



# Kapiti Fly Fishing Club

## June 2023 Newsletter



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*You are invited to our next Club meeting on Monday 24 July*

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**In this month's newsletter: 'In anticipation' – all rig up and ready to go.** Photo taken by Kras Angelov

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## Club activities

Date	Event	Coordinator
Sunday 23 July	Fly-Tying workshop - Nymphs	Gordon
Monday 24 July	Club meeting – Guest speaker TBC	President
Sunday 30 July	Fly-Tying workshop – Dry Flies, Emergers, other things	Gordon
11 to 13 August	Tongariro and Tauranga -Taupo Rivers	TBC
Monday 28 August	Club meeting – Guest speaker TBC	President
15 to 17 September	Manawatu River	TBC
Monday 25 September	Club meeting – Guest speaker TBC	President
Sunday 1 October	Opening Day on Waikanae River	
13 to 15 October	Rangitikei River area	TBC
Monday 23 October	Club meeting – Guest speaker TBC	President
10 to 12 November	Tukituki and Waipawa Rivers	TBC
Monday 27 November	Club meeting – Guest speaker TBC	President

## Presidents report

Here I go with my first President's comment.

I have just returned from the UK, London. We had the most amazing weather, 5 weeks of sunshine and up to 28C. We had one day with rain – a torrential monsoon-like downpour that last perhaps an hour and flooded the gutter and made it impossible to stay hard left – the middle of the road was the only clear spot.

I had arranged to meet up with Graham Pearson, a guide at Rutland Water whom I had met in NZ when he came over for the last Lions tour and with whom I had fished on Rutland in 2018 when I was last in the UK. But catching Covid from my son 2 days after we arrived in the UK (he had been at a work junket in Spain with 1500 people!) put paid to that, as we all were confined to barracks and felt pretty lousy for 2 1/2 weeks.

And I guess that saved me a lot of \$. The cost of one Day Rutland permit - 8 fish + Catch and Release is £33, £28 for a boat, or £1200 for a season (closed 1 Dec – 31 Jan) – multiply by 2 to get NZ\$. So don't complain of the cost of your license.....

So, the only trout I saw were a couple cruising the edge of the Thames near Windsor as we spent some 2 hours on a French Brothers cruise – in fact they were beside Eton – high class fish of course! It surprised me, but they were definitely trout, but not in the sort of water I would want to fish – visibility only 50cm, 40 - 60m wide, mostly going straight down, and bush or private property down to the edge.

Graham is the developer of the Cormorant fly, which he introduced me to and which I have used to great effect in still-water. It is basically black marabou tied in at the head on size 10-14, with any head or body and flash that you want. So simple and easy to tie, but deadly fished on a slow retrieve high in the water.



Pearl & Green



Red Holo



Mirage & Holo

I am really looking forward to getting back onto a river here, of course the high water locally currently makes that a little difficult unless one heads for Turangi. But I understand that has been pretty hard too recently. Maybe the rain next week might drag some up. Or maybe I will have to see if the Otaki mouth has any kahawai coming in.

It's nice to be back – own bed and food, but not so much the temperature.

Tight lines



## ***Significant progress in our mission to safeguard the future of fishing and hunting in New Zealand – Fish and Game NZ***

Parliament's Environment Select Committee has reported back on the planned Natural and Built Environment Bill (NBE), which we believe would have had significant implications for the future of fishing and hunting in New Zealand and the role of Fish & Game.

Over the past few weeks, almost 12,000 people visited Fish & Game's 'Our Future' [website](#) and nearly 3,500 Kiwis sent emails outlining their concerns to the Government and MPs.

Following this public outcry and the hard work of the Fish & Game team, the select committee has now recommended changes to the proposed law.

These changes include:

- enshrining the protection of the habitat of trout and salmon alongside the protection of indigenous species,
- recognition of the values Kiwis place on public access to lakes and rivers,
- recognition of the recreational use and enjoyment of the natural environment – and for these values to be maintained and enhanced.

**Generally, we believe this is a win for recreation, a win for anglers and hunters and a win for all New Zealanders.**

The initial draft of the NBE Bill completely ignored the value Kiwis place on recreation and enjoyment of our great outdoors and removed the habitat protection of trout and salmon so these recommended changes are positive for Fish & Game and licence holders like you.

We were worried this Bill heralded the beginning of a suite of legislative changes that would threaten the future of fishing and hunting and the species we harvest in this country.

For trout and salmon, we have always been clear that any law must recognise both the national importance of these species and the reason why we need to protect their habitats – to safeguard the habitat of all freshwater fish. On the face of it, these changes go a long way towards addressing those concerns.

The changes rightly prioritise the health of the natural environment and recognise the importance of the recreational values New Zealanders hold so dear, not just now, but for future generations.

### **Than you**

Our licence holders deserve a lot of credit for taking the time to make their voices heard and help bring about this change. We were overwhelmed by the level of support for the campaign, which shows the passion of our anglers and hunters in ensuring the things we care about today will be enjoyed by all in the future.

## Further changes are still needed

Over the past 12 months, Fish & Game has raised its concerns about these reforms with environmental NGOs, officials, MPs from all political parties and ministers.

For the most part, it appears the decision-makers have listened, but there are still areas Fish & Game wants resolved.

- The Bill should be more explicit, in particular by ensuring the habitat of trout and salmon is protected, insofar as this is consistent with the protection of the habitats of indigenous freshwater species.
- We remain concerned about the limits framework where the Government and local government will set environmental bottom lines for the environment.
- We want communities to be able to have their voices heard in the development of new regional planning frameworks and consents.

## Next Steps

Over the coming days, Fish & Game will be studying the select committee's report in detail, seeking greater clarity on the recommendations and advocating for other changes.

