Lyrical Classic

And some 'practical' stuff, too

Flyfisher's World

By Nick Lyons
(New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1996). 304 pp. $23.

The Earth is Enough

By Harry Middleton
(Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Co. [2928 Pearl St., Boulder CO 80301]. 1996 [1989]). With a new foreword by Russell Chatham.

We have a good mix here to sustain us through the evenings of our high season—lyrical and literary books, great reprints and practical tomes. Although at this time of year we might postpone the "fireside" titles in favor of books on, say, flies, let me deal with them first; they're exceptional.

Flyfisher's World is the first Nick Lyons anthology in many years, assembled from various columns and articles in magazines and newspapers. As such, it's an automatic "must read" and candidate for any literate angler's top 10 books of '96. (And I can now throw away a *big* stack of old magazines and photocopies!)

If you know Nick and his work—and it's hard to think that anyone who reads and fishes with flies doesn't—this is obvious. But for anyone new to his work I'd like to quote another fine writer, Ted Leeson, on him, from Leeson's intro to the new Easton Press "collector's edition" of Nick's old *Bright Waters*; it could speak of this book as well:

"The insights here are often subtle, and perhaps even subversive, cutting against the grain of conventional wisdom. Nick refuses, as I think the most passionate anglers must, the notion that fishing is an 'escape,' a domain of experience that is cordoned off, indulged on rivers and forgotten about otherwise . . . in its pages the author undertakes what every thinking person must do: negotiate a life rifled with conflicting demands and attractions, pressures and enjoyments, passions and tediums . . . . This book is a record of the part that flyfishing plays in these negotiations, or how it is *not* the whole story though a deeply important one, of how in the pursuit of rivers, properly conducted, some longing gets filled."

This particular volume ranges from Nick's roots in unlikely Brooklyn and early flyfishing in Michigan, on the Au Sable, ("I owned a white glass fly rod then and knew just enough about using it to avoid threading the line through the keeper ring") to French chalkstreams and the good rivers of Montana. In addition to trout, the fish range from bluegills to stripers (with added tongue-in-cheek forays after eels and snakes.) The pieces include tall tales, history, reflections and appreciations of other anglers . . . an incredible diversity, all with Nick's trademark erudition, humor and, above all, sanity.

A few favorites, at random: "Space Age Stuff" starts with a laugh at a nouveau angler: "he was searching for the right fly—and really needed a computer." It meanders elegantly through appreciation for fine old things, such as bamboo rods and his old manual typewriter. Then it takes an unexpected turn: "I don't think we go fishing to hold up the honor of the past—though the past is an honorable part of the pleasure for many; but to me, suddenly, bamboo was not quite as useful or pleasant as a graphite rod I tried . . . I could cast better with graphite, so I switched." He ends with typical practical graciousness: ". . . intelligence, humanity, courtesy, skill, and heart exist whether one carries bamboo or cutting edge graphite, and . . . the spirit with which we practice fly fishing means as much—even more—than the tools we use." "The Collector's Hook" speaks of his addiction to angling books and his past passion for cane rods, all leading up to his canny purchase of a vintage Bogdan salmon reel from a junk shop. But it's the ending that's the kicker—one that any book, rod, or gun junkie can identify with:

"And then I realized that I'd probably made a tragic mistake.

Hooked again.

I'd condemned myself to a powerful addiction I'd tried for years, desperately, to avoid.

Bovey Tracy, Devon TQ13 9HQ]. 1996 [1950]). 269 pp. $55 boxed. With a new introduction by Datus Proper.

The Practical Angler

By W.C. Stewart
(Devon, England: Fly Fisher's Classic Library, 1996 [1857]). 228 pp. $55 boxed.

Actually, these two elegant reprints are *both* "practical" books, at least in intent. The Marinaro, often in print from 1950 to the present but never in this nice an edition, is, as Datus Proper explains in his excellent intro, *the* seminal modern dryfly text: "*A Modern Dry-Fly Code* opened a half-century during which anglers would proliferate, equip themselves amply and absorb great blocks of Vincent Marinaro's original thinking into conventional wisdom." Marinaro rejected the handed-down dry flies of previous generations and observed the life in Pennsylvania's limestone steams, coming up with terrestrials like his "jassids," with minutiae, with the first flies based on *Baetis*. He was a perfectionist, an exact observer and a man of forthright opinions; Proper, who knew him, said that "he was a lawyer, and the *Code* made case law that would be argued before the court of anglers without proving flawed." What doesn't come through without reading him is his passion, his keen appreciation of things and their properties, his naturalist's eye. This book is a delight; on reading it for the fifth or so time, it reads as freshly as it did the first. It was my first pick from this year's Fly Fisher's Classic list—and any reader of this column would know how much I like their books.

While I have always admired Marinaro, I had never read Stewart, still another reason to trust the editors in Devon. John Waller Hills considered this book to be one of the four most important fly-fishing texts. Although anglers had written about fishing upstream before Stewart, his was the book that turned the tide. It's worth quoting Hills here (from *A History of Fly Fishing for Trout*, also available from Fly Fisher's Classic Library): "He was not the discoverer of upstream fishing any more than Darwin was the discoverer of natural selection; but he was the first for nearly two hundred years to take any trouble to make the case and the first of any age to do it completely . . . all credit be given to Stewart, for he converted the world as Darwin did."

Not that it's just valuable as history: Stewart is a happy man and a joy to read, with none of the pomposity that can mar the prose of, say, some well-known 19th-Century salmon anglers. "It is surely better to have fresh air and exercise, even in wet, than to be spending the whole day in some country inn, yawning over some second-rate novel for the third time, the amusement agreeably diversified by staring out of the window at the interminable rain, by poking a peat-fire, and possibly by indulging in a superfluity of that institution of the country, pale ale."

Spinners

By Sylvester Nemes
(Bozeman, MT: self-published [PO Box 3782, Bozeman, MT 59772], 1995). 155 pp. $34.95 + $2 s&h.

Tying Bass Flies: Twelve of the Best

By Deke Meyer
(Portland, OR: Frank Amato Publications, 1995). 32 pp. $9.95 paperback.

Bonefish Fly Patterns

By Dick Brown
(New York: Lyons & Burford, 1996). 253 pp. $45.

Good fly books. The most interesting is Sylvester Nemes' new book, the first I know of entirely on spinners. It's a work of science as well as art, and a labor of love. As Mr. Nemes says, most hatch books emphasize the dun rather than the less numerous, often less visible last stage.

Nemes takes us briskly through the history of the spinner in angling literature and gives a careful entomological account of the second molt (and why there is one, a subject I've not read of before). And then: "There is a kind of sleight of hand in the molt. Your eyes are glued to the insect. You don't want to miss anything. Yet, when it's over, you're not sure what you saw. It's also hard to believe that the spinner and the dun are the same insect. The dun is lackluster, thick and stodgy with dull, hairy wings of little translucency. The spinner is sparkling and jewel-like, and luminous with bright, clear wings of maximum transparency."

Noting that this translucency, which makes the flies so beautiful, is difficult to match, he then gives detailed accounts of the main spinner species and patterns. The wonderful photos are not just icing on the cake; they help the angler see how brilliant and elusive the colors are. This work of angling scholarship will join Nemes' "Soft-Hackle" books as minor classics. I, who don't match hatches, am keeping it.

Tying Bass has only 12 patterns, but they are complicated, sturdy numbers that need detailed instructions. I've used some similar ones with good results (the Rabbit Strip Slider, various poppers). And a couple—the Burks Bass Flash, with its extended Flashabou "armature" (hat?)—are so weird that, well, John Gierach says in his intro to A.K. Best's forthcoming *Fly Box* that he keeps some flies just because "they seemed interesting or beautiful or weird or maybe ridiculous in some strangely meaningful way." Yes.

Bonefish Fly Patterns is at the other end of the spectrum. It is a $40 book with no fewer than 150 elegant flies, every one pho-

book reviews

BEYOND THE TETONS
by Ralph Maughan, Pruett Publishing Company, Boulder, Colorado, 1981.

This guide unlocks the secrets of one of the wildest—and best— fly fisherman's regions in the contiguous United States. What makes the Teton Wilderness one of the best fishing areas? Remoteness and relative inaccessibility keep the hordes from making the trek. Another reason for this area's splendid fishery is its abundance of clean unpolluted waters. The headwaters of the mighty Yellowstone, remote and untouched by roads, originates here and streams like Thorofare Creek, Open Creek, the three forks of the Buffalo River, Pacific Creek and countless alpine lakes rank as "blue ribbon" waters.

In this dramatic alpine setting, most cutthroat trout fin out their lives having never flitted from the menacing shadow of a human being. Fewer still have ever been forced to decide whether that apparent bug dangling at the end of a thin filament can threaten existence.

