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The Newsletter of the Columbia-Greene Rip Van Winkle Chapter #569 of Trout Unlimited

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TU...TO CONSERVE, PROTECT & RESTORE NORTH AMERICA'S COLD WATER FISHERIES & THEIR WATERSHEDS

## **“NOT FOR NAUGHT” REGARDING KNOTWEED**

You should not have missed the educational program presented at our March chapter meeting. Jenn Grieser from the NYC Department of Environmental Protection Stream Management Program and Abbe Martin from the Greene County Soil and Water District presented a PowerPoint program loaded with pictures and information. Many of the photos were taken of the Batavia Kill Stream, a terrific brown trout fishery that is getting colonized by Japanese Knotweed. This meddlesome import resembles bamboo and grows in tall thickets along the stream bank, making it difficult for anglers and others to access the stream. In addition, it poses a danger to the fishery itself as the dead plant matter food web chain that supports trout may become altered. Areas where it grows may be more prone to erosion. Its aggressive behavior interferes with native vegetation and this could affect food, shelter and nesting sites for animals and birds.

There are a host of additional problems but one stands out as a concern, which is one reason why it is being scrutinized by these agencies. It is the impact of this invader on water quality. Since these watersheds are the major suppliers of water for NYC it could cause treatment problems as turbid water approaches its city destination.

This program presented by “the dynamic duo” about this naughty knotweed was an educational treat that was not to be missed! Thank you Jenn and Abbe for this enlightening program!

(Much more information is available at [www.gcswcd.com/stream/knotweed](http://www.gcswcd.com/stream/knotweed) and at [Google.com](http://Google.com) - type in “Japanese Knotweed.”)

Dick

## **UPDATE ON FLY-TYING AND FLY-FISHING CLASSES**

Our chapter has successfully completed the fly-tying course instruction at C-GCC with a total of 9 students attending the class.

The fly-fishing course has now started at Hudson High School and we have a total of 10 students, some of whom also took the tying class. Based on last year’s experience, we expected a larger group, but the distribution of the C-GCC brochure announcing the class was delayed, consequently our class is smaller despite the terrific coverage given by the media. The students, however, are dedicated ones from Columbia and Greene Counties, and include 1 woman. It is a small enough class that it is not necessary to split into 2 sections as we have done in the past. One benefit of this arrangement is that the instructors now have a chance to participate in the classroom session and add comments, as well as view that part of the course that they may not have seen in the past.

Dick

## THE C-G TU 2005 SPRING SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

April 4 – Monday **Fly-Tying Workshop**

PLACE: Agroforestry Resource Center – Route 23, Acra

TIME: 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

April 7, 14 – Thursdays **Fly-Fishing Course**

PLACE: Hudson High School – Room 14 and Gym

TIME: 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

May 7 – Saturday **Students' Day on the Stream**

PLACE: Routes 23 and 23A, at the ballpark parking lot

TIME: 10:00 a.m.

LUNCH PROVIDED by the chapter.

May 21 – Saturday **Greene County Shad Festival**

PLACE: Catskill Point

TIME: 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

FLY-TYING AND CASTING DEMONSTRATIONS

May 29 – Sunday **Columbia Land Conservancy Shad Festival**

PLACE: Clum and Patchen Farm, Livingston

TIME: 4:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

FLY-TYING AND CASTING DEMONSTRATIONS

June 4 – Saturday **Olana Fly-Tying Demonstration and Casting Lessons**

PLACE: Olana Pond

TIME: 12:00 Noon

## FROM THE EDITORS: THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

*Maybe your stature as a fly fisherman isn't determined by how big a trout you can catch, but by how small a trout you can catch without being disappointed, and of course, without losing the faith that there's a bigger one in there."*

JOHN GIERACH

## REMEMBERING WHEN...

Dick and I encourage members and friends to submit information and articles to the newsletter. Recently I was happy to receive a phone call from Wendy Neefus asking if we would print an article he wrote about "olde times". It mentions several people (Fred Bernockie, Otto Grater and Red Ressler) I met way back in the late 60's when I joined the Claverack Fire Company. I really enjoyed reading Wendy's article about those days...and am sure you will too! Hank

# Spider Fishing at Night

By Wendy Neefus

Back in the 70's a very productive fishing stream here in Columbia County was North Creek, a place called Pulver's Station between Ghent and Mellenville. It was a cold stream known for its big trout. The local fly fishermen: Bill Frutching (also a local fly tyer), Freddie Bernockie, Otto Grater, Red Ressler, another whom I cannot remember, and I fished this stream with big bivisible dry flies that were called Spiders.

