

the taut line

the newsletter of the north coast fly fishers



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March 2005

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The Future is Now

Doug Crouch, President, NCFF

The North Coast Fly Fishers have come a long way in 18 years. From modest beginnings to a vibrant, strong organization with a lot to offer to its members and the community.

This year, we have built on the success of the recent past by continuing to push for fiscal security and good management at a board level while also making the experience better for our members. When you combine all of this with the success of the first three Expos, you have a club with endless possibilities.

Many members, however, have privately voiced concern to me over the course of the last year about our growing bank account. "What are we going to do with that money?" they asked. The purpose of our thriftiness was and is to have on hand in a savings account enough funds to run the club for a year should something happen that would cut our incoming funds drastically. Due to the incredible success of our last Expo, we are well past that point and need to find ways to utilize the surplus without jeopardizing the future. We must also remain true to our purpose as an FFF club by promoting the sport of fly fishing through education and conservation. With some good education work already in place, one key issue for the club is how to take hold of the conservation/accessibility objective. In essence, not only giving back to the club, but also to the resources that we make use of. As a board, we worked hard to get to this point and are now proud to push forward.

Ideas for Change

Over the course of the next three months, I am asking **all** club members for ideas to improve the club. Specifically, ideas dealing with utilizing the surplus funds, improving the club and increasing membership. I encourage and expect input from each and everyone of you. Please put these ideas in writing and either email them to me

at: president@ncff.net, or hand them to me at a members meeting. You can even call me at home if you are having trouble putting your ideas on paper. My home phone number is **216.221.2994**. I will collect these and pass them onto a committee that we are forming made up of board members Eric Nakanishi and George Shuffert and club members John Marics and Andy Setlock. They will review all of the ideas that we receive and sort through realistic and unrealistic and present their final findings to the board and the membership.

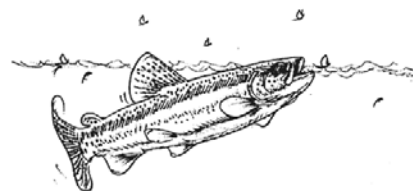
We have already had several great ideas that we are now able to put into place. One we have been working on is an "Attendance" raffle – the only thing you need to do to enter is show up at the next four members meetings. Each member will be given **one** ticket upon checking in at the front desk. There is nothing to buy, but you can increase your chances by showing up at all of the remaining members meetings. The winner will be announced at the picnic in June. This idea came to us through Skip Nieberding and George Shuffert.

There are more great ideas floating around out there like mayflies waiting to be seized by a trout. Even though we cannot implement all of them, I challenge each and everyone of our members to float your ideas by us. By sharing your ideas, you give yourselves a stake in the future of the club and help to make it better for all.

Sincerely,

Doug Crouch

President, North Coast Fly Fishers



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The North Coast Fly Fishers (NCFF) is a 100% Federation of Fly Fishers (FFF). Its purpose is to promote fly fishing as the most enjoyable and sporting method of fishing. We are committed to provide education in the best practices and techniques of the sport, including fly tying, fly casting and fish and water conservation. Our members are committed to maintaining a current membership in the FFF



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Clip art courtesy Dave Whitlock,
www.davewhitlock.com.

March Membership Meeting

*Wednesday, March 2nd 2005
 Penitentiary Glen Nature Center
 8668 Kirtland-Chardon Rd.
 Kirtland, Ohio*

*Beginner Fly Tying,
 & Favorite Fly (John Marics)
 6:30 - 7:45 PM*

*Fly Tying Marathon
 No Speaker, just Tying!
 8:00 - 10:00 PM*

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March Madness: the Annual Fly Tying Marathon

It's that time of year again, the Annual Fly Tying Marathon. We will have the usual Beginners Fly Tying and Favorite Fly programs, followed by a brief business session and then a massive tying demonstration by you, the rank and file members. Bring your vises, tools and materials to tie your favorite flies and share them with each other. The board will accept no responsibility for the claims of fish catching power associated with these flies.

