



The Evening

Hatch

The Newsletter of the Michigan Fly Fishing Club

January 2021

Lost in Translation

Why Would A Canadian Fly Angler Join MFFC?

By Sybil Hunter

While trying to track down Club members for Project Pin Drop, I had the privilege of an exchange with a new MFFC member, Helmuth Pletz, from Ontario. Filled with enthusiasm, despite the lockdown, Helmuth agreed to take the Dave Begley Challenge and tell us just how he got into the sport of fly fishing and why the MFFC became part of that adventure. Following is a transcript of the conversation:

How did you get interested in fly fishing?

When I was working in Denver, I



Canuck Helmuth Pletz says fishing at home during COVID "sucks."

took an interest in fly fishing and bought three fly rods and reels from Orvis. I never found the time to get out fishing though and still consider myself to be a novice.



Sybil Hunter

That's the main reason I joined the Michigan Fly Fishing Club, to learn more about how to fish and get out with some fellow members. Now with this COVID, it's kind of put everything on hold once again. For proper trout fishing, everything is at a distance here in Ontario and that's why I was looking forward to fishing in Michigan.

How did you end up in Colorado and what brought you back to Ontario?

I had worked in Washington state from 2007 to 2012, then from there I got a job and moved to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The first winter I lived there the wind and snow were howling like I was living up in the Arctic. Some nights during the winter, the temps would

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Michigan Fly Fishing Club

Calendar

1/13/21 Speaker: Jason Pokone, Tying Trout Flies for the Upper Manistee

1/20/21 Board

1/27/21 Tie Along: Corey Thelan

2/10/21 Speaker: John Ray of Mangled Fly

2/17/21 Board

2/24/21 Activity: Tie along with Al Haxton and Sybil Hunter

3/3/21 Activity TBD

3/10/21 Board

3/13-14/21 MFFC Expo cancelled until March 12-13, 2022

3/17/21 Speaker: Capt. Chuck Hawkins, Simplifying Your Fly Box

4/7/20 MFFC Elections / Speaker: Roger Greil of Lake Superior State

4/14/21 Board

4/21/21 Activity TBD

5/5/21 Activity TBD

5/12/21 Board

5/19/21 Banquet @ Italian American Center, 39200 5 Mile Rd, Livonia

6/9/21 Speaker @ VisTaTek, 18600 Haggerty Rd, Livonia

7/14/21 Speaker @ VisTaTek

8/25/21 Speaker @ VisTaTek

Lost in Translation *A Canuck Longing For Michigan*

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drop down to minus 45 degrees (tooooo cold for me). I owned a condo there for five years but for three of those years I ended up working down in Denver, my wife staying behind in Saskatoon. I kept asking myself what I was doing living there. I eventually retired and in the summer of 2017, we relocated back to the condo we owned in Windsor where I grew up.

Saskatchewan has some beautiful country. I'd highly recommend going there once this COVID is over. We went several times up to Northern Saskatchewan to go fishing for Lake Trout and Pike. It was spectacular. We'd drive about seven to eight hours to get there. The first three hours travel was all on paved roads, after that everything above there was gravel going to the various mines, logging camps or Indian villages. September in that area, a person can expect cold weather and snow.

That's a great trip along the lake when you've got the time. I drove numerous times through Northern Ontario along the Lake Superior shoreline during the winter, and it can be a lonely drive that time of year. Being so isolated during the winter, it's best to be prepared for anything — should it happen.

What an adventure! What places in Canada do you fish that you would recommend to fellow fly fishers?

I recommend the St. Mary's River in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario. I fished for salmon there last September.

The Maitland up at Goderich, Ontario and the Grand River in the Guelph, Ontario area. I haven't had the opportunity to fish there but have heard a lot about it.

Even as hey neighbors we cannot cross the border right now, but where would you like to fish in the U.S.?

I'd love to spend a couple months fishing out west, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Oregon and Washington.



Canuck Helmuth Pletz and his wife during a salmon fishing trip to St. Mary's River in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario last September.

How about in Michigan?

In Michigan I would love to go back to the Manistee for salmon which I loved, and would also like to try my luck on the AuSable. At the moment I've only fished the Manistee, in September of 2019, and was looking to fish there all summer (2020) but due to this COVID I wasn't able to. I am looking forward to going back.

How does Canadian fishing compare/contrast?

Being a novice fly fisher, I can't honestly answer that yet. Fishing conditions in Ontario I think would be similar to fishing in Northern Michigan and fishing conditions in British Columbia would compare to fishing in Washington state.

