, your percentage of hook-ups increases.

There are other casting techniques—the "down and upper" and the "rolling tuck"—that create bottom-rolling presentations. Space precludes explaining them here, but I show them in my book *Trout Tactics*, (Stackpole Books, 1981) and in my video: *Master Nymphing Techniques*, (1986, available from Orvis and Cortland Line Company).

One aspect of nymphing that I developed back in the 1950s and have advocated for years is the monofilament technique. The fly line is all monofilament. Its diameter is smaller than that of a traditional fly line, thus allowing the line and fly to sink faster. You're using a nymph of your choice and the casting technique is the same. It's still fly fishing and you're fly is on bottom instantly. Conventional fly lines (even 2- or 3-weight lines) belly and create drag. You don't have nearly the line control or sensitivity as you do when using monofilament.

The monofilament system is also deadly for fishing to salmon and steelhead where you can observe the fish in fast, deep runs. A problem in this fishing is that

DALE SPARTAS

The author sight nymphing on a Pennsylvania spring creek; releasing a 19-inch rainbow trout (inset photo).

PAUL BLANKENHORN PHOTO

your nymph, in a normal presentation with a fly line, isn't in front of the fish long enough. For whatever the reason a spawning Chinook or coho strikes, the longer the fly is in front of the fish on a drift the greater the chance you have for a take.

Weight adjustment is vitally important. Several years ago as he was fishing for steelhead in a New York stream, a friend stepped into a spot that I had just fished unsuccessfully and hooked three heavy fish, landing two. He used the same technique I used, except that he also used three heavy split-shot that helped him roll his fly slowly along bottom. Although I used both a longer leader and a longer tippet with a smaller diameter, I didn't have enough weight to do the job. Although it reached bottom, my fly moved too fast. In that cold water the steelhead failed to react to it.

Using the right weight and the right leader construction, you can give your nymphs as much time on bottom (drifting naturally) as possible. It's the secret of nymphing.

Leader construction is also important in nymphing deep water. Fishing a large-diameter leader that's too short causes the nymph to be pulled off bottom. The pull of currents on the fly line causes the line to belly to the leader. Too much weight and you hang the sinkers on bottom. I constantly adjust my weight and tippet length for the depth and water speed. The new leader materials are strong for their diameters. (Some tippet material of eight-pound test measures .008″ (3X) and ten-pound test measures .009″ (2X).) Fishermen now have the advantage of small-diameter tippets that can take the strain of heavy fish and (thanks to the narrow monofilament diameter) they can use less weight for a slow bottom-roll presentation. Longer, finer tippets also provide a more natural drift.

When sight-nymphing in deep water, you can't avoid some slack from rod tip to nymph. Even when you feel the roll of the weight and nymph on bottom, you still may not be in direct touch with the fly. The deeper the water and the faster the currents, the more slack, even when you are trying your best to maintain line control.

Understanding that there is slack from rod tip to fly can help you hook fish you might ordinarily miss. The movement of a fish, even if it is not near your fly, may signal a take. That extra slack creates a time lapse between the movement of the fish and your setting of the hook. I've often hooked fish in *anticipation* of a trout's movement. It becomes instinctive.

You can minimize the slack. Use a line of 15- or 20-pound Cortland flat monofilament and taper the leader off the mono with a tippet diameter that is as small, yet as strong, as you can get away with. This gives your fly the time needed on bottom for the fish to see it. It also gives you the line control you need to hook the trout.

When describing native trout, trout that have been pounded—the survivors—it's a sure bet that if you wave a fly rod around, they'll scram. Hatchery trout that are heavily fished over may or may not spook, but the more visible you are the less attentive they are to your offerings. A rule of thumb is: The less visible you are the better your chances. Work on a low profile in the stream and out. If necessary, drop down in the water on both knees for a lower profile.

Finally, remember what you can of this material, and then go fishing. I can give you shortcuts, but only time onstream can perfect your game.

JOE HUMPHREYS is Penn State University's angling professor.

DETTE
A Catskill Tradition

ERIC LEISER

DIAL (607) 498-5350 any day during April, May or June and you'll get a tape recording that describes the fishing conditions on the Beaverkill or Willowemoc Rivers in New York's Catskill region.

The soft voice on the tape belongs to Walt Dette, who rises early each day during the height of the trout season to take the water and air temperature and check the general condition of the streams. Dette also gives more pertinent data, such as the type and size of flies the fish are taking, the most successful pattern and whether the action is fast or slow. Dette doesn't add hype or promote the rivers; he keeps the news conservative. If he says the fishing is fair, it will be good; if he says the fishing is good, it will be exceptional. "I'd rather tell them it's not as good as it is," he says, "so that they won't be disappointed. Why should an angler spend all that money coming up here if the fishing is lousy?"

Walt and his wife, Winnie, have offered this service to anglers for almost 15 years. At first it was done in conjunction with the Roscoe Chamber of Commerce, but since 1977 the Dettes have provided the service themselves. They have nothing to gain from this except the satisfaction that it has helped and benefitted the many angling friends they have made over the seasons.

Fishing Reports

TAKING WATER TEMPERATURES and checking stream conditions is nothing new for Dette, who did this and other related tasks for the New York City Department of Water from 1956 until his retirement in 1972. As a junior civil engineer Dette traveled through the entire Catskill region from Cornwall on the Hudson to the upper reaches of the Delaware River, sometimes surveying line and grade, making maps or taking photographs for the Bureau of Claims. He knows the area better than most anglers ever will. On one occasion Les Waters, head of the department, told him to fish the Delaware and bring back a good report.

"I told him it was a waste of time," Dette says. "How could I tell them the fishing was good when it was lousy?" Since then, the Delaware has become one of the finest trout streams in the east. "Before the Pepacton (East Branch) and Canonsville (West Branch) dams were built, especially Canonsville, the only thing the Delaware was good for was undersized bass. Now, water releases from the bottom of these impoundments keep stream temperatures in the sixties all summer long and the trout love it."

A Family Business

THE DETTE HOUSE AND SHOP, a two-story wood-frame affair built in 1900 but reconstructed and modernized by Walt, is in Roscoe, New York, where the Little Beaverkill and Willowemoc Rivers join at Junction Pool to form the Beaverkill. Though nestled in one of the Catskill Mountains' lowest valleys, the Roscoe area has never known a flood. Nature seems to have accorded it special regard and protected it like a prized jewel.

Approach the Dette's tackle shop and two signs are visible. One reads, "Ring Bell and Walk In," the other, "Sorry, No Worms." You walk in and to the left is a small room, the rear half of which has been partitioned off for fly tying. There you'll find Walt, Winnie, or, if you are visiting during the spring, Mary Clark. Mary, the Dette's daughter, helps with the early-season backlog of fly orders.

The Dettes run an unusual tackle shop. Visiting it is like visiting a friend's home. Actually, there is no tackle shop to speak of, just an assortment of hand-tied flies, a few accessory items such as fly dope and insect repellant, and a rack of maps. Wooden compartmentalized fly boxes, hand-made by Walt, ring the small shop. Most of the boxes are usually empty—not because the Dettes have slowed their fly production but

Not a legitimate method.

Top of the Bottom

The stream-bottom shuffle makes trout crazy

Doesn't make the insects feel good?, i.e. the.

JOHN BETTS

IT'S ESSENTIAL for me as a professional fly tier to understand how my flies are going to be used. Without that, concepts regarding trout behavior can never reach beyond guesswork. This article is the result of more than a year's observation of trout. In all cases—to one degree or another—the trout's specific behavior was the same, even though the situations varied. I admit that in the early stages one reason for this investigation was to try to develop a single, never-fail fly pattern. In the end I found that because trout eat a variety of foods there is no need for such a pattern and, conversely, due to selection and therefore exclusion within a variety, there simply isn't any such fly. But while looking for it I uncovered what I think may be the single most important factor that causes trout to begin feeding. I know that others have seen this phenomenon occur, but I have no idea where they've written it down. I don't feel it should be kept a secret; the real product of secrecy is ignorance.

I know there are many things that can stimulate trout to feed, and I'm not taking away from the effects of light, dissolved-oxygen levels, water temperature or the visible presence of food. What I am saying is that I can deliberately override any of those factors and cause trout to feed when and where they would not normally do so. I can also make them change their location—without changing the feeding behavior I initiated. The stimulus is so strong that I can pull trout in other areas away from feeding on drifting duns, bring them within six inches of my hands, and sometimes even move them—without spooking—by pushing them with my fly rod. And these fish would not initially permit approaches much closer than 30 feet.

The practice itself is not new and every angler since the year Dot has created the stimulus the minute he or she stepped into the water. Recently it has been known as the San Juan Two-Step and the Buffalo Ford Shuffle, but these dances have proven no less alluring to the trout of lesser rivers.

To examine what might cause this behavior of trout we have to look at two parts of any body of water. The first is the zone above the surface of the bottom and the second is the zone below it—the substrate. The water above the permanently submerged bottom has certain characteristics: Its depth fluctuates constantly and often rapidly. Temperature and light also vary considerably with time of day, water depth and clarity, shade and cloud cover. Current speed and direction, associated with depth and stream architecture, are never constant for any distance in moving water. And last, even if it's rich in minerals the water above the bottom could be considered impoverished since the few organisms living in it provide little of the nourishment for the whole system. The bulk of the food on which trout rely comes from the terrestrial world above and the streambed below.

Beneath the surface of the streambed conditions are quite different. Under moderate circumstances we'll find the depth of the water column in the substrate is constant—recall I said permanently submerged. Graphs of temperature are much smoother than those of the stream above. Little light penetrates more than an inch into areas of fine sediment, so that dark stays dark regardless of the time of day. Here current is, for our purposes, constant: The speed of the water is greatly reduced and evened out in passage around the myriad grains; its direction is generally downhill. All these conditions make the interior of the streambed an ideal

Audio cassettes, 85 minutes each. $10.95 each.

These cassettes are an oral anthology of what The Audio Press calls "13 classic trout fishing stories." Clearly Ernest Schwiebert was chosen to read them because of his stature as an angling authority. He's maybe not the logical choice, but he turns out to have been a good one. Schwiebert reads well, if a little too measuredly, with a old-fashioned trill now and then, and he never becomes overly dramatic. You imagine him at the podium of a lyceum somewhere. He has a good deep voice, just the kind of voice you imagine Ernest Schwiebert having.

My problem with *Tales of the Trout* lies in being read to in the first place. When you read a book your eye moves silently and rapidly over the page—you can adapt the pace to the interest of the reading. When you're being read to, you're stuck. Word follows word at an even pace and it takes a remarkable work—either in literary quality or dramatic impetus—to sustain interest. The stories of this series are generally excellent—who can quibble with Howard Walden, Sparse Grey Hackle, Robert Traver?—but they tend to be stories of a luxurious, descriptive nature that, presented this way, wore me out in a hurry. Nash Buckingham and Henry Van Dyke and Dana Lamb simply can't survive a leisurely oral presentation as well as they can a fast reading. Now a tape of Traver reading his *own* work, or Maclean reading *A River Runs Through It*, or John Gierach reading some of his stories would have more interest, as does Schwiebert reading one of his own stories. However, judging by the way these tapes are selling, most people find them entirely satisfactory.

The Superhatches, *with Dick Pobst and Carl Richards. (Ada, MI: Thornapple Angling Classics, 1987). Videocassette; Beta or VHS. $39.95.*

This is a video that knows not what it is. Carl Richards sits on the bank of a river, Dick Pobst stands knee-deep in its shallows and they present, in a kind of video translation, the core of the information found in *Selective Trout*. Pobst and Richards have, in the past, done fly-fishing great service. But in this tape they've gotten their media muddled.

The fault arises from confusing what a book can do with what a video can do. *The Superhatches* treats the major insect hatches across the country in the same way a book does, with video "pages" devoted to separate hatches. In practice these are difficult to use; most of the information is in the voiceover and not in the pictures, and the voiceover keeps marching right along. To use this video for fly-tying or note-taking would require constant rewinding and fast-forwarding, where a book like *Selective Trout* just lies there, ample and quiet and accessible. The only thing we see in this video that we don't see in the book is some nice shots of Pobst and Richards talking and, occasionally, fishing. Why not use a video to do what a video can really do and not what a book can do much better? There is no value in muddling the two.

Polly Rosborough, Master Fly Tier, Ties His Fuzzy Nymphs, Volume 1, *with Polly Rosborough. (Ashland, OR: Pegasus Productions, 1986). Video cassette; 60 minutes, Beta or VHS. $45.*

Now this is a video that understands what it's about. Polly Rosborough is a character, and what we get here is a character sitting at his fly-tying vise and doing what he does best: tying flies and being colorful.

Admittedly, Polly ties the same basic pattern again and again here (there is a close resemblance among his fuzzy nymphs), and he tries to sell you a vise and he'll probably convert no one to bobbinless tying, but still the whole thing is quite pleasurable. I'm tempted to say something stupid, like "It's worth the price of the tape just to hear Polly say the word 'noodle.'" It's not, of course, but it is worth it to spend some time with an authentic angling character and, in the process, learn some useful things about his nymphs. And this video, captures what no book can: Polly himself. □

environment for the many forms of life found there. Unlike the stream, the streambed is very rich. Granted, many life-forms leave it to roam around in the current; but most, if not all, begin life within its sedimentary matrix. They are products of the environment they help create, and require this environmental stability not only for their own lives but also for the lives of what they eat.

The entire stream—above and below the bottom—is filled with the same basic fluid, to which are added many compounds. Some come from inanimate sources; others are organic. Within the streambed, added to the original mix of H_2O plus planet, are large amounts of the by-products of the life, death and decay of the plants and animals therein. This compound or "liquor" (or some part of it) deliberately released into the current appears to prompt trout to behave in ways not seen in a normal sequence of events.

FIFTY-FIVE MILES from Denver the South Platte flows through Cheesman Canyon. It's one of the oldest tailwater fisheries in the country (1906) and is currently a major reason why a proposed billion-dollar reservoir that would inundate it (and another 15 miles of superior trout water) should not be built. The canyon supports about 2,000 pounds of fish per acre. A year-round fishery of this quality so close to a major city may be unique in the world. My observations were made in the canyon, fishing an average of one day a week for more than a year.

During the process I've found useful information on trout territoriality, dominance, sensitivity, eyesight, fly pattern, feeding behavior and reproduction. I'm not going to draw any hard conclusions. The events recorded have been duplicated by others here and elsewhere. Listed are the conditions under which the work was done. At no time did I find different behavior under different conditions; on 35-degree winter days with water temperatures around 34 degrees the response of the fish was the same as on the balmy bug-filled days of late June with 63-degree water. The ranges are as follows:

Air Temperature: 30 to 85 degrees F.
Water Temperature: 33 to 73 degrees F.
Clarity: Very low and clear to very fast and slightly off-color but not turbid.
Depth: 12 to 48 inches.
Bottom Types: Fine sand to gravel to large, well-planted stones.
Fish Species and Sizes: Brown trout (wild) and rainbow trout (wild and private hatchery) of 12 to 17 inches. All are under much fishing pressure year-round. The area is catch-and-release with some poaching.
Weather: Any.
Time: All year any time of day.

All my information-gathering on the South Platte was done with the same fish week after week. I've never hooked fewer than 15 in any five-hour period, and a large number of these were taken and released more than half a dozen times in the year.

I have read that trout can detect chemicals in dilutions as fine as about one part

per billion—which makes them more sensitive than any man-made smell-detecting instrument yet devised. In a three-mile stretch of river with 100 cubic feet per second of water moving above the bottom there are about 14 million gallons in flow. One billionth of this is .014 gallons, or about an ounce. This means that a trout could taste/smell one ounce of material stirred throughly into a container of water 100 feet wide, one foot deep and three miles long. (Even if this information were off by 90 percent, we'd still be talking about only 14 gallons; could we detect a color change if 14 gallons of red ink were mixed evenly into this immense volume?)

If I take a cupful of water from the area above the bottom of the South Platte it usually tastes like Denver tapwater — which is reasonable, since that's where we get our water. When I stick a turkey baster down into the gravel, suck up a sample and filter it, I find that this fluid tastes completely different to me. (Knowing the conditions that exist there, I expect this.) If this water—liquor, I call it—is released into the stream the trout who sense it react immediately. If particles of material are included the fish begin opening and closing their mouths the instant the particle cloud reaches them. This will occur in all conditions except high, dirty water. From here on I'll call this opening and shutting of mouths "feeding."

When I enter any body of water I become structure, but structure by itself doesn't cause fish to feed. However, streambed liquor and particles can be released when the structure disturbs the bottom. Just stepping on the bottom will inject some of this material into the current. Slogging, shuffling and foot-dragging will increase the volume of the injection. The injected material is smelled/tasted by fish downstream. Where possible they tend to move upstream toward the source.

(A note here about the amount of food material actually released: I have never found in any bottom sample enough food to justify the behavior I see. In other words there seems to be more opening and shutting of mouths than there are reasons for it. For me this has some interesting implications regarding the presumed excellence of the close-range vision of trout and the amount of sampling they may have to do as a result of poor visual acuity. What they appear to be very sensitive to are: motion, size and shape, possibly indicated by patterns of light, dark and color; gathered and/or reflected light; color quality and quantity —whatever color is as it is seen in their world—and its location on the fly, specifically dry flies. Precise imitation of certain anatomical parts of the food are very important, but similar treatment of the whole thing is more liability than asset. Trout do not have much time to decide whether or not to take an offering. At best they only seem able to get a few units of information upon which to make a decision. Any discrepancy—even a small one—in this information may cause them to turn away. Don't lose heart, they also turn down a lot of things we didn't make.)

If I'm standing in moving water an eddy forms below me. The material released from the bottom I disturb flows into the eddy and is contained within it. Fish attracted by the taste will also be "contained." As stated, the attraction is very strong. So far I've found only three conditions that cause the fish to leave the eddy: Reduction or elimination of the scent, overcrowding and excessive amounts of sediment.

At the source of the eddy the concentration—parts per million—of liquor is high. If we move this volume downstream as a body it will increase in size. If the liquor injected in the beginning does not increase—I stand still, don't shuffle my feet—there is dilution; the same quantity of liquor spead through a larger volume. Thus downstream of me trout activity decreases. In areas of lower concentration there also seems to be a "dilution" in the fish population. The number of fish per volume decreases although the number of fish per linear measure of stream stays about the same. In the small volume at the source of the eddy there may be five fish per linear unit. There will be about the same number per linear foot below the source in the larger volume. "Dilution" in this case means individuals farther apart from each other.

IF I—the source of the eddy—move downstream toward the head of the pack the lead fish, usually the largest, drop back into the ranks below them. This increases the number of individuals in a space of decreasing size; with this comes an increase in feeding activity and aggression. Crowding and an increase in concentration of the liquor may reinforce each other to produce this effect. If I back up to my original position the leading individuals will advance, decompressing the situation and bringing back more normal behavior.

If I move down far enough the lead fish will bolt and either turn downstream or, more frequently, race upstream around me, leaving the eddy entirely. (I don't know what happens to fish that move away in the direction of the current, as some do, and I wonder if they are able to re-insert themselves farther down, according to their dominance.) With the source of the eddy now closer, fish that before were distant and inactive now in turn display the same feeding behavior.

Earlier I said I have encountered only three conditions that causd fish to leave the eddy. The third is excessive suspended sediment. If the sediment cloud is thick fish will move to its edges. I'd do the same; I suspect seeing and breathing in it is difficult. This is not unlike the highly turbid conditions in the spring, when many fish can be found along the quieter, clearer margins. In the eddy, once the heavy sediment cloud has passed the fish return to their original positions below me.

CAN ONE FISH in the eddy? Yes, and to do so successfully all you have to do is get the fish to feed. Any suitable nymph or wet fly has a better than even chance of being taken, and chances improve as night approaches. Your experience may be different, but I've never had a dry fly taken by these fish. This seems to support the theory that trout feeding hard below the surface are not interested in changing over and that underwater activity in general is more attractive to fish than feeding on the surface. All of this is added reinforcement for the effectiveness of nymph fishing. The taste of the eddy below you can pull fish away from whatever they were doing on the surface and make it seem as if you've put them down. Spooking a fish with a bad cast is often a temporary thing; however, if his flight takes him into the current tongue below you it can become a permanent move.

A word of caution: These fish are very easy to foul-hook, so don't jump at every nudge. The line, leader or fly will be touching fish much of the time, and you can feel it. Use barbless hooks to avoid unnecessary injury and let the fish do the hooking.

Isn't this chumming? Yes. Is it unsportsmanlike or unethical? That's for us all to decide for ourselves. But before riding off on some self-righteous tilt consider:

Every time you step into the water you release some taste or scent from the bottom. If you fish downstream you cannot avoid swimming your fly in or over the current tongue you create below you. According to the comments I've received, doing this by accident is sportsmanlike but doing it on purpose isn't. Is it ethical? I'm not a big fan of Ethics; the times I get into trouble in this area are when I run afoul of someone else's.

I've never met anyone who couldn't justify what he was doing, stopping only when he decided it was impractical or impossible to continue or complete. If something ends up being unethical, it started out that way in the first place.

Is exposing these observations irresponsible? Noticing the phenomenon and deliberately turning my back would be irresponsible, as would be exploring it and keeping it to myself. Investigating it and then selling a set of flies impregnated with

Fig. 1 The volume of the eddy increases as the current washes it downstream.

Spreading 'the Taste'

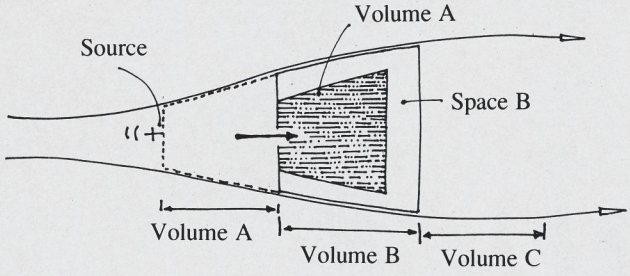


Fig. 2 Volume A, moving downstream, contains a concentration of compound from the streambed. This quantity does not increase, so upon arrival in space B it becomes volume B and will, because of the increased volume, be diluted. The same happens when B moves to C.

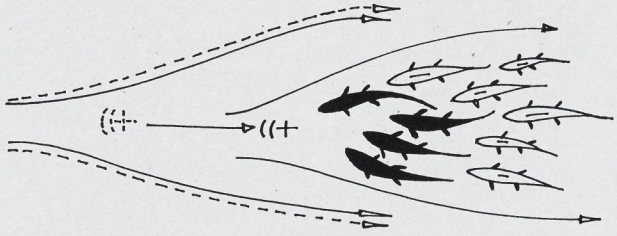


Fig. 3. If the eddy source moves downstream, the lead fish (black) are pushed back into the fish behind them. All are in a more restricted space.

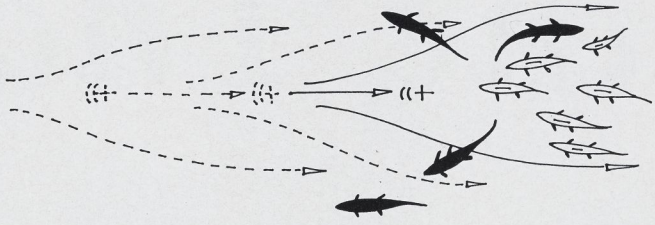


Fig. 4. Further downstream movement of the eddy source makes the lead fish bolt.

Author's Illustrations

The Taste without telling the truth about why the flies might be successful would be dishonest. Just as bad would be making up a paste to smear on waders and billing it as a way to "remove the human smell." Some have cautioned that if I tell people about it everyone will be doing it. The argument for keeping quiet is the same one used to promote censorship of books, films and so on. My response to this is 1) we're already doing it and 2) in spite of the hand-wringers' best efforts there appear to be more and more children every day—apparently the word on how-to is still being spread.

Well, what is It? What is the compound that turns fish on? I don't know and I don't really care. Yes, I could find it, but I'll leave that to a grad student who needs a thesis. As for commercializing it—that's for someone more aggressive than I.

Being able to take full advantage of a basic vulnerability in trout has shed a much harsher light on everything I do as an angler. It has created an acute awareness regarding the loss of life I'm responsible for—real, in the fish I've killed, and potential, in the ones I've released. This awareness is part of every hour I'm on the stream and many I spend away from it. In this unforgiving glare a dilemma that's easy to see is less so to resolve—I can either stop fishing or continue, knowing that if I choose the latter the best I can do is limit the damage. Being able to decide not to catch a lot of these fish has created the opportunity for me to become a more conscientious fisherman than I ever was, and it makes me much more willing to try to fish in the most difficult situations I can find. Catching fish is no longer the prime consideration. I now go fishing knowing I can do one thing and hoping I'll get the opportunity to do a lot of others. □

(See sidebar page 50)

JOHN BETTS is widely known as the fly tier who popularized the use of synthetic tying materials.

Attention, all nymph fishermen . . .

Remember the Thalweg!

JOHN H. SULLIVAN

THALWEG?" you ask, the gears in your head whirring. "What's a thalweg?" No, a thalweg is not a naval ship classification, but it does pertain to water. "Thalweg" is a word from hydrology, defined as an imaginary line running down a stream through the points at which the water is traveling the swiftest—the aquatic equivalent of the skier's fall line. Understanding it is important for the nymph fisherman.

The thalweg figures big in fly drag, a problem that is actually more complex for those fishing wet than for those fishing on the surface, and it must be dealt with to ensure any degree of success. Once we tie on a nymph, many of us quit giving drag the attention it demands; out of sight, out of mind. We learn early to concentrate on surface flows and to delay the moment when our floating fly is overcome and cuts a vee across the water, but drag occurs deep as well. The effect on our attempts at natural presentation can be just as devastating.

I grew up minutes away from California's Owens River, where I could cast to trout rising to caddis practically any evening all summer. It was probably a search for diversion that lead to my curiosity about what might be happening down deep, especially while the mid-sized and smaller fish were crashing about on the surface. My first exploratory tools were crude flies made of chenille wrapped over split shot clamped and glued to my hooks. Matters improved when I disovered lead wire in a Herter's catalog.