We will also have soft drinks and hot dogs **free** of charge for all!



Why Build Your Own Fly Rod?

by Larry Ingram – From EC Powell Fly Fishers Newsletter, courtesy FFF ClubWire

Such a simple question generates many answers. Some answers involve logical reasons such as saving money or building the rod that meets your specific performance standard for a specific application. (I recently built a Steelhead rod for Jim Tanner. He was very specific in that he wanted a 9'6", 6 wt. Sage XP, 4 piece to use for Steelhead.) Other answers may revolve around more abstract, philosophical, psychological, or emotional-based reasons. The reasons are many but probably identical to the feeling one gets by tying one's own flies and catching fish on them. Those new rods, with all the different looks and feels, can be an extension of your own creative expression and more importantly, catch fish.

When building one's own rod, the builder will have to address many details regarding the type of fly rod to build. One rod will not serve in all situations. I work with a spin fisherman who is amazed that we can catch big fish with a fly rod. Obviously he believes that all fly rods are the same. Rods come in different lengths, weights, actions, stiffness, colors, guide sizes and reel seat types.

The questions one must ask are:

- What kind of fish and size do I want to catch (bass, trout, tarpon, stripper, etc.?)
- What type of water are you planning on fishing (small streams, big rivers, lakes, etc.?)
- What rod length do I want (2 piece for all around, 3,4 or 5 pc for back packing, traveling, etc.?)
- What types of flies are you going to be using (large, small, weighted, etc.)?
- How much time and money are you willing to spend on this new rod?
- The final decision is completely yours. Many of the club's members have built their own rods and they are all good ones.

A few basic steps will have you on your way to that special rod to use for that special occasion.

Check with local fly shops as some do offer rod building classes throughout the year.

What Do Fish Hear?

by Mac Caradine – From Mid-South Fly Fishers Newsletter, courtesy FFF ClubWire

Don't believe your guide when he says "fish can hear you talk". Fish don't hear as humans do, but they do have a form of hearing. Their lateral line is a highly developed system of nerves that runs the length of their bodies, allows them to feel (hear) vibrations in the water.

You can see this line running down the side of the trout. The line also arches forward over the eye and along the lower jaw. This "ear line" hears in nearly the same range as humans. Sounds generated in the water travel five times the speed of sound waves in the air, so anglers need to be light-footed while wading or walking the