We will not stop speaking up for hunters and anglers' interests.

Thanks again for all your support, we will continue to keep you informed.



## Editor's Note:

*I would like to encourage all our members to take the time to visit the Fish & Game's 'Our Future' [website](#) and email your concerns in regards to protecting our sport of fly-fishing and access to our waterways. Please do not sit back in your armchair and think that it will not happen, your voice is important, so make sure that those people sitting in Parliament hear our concerns.*

### ***Fly Casting Tuition by Gordon Baker***

Club member Gordon Baker is available for one-on-one casting tuition. Gordon is a casting instructor with Flyfishers International (USA). He is available to help beginners get off to a good start and to assist more experienced members improve their distance casting skills. Although not yet an approved two-handed casting instructor Gordon is a keen learner willing to share new skills.

Email Gordon [kiwiflyfisher@gmail.com](mailto:kiwiflyfisher@gmail.com) or phone 0274946487 to arrange a suitable time for a lesson. There is no charge.

### ***Mid-Week Fishing trips by Hugh***

For those members who are lucky enough to be able to fish mid-week during the forthcoming season please confirm your desire to be included in the mid-week fishers email list to:

[hugh.driver.nz@gmail.com](mailto:hugh.driver.nz@gmail.com)

The emails are often sent out only giving very short notice to take advantage of the prevailing conditions and members availability, as an example the afternoon of day before the proposed trip.

**If you are interested in participating on any mid-week fishing trips, please email Hugh Driver with your contact details and you will be added to the email list.**

### ***Winter Fly-Tying workshop by Gordon Baker***

Lat last year our monthly fly-tying stopped due to a lack of interest from members so a new initiative will offer members an opportunity to participate in an afternoon fly-tying workshop over four weekends, the last two Sundays in June and July.

Gordon Baker has created and will present each session. Join fellow members on **Sunday afternoons between 1 and 5pm at Te Ara Korowai, 8 Weka Road, Raumati.**

Refresh your skills and learn new ones, each session will focus on specific aspects of fly-tying. This is a perfect opportunity to get started in fly tying, each session will feature additional skills that utilise tying gear, as an example braided loops first then joining fly lines to backing.

**Sessions are limited to about 10 members.**

Please bring your fly-tying kit, there will be tools there for beginners. Tools and materials will be provided by our usual sponsor **The Flyshop.**

Please contact Gordon ([kiwiflyfisher@gmail.com](mailto:kiwiflyfisher@gmail.com)) to ensure your place.

**Session Three Sunday 23 July - Nymphs**

**Session Four Sunday 30 July - Dry Flies, Emergers, and Other Things.**

## *Kapiti Women on the Fly by Leigh Johnson*

### **Activities**

On June 11th, 9 ladies from around the Wellington region, mentored by 6 members of the Hutt Valley Angling Club, received 'An introduction to successful methods on The Hutt River!' 🎣

Following a quick briefing from Al Markham, the ladies were paired up with their mentors and relocated to spots along the Hutt River. It was a stunning morning and though no fish were caught, everyone learned a lot and new friends were made. Thanks to Al, Karina and the Hutt team.



### **Next event**

#### **Practical Skills Meetup & Shared Lunch on**

**Sunday, July 16th from 10:30 am to 1:00 pm** at the Otaki Bridge Club, 75 Aotaki St, Otaki.

Topics covered by our mentors from the Kapiti Fly Fishing Club will include:

1. Setting up rods and lines
2. Leaders and tippetts
3. Knots
4. Basic flies
5. Please message me your ideas?

Please bring:

1. A simple plate for the shared lunch.
2. A \$10 koha to cover the venue hire.

*This event is very suitable for absolute beginners so if you know any ladies who would enjoy meeting some enthusiastic fly chicks, then please pass on these details.*

### **Central Plateau Women's Social Fly-Fishing Tournament**

The annual women's social tournament, (which takes place in Turangi on July 21st and 22nd) has become incredibly popular including several of our club members attending. With approximately 50 women participating, I would recommend avoiding the Tongariro River during that weekend. 🇳🇿

### **Kapiti Women on The Fly Workshop 2023**

Due to popular demand, we're doing it again! The venue, **TALTAC**, will provide accommodation for 20+ ladies with overflow accommodation available nearby. Or bring your motorhome and camp on site.

We will kick off on Friday evening. Saturday through Sunday morning will be workshops, fishing and fun. For now, please reserve this weekend. More details will be released in due course.

Where to find WoTF?

Please follow our activities on this [Facebook Page](#).

There is also a private [WoTF Facebook group](#) that provides a safe space for women who fly fish, (or would like to fly fish) to share information, arrange fishing activities, and learn from each other about all things fly fishing. Or contact me directly at [leigh@leighjohnsonnz.com](mailto:leigh@leighjohnsonnz.com) or visit [www.womenonthefly.nz](http://www.womenonthefly.nz).

***Taupō fishing licence: new photo announced for 2023 from the Taupo and Turangi Herald.***



**Dion James' winning fishing licence photo shows him with an impressive catch**

A photo of an angler holding a stunning brown trout caught at Lake Otamangakau was the overall winner of this year's Department of Conservation Taupō fishery photo competition.

The winning image, by Dion James, of Rotorua, was taken at the popular angling lake between Tūrangi and National Park. It will feature on the 2023-24 Taupō fishery printed plastic licences.



Six additional winners will see their photos used to illustrate a range of licence options, which appear within DoC's online fishing licence store as well as on the 24-hour paper licences.

Competition judges had a tough job working through hundreds of entries. Taupō Fishery senior ranger James Barnett, who has a background in design and communications, said he was impressed by the quality of the images. "Thank you to everyone who submitted photos, the quality was very high and gave the judges plenty to discuss.