The lower Owens River is narrow and deep, its bottom barely visible in most places. Currents cut back and forth as the river bends between steep banks and the water circles upstream in many pools. I learned to get a weighted fly well down and then, giving it free rein, follow it with my rod tip wherever it wanted to go. Strange things sometimes happened—good strikes came while the line where it entered the water was cutting along opposite to the flow of surface current!

I explored the contours of individual pools by using a heavily weighted fly almost as a sounding device. Gradually, confidence grew from understanding that regardless of the drag my line was exhibiting at the surface, the critical movement was down deep, where the nymph was drifting. Welcome evidence of my developing success was a brown much larger than any I'd ever taken on the surface. And lessons learned on a river like the Owens could be applied more easily to a shallower freestone stream. The key is to remember the thalweg.

Simple observation teaches how moving water is affected by friction against the banks. Excluding the effect of protruding rocks and logs, water flows more slowly the farther it is away from the imaginary "swiftest water line"—the thalweg— running through the stream. At the bank water may hardly be moving at all.

The Taste, the Smell, the Strike

Lessons learned from the top of the bottom

IT'S ALWAYS DANGEROUS to say, "This is why that happens." Better to say, "I did this and saw that." One of the devils of fly-fishing is the propensity everyone has for describing their observations and then declaring a full set of reasons for that behavior. Alas, I'm no different, for there are some things I want to know and I'm willing to speculate on their foundations. For example, is taste or smell the signal trout use to discover when food or reproduction is on the way? Without a scent/taste trail, how could a fish beyond sight of a redd find one that's being made, before spawning takes place? And in an area of many redds how does a fish know which one to defend? A better understanding of the use of smell or taste might lead to some answers concerning the frequency of strikes that occur at the end of the fly swing or while reeling in a wet fly.

If a generation of juvenile salmon or trout were killed off by a contaminant there would be no returning spawning run. The same contaminant (it need not be manmade) could prevent the return of runs still at sea or in the lake because the river, with its new ingredient, would not "taste right" and would therefore be the wrong river. Returning fish would pass the river by each year and since they'd never encounter the taste they were looking for they might die out at sea. (I see no reason why the same contamination could not occur in lakes and oceans.) I realize that this is a rudimentary answer to the probably complex decline of a salmon run. However, these runs have taken very little time to decline and not much more to come back, at least to the point that they exist again. Other restoration projects—the whooping crane, for example—have not met with nearly this success. We've learned that if pollution levels are within acceptable limits imprinted fish will return and spawn. It is hard not to think that part of the imprint may be the pollutant itself, since the imprinting took place when the contaminant was present.

Nearly all current tongues are going to be intercepted by fish, assuming they're present. The fish, spread across the stream, can hardly avoid assisting each other. If one is alerted and begins to feed, he can be felt to be doing so by others who haven't yet tasted the reason for his actions. The "sounds," derived from movement, that a fish makes while feeding are different from those made when he's resting or running. The other fish hear him (or may even see him) and paddle over to join in. If fish are as sensitive as advertised then it wouldn't take very many nymphs scrambling up and out of the bottom to disturb it sufficiently and release a perceptible amount of taste or scent into the water. Long before the food may appear the fish would be alerted and presumably ready to pounce on the first item that showed.

I doubt fish normally encounter concentrations of this stimulant as great as the ones I stir up. During these periods the acitivity can become so intense that any of dozens of fly patterns work equally well. My best guess is that in everyday conditions trout alertness is raised to certain levels that are well below that of indiscriminate feeding. It could be that these lower levels result in selectivity, since higher levels are associated with a lack of it. The normal level is high enough to cause trout to respond only to certain visual signals and the response to the visual signal overrides the not-quite-high-enough alert status.

IN THE ABSENCE of The Taste, trout are inactive in 33- or 34-degree water. Activity, when it does occur, is often attributed to changing water temperature. But in such water I can cause the same sluggish fish to feed immediately and actively the instant the sediment cloud reaches them. So I don't think temperature change is the cause of feeding; rather it may be an indicator of some other event, perhaps a change in water chemistry. Or again when the temperature reaches a certain point insect activity begins and fish respond to the taste and sight of that activity. (I'm including the witnessed activity of other fish.) Temperature then would be a signpost for response and not a cause of it.

Moving water carries taste and eventually food to stationary fish. In still water moving fish may swim through a cloud of slowly moving taste. The "sound" of their feeding is transmitted through the lake attracting others just as it did on the river. Most lakes and rivers have similar environments in different locations. Within limits separate populations of the same food will be available at the same time. Separate hatches of the same species can and do occur in different places, simultaneously causing separate trout populations to feed at the same time. The similar habits of different species is one of the reasons different trout can select different insects in the same place and at the same time. Enter once again the process of selectivity.

I'm becoming convinced that trout selectivity is nothing more than a habit involving no more care than we use in buying items at the supermarket. I'm not trying to reduce the importance of the selection process, I'm suggesting that much of its mystery can be dispelled with some observations of our own behavior in similar situations. Retailers exploit our selectivity with color, size, shape and location of merchandise on the shelf. These tools sound remarkably like the ones we use to design and select fly patterns. Mother Nature's larder is just as carefully aranged as the supermarket—except that she may do better in eliminating most of her loss leaders.

The precision of selection by trout seems to have a lot to do with their eyesight, or lack of it, and level of physiological activity. On one occasion I lowered the same fly (minus its hook) into the fish I invariably found at the head of the eddy group. The fly was taken by active fish many more times than there were individual fish to take it. These fish were close to me (less than 10 feet away) and in low, clear water. The only fish that did not strike more than three or four times were the two largest, at the front of the group. And they opened and shut their mouths many more times than they apparently had reason to.

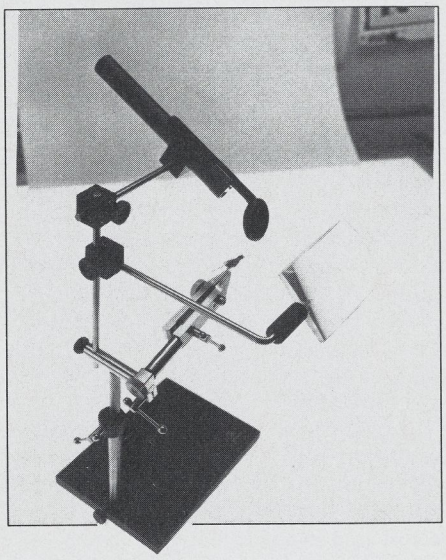
There are some indications that a trout's eyes do not react as fast as the trout does. In other words the fish moves to intercept the food faster than his eye can refocus in the decreasing distance. In this very complex visual environment, a blur may be all they get. If this is the case the precise imitation of minute insect parts is useless, whereas a few pieces of specific, accurate imitation would be essential. Approaching fly design from this standpoint, as well as others, could answer a number of questions about the

NEW GEAR

Hart's Content

What you get with the ATH Deluxe fly-tying vise is features. Lots of them. Maybe one or two too many, in fact. Ari Hart, designer of fine fly reels, has come up with a vise that will keep the most discriminating gadget crank happy. Precisely machined (in Holland) of polished stainless steel, it's a first-class pedestal vise that holds a wide range of hook sizes and—with all those levers, clamps and arms—it is adjustable for height (jaws rise from 5" to $8\frac{1}{4}$" above the base) and angle of incline; and the jaw-arm can rotate 360 degrees *and* spin on its upright post, to give front and back, top and bottom views of the fly-in-progress. On the jaws, the front knob adjusts the gap, the rear lever opens and closes it.

The perhaps-extraneous features are the magnifier and the penlight on the tall stalk behind the jaws. The lamp (two AA batteries) has an adjustable angle mirror, like the one the dentist sticks in your mouth, to direct its light onto the hook. The lens has a smaller, extra-magnification "eye" ground into the right side. Both take some getting used to—everyone bumps into one or the other at first—but you can easily remove them. They may prove their worth, however, while tying in the evening in camp, when lighting and visibility are poor.Upon opening the felt-lined, dovetailed hardwood box with sliding clear lid (not a bad piece of work in itself) that cradles the knocked-down vise, you may be intimidated: parts everywhere, and in



no apparent order. But fear not; the first go-round is pretty slow, even with the enclosed instructions, but after doing it several times we got the assembly down to below two minutes. (And no better way to appreciate how finely it's all made.)

We were impressed with how it holds even large streamer hooks. The vise is sturdy and stays in place while tying, even though the light and lens put the center of gravity higher than in other pedestal vises. The base has a nonskid rubber backing.

Perhaps too complicated for the casual tier, at $310 this vise is more appropriate for the person looking for a little extravagance. The vise often awakens the same covetousness many anglers feel upon seeing an ATH reel—*Gotta have one!*

ATH, Inc., Box 15129, Chevy Chase, MD 20815; 301-986-4725.

Eagle Threads

Eagle River Trading Company has begun to distribute, in the U.S. and Canada, a high-quality English tying thread that has been tested by a number of well-known tiers. According to Bill Grady of Eagle River, Dick Talleur ties Glo Bugs, which require high tension, with the new thread; we've done much tying with it— #4 bucktails to #20 dries—and agree that the thread is strong and easy-handling. It flattens well against a hook shank, which helps cut down bulk when tying smaller flies.

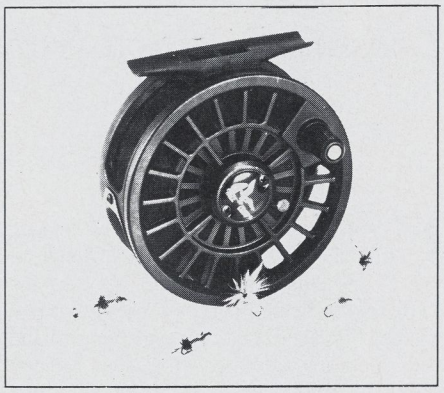
Grady is now working with the manufacturer to expand on the choice of colors (13 shades are presently available), and they're particularly interested in adding the fluorescent red popular with salmon-fly tiers. Price is about $1 for a 100- meter spool. Contact Eagle River Trading Company, Box 1810, Wakefield, MA 01880; 617-246-5630

Eagle Claws

Eagle Claw's new exposed-rim graphite fly reels (one for 5- to 7-weight lines and one for 7- to 9-weights) are good-looking, well-constructed and inexpensive. At 30 clicks per revolution, they sound fine, if a bit loud, and they turn and feel like a reel that costs a good bit more.

The full frame and foot are molded of a single piece of graphite composite; only the unobtrusive sheet-metal line guards are attached with screws. Spools snap on and off with great ease. The mechanical drag is not adjustable; it's really just an anti-overrun brake. True fish-slowing, if it's ever needed, is done with the palming rim. The most unusual feature of these reels is that they can be set for left- or right-hand wind without removing screws, flipping pawls, etc. Turning the knob on the back changes the winding direction by moving two opposing flat springs, one on on either side of the single pawl. They add or subtract pressure, allowing the spool to turn more easily one way or the other.

At $2\frac{7}{8}$" diameter, the smaller model 3080 is commendably light—$3\frac{3}{4}$ ounces—but the manufacturer's suggested 125 yards of backing might be optimistic. The major components are all fiber composite, stainless steel or beryllium copper, so corrosion is not likely to be a problem. These reels should deliver workman-like service in light- to medium-duty use, and



the price is right—about $25, and spare spools are about $10. Made in Taiwan. For your Eagle Claw dealer, contact Wright &McGill Co., Box 16011, Denver, CO 80216; 303-321-1481.

Gold Medalists

When we planned a trip to Grand Lake Stream, here in Maine, for landlocked salmon, it seemed like an ideal opportunity to try one of Pflueger's new Medalist Graphite fly rods, so we packed the $8\frac{1}{2}$-footer for 7/8-weights and put it through its paces.

It performed admirably, if not exactly to our personal tastes. Casting is smooth and powerful, and the rod handles 70 to 80 feet of WF7F line with little difficulty. The action is medium-soft with a slightly slow feel to it, and the blank will flex down into the grip, but it's not at all tip-heavy. The feel is rather like some good cane rods—a bit soft but it holds up impressively during energetic casting. And, as we found, there's plenty of fish-fighting strength.

Pflueger has been gradually expanding its fly rod line to 12 sizes. Blanks are made at Pflueger's South Carolina plant, of "100 percent 150-gram graphite" (the weight per square meter, impregnated with resin but minus its scrimcloth backing; the thickness is about .0045", depending upon fiber count. Tape of this weight is structurally more consistent than 120-gram) and carry Fuji strippers and Perfection snake guides. The rods range from a 7' 4/5-weight to a 9' 11/12-weight tarpon model. Most have resin-impregnated hardwood reel seats; the two smallest rods have cork seats. Each is in a gold-anodized aluminum tube, the cap of which is attached to the cloth rod bag by a short length of bead chain, ending the problem of lost caps.

Prices are about $125 for most models. Pflueger, Drawer S, Columbia, SC 29620; 803-754-7540. □

acceptance of flies at all, and the number of flies—real and artificial—that fish cleanly miss. A higher than resting state of physiological activity seems to reduce further a trout's ability to select, and makes matching the hatch possible. Once tasted, the natural insects themselves may serve to roll the ball even faster.

THE POSSIBILITY of a strike at the end of the swing is almost a given in wet-fly fishing. The behavior of the trout in the downstream eddy may help explain this. It could be that the fly ends up traveling, for the first time during the cast, at the proper speed through an area containing fish, and possibly more fish than we might normally find. The newcomers have moved over into the area after being alerted by the scent/taste of the disturbed water. (Any obstruction to that flow would of course change the direction of the current and put the taste somewhere else, encouraging the fish to move accordingly.)

Many species of nymphs crawl about and swim freely in the current in large numbers during certain periods at night. This is called behavioral drift. During these periods fish apparently feed very heavily. The disturbance of the bottom by such a large number of insects, as well as the scent of the streambed washing off their bodies, might trigger this feeding activity and bring it to unusually high levels. Trout are reported to be able to see objects well—if not distinctly—in low light. A combination of high levels of activity, vision sensitive to movement against a stationary background and an abundance of food might offset any difficulties finding it.

I don't think a trout's proclivity toward insects was carved in stone on Day One. Conceptually it makes more sense that in the beginning there were different types of food and different types of individuals to eat it. If a source of nourishment disappeared then so might the organism that relied upon it. When all was said and done mayflies, caddis, stoneflies and midges remained to supply those who had adapted to their habits. Everyone else either died or turned into carp and fed on cheeseballs. It may be that only those that happened to respond to the taste/scent of the streambed survived to produce more of their own.

IS THERE a relationship between space and levels of trout feeding activity? Is the space between individuals elastic under certain conditions? At high levels of activity trout seem to be able to operate in close proximity to their neighbors. At lower levels they may prefer more room.

Fish all feed where the food is, but not all fish hold or rest in feeding lanes. When feeding does occur in a specific area the non-residents not only move in but are apparently allowed to do so in a set hierarchy. Unless they're removed, I've seen the same fish occupy the same place in a school for months on end; none of them were residents of the area. Is the acceptance of others in common—and competitive—feeding areas just as it is among land animals at a watering hole? Are territorial demands flexible and/or is there some sort of absentee landlordship? Arguments over turf are far more prevalent among predators than among the predated, and the trout is a predator.

It occurred to me that if feeding activity decreases the farther one gets from the eddy source there may be thresholds of sensitivity through which the trout must pass in order for behavior to change. These thresholds seem to be based on two things. One is the concentration of liquor in the water, and the other is an accumulation of responses (each building on its predecessor) to reduced levels of concentration. Behavior in the eddy would indicate the former, but behavior during a hatch involving an entire pool would favor both.

In high concentrations of liquor at the upper end of the eddy there are high levels of activity and even attraction. Activity, attraction and attendance stop at some distance downstream even though the taste is probably present (but very weak). Could a greater amount of dissolved oxygen in the water above the bottom react with the liquor, forming a new compound and attracting fish? Could it be the reaction itself? Is it possible that water composition is sufficiently different from one end of the pool to the other to alter the behavior of the fish in it—for instance a fish like salmon or steelhead?

Trout feeding areas are determined by the location of the food they're going to eat, and this often occurs in a pattern and is thus repeatable. Most fish view the same pattern the same way. There is no reason to restrict the idea of a fly pattern to a Light Cahill, Royal Wulff or Hare's Ear. A fly "pattern" can be the pattern an artificial—or a natural—makes on the surface as seen from underneath. If these, why not also the pattern made by a whole population of insects on the surface, or arranged in the column of the stream itself? In a hatch it would be a number of identical individuals located at various times between the surface of the bottom and the surface of the water.

To fish successfully we must fit the pattern of life as it exists. This can be done by matching it, by not matching it or something in between. Determining which of these avenues to take requires more information than most of us are willing to gather. A lack of information is manifested by the number of fish who remain unconvinced and uncaught. Even if you create a pattern by disturbing the streambed you must adapt to it in order to be effective. In order to adapt you must investigate–and understand the investigation.

—*John Betts*

Regal Anti-Reverse Fishing Reel

For fresh or salt water. Available in one size, capacity 150 yards 20-lb. backing & WF8F. Reel with leather case, $300; reel with extra spool and double case, $425; extra spool with case, $125. Made in the U.S.A. by Regal Engineering, Inc., RFD 2, Tully Road, Orange, MA 01364. 617-575-0626.

JERRY AND "T" DOIRON, the Massachusetts brothers who designed and manufacture the unique Regal fly-tying vise, put their heads together and came up with a salmon/steelhead/bonefish reel. The prototypes received about two years of field-testing, which led to many important modifications, and this spring the reel went to the dealers. Every product from this company is worth a close look, and any fly reel that sells for $300 deserves a particularly squint-eyed examination. We've now fished the Regal for a week, understressing it on sea-trout up to 17 pounds, and we have a few observations to pass along.

To describe it straightforwardly, the reel is a fully machined, cage-frame, anti-reverse type, with a dovetailed foot, a solid, interchangeable spool and both internal and external braking. Although no larger than many trout reels at 3 5/8" x 1 5/16", it weighs 11 ounces. (By comparison, a Medalist 1495 is the same outward size but half the weight.) So the Regal immediately gives an impression of great strength and solidity.

Disassembling the reel does nothing to change that impression; rather, the simplicity of the innards reinforces it. There aren't many parts to lose—none, in fact, except maybe the crank handle, and if you misplace that you're a hopeless klutz. Sure, there's a roller thrust bearing and a washer on the spindle under the spool, but they won't stray because Regal has thoughtfully captured them with a spring clip. Even switching from right- to left-hand wind won't get you into trouble: Pop the drag knob free from the crank (it's held by a rubber O-ring), shake out the upper thrust bearing and washer, flop the anti-reverse ratchet over and realign it on its pin, and reassemble.

That "ratchet" deserves some praise. It's a steel collar with a bearing ball trapped loosely in a cavity in the inner wall. In the reel, the ball is positioned over a necklace of gear teeth cut into the spindle. The ball's pocket is shaped so that in one direction of rotation the ball skips easily over the teeth; in the other direction the ball jams instantly, keeping the crank from turning backwards and allowing it to apply friction to the spool sidewall. (Resist the urge to grease the ball, as that will keep it from moving freely in its pocket.) The teeth of our sample reel's spindle show only the track of the ball's path after a week's hard fishing; no actual wear is evident.

The spring plunger and pinion gear at the base of the spindle are only to provide a click and overrun protection at low drag settings. Note however that this gear and the spindle are one machined piece of hardened and ground steel, fastened solidly into the one-piece reel frame with a high-tensile Allen bolt.

The drag is blessedly simple. Screwing down the large, conical, comfortably knurled knob squeezes the crankplate ever more tightly against the cork drag disc. The swept area of this brake is a full 3.75 square inches, so there's more than enough stopping power available. The cork is solidly glued and plenty thick, but it apparently wouldn't take much wear to let the aluminum crankplate contact the bronze sleeve bushing in the spool, which pokes up partway through the cork. The situation then would be as in a car's disc brake when the pad material has worn away, letting the mounting studs scrape the brake rotor: wear, lots of it, and fast. However, Regal glazes each cork drag before shipping, and seals and protects it with a silicone coating; random reels are spun on a torture machine until hot to the touch, and T Doiron reports they've never yet been able to wear away enough of the cork to see this happen. This low wear/high drag capability is also due in part to the superbly hard and smooth finish on the crankplate itself, which (like the rest of the reel) is polished and hard-coat anodized after machining.

The pitch of the threads is just right for drag adjustment, but fine setting isn't that critical as additional drag can be applied instantly by pressing directly against the spool or by palming either the radiused knob or the crank handle, which adds friction to the cork. Easy and effective.

Because changing spools is so easy, Regal decided to glue the cork to the spool instead of into the frame; thus if you buy the whole system—reel and two spools in a two-pocket leather case—you'll always have a spare drag readily available, as well as another type of line.

Everything, says Regal, is either stainless or protected against corrosion. The reel is more handsome than its b&w pictures suggest—those little holes in the spool rim are to thread the tippet through for storage—but what are we to make of that sensuous crank shape? There's a strong hint of Yin and Yang there, positive/negative, the Eastern equivalent of *We have met the enemy and he is us*. Are the Doiron brothers, gifted machinists of French-Canadian extraction, really Zen masters? The impressively minimalist design of both this reel and their successful vise might bear this out. The only eyesore is the engraving on the back side—truly ugly. (But aha! Perhaps it's the flaw that mystics insist perfection cannot exist without!) Anyway, all you reel makers out there, listen up: When you've got the engineering under control, take your prototypes to a good industrial design house and let them work up the final graphics.

Fishing the Regal on a salmon rod—where its weight balances nicely—is a pleasure marred only by the somewhat harsh click (which, however, can be toned down by fiddling with the plunger spring in the spool). Things fall readily to hand, the crank knob is reasonably comfortable, and the reel inspires the confidence that lets you concentrate on the water or a fish instead of on your tackle. We think this

ROD & REEL

The rolling nymph

NEIL PATTERSON describes his tactics for deep-lying trout on the Kennet

Neil Patterson fishing a stretch of the Kennet where he began experimenting with deeply-fished nymphs.

I HAVE A GOOD friend who works for a tobacco company. One of the cigars this company makes tastes, in my opinion, little better than burning rags. It does, however, have one saving grace. It's inspired some of the funniest and best-loved television commercials of this decade. When I eventually confessed my opinion of this cigar and asked him why it sold so well and why anyone in his right mind could ever contemplate smoking them, he replied: "They don't smoke the cigar; they smoke the advertising."

You could use the same logic to explain why chalk-stream trout should ever want to take artificial nymphs into their mouths. Simply, they do not eat the fur and feather; they eat the presentation. And to my mind, 75 per cent of good nymph presentation — selling your artificial to the trout — is getting it to the correct depth. And that's on a horizontal plain directly in line with its nose so that all it has to do is open its mouth and close it again.

Under most conditions — and I'm talking here about trout lying in up to 2 ft of medium-paced water — this is not too demanding a task for a nymph lightly weighted with copper wire to perform. A Pheasant Tail Nymph as prescribed by Frank Sawyer will comfortably reach trout feeding at these depths.

But no matter how murderous it may be on Choulston Shallows or on the Home Water on the Wiltshire Avon, the Pheasant Tail ceases to be effective — indeed it was never intended to be used — against trout lying in 4 ft or even 5 ft of water. And this, as I'm consistently reminded every summer, is where the biggest trout lie on the stretch of the Kennet which I fish.

It was these trout that, in the beginning, drove me to developing a heavier nymph, two or three times the weight of the standard Pheasant Tail; and it was when putting this heavier nymph to practice that it first became apparent that a heavily-weighted nymph had more uses than just getting to trout lying in parts of the river Pheasant Tails could not reach. It had many advantages — and opened up several tactical possibilities — in water depths I had once considered well in range of the Pheasant Tail; namely in water up to, and no deeper than, 3 ft. It's the first of these tactics that I want to discuss here.

☆ ☆ ☆

If you're allowed to float-fish at the back end of the year for chalk-stream grayling, you will have noticed that, whereas your float wobbles away in one direction, your bait likes to skid off in another. This display of mutual uncooperation illustrates the fact that currents on the surface that bring food to a trout are often totally different from currents beneath the surface as they bounce off bridge supports, mid-stream obstacles, and the banks of the river itself. It's like some enormous pin-ball machine down there. In the summer when surface food becomes less plentiful, the trout take control of lies in these sub-surface food-bearing alleys. How can you detect these alleys and follow them along to spot trout?

On the Kennet many of these channels are staked out by lines of white patches on the river bed which are in fact small pockets of clean gravel. Most people believe these patches are made by the action of the trout's tail brushing away the silt down to sand and gravel, or by his nose digging for shrimps. It is easy to see how this idea came about, but it is not completely true. Much more often they are caused by the flow of water where it is forced over a stone, round a stick, or between two weed-beds. Usually it is where two or more currents — however tiny or insignificant — meet underwater and create enough thrust to grub slowly away at the bottom.

These markers tell you where the flow narrows underwater, similar to a 'glide' on the surface. And where there's a narrowing, not only is the water being channelled into one spot, but the food contained in that water is being channelled too. It is here that trout lie waiting to ambush food.

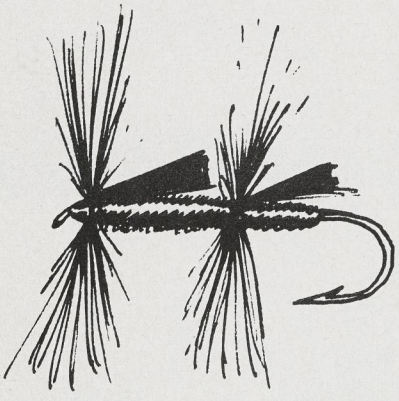
An exasperating sight, which becomes increasingly familiar as the summer days grow longer, is that of trout during the day lying seemingly nailed by the fins either in, a little to the side of, or directly in front of, these white-lane junctions. Unlike trout lying a little above them in mid-water, they appear totally disinterested in any nymph swum in their general vicinity, and because of this have caused more bitten finger-nails than have a season of Hitchcock thrillers.

Why do these fish present the difficulties they do? I do not believe that trout are capable of having whims and fancies, so I conclude that they lie on the bottom in this manner for a purpose. What purpose?