Maughan answers his critics who ask, "Why tell people about this place?" with, "Such places as the Teton Wilderness are being visited, not because there are trail guides available, but because there simply are more people." He sees America's wilderness system being "rapidly torn to shreds" not by fishermen and backpackers, but by the timber industry, energy interests and "assorted corporate conglomerates." Maughan feels that the answer is not to hide these few remaining gems, rather they should be exhibited and publicized as national treasures.

As the title indicates, this book doesn't deal with the spectacular, but heavily-used Teton Mountain Range, but those brooding giants beyond the Tetons to the east—the Absarokas and the Pinyon Peak Highlands. Most of Maughan's book describes the trails that penetrate this wilderness, but he begins with a description of the region in general with directions on how to find the Teton Wilderness.

Unfortunately, the reader who is looking for fishing tips won't find much in this book. Maughan focuses on the travel aspects of the area rather than its fishery. He abstains from such things as fly recommendations, rods, lines and so on, but concentrates on the best places to go to tangle with trout. Maughan's enthusiasm for fishing is manifest in his use of superlative terms. Words such as "overflowing," "abundant," and "best" permeate the text when referring to most of the fishing waters and their shimmering inhabitants. But the vocabulary is justified.

The author quite skillfully sprinkles excellent black and white photography throughout the book. Thankfully, there are no dead fish pictures and his photo portrayal of selected wilderness waters should convince even the most skeptical angler of fly fishing potential in the Teton Wilderness.

There's still plenty of good fishing to be had at the edges of civilization. But if you are tired of casting your fly to the background music of "organized" society hissing tires, roaring jet boats, sputtering dirt bikes and the ubiquitous "ketchin' anythin'?" from an apparently endless procession of passing anglers—then you'll have to walk beyond the edge. *Beyond the Tetons* shows you the way.

George Wentzel
Pocatello, Idaho

THE SOFT-HACKLED FLY ADDICT
by Sylvester Nemes; published in 1981 by the author, 901 South Plymouth Court, Chicago, Illinois 60605; 125 pages; hardbound, $16.95.

In 1975, with the publication of his first book, *The Soft-Hackled Fly*, Sylvester Nemes earned the admiration and affection of the fly fishing public. He wrote simply and refreshingly about a style of trout flies that were simple to tie and pleasant to fish. Astonished by clarity in a world that grew Latinly confused, fishermen turned eagerly to Nemes and learned much from his fine little treatise.

He has done it again.

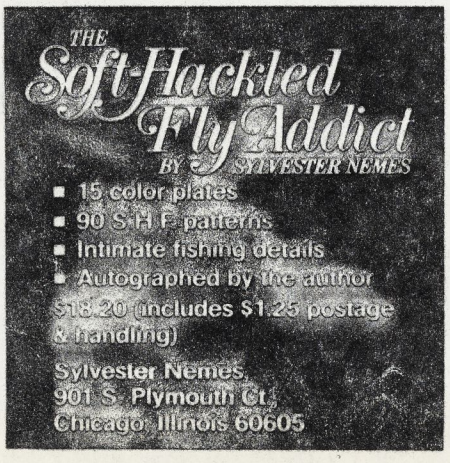
Nemes has written another fine book. The subject is the same simple wet flies that he introduced in his first work. This time he takes the reader backward in time, looking closely at the origins and history of soft-hackled flies. He also looks forward, from the publication of the first book, detailing developments that have taken place since then. But Nemes' prose, which is always sharp and fine, is perhaps best when he glances sideways at other anglers who wade his rivers: "One of their favorite patterns around West Yellowstone was a two-inch long, heavily-weighted stonefly nymph. They demolished brand new graphite rods with it. They pelted themselves in the head, shoulders, and body with it. They cursed the fishing style required to fish it. And, of course, they caught fish with it." But, Nemes maintains, he caught fish apace with them, and, "I was having more fun."

Nemes insists on catching fish and having fun, too. So he fishes with soft-hackled flies because they are pleasant and productive.

In looking at the history of soft hackles, Nemes introduces two books. The first is *North-Country Flies*, published in Britain in 1886, by T. E. Pritt. The second is *Brook and River Trouting* by H. E. Edmonds and N. N. Lee, in 1916. These two ". . . communally form the bible of the soft-hackled fly."

From the Pritt book Nemes extracts all of the fly fishing information, the full list of 62 dressings, with their descriptions and also reproduces the 11 color plates of all the flies. He has, essentially, presented the out-of-print Pritt book to the reader, as a gift, within his own book. That fact is no little comment on the importance of Nemes' book.

In 1886, Pritt wrote: "Trout undoubtedly take a hackled fly for the insect just rising from the pupa in a half-drowned state; and the opening and closing of the fibers of the feathers give it an appearance of vitality, which even the most dexterous fly fisher will fail to impart to the winged imitation." Pritt contrasted the "perfect" insect, the fully formed adult, to the "imperfect" insect,



Armchair Outdoors

'Soft-hackled Fly' a nice catch

by Joe Parry

Many of my early-on flies came out of the vise looking more bedraggled, fresh roadkills.

One obnoxious "former" friend referred to my fly creations as "hysterical!" He went on to add more to the (valid) insult by saying, "You may have to get a falconer's license to fish those babies!"

But, forced by a modern-day version of poverty, I was unable to afford the more expensive materials — the necks that held the stiffer hackle and such.

One late evening, however, I resolved to tie my flies a tad more sparsely and came up with a few that looked pretty good — even though drastically dissimilar to those of the fine, Orvis variety.

Some of those mentioned above had no wings, no tail and long, soft grouse feathers for hackle. The bodies were, for the most part, a few wraps of floss in orange, yellow or red. When these got wet, the hackle would lay back toward the hook's bend and take on the appearance of a thorax. Not to mention the fact that the delicate barbs would undulate in a manner that simply had to be tantalizing to a trout.

One early summer afternoon I was fishing a small area stream and had one of these flies tied to a very light tippet, about a 5X, and I placed it into a boil in the tiny stream. Lo and behold, I was soon hooked up with the biggest trout of my half-century career! I won't tell you whether I landed it or not, since the main theme here is the fact that old Joe was onto something. Had I invented a fly that would have my friends at Orvis carrying contracts to my door? No such luck.

However, I did have a fly that put the hurt (I catch and release) on five other trout that summer afternoon, the only trouble is, I was not the inventor, as I later found out after reading a wonderful book from the folks at Stackpole Book of Mechanicsburg, titled, "The Soft-Hackled Fly" by Sylvester Nemes. Nemes, by the way, is a Pennsylvania product, too.

"The Soft-Hackled Fly" may not go into the archives of great fly-fishing literature, but it will most surely be celebrated by fly fishers the world over for the introduction of the soft-hackled fly to their fly wallets. And Sylvester Nemes may not become a household word, but he'll be a man the angler won't soon forget.

Nemes takes readers through the book as though he were sitting on a streamside log instructing you as you fish. He's the kind of gent and writer this writer would very much like to befriend. Nemes is very much "unlike" the egotistical dry fly purist and is generous with revealing and sharing, this angling knowledge that, for this fisher of the fly, will be a celestial celebration.

The preface of the book hooked me. Nemes says, "The instructions here eliminate the need for the average flyfisherman to be an entomologist. He need not know the difference between a stonefly nymph and a small mayfly nymph. He can forget (amen) emergence dates, fly sex, and maturity or immaturity. He can travel from one stream to another, east or west, and enjoy the sport as it was meant to be enjoyed in the beginning . . . without the cult, ritual and mystery."

And Nemes is 110 percent correct with that declaration, though I discovered some of what he's written through ignorance.

Nemes tells of the flies and patterns he carries in his fly box, admitting that they are strictly limited to but fourteen flies in three different colors from size 8 to 14.

"I was so enamored of these partridge-hackle flies, that gradually my fly box contained nothing else," he writes. And he goes on to say, if fished in the manner he describes, "I believe a blind man could successfully fish my flies in the manner described." That alone boosted my confidence greatly!"

And Nemes says, "The soft-hackled fly temps more trout a great deal more often. It tempts bigger trout. And it rouses the rapacity of the most lethargic trout causing it to charge from great distance or depth. That's why the take, when fishing these flies, is so powerful and extremely physical."

Certainly the dries of the fly world are things of beauty, but after reading "The Soft-Hackled Fly" by Sylvester Nemes you may elect to frame them for occasional admiration since you sure won't need them any longer.

Unless, that is, you're a dyed-in-the-wool dry man and too bull-headed to make the conversion. Go ahead if you like. Wait for the hatch, the riseforms, and worry your derriere off about "drag." With Nemes' theories and flies and instruction and marvelous coaching in his first book, I won't be waiting with you. I'll be catching trout and tying flies a child could tie with an hour's training!