"We were impressed by the variety of photos, which came from experienced local anglers to visitors giving trout fishing a go for the first time, and from trout fishing veterans to kids learning the ropes. "It's the wealth of opportunity on offer to anglers that really sums up the Taupō fishery.

"We hope this is reflected in the winning photographs.

The prizes were season fishing licences and set the winners up nicely for the new Taupō fishing season opening on July 1.

New-season licences can be purchased from June 24 using the online licence store. For more information head to: [www.doc.govt.nz/fishinglicence](http://www.doc.govt.nz/fishinglicence)

## ***KFFC Tongariro Club Trip 16-18<sup>th</sup> June 2023 by Mike Noon***

Auckland Fly Fishing Club House: Kras, Mark, Mike

Greg asked me to pen a few words on my first ever club trip, so here goes.... On a very fine, sunny, and cold Friday we headed off to Turangi. Kras and Mark away at 5:00am to get on the water as fast as possible, me a far more reasonable 8:45am start. Below is Mark's early morning view of the Desert Road. It looks icy!



Kras and Mark hit the Tongariro Blue pool and above. I arrived a bit later and fished the Blue Pool thoroughly, I reckon I would have been the seventh or more to do so as the car park was full. Surprise surprise no luck for me but Kras caught a solid Jack further upstream (see pic below). He and Mark saw fish lying in the river, but they were not interested in anything thrown at them. The river was clear and low at around 29 Cumecs and had not had a flush for about a month.

The big round upper river boulders were covered in algae and very slippery, so any wading was very cautious. Driving to Turangi I had a look off the Red Hutt pool Bridge and could see well

into the pool. I only saw one smallish fish, so it rather confirmed that the upper river was not very fishy.

Kras had an equipment fail, so like most trips we ended up at the Sporting life tackle shop. With lighter pockets Kras left with a new reel and spare pool benefitting from the club discount. Remember we get 10% off!

A quick lunch, check into our accommodation and we were off to fish the true left lower reaches. The river is braided here, and we tried the smaller left stream. What there was, was plenty of fishermen. Looking up stream and down I could see at least eight at one point and they all had one thing in common. No one was catching anything. I saw no one with a bent rod and we did not get a touch despite the water looking good.

After a nice dinner and a few beers, we decided to change rivers and give the Hinemaia a go in the morning. A friend of mine had caught a couple there a few days earlier. As I had said this is the water I mostly fish, I was feeling some pressure. We fished below the SH1 bridge working up from a couple of hundred meters from the mouth. The river was low and very clear, not a good thing. A first pool had Mark casting to a couple of fish, but they were not convinced and drifted away into shelter. Then a couple of favourite pools had fishermen in them already. I was getting worried! I finally caught a jack casting up into a reach, some relief. Due likely to the low clear river the fish were holding high up and deep in the pools. Mark and I fished an old favourite pool together taking three and I let one go. The biggest a hen just over 5lb, which is a good fish for the Hine. Kras joined us and he also had a fish.



After lunch it was back to the Tongariro and the Graces Road area. I do not know this water very well and it has apparently changed a lot after the recent floods. The last time I fished here in May the river was running at 53 Cumecs. The river looked very different at 29 Cumecs and the many snags in the runs and pools are much more visible. Trying to fish around and between them was a bit like being sea fishing when the barracoota arrive, tackle shop heaven and lots of lost flies to the unseen snags below the surface that seemed to be everywhere I thought there might be a fish. The fishing was hard, I got one and lost another.

Back at the house I smoked a trout we had salted and smothered with honey earlier in the day. It was delicious, eaten with fingers hot and juicy with a beer.



Rain was due overnight, not a lot but some anyway. We planned to go back to the Graces Road pools at first light figuring they would be full of pods of fresh run fish from overnight. That was not how it turned out. The fishing was again hard. Eventually my indicator bobbed, and a fish was on, a silver bullet, the only problem it was six inches long. We tried everything. I had a go with Malcom's beaded green Intruder fly and various woolly buggers. Plus, a range of nymphs and glo bugs which I left decorating the many snags.

Nothing for me and nothing for Kras. And just before we were about to leave Mark had a strike on a "squirmy wormy" fly (told you we were trying everything). The result a beautifully conditioned silver Jack which Mark promptly named "The fish of a thousand casts!".



A quick clean-up of the house and we were off late morning and homeward bound. The club house was perfect, and the fire made it nice and warm.

All in it was a great weekend, good food and company and while the fish were not entirely cooperating, we all caught. There was room for another three in the house, so join in next time for a club trip, its good fun.

The following very nicely conditioned fish picture courtesy of Mark Vogt. Well done, Mark!



## *Nymphing: When to ditch the dead-drift by George Daniel*

When an "induced nymph" can significantly up your catch rate.



I make a point of reflecting on my teaching efforts with the hope of becoming a better educator. This often means looking through past writing projects in search of things I failed to mention. One gap I quickly noticed was neglecting to highlight the importance of speeding up subsurface presentations, specifically when nymphing. There are numerous fly-fishing scenarios when we should ditch the idea of a natural dead drift and think about inducing drag to move the nymph faster than the current, as well as to create vertical movement towards the surface. Though there are several times when I feel a swung nymph presentation may outproduce a natural drift, one rises to the top: hatch time.

At the time of this writing, many of my favourite Pennsylvania trout streams are at peak insect level, with droves of caddis, mayflies, and stoneflies emerging throughout the day and into the darkness. While dry fly fishing is my preferred approach during this hatching "primetime," nymphing tactics are still needed to produce results when fish are not feeding at the surface. While drifting nymphs naturally with the current (aka dead drift) provides the bulk of strikes during the year, the induced drift is often just as if not more effective during peak insect hatch periods since trout are conditioned to insects emerging towards the bank or surface.