No bait-fisherman, trotting for grayling

Modern fly-dressings

THE PAIRING SEDGE



TOWARDS DUSK, sedge-flies may be seen flying paired over the water, and they often fall in. When they do, trout eat them, and where the trout are very large, advantage may be taken of this fact to fish an imitation of the paired insects, allowing the use of a bigger, stronger hook (a No 10 or even No 8, long-shank) and a stronger leader point.

Only three materials are used; medium brown silk, pheasant-tail fibres, and natural red cock hackle. The bodies are made of the pheasant-tail fibres wound over a varnished silk binding, while the varnish is wet. The wings are made of bunches of natural red cock hackle fibres, clipped square, and set at a very narrow angle to the hook-shank.

The rear body and wing are about two-thirds the length of the front body and wing, the female being that much larger than the male. But both wound hackles are of the same size, rather long in fibre; put a turn or two of silk behind each after winding them, to make them stand well out, rather than slanting back at all.

The fly should be waterproofed by total immersion in a silicone-wax floatant, but ensure the leader is degreased and sinks directly it falls on the water.

At appropriate times, this pattern may be cast out and left immobile until either a trout takes it, or the effect of wind or drift induces drag and necessitates re-casting. But more entertaining is casting to rising fish. Aim to drop the fly in the centre of the rise-ring, or, in a river, a foot upstream. Trout will, if cruising, turn back and chomp the fly very quickly. It is fatal to strike too soon. Count three and tighten.

Richard Walker

on the bottom, escapes the problem of his float overtaking his bait and pulling it along; it is caused by two things — the bait dragging on the river bed and the fact that the current on the bottom layer of the river — usually only a few inches — is considerably slower and slacker in proportion to the middle and upper layers as it negotiates obstacles on the river bed. Because of this I had always suspected that trout lie in the bottom layer because there they were exerting less energy to hold their station than they would if they were to lie a foot or so higher, in mid-water, or at the surface. In a sense, I had convinced myself that these trout refused my nymph because they were resting. Two things were to swiftly change my mind.

During the drought of 1976, with less water in the river, it was easy to see what was going on beneath the surface, and I noticed a good deal that I had never spotted before. On rooting expeditions with my nymph-net, and by lying on the bank peering into the water, it soon became clear that it was not just trout which were aware of the more relaxed flow in the bottom layer. Indeed, not only did I watch nymphs and shrimps bumble downstream in the slacker current, I also saw them skip from stone to stone upstream against the easier-paced flow. Often they would be washed back a foot or so before regaining a hold. But the most illuminating discovery on these outings was that I consistently netted more food from the current in this bottom layer than from the water above it.

Because of this I was not surprised when I noticed that not all trout lying on the bottom were 'closed for the day'. Every now and again the mouths of several of the trout I watched would open and shut, clouds of silt puffing from their gills. The fact was that although these trout were clearly not in quite the same party mood as, say, trout feeding in mid-water, there was a chance — perhaps a certainty — that they would accept food brought to them in the leisurely current. From observations, such food would have to be presented expressly on the trout's terms: it should not demand their lifting themselves out of the bottom layer into faster mid-water where food took more exertion to intercept.

☆ ☆ ☆

This phenomenon of trout feeding on a fixed level as if rigidly blinkered is not unusual behaviour for a nymph fisherman to encounter. In the same way a trout sucking at spinners or hatching nymphs in or under the surface film, and refusing food presented on top of the surface, is not considered remarkable or, indeed, unreasonable, to the practised dry-fly man.

What perhaps was unreasonable was for me to expect a nymph designed to take trout in mid-water to take trout from the bottom layer. The latter required the nymph to plunge directly to the trout's level — right on the river-bed itself — and once there, to keep travelling at a speed no faster than other food ambling down in the slower current. Literally it would have to roll, or drag, along the actual gravel.

Although a Pheasant Tail often reached the bottom, it simply did not have the 'clout' to counteract the slightest pull from the leader moving at the faster speed of the mid-water current. Instead of rolling, it was immediately lifted out of the bottom layer, thus becoming unacceptable to the trout.

The problem of rolling a nymph to a trout was immediately overcome by using a heavier nymph, the technique being almost as straightforward as the results. Having judged the depth and distance of a pre-selected trout, I cast my nymph well upstream and allowed it to sink immediately into the bottom layer. To avoid any unnecessary pull from the leader or reel-line, I cast a line similar to one I use to avoid drag with a dry-fly. Once the nymph has arrived at a point on the river-bed, a foot or so away from the target, I let it roll along the gravel, giving it a gentle sideways twitch just before it reaches the trout.

☆ ☆ ☆

The hardest part of the tactic is keeping your nymph on a direct collision course with the trout because, no matter how accurate your cast, sub-surface currents can divert your nymph. This is much more obvious with a Pheasant Tail than with a heavier nymph which, with more weight, steers a straighter course and enables you to lift it out of the bottom layer if need be and plonk it straight back down in line with the trout.

The leader, preferably one with a 4-5 ft tippet of as light gauge as possible, should be stripped of all grease. For this reason when rolling a nymph, you must be able to see the trout, or judge when the trout takes your nymph or rely on a sixth-sense to tell you. There will be no indication on your leader which, should have sunk beneath the surface before the take.

Although rolling your nymph is effective when fished to trout lying tight under your own bank, I have found it even more successful when cast up and across to trout in mid-stream. To tackle these trout you should position yourself so that when the nymph reaches the trout, you are standing a fraction downstream because a sideways twitch of the nymph is more attractive than a nymph twitched upwards and towards you.

Fishing the bottom layer is, I believe, a relatively unexplored area of chalk-stream fishing. Judged by results of autopsies, bottom-feeding trout do not seem as selective as are trout feeding higher in the water, but, from observations, they are considerably more choosy about how food is presented to them. The angler who can roll a nymph so that it is presented in that crucial horizontal plane in front of the trout's mouth may just fill his basket on those drowsy summer afternoons when most trout appear to be in a torpor.

Next month I will explain how to tie the heavier nymph and discuss a situation where its extra weight can help catch trout in comparatively shallow water.

Leaded nymphs on the shallows

Materials needed for the writer's Nappy Nymph, a weighted pattern.

by NEIL PATTERSON

IF YOU WERE able to climb into a trout's skull to see if you could find out how he thinks, you wouldn't be cramped for space. In fact, you could ask a few friends in with you. The truth is, the brain of our so-called wily quarry hardly fits the space allocated to it; and in the animal world the trout ranks as a lower form of life than the common garden sparrow.

Because of this, for the trout to be described as "intelligent", "devious", or "crafty", is, I'm afraid, nonsense. For the trout, thinking — and therefore the ability to reason, solve a problem, day-dream, or even have a sense of humour — is an impossibility.

Even though it's unlikely a trout could ever be reincarnated and return to this earth as a second Einstein, it has successfully managed to do the one thing required of it: ensure the survival of its species. And it has done this, not by intelligence, but by instinct — which, in the day-to-day life of the trout prompts every action and every move.

If a trout is positioned in a certain spot, and at a certain depth, in a chalk-stream, it is there for a purpose. Last month I discussed why trout lie belly-flat on the gravels during the summer months. I suggested that, along with relaxing in the steadier flow of the bottom layer of the river, they were also wallowing in a huge bed of wriggling, kicking food-forms and would take a carefully presented nymph. I also explained that the most effective method of catching these trout was to cast a fast-sinking nymph upstream and let it "roll" along the river bed to an individual, pre-selected trout.

A heavier nymph than the standard Netheravon Pheasant Tail is needed if the water depth is anything more than 1 ft. The nymph I use for this tactic, although based on the Pheasant Tail, really comes from an idea by Jules Verne. It is designed to sink swiftly to the bottom of the stream to reach trout in deepish water, but it can be fished in shallower water and it is this second technique I want to discuss here.

☆ ☆ ☆

The story begins on the fourth evening in a week of heavy evening hatches of pale wateries. Despite the huge amount of fly, relatively few trout were feeding on the surface, most — and the largest — hanging in mid-water feeding on nymphs. I had spent three evenings trying to interest these trout, but I had failed to have a fraction of the success I had expected. The fourth evening I took my shooting-stick to the river and left my rod behind.

Sitting quietly watching these trout was a revealing experience and gave me valuable insight into how trout feed beneath the surface when there's a good hatch of fly either brewing up or in progress. Although the water that evening must have resembled some kind of ephemeropteran *bouillabaisse,* the trout seemed particularly cool about the culinary glut going on around them, holding their positions with sober restraint. Instead of darting from one nymph to the next, they made definite moves to either side of their mid-water lies, and having intercepted the nymph in question, returned to their original positions where the same procedure of spot, mark, line-up, and trap would start over again.

THE NAPPY NYMPH

Tying thread: Well-waxed brown silk.

Hook: Size 16 Yorkshire Stronghold (or a 14 with rather long shank).

Tails and wing cases: Hen pheasant tail fibres.

Body: Wound tapered strip of nappy-liner ribbed with tying silk.

Thorax: 4-8 strips of wine-bottle lead above and below shank; cover with two turns of nappy liner. Varnish body, including thorax for a faster-sinking more durable fly.

From the deliberation of their movements, and from the length of time between them lining up and opening their mouths, they were clearly selecting the nymph they were to trap well in advance of its reaching them — out of a crowd of what must have been several other equally-eligible candidates. And having done this, they seemed to set out after the unfortunate insect with an irreversible decisiveness, ignoring all else until it had been intercepted.

It occurred to me that if I wanted my nymph to catch trout the following evening it first had to catch the trout's attention, not when it reached him, but before it reached him. In a sense, my nymph needed to be presented not just accurately, but attractively — several feet in front of the trout. It was from these observations that I returned to the river with the idea of a double-lift technique. This in effect constituted not one, but two induced takes. The first of these lifts I called the "advance lift".

Creeping up behind one of the trout I had watched the evening before, I cast my nymph well upstream and let it sink to the level of his mouth about 6-7 ft up from him. Once at that distance, I lifted my rod-tip sharply, pulling the nymph high in the water — allowing it to sink back immediately to the horizontal plane a foot or so from the trout's mouth. On the drop I could see the trout had lined up with my artificial, fins bristling like little wire brushes. When it reached him I lifted again, but it never reached the surface, its journey upwards being abruptly checked by a trout with all the sensitivity of the Berlin Wall.

For those of you wondering how anyone could ever execute this tactic with a nymph as lightly weighted as a Pheasant Tail, let me tell you that you can't. The "advance lift" was developed not for the Pheasant Tail, but for the fast-sinking nymph I devised for deep water. With this heavily-weighted nymph, not only is the tactic relatively simple, it's also more effective. Here's why.

☆ ☆ ☆

The tactic demands that the nymph, once hitting the water, should sink like a brick to the horizontal plane in front of the trout. Then the nymph must be lifted sharply in the water several feet upstream of the trout to catch its eye. And in the remaining distance it has to sink straight back to mouth level immediately in front of the trout.

Getting the nymph back on this plane was more important than I had first thought because, as any nymph fisherman will have seen — but perhaps not noticed — a trout is much more likely to move from side to side than lift up in the water to ambush food.

In short, no matter how shallow or how deep the fish is lying, the tactic demands a quick sink, and therefore the use of a fast-sinking, heavily-weighted nymph.

The tactic, like "rolling" nymphs, also demands you see the trout take your artificial because there should be not the slightest hint of grease on your leader — this must sink with the pull of the nymph, or even better, on its own accord.

I recommend a leader tip of 4-5 ft of light line and a leader length of 12 ft. On the leafy, sedgy banks of the chalk-stream a cast longer than 12 ft results in hook-ups. I rely on what accuracy I can muster, and not on the length of my leader, to avoid unfortunate introductions between my reel-line and the trout.

After a short time I discovered that the induced take after the "advance lift" was, in actual fact, superfluous. More often than not, if the trout were going to take the nymph at all, it would set his mind on taking it after the "advance lift" and would line-up to intercept.

As well as introducing me to two new tactics, my heavy nymph also introduced me to a new nymph material: baby nappy liners, the tissue-fibre variety that — without getting too technical about it — lie between baby and the nappy towel.

This material is easily obtainable, and another advantage is that it's simple to dye. Since both the tactics I've discussed involve trout taking the nymph at a relatively slow pace, I believe colour is important. Using "Magic Marker Speed Dry" felt-pens — available from any art shop — you have a choice of 112 colours that dry in a matter of seconds, without pots, pans, rainbow-coloured fingers, and inconsistencies.

All you need to do is stroke down the nappy liner with the pen longways, on just one side, and cut the liner into strips. The dye, which is waterproof, holds as fast as any I know.

☆ ☆ ☆

After lining up shades with naturals in my tank I recommend you buy "Magic Markers" in the following shades, which, incidentally, are the nearest I have ever got to the colour of both immature and mature nymphs of all the common species: Pale Olive (No. A617); and Pale Sepia (No. A207).

Having strapped strips of wine bottle lead on both top and underside of the hook to build up a thorax, I needed a strip of material less bulky and flatter than a bunch of feather-fibres to cover it. In a way, I needed to "wallpaper" over the lead. A tapered strip of nappy liner wound gently round the thorax got over this problem perfectly.

The last advantage of nappy liners is that it soaks in varnish like blotting paper, making the nymph totally tooth-proof and giving the body a convincing translucency. I use "Yorkshire Stronghold" hooks for these nymphs because they give extra weight with the added advantage of a long hook-shank.

For me, the "Nappy Nymph" has achieved the impossible. It's replaced the Pheasant Tail in my fly-box — something I though could never happen. It's managed this because, using lead strips, I now have more flexibility over the amount of "sink" I incorporate in my nymphs and can use different weights as the situation demands.

More importantly, the "Nappy Nymph" has earned its spurs in terms of trout caught. By being heavier, it gives me, and not the current, complete control over it in the water regardless of whether the plan is to roll, lift, or twitch it down to a waiting trout.

So catch them by day . . .

MOST EXPERIENCED anglers will agree that, under normal conditions, the best time for catching sea-trout in rivers is during the hours of darkness; and that probably the best method, and certainly the most convenient, is wet-fly.

But there are many enthusiasts, especially among those who have seen quite a number of seasons come and go, who do not like to fish during the night or are unable to do so. And as the whimsical sea-trout is a notoriously poor taker during the hours of daylight, tempting him then can set real problems and test even the most knowledgeable angler's ingenuity to the full.

There is a further certain fact, however — namely that the most productive daylight hours for sea-trout are just before dusk and immediately after dawn. But is fly still the most rewarding method? It may well be so before dusk if very small lures are used, but my own experience suggests that once daylight is fully in — and that means around 4.30 am in midsummer on the average latitude in Great Britain — then a small, live bait is more effective.

I have taken many summer sea-trout between 4 a.m. and 8 a.m. (and sometimes much later if the sky was overcast) with a small lively worm, but I think an even better bait, generally speaking, is the tiny "beef maggot" or *Calliphora vomitoria.*

These are the same maggots (dull white in colour, barrel-shaped and 6-8 millimetres in length) which many anglers, in what now seem to be days of yore, insisted on attaching to their flies at night. They are then a nuisance, of course, for various reasons, not the least being the difficulty of working with them in the dark, and one rarely sees them used in this way nowadays.

But as a bait in daylight they are a much better proposition and it is unfortunate that some anglers recoil with something akin to revulsion at the thought of procuring and handling those admittedly unattractive little creatures. But they do kill fish.

☆ ☆ ☆

Getting hold of them is easy enough. I put a piece of meat or fish into a polythene bag and bury it in the garden. After a fortnight or so it will be crawling with maggots. If the smell of rotting flesh upsets you and puts you off touching them (it is true that the odours exuded are extremly vile) they can be picked up individually with a pair of tweezers and dropped into a tin box containing oatmeal. This will help to clean them and at the same time will allay the smell.

The creatures last as maggots for about ten days. Therefore, if you keep them too long and suddenly open the box, you might well be assailed by a swarm of bluebottles eager to stretch their wings!

I like to use a fly-rod/spinning-reel combination, with a 5-6 lb line and a cast of 3 ft. The size 16 hook is pushed through the maggot's head and concealed entirely in the tiny bait.

I have found the maggot most effective in a deep pool, but there must be sufficient flow to keep the bait moving downstream. To achieve casting distance lead shot, or, preferably (to avoid hanking), a bubble float is necessary. The latter has a further advantage because you know that if the line stops it will not be a snag but a fish which is mouthing the bait. This is important, since the take is often almost imperceptible and in fact sometimes not the slightest movement, not even the slightest tremor, is transmitted along the line to the angler's finger.

So if the bait stops its downstream progress, leave well alone. After a minute or 90 seconds you should experience a slight tugging sensation which will quickly become more pronounced, although there will be short intervals of a quarter-of-a-minute or so when nothing seems to be happening. Each time you feel the fish pull give slack by lifting your finger from the spool. When he is on he will run hard and jump, or crash to the surface.

Some heavy sea-trout can be lured in this way — I well remember taking five one July morning including one of 6¼ and another of 4½ pounds — so it is wise policy to keep the reel tension fairly minimal in view of the lightish nylon being used and the tremendous pressure that can be exerted by a big, panicking sea-trout when it realises that there is something far wrong and decides to go.

James Fyfe

IRISH COLUMN

Seven to the rescue

AN UNUSUAL thought about Irish salmon. The stocks may be saved from the nets not by clamour from anglers or from fishery owners (who are very vocal at times), but by the seven regional managers of statutory fishery districts covering the Republic. The people in Northern Ireland might take a tip from this writing.

Early in the season just ended the Minister of Fisheries, Mr O'Toole, with some flourish which is not his style, declared that he was extending the netting season by one week for drift netters generally, and two weeks for estuary netters in a few southern districts.

But the salmon netters' season failed mysteriously. There was drought, which ought to have favoured the nets, but did not. There was abundant netting pressure everywhere, but still the salmon were absent — and absent from the rivers as well.

The position became so bad that the Minister had to revoke part of his own order extending the netting season, and this is where the regional fishery managers come into this report. Combined, they have written to the Minster saying that never again should he wildly promise such netting freedom, seeing the state of stocks.

Clearly, the idea is to promote the strength of the seven fishery boards, which at times are given a hard sterile ride by the Fishery Department proper. I hope it never comes to a battle between The Minister, the Department, the fishery boards and the managers, but here the inherent power of the managers should not be ignored. It is grand to see that the managers, who are caught up on the daily work of fishery adminstration in "the water" as it were, instead of in Dublin offices, are prepared to take on adversaries at a vital time.

Anyone for sea trout?

THE SEA TROUT anglers along the western coasts got their reward in the late September and early October when the late rains brought the shoals into the rivers and lakes. The lakes in the high hills of Connemara, for example, were packed with trout. Catching, whether legal or illegal, was so great that as one drove home men were seen actually distributing sea trout to known neighbouring occupants of houses along the roads! John Lawlor, of Dublin, was the happy man on the Derryclare butts, beside Lough Inagh, on September 30, the last day for salmon angling there. First he caught a cock salmon of 21 lb and then four others to total 60 lb! Exceptional, yes, but through the season he fished there for 10 days and got nothing!

Big day in Eire

DECEMBER 1 will be an important day in the Republic. The staffs of the seven fishery boards and those of the now defunct Inland Fisheries Trust, taken over by the Central Fisheries Board, will be merged under the management of the seven regional boards. A point of much contention this, and adjustments may be hard and tedious.

But it is clearly understood and desired by many anglers that well-devised management of resources is urgently needed, as well as money, to bring back the bloom on trout angling.

George Burrows

FLIES the Scots way

Jimmy Younger traces the origins and then ties one of the most successful wet flies ever devised.

THE PETER ROSS was one of many Scottish teal-winged flies that appeared around the turn of the century and quickly became one of the most important wet flies ever devised.

As with all flies that have remained popular over many years, these flies were quite easy to tie, looked good and all caught fish, albeit, some more than others.

I believe, and my view is shared by others, that the Peter Ross evolved by way of the Teal and Red. If you substitute a black hackle for the brown or red game hackle, and lengthen the tag by one or two extra turns, you have something pretty near to the Peter Ross.

The older reference books state that the body should be a third silver and two thirds scarlet seal fur, but nowadays half silver and half seal fur is the norm. Strange to say, I know of no other pattern of fly that uses the silver and red combination in this way.

The teal feather has long been a popular feather and flies using teal for the wing are excellent representations of various species of small fry.

The Peter Ross has been a favourite fly on Loch Leven for many years as a shrimp imitation. At a glance we could never imagine how it could look anything like a freshwater shrimp, but, when tied on the popular wee doubles in sizes 12 or 14, it certainly does take on the shape and colour of some of the species of shrimp which abound in the Loch.

Place the hook in the vice and wind a layer of tying-silk down towards the eye of the hook and back again, to about mid-way between the point and the barb of the hook. Select six or seven fibres from a golden pheasant tippet and tie them in.

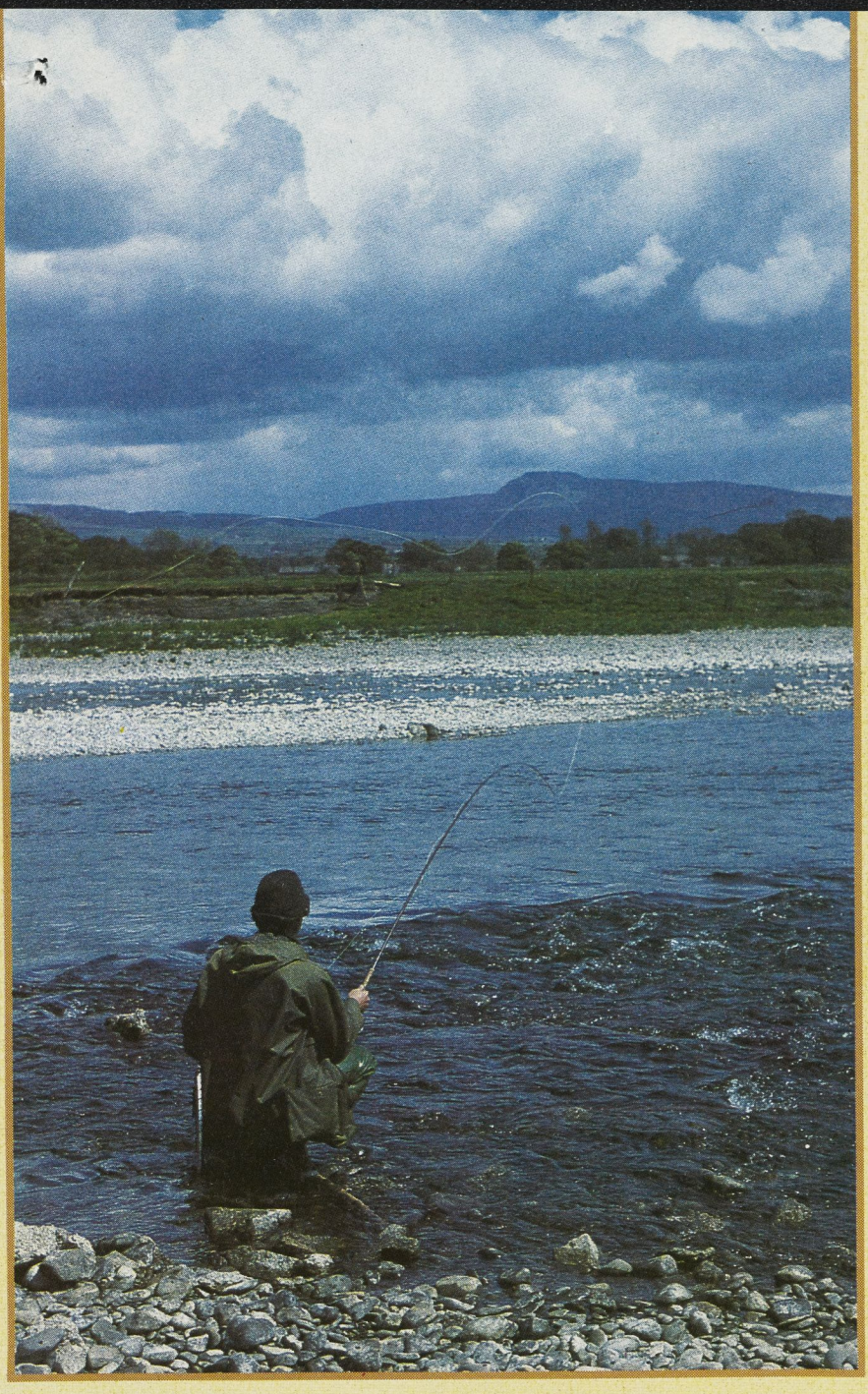
Next, tie in a length of oval silver and a shorter piece of flat silver. Form the first half of the body with the flat, and cut off excess tinsel. Making sure there is plenty of wax on the tying silk, dub on a small amount of scarlet seal fur to complete the second half of the body but remember to leave room for the hackle and wing. Rib through the whole body with the oval tinsel.

Select a good soft black hen hackle. Two or three turns will be sufficient on the smaller hooks and I usually use the point of the hook as a guide to the correct hackle length. The easiest way to wing the fly is to select a teal flank feather, strip away the soft fibres from each side, and to roll the remainder into a bunch. Place the wing squarely on top of the hook, and, when satisfied that the position and length is correct, bind down with five or six tight turns of the tying silk. Cut off the excess feather, form a neat head and whip-finish. One or two coats of varnish completes the fly.

The dressing

Tail — golden pheasant tippet
Body — first half flat silver tinsel; second half scarlet seal fur
Rib — oval silver tinsel
Hackle — black hen
Wing — well marked teal flank
Head — black

A colour picture of the Peter Ross tied by Jimmy Younger appears on Page 3.



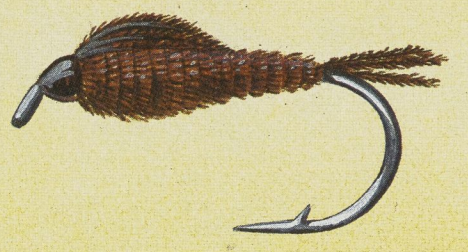
Where t

ON THE CHALK streams of the South of England the names of Skues and Sawyer have become synonymous with nymph fishing. Frank Sawyer was a great countryman and angler. He will, among many other things, be remembered as the man who developed the Pheasant Tail nymph, a pattern tied with copper wire and thus weighted to make a good entry and sink quickly to the level of the nymphing trout.