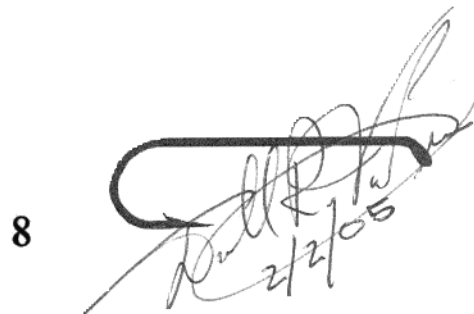
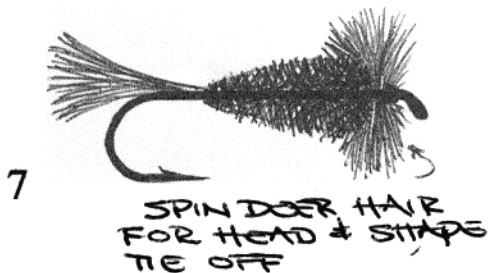
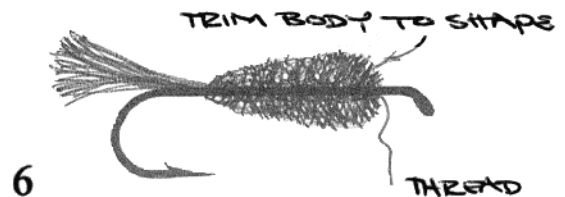
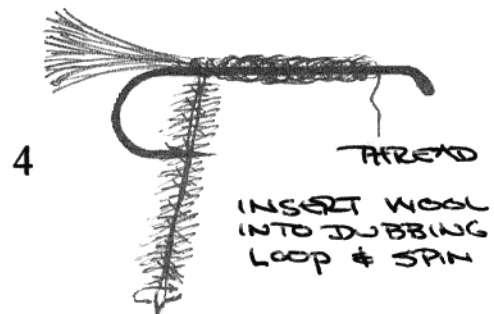
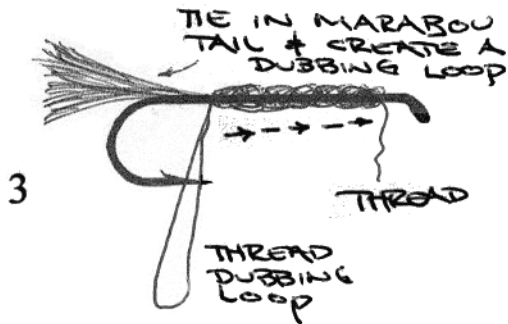
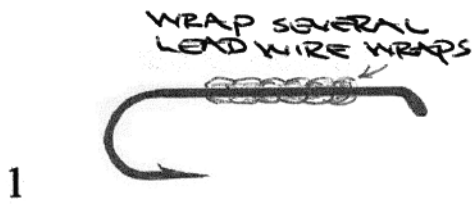
streambeds. Be careful not to grind gravel beneath your feet or plow through the water as you wade.

Should you talk with your buddies while fishing? Sometime it is necessary to find out what fly the trout are taking. But I like to enjoy peace and quiet while fishing listening to the sounds of the water, leaves blowing and sound of the wildlife. Your conversation does not travel from the air into the water, unless you are have fallen in the water, blowing bubbles like a fish yelling for help. Then the fish can hear you.

NCFF Favorite Fly

Black Sculpin Tied by George Shuffert

Hook Mustad 79580 4X Long Size 8 Thread Black 6/0
Tail Black Marabou
Body Black Wool Twisted utilizing a Dubbing Loop
Head Black Deer Hair spun then shaped
Weighted with .020 or .025 Lead Wire



The Fly Tier's Corner

Wildlife, a Bonus on the Stream

by Don Van Buren

One of the simple pleasures of Fly Fishing or Fishing is the enjoyment that can be had while fishing alone or with friends. A bonus to add to this is the experience of seeing wildlife in their native surroundings, after all we are invading their space, their home.

I have had many wonderful experiences, both humorous and serious, observing wildlife while Fly Fishing. While on a float trip I had the opportunity to observe a mink as it worked it's way down the bank our boat was anchored to. Remaining absolutely still the Mink came within several feet of us. What a display of curiosity, a sense of exploring and energy. I doubt that it missed one hole or crevice as it hunted for food. Finally, after it passed us and was approximately 75 feet downstream, it entered the water and swam to the other shore and continued it's hunt.

That strange feeling that you are not alone! How many times have you had the intuition or sense that someone or something was nearby? I had just such a feeling while salmon fishing and looked up to see a lone Turkey quietly glide onto a 30-40 foot cliff off to my left and approximately 100 feet upstream from my position. My attention went back to retrieving my line. As I turned to see where the lone Turkey was, I witnessed approximately 20 more

glide onto the same location. Who said Stealth was new?