In your humble opinion what's the best part of fly fishing?

The part that I best like is the solitude, getting back in touch with nature and relieving the stress of city life.

Do you have any favorite gear?

My current favorite gear is the Burkeheimer 7127-4 classic rod with an Abel Super 7/8n reel that I just bought. I haven't had a chance to use it yet, but it's intended to be my everyday go to rod.

Do you have a favorite fly fishing great?

I'm actually just starting out fly fishing and am still in the learning stage. Hopefully that'll change once this COVID is under control and I can get out fly fishing again.

Do you fish well with your wife?

I've fished with my wife and she enjoys it very much. I'm retired and she's still working so presently I've been going solo to fish.

What have you been doing to occupy your time during COVID shutdowns?

Fishing at home during this COVID is beginning to suck.



Michigan Fly Fishing Club

Business

Michigan Fly Fishing Club Board of Directors Meeting December 16, 2020

Roll Call

Meeting called to order 7:33 p.m.

Present: Strachan; Hunter; Oehring; Fischer; Niemi; Bada; Mayes; Sejalon; Green; Nowicki

Visitors: none

Approval of Agenda - Approved with additions.

Approval of Minutes - Approved of 11/11/20 Board of Directors meeting minutes.

Officer's Report

President: Strachan

1. The Hatch is well done by Hatch staff, new editor coming on board, Jim DuFresne, but has not formally accepted this position yet.

Vice President: Hunter

1. Club email addresses content

to be migrated to new server; free account option at this time [30 GB cloud space per user, 30GB cloud space for shared drive]; upgrading [to 1 TB] would be \$4/mo per address.

2. Project Pin Drop fan out, was 342 pins; three left for White Lake area

3. Nowicki acknowledged S. Hunter's leadership on pin drive

4. Niemi acknowledged improvements on database as well.

Treasurer: Oehring

1. Acceptance of December, 2020 Treasurer's Report

2. Event funding discussion that activities need to be self funded at this time. Looking into deferring 2021 banquet to 2022. Bob Jacklyn not able to attend as speaker. Scout School moved to fall 2021. Event chairpersons needed for events.

Public school is part of our 501(c)3 charter and is essential activity, is self funded. Member School is canceled for 2021 as school venue unavailable. Club meetings at VFW if CMS not available when Covid-19 regulations relaxed.

3. Letter from IRS, confirmed receipt of Form 990.

Corresponding Secretary: Fischer

1. Speaker schedule: Jan (Joseph Pokone - Manistee Flies); B. Green to host; Feb (John Ray); Mar (Captain Chuck Hawkins); Apr (tentative Roger Greil LSSU); May (not available).

2019 - 2020 Officers

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Michigan Fly Fishing Club Board of Directors Meeting December 16, 2020

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2. Speakers need to be prepped.
3. Expo cancellation
4. There are 380 members receiving e-blasts.
5. Members list categories discussed.
6. Constant Contact should be the only electronic communication to Club members.

Membership: Niemi

1. Currently there are 285 active members; 18 renewals and 3 new members

Events & Outings

Striper Outing deposit not due until late January. 14 possible slots, 3 guides possible.

Scout School of April 2021 postponed to September 2020 or April 2022.

Expo 2021 is canceled. Vendors contacted. Exit notified. Expo site had 4000 hits, maybe these people can be recruited as members. Expo banquet facility is not certain for 2022.

New Business

MUCC donation of \$5 per membership paid to MUCC. Should we keep this affiliation? MUCC lobbies for local conservation efforts in Lansing. They provide legal actions. Affiliation not needed for 501(c)3 status. Strachan to draft communication to MUCC regarding funding. Tom Doyle is MFFC Club rep for MUCC.

FFI is \$500 used for direct ties for insurance.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Fly Film Fest Comes to Michigan

On Feb. 19 and March 19, the Paul H. Young Chapter and Michigan Trout Unlimited is hosting the only virtual screenings in Michigan of the 2021 International Fly Fishing Film Festival (IF4).



The event is a TU fundraiser to support cold water conservation in Michigan and will be shown virtually on both dates. The films will be available to watch at 4 p.m. on the selected date, and viewers will have 48 hours to start watching the films and seven days to finish the series.

Since 2011, the IF4 has been a showcase for short and feature-length films produced by professional filmmakers from all corners of the globe that captures the passion, lifestyle, and fly-fishing culture. This year's festival consists of nine films.

Spotted on the River



MFFC member, Dan Walker, spotted fishing at Tippy Dam on January 5, 2021 ushering in the new year!