Whilst this pattern may be taken as it simply drifts towards a fish, it is at its most effective when lifted in front of a trout in what has become known as the 'induced take' method. To this extent, whilst the P.T. does look like a nymph, movement is far more important. This may be emphasised by recalling how Major Oliver Kite could catch fish on his 'bare hook' versions of the Pheasant Tail nymphs which had hardly any dressing left on them and sported only a hump of copper wire.

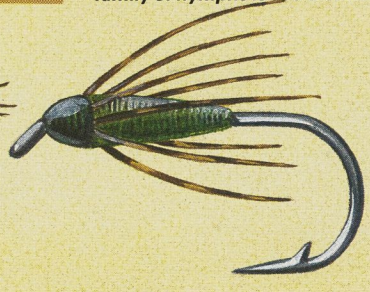
G. E. M. Skues, on the other hand, did not use the induced take method and used what we might term static nymphs. A typical Skues nymph was a silk or herl body, a few whisps of feather fibre tails, a fur thorax and a tiny hen hackle in front of the thorax. When wet, it looks like a mature nymph on the point of emergence and, as such, is fished statically just under the surface film. Now F. M. Halford maintained that most nymphs dart around quickly (in fact, many only crawl along) and therefore cannot adequately be imitated. Skues, on the other hand, was right in stating that nymphs do float

The North Country home of the sparsely dressed wet fly. Lacking the mobility of the wispy hackle, the more solid Pheasant Tail family of nymphs is at a distinct disadvantage.

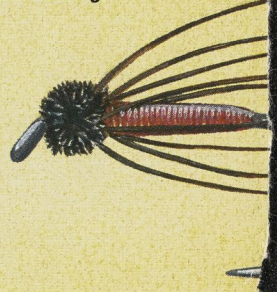


Sawyer's Pheasant Tail Nymph.

A 'static' nymph in the Skues style.



Soft-hackled spider for downstream fishing.



Herl-headed ve of the soft-hac downstream spic

be Pheasant Tail fails

statically along near to the surface film just before the adult fly emerges.

Chalk stream anglers may therefore make their choice. They may fish the Skues nymph statically, or employ a Pheasant Tail nymph to imitate what Oliver Kite termed an 'agile darter', or a nymph ascending towards the surface film. On the rough, rain-fed rivers, the position may be quite different.

Let the river decide the style of nymph to choose advises Roger Fogg

In my opinion, the weighted P.T. nymph is not a good pattern for rough stream fishing and I know others who share my opinion. Much of the water in such streams does not lend itself to the induced take method and if the P.T. is drifted statically, or fished upstream in traditional wet-fly fashion, it appears rather lifeless and rarely does well. On the other hand, the Skues-styled nymph does fare a little better, but, lacking much of a hackle (because it was designed to enter the water quickly), it does not possess enough 'life' for rough stream work.

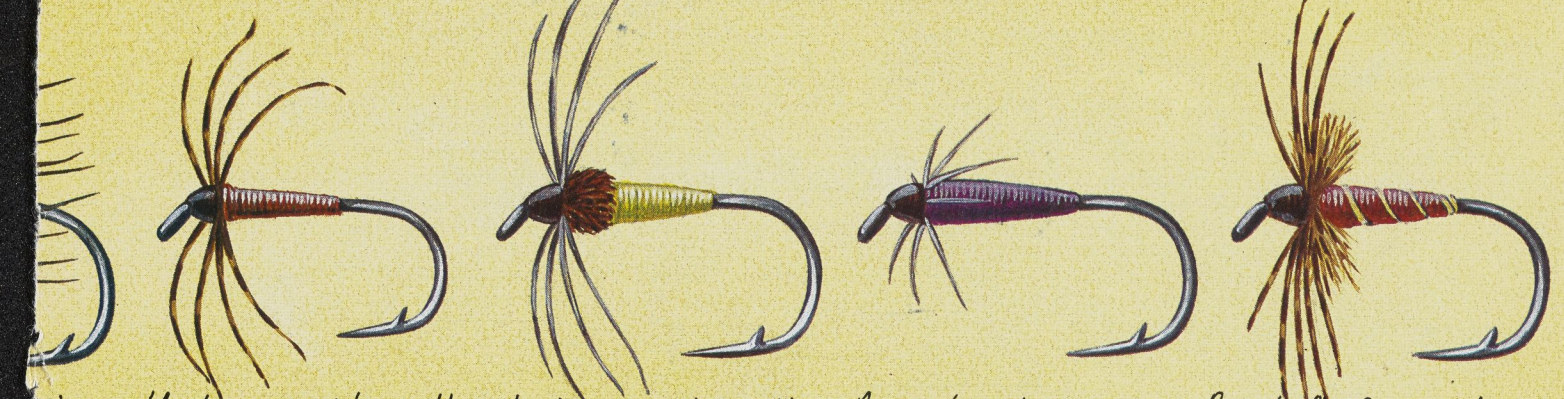
In point of fact, the Skues nymph developed from the traditional North-Country hackled pattern. It was a variation tailored to the needs of chalkstream fishing and Skues himself would have been the first to admit that it was not a rough stream fly. I have often read that Skues developed his nymphs from Clyde-style flies. I do not know where this impression has come from because you only have to read works such as 'Minor Tactics of the Chalkstream' and the essays in 'Sidelines, Side lights and Reflections' to realise that not only did Skues develop his nymphs from traditional spiders (by substituting a smaller hackle and by adding a fur thorax) but also continued to use soft-hackle spider patterns when away from Hampshire. The old Dotterel Dun was one of his favourites.

If Skues, for so long the doyen of nymph fishers, knew that he had to use a traditional North-country wet-fly when fishing rough streams, one might imagine that he used such a pattern as a nymphal imitation. Strangely, that does not seem to have been the case. In 'The Way of a Trout with a Fly' (1921), a book which already contained the fully developed Skues nymph, he wrote of the North-Country spider pattern:

"A hen's hackle, or a small bird's hackle, would respond to every movement of the current, and would thus suggest an appearance of life in action, which is very fascinating. The Yorkshire hackles and Stewart's famous trio of 'spiders', so called, are based on this theory. What these flies really represent cannot always be predicted. Doubtless the hackles in some cases suggest the wings and legs of hatched-out insects, drowning or drowned and tumbled by the current, and in others they suggest some non-descript, struggling subaqueous creature. In either case the mobility suggests life."

Now, in general terms, I would accept what Skues says about the North-Country fly and indeed, I have previously stated that other styles of fly do lack adequate 'life' for rough stream work. Soft-hackled spider patterns reign supreme on rain-fed rivers because the hackle fibres are mobilised by the current to provide the impression of a struggling creature.

When fished downstream (a method sometimes frowned upon in certain quarters, wrongly I believe), you may often see the fisherman twitching the end of his rod, or raising and lowering it to get ▶



sion led ler.

Upstream spider with the whipping behind the hackle.

Upstream spider with the hackle fibres raised by a fur thorax.

A good upstream nymph! A soft-hackled fly with the hackle reduced to shreds.

A wet-fly for rapid and tumbling currents: The soft hackle is fortified by a small cock hackle wound close up behind it.

the greatest movement from the hackle.

However, the soft-hackled spider has another important function which has little, or nothing, to do with hackle mobility and is not concerned with creating a general impression of an insect's struggle. The spider pattern can be used to provide an impression of a nymph better than any other design of fly when fishing rough streams. In this case, the soft hackle fibres are not intended to move around over much, but to cling to the body. This may seem contradictory, paradoxical at best, so we had better examine the theory and practice.

Elsewhere, I have often defended the validity of downstream wet-fly fishing on rivers but have taken pains to explain that I do not mean simply casting downstream and across at random over any water. The downstream technique must be used selectively, often in places where it is impossible to fish upstream, and must be used for a reason. If you imagine that I have located the position of a good trout, or a location where I imagine a good trout to lie, and cannot see an actual rise form, it would seem reasonable to assume that I might tempt him with a nymphal imitation. On rough streams, he will generally be feeding or be prepared to feed. This fish, it will be imagined, cannot be attacked from any position below him and thus must be tackled from upstream. In order that he may not be scared, 'fine and far off' must be the keynote, and the fly must be presented to him correctly. For me, this means casting slightly upstream and across, and throwing a slack line with an upstream loop in it. This can be achieved my making an upsteam flick of the rod just before the cast lands. The line may then be drifted downstream so that the flies travel first and the fly-line afterwards. By paying out line and by continually mending the line as required, the flies will travel quite naturally downstream towards the trout and he will hopefully take. Fished correctly, the flies will not 'drag' and skate across the stream. If necessary, by checking the drift of the line just before the flies reach the position of the fish, they can be made to rise in the water like ascending nymphs. This will prove deadly.

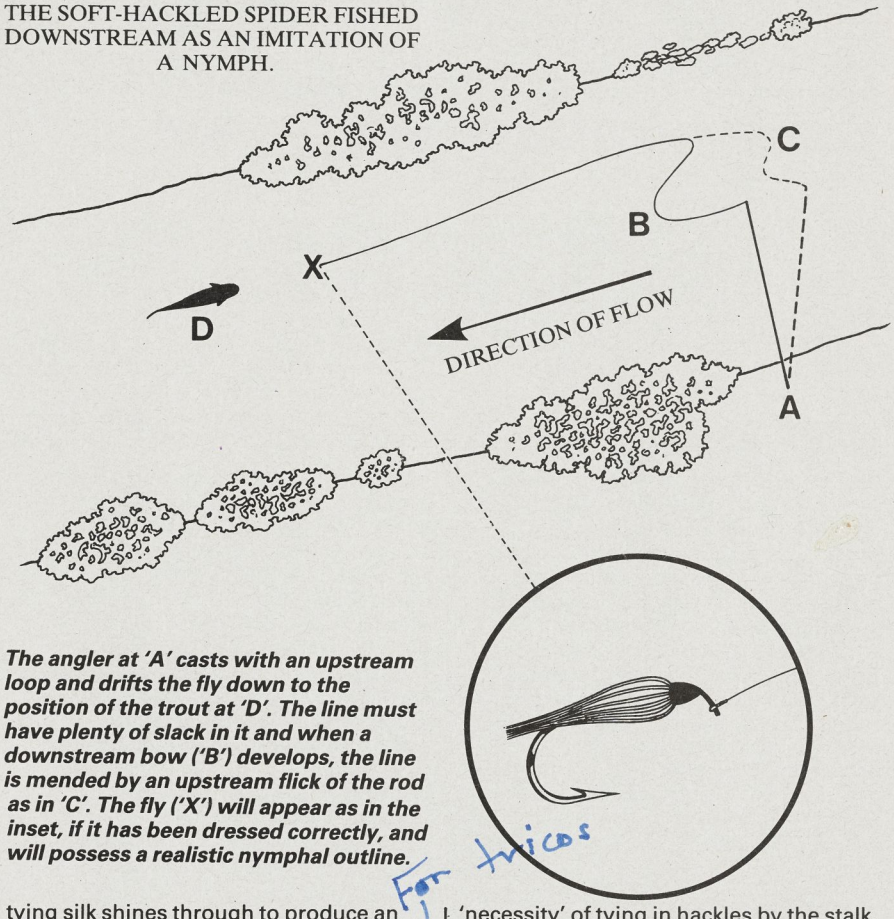
What is equally important to know, is what is happening to the spider pattern as it drifts downstream in this fashion. Rarely will be hackle fibres be moving in the manner described by Skues. As the fly will be facing upstream during the drift, the soft hackle fibres will be forced down against the body of the fly by the pressure of the current. They will not, however, lie flat but will produce a really good nymphal profile since the bases of the fibres, being wider, will form a plump thorax, whilst the tapering of the fibres towards the tips will suggest the slender abdomen of the nymph. Further, if the hackle is sparsely dressed, the colour of the fly's body will shine through the hackle to produce an impression of translucence. It is important that the body is very short. This will certainly help to produce a tapering effect as the bulk of the body will be under the hackle fibre 'thorax' only.

For me, therefore, a spider pattern for downstream fishing must be dressed in the particular manner which I shall endeavour to outline. First of all, whether fashioned from tying silk, floss silk, or a combination of tying silk and fur dubbing, the body should be slim and extend not much further than where a line drawn vertically from the hook point would reach the shank of the hook. If a fur dubbing is used, the fur should be applied sparsely in open turns so that the tying silk shines through to produce an impression of translucence. Indeed, the skill is often to blend the silk and fur to produce a particular shade. For example, pale primrose yellow silk, dubbed with a mole or water rat fur, produces an olive shade when wet. A floss silk body should always have the same colour of tying slk underlying it.

The hackle should be given no more than one and a half turns (or two turns if a hen hackle is used, since the fibres are finer) and the hackle fibres should be tied so that they slope backwards. This can be achieved by finishing off the fly so that the tying silk overlays the base of the hackle fibres, or by including a herl head (as in many traditional dressings) close against the hackle so that the fibres incline backwards. Today, most fly-dressers advocate tying in the hackle by the tip rather than by the stalk so that the shorter fibres will be used first (thus forming a neater hackle) whilst the stalk is easier to grip between the hackle pliers than the soft fibres which tear easily. Nevertheless, when using tiny feathers from the marginal coverts of a bird's wing, fix the hackle in by the stalk — you will find it almost impossible to do it any other way. It is always best to purchase whole wings and carefully select the smallest feathers from the marginal coverts; the best feathers are those closest to the 'knuckle' or joint of the wing. Feathers in bumper packets of 'selected' feathers are generally too large for spider patterns and I am sure that this is the real reason for the apparent 'necessity' of tying in hackles by the stalk.

Whilst this dressing may also be used for upstream work it certainly does not have the same appeal if you are desiring to suggest a natural nymph. It possesses too much hackle. On the other hand, once the hackle has been worn away so that only a few stubs and whisps of fibre remain, then it succeeds brilliantly as an imitation of a nymph. Most wet-fly fishermen will acknowledge the fact that a worn and dishevelled fly is far more effective than a fresh fly, when fishing upstream, and I am convinced that this is because a trout mistakes the austere offering for a nymph which has become dislodged and washed downstream by the current. Thus, for upstream fishing with the wet-fly, it is well worth collecting together all your worn and tattered spider patterns — don't throw them away and regard them as useless. A Snipe and Purple, for example, with hardly any hackle fibres on it, may be the least appealing wretch in the eyes of a

THE SOFT-HACKLED SPIDER FISHED DOWNSTREAM AS AN IMITATION OF A NYMPH.



The angler at 'A' casts with an upstream loop and drifts the fly down to the position of the trout at 'D'. The line must have plenty of slack in it and when a downstream bow ('B') develops, the line is mended by an upstream flick of the rod as in 'C'. The fly ('X') will appear as in the inset, if it has been dressed correctly, and will possess a realistic nymphal outline.

fisherman but it will catch fish after fish and that is what counts.

When casting a wet-fly upstream, the pressure of water against fly and leader forces the fly to fish deeper than it would when drifting downstream. This is especially true when casting directly, or almost directly, into the current. Thus, whilst I like to fish a spider pattern on the point of the leader, I like to fish two other flies on the cast as well so that I can capitalise nearer to the surface. At one time, I only favoured a single fly on the cast when fishing upstream but I do feel now that a cast of three allows a greater flexibility of method. Whilst the point fly can be fished a little deeper as a nymph imitator, the other flies can work nearer to the surface and utilise hackle mobility to create impressions of struggling insects. In this way you get the best of both worlds. For upstream fishing, two styles of dressing create maximum mobility. One, the semi-palmered fly or Stewart spider, I shall be dealing with in a further article; the other is a soft-hackled spider with the fibres standing erect rather than sloping backwards.

The 'erect' hackled spider is a style of dressing I discovered not in one of the standard books on North-Country wet-fly fishing, but in G. E. M. Skues's 'The Way of a Trout with a Fly'. For upstream work, this style of dressing provides maximum mobility and either suggests an emerging insect or a fly struggling and drowning. For those readers unacquainted with Skues, it is well worth quoting the whole passage where the master nymph fisherman described the construction of a soft-hackled wet-fly:

"Suppose you are tying an Orange Partridge. You have whipped out the gut, tied in the floss, whipped to the shoulder, wound on the orange floss, whipped down the end, cut away the waste. You then take your partridge hackle, and placing it face downwards on top of the hook, with the stump towards the bend, you whip it down with two turns towards the head; then whipping over the hook and back to the feather, you form the head. Then you take two turns over the butt, and, taking the centre of the hackle in your pliers, you wind at most two turns of the hackle and secure the end with one turn of silk. Then you pull all the fibres forward over the head, and finish with a whip-finish tight up behind the hackle, and break off the waste. You then soak the whip finish with celluloid varnish . . ."

Dressed in this manner, the fibres of the hackle stand out at 90 degrees to the hook shank and become vibrant with life. They possess what Skues called 'kick'. A similar effect may be achieved by dubbing a fur thorax close up against, and behind, the hackle, and this method was in use at least by 1836 when it can be discerned in dressings within 'The Angler's Manual' by John Turton. As an alternative to a fur thorax, peacock herl may be used as a thorax behind the hackle on any pattern to provide the fibres with extra 'kick'.

When requiring maximum hackle movement and 'kick' in really rapid streams, soft hackles, even when dressed by the methods outlind above (where the hackle is strengthened by varnished silk, or a thorax) tend to lack enough strength. One useful trick is to fortify the hackle by winding in a small cock hackle of the same general colour behind the main hackle. Thus, for example, the Orange Partridge may be fortified by the inclusion of a small ginger cock hackle behind the brown partidge hackle and close up against it. Alternatively, wet-flies may be dressed solely with cock hackles as they possess enough 'spring' to work in tumbling currents. This is where good trout may lie in low summer conditions when other areas of the river are lacking in oxygen. The trouble with cock hackles is that you tend to be limited in terms of feather pattern. You can, of course, dye them to any colour, but you will no longer find the kind of hackles in use when that great West Country wet-fly fisherman, H.C. Cutliffe, published 'Trout Fishing on Rapid Streams' 1863. This excellent little book deserves to be re-published. Nevertheless, the wet-flies contained within its pages were dressed with special cock hackles and unfortunately are unlikely ever again to be recreated. How, for example, are we to secure any of the following cock hackles: 'blueish-red', 'silvery speckled brown', 'highly speckled blue', 'yellow spangled red' or 'spangled blue ginger'? Cutcliffe included a great amount of detail concerning the theory and practice of dressing wet-flies for rapid streams and yet he made it quite clear that the requisite cock hackles were already rare over a hundred years ago:

"The best of all fowls for hackles is the old English game cock, which, however, is now very difficult to be obtained. No bird seems to have such lustrous, shining, stiff, and well-shaped feathers as this game fowl, such as was used in times of yore for cock fighting."

A notable feature of Cutcliffe's design of the fly is brightness, not only of the hackle, but of the body also, and almost a half of the dressings call for a rib of silver or gold twist. In rapid and tumbling currents, the resultant sparkle undoubtedly adds a further point of attraction and perhaps some of the drabber standard patterns might be adapted for rapid stream work by incorporating a silver or gold tinsel rib. In Yorkshire, for example, the Orange Partridge is often given a rib of narrow silver tinsel. It may be recalled that ascending nymphs do themselves possess a silvery appearance due to the intake of gases prior to the emergence of the fully-fledged insect. These gases will not only supply added buoyancy, but will also enable the easy splitting of the nymphal thorax so that the dun may escape.

In my next two articles, I will seek to describe further methods of dressing wet-flies for river fishing. For the moment, I am concerned essentially with styles of wet-flies, but in subsequent articles I will consider many of the great wet-flies of the past which may still be of real value to the modern river fisherman.

FLIES FROM IRELAND

Ballymena Fancy

THE DRESSING of the Ballymena Fancy was given to me by Mr Peter Woods, of Ballymena. It is a local pattern used for dollaghan in the river Maine. The dressing is:

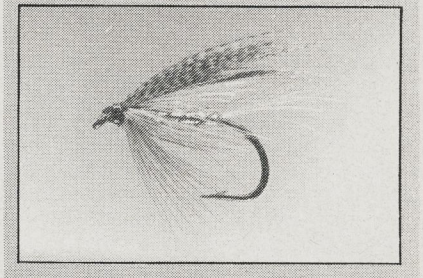
Hook: Sizes 8 and 10; trout hook.

Tail: One topping.

Body: Flat gold tinsel, ribbed oval gold.

Hackle: Four turns each of claret and yellow cock.

Wing: Bronze mallard.



Green Olive

The Green Olive is traditional Irish lake pattern from the same mould as the Sooty and Golden Olive. It is also worth a try for the dollaghan and it has its uses for the sea-trout. It is tied as follows:

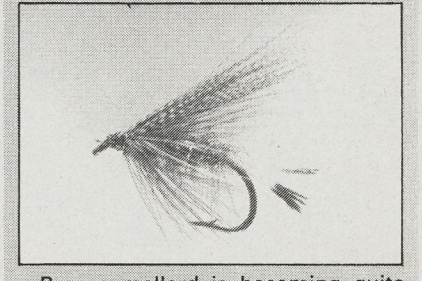
Hook: Sizes 8 to 12; trout hook.

Tail: Tippet fibres.

Body: Bright grass-green seal's fur.

Hackle: Bright green (sometimes Rhode Island Red is used).

Wings: Bronze mallard.



Bronze mallard is becoming quite scarce — after all, there are only a few feathers per bird — so I find myself on smaller flies, especially trout patterns, using the dyed substitute. I dye my own by re-greasing mallard drake body feathers and then dyeing them in a mixture of fiery brown and black dye in a ratio of two parts of the former to one part of the latter. The substitute is easier to use by preparing the feather like a V and tying in the whole thing — much easier than matching and rolling. The fish don't seem to notice the difference, either! **Robert McHaffie**

THE ACCEPTABLE FACE OF *competition*

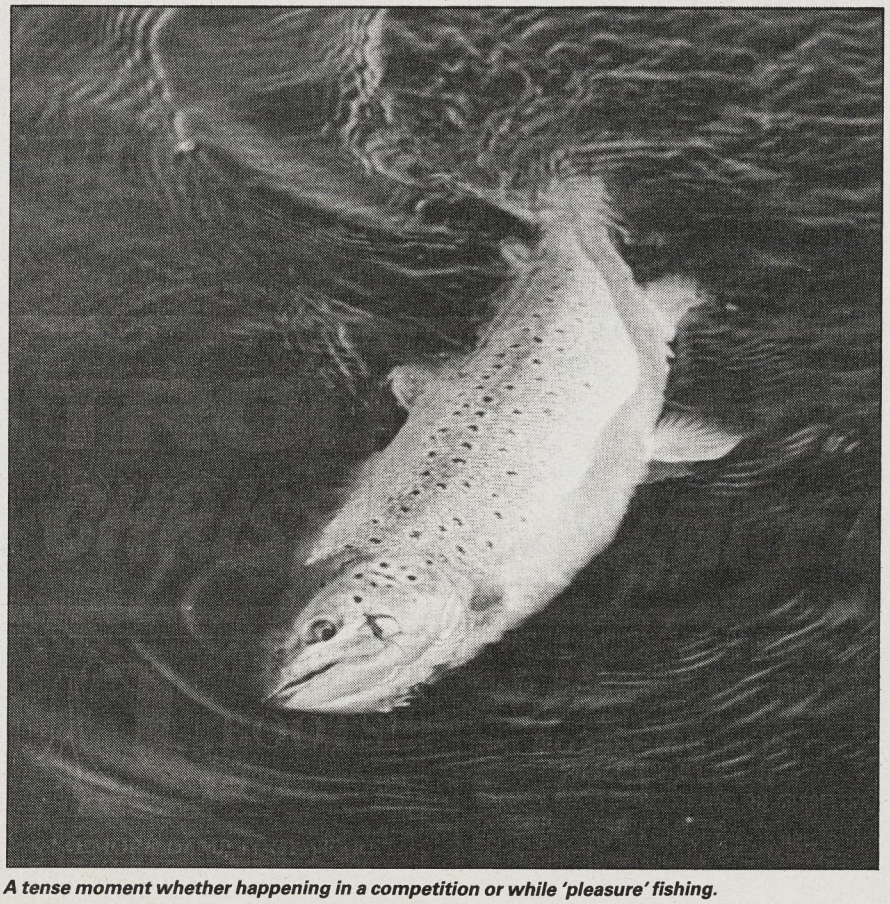
Competitive fishing is no tooth and nail affair but possibly our sport's finest ambassador, says Chris Ogborne.

THE FACE OF fly fishing in Britain has been changing for the last twenty years, but probably never more so than at the present time. Quite understandably, any innovation in the field of recreational sport is regarded with varying degrees of suspicion. It will be welcomed by some, and ignored or rejected by others.

And so it is with competitive fly fishing. In barely one generation we have seen the advent of carbon rods, put-and-take fisheries, and an astronomic increase in the number of people actually fishing. All of these things represent fundamental changes, but none of them provokes as much reaction, debate, or feeling as do competitions.

So perhaps the time is right to take a long, hard look at competitive fly fishing. But, before the sceptics turn the page, just indulge me for one minute more. There is no doubt at all in my mind that competitions are good for the future of fly fishing. Of course this has been said before, but often as a kind of glib rejoinder without any real qualification. It is also true that most readers will know at least something of the history of competitions, how the present system has evolved from the early Scottish events into a full-blown International scene, and how sponsorship and big business are now attracting more and more devotees to the fold.

Chris Ogborne.



A tense moment whether happening in a competition or while 'pleasure' fishing.

But despite this vast increase in interest the angler, whether organiser or competitor, must keep his eye very firmly fixed on the original objectives, as declared by each of the Home Countries' governing bodies. These are, quite simply, to promote contact, friendship and communication between anglers, through the medium of competitive fishing. The Home International series seeks to do just that, in the form of two meetings each year, rotated among England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. The host nation provides the venue, and teams of 14 anglers compete from boats using traditional loch-style skills and methods. The spirit at such events is superb, and leaves lasting memories with all of those who have ever represented their country, not just of the fishing, but also of friendships made, stories exchanged, and ideas shared.