MARCH 1986

Antique Fishing Collectibles NEWSLETTER

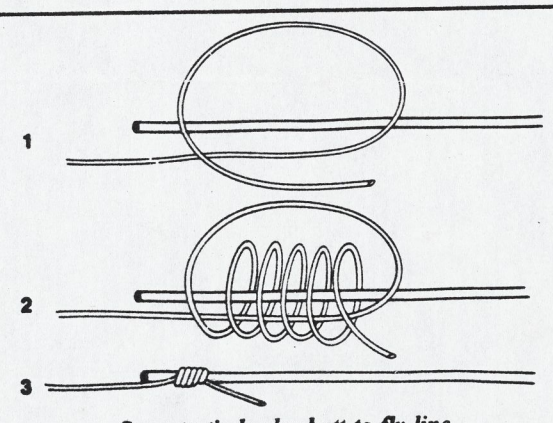
BOOKS

- **Learn How to Fly Fish in One Day** — By Sylvester Nemes (Stackpole Books, Harrisburg, PA. $9.95, Paperback)

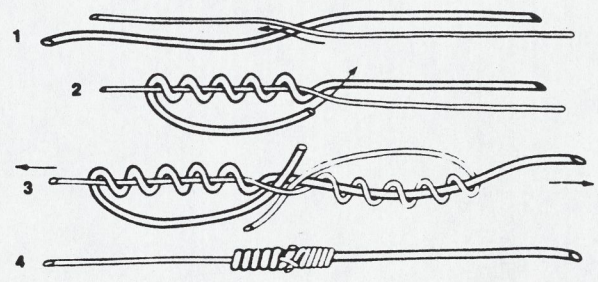
Learning to fly fish in a single day is an ambitious undertaking. The main thing to keep in mind is not the time, but the basics. One day today, one day tomorrow, practice makes perfect! Practicing without the basics is a hit-and-miss proposition, one that should be avoided if one has access to a good teacher.

It appears, of late, that teaching to fish is catching on. Nemes is an accomplished fly fisherman, and from his instructions he appears to be a good teacher. Take Dick Wilson, for instance. Wilson, the NFLCC Region 4 vice president and an avid collector (see cover story in this issue), has also taken to teaching. But he does it in a classroom at an Ohio university. During those lazy months of summer and the cooling months of fall, he teaches how to fish. His degree instruction course offers hands-on casting techniques with live and artificial baits. Wilson reveals that casting is one thing, catching is altogether different.

Those of us who are prone to book-learning may gain a measure of instruction with book in one hand and fly rod in another.



Steps to tie leader butt to fly line.



Steps to tie a Blood Knot.

Nemes, however, realizes the problems novices face when they try to follow instruction from a book without the benefit of a teacher. He, therefore, carefully outlines the equipment you will need and where to get it. Also, he illustrates the proper methods of whipping a fly rod. His text is clear, concise and laced with good common sense.

There is nothing here about the traditional, split-bamboo rod, or expensive fly reel and line as some elitist fly fishing group would demand from one starting out. Instead, Nemes recommends the use of a graphite rod with a length of 8 ft., or 8½, an ordinary fly reel, and proper weighted lines.

Tying a streamer, wet fly and dry fly are graphically illustrated. Whatever mystery you may have harbored about fly tying will soon melt away like winter snow with the march of spring thaw. Illustrations on fly line knots offer step-by-step procedures. You will cherish the abundant data on trout habits, and stream characteristics.

Nemes cautions that making trout flies at home requires considerable patience. But that will come later, after the novice has become more familiar with the basics. According to Nemes, fly tying course lasts no more than an hour. The large photographs could induce one to take fly tying with a passion.

Experience fly fishermen are prone to lift their eyebrows at the crash course in fly casting offered by Nemes, and they may regard his efforts with some doubt. But even these experts will agree that fishing can be taught in short order. The secret, they will offer, is the sustaining period following the initial experience that demands discipline on the part of the fishing enthusiast. □

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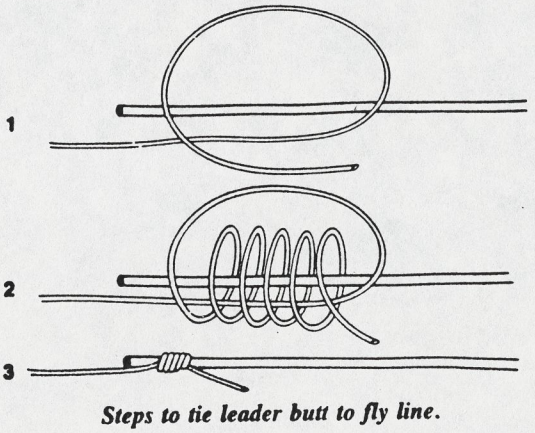

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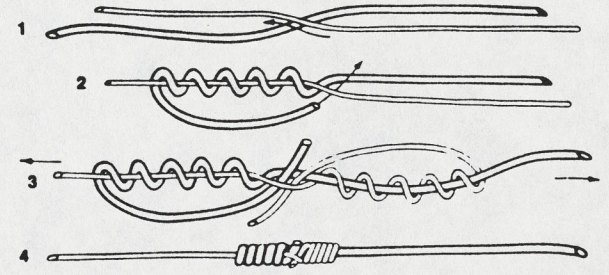

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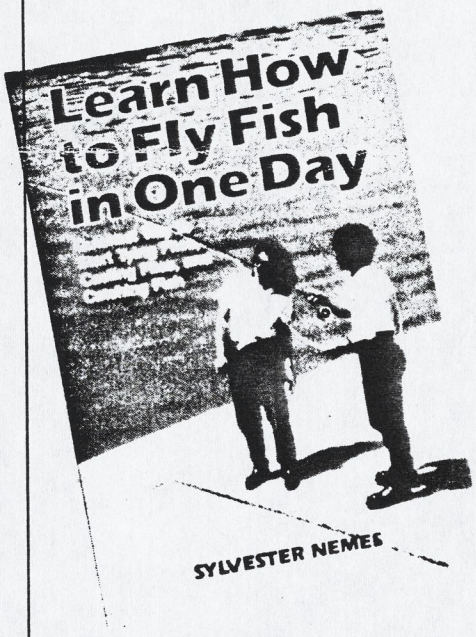
BOOK REVIEW

By
John K. Calkins



Fly fishermen are a sort of self proclaimed elite among fishermen. If fly fishermen are to be believed, fishing with flies is not only more sporting than any other sort of piscatorial pursuit, it is also more gentile and dignified. Fly fishermen like to make snobbish distinctions that elevate their social caste, as least in their own eyes.

In the fly fisherman's hype, baitcasters are a proletarian, beer swilling bunch, whereas fly fishermen are sophisticates who sip dry martinis. Fly fishermen are outfitted by Orvis and L. L. Bean, crankbaiters are outfitted by K-Mart or Yellow Front. Fly fishermen use rods, never poles. Fly fishermen wear jaunty felt caps with fleece bands, spin-casters wear promotional baseball caps. A list of these distinctions could go on and on.

If you lend a fly fisherman an ear, he will go on and on, at least until you try to pin him down about how you might join the elite ranks of the fly fishing fraternity. Then you're apt to get a discouraging response. Fly fishermen, like labor unions and professional organizations, do not like to encourage casual newcomers to their select group.

But don't let them fool you. You too can pull yourself up by the wader straps, improve your social standing, and probably get a big raise and improve your sex life, by becoming a fly fisherman. All you need is some gear, and some instruction. You can pick up the gear at most any sport shop. For instruction, you can pay big bucks to attend a fly fishing school, fool around for years with trial and error methods, or get yourself a copy of LEARN HOW TO FLY FISH IN ONE DAY.

A crash course in the basics of fly fishing, this book pares the whole business down to the rudiments. Author Sylvester Nemes has subdivided a theoretical eight hour day into four blocks of time to concentrate on three hours of casting work, three hours of fishing techniques, and a hour each for knots and fly tying. Casting technique is a significant stumbling block for the beginning fly fisherman, but Nemes illustrates with words and photographs a unique system, involving the use of a second person as a helper, that should get a novice off to a fast start.

Once the neophyte has picked up the hang of casting, Nemes moves on to discuss where and how to fish various types of flies in different kinds of waters. Skipping the fine points, the book sticks to the A-B-C's of using dry flies, wet flies, nymphs, and streamers. There's just enough information to get you started in the right direction, but not so much as to be intimidating.