Among the films is *Sunshine for Days* by Capture Adventure Media. With fly rods in hand, its crew heads to Lake Powell to chase its legendary population of land-locked striped bass.

Baltic salmon in the heart of Swedish Lapland is the focus in *Baltics*. Isolated from their Atlantic cousins during the last Ice Age, these fish have developed an extraordinary behavior, adapting their qualities to some of the wildest and longest river systems in Europe.

Tickets are \$15, and 100% of the proceeds will be used to improve trout habitat in Michigan. To purchase tickets for the Feb. 19 presentation, go to: <https://watch.eventive.org/.../play/5ff74983e1fe8d-004ef02e2b>

For March 19, go to: <https://watch.eventive.org/.../play/5ff7553fcb-d0000e5cf9907e>

For a complete list and descriptions of the films, go to: www.flyfilmfest.com/films/



In Special Recognition

From Sybil Hunter

Project Pin Drop is complete! Thanks again to everyone who helped to make the fan-out project a success! In addition to the prior list, one more thank you goes out to Fred Sejalon, who volunteered to deliver the last three pins for me. (I was burnt out.) After the pass off, he delivered the very last area — White Lake. And now you know — the rest of the story.



Conservation Corner

Peter Albertson's

Conservation Corner



First, let me thank those who have chosen to participate in the Michigan Fly Fishing Club's Conservation Corner (MFFC CC) during meetings and via emails. Your time and interest in bringing forth conservation issues is very important to our Club, our fly fishing environment, and our State recreational opportunities. If you have a topic- Action Item- for the CC to follow, please bring the topic to my attention **and be willing to be the topic lead contact** within the CC regarding, and providing, related Action Item follow up within the CC.

There are no communications regarding the MFFC CC this month. Information below is based upon recent source newsletters I have received.

Action Items

Pipe Line 5: Enbridge Energy sued State for revoking easement in Straits of Mackinac, 11/24/2020. Additional information: Sea Grant Law Center- Michigan Court Must Evaluate Easement for Controversial Enbridge Pipeline, 11/02/2020.

Johnson Creek Land Fill Discharge: Latest information, visit twp.northville.mi.us- Johnson Creek- Discharge on hold 8/20/2020; letter fighting permit 6/29/2020. Visit: Conservancy Initiative- <https://conservancyinitiative.org/>, for history and latest information; Friends of the Rouge- friends@therouge.org, RE: Johnson Creek- Arbor Hills Landfill NPDES Permits. Discharge monitoring in progress.

Environmental Items of Interest

Bridge Michigan: Top environment stories of 2020- bridge.com, 12/30/2020. See Line 5 Closure article. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding increased. See EPA.gov, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative for details: Restoring Great Lakes Areas of Concern.

The Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study: A proposal to study options and technology regarding Asian carp entering the Great Lakes at the Brandon Road Lock Site Will County Illinois. Also see- MUCC December Newsletter.

Mining And Energy Firms Access to Public Lands- NYT article: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/19/us/politics/in-last-rush-trump-grants-mining-and-energy-firms-access-to-public-lands.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

Consider contacting your US and MI Senator and/or Representative to share your thoughts on the above item(s): MI-house.mi.gov, senate.michigan.gov; US- senate.gov, house.gov.

Please direct comments to Peter Albertson at: palbertsontsp@icloud.com



Fly Fishing Reports *Members of the Fly*

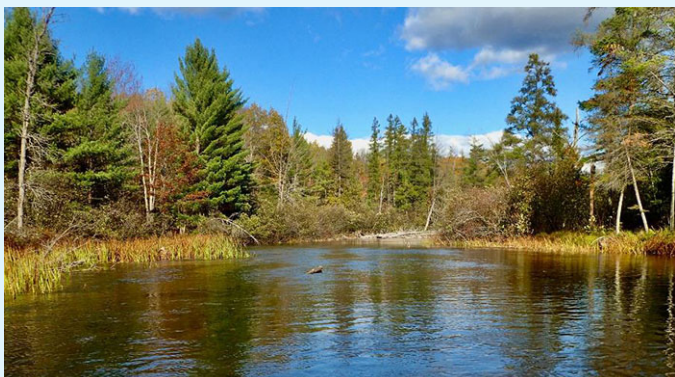


A Cabin on the Water

When MFFC member George Safranek and his wife Mary Ann want to get away from it all they head Up North to their property on the South Branch of the Au Sable River. Located just up the hill from the famed river, within view of the water through the trees, is a small little cabin, their get-away. "We named our little shed the Brooke Trout Lodge after our