The rationale was that the only time "Mr. Big Trout" was going to feed in the heat of summer was at night when things cooled off a bit. Large trout do become nocturnal feeders. So, we simply showed up when they were most likely to feed. The technique was to find and fish just a few slow water pools. This was important so you could hear the trout if he took your fly. Seeing your offering was poor if not impossible. We would twitch these Spiders across a pool. The frequency and magnitude of the twitch and pause is where the artistry came into play. Often they would hit the fly aggressively with a big noisy pop, or at times with a very subtle quiet take.

One had to be careful fly fishing at night. Scouting out a section of stream in the daylight was imperative. You had to know exactly where to walk and stand to minimize your chance of falling in, getting your fly hung up in the trees, or losing your fish to an underwater snag.

These spiders were dressed on #6 or #8 salmon dry fly hooks. They were either black and white, brown and white, or all white. We fished them on a 1X or 0X tippet. When a fish was hooked you didn't allow it to run much, since he'd run for cover and you'd lose your fish to an underwater snag. Yes, we would "horse the fish" in and net him quickly.

Nobody really knows what these big bivisible flies imitated. Sure, it could go for a spider as named...or maybe it was taken for a caddis or stonefly since it's a fact that many of these insects hatch at night. With the "stop and go" action we gave the fly it could have imitated a mouse, injured bird, or bat. It wasn't always hunger, sometimes the fish hit it out of anger after 10 or 15 casts to the same spot.

Speaking of bats, on two outings I hooked a bat at night. This, though scary at first, was easy to deal with...you'd simply step on your line and leader and draw it under your foot drowning the bat and clipping your leader on the opposite side of your foot, away from the bat.

The eeriness of the dark is loaded with suspense and when you get a hit or hook into a monster your imagination really runs wild. A friend of mine hooked a beaver one night. He had quite a shock when he turned his light on that.

The technique of Spider fishing at night can still be used today, but North Creek is pretty much choked up with high grass that completely covers the stream in some spots. Most trout streams have some slow calm pools where this can all be applied. You won't catch a lot of trout but they will be large.

## **La ROCCA'S CORNER – “Fish Tails & Fish Tales”**

Last autumn while fishing the Housatonic on a cold and a bit blustery day near the close of what I used to think of as the “normal” trout season, my eye was drawn to a piece of flotsam stuck in a bank side bush. I was out in the current twenty feet from the bank drifting a weighted Prince Nymph down through the run between the shore and me. Every time my drift was just about to pass me I would see this tiger-striped orange bit of plastic in the bush. I knew what it was: an all-in-one fishing outfit made for kids. I could not resist; when I'd exhausted my patience in the run (and, incidentally, after I hooked and landed my lone trout for the day) I waded over and retrieved the little outfit.

### **ON FISHERMAN AND TACKLE**

The tiny Zebco from the Housatonic bush was broken, but it was just like the one my daughter gave me a couple of years ago as a signal that it was okay to take my granddaughter fishing for the first time. I do not know if, years from now, she will remember the little closed face reel and tiny rod, but if she grows up to enjoy fishing, she likely will. Most of us who are hooked for life remember our gear and can often trace our angling evolution – some would say growth – through our gear. Doing so is an interesting mental exercise that can evoke lots of memories.

Nearly two years ago now we moved from our farmhouse in Medusa to a temporary home while we readied for and then had our new home built. In the process of that move I found a pair of dusty and cobweb-laced glass fly rods stored up between the floor joists in the cellar of the old house where they had rested for thirty years. Big and clumsy and, as I only now know, never quite matched to the correct line weight, they were part of the reason why my embrace of fly fishing was delayed. The fact that I lived only a couple of miles from the Ten Mile Creek and learned that an ultra light spinning rig and small Mepps and C.P. Swings were deadly on that little stream was another reason. So deadly was that combination, especially in the spring, that I took still another of those ugly glass fly rods into a locally well-known fellow on Adams Street in Delmar, Dud Soper. Dud was a fly fisherman, fly tier and rod builder, and I had him turn the top section of the rod into the tiniest of ultra light spinning rods. Paired with an Alcedo Micron reel and 2lb test monofilament, I caught a lot of trout in local creeks and in the backcountry ponds of the Adirondacks.