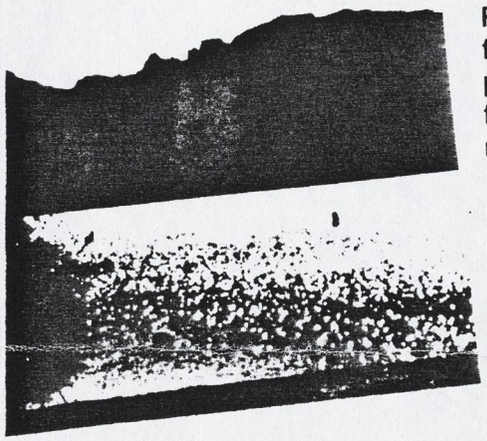
A short summary of the knots required to fasten line backing to reel, fly line to backing, leader to line, and fly to leader is amply illustrated with drawings that make the process crystal clear. Tying your own flies is to fishing what handloading is to target shooting, more a labor of love than an economy measure. Another well illustrated chapter touches on tying flies with just the bare minimum of equipment. Again, this segment is not intended to make you an instant expert, but rather to introduce you to the fundamentals.

With this book, some equipment, and a spare Saturday, you'll be a fly fisherman before you know it. A word of caution though. Your current fishing buddies cannot be counted on to remain loyal once you begin the transition from common fisherman to fly fisherman. They'll start whispering behind your back as soon as you make a public appearance wearing one of those multi-pocket vests and jaunty felt hats with the fleece bands.

hey'll snicker when you order a dry martini at the bar, rather than a beer. Worse, the boss may invite you to join the country club, and expect you to spend your weekends golfing instead of fishing. Proceed at your own risk.

LEARN HOW TO FLY FISH IN ONE DAY published by: Stackpole Books P.O. Box 1831, Harrisburg, PA 17105 Softbound, $9.95.

RECREATION ON THE COLORADO RIVER



Fishermen, sightseers, and watersports enthusiasts will get a lot of mileage out of RECREATION ON THE COLORADO RIVER — about 1400 miles of river, with almost two miles of fall. to be more specific. This users guide is designed to be useful to sportsmen and tourists exploring the big river and its surrounding countryside. It's a no-nonsense compilation of maps, narrative, lists, and references that features something for everyone, whatever your recreational predilections may be.

Page by page, the guide charts the river's course from its headwaters high in the Rockies (home of the world's highest yacht club), to its mouth at the Sea of Cortez. Segments of the river, along with the nearby areas of interest, are illustrated on maps that are full of information. River and road mileage, access points (including 4WD roads), launch ramps, marinas, campgrounds, and similar highlights are noted. Accompanying the maps is a cunning narrative that is short on Chamber of Commerce style hype, and long on hard, local information. Recreational facilities ranging from primitive campgrounds to posh lodges, do-it-yourself fishing boat rentals to deluxe raft and air tours are cataloged.

Name your sport-the facts, phone numbers, fishing info — everything you need to plan a trip is mentioned ,if not specifically, then by reference. Using the guide you can find sources of up-to-the-minute information on weather, camp ground space, permit availability, and all the other odds and ends of information that can make a trip a treat rather than a trial. I can't help but wonder, what would Major Powell have bid for a copy.

RECREATION ON THE COLORADO RIVER
Published by Sail Sales Publishing
P. O. Box 1028 Aptos
CA 95001
$11.85 (postpaid), spiralbound

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His chapter on the coyote is merely a pointless essay on why it's OK to use a pseudo-military .223 to hunt with. And what is the sage grouse, a bird that barely makes it into the southwest, doing here at all? There are a few good things; Mr. Samson is pretty good on Texas hunting customs for instance. But all in all, why bother?

Short takes. Nick Lyons Books is distributing a fine paperback of Viscount Grey of Fallodon's *Fly Fishing* (NLB, 31 W 21st St., New York, NY 10010, 244 pages, $16.95). This is one of the true classics of preplastic fly fishing, one every literate angler should read. *Learn How to Fly-Fish in One Day* (Stackpole, 124 pages, $9.95 pb) will not make anyone an *angler* in that time but may give the beginner some idea of what to expect. *Hunting Hares and Rabbits* by Richard Smith (Stackpole, 159 pages, $12.95 pb) is a detailed and enjoyable overview of our lagomorphs and the more traditional ways of hunting them, marred by some puzzling omissions. I can easily forgive leaving out falconry but surely chasing rabbits and hares with coursing dogs, a common method in the upper midwest and the western plains, deserves mention. And his sentence, "With the exception of tularemia, there is no disease of larval parasite carried by rabbits and hares hunters should be concerned about" overlooks the pervasive presence of bubonic plague out here in the "Land of the Flea."

Snow on the Backs of Animals (Winn Books, Seattle, 75 pages, $6.95) is a handsome little volume of nature-informed poems by sometime *Gray's* contributor Dan Gerber. I particularly like "The Life of the Fox," which describes skulls as "white and perfect / structures on which no life can be rebuilt." *Arizona Wetlands and Waterfowl* by David Brown (University of Arizona, 169 pages, $24.95) sounds too specialized but isn't, as any reader of Brown's previous books (*The Wolf in the Southwest, The Grizzly in the Southwest*) knows. There is a lot of up-to-date waterfowl biology here in the straightforward manner I've come to expect from Brown. *Not* just for southwesterners.

Finally, *The Deer Hunter's Encyclopedia* by John Madson, George Haas, Chuck Adams, Dwight Schuh and Leonard Lee Rue (Outdoor Life/ Stackpole, 788 pages, $49.95) is something I wouldn't have believed possible: an encyclopedic work on deer with some new things to say. Not all of it, of course, is worth reading, at least to anyone who has ever been outdoors. But Madson does his usual literate, conservation-conscious job, including an essay defending trophy hunting I might just copy and pass around. And *Outdoor Life* editor Haas does a magnificently sensible section on firearms, including the best "how-to-and-why" information on handgun hunting I have yet seen. Writers like Haas, who find the challenge of the close stalk to be the vital part of a handgun hunt, are changing my Eastern mind about the sport. But "hunters" who try to make 200-yard firearms out of the .44 magnum will find little comfort here.

Periodicals. I hadn't seen *Wildlife Art News* until Wisconsin's Tom Davis put me onto it. It is a glossy magazine of splendid quality published at 11090 173rd Ave., NW, Elk River, MN 55330. My only reservation is that the publishers seem more geared to ads—many ads—then to what I consider to be the best sporting and wildlife art. But maybe that's how they afford their slick paper? Diverse, anyhow.

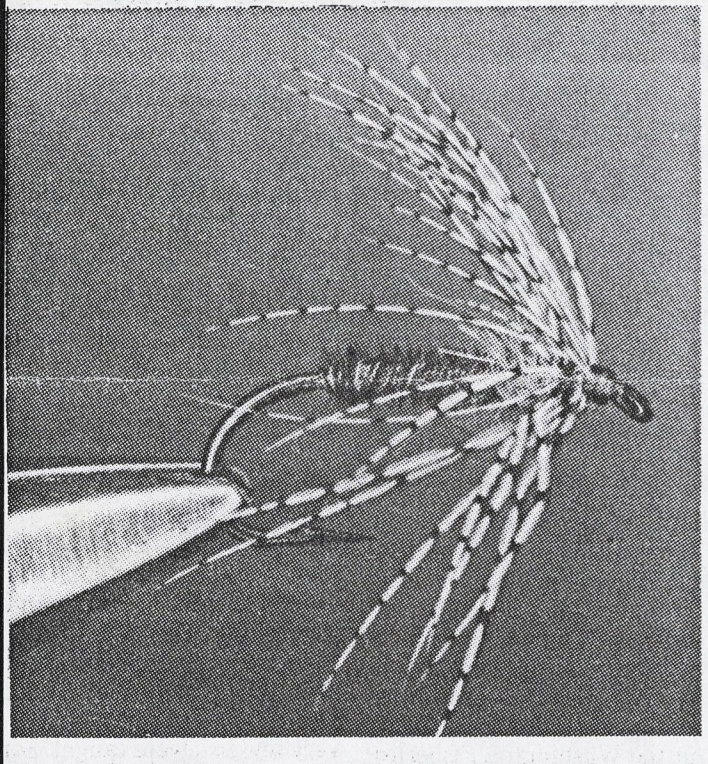
Wildfowl and *Gun Dog* have been slipping lately and I fear they may slip even more if they divert their energies into a third, upland game-oriented magazine. In one recent issue of *Wildfowl* a caption on a photo of John Browning alleges that his Auto-5's quality is "a fact bore out by the many imitations." Another caption calls a Model 12 pumpgun a Model 23 (a double). Finally a book review speaks of "hand detachable side-clips," nonexistent and impossible! I assume the writer was thinking of side *locks*; side *clips* are tiny metal wings that project forward from the standing breech and are an integral part of it. Come on, Stover Publishing: hire somebody who speaks English and knows guns!

I want to revive my "quote of the quarter" and invite suggestions. Remember, they may be good or awful. My choice this quarter is from *Sports Afield's* Lionel Atwill, who wrote the following in February's issue. "Hunting, more than any outdoor activity, needs elitists. They provide leadership and set the tone for our sport. They are our conscience. If the elitists consider their talents superior to those of the rest of us, it is probably because they are. Who else should rant and rave to preserve what they see as the integrity of the sport?...Elitists are the people who keep our sport on track. We may snicker at them from time to time. but let's not condemn them."