So many critics of competitions fail to see such things, but in reality it is far from the tooth-and-nail fracas that they would have you believe. Rather, competitive fly fishing is more about giving successful flies to unsuccessful opponents, and more specifically about promoting an acceptable face of angling to the growing anti-bloodsport lobby.

And this last point is probably the most important of all. We all know, or we

JOHN RANDOLPH PHOTO

The Right Nymphing Line

Hook Analysis

JIM MCLENNAN

NYMPH FISHING HAS BECOME increasingly popular in recent years, partly as a result of the publicity it has received in magazines like this one, and partly because its reputation for effectiveness is sound. I'm convinced that people who specialize in nymphing catch fish a greater percentage of the time than people using other methods.

People who specialize in nymphing also do it in different ways. The method currently getting a lot of press is the "nymph-and-indicator" method, which makes use of a floating line, a relatively long (9- to 12-foot) leader, and a colorful marker. The fly is usually weighted, and often extra weight is attached to the leader above the fly. The rig is lobbed upstream or up and across, and as it drifts downstream, the fisherman watches the indicator or marker for any movement that might indicate that a fish has eaten the fly.

Another popular method is the one introduced by the late Charles E. Brooks, author of *Nymph Fishing for Larger Trout*, *The Trout and the Stream*, and other books. Brooks developed his nymphing method for fishing big stonefly nymphs in the fast, heavy water of Montana's Madison River. He used a fast-sinking fly line, a short, stout leader, and a heavily weighted nymph. He cast upstream and across and stayed in contact with the fly by touch rather than by sight, raising the rod to remove slack as the fly traveled downstream to him and lowering the rod to pay the slack back out as the fly went by.

A floating line makes the best presentation in moving water.

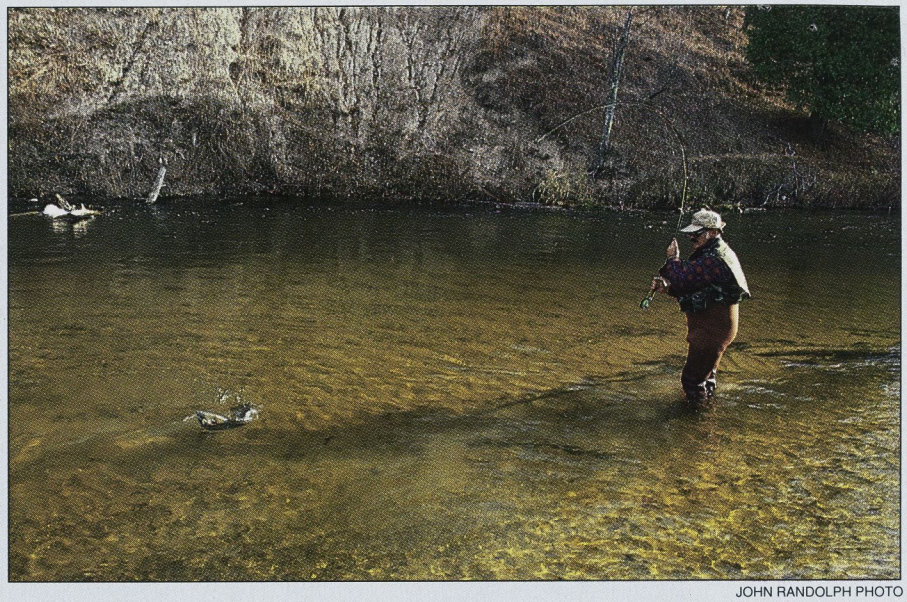
Improves on the Brooks method

The indicator method is often touted as the best method to use in relatively slow or shallow water, and the Brooks method is said to be better in faster, heavier flows, because it gets the fly deeper quicker. I followed this line of thinking for years, but recently I've slipped into the habit of using a floating line for all my nymphing, even in water where the Brooks method is supposed to work better. I seem to be catching just as many fish this way, and I'd be happy to leave it at that, but you might not agree with me just on my word. So, because modern science carries more weight than my hunches, I headed for the bathtub to try to figure it out.

I grabbed a couple of identical pairs of weighted nymphs, three or four different densities of sinking fly line, a piece of 1X leader material, and a piece of 3X. I compared the sink rates of these components and discovered

Continued on page 28

Forum . . .



JOHN RANDOLPH PHOTO

In fishing situations where a dead-drifted deep nymph is essential (steelheading on a Michigan river above, for example) you'll hook more fish if you use a floating line and a long leader.

Continued from page 27

all kinds of things, including the fact that most weighted nymphs alone (unattached to anything) sink much faster than any sinking fly line alone. It also became clear that a fly sinks much slower when it's attached to line or leader.

I was especially interested in the comparison between a fly attached to leader tippet and a fly attached directly to sinking fly line (eliminating monofilament altogether to isolate the effect of the sinking fly line). Only when the fly was tied to the fastest-sinking fly line (Hi Speed Hi-D and Cortland type VI) did the sink rate match that of a fly tied to monofilament. A fly tied directly to slower-sinking line didn't go down as fast as one tied to monofilament.

This means that a weighted nymph gets to the bottom at least as quickly with a long leader and floating line as it does with a short leader and sinking line. A sinking fly line is of little benefit in getting the fly down quickly, and all but the densest of lines actually slow down the sink rate of a nymph that's already weighted.

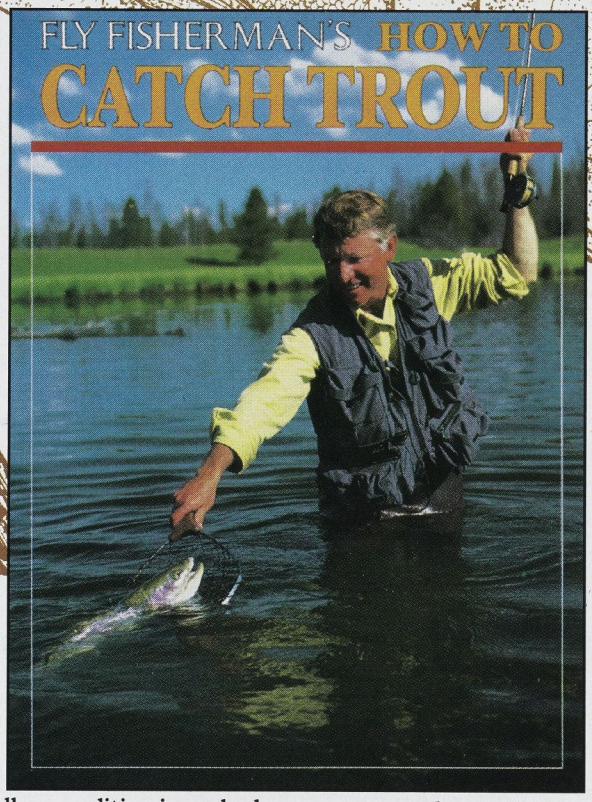
Now let's examine what happens after the fly reaches the stream bottom. The objective is to have the fly stay deep and drift along at the same speed as the current. Many people don't realize that the current right at the stream bottom is slower than it is a little above the bottom. This means that if the fly is on the bottom of the stream and the leader and fly line are above it in the water column, whatever is attached to the fly will be in faster water than the fly itself is in. To drift at the proper speed (i.e. the speed of the current at the bottom), the fly must resist the pull of the line or leader which is being carried by this faster current above the fly. Either the line will speed the fly up or the fly will slow the line down, and unless the latter happens, the fly will be dragged along faster than the water it is in, and it won't look right to the fish.

The weight of the fly helps it resist this pull from the leader and line (we may not realize it, but this is one of the reasons we use weighted nymphs). The factor working against that one is the diameter of the line or leader attached to the fly. Monofilament is thin and slices through the water easily. Fly line is much thicker and gives the water much more cross section to grab and consequently exerts more pull on the fly. Because nymph fishing requires a drag-free drift just as much as dry-fly fishing does, my tangled discourse simply means that you get less drag on a deep nymph if it is tied to a long leader rather than to a short piece of leader and a sinking fly line. (Floating line would pull the fly unnaturally, too, if it was left on the water, but it usually isn't.)

I also think you'll hook a greater percentage of the fish that take your fly if you use a floating line and long leader. When you yank to set the hook in a fish, the slack disappears from thin monofilament much more quickly

Continued on page 30

What's packed with fly fishing information, is in limited supply, and best of all, is *FREE?*



FLY FISHERMAN's ***How to Catch Trout*** is no riddle. It's your gift when you give a one-year *FLY FISHERMAN* gift subscription to a friend this holiday season. This all-new edition is packed with expert advice to help you get the most out of the time you spend fishing. Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned angler, you're sure to find some practical, helpful information in ***How To Catch Trout.***

Figure it out. A one-year (6 issue) gift of *FLY FISHERMAN* is $20.00. Then, each additional subscription (or your own renewal) is just $18.00. And ***How To Catch Trout*** is yours—**FREE.** If you prefer, we'll even bill you after January 1, 1990.

The answer is easy. Your friend will receive a great gift, and you'll receive your **FREE** ***How To Catch Trout*** along with a substantial savings.

Quantities of ***How To Catch Trout*** are limited and will be reserved on a "first come, first served" basis, so use the attached envelope or card to order today. We'll take care of the rest: send your gift card(s) which you can use to announce each gift subscription; mail your **FREE** ***How To Catch Trout*** as soon as we hear from you . . . allow another 6 weeks for delivery; bill you after January 1, 1990, if you prefer. If the envelope or card is missing, write to *FLY FISHERMAN*/ Gift Department/ P.O. Box 3474/ Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This special offer expires 12/31/89.

Give a gift to a friend... And one to yourself—Order today!

Striking it tough

Forum . . .

Continued from page 29

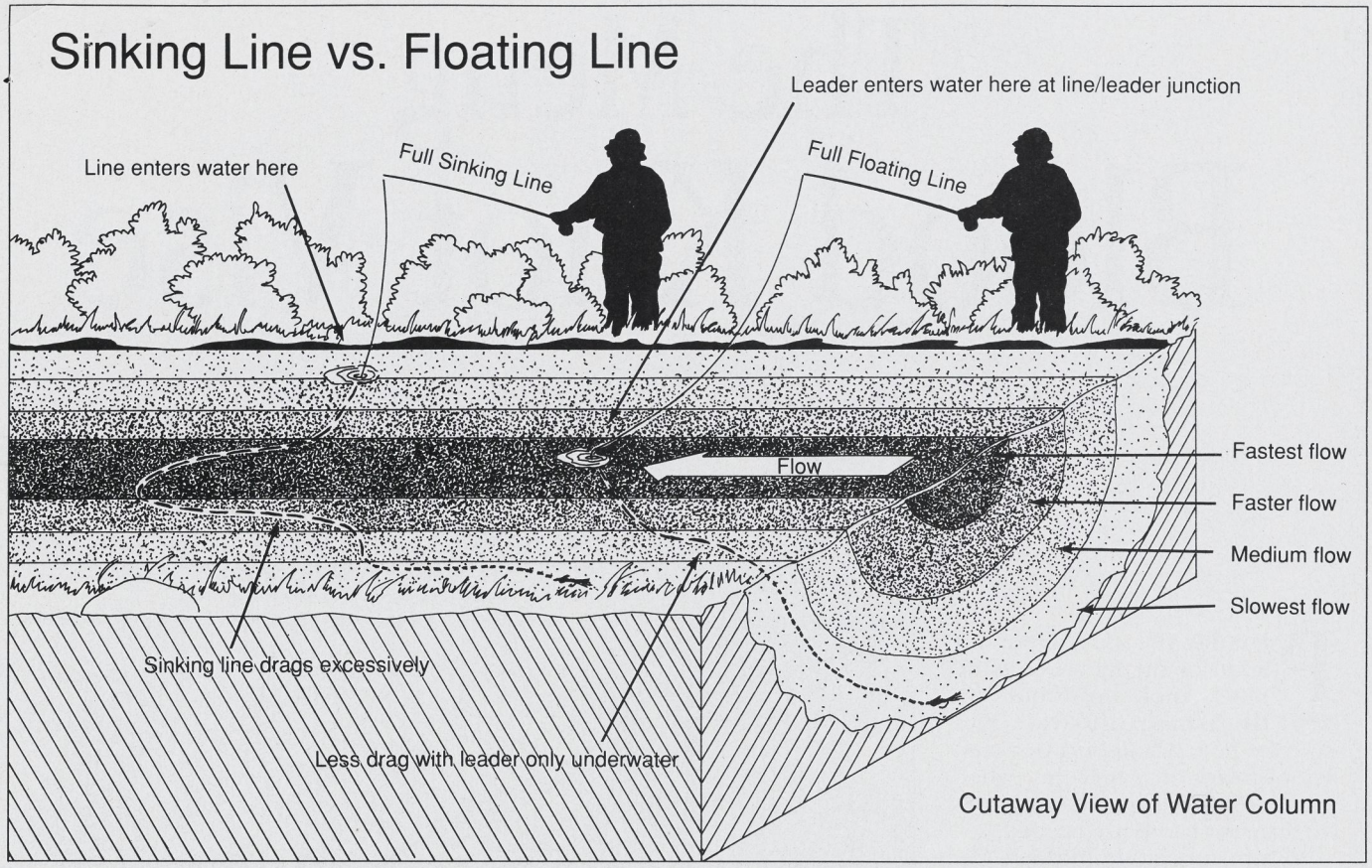
than from thick fly line (again because of less resistance), and your movement will be transferred to the fish's mouth more quickly and with more intensity. With the Brooks method, because of the fly line in the water and the slack in the line, you must strike almost as hard as you can when you feel a fish take the fly. Brooks himself said that real experts with his method only hook about one fish out of three that take the fly. With a floating line and long leader all that is needed is a quick, short flick of the rod tip.

All this doesn't mean that sinking lines don't have a place. My argument applies to situations where the fly is supposed to drift with the current. When the fly must move contrary to the water around it, a sinking fly line offers some benefit. Two common examples of this are when fishing a streamer in moving water and when fishing any sinking fly in a lake. In both cases the fly does not necessarily get deeper with a sinking line, but it stays deeper through the retrieve, because the fly is being pulled on from a point beneath the surface.

A sinking line is also useful when you use buoyant flies, such as flies with clipped deer-hair, Muddler-style heads. Those flies want to float, at least until they get well soaked, and a sinking line can force them down.

There is one thought in the back of my mind as I write all this: What would Charles Brooks think of my argument? I studied his books and used his method for many years before meeting him and fishing with him. If I hadn't known him, I might be reluctant to disagree with him. Charlie Brooks made many major contributions to our sport, but I honestly believe that he most of all wanted to stimulate thought and study on the part of other anglers. I think he would have been pleased to know that his experimentation with angling methods has inspired the rest of us to do likewise.

See illustration page 31. The current at the bottom of a stream is slower than it is a little above bottom. Monofilament is thin and slices through water easily. Fly line is much thicker and gives the water more cross section to grab and consequently exerts more pull on the fly. You get less drag on a deep nymph if it is tied to a long rather than to a short piece of leader and a sinking fly line.



LAMIGLAS-ESPRIT LHS GRAPHITE RODS (with case)
-- *A Best Buy!*

F765 7½' 5 WT	123.35
F804 8' 4 WT	128.30
F806 8'6 WT	128.30
F866 8½' 6 WT	130.75
F906 9'6 WT	135.70
F907 9'7 WT	135.70
F908 9'8 WT	135.70
F909 9' 9 WT	135.70

LAMIGLAS G-1000 GRAPHITE RODS (no case)

G1292 5'9"4 WT	57.55
G1295 7½' 5 WT	63.00
G1296 8' 6 WT	65.75
G1297-6 8½' 6 WT	68.50
G1298-6 9' 6 WT	71.25
G1298-8 9' 8 WT	71.25
*G1299-9 9½' 9 WT	82.25

* Detachable fighting butt

POWELL "LIGHT TOUCH" IM6 RODS (with case)

Featherlight 7'9" 4 WT	238.00
Ultra 9' 4/5 WT	248.00
Ultra 6 9' 5/6 WT	248.00

G. LOOMIS IMX GRAPHITE FLY RODS (with case)

932 - 7'9" 2 WT	280.00
1024 - 8'6" 4 WT	290.00
1085 - 9' 5 WT	300.00
1086 - 9' 6 WT	300.00
1088 - 9' 8 WT	310.00

BROWNING WATERTON IM6 GRAPHITE FLY RODS (with case)

8' 4 WT	168.50
8'6" 5 WT	169.95
9' 5 WT	177.50
9' 6 WT	180.00

FLY LINES:

Scientific Anglers Air Cel Ultra Floating. DT-2-F to DT-6-F and WF-2-F to WF-8-F. In Tan, Orange.
Each 27.35

The Hook & Hackle Company

P.O. Box 1003
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Order Toll Free
1-800-552-8342

FLY REELS
Scientific Anglers

System II Reels		
67	110.00	34.35
78	110.00	34.35
89	120.00	38.10
1101	120.00	38.10
System II-L Fly Reels		
45, 56, 67, 78	97.25	29.80
Martin		
MG3SS	30.35	16.65
MG7SS	38.20	17.50
MG8SS	61.60	27.00
Pflueger Medalist		
1494	34.40	12.75
1494½	34.40	12.75
1495	35.95	14.20
1495½	35.95	14.20

VESTS
Columbia Sportswear
Bighorn-Convertible from regular to shorty wading vest. 19 pockets. Tan.
S,M,L,XL 45.90
XXL,XXXL 50.65
Henrys Fork II-Tan or Green. 25 pockets.
XS,S,M,L,XL 40.50
XXL,XXXL 45.90

CHRISTMAS IDEAS

Wheatley Fly Boxes

1307- 6 compartments	45.55
1407-12 compartments	62.65
1607-16 compartments	71.20
1609-32 compartments	123.45

THOMPSON A VISE 22.95

PRO TOOL KIT-Thompson A Vise & Bodkin, S & M Bobbin, Herb Howard Pliers, 3½ Stainless Steel Scissors 30.95

THOMPSON REGENCY FLY TYING KIT
-- Includes all tools, materials and instruction manual to get one started in this fascinating hobby. First rate outfit. Complete 57.60

REGAL FLY TYING VISES

Special Bronze Pedestal Model	135.00
Standard Pedestal	112.50
C-clamp Model	94.50

BOOKS

Complete Book of Fly Tying	19.15
The Book of Fly Patterns	37.95
Caddisflies	20.95
Pennsylvania Trout and Salmon Fishing Guide . . . PB	12.50
Advanced Custom Rod Building	20.95

VIDEOS – VHS Only

Essence of Fly Casting	24.95
How to Tie/Fish the Caddisfly	29.95
Nymphing-Borger	24.95
Advanced Fly Casting (3M)	45.00
Adv. Strategies-Selective Tr.	45.00

Prices subject to change without notice and are void after December 31, 1989.

Add $4.50 UPS/handling

NY Residents add sales tax for your locality.

FREE CATALOG
(Not sent outside USA)

American Express,
VISA & Mastercard
Telephone & Mail
Orders Accepted

ORDER TOLL FREE –
1-800-552-8342

Phone (518) 561-5893
Fax Phone (518) 561-0336

Dealers Inquire on Your Letterhead.

STOCKING FOOT WADERS
(Send height and inseam)

Red Ball ST Flyweight Waders ... Pr. 37.15
Red Ball ST Flyweight Hippers 30.05

Red Ball Neoprene Waders 100.95

Hodgman Lakestream II Neoprene Waders. 2 Year Warranty 125.95

FELT SOLED WADING SHOES

Weinbrenner. "Borger Boots" (Order 1 size larger than shoe size).
Sizes 6-12 ..... 62.95
Sizes 13,14 ..... 65.70

Red Ball NEW Master Wading Shoe. (Order regular shoe size.)
Sizes 7-13 ..... Pr. 34.45

Pro-Line Velcro-Close Wading Shoe.
Sizes 7 to 13 ..... Pr. 29.95
(Order regular shoe size.)

The Meng Blood Knot Vise

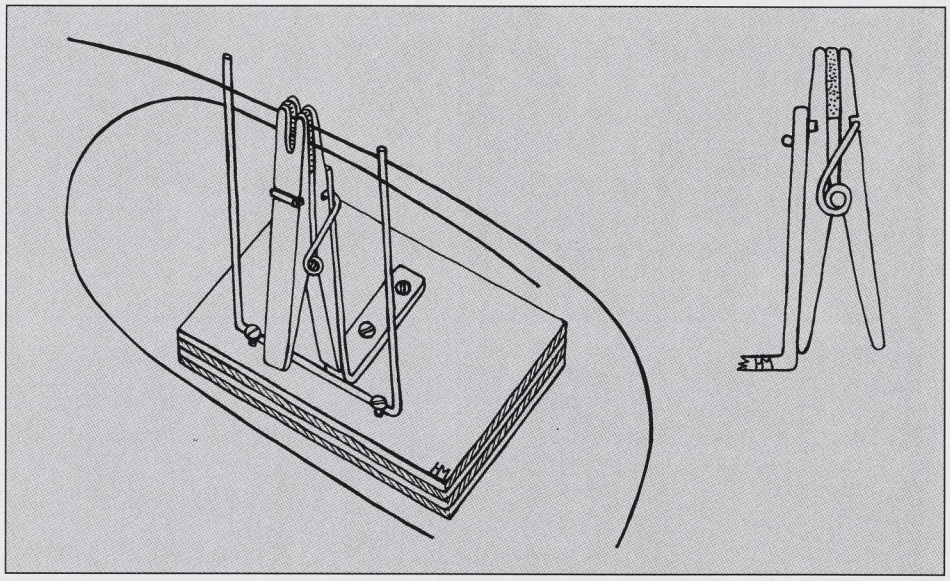
HEINZ MENG

PROBABLY THE MOST important knot for the fly fisher is the blood knot. Most books on fly fishing illustrate and describe how this knot is tied, and it looks easy on paper, but when you try to tie one, you quickly realize that four hands are needed.

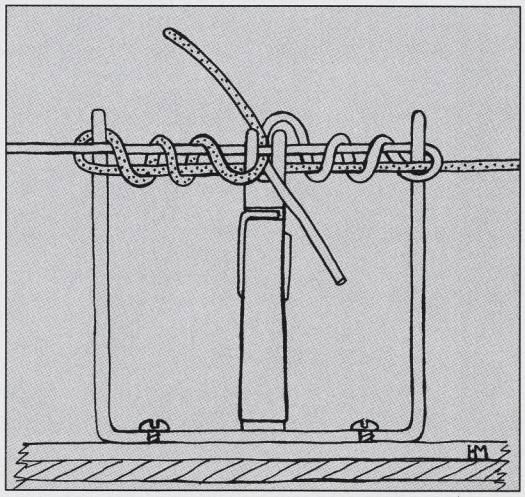
To turn frustration into joy, I've developed an easily made blood knot tying device. It is made with the following materials: a wooden spring-loaded clothes pin, an angle iron, some soft leather, a piece of plywood, coat hanger wire, four round-head wood screws, and five-minute epoxy.

To make the blood-knot vise, take apart a clothes pin and sand the biting surfaces smooth. Then cut out the center of each jaw. Screw the angle iron to the plywood, then bend the wire and secure it in front with two screws, as shown in the illustration. File the ends of the wire smooth, to prevent cuts in the leader. Now reassemble the clothes pin and attach it to the angle iron with the back spring lever. Insert the leather in the jaws and fasten it to the back half of the clothes pin with epoxy. The back of the clothes pin, the front of the angle iron, the bottom edge of the wire, and the ends of the spring levers should also be expoxied. When the epoxy has cured, cut out the mid-section of the leather with a scalpel or razor blade. Finally, paint the vise black for better leader visibility.

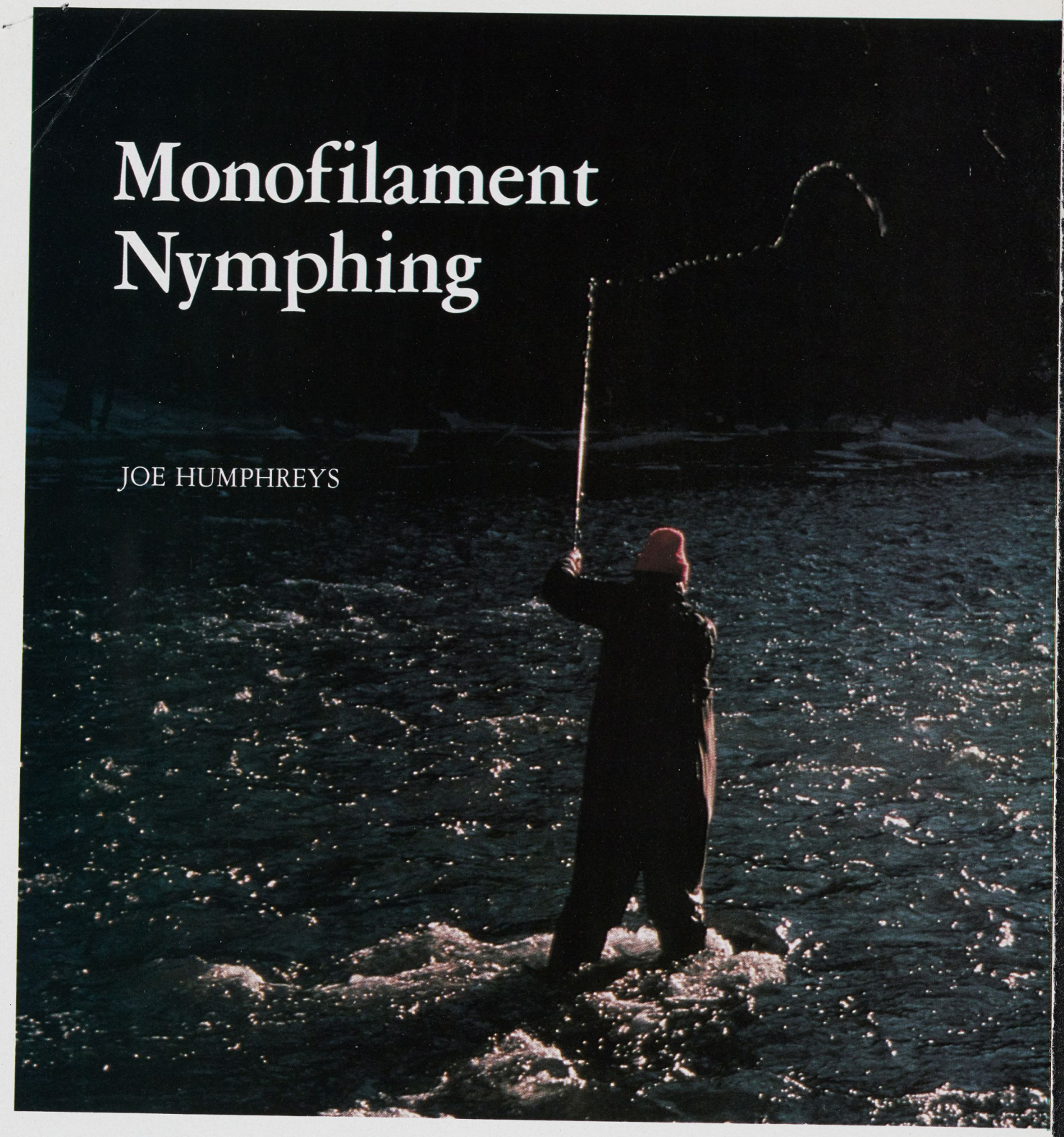
Now comes the fun part. Press the clothes pin open and insert two pieces of leader material. Wind the shorter end around the wire, around itself, and around the longer section of monofilament. Make four or five turns and insert the end between the two strands in the middle of the vise. Do the same with the other side and insert it in the opposite direction. Slide the leader material off of the wire ends and the clothes pin, wet the knot with saliva, and gently pull it tight. You now have a perfect blood knot.