### **Inducing your nymph**

An induced lift is accomplished simply by applying tension on the line which makes the nymph move towards the surface. Often this tension is applied at the end of presentation and is referred to as a swing. During the month of May on my home waters, when insect activity and ideal water temperatures have fish keyed in on emerging insects, I would say that over half my catches occur during the swing stage of the presentation.

This swing or induced lift can be achieved a number of ways but these two I use the most often.

### **The basic swing**

The basic swing is employed by lowering the rod tip at the end of a nymphing drift and slowly pulling the flies towards your direction. Usually, I keep the rod tip low during the swing to keep the nymphs riding deeper in the water column. The advantage of the basic swing is the ability to swing the nymphs across a wide arc of water, allowing you to cover a lot of ground. You can consider

this basic swing as a searching tactic and often I use this approach when I'm swinging through a nondescript body of water, where I don't have a defined target like a bubble line or a seam. I often use this basic swing in wide shallow riffles or a wide tail out.

### **The Parallel Induced Lift**

The concept of creating tension is the same with this tactic as it is with the basic swing. The major difference is that I'll keep my rod tip held higher off the water and stop it over a specific seam I want my nymphs to remain in during the swung presentation. Think of it as a classic, dead-drift nymphing presentation where you simply move your rod tip over a distinct current or seam where you want to swing your nymph patterns. I use this tactic anytime I have a great looking seam, current, or bubble line where I want to keep my nymphs within during the swung presentation.

### **Patience is a virtue**

With either approach, it's crucial that you patiently wait for the nymphs to swing all the way up towards the surface before beginning the next presentation. As someone who possessed little patience in my early fly-fishing days, I rarely exhibited the restraint to allow my flies to fully swing up towards and to the surface before making my next cast. That is, until I realized that the majority of my strikes often occurred after the flies swung to the surface and dangled there for several seconds.

### **Wet's not required**

You don't have to use wet flies to employ a swung presentation. Recently, I've moved to fishing a lot of single nymph rigs—using flies like pheasant tails and perdigons nymphs—and I still catch a lot of fish. If I start seeing an increase in both bug and fish activity, then I may add a soft hackle pattern. I think an important part to remember is you don't always have to build movement into your flies like a soft hackle. Instead, you can induce movement into the pattern by using your rod hand to tap the rod blank during the swing-sending pulses into the fly. You can also wiggle the rod tip during the swing. The options are endless, but the point is sometimes excessive movement placed into the fly during the swing is a good thing.

### **Easy does it**

One of the hardest things to master during a swung presentation is gently setting the hook. Your nymph(s) are already under a high degree of tension during a swung presentation. Most often, the fish will hook itself when striking making it easy to overreact when one detects the aggressive tug characteristic of a trout or other fish taking a swung fly. The goal is to lift the tip with little force—just enough to squarely set the hook. Anything too aggressive will result in either breaking off the fly or ripping the fly out of the trout's mouth.

### **Wrapping up**

As we head into prime trout season, remember not to neglect the traditional swing or the induced parallel lift, as I believe this final stage of your presentation may prove to be the most useful during these times.

## *Kāpiti trio awarded for fly fishing dedication by David Haxton*



**Leigh Johnson with a trout**

Wellington Fish & Game has honoured three members of the Kāpiti Fly Fishing Club for their voluntary efforts to the club and wider community. Leigh Johnson, Michael Murphy, and Gordon Baker were recognised in the Wellington Fish & Game Council Recognition Awards.

Johnson felt “proud” to be awarded for outstanding contributions to the promotion of participation by women in freshwater angling in the Wellington region. “My focus has been to get more women involved in fly fishing.”

She created the Women on The Fly project to get more women into the club which was so successful it became Wellington-wide. “It’s now growing right throughout the country.

She said if women were keen to get involved, they could check out [www.womenonthefly.co.nz](http://www.womenonthefly.co.nz).



**A Women on The Fly gathering next to the Ōtaki River**

Johnson has been involved with fly fishing “on and off” for about 30 years. But she returned to it “as a retirement activity” and is now “fully engaged — I love it.

Her first association with the sport was as a child when she saw a “split cane rod on my widowed great-aunt’s garage wall and I wondered what it was.”

“And then I had a relative who was a keen fisher and then a work colleague who fished, and then I thought I should try it out.”

Johnson said flying fishing gave a wide range of enjoyment. “It has benefits to your mental, physical, and social health. I didn’t realise how much I enjoyed the therapeutic benefits of just being out on the river and nature.”

There’s quite a lot of problem-solving and learning involved too. “I’m also motivated to stay fit and healthy because I need strong legs, I need to look after my knees which are a bit dodgy, and I need to have good balance.”

“And socially there’s something about a group of women fishing, supporting, and encouraging each other.



**Michael Murphy with a trout which he is about to release back into the river**

Murphy was “quite humbled” to be awarded for outstanding contributions to the promotion of freshwater angling in the Wellington region.

He has been involved in fly fishing from a young age, especially as his father was into it, but it wasn’t until he was in his late 50s that his passion increased.

“I’d been involved in hunting, tramping, yachting, four-wheel driving and more over the years, but then got back to what I started [fly fishing] as a young fella. Murphy noted many benefits too.

“It’s an amazingly good way of keeping reasonable fit and the whole mental wellbeing part isn’t well known. “There’s nothing better than getting out there and spending time on the river. “It’s hugely important for me, and some of my friends, to do that.

You’re in the moment — all the time — and the normal day-to-day things we worry about tend to disappear.” And there’s camaraderie which is really good.