Next month, would somebody please send me something eccentric?

—*Stephen J. Bodio*

FAVORITE FLY



NEMES' SOFT HACKLED PHEASANT TAIL

By Don Chinn

What do the Teeny Nymph, Chan's Chironomid, Six Pack and Pheasant Tail Nymph all have in common? For one thing they are all "Blue Ribbon Flies". Also their bodies are all constructed from pheasant tail fibers. That should say something for the fish taking properties of pheasant tail fibers. Add a fish taking hackle to a fish taking body and you automatically come up with winning combinations such as Soft Hackled Pheasant Tail. Pheasant tail nymphs are the most popular nymph patterns in England. Another winning combination is a gold ribbed hare's ear body with a partridge hackle.

Hook: Mustad 3906 No. 10-16
Thread: Danville's 6/0, brown
Tail (optional): Pheasant tail
Body: Pheasant tail
Rib: Fine gold or copper wire
Thorax (optional): Dubbed fur from a hare's mask
Hackle: Brown or gray partridge

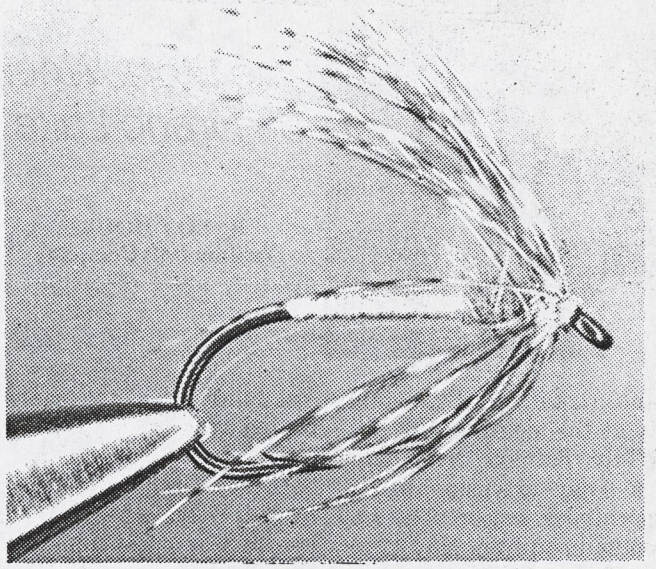
THE BOOK

THE SOFT-HACKLED FLY, by Sylvester Nemes, is considered a classic piece of angling literature that was out of print for many years. By popular demand it was reprinted in 1988 and is available directly from Mr. Nemes, P.O. Box 3782, Bozeman, MT 59772. Hardbounds are $16.95.

★★★★★

FAVORITE FLY

The Outdoor Press May 11, 1989



Orange Partridge

NEMES' FLOSS BODIED, SOFT-HACKLED FLIES

By DON CHINN

The name Sylvester Nemes and "Soft Hackle Flies" have become synonymous among American Fly fishermen. Although soft hackle flies have been widely used in England at least since the days of Juliana Berners (1497), they were largely overlooked in this country until Nemes published his book, **"THE SOFT HACKLED FLY,"** in 1975. The book, the patterns and the "simpler romantic style of fishing," gained instant popularity. A second book, **"THE SOFT-HACKLED FLY ADDICT"** followed in 1981. Due to interest and demand **"THE SOFT HACKLED FLY"** was republished again in 1988.

Soft hackle patterns effectibely imitate both may fly nymphs and caddis pupa. But why are they more effective than standard patterns? Observe their action in the water! Soft hackle simply has more life like properties. The natural action of the current is sufficient to cause the hackles to open and close and wiggle against the body of the fly.

Hook: Mustad 3906 #10-16.

Thread: Danville's 6/10, color should match or compliment body

Tail: Usually none

Body: Orange, yellow, green, red, purple or pale pink floss

Thorax (optional): Several of the Partirdge and floss patterns also call for a thorax made of dubbed fur from a hare's mask

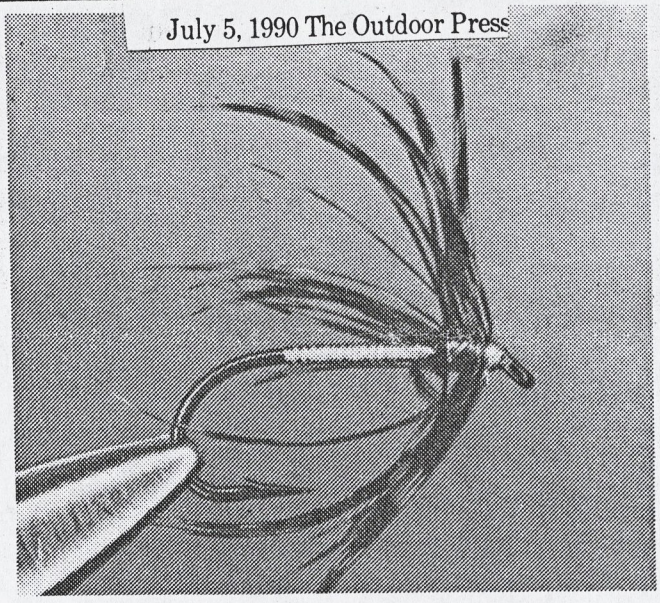
Hackle: Partridge, grouse, woodcock, jackdaw, snipe or starling. Select hackle from backs, necks, breasts, or from the leading edge of wings. Partridge is the most popular.

PRESENTATION

Soft hackled flies work best in fast shallow riffles, less than 4 feet deep. Productive water is usually fairly straight with little variance in depth from side to side. Where as most fly fishermen prefer the deeper pools, Sylvester suggests you try the soft hackle patterns in the fast choppy riffles just above or below such holes. Use a floating line and a leader no longer than the rod. Fish down and across or up and across but make sure you mend the line if necessary to ensure a drag-free float. It is not necessary to advance the fly in order to increase the action of the fly. In fact, Nemes says his performance improved as he grew older and stopped advancing the fly. I have found soft hackled patterns to be very effective in the St. Joe river for both cutthroat and whitefish.

Next week I will talk about a few more interesting soft hackled patterns and I will also tell you more about Sylvester's books.

THE VISE SQUAD
By DON CHINN



GROUSE & ORANGE

If you have a grouse skin and have been looking for a good grouse pattern, here is a dandy. It is another of the famous **soft-hackled flies** that date back to the days of Juliana Berners, the English Nun, who wrote one of the earliest books on fly fishing in 1497. She listed 12 patterns, the first of which was a soft hackled fly with an orange body. This pattern is probably taken for the "Little Orange Caddis Larva" that Ernest Schwiebert describes in "Nymphs."

Hook Mustad 3906 No. 10-16 (12)
Thread: Danville's Flymaster 6/0 orange
Body: Orange floss
Hackle: Black and orange barred grouse hackle, 1-2 turns depending on the fullness of the hackle

I "CONNED" 'EM

A number of years ago we were camped at Fly Flat campground on the St. Joe river next to an older man and his grandson from Moscow, Idaho. He was catching three fish to my one. He wasn't too keen on out-of-staters fishing his river, so attempts to learn the secret of his success were futile. His grandson however, was the friendly type and hung around while I tied flies. After giving the kid a few flies and showing him some tying tips, the old man began to mellow. The next day he not only gave me some of his **secret** flies **but showed me where and how** to fish them. You guessed it. They were soft hackled flies.

NOT FOR JERKS!

Other soft-hackled patterns, their history and the technique for fishing them were presented in the May 11 and 18, 1989 issues of T.O.P. One additional tip: Sylvester Nemes, who popularized the use of soft-hackled flies in this country, says that most fly fishermen can't resist the urge to advance the fly with short jerks while it is drifting barred in the current. Nemes advanced his flies too, in younger years, but when he reached middle age he stopped advancing the fly and the performance of his soft-hackled flies improved! So relax! See you in two weeks with tales from my Montana trip.

VERLYN KLINKENBORG

Fly Rod & Reel
November/Dec
1991

With Luck & Good Timing

Expeditions to rivers new and old

The Way of the Trout: An Essay on Anglers

by M R Montgomery. (NY: Knopf, 1991.) 270 pages drawings by Katherine Brown-ing. index. $22 hardcover.

THIS past year (I include late 1990) is going to go down as a banner year in the literature—and I do mean literature—of fly-fishing. I suppose it seems to some readers that there are never enough "useful" books in this column, enough primers and guides and introductions. But in a year like this, when books that will genuinely endure are falling like rain around us, it seems a shame not to give them all the attention they deserve. Since late '90, we've seen Chris Camuto's *A Fly Fisherman's Blue Ridge*, Harry Middleton's *On the Spine of Time*, Walt Wetherell's *Upland Stream*, and now M R Montgomery's *The Way of the Trout*. That's as fine a run of books in one [illegible] as our sport is ever likely to see.