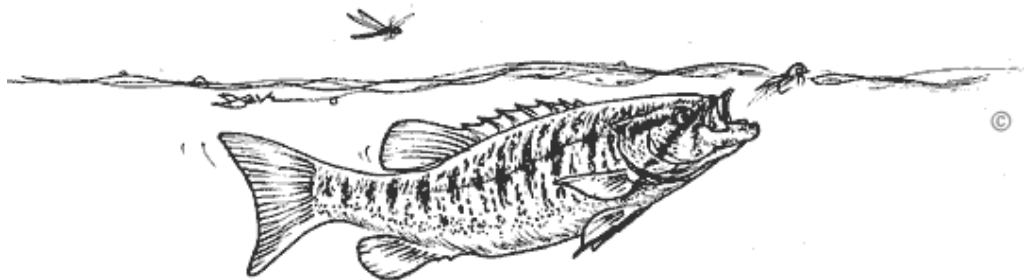
One of my more humorous experiences happened when I was trout fishing on Henry's Fork River out West. A fly fisherman up stream from me hooked a very nice trout and was into the fight when a pelican landed close to the fighting, jumping and trashing trout, and proceeded to go after the trout that was hooked. The fisherman not only had to fight the fish but somehow keep the pelican from latching onto the fish as well. His solution was to give slack to the line allowing the trout to dive deep and avoid the Pelican. Each time he started to retrieve the fish and it broke the waters surface or was close, the pelican moved in! This went on for several minutes when finally the pelican gave up. Both of us shared a laugh over this incident.

My favorite wildlife observation while fly-fishing happened in Michigan on the fabled Pere Marquette River. I was working a run when I heard a splash that was not typical of Salmon trashing about and turned to look. Within 100 yards of me a lone doe whitetail deer entered the river and moved to the center. She looked about, very nervous and alert. I froze so that I would not alarm her, and suddenly she grunted and moved to the far bank. Next, two fawns hit the water and quickly

waded across, jumped onto the bank and ran out of sight. The mother followed shortly. Having hunted whitetail deer for many years, I remained quite and immobile for a moment longer. Imagine my next surprise when a nice Buck jumped into the water and moved across quickly to the far bank and out of sight. The whole sequence was like a scene from a Currier & Ives picture.

My last observation involves the black squirrels that inhabit the woods surrounding my favorite river, the Pere Marquette. The squirrels are plentiful, active and beautiful. Every time I get an opportunity to watch them, I pause my fishing and do so. Many times I think, "Wow, wouldn't that tail or pelt be wonderful fly tying material", not to mention the great stew that squirrel makes. This leaves me with a continuing dream of looking forward to the opportunity to someday hunt in Michigan.

Fishing has its rewards, and not all of it is pursuing, catching or sharing fish stories. To the observant fisherman, the native wildlife will put on quite a show and leave many indelible memories. So, the next time you're fishing, pay closer attention to your surroundings. You never know when wildlife will put on a show for you.



Fly Tying Tip – Choosing Good Rabbit

by Daryl Crowley member of the West Michigan Hacklers – courtesy FFF ClubWire

As most of you know, I absolutely love tying and fishing flies with rabbit strips, or as it is often called “Zonker Strips”. Rabbit patterns have been around a long time and big rabbit flies that move a lot of water have accounted for a lot really big fish over the years. While the effectiveness of rabbit flies is not in doubt, the quality of many commercially prepared rabbit strips certainly are. A lot of commercial zonker strips are poor at best and some are downright worthless. While you can remedy some of the problems by buying rabbit skins, there are also good skins and bad skins.

There are several things you should look for when buying either zonker strips or rabbit skins. Number one is the quality of the hide. The rabbit hide should be thin, soft, and supple. If it is too thick it will result in a strip that is too stiff and lacks good action or does not “palmer” well.

When using longer strips such as in big streamers or strip leeches, some of the best action comes not from the rabbit hair but from the supple action of the hide itself and that requires a thin supple hide. Another thing to consider is the length of the rabbit hair. There is a wide range in the length of the rabbit hair attached to any hide. While the quality of the processed hide is controlled by the person doing the tanning and preparation the length of the rabbit hair is controlled by the genetics of the rabbit. The longer the hair, the better the action. The third consideration is the width of the strip being used. While the actual width required will vary depending on the fly pattern, most commercially prepared zonker strips are too thin for most medium to big streamer patterns and many are too thin for any kind

of reasonable use. (Remember the more strips they cut the more money they make per rabbit!) Which hard to understand given the relatively low cost of even premium rabbit hides.