Baker was “quite honoured” to be awarded for outstanding contributions to the Wellington region’s recruitment and training of anglers. He joined the Wellington Flyfishers Club in 1989 and was with the club for many years before moving to the coast and joining the Kāpiti Fly Fishing club in recent years.



**Gordon Baker has enjoyed fly fishing for many years**

He became involved in fishing after his mother passed away in 1987 and he got some money as part of her estate. “I didn’t know what to do with it, but I thought what would she like me to do with it?”

“I thought she would like me to spend it on something I enjoyed.

“I used to enjoy fishing as a kid.”

So, he bought some saltwater fishing gear and read various books about the art of fishing.

But after staying with some friends in Mangaweka he was introduced to fly fishing.

“I went back to the library and started to read about flying fishing and then bought a fly-fishing rod, and within a short time joined the Wellington club. “That was a big step because I was starting to fish with people who knew what they were doing and made a dramatic difference from learning from a book.

“And now I’ve got an international fly-casting instructor’s qualification and I teach fly fishing, fly tying and take people fly fishing, and that kind of stuff.”

Like Johnson and Murphy, fly fishing brought lots of enjoyment to Baker. He loved the “different challenges and degrees of satisfaction” rivers offered as well as maintaining his fitness, making his own flies, reading fly fishing literature, and camaraderie.

There was also another aspect. “You can even sit on the riverbank and watch fish swimming about which can be pretty satisfying.





## How to make your own killer fly by Spenser Durrant



***You don't need to be a fly designer to come up with your next great pattern.***

The wind howled from the West and snow fell sideways, which made trout fishing rather pointless. It was the kind of spring weather that you just can't fish through; you have to wait it out. So, I stayed home for the better part of a week, tying flies and filling boxes full of patterns I'll need when summer rolls around. I kept looking out the window, hoping for a break in the weather and warm enough temps to coax a blue-wing hatch into existence.

Early spring blue-wing hatches are among my favourite in fly fishing, but they're also the most infuriating. The bugs are tiny, the water is usually still low, and the fish are more skittish than normal. On my local tailwaters especially, the trout are professional fly critics, carefully examining each bug for the correct number of tail feathers and a properly tapered body. If so, much as half a hackle fibre is out of place, they shake their heads, seeming almost disappointed that I *still* don't understand exactly what they want.

So, once all the necessary flies are tied, I try to dream up an answer to those infuriating days of fishing. I've used variations on the Last Chance Cripple, Sparkle Duns, comparaduns, and Klinkhammers for years, to varying degrees of success. This year, I want something that's closer to a sure thing. Specifically, I need an emerger that floats right in the surface film, but isn't impossible to see in the cloudy, flat light of a good hatch. And I don't want it to take ten minutes to tie.

Slowly, over a few more days spent waiting out the weather, I come up with something that looks like it *should* work. The early returns are promising — it catches fish on the tailwaters that always give me grief this time of year.

I've come up with a few other flies in the past that have worked, but I always assumed those were lucky guesses. I'm no fly-tying savant; my flies work for the trout and places where I fish, which is all I can realistically ask. What makes this blue wing emerger pattern different, though, is that I tied it to fit a specific need. The other flies I've created all happened probably by accident.

With that in mind, I wanted to share my process for creating this new-to-me pattern. It just might help you crack the code to tying your own killer fly that works wonders on your local waters.

### **Identify the need**

What made this blue wing emerger pattern so successful for me was that I knew exactly what kind of fly I wanted. I needed something that would float right in the surface film, yet still be fairly visible. I wanted something easy to tie. Above all, it needed to work on picky fish. Since I clearly knew

what I needed, it made wading through the mess on my fly-tying desk much easier. Standard dry fly hooks were out of the question since I wanted something to sit right in the surface film. Even something as simple as how you want your fly to float can help you eliminate tons of different options in the design process.

### **Make it stand out**

Once you've decided what your new fly has to have, you need to find some way to make it stand out from the other options out there. Why is Egan's Frenchie such a great variation on the standard Pheasant Tail nymph? Because it has the bright red hotspot that a Pheasant Tail doesn't. That little detail makes the fly stand out, both to other anglers and probably to fish, too.

For the blue-wing emerger pattern, I knew I had to make it different than the usual goose or turkey biot bodies. Dubbing might work, but fish see a lot of dubbed bodies on emergers, too.

I finally settled on stripped peacock herl. The colour variations and slight riding make it an ideal material for an emerging mayfly body, and I don't see as many flies tied with it as I do with biot. I can't say for certain that using peacock herl instead of goose biot is why the fish love the emerger so much, but I reckon it has something to do with it.

### **What does the fish see?**

Parachute flies are popular for a number of reasons — they float well, they're easy to see, they're simple to tie — but what makes them so effective is the silhouette they create from a fish's point of view.

Looking up, a fish sees a sparse tail and a thinly tapered body resting right on the water's surface. Used in the right size as anything else on the water, that silhouette looks like anything from a midge to a caddis.

I've found that visualizing my flies from this point of view helps me tie the classic patterns more effectively, in addition to helping me create my own patterns. If you build your fly around what the fish will see when it floats by, I think you're far likelier to create something successful than not.

### **Get the colours right**

If you're like me and fish heavily pressured water, colour does matter. Size and shape are more important in fly design, but you need the right colour scheme, too. I've actually started mixing a few different types of dubbing together to create the right shade of dark olive for the early-season blue wings around here. I'm sure the mayflies and caddis in your neck of the woods all have a unique colour scheme to them, so pay attention and try to craft a colour palette that matches.

While it's important that your fly stands out (like the Frenchie) you don't want it so flashy the fish ignore it. The Frenchie's red-hot spot is a small part of the fly overall, and as I mentioned earlier, we don't know if that's why trout love it so much. The rest of the fly stays within traditional colour schemes, though, which I think is part of the Frenchie's success.