M R Montgomery is a Boston-based journalist whose most recent book was *Saying Goodbye*, a memoir of his father and his father in law. Montgomery grew up all across the West, it seems, though spiritually his home is eastern Montana. "I am accustomed," he writes, "to a world where the tallest building is an alfalfa seed elevator, a town where you drink with your hat on." *Saying Goodbye* was [illegible], but *The Way of the Trout* is [illegible] diversions. Its title is not necessarily apt. If you expect technical discussions of fishing, you'll get them, but with a lot more of Montgomery's personal life than you bargained for. If you come to it expecting memoir, you get a lot more technical fishing talk than you imagined, though Montgomery never forgets that his audience is the general reader, not the angling specialist.

What makes *The Way of the Trout* so delightful is the precision with which Montgomery pursues the side-channels of his story. Whatever he turns to, whether it is the breaking strength of the old Herter's formula leaders or the exact manner in which gut is made or the dying out of Lahontan cutthroats in Lake Tahoe or how biologists piece cell membranes and what that has to do with tying knots in monofilament, he treats with exactness and with precise information. There are many curious corners to Montgomery's knowledge, and they're always worth wandering into.

In a sense, *The Way of the Trout* is an extremely old-fashioned kind of book, a miscellany of sorts. Montgomery's publisher has done its best to give the book a jacket that recalls the era of Ray Bergman. Montgomery himself never loses sight of the connection between former angling eras and what he calls the "post-modern" present. He is well-read in the ancestors of this sport, but he doesn't regard them as antiquities; they contribute as much to his sense of fly design as did his first encounter with the Bunyan Bug in Montana. The best way to sum up this remarkable book is to quote its extraordinary subtitle: "Principles of Fly-Fishing Drawn from Personal Experience, Historical Sources, and the Advice of Companions, Guides, and Strangers *to which are added* Anecdotes of Angling in North America and Great Britain *including* the Author's Return to the Bitterroot and Blackfoot Rivers of Montana, and Expeditions to New Rivers Created by Construction and Water Reservoirs and Old Streams Newly Discovered."

There, in a nutshell, we have it—the substance of a truly amiable work about this undying sport.

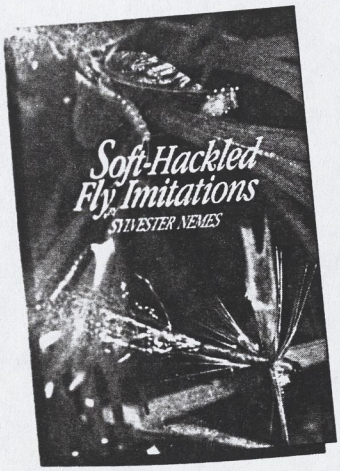
Soft-Hackled Fly Imitations

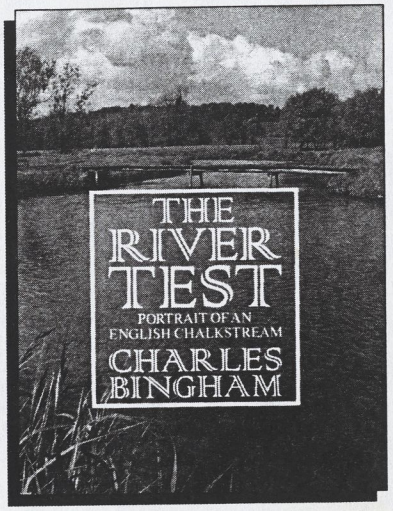
by Sylvester Nemes. (Bozeman, MT: self-published, 1991.) 113 pages: illustrations by James Marc; color plates; bibliography. $27.95 hardcover.

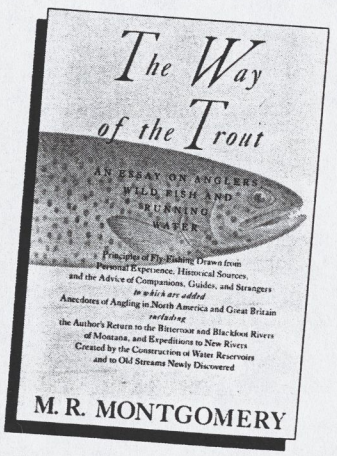
IN June this year I had the accidental pleasure of watching Sylvester Nemes fish the Firehole. I wasn't doing much good, but he was. When we met at last on the roadside bank of the river, Nemes handed me a fly: his Mother's Day Caddis—named after the Yellowstone River hatch. I'd seen it thoroughly tested that afternoon, for Nemes had hooked fish after fish.

Nemes, you recall, is our chief advocate of the soft-hackled fly, a design with venerable origins, which he was largely responsible for reintroducing to American anglers. *Soft-Hackled Fly Imitations* is Nemes's third book on the subject. It introduces several new patterns for specific hatches across the West, and it includes a number of Eastern soft-hackle patterns tied by Tedd Ward. They are all attractive flies, with a pleasing, traditional look about them, and they obviously catch fish. They're also simple to tie, which is a virtue in any fly.

My only quarrel with this attractive book—James Marc's drawings are superb, by the way—is with Nemes's insistence that these flies should somehow replace dry flies in an angler's arsenal. *Soft-Hackled Fly Imitations*, Nemes writes, "has finally freed me from the dicta, confines and cultism of dry







fly fishing . . . I can concentrate more on the fun of fly fishing, the end . . . not the mechanics . . . not the means." In many situations soft-hackle flies will certainly outfish a dry, but in many situations a dry fly will certainly outfish a soft-hackle. Still, it's hard to publish a book of fly patterns without making claims for their potency, claims that often seem less convincing than the patterns themselves. That is one of the great pitfalls of fly-tying books, and one from which *Soft-Hackled Fly Imitations* is not immune. But in every other respect this is a book worth owning and tying from.

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The River Test: Portrait of an English Chalkstream

by Charles Bingham. (London H.F. G. Witherby Ltd., distributed by Trafalgar Square, North Pomfret, VT 05053.) 200 pages; black & white photos; color plates. $45 hardcover.

IT is a fact that most of us will only fish the River Test in the pages of a book like Charles Bingham's *The River Test*. And should luck and good timing happen to yield a few hours on that river, as they did once in my case, you're likely to come away with the sense of having fished in an historic tableau, rather than having fished to catch fish. I know I can tell you much much more about the Test from having read Charles Bingham's book than from having made one brief foray upon it.

In *The River Test* Bingham works his way downstream, interviewing riverkeepers and contemplating the river's history, from Ashe Church (where the Test rises) to its mouth at Redbridge. We're so used to thinking of rivers like the Test as somehow unchanging, except by season, that it comes as a shock to learn that the Test has entered the modern world: It too suffers from reduced water flow, due to increased residential demand, and over-abundant weed-growth, from excess nitrogen. Bingham's book, in fact, is an emphatic plea for conservation of these historic waters.

But at least for American anglers, *The River Test* also offers a fascinating glimpse of the social structure that has grown up around the river. The sale and lease of fishing privileges on the Test is a subject worthy of a good sociologist, someone interested in sporting rights as a form of property. Bingham's book is a complete introduction to the complexity of angling in the valley of the Test, where many of the mills date back to the Domesday Book, a record of English properties begun in 1086. Bingham's prose is totally undistinguished, but many of the photographs are excellent. The single piece of good writing in the book was done by a riverkeeper's wife. You may remember it: "Behold the fisherman. He riseth early in the morning and disturbeth the whole household. Mighty are the preparations, and he goeth forth full of hope. When the day is far spent he returneth smelling of strong drink, and the truth is not in him." □