That Dud Soper rod was, at the same time, also responsible for expediting my conversion to fly fishing. (Note that I am not a purist; I have nothing against spin fishermen or spinning gear...there is a time and place for everything.) On a subsequent visit to Dud's shop – the place was fascinating – I purchased more than a few raffle tickets offered by the Clearwater Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Incredibly, a few weeks later, two of my tickets were drawn as winners, and I was the proud owner of not one but two custom made glass fly rods, one crafted by Dud and another made by a chapter member whose name was not inscribed on the rod. Dud's rod was small – seven foot, meant to handle a five weight line – then designated by a set of letters, and came complete with a reel and aluminum rod tube. It was the first fly rod I owned that seemed to cast well. I could actually feel the rod load on my back cast, something I'd not experienced before. That little outfit served me well and I still have it safely stored away in its protective tube.

The more I fished with and learned about flies, the more I learned that so much of a trout's diet is consumed underwater, and the less useful the little rod became. A longer rod, although sometimes difficult to handle in the tunnel that is the Ten Mile Creek (especially after the leaves are on the trees), seemed more useful. I had learned to mend line and steer my weighted nymphs through fishy-looking runs and pockets...especially on bigger water than the Ten Mile. A River Runs Through It hit the movie theatres, and while I was already hooked on fly fishing, that movie seemed to prompt all the catalogues to feature graphite rods in "beginner series"...solidly built eight footers that handled reasonably well and were (and still are) dirt cheap. I bought one, a two-piece outfit from LLBean, that served me well on the Esopus, the Catskill, the Ausable and other local waters. I still have that one too...somewhere.

When I began to travel on the job my trips sometimes took me to trout fishing locales. One of the first was Helena, Montana where I could fairly easily get to the Missouri, a blue ribbon trout water as it is termed in that state. There are lots of stories about trout rods lost by the airlines, so for that and other reasons I invested in the rod that I now use. It is nothing special: a nine foot five weight that breaks down to four pieces for easy airplane travel...graphite...with a decent reel with a real drag. I have used this outfit from my pond to the Ten Mile to the Delaware to the Farmington to the San Juan to the Big Horn...and I have no complaints. (Then again, I am still a hack, and what do I know?) The rod has the feel of utility; at this point in my fly-fishing evolution it feels like all I need.

Except now there is bamboo...in fact, there has always been bamboo. I believe my very first fly rod was bamboo. It was a weighty stick that came from Sears...or maybe from Bergenfield Sports and Auto...that had a permanent bend in the tip after my first outing with it. That was way back in high school, and "permanent" was not a very long time, because, as I remember it, I splintered it in a car door on one of our expeditions from New Jersey to the Beaverkill Campground! My buddy Tom, who recently purchased a graphite fly rod for saltwater, has fished with an Orvis Battenkill for over forty years, and many of the guys in our local TU chapter are bamboo rod enthusiasts. A number of books, John Gierach's Fishing Bamboo and Splitting Cane – Conversations with Bamboo Rodmakers by Ed Engle among them, extol the virtues of bamboo and chronicle the stories of more than a few of what seems to be a growing number of craftsmen who design, shape and build fine bamboo rods. Eighty year old Roger Menard, in a wonderful little book I just purchased entitled My Side of the River, wrote a delightful chapter devoted to refurbishing and rejuvenating old cane fly rods. I could smell the varnish as I read the chapter!

Some folks fish with them, some collect them, some trade in them, and others do all three. A decade ago, while doing some work in Santa Barbara, California, I ran into a fellow who published his own newsletter about bamboo fly rods and augmented an already comfortable living by buying and selling what he called "masterpiece fly rods." At this point in my fishing career I am not sure I'll ever own another bamboo fly rod...but who knows? A few months ago a young colleague at work mentioned that his grandfather had just given him a stash of old fishing gear. The trove included at least one fly rod. Hm...sounds interesting. "Why don't you bring them into work someday?" I asked. "I'd love to have a look at them." One of them might be bamboo.