Creating your own flies is fun. It's a challenge to come up with something new, or a unique spin on classic patterns, but the payoff can be more fish in the net. Do yourself a favour, though, and don't wait to start experimenting until you get stuck inside for a week due to bad weather. Create something now, so you're prepared the next time you hit the water.

## ***Fish eat mice by Chris Hunt***

*Thoughts on fishing with mouse patterns, and why we don't use them more often.*



I've been thinking a lot about mice lately. And not just in the general vermin sense. Yes, it's true that my girlfriend had one skitter across her foot on the stairs landing this week, which sent me to the garage to find traps and such. We're now paying for an exterminator, mostly because it's less hassle than trying to dig through the storeroom to find the tiny cracks and holes the shoulder-less little rodents can squeeze through.

And we're paying for therapy for my girlfriend, of course. When her eyes rolled back in her head at the sight of the terrified critter, and she howled a stream of profanities at me that would make Sam Kinison blush, I didn't see an option (you know, because the presence of mice is clearly my fault).

It started last autumn on a trip to Chile's Rio Blanco, where big browns would chase skated mouse patterns across riffles and charge out from under submerged wood to hammer foam rodent imitations. And since then, I've had mouse dreams.

I've flirted with the notion of downsizing my favourite mouse pattern — a poor man's Moorish Mouse that makes up for its simplicity by being easy to tie and nearly impossible to sink — for my local trout waters, and I'm convinced it's a solid plan.

These are the notions that ricochet through a fly fisher's brain in the months between winter and summer (don't call them "spring." We don't get "spring" here in the Rockies. We get winter, Easter Sunday, Memorial Day weekend and then, sometime in early June, it'll snow in the morning and then the sun will come out and declare the start of summer). When an epic week spent casting mouse patterns to giant trout at a remote fly-fishing camp in Middle of Nowhere, Patagonia, has time to marinate over the course of the long, dark months after the solstice, and eventually translates into thoughts like, "You know... I bet this will work on Smith Creek back home," you know it's been a long damn winter.

But ... still ...

I mean, why wouldn't it, right? Why wouldn't a downsized mouse pattern work on a lake-run cutthroat or a South Fork brown? Pressure? I guess that's a reasonable assumption — fish that see the bottoms of drift boats all summer long are bound to be more cautious than fish that don't. Coming to the top to chase a rare big bite of protein during the busy months on the Henry's Fork or the Madison might seem antithetical, especially for highly educated trout.

But hey... fish gotta eat, right?

And on spring creeks the world over, night-time “mousing” is a time-honoured endeavour. Seriously. We have mouse patterns because trout eat mice.

Years ago, before the Idaho Department of Fish and Game made it illegal to harvest native Yellowstone cutthroat trout on the South Fork of the Snake River, a buddy of mine showed up at work one morning and handed me a photo of three perfectly cleaned cutties stretched out on a plastic cutting board. Alongside the fish, he placed their stomach contents, which included three very small mice. It was proof positive that the small rodents are not only on the menu, but a significant portion of the native trout’s diet.

Last autumn, after watching a two-foot-long brown erupt under a size 4 skated Moorish Mouse (sadly, I missed the fish — a common occurrence when trout target top-water flies on the move), I started plotting my plan of attack for stateside trout.



First, the downsize. Even in Patagonia where trout heads are roughly the size of a grown man’s fist, the size 4 flies were likely too big.

Here in the Snake River drainage of eastern Idaho, where we certainly have our share of big trout — but also our share of mid-sized fish, too — I think the first move is to shrink the pattern to at least a size 6, and possibly to size 8.

Thinking back to that photo all those years ago, this makes sense, even for big-water cutthroats, browns, and rainbows.

The next move is to figure out where a mouse pattern might work on any given stretch of water. I’m not naive — I get that, during the epic early-summer stonefly hatches or when the big Green Drakes come off the river after June downpour, a mouse pattern doesn’t make much sense. But, in the right stretch of water, under the right circumstances, a skated mouse could be a better option than trying to pluck 15-inch trout from a riffle with a size 16 PMD.

Experience matters, of course. My week on Rio Blanco leads me to believe that mouse flies skated across moving water — runs with some depth and obvious holding structure — can be absolutely deadly. While I did manage to pull some big fish out of slack water using mice, the vast majority of my mouse eats — and my mouse hookups — happened when the fly was presented with some sense of panic. Skating it and wiggling across open water proved best. As with any predator, trout don’t like it when potential meals get away, and making the fly “act” as though it was about to escape worked very well.

Finally, I think I should consider timing.

Usually, during a “normal” season, when runoff pushes through most of June, I’d fish the high water with big bugs that make a racket, or with big nymphs pushed tight to the banks where fish are holding and waiting.

In the coming months, as things finally warm up and runoff really gets going, I'm going to tie mouse patterns at the end of my tippet and see if I can't convince otherwise tight-lipped, high-water trout to take a bite.

At this point, it's purely an experiment. I'll admit, during the cold, grey months of winter, I had visions of fishing nothing but mouse patterns all summer long, but now, as the days grow a little longer and I begin, in earnest, my emergence from hibernation, I realize that's likely folly.

In time, I'm sure, the mouse dreams will dissipate with winter and warmer days. It'll make more sense to float a high-and-dry attractor over my favourite cutthroat water, and less sense to tie up a dozen or so mouse patterns that might never see the water.

But like I said... I've been thinking a lot about mice lately. And my plan, concocted in the fog of winter, still feels solid.

What do I have to lose? A few hundred casts here and there?