The Meng blood knot vice (side view, below) uses a modified clothspin and a minimum amount of hardware to make tying blood knots easier.



Monofilament Nymphing



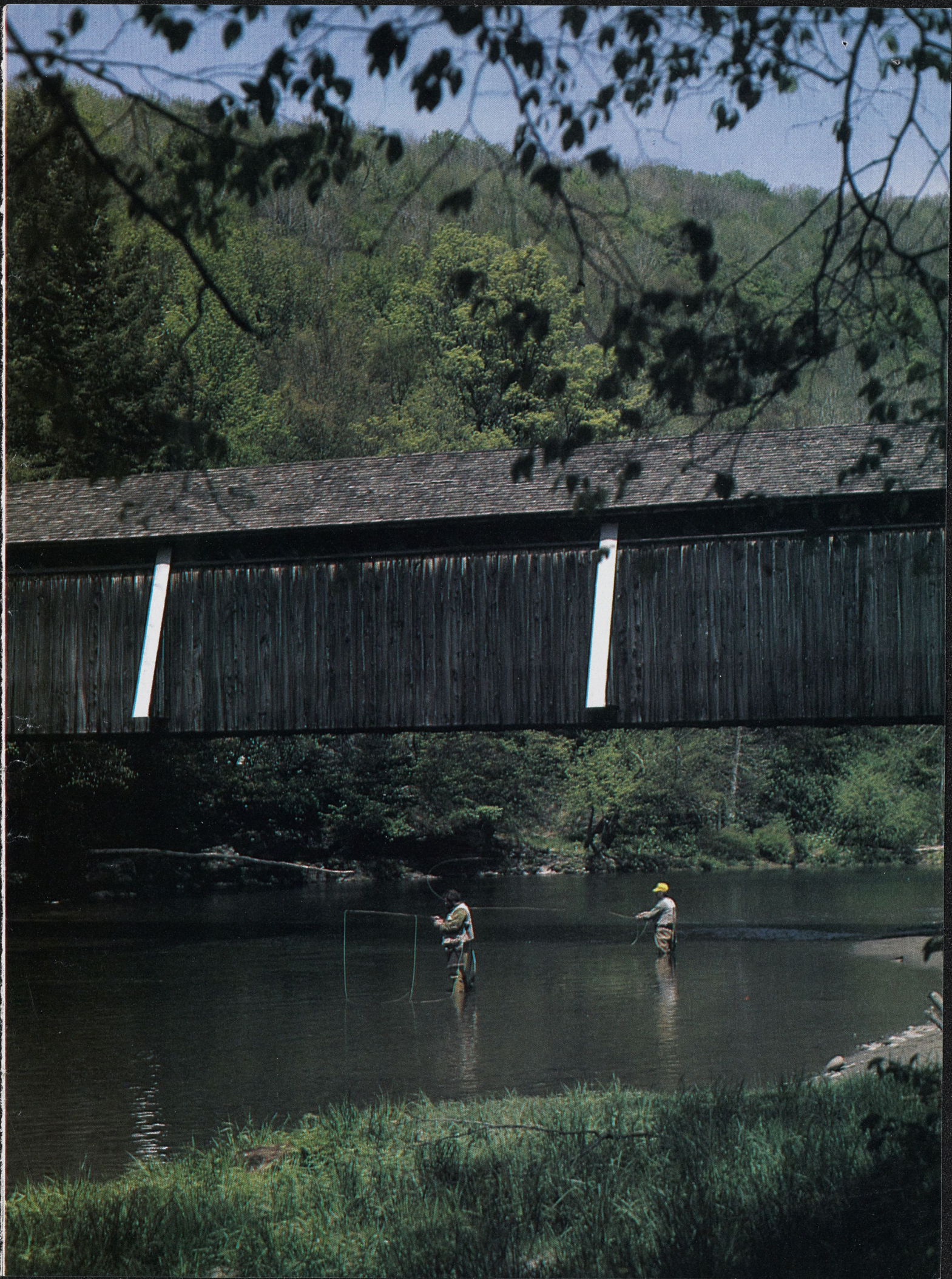
JOE HUMPHREYS

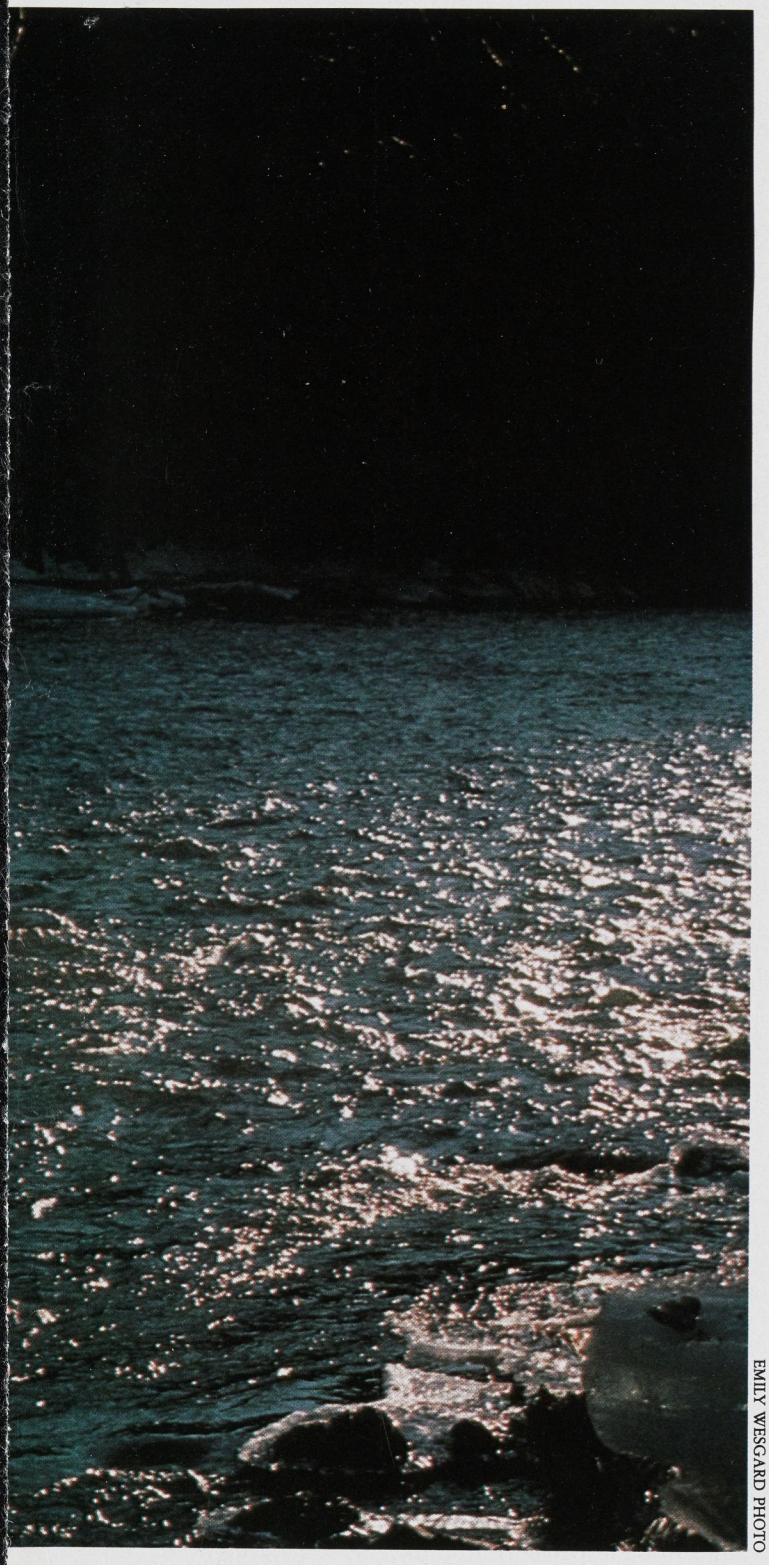
If you're having trouble getting to the bottom, or feeling it when you get

AFTER WORLD WAR II, when the first spinning tackle made its entry onto the Central Pennsylvania angling scene at first only a few anglers took the new gadgets seriously. Most fly fishermen looked with disdain upon the equipment and those who could cast effortlessly with it far beyond the limits of the best fly caster. Trout were taken off distant banks where they had been untouchable and perfectly secure in years past. It was frustrating, and a blow to a fly rod man's pride.

Spin fishermen were able to cover distance and depth. Monofilament's small diameter and the weight of the lure or bait, enabled anglers to cover a greater area of the bottom.

JOE HUMPHREYS, author of *Trout Tactics*, teaches sport fishing and other subjects at Penn State University.





EMILY WESGARD PHOTO

there, try this different approach . . .

Some of the first fishermen to jump on the new-fangled system were the minnow anglers on Penn's Creek. But they modified spinning to suit their needs; they dumped the cumbersome spinning reel, and loaded automatic fly reels with monofilament.

They needed both hands to retrieve and work the rod in a rythmic hand-and-rod motion and to control the minnow's speed, depth, and action. With long, heavy, stiff bamboo fly rods they chucked live minnows unbelievable distances.

The technique was simple: The fisherman would thread a live minnow with a needle, add a treble hook on a loop, stick one hook in the minnow's vent, and then 20 inches up the leader attach a swivel and the minnow. They would pinch on several split shot, sometimes as many as a dozen, and then heave the terminal rig.

Heaving it was not without technique. The minnow would dangle about two feet off the end of the fly rod, enough to clear the swivel. Then, with a circular wrist motion, the angler would bring the rod up and around over his head with a lobbing motion. The same lobbing and circular motion was also applied underhand. Both methods sent the line, previously stripped off the reel and held in the free hand, arcing across the stream. It landed with a thunk. The fisherman held the rod high with the casting arm fully extended; when the minnow reached the bottom and the line went slack, he dropped the rod tip, gathered in the slack mono, and stripped like hell. The minnow churned on the bottom.

It was awesome—I saw big trout come out of places I never would have fished, and saw more fish than I believed those waters held. Early in the '50s Lewis Weaver, an outstanding minnow fisherman for that school, taught me the system.

But I had lost my desire to baitfish. It was rewarding, but the challenge was to take the same fish on fly. So, like the minnow men before, I adopted the method to fit my needs.

To cast flies with monofilament was unheard of. There was no weight to the fine mono material and in most cases the flies possessed insufficient weight to throw them. It just wouldn't work, or so most anglers thought. But it *did* work. With weighted nymphs or additional weight, or a combination of both, I achieved distance and control most effectively.

Here, at last, was a nymphing technique that could give me the same advantage the spin fishermen had. I could cast great distances and cover more bottom area in deep water, with more sensitivity than I ever could before. For me, a revolutionary nymphing technique was born.

The Problem: Time on the Bottom

A CONVENTIONAL FLY line weight and diameter simply can not give the nymph time on the bottom in deep, fast water. Regardless of leader length, the currents lift the nymph out of productive water as the stream flow pushes the fly line. Adding weight—enough to get the nymph down—means you are constantly hung on the bottom and you lose the sensitive touch and control needed to detect the subtle take of a bottom-nymphing trout. A trout practically has to hook itself.

When trying to control enough line and leader to cover the bottom of a large deep pool properly, the line bellies, and if you *do* detect a strike (the line stops or twitches), by the time you pick up the slack it can be too late for a connection.

My early attempts at casting the nymph mimicked the minnow fishermen—swinging the nymph behind me until

JIM MILLIRON PHOTO

it straightened out and then lobbing it with wrist motion. It worked, but it took time to determine the nymph's location on the bottom and gain line control. There was too much slack line after the nymph hit the surface. Yet, in pockets and pools that I previously passed up I began to catch fish.

Then on a spring day in 1970 my mentor and close companion, George W. Harvey, taught me a lesson in casting the nymph that changed my casting approach. It was the tuck cast, a cast that he innovated and one that has altered my approach both with fly-line nymphing techniques and the monofilament system as well.

The Answer: Monofilament

THE TUCK CAST with monofilament is a change from fly-line casting. You've got to wait for the pull of the weighted nymphs and/or weight before beginning the forward cast. Once you feel the weight on the backcast, begin the forward drift to load the rod tip and continue to load it until the rod tip is in an 11 o'clock position overhead, or when the rod and casting hand comes into your peripheral vision. The rod hand holds the rod lightly until the forward stroke. Stop it with a sharp push of the thumb. This squeezing-shocking motion sends the nymph forward, and at the extension of the forward cast tucks the nymph back under the line and drops it immediately. The nymph reaches the stream bottom before the current can pick up the slack line and pull the nymph off the bottom. Remember, the rod tip stays aloft after the nymph tucks.

I've explained this technique before, in my book *Trout Tactics*. Some have criticized the analysis or description of the cast; they say simply overpower the forward stoke. Not so, if you want a true tuck. Obviously they've never used it, don't understand it, or what they think is a tuck cast isn't a tuck cast.

It is helpful—but not critical—when shooting additional line to use a haul. The haul adds speed to both the back and the forward cast. When going for distance, I shoot a little line on the back cast with the first haul, then drift forward until I feel the weight of the nymph load the rod tip. I'm leading into the forward cast with the butt of the rod and at the moment of the forward stroke, pull on the line, and then release the line in hand. The forward stroke is the same squeezing-shocking stroke previously discussed. Increasing the speed on the backcast keeps the weighted nymph or additional weight from dropping as much on the backcast, and with the additional speed on the forward cast, you get a sharper tuck. Often the water facing you is unwadeable, the pool or body of water is extremely wide and deep. To cover more bottom area, distance is a must. When going for distance I use a longer rod, one of nine feet or more, for a few reasons: (1) The longer rod has more power and punch and you need it when throwing heavy weights. (2) I can lift more line on the backcast and keep the nymphs and weights higher and airborne longer. (3) The longer rod keeps more line off the surface of the water for better line and nymph control.

A few tips or suggestions:

—Don't try to cast until you have absolute control of the line from the rod tip to the nymph. If you try to cast with slack, you'll probably be wearing the nymph on the back of your head.

—Don't wait too long on the backcast. If you have enough weight on the business end and it drops too far on the backcast, you may even knock yourself out on your forward cast.

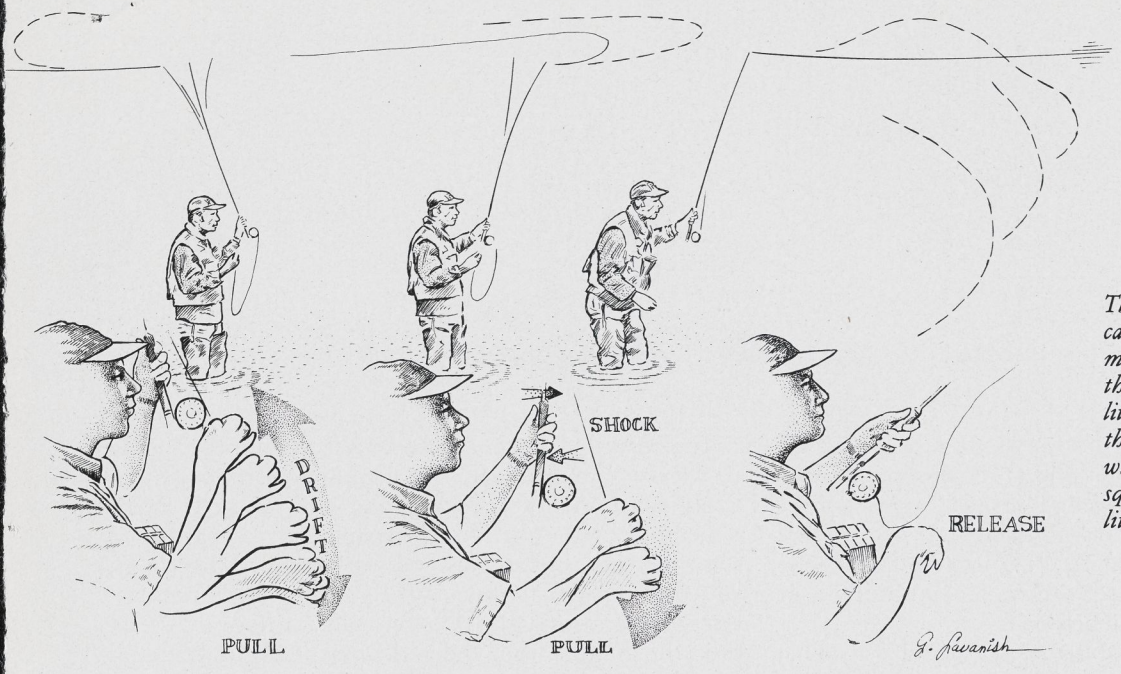
—Get that wrist and stroke into the forward cast, because too much arm will take the energy away from the rod tip, the weighted line end will drop and either hit the rod or hit you.

—Change the level of the rod—after you lift the forearm on the backcast, drop your elbow on the forward cast—to enable the nymph and weight to clear the rod tip.

Perhaps the most difficult casting challenge is to cast weight back under limbs and obstructions. Let's face it, trout like cover and that can mean casting a considerable distance under bankside over-hangs. The forward drift in most cases is longer. The thumb is the guide—push it at the space you want to go under, not toward the overhang. I like to imagine that I am taking the rod tip beyond what I've got to cast under. The casting stroke shortens, it's merely a squeeze, with the thumb not dropping like a hammer on a gun, but staying upright and moving only a fraction of an inch. This keeps the loop tight and enables it to shoot under the limb. The nymph will follow. But if you drop your thumb, the weighted nymph will climb like a rocket and your line will go over the limb or into it. Remember, it's just a squeeze of those last two fingers and an almost imperceptible punch with an upright thumb. *Don't overpower the stroke, just touch it*. The rod will do the rest.

The Set-up

THE LINE AND LEADER: For the monofilament I've been partial to Cortland's 20-pound flat mono. It's pliable and doesn't have much memory—it doesn't coil or kink readily. But when you're not using it, strip it off the reel and hang it in loose coils, and before you fish with it, straighten it out. If you store it on the reel too long, it may kink when you



The key to executing the tuck cast is the squeezing-shocking motion of the casting hand. On the backcast, the ring finger and little finger are relatively relaxed; the forward stroke stops abruptly with a push of the thumb and a squeeze of the ring finger and little finger as the wrist snaps.

cast, as will any mono. What I like about the flat mono is its casting performance. It shoots through the guides smoothly and doesn't hang. I feel that the flat surface is a definite advantage.

Now the leader: If you're using it after dark, or in off-colored water, or extremely heavy water, you can use the straight 20-pound mono—tie the nymph directly to the mono—but I prefer to construct a leader of all stiff mono (my experience is that stiff leader material sinks more readily than soft) and graduate 20-inch sections of the stiff Dupont Nylon 44, coming off the flat mono with .019, use a barrel or blood knot for the connection, if you prefer, and then continue to .017 to .015 to .013 to .011 (0X) to .009 (2X) to .008 (3X). If you want to shorten this leader, come off the flat mono with .017 instead of .019. The depth and clarity of the water will dictate whether you will want to go with a terminal section of 2X (.009), 3X (.008), or 4X (.007).

The importance of leader length and tippet diameter, as well as weight regulation, can best be illustrated by an experience I had on a mountain stream in North Carolina one October day. Pool after pool had yielded only small trout, or no trout at all on dry flies. On only two occasions did I see a decent fish rise. Then I took the surface water temperature, it told me what I should have known. The water was in the low 50s, so the majority of the trout were deep.

I switched reels to fish the mono system. The leader off the flat mono was approximately seven feet long, the tippet a shortened section of 2X. It wasn't right, but I fished with it anyhow. Finally, after working a section of stream, I stopped, collected myself, got rid of my anxiety, slowed down, and began using a little common sense.

The water was clear. Water clarity dictates the leader length, especially with trout that have been fished over. I lengthened the leader to 9½ feet, went to a 20-inch tippet section of 3X, all stiff material, tied on a weighted stonefly nymph, and began shooting a little distance on the cast. In clear water you can't get as close to those fish. I adjusted the weighted nymphs with the weight needed to get me on the bottom and maintain a natural drift. Each pool yielded a trout or some interest from one.

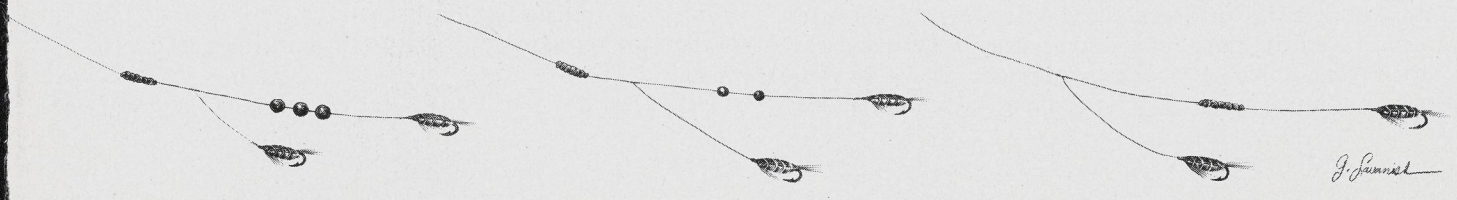
Some anglers are skeptical of the system in deep and fast water. They argue that the only viable method for fishing such water is Charles Brooks's lead core line, short leader, and heavy nymph system. I heartily disagree. Lead-core line or lead-core shooting heads both drag and belly, have poor sensitivity, and are difficult to control in fast water.

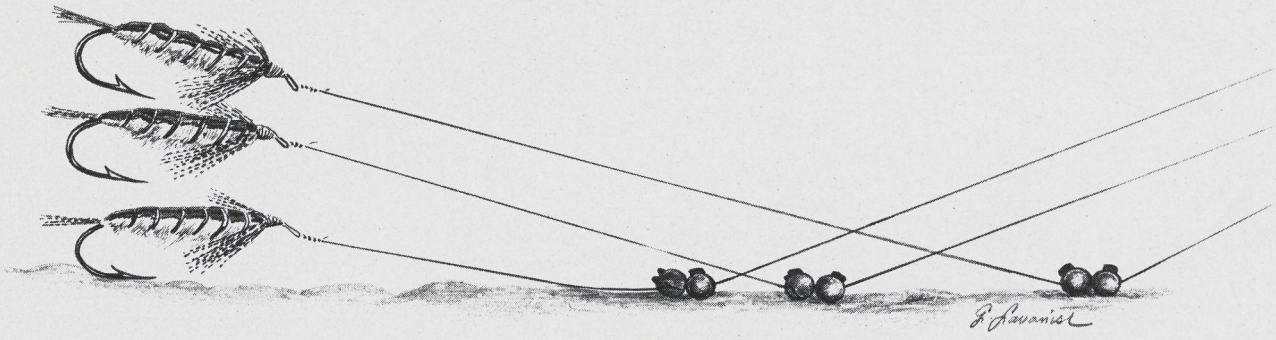
Cannon Balls

A FRIEND OF MINE DOUBTED that the mono system would work in such waters as those below Quake Lake on the Madison River. This past year I made a special effort to go there and fish that chute. The mono system scored. I took trout out of that cascading water with the "cannon ball" technique.

Come off the flat monofilament with a 20-inch section of .019 stiff mono and then taper the leader down to .011, each section being 20 inches. It goes from .019 to .017 to .015 to .013 to .011 (0X). Use two nymphs, both heavily weighted in the front one-third of the hook. The hook is a #4-4X long. Weighted this way the nymph has a jig effect. It is also flattened, which gives it a side-to-side, rocking

Changing weights to match water conditions—velocity and clarity—is paramount.





motion. The pattern I used on the Madison was a G. W. Harvey two-toned stonefly imitation. The dropper was two feet above the point nymph on a four-inch extension off a blood or barrel knot. Anywhere from eight inches to a foot above that were three #7 buckshot. These are the cannon balls. Shoot the nymphs upstream as far as possible—go for it—up stream or up and across.

Cast with double haul, and the truck, and when that hefty combo drives into the deep and fast water, hold the rod tip high. You'll feel the weight hit bottom and as soon as you do, drop your elbow, but keep the rod tip up, strip in the slack line till you feel the bottom, and constantly take in the slack as you lead the nymph through the drift with the rod tip. You will be in touch with the nymphs throughout the entire drift. Constantly strive for a natural drift. Let your nymphs spend as much time on the bottom as possible, as they move naturally. As the nymphs swing, let them straighten out completely below you and retrieve slowly. Many times a trout will pick up on the lift. With the tip high, your hooking chances are better because trout don't grab—they inhale—and that angle from rod tip to nymph allows just enough leeway so the trout can suck the fly in and you can feel it. Point your rod tip down at the water, and hooking chances as well as control of the nymph drop drastically. Believe me.