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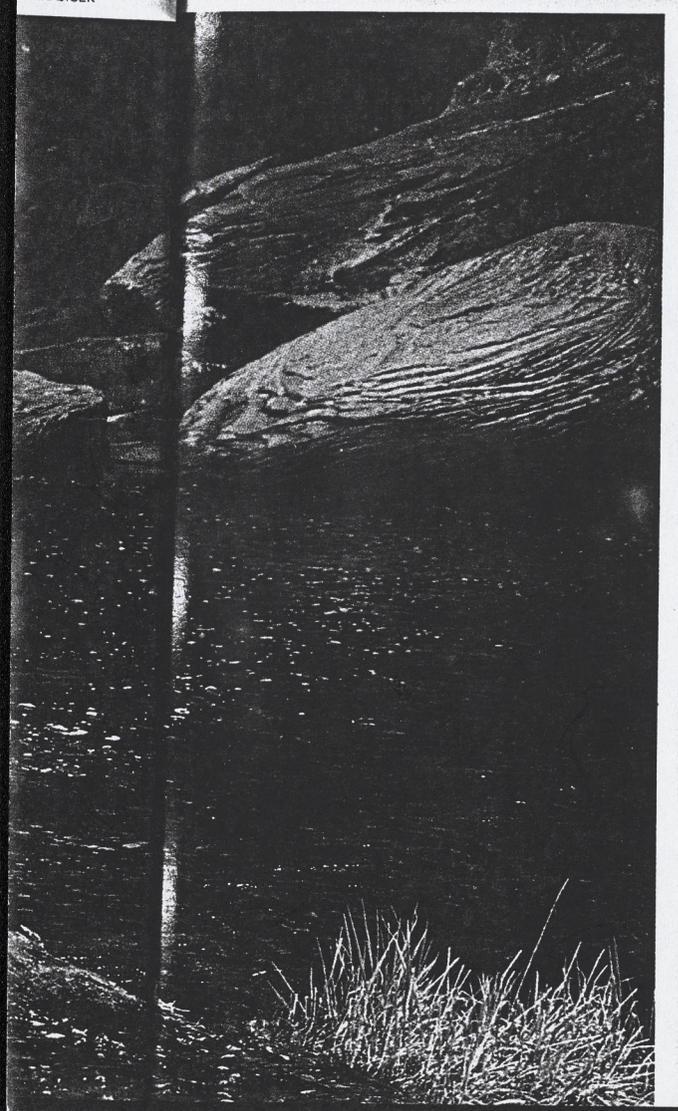

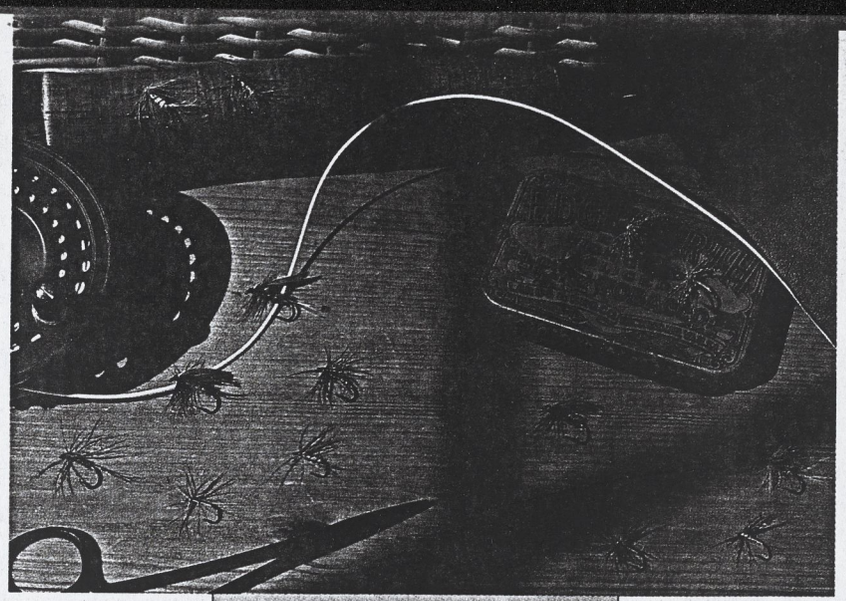

water. Trout held in the run, and were eager enough to pounce a dry. But they were scattered, and the strong current made it difficult to wade upstream and cover enough water. So I backed out of the run, hiked to its head, tied on a wet fly, and inserted myself into the river again.

This time I waded downstream, letting the current urge me gently along, and cast the wet quartering across, fishing it on the classic downstream swing. I covered every foot of the run, and hooked six nice rainbows. More than twenty came to the wet fly throughout the rest of that Andean afternoon.

On trout streams big and small, holding lies abound where it would be easy to coax a trout to a dry if only you could get a good float. But you can't: conflicting currents cause instant drag; limbs overhanging the stream prevent a proper cast; a swirling eddy, a natural lie for big trout, straightens your leader and tugs at your dry. Don't trot past these places. Instead, probe them with wet flies.

On trout streams big and small, knowing how to go against the grain with wet flies can net big results.

The tactics required to do this are simple. Above all is the ease of switching from dry flies to wet flies: nip off the dry, tie on the wet, and you're back in business. The same rod, line, and leader are almost always exactly right when you fish wet flies on dry fly water.

When fishing small waters, or when casting over rising trout, fish wet flies upstream on short casts: 15 to 30 feet. Forty feet is too far. When a trout takes the fly, make sure you're close enough to see some sign of it because you've got to set the hook. The trout won't set it for you on an upstream cast.

Use a wet, or even a brace of them, to search a riffle or run by casting quartering across and down. You have to swim the fly slowly and naturally or trout won't get near the hook. How do you do that? By choosing the angle your cast cuts across the current.

If the current is fast, the line will quickly form a downstream belly on the water and tug your fly into an unnatural gallop. Cast farther downstream—and less across—to prevent this. If the current is slow, the line belly will form lazily and coax your fly slowly across the holding water. You can cast farther upstream and still get the proper drift and swing while covering more water. In pools that are almost still, your casts can angle almost straight across the stream. A belly in the line will then animate the fly, making it look alive.

Most of the time your only task is to slow the fly swing. Do this with a series of mends, lifting the rod tip and flicking it in an upstream roll. This lifts the downstream belly off the water and tosses it into an upstream belly, slowing the fly. Repeat as needed, which in fast water can be close to constantly.

Like most fly fishermen, I like to fish insect hatches, and I prefer to fish dry flies. But trout often refuse dries even during a hatch. When that happens, most anglers blame the pattern.

But the problem is not always pattern. It's often fly type. During mayfly hatches trout sometimes sip emergers just under the surface. The resulting rise looks like the take to a dry. Often it's not. Try fishing a wet fly the same size and color as the natural. Cast it upstream to the rises, just like a dry. Let it drift downstream naturally, but a few inches deep. You'll see your line tip dart. Raise the rod; that's a trout interviewing your fly.

During caddisfly hatches trout often take pupae rising to the surface. Trout know they must intercept an insect before it bursts through the surface film, so they hurry. Their rises are splashy and look like takes to dries. But the fish are taking pupae, not adults. Therefore, select a soft-hackled wet fly the size and shade of the caddisfly you see in the air. Cast it quartering across and let it swim idly down through the rises. You won't have any trouble telling the take. Also keep in mind that wet flies often take trout after a hatch has ended but the fish continue rising.

The techniques described above are about the best ways to fish wet flies on dry fly water. But I've recently discovered wet flies also can be fished *as* dry flies, too. And in certain situations they'll actually be more effective.

I boated Montana's *(Continued on page 92)*

EFFECTIVE WETS

Two kinds of wet flies seem to take the most trout when fished on dry fly water. The first is a wingless wet, sometimes called a flymph. It has a loosely dubbed fur body and a hackle, usually of hen, wound over the front third of the body. The second is a soft-hackled wet. It has a body of fur, floss, or silk thread, and a turn or two of hackle from a land bird, usually grouse or partridge. Both kinds move well in the water, and look like natural insects swimming for their lives.

an article by Dave Hughes

dicated. If you have them, use a pair of larger grommets at the front corners of the flap, which can either be thrown up over the ridge line in fair weather or dropped forward and held in position with sharpened sticks stuck through the grommets and angled back into the shelter. Attach sections of nylon cord where indicated.

Pitching the Whelen shelter:

The Whelen may be stylishly pitched with a ridge pole set at head height, or with a strong rope (I use parachute cord) strung between two trees and attached to the ridge line of the tent with tie downs. After staking the corners down, attach lengths of nylon cord to the pairs of grommets on the back wall and pull taut, either staking the ends of the cord down or tying off to trees. This stays the back wall of the tent from its natural inclination to sag.

THIS SHELTER IS NOT ONLY INEXPENSIVE, BUT DURABLE AND RESISTANT TO SPARKS.

The side walls of the tent splay outwards and forwards, but they may be pulled in to square off the front opening, which makes the shelter easier to heat in cold weather or severe wind. If you desire to completely enclose the tent, a rectangular piece of Visquene cut to fit this opening may be secured with tie downs and grommets to the side walls and the front tent flap.

The Whelen is designed to reflect firelight and heat off its back wall. It enables the hunter to sleep parallel to a long log fire built in front, rather than with either head or feet toward the fire, which is a problem with the Adirondack and most other forms of lean-tos.

One note of caution: When the Whelen shelter is pitched with its back wall to the wind, smoke from the fire has a tendency to fill the vacuum created by the front opening. To prevent this, build your fire at least 6 feet in front of the opening and pile a 2- to 3-foot backdrop of logs or rocks behind the fire to chimney the smoke upwards.