John

## HANK'S FLY BOX – Bill Millard’s Early Little Black Stonefly

After talking with Bill Millard more, I am impressed with how extensive his family history has been in fly tying. Bill started tying when he was a young boy with the aid of his mother’s brother, his Uncle Irving “Warner” Parks...they tied mostly streamers and some big nymphs. In 1966, when his long time friend, Don Traver, opened up his fly shop on Morton Street in Poughkeepsie, Don taught Bill how to tie dry flies. Don also taught George Hopper at about the same time...and Bill sat in on those classes too, to learn how to teach fly tying!

Judee Darbee sent Bill a book (#103) from the collection of Elsie and Harry Darbee (of the fly tying, fishing tackle and book business in Roscoe, NY) and he discovered that his family was tying as long as anyone in New York State...which obviously goes back a long time! Bill sent me copies of pages from those publications which included “A Book on Fine Fishing Tackle” by Millard. In the material there was also a picture of one of the fly-tying rooms at the Bennett Millard Tackle Plant in Deposit, NY. Bill’s fly-tying roots go deep!

I appreciate Bill offering me this recipe and photo for his Early Little Black Stonefly for this newsletter. It would be nice to be able to pick the brains of Bennett Millard and Irving (“Warner”) Parks...but since we can’t talk with them about a nymph that is perfect for the early season, we can pick the brain of the next best person when we talk with Bill!

Hook: 3906B – 14 to 18’s

Thread: 8/0 Black

Tail: 2 – Peccary hairs

Body: Black Flexi-Floss

Wing Case: Dark turkey quill section

Thorax: Very dark green or black dubbing

Head: Fur and thread



### TYING INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Start thread at 4/5’s mark on shank and wrap a nice tight thread body back to the hook point.
2. At this point, tie on the two hairs divided, and wrap back to barb, then back up to the tie on location.
3. Tie on about 4 inches of black Flexi-Floss at eye area, pull tight and wrap over it back to the hook barb. Then run thread back up to the hook eye.
4. Pull tight Flexi-Floss and wrap up to 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of hook shank. Start releasing some pressure on the floss while wrapping up to 1/4 inch behind hook eye. Tie off good and cut excess.
5. Wrap thread back to the 1/2 mark of hook shank and mount the turkey quill section here.
6. Dub thread and make the thorax up to 1/8 inch of the hook eye.
7. Pull turkey quill over thorax and tie down at the hook eye.
8. Before cutting off excess – separate some fibers (3 each side) and wrap thread head holding these to the sides.

9. Add a tiny bit of dubbing to the thread and wrap for head, while whip finishing it off.

Once done cut the side legs even with the back of the thorax.

**Bill, thanks again for sharing your Early Little Black Stonefly recipe with our readers!**

## **THE CURRENT ON"LINE"**

**IF YOU RECEIVED THIS NEWSLETTER BY MAIL AND HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS PLEASE CONTACT ONE OF THE CO-EDITORS SO OUR TU CHAPTER CAN SAVE MONEY ON MAILINGS.**

Also, **if anyone has changed their email address or doesn't want to receive the newsletter any longer** please notify one of us: Dick Riccio (518) 851-7002 newsletter@cgtu.org  
Hank Theiss (518) 851-9442 newsletter@cgtu.org

## **A BIG "THANK YOU"...**

...to Wendy Neefus for donating numerous tying materials for upcoming classes and demonstrations.

## **AND THE WINNER IS...**

Tom Poelker won the FREE March meeting door prize of flies tied and donated by Bill Millard. We appreciate Bill's generous donation. **Those wishing to donate flies or other door prizes for the free monthly drawings should contact Dick Riccio.**

## **C-GTU MEETINGS**

**EVERY MONTH:** Our regularly scheduled meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. **at the Cornell Cooperative Extension Building on Mountain Road in Cairo, NY**, the 3rd Tuesday of each month (except July and August) unless otherwise indicated.

**THIS MONTH:** Tuesday, April 19, 2005 – **FREE DOOR PRIZE DRAWING.**

**NEXT MEETING:** Tuesday, May 17, 2005 – **FREE DOOR PRIZE DRAWING.**

### **COLUMBIA-GREENE RIP VAN WINKLE CHAPTER #569 OF TROUT UNLIMITED**

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**Keep current...with The Current! Dick & Hank (CO-EDITORS)**