## ***Momentum grows for new thinking about river restoration by Juliet Grable***

*An unconventional gathering helped spur ideas to speed the pace and scale of river restoration projects across the West Coast.*



**Logjam on the Salmon River in Oregon**

Brian and Pat Robertson first noticed something wrong nearly 30 years ago. A stream called Little Bear Creek ran through their property in northern Idaho, but the waterway had long ago been altered during a logging operation and essentially functioned as a ditch, carrying water swiftly away from the valley. Trees were dying; the water table was dropping; neighbours were digging dry wells. After consulting with Natural Resources Conservation Service and touring several Forest Service restoration projects in Oregon, the Robertsons decided to take the creek back to Stage Zero.

Stage Zero is like hitting the reset button to a time before the stream had formed a channel. With help from 10 agencies, the Robertsons filled in their stretch of Little Bear Creek until it was flush with the surrounding landscape. They scattered large logs about to help slow the flow of water. Then the stream could decide where it wanted to go: spreading out in fingers across a valley; pooling in wetlands; creating little micro-habitats — places where water-loving plants could grow, insects could hatch and young salmon could thrive.

Since the restoration at Little Bear Creek began more than five years ago, the water table has risen several feet. The meadow is transforming into a wetland. In time, the Robertsons say, willows may return, then beavers.

The Robertsons' project is an example of process-based restoration. This approach differs from conventional form-based restoration, which emphasizes building discrete structures and modifying a river channel. Process-based restoration is about restoring functions, and its scope expands beyond the channel to include the floodplain and valley bottom — the whole riverscape.

Chris Jordan, a fisheries biologist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, was an early pioneer of process-based restoration. In 2009 he led an experiment sinking posts into a riverbed in central Oregon to give beavers points of attachment for their dams. The beavers responded. Four years later the water level had risen, and juvenile steelhead had increased by 175%. The processes set in motion not only improved the quality of the habitat, but the quantity, too.

### **Could the same thing happen elsewhere?**

River systems across the West are degraded from logging and grazing, channelization, the removal of beavers, and the construction of dams, diversions, dikes and roads. Twenty-eight species of salmon and steelhead are currently listed under the Endangered Species Act.

There's a whole industry — Jordan calls it the restoration-industrial complex — focused on form-based restoration: building log jams, excavating river channels, and populating riverbanks with native plants.

“There's billions of dollars being spent, yet on the salmon recovery side of things, we're not seeing the ecological uplift of the projects,” he says. Notably, you do see those benefits with process-based restoration projects, which include such things as removing dams and breaching levees as well as newer strategies such as building beaver dam analogs. But they aren't happening fast enough to address the crisis at hand.

“I think it's crystal clear that everyone in the restoration community and people throughout government understand that we're dealing with catastrophic species and habitat loss that's only going to be exacerbated by climate change,” says Erika Lovejoy, director for Sustainable Conservation's Accelerating Restoration Program. “If we don't do the restoration more quickly and put these solutions in place, we're going end up dealing with everything on an emergency basis.”

### **An unconventional workshop**

Jordan and his colleague at NOAA, senior policy advisor Irma Lagomarsino, wanted to get more people on the process-based restoration bandwagon. Their solution: a special workshop called Restoring Riverscapes. The three-day event, held this March, gathered students and scientists; fluvial geomorphologists, aquatic ecologists and fish biologists; civil engineers and regulatory specialists; private landowners, tribal members and ranchers — in the same virtual room.

“The workshop was designed to help the very large community in California, Oregon, Washington, and parts of Idaho to learn and think together about potential solutions or ideas to expand the rate and the pace and the scale of process-based habitat restoration,” says Lagomarsino.



Jordan and Lagomarsino didn't want Restoring Riverscapes to be an ordinary workshop. They brought on a team of producers, led by filmmaker Sarah Koenigsberg, who, among other projects, produced the award-winning feature documentary *The Beaver Believers*.

Restoring Riverscapes took over a year to plan. Koenigsberg helped them shape the workshop experience like a story, with a clear narrative arc. They created a color-coded chart of the presentations: inspiring stories of stewardship interspersed with pre-recorded presentations and live panels — no snoozy PowerPoints. The planners knew they would have to appeal to people from career restoration practitioners to graduate students to decision-makers — many of whom aren't scientists.

“We needed to change people's minds,” says Jordan. “And you don't change someone's mind when they're asleep.”

The first half of the workshop laid the foundation: explaining what process-based restoration is, why it works and showcasing examples. A trio of career Forest Service biologists traced their long evolution as restoration practitioners who now embrace the concept. Lisa Huntington talked about restoring a creek and floodplain in a Portland neighbourhood. A short film presented the Robertsons' story.

With help from a team of filmmakers, editors, and other creatives, Koenigsberg produced this and three other films specifically for the workshop. The films are moving, the production values high. Storytelling is critical for winning hearts and minds, she says. “When you see other people who persevere and were inspired and didn't give up, that's what gives us this inspiration to go try, and to also keep at it.

### **Cutting the Green Tape**

Midday on Day 2 the focus pivoted to why it's so hard to get more of this work done. Topping the list are regulatory compliance, landowner cooperation and funding.

Restoration projects typically require a host of permits: water quality certification, removal-fill permits from the Army Corps of Engineers, floodplain development permits from the county, Endangered Species Act compliance...the list goes on. Whether seeking permission to build a beaver dam analog or a bridge, the regulatory requirements are the same, and they are costly and time consuming.

“The systems that were created to protect the environment and stop bad things from happening were designed for development type activities,” says Lovejoy. “They aren't designed to help fix the environmental problems that we face in any type of efficient manner.”

Lovejoy is part of a coalition that successfully lobbied the state of California to create separate streamlined permitting pathways for restoration projects. Natural Resources Secretary Wade

Crowfoot took up the cause, launching Cutting the Green Tape, an initiative to accelerate ecological restoration across the state.