The Whelen tent is a wilderness camp best suited to timber country where there is plenty of firewood and elevations where nights are chill enough that stinging insects are not a nuisance. It isn't for everyone. But for those who find what they are hunting is in a field of stars, the Whelen shelter has no equal. It grants you insights into nature's pulse that no lodge or enclosed tent can provide.

WET FLIES

(Continued from page 49)

Bighorn River one day when a hatch of little olive mayflies began. I'd fished the same hatch before, but for some reason the fussy trout suddenly refused all of my standard dry flies. So I tied on a small wet fly that was nothing more than an olive fur body overwound with a gray hen hackle. Before casting it I dressed this wet with dry fly flotant.

I made a short cast. It was impossible to follow the drift of the fly on the water

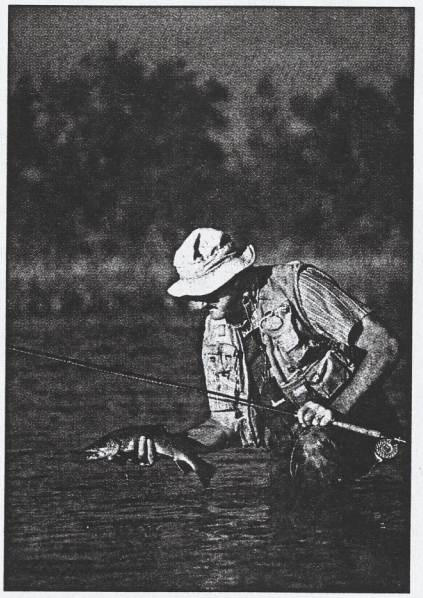

PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

because it floated flush in the surface film, and I couldn't see it. But I had no trouble noticing a bold swirl right where I suspected the fly might be. My instincts jerked the rod up a little too abruptly. The fragile tippet parted. A big trout shot into the air, the fly still pinned in its lip.

That shy brown wasn't accustomed to seeing a wet fly afloat on its dry fly water, which is probably why I was able to fool it. If you begin to fish wet flies where it seems you shouldn't, you'll also begin to take trout that in the past might have let you pass by.

WETS AS IMITATIONS

■ Sylvester Nemes, acknowledged master of the soft-hackled fly and author of two books about them, has released a third book on the subject: *Soft-Hackled Fly Imitations.* If you are interested in further reading about wet flies to match insect hatches, the hardbound book is available from the author for $29.95 ppd. Contact Sylvester Nemes, Dept. FS, P.O. Box 3782, Bozeman, Mont. 59772, telephone ☎ (406) 587-8301.

Fly Fisherman
May 199

fly fishing way out of proportion to its importance for most situations. At sportsmen shows, fly shops, and, lamentably, onstream, the first thing a fisherman will do when picking up a rod—even a 2-weight or 3-weight—is to see how much line he can lay out. What seems to be missing with these casters and in Krieger's video is a notion of advanced casting that stresses accuracy, line control, and improved presentation. Distance *can* be a factor; these other skills *always* are.

Still, there are unquestionably some strong points to this video. Krieger is too good a caster and instructor not to teach you something in the course of an hour. The section on roll casting is informative, and his explanation on tailing loops—and how to get rid of them—is the best I've ever seen. A discussion of rod stiffness and action, though somewhat tangential to the main subject, is extremely well done. The video itself is capably produced, making good use of graphics, slow-mo, and stroboscopic photography.

If I've concentrated more on the shortcomings of *The Essence of Flycasting II*, it's because Mel Krieger *writes* lucidly, intelligently, and perceptively about casting. I measure him against the high standard that he himself has established, and this video does not quite reach that mark.

TED LEESON

Nemes's Soft-hackled Flies

Soft-hackled Fly Imitations, by Sylvester Nemes. Published by the author, P.O. Box 3782, Bozeman, MT 59772, 1991, 113 pages, $30.95.

FROM THE PEN OF SYLVESTER NEMES, chairman emeritus of "The Soft-hackle Society," comes part III of the modern manifesto. In parts I and II, *The Soft-hackled Fly* and *The Soft-hackled Fly Addict*, Nemes resurrected the slim, simply constructed flies of Britain's freestone streams and introduced us to the classic patterns and their history. Now, after ten years of development, comes the first thoughtful attempt to season centuries-old recipes to tempt the refined palates of today's "educated" trout.

Tampering with tradition, like training a fiery filly, demands "hands." Too heavy a touch and the spirit is lost; too light and naught is wrought. For the most part Syl rides well, but his handling gets a bit rough from time to time. Two gentle adjustments to the original soft-hackle design are the sparse tail of clear poly material to simulate a trailing shuck and, I believe, to

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BOOKSHELF . . .

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give the fly just a hint of eye-catching (fisheye, we hope) sparkle, and the moving of the hackle slightly rearward into a thorax position, permitting a wind or two of body or other material behind the head. Neither of these, particularly the second, does violence to the concept, and they strike me as being significant improvements. Also quite noticeable is the occasional use of hen hackle, particularly grizzly and a white-with-rusty-edge variety, instead of the traditional but often difficult to obtain gamebird feathers.

Somewhat more radical is the suggested incorporation in one pattern of a Glanrhos wing. I was unfamiliar with this technique, which retains the tip of the hackle feather to serve as a single wing. However, unlike the other patterns, there is scant anecdotal evidence of success for this addition, and the inherent fussiness in judging the length of the hackle would put me off. Nemes also seems a bit ambivalent about ribs, occasionally flagging them as optional. I'd like to have seen some comparison testing, with and without; however, there's plenty of historical precedent for their inclusion, particularly fine gold wire. On the other hand, although it may be effective, the shrimp pattern that calls for a plastic shell has few if any links with the past and so seems out of place.

As most of the trial-and-error work took place in Montana, it's not surprising that the naturals imitated include the Pale Morning Dun, several *Baetis* species, *Callibaetis*, the Green Drake, Tricos, midges, and caddis. There's also a general spinner pattern and the aforementioned shrimp. Nemes apologizes for the regional concentration and tries to smooth ruffled Eastern feathers with a half-dozen suggestions for Catskill rivers from the fertile vise of Ted Ward. Furthermore, the last chapter offers help in producing your own soft-hackled imitations for local hatches.

Why fish with soft-hackled flies? The author suggests in the introduction that larger imitations can be used, implying better hooking percentages, and that drag is often advantageous. But perhaps there are less-practical reasons. I know members of "The Society" who find it particularly satisfying to capture difficult trout with an artifact, thus maintaining contact with fly-fishing history. By offering imitation without wanton perversion of the soft-hackled fly heritage, Syl Nemes has prepared a well-researched and entertaining recruiting package aimed at a wide audience of pragmatic hatch matchers.

PAUL MARRINER

we had a whole new set of standards. For a while the nymph was respectable only if fished upstream, but that didn't last long. For that matter, a lot of dry fly fishermen turned around and started wading downhill.

Twenty years ago the Woolly Worm was not respectable, and I recall the wife of a purist dry fly man who referred to it by spelling it out.

"We never use those words in our family," she said.

Then, just when the nymph fishermen became accepted and started developing a select snobbery of their own, I went fishing with one of them. I was thinking in terms of nothing larger than a No. 16, but this fellow uncased his Leonard bamboo and tied on what looked to me like a Woolly Worm—with a sinker. Swish! Splut! He caught a big trout and explained to me that his nymph *did* resemble a Woolly Worm to some extent, but that he had tied it with some special hair, making it a nymph.

So then the nymph, however Woolly Worm-like, was highly respectable. And you could take a plain, ordinary wet fly, crop its wings a bit and call it a nymph and avoid stigma. Then Sylvester Nemes squared everything off with a book called *The Soft-Hackled Fly*. It is a fine book on wet fly fishing, but Mr. Nemes played it cool when he didn't begin with those words. He put everyone at ease, too, by explaining that a wet fly with very soft hackles breathes in such a way that it could be any one of a number of nymphs.

As a youth I recall reading about dropper flies and a "cast" of three wets, and I can quote faithfully. The author said, "but it is better to employ only two, and one is all the expert uses."

I read the other day that there is now going to be a return by the elite to more than one fly at a time. Since everything else has gone the limit, I foresee casts of flies that resemble trotlines—if the law allows. It may be that your skill will be measured by how many flies you can cast at once without snagging your waders, for today your prestige in some circles is gauged by the distance you can throw a sinking head.

At about the time I heard of the nymph being accepted as distinguished from a "wet fly," I began to hear a lot about the wizards of the Letort in Pennsylvania. That's a tough creek with some highly skeptical trout, and I think its masters are among the best fishermen in the world—but since mayflies (fill in the Latin name) haven't been too thick there, the Letort people started imitating ants, sow bugs and crickets. They had to come up with their own code of ethics because artificial

Silent Seasons
Edited & Illustrated by Russell Chatham
Story By Charlie Waterman