Fast Water

When fishing heavy water, look for the velocity changes, behind boulders, and close to the bank. When water velocity changes, change the weight on the line.

A few years ago, Vance McCullough, and I were fishing for Great Lakes steelhead on a New York stream. Vance gave me the first chance at a swift, foaming pocket below a falls. I worked hard for a natural drift with an imitation looped-yarn spawn sack. At first I went with two strips of wrap-around weight, but couldn't feel bottom. Only in the tail of the pocket, where the water shallowed, did I make contact. I tried three BB's and could feel the bottom, but the drift was a speedy one. Vance stepped in when I was finished and I sat down to watch. Within minutes he was fast to a heavy fish, a 7½-pound steelhead. After a few minutes, Vance stepped back into the same pocket and took a second fish, a handsome 8-pound male. After he lost the third fish, I cornered him. The answer? Three buckshot. It was early spring, the water was cold, those fish didn't want to move, but if you got it to them and gave them time to look at it, they would take. Don't be afraid to use as much weight as you need for a slow, natural drift.

The beauty of the mono system is its versatility. With little weight, say a lone weighted nymph, you can most effectively cover shallow pockets, and riffs as well. Again, depending on the clarity of the water, you may have to cast some distance, but in most cases in shallow, broken water you can get a tad closer. When fishing such pockets I change the casting stroke a bit. On the forward stroke, drive the thumb down, and as the nymph begins its descent lift the casting hand sharply. I call the cast the "downer and upper". It drives the nymph in at the head of the riff or pocket at a steep angle. At the conclusion of the stroke the rod tip remains up and your elbow remains in, tight to your side. It's amazing how quickly the nymph reaches the bottom and how thoroughly you can cover the bottom from the top of the pocket or riff back to you. Which, incidentally, is the secret of the tuck cast as well—complete coverage from the top of a pocket or pool to the tail end.

Night Tactics

The mono system also has helped me in the night fishing game. When fishing big wets at night there are times you can't buy a rise. The trout will not come up off the bottom, and in the deeper runs and pools you can't get those big wets deep enough to stir them, especially when there is fast current.

In years past if I couldn't raise fish I quit. At times I would attempt to cover the bottom—sometimes successfully if the pocket or run wasn't too deep. Then I began to reason—if you can successfully nymph during the day with mono, why not at night? Mono offers contact with the nymph. When the lights go out, it's a game of feel. It's perfect for covering the bottom of deep pools at night.

On a warm, dark-of-the-moon, August night on Fishing Creek in Pennsylvania (perfect conditions for big browns), I was about to surrender well past midnight. I hadn't moved a fish, I was tired and my back ached from bending. It was an arduous 15-minute hike back to the car and a 45-minute drive home. I don't take kindly to defeat, so I went back after them, this time loaded with monofilament and two black-leech nymph imitations. With a little trial and error, I finally found the correct weight combination and got a feel for the bottom. The result: two fine browns, each weighing about 1½ pounds. I know very well it wasn't a matter of timing, but rather one of technique that enabled me to take those fish.

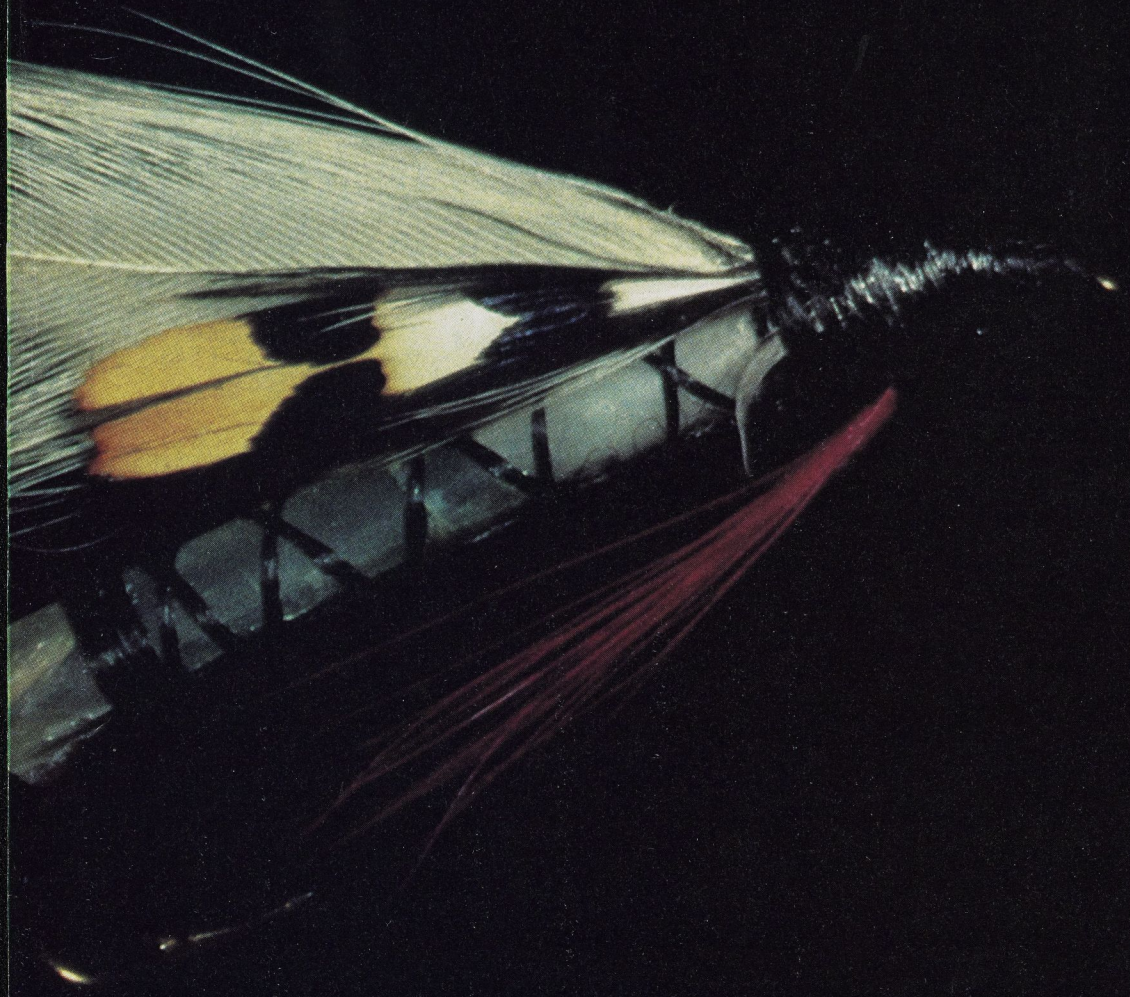
There are so many applications for monofilament and a fly rod.

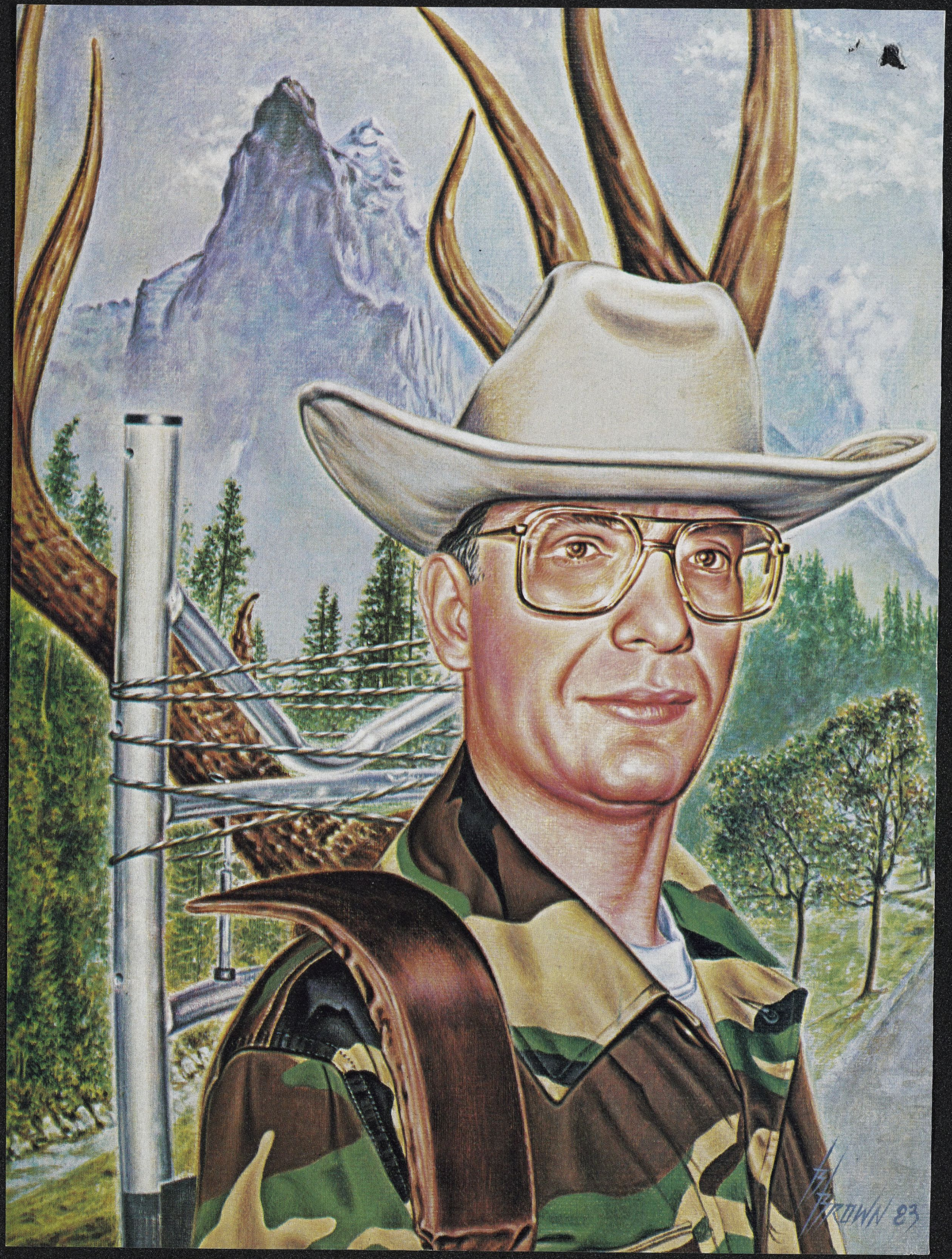
Don't take my word for it—*try it!*

Floating Streamer

It's a quiet summer day; hot and humid and nearly noon. A trout stream runs quietly without a single rise to mar its placid surface. No other fishermen are in sight and I eye the far bank where rocks, grass and overhanging limbs indicate trout. Slowly I wade into position, careful not to make any telltale ripples, and start to false cast. My fly lands lightly on some grass hanging over the water and slides gently into the water. A gentle twitch and the water explodes into a million iridescent droplets as a trout strikes viciously. The hook drives home and I bring in my fish. Releasing the trout, I relax and enjoy the quiet solitude

continued on page 39




BROWN 83

The Amazing

When other trout fans are waiting for the evening hatch, I'm out on the water at high noon catching more and bigger fish with my floating streamer. And when the hatch comes on, I still catch more fish than everybody else. By Arthur T. Broadie

PHOTOGRAPH BY CLARE CONLEY

Most of the knives that fall within the $35-and-under category are pocketknives. This is because more pocketknives are produced than other types, and higher production generally means lower cost. As a matter of fact, $35 will usually buy near top-of-the-line pocketknives, and the same price will get middle-line lock-back folders and low-end sheath knives. Not that middle-line or low-end knives are poor quality. They are just, of necessity, given less attention to detail than higher-priced knives from the same company. Knife prices are directly related to quality. The knife business is too competitive for the situation to be otherwise. For this report, knives of absolute poor quality and poor value have been omitted, but omission of a particular knife or knife company does not necessarily mean poor value. While this listing is reasonably complete, it is not all-inclusive.

The best pocketknife designs for hunters are the Trapper and Stockman's patterns. The names obviously relate to work with animals. The blade complement of a Stockman's knife are clip, sheepsfoot and spey blades. The Trapper has clip and spey blades only. Both come in several sizes, and all knifemakers offer them. Our listing here just samples them.

The jackknife pocketknife generally has two blades. (A jackknife traditionally has both blades hinged at the same end of the handle.) Blades are clip and skinner, with the clipped blade angling down, or curving down, like a ski jump, to the point. The skinner is an almost straight-backed blade with a somewhat

continued on page 105

Knives (from left) Olsen Model 304, Precise Deerslayer Lite, Normark Super Swede, Western W84, Crosman 934 Hunter, Ka-Bar 1237, Camillus Great Smokey, Ka-Bar 1607, Gutmann Rancher Explorer, Schrade Sharpfinger, Chicago Cutlery Folding Hunter, Case 3 Finn, Gerber Model A-325.

FLOATING STREAMER

continued from page 63

of my surroundings. Come evening, fishermen will appear for the evening rise but at high noon it's all mine to savor.

The fly that evokes such action is the floating streamer. During the middle of the day, trout just love to cuddle up to a bank under protecting rocks and overhanging grass or brush. Often this water is shallow and too slow to be fished properly with a standard streamer. The retrieve has to be fished too fast to prevent the fly from sinking to the bottom. This doesn't give the fish a chance to strike. I tried to solve this problem by dressing my flies more heavily but the results weren't very good. Finally a quill body provided the answer. It was light and durable and floated just right. It seems to imitate a minnow swimming on the surface. I don't know if the trout think the quill represents a crippled minnow but I do know that, even though the trout are not actively feeding, they cannot resist the chance to snap up a tasty morsel. The strike is usually quick and vicious.

Fishing with floating streamers calls for a floating line and a rod that is capable of handling a No. 8, No. 6 or No. 4 streamer accurately and softly. I like a nine-foot or longer rod that will handle a No. 8 or No. 9 line because most casts are fairly long. The leader should be 12 to 18 feet long and taper to 1X or 2X. Accuracy and lightness of presentation cannot be stressed too strongly. Usually one cast to a spot is all that is allowed. A short cast or one that drops heavily on the water usually frightens the fish. A fly that quietly slides off a blade of grass or a rock immediately attracts attention and, with the proper movement, evokes a strike. Most strikes come within the first two feet of the retrieve but it's always wise to fish the cast out completely. This causes less water disturbance. I usually retrieve until only the leader is on the water before I pick up the fly. Remember that at noon the stream is yours and you can fish slowly and without being disturbed. Slowness and stealth yield more fish.

The floating streamer retrieve varies from stream to stream. Banks with grass hanging in the water are my favorite spots, especially if the flow is smooth and gentle. The streamer is laid gently onto the grass and the line is held to allow the current to drag the fly gently into the water. Sometimes no action is necessary. The slight V formed as the line drags the fly in an arc from the bank is all that is needed. Sometimes short, gentle twitches are effective, too. These should be started as soon as the fly enters the water. And sometimes a pull of about six or eight inches with a pause after each will do the trick. Only rarely does jerking a floating streamer work—especially on smooth, sunlit waters. If you are fishing rocky waters that are fairly deep, sometimes a splashy retrieve will bring action. Fish in shady spots often react favorably to a splashy retrieve as well.

Many anglers prefer to take fish on the surface. This restricts them to morning or evening fishing or to the few daytime hatches that occur. But when you use the floating streamer, you can fish the surface all day and satisfy your craving for surface action. A bonus of this type of fishing is the savagery of the strike.

This type of fishing is just like any other method in that sometimes it works better than others. Hot weather and low, clear water—typical midsummer conditions—seem to be the best. This is a period of sparse hatches and seems to create the most favorable conditions. Another prime time is when the waters in spring are high, clear and still cold. On a sunny day the shallow inshore waters will draw trout like a magnet. They love to soak up the first warmth of the year. The first movement of minnows and nymphs occurs in this warmer water, too. On days such as this your fishing can be fabulous. Other anglers are dredging the bottom with nymphs while I'm picking up fish after fish and doing it in an easy way. How many times have you seen fish dart away from the bank for deep water at your approach? This is the signal to fish the banks instead of the deep water. Surprisingly, fishing near the bank seems to yield larger fish than does fishing in the main current. Think of how many times you've seen a fish break the surface in shallow water or up against a bank chasing a minnow. Usually the angler will try to fish the same spot with a streamer but come up empty because the fish made its kill and is savoring its meal. After a few casts the angler loses interest and returns to his former method instead of trying to find other fish waiting for a meal. I note the type of water where I've seen fish and search out similar spots. Many times this has saved the day for me.

Patterns are a matter of personal preference and usually the pattern means less than its presentation and performance. The body is the main thing. For years I experimented with various materials but never really had a winner. They either didn't float right or were too fragile. Then I read about Charles E. Brooks in West Yellowstone, Montana, who used quill bodies on his floating streamers. I found that quill bodies were very durable and floated very well when properly sealed. Brooks has taken trout weighing more than 11 pounds on his floating streamers. Robert Boyle, a writer and avid fisherman, started tying realistic and effective salmon fly imitations using goose quill bodies. From Boyle I found the ideal method of fastening the hook to the quill. After binding the hook in the proper position with thread he used Krazy Glue to firmly affix the hook to the quill. I found most of the cyanoacrylate glues were equally good. Brooks did nothing to the quill because he liked to retain the translucent effect but any color body can be obtained by wrapping floss or tinsel over the quill. Permanent marking pens can also be used to color the quills. This method has the advantage of retaining some of the translucence of the quill plus adding no weight to the finished fly. I prefer to retain the natural translucence and use a heavy black thread to give a ribbed effect to the body.

Tying the floating streamer is easy. The body is made from a piece of quill taken from the flight feathers of a duck or goose. Duck quills are all right for small streamers but I prefer goose. They have a larger diameter which gives greater buoyancy. I cut a two or three-inch piece from the butt of the quill. The butt end of the quill has a small hole in it that has to be sealed. I take a small bunch of Golden Pheasant tippet and insert it in this hole. A drop of glue effec-

tively seals the hole and holds the tail firmly in place. In the open end of the quill I cut multiple slits about a quarter of an inch long so it can be pulled down to form a smooth head. I use monofilament cord because a lot of pressure is needed to draw the quill down tightly. I apply clear nail polish and wind right over it while it is still wet. This seals the quill and I use the black thread to bind the hook in position. This also gives the ribbed effect I like and I now have a natural-shaped body ready to be finished.

I use No. 4X long-shanked hooks. Once the hook is properly positioned I apply the glue along the shank of the hook where it is in contact with the quill. Take care to provide a smooth base for the wings. This firmly bonds hook and body together. I usually do this much and then set it aside to cure. I often make up a good stock at one time.

I like the Black Ghost pattern. The wings are formed by four matched hackles that are tied in and the fly is finished off. Make sure the head has a nice, smooth taper. This taper is very important if the fly is to swim quietly. Tying the fly this way causes it to swim on its side and simulate a crippled minnow. If you want the fly to float upright, the wings have to be tied parallel to the body. This causes the fly to float upright like a minnow swimming on the surface. Sometimes this will make a big difference.

I usually tie hackle-wing flies but the calf or bucktail can be very effective. Bucktail patterns range from Mickey Finns to whatever pattern you wish to make. Black or brown over white seem to be the best combinations. I usually tie the white parallel to the body and the black or brown on top.

A second method of making the body is to use two quill sections. One quill should be cut almost the length of the body you want. Then a short piece of a quill butt is cut that will slide into the body quill. This should fit snugly. I insert this piece just far enough to hold it in place. Then I apply a ring of glue around the joint and immediately push the head piece into position. This gives the tyer a natural taper for the head and it is easier to seal the body completely. A drop of glue will usually do the trick. This method also increases the buoyancy of the fly. The step created by the joining of the quills makes it much easier to form a smooth head. After I make up a supply of bodies I hang them on a rubber band stretched over drawer knobs. This way they hang freely while curing and are handy for the application of a couple of coats of nail polish, which makes the body more durable and gives it a final seal. You can also use colored nail polish to finish the body.

If you think streamers work only on unsophisticated trout, think again. Most of my fishing has been done within close range of New York City. The East Branch of the Croton River, Amawalk Outlet and Big Brothers are all within 50 miles of the city and this is where I do my everyday fishing. The Esopus and the Beaverkill also received their share of my attention. The floating streamer has worked out West, too, especially in Montana.

Montana offers many streams tailor-made for the floating streamer. The Firehole River is especially good. The weed growth makes subsurface fishing very difficult. But a floating streamer fished in the narrow channels close to the bank works very well.

I was fishing the water below Biscuit Basin where it meanders through the meadows. I had taken a few fish and the best one was about 18 inches long. I came to a deep hole in a bend of the river. It was undercut and appeared to be deep enough to hold a good trout. I drifted my floating streamer under the overhanging bank and began to twitch it back out. Suddenly water flew and the explosion caused me to miss the fish. Returning the fly immediately, I was ready for the fish. It struck and I was hooked into a trout I had traveled more than 2,000 miles to tangle with. I finally lost the fish when it dove into the weeds and succeeded in dislodging the fly. The loss of the fish was more than compensated for by the thrill of the initial strike. I can still see the water flying and the head and upper body of the fish out of the water.

I remember similar strikes on the Gibbon and Gallatin rivers. Where the Lewis River empties out of Lewis Lake until it plunges down into a rocky gorge is a beautiful stretch to fish with a floating streamer. I didn't take many fish but the ones I did take averaged about 18 inches long. Small fish do not seem to attack a floating streamer. Consequently, you catch fewer fish but larger ones. Very few strikes occurred in open water.

Most of the other fishermen I met were using Hopper patterns and I was outfishing them. I had tried various Hopper patterns before I switched to a floating streamer. My buddy Sam Seymour did very well with Hoppers but the difference in the size of the fish caught on a floating streamer and those caught on Hoppers convinced me to stick with the streamer. Once I discovered the method the fish preferred, I was able to take fish when most of the other anglers were waiting for hatches. When hatches were on, I switched to dry flies. Even then, the average size of the fish was smaller than those taken on the floating streamers.

In the East we have what I consider to be one of the top trout waters in the country: the Delaware River system in New York. Two branches make up the upper waters: The West Branch runs from Cannonsville down to Hancock and the East Branch flows from Pepacton Reservoir to Hancock where the two form the main river. These impoundments have created a cold-water fishery without parallel. Fish longer than 20 inches are common and every year 30-inch-plus fish are caught.

I never thought a floating streamer would work here because the fish were in the large smooth-flowing deep pools. One morning at about 10 a.m., I started fishing in the run of a large pool on the West Branch. There was a strong flow of water and the 100 yards were narrow, fast and about four to six feet deep. At the end of the run the water fanned out and became smooth. I thought I would make a killing with a deep, sunken Black Ghost but about 20 or 30 casts produced nothing. I tried every kind of retrieve I could think of—fast, slow, short jerks and long ones. Not a single hit and I could sense that fish were present. Finally I made a cast quartering downstream and immediately began to twitch the fly in short twitches near the surface as it drifted downstream. On the second cast I got a solid hit and a good fish. A couple of casts later another good fish struck solidly. This fish was about 20 inches long. After releasing the fish, I mulled over the change in methods needed. Maybe a floating streamer would work. I switched to a floating line and waded back up to where the water started to fan out. This water now yielded fish. All of the fish I caught were longer than 15 inches—except for one 12-incher. I cast across the stream and, holding my rod high, I allowed the current to carry my fly downstream while imparting short two or three-inch twitches. The fly would be drifting downstream with small ripples coming from the twitches. A heavy boil and the fly would disappear. In three hours I took 17 fish and three topped 20 inches.

I never equalled that day but that method always provided action when nothing else would. Early mornings and evenings always had quite a few anglers whipping the waters but the midday hours were barren of fishermen.

Every angler knows that slow, deep, swampy stretches are very hard to fish. Willows hanging in the water and logjams make fishing difficult and there is no current to assist the angler. I have a stretch of water like this that shall remain nameless. I love to flip my streamer as close as possible to an overhanging willow or by a logjam. Very little action is given to the fly and often a float of three or four feet takes minutes. When a fish strikes it is often with explosive viciousness. Only oversize fish seem to inhabit this water. Once hooked, the advantage is all on the trout's side. I lose more fish than I land because of the close quarters and the many underwater snags. Fishing a floating streamer seems to be the only consistent way to take trout. I learned of the existence of large fish in this section by accident. I was sitting on the bank one evening at the tail of the last pool before a swampy area. It was late spring and I was waiting for the evening hatch to start. Quite a few stocked fish were still in the stream and I saw one of these small fish start feeding about 50 feet below me where some red willows hung down in the water. Suddenly there was a huge swirl and the little one was gone. This tipped me off that large fish were there but it took me awhile to find the right method. The floating streamer was the answer.

Remember, these flies don't work every day but then, no method does. It's a wise angler who is willing to learn a new way and use it. Not only does he extend his fishing time but he increases his chances of turning fishless days into red-letter ones. Catching fish is the bottom line—no matter how loudly one raves over sunsets and solitude. I love to watch sunsets but I always seem to enjoy them more after just releasing a husky trout.

Makin' Fish Jerky

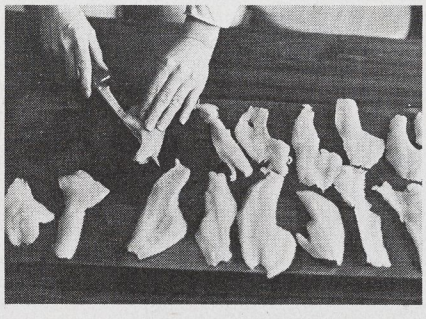
Indians made their fish jerky out in the open and it took several days, but you can do it a lot easier in your oven in just a few hours. Here's how to make this unique trail food.

By J. Wayne Fears

Drying fish as a means of preserving it for future food use has been in practice for centuries. Even in these modern times, a visitor to coastal native villages in Alaska can see large racks of salmon drying out in the open.

If you are interested in having fish jerky as a trail food for your fishing outings, you can dry fish in your oven just like the Indians did out in the open. Lean fish such as bass, bluegills, brook trout, crappies, flounder and perch make the best jerky. Those fish with high fat content such as carp, pickerel, pike, catfish and snapper are not practical to dry.