If you can locate a source of good dyed hides that meet the above criteria you can cut strips for all your needs with a good sharp razor blade. You can use a straight edge on the hide side and easily cut strips to the desired length and width you need. Make sure you use a new blade often as an even moderately dull razor blade will make it difficult to cut clean uniform strips while a new blade makes it easy.

If you don’t want to mess with cutting hides then check out the commercially prepared Magnum Zonker Strips. These are premium strips that meet all the above criteria. There are cut to a generous width which is ideal for nearly all situations.

For palmering strips you can just cut the magnum strip length-wise down the middle and get two perfect palmering strips. The hair is long and thick while the hide is supple. The Magnum Zonker Strips truly provide a good measure by which to compare various other strips or to gauge how to cut your own from a premium hide.

On a side note: I personally never use cross-cut zonker strips. These are primarily sold for palmering bodies. I find that using straight-cut zonker for palmering is actually easier. If you have a thin supple hide on your straight-cut zonker strip, just slightly overlap each wrap and you will produce a nicely palmered fly. The other problem with cross-cut strips is that they are not much good for anything else.

Hopefully these tips will help you when choosing sources for rabbit strips. Buyer beware! While you can find cheap hides in a craft store, the hair is often too short. Don’t hesitate to contact fly material manufacturers as they will often sell you dyed hides even if they don’t advertise them.

Except for the Magnum Zonker Strips (which is what I most often buy.) I never buy zonker strips or rabbit hides sight unseen. Be sure to buy zonker strips from a fly-shop where you can take them out of the bag and physically check them out thoroughly for the above criteria and you will find that it’s much easier to tie, your flies will look better, and most importantly of all, they will fish better.



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Book Reviews

courtesy FFF ClubWire

Rod Rage; The Ultimate Guide to Angling Ethics

Suggested Retail \$22.95

Reviewed by John Colburn

Much of the present day writings are simply repetitions of the accumulated experiences and thoughts of our forebears, especially writings about fly fishing. Today's writers often restate the knowledge they acquired through reading the older books and articles, never crediting the earlier authors. When one comes across a book that actually quotes the writings of the earlier authors it is to be treasured. Rhea Topping's Rod Rage: The Ultimate Guide to Angling Ethics is such a one. She had the honesty to quote rather than paraphrase her predecessors' works.

Ms Topping has searched the literature of fly fishing from the 15th Century's Dame Juliana Berners to the 21st Century's Federation of Fly Fishers' Chairman of the Board Gary Grant to find the best thinking about fly fishing ethics and etiquette. She has quoted often lengthy passages and complete articles from writings of more than sixty authors, many of the names well known in fly fishing circles.

In compiling Rod Rage Ms Topping has not just accumulated other writers' work. She has written short insightful introductions to each author and closes the book with a summation of much of the thinking of the quoted authors. The final chapter "Some Dos, Don'ts, and Solutions" cover such problem areas as "Crowding: The Biggest Problem", "Respect for Other Anglers", "Some Options for Fishing in Crowds or With Friends", "On Rights-of-Way", "On the Environment", "On the Law", "On Boats", "The Client's Responsibility to the Guide", and "The Guide's Responsibility to the Client".

The book is illustrated with black and white photos and cartoons of some of the good and bad ethical situations as well as photos of many of the quoted authors.

In her "Afterword" Ms Topping wrote, "In my opinion, etiquette is far more important today than teaching students to cast effectively, to red water, to tie good

knots, to catch fish. For in this ever-more-crowded world of fly fishing, if we forget our 'water manners,' it's all lost."