**Fish ladder and rock fall barrier Big Chico**

Cal Trout is taking advantage of a new programmatic permit for its project on Big Chico Creek in Northern California, which aims to restore over eight miles of salmon and steelhead habitat. They estimate it will cut permitting time in half and slash costs by \$250,000.

During her presentation, Lovejoy outlined the ingredients needed to catalyse such a sea change: strong coalitions, empowered agency staff, and support from leadership. She hopes other states, or maybe even the West as a whole, can develop similar initiatives to speed restoration efforts.

“When you have the permitting, the technical assistance and the funding under one roof, I feel it helps change the mindset,” she says. “You’re not regulating development but helping steward restoration.”

### **The human dimension**

In many cases restoration projects need to happen on private land: farms, ranches, and urban neighbourhoods. But how to earn the cooperation of people who may care about different things than you do?

To address that question, two social scientists presented at Restoring Riverscapes. Laura Van Riper, with the Bureau of Land Management’s National Riparian Service Team, shared ways to build trust with landowners and communities affected by restoration projects. Hannah Gosnell of Oregon State University talked about rivers as social-ecological systems.

Lagomarsino lobbied to include the social component in the workshop.

“A lot of us don’t have the tools and the concepts at hand,” she told me. “We just think we’re doing this really important work.” But cooperation requires trust, and the key to gaining that trust is finding ways to appeal to different values. That may require talking less about salmon and more about how a wetland could create a fuel break, helping protect a community from fire. Or how a restored riverscape could help a rancher through the dry season.

Gaining trust and engaging diverse stakeholders might be one of the most important challenges, Lagomarsino told the virtual audience in a session on collaborative conservation. But “it might be our greatest opportunity to expand the scale, pace and efficacy of process-based actions.”

### **Next steps**

Over 1,200 people showed up (virtually) for Restoring Riverscapes. Lagomarsino and Jordan are still sifting through mountains of comments and figuring out how to build on the momentum.



“Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive,” says Koenigsberg. “That’s really hopeful to me. It can be hard to maintain positivity when we’re facing such an uphill battle.”

One of the workshop’s aims was to nudge people into seeing, thinking, and talking about rivers in a new way.

Some of the bullet points Gosnell, the social scientist, used in her discussion of Resilience Thinking — embrace dynamism; work with Mother Nature; relinquish control — could have easily belonged in a different workshop. At one point she read aloud comments she’d captured from other workshop participants

- Rivers are a series of scenes in a really long movie.
- Rivers need room to play, like kids on a playground.
- We need to think of riverscapes as biological beings with urgency.

The final keynote speaker was Amy Cordalis, co-founder of Ridges to Riffles Indigenous Conservation and Yurok Tribal member. She talked about the Tribe’s long advocacy to remove four dams on the Klamath River — the biggest process-based restoration project ever — and the reciprocal relationship between people and rivers. She invited the hundreds of people hunched over screens all over the West who care deeply about rivers, salmon, people, and the future health of our planet, to draw strength from the very ecosystems they’re working to repair.

“The river, if you ask it, the water, if you ask it, will tell you what you can do to help it to get back to that good place,” she said.

*This story originally appeared in The Revelator and is part of Covering Climate Now, a global journalism collaboration strengthening coverage of the climate story.*

**Editor’s note:** a couple years ago I read a very interesting book called Wilding – the return of Nature to a British Farm by Isabella Tree, the book is about how a large landowner allowed a major part of his uneconomic land to return back to its natural state including the original animals that roamed this area of England.

The impact that this had on reducing the flooding of a local river and the quality of the water was just one of the many rewards to the wildlife and life within the river including to reintroduction of the beaver. When of I think of the flooding that we have seen over the past few years here in New Zealand I wonder if this is linked to the fact that we have removed 90% of our wetlands, nature’s way of preventing flooding. If the Kapiti Coast had the same level of rain as Gisborne and Hawkes Bay, I wonder how our local Waikanae River would cope, fingers crossed we never have to find out.

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**To promote the art and sport of Fly Fishing.**

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Club Committee meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month and the meetings are held at the Waikanae Boating Club and start at 7:30pm.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

*Please remember that the club has two Five Weight 8'6" fly rods that members are welcome to use, just contact Malcolm Francis*

**Contacts**

**President:** Graham Evans  
Email: [graham@breakerbay.co.nz](mailto:graham@breakerbay.co.nz).

**Secretary:** Greg du Bern  
Email: [kffcsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:kffcsecretary@gmail.com)

**Treasurer** Kras Angelov:  
Email: [krasimir.angelov@gmail.com](mailto:krasimir.angelov@gmail.com)

**Vice President** Leigh Johnson  
Email: [leigh@leighjohnsonnz.com](mailto:leigh@leighjohnsonnz.com)

**Past President** Wayne Butson  
Email: [Waynebutson@gmil.com](mailto:Waynebutson@gmil.com)

**Committee:** Malcolm Francis:  
Email: [malcolm1@xtra.co.nz](mailto:malcolm1@xtra.co.nz)

Peter Blaikie  
Email: [drpblaikie@gmail.com](mailto:drpblaikie@gmail.com)

Mike Noon:  
Email: [mike.noon@outlook.com](mailto:mike.noon@outlook.com)

Gordon Baker:  
Email: [kiwiflyfisher@gmail.com](mailto:kiwiflyfisher@gmail.com)

**Club Coach** Gordon Baker:  
Email: [kiwiflyfisher@gmail.com](mailto:kiwiflyfisher@gmail.com)

**Newsletter** Malcolm Francis: ph. 027 384 6596  
Email: [malcolm1@xtra.co.nz](mailto:malcolm1@xtra.co.nz)