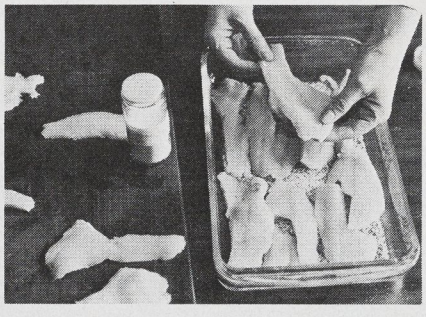
The first step in making fish jerky is to clean and fillet your catch as soon as possible. Next, cut the fillets into strips that are one-quarter-inch thick and four to six inches long. Small fillets such as those from panfish may not need to be cut into strips (photo 1).



1. *The first step in making jerky is to clean and fillet your catch as soon as possible. Cut into one-quarter-inch thick strips.*

Thick strips of fish take a long time to dry and there is a greater chance of spoilage. After cutting the fish into strips, dry each piece thoroughly.

Before drying, the fish should be packed in salt. The best salt to use is pickling salt. This finely ground salt is usually found in grocery stores, especially during the summer canning season. In a glass dish, spread a layer of salt on the bottom, then coat each strip of fish with salt and place in the dish. Place the fish in layers, making sure each strip is well coated with salt (photo 2). This process uses about one pound of salt for every four pounds of fish. Allow the fish strips to cure for about 48 hours. This curing retards spoilage by pulling water out of the fish and therefore killing decay-causing microorganisms.



2. *Before drying, coat each strip with pickling salt. Allow strips to cure for 48 hours in order to retard spoilage.*

Take the fish from the curing dish, rinse them and clean off all the salt. Dry each strip thoroughly.

Next, place a cooking sheet or aluminum foil in the bottom of the oven to catch drippings. Be sure to oil the oven racks to prevent the fish from sticking. Then lay the strips of fish on the oven rack (photo 3).

Prop the oven door open about two inches with a wooden spoon to allow moisture to escape. Turn the oven to its lowest setting. Using the lowest temperature setting on your oven is the only way to make jerky. Higher settings cook the fish rather than dry it.

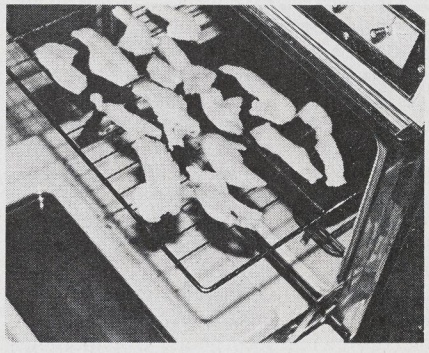
Keep the fish strips in the oven until they are thoroughly dry. They will shrink and turn somewhat hard. If the fish does not dry completely throughout, spoilage will occur. The drying process will usually take from six to eight hours (photo 4).

Fish dried in this fashion are usually not very flavorful. Therefore, just before placing them in the oven, many sportsmen soak the strips for an hour or two in a brine or dry cure, or coat the strips with Worcestershire sauce, liquid smoke or soy sauce.

A favorite dry cure is made by mixing one pound of salt, one pound of brown sugar, one tablespoon of garlic powder, two tablespoons of white pepper and one tablespoon of onion powder. It's best to mix these ingredients the day before applying it to the fish strips, letting it sit overnight in an airtight jar to blend flavors. Before placing the strips in the oven, just after the salt cure has been rinsed off, coat each strip with this dry cure and let sit for two hours before placing in the oven.

A variation of the basic fish jerky recipe is perhaps tastiest when used on salmon. First, slice the salmon into thin strips. Salt the strips in a glass dish or enameled pan using two tablespoons of salt for each pound of fish. Refrigerate for 12 hours. Remove from the refrigerator and place strips on an oiled rack in the oven to dry. Set the oven at the lowest possible temperature and allow the fish to dry three to five hours or until thoroughly dry. Again, leave the oven door slightly open to allow moisture to escape.

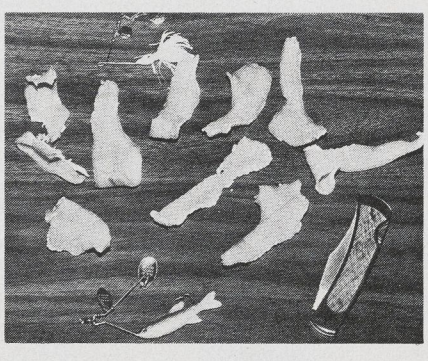
Fish can also be dried outside without any modern conveniences, as long as it is done in an area where warm sun and low humidity persist for as long as a week. The fish must be left out in the open air but shaded from direct sun. This process takes days whereas oven drying takes only hours.



3. *After placing aluminum foil in the bottom of the oven to catch the drippings, lay the fish on the greased oven rack.*

Once the fish strips are made into jerky, it is wise to store them in a freezer until you are ready for a trip afield. The purpose for storing in this manner is two-fold. Fish jerky is simply raw fish that is dried, so it is wise to freeze the fish for 48 hours in order to kill parasites such as the fish tapeworm, which has been known to be transmitted to anglers who eat raw fish. The second reason is to avoid contamination with the deadly food poison, botulism, which can develop in fish that are improperly preserved. Although for many generations dried fish has been kept stored in a cool, dry spot in camps without refrigeration, it is best to store fish jerky in the freezer just to be safe.

4. *A few hours in the oven set at its lowest temperature will dry the fish thoroughly and start your lips smackin'.*



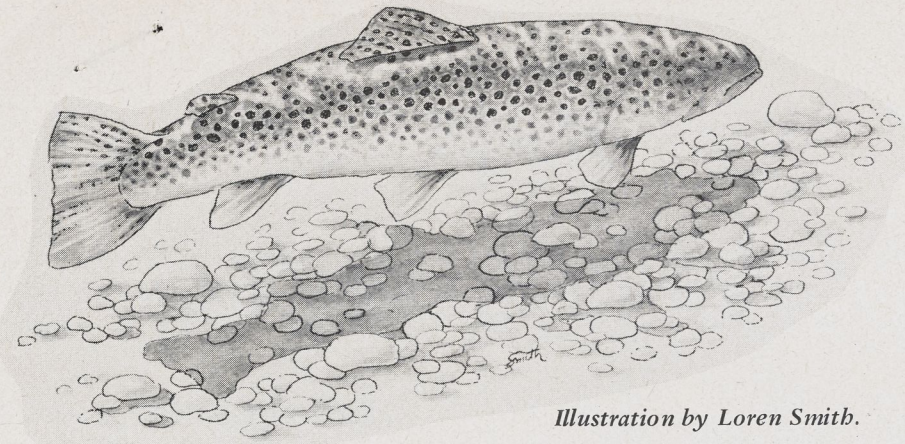


Illustration by Loren Smith.

The South Platte Method

Edison Engle

Breaking concentration for a few seconds, I looked upstream at my fishing partner. I was just in time to hear his epithet, "This is no way to fish!" He pulled his leader in toward himself and cut off the split shot and put it into his pocket. Minutes before it had been necessary for me to wipe a grin from my face as I watched him trying to cast the weighted leader. There is no question that a leader weighted with a BB size split shot is an abomination to cast. It wasn't long before he had a new tippet tied on and was happily casting an unweighted Hare's Ear into the riffles. His loop was nice and tight as the line unrolled and laid down the nymph. There was that aura around him that a good fly caster radiates when things go smoothly. I didn't want to tell him that his odds of getting a strike were next to nothing.

There are a lot of reasons why the trout are difficult in the Cheeseman Canyon area of the South Platte River near Deckers, Colorado. First of all, this is a wild trout fishery – several years ago the state declared a three-mile stretch of river from Cheeseman Dam downstream as the state's first fish-for-fun area. The area was not stocked and the rainbow and brown trout in the water took on the responsibility for their own propagation. The initial fishing pressure was not extremely heavy but as fly fishermen from the Denver and Colorado Springs metropolitan areas began to realize the premier fishing experience that the area offered, pressure increased. As more and more trout have been caught and released their population has become wary to the point of affording fly fishermen a substantial challenge.

Colorado anglers realize larger yields using largely unwieldy techniques.

Somewhat specialized methods have been developed by fly fishermen to cope with the trout in the South Platte. One that I call "the South Platte Method" for want of a better term is concerned with attaching split shot to the leader and fishing a nymph very close to the bottom. This method is familiar to many Colorado fly fishermen and it has been developed to a very high degree of sophistication on this river.

The reason the method developed is quite simple. When there is no action on the surface the trout hug the bottom. I have experimented and found that a nymph presented just three or four inches above the stream bottom will not move the trout. It is possible for a very meticulous fly fisherman to get an unweighted nymph down near the bottom, but for every five or ten casts one will actually put the nymph where it belongs. In the words of George Hamamoto, a fisherman of local reputation, "You have to get the fly to the fish."

There are several ways of attaching the split shot to the leader. The simplest is to put the shot on the leader about a foot or two above the fly. This is the method I generally use, but you do lose a bit of sensitivity because you have the weight between you and the fly. Several ways have been suggested to counter this. Swisher and Richards, in *Fly Fishing Strategy,* mention a dropper technique in which a long tippet of about two feet is tied to the end of the leader with a blood knot. An end of the blood knot is then left untrimmed and an overhand knot tied at the tip. A split shot is attached to the dropper. This provides more sensitivity but the "rig" has a tendency to "foul up." A third method suggests that you tie the nymph to the tippet and rather than trim the loose piece of tippet material, you attach the shot at the desired distance below the fly. This solves the fouling problem of the dropper technique but may prevent the fly from achieving optimum action.

The method itself is easy once the fisherman becomes acquainted to its terms. The most critical aspect is that of reading the water. You must be able to determine what water is appropriate to this type of fishing. If you have fished unweighted nymphs, you are at an advantage. Initially, you should look for areas where fast water comes into flat or still water. In this type of situation the water has usually created a "hole" that is good holding water for trout.

On the South Platte the Hare's Ear nymph is generally the most effective pattern to use. The best sizes are from 14 to 18. The fly should be tied as "buggy" as you can get it. This means pull the hairs out with your dubbing needle or do whatever is necessary to "mess" it up. Another excellent South Platte fly is a freshwater shrimp or scud imitation. Shrimp and scuds are particularly effective in the early spring season when the rainbows are on the

Photos by the author.

that, of course, but the West also offers intimate small streams, lakes and even bass and pike fishing." The flies are tied by specialists from around the country and in-house custom tying is also available.

In addition to the flies, Western Angler stocks rods, reels, lines, leaders, blanks and rod building components, a complete selection of fly tying materials and tools, boots, artwork, gift items and a large library of fishing books which are set into an alcove with a fireplace and a leather sofa.

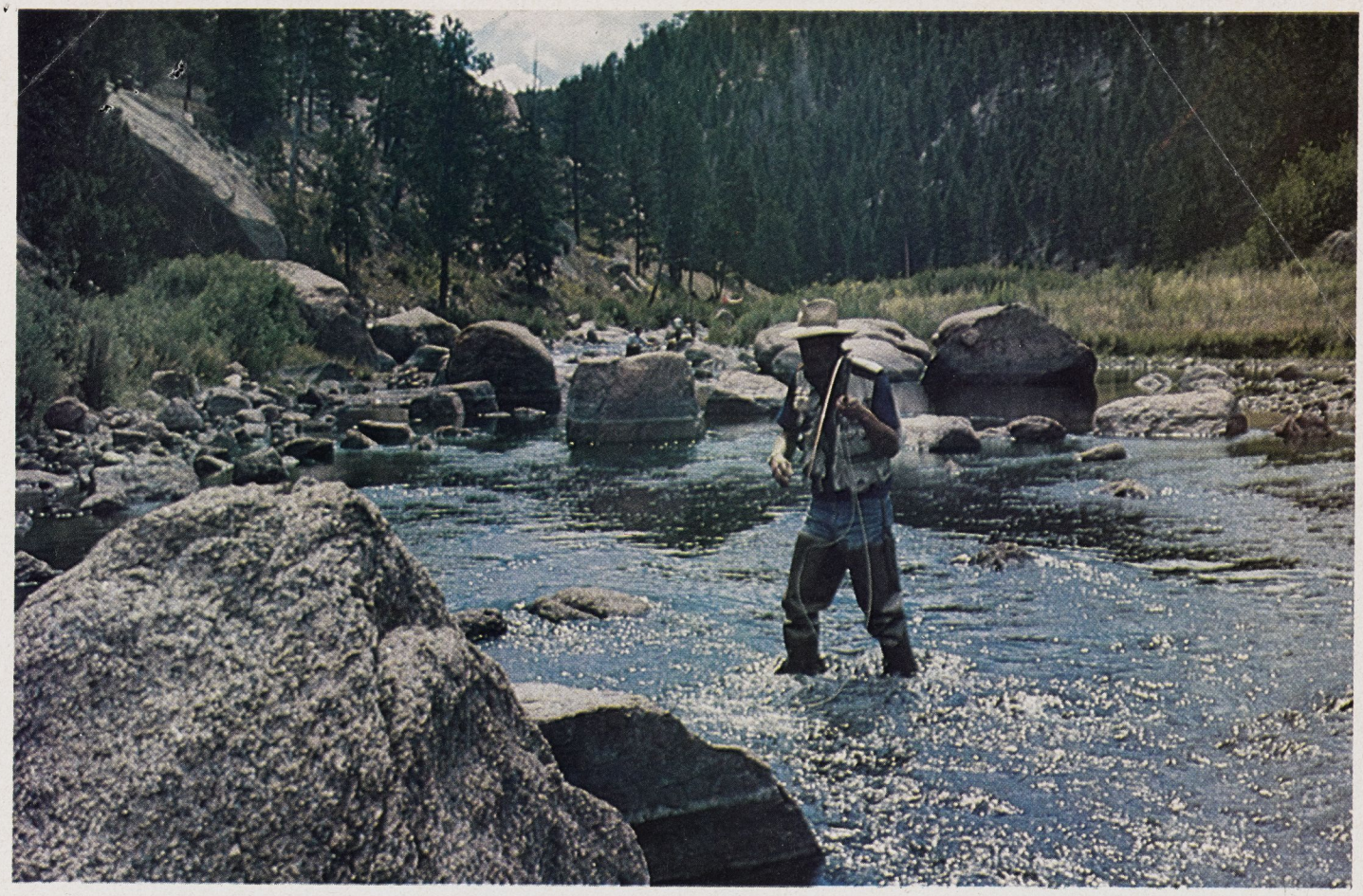
"One of the reasons fly fishing is such a great sport is that there are so many corollaries," says Norm. "There's fly tying which is a whole sport, or art, in itself, entomology, rod building, collecting, reading and so on." He feels that to say that fly fishing can become a way of life is "a little overly dramatic" but allows that this is what happens with many anglers.

"A fisherman progresses from wanting to catch the most fish, to the biggest and finally the most difficult, regardless of size or quantity. And somewhere along the line he develops an interest in conservation."

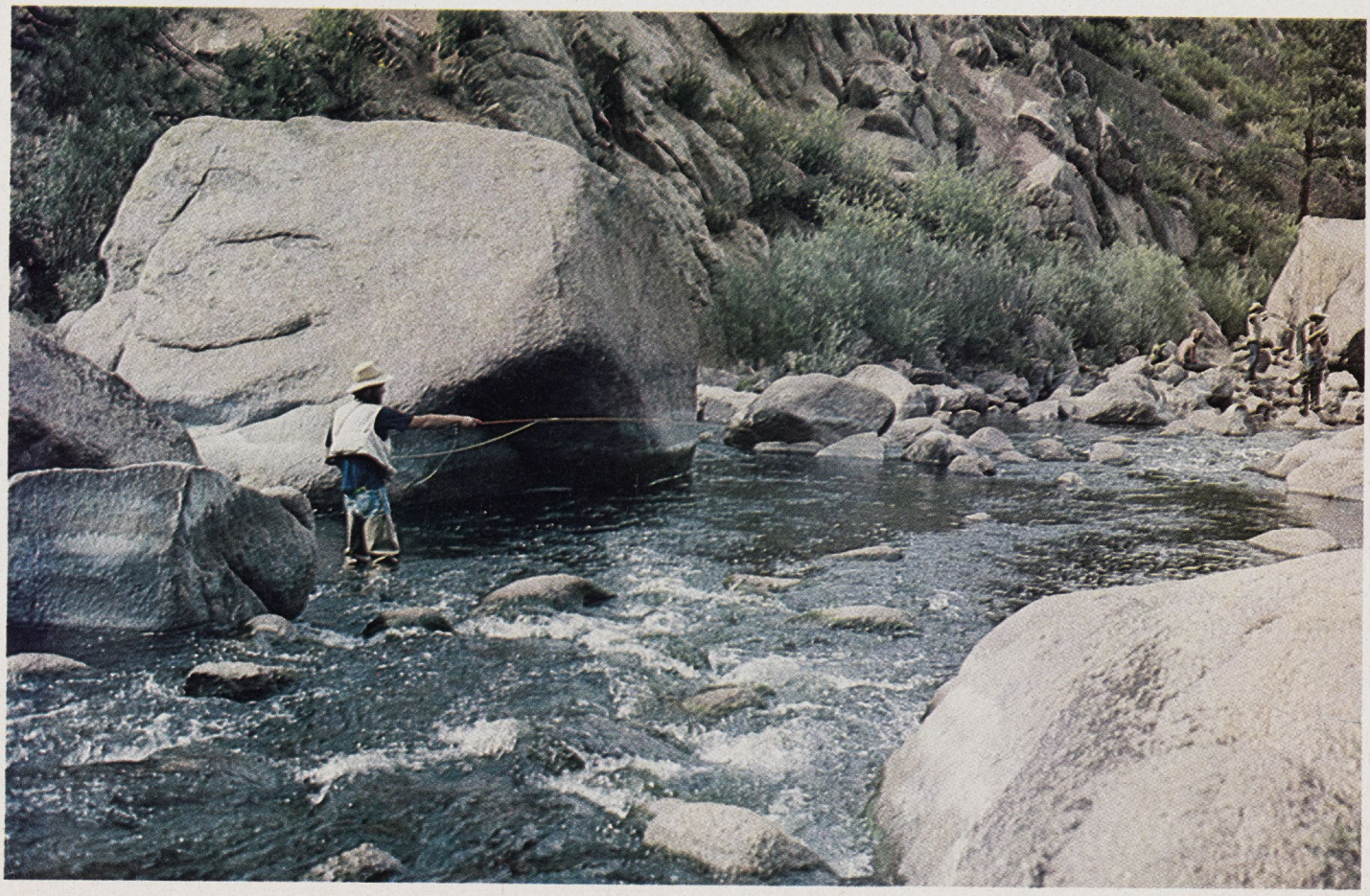
Norm recognizes that many anglers join T.U. and other organizations because they want to do something for the conservation movement and want an efficient group to do the work and keep them informed. "These people aren't conservationists who fish; they're fishermen who are interested in conservation." He adds, "That's an important distinction."

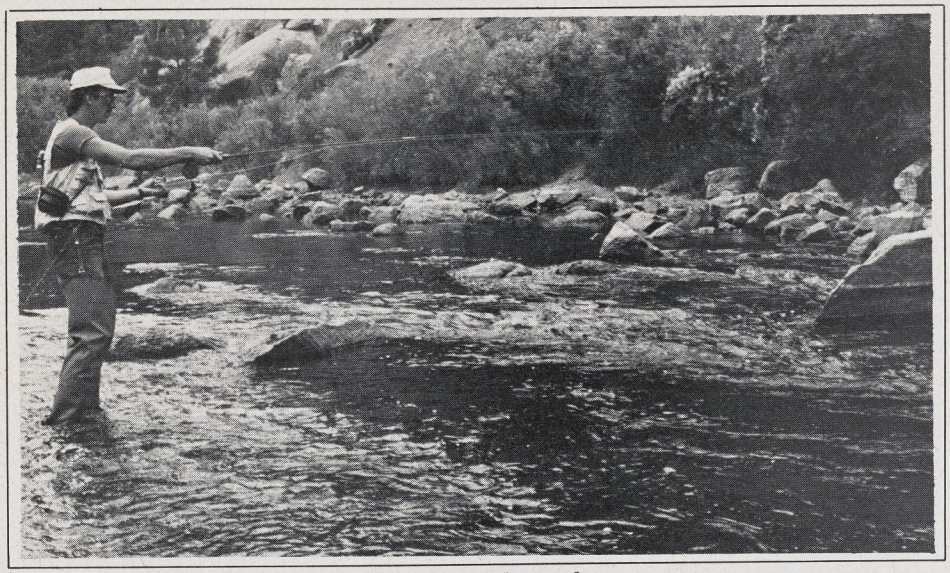
Norm is encouraged by the number of people who are taking up fly fishing. "Fishing is a sport that grew on its own for years. You were taught to fish by friends who fished, but now there are a lot of things people can do besides go fishing. They can play tennis or racquet ball. This growth in fly fishing that we're experiencing now began about ten or twelve years ago and in another five years or so it will reach the top of its curve and level out."

A continued growth in the number of fly fishers is good for business but it also means a larger constituency that is difficult to ignore. Norm and his staff are not only concerned with the tackle business, but share this greater concern over the state of the fisheries and the sport in general.

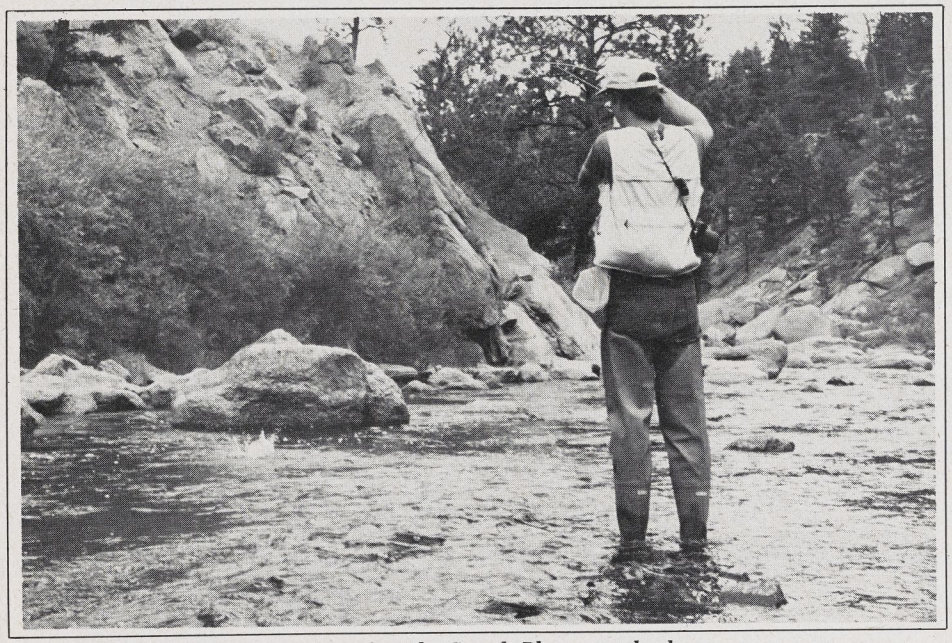


Photos by the author.





The rod tip follows the nymph as it bounces down the streambed and is as close to directly over the fly as possible.



Author playing a trout caught using the South Platte method. Water here is ideal for fishing nymphs with this technique.

move. If the fish are particularly wary you will probably have to go with a 6X tippet, although a 5X is suitable in most cases.

It is then necessary to choose a weighting method. If you prefer the simplest method, tie on about a foot and a half of tippet with a blood knot. At the blood knot attach the split shot. I have found BB size shot to be the most effective on the South Platte although specific water conditions will at times dictate more or less weight. The nymph itself should be unweighted. This last point has been considerably contested. Many area fishermen say that the nymph must be weighted along with a split shot farther up the leader. I have found in my own experience that an unweighted nymph seems to act in a more life-like manner and is more effective. As you fish the method more, you will undoubtedly find it necessary to experiment with how you weight the leader and if you need to weight the nymph itself.

Cast the weighted leader in the faster water upstream from where you believe the fish are holding. You will find that you can approach these areas very closely. It seems that when the trout are holding close to the bottom you can come very close without spooking them. As you feel the shot bouncing down the stream bottom, follow it with the tip of your rod and keep the slack out of the line. The closer you can get to forming a right angle with the line and your rod tip the more sensitivity you will have.

The most difficult part of the South Platte Method is detecting a strike when you get it. To do this requires that you pay special attention to the leader at all times as it moves downstream with the current. If the leader stops or in any way acts in an unusual fashion, set the hook. You will find in the initial stages that you will be striking at an array of things other than trout – like rocks, algae, branches, and imaginary fish. As time passes you will develop a feel for the trout. If you make a pass through a holding area and don't get a strike, check the nymph to make sure it hasn't picked up any algae or other foreign matter before you cast again.

As you get the feel for this kind of fishing you will be able to locate more and more areas that can be effectively fished using this technique. There are many areas in a trout stream that provide faster holding water although its depth is only five or ten inches. Some seem to have no holding areas at all. Give them a try. You will be surprised at the number of trout that seem to come out of nowhere to strike the nymph.

Deeper holes can also hold larger trout. Try these. I have found that in deeper water the South Platte Method doesn't seem quite as effective and that it may be necessary to switch to fast sinking fly lines. It becomes quite a bit more difficult to detect a strike under these conditions.

The rod you use for the South Platte Method is important. A graphite or glass rod of about nine feet is usually adequate. A rod this size gives more latitude to cover areas farther from the fisherman while still maintaining a close to 90-degree angle between the line and rod tip. The graphite may give you a somewhat quicker reaction time to strikes.

The use of lead on the leader in fly fishing seems to be one of those things that a lot of fishermen do, but don't talk about. It is just now finding its way into print. Perhaps the best explanation for the aversion some fishermen have to lead weighting is contained in a quote from Swisher and Richards *Fly Fishing Strategy*, ". . . it may be the understatement of the year to mention that it is not much fun to cast this kind of setup."

Fishing with the weighted leader is one of those tools that a fisherman

(continued on page 52)