Rod Rage ought to be required reading for any fly fisher-no, any angler who goes to a creek, river, lake, pond, estuary, flats, or blue water to enjoy the sport of angling without spoiling the sport of others. Rhea Topping is to be commended for compiling the thinking of these authors as "The Ultimate Guide to Angling Ethics" for us.

Building Classic Salmon Flies

by Ron Alcott

suggested price \$29.95 & \$39.00

Reviewed by Bruce E. Harang

This is a reprint of the original publication revised to include all color photographs of the tying sequences. As such it is a wonderful update of an excellent fly tying instruction book that has become very hard to find. For anyone wanting to truly learn and understand how to build a full dress Atlantic Salmon Fly this is one of the very best volumes available. The written instruction is clear, concise, and easy to read while the new color tying sequence photographs are of outstanding quality and clarity. For a working textbook the spiral bound version is particularly welcome as it opens flat and provides easy access while actually tying a fly following the author's instructions. In addition, the binding is done in a manner that provides for a standard type book spine when closed and shelved so that it is easy to shelf with your other tying books.

The substantive portion of the book opens with a short discussion of lessons from the past covering in a few pages some of the high points in the classic Atlantic salmon fly tying literature and then moves on to the critical but often overlooked subject of Materials and Material Substitutes. Unfortunately, many tiers feel they must have the original materials called for in a published pattern even when such materials are legally restricted or at the brink of extinction. The most important lesson found the Materials chapter may well be that even during their heyday tiers were already substituting for materials that were

either scarce, or overly expensive. The next chapter deals with color of silk, feather and fur used for tying Atlantic salmon flies.

This is followed by another extremely important chapter covering the subject of Metallic Tinsels that fully explains the various types of tinsels and clears up many misconceptions and errors in describing these very important materials of the Atlantic salmon fly tier. Chapter Five defines and describes the various types of wings used on Atlantic salmon flies and also details how the terminology of wings has changed over time so that in reading old patterns the tier must also read into the pattern the understanding of the time during which the pattern was first published. The next and final background chapter details the proportions that are important to building a proper looking Atlantic salmon fly. Of particular value, are the excellent pencil drawings illustrating all of the important proportions required to tie these flies.

The chapter concludes with color plate of twelve classic flies, and twelve individual color plates, one for each of the twelve patterns with the recipe included below. Chapter Seven provides step-by-step tying instructions including full color photographs for the Parson, the Silver Doctor, the Durham Ranger, the Orange Parson, and the Jock Scott. In so doing the author teaches all of the various types of wings, bodies, tails, hackles, etc. generally used in tying classic Atlantic salmon flies. The next chapter contains the patterns for a selection of twenty-five more classic salmon flies. The book concludes with a metric conversion chart, a bibliography, and a first class index.

This is an excellent revision of one of the best Atlantic salmon fly tying instruction manuals available. The only issue I found was that the image in Plate 5 does not show the horns called for in the pattern and Figure 7-73 on page 150 and Figure 7-74 on page 151 do not match the written captions. For the tier of Atlantic salmon, and steelhead flies this is a must have addition to his library.

Schedule of Upcoming NCFE Events

March 2, 2005	Membership Meeting/Fly Tying Marathon Beginner Fly Tying & Favorite Fly No Guest Speaker	Penitentiary Glen 6:30 - 10:00 PM
March 9, 2005	Board Meeting	Penitentiary Glen 7:00 - 9:00 PM
April 6, 2005	Membership Meeting Beginner Fly Tying & Favorite Fly Guest Speaker: Chris Helm	Penitentiary Glen 6:30 - 7:45 PM 8:00 - 10:00 PM
April 13, 2005	Board Meeting	Penitentiary Glen 7:00 - 9:00 PM
May 4, 2005	Membership Meeting Beginner Fly Tying & Favorite Fly Guest Speaker: Dan Catau	Penitentiary Glen 6:30 - 7:45 PM 8:00 - 10:00 PM
May 11, 2005	Board Meeting	Penitentiary Glen 7:00 - 9:00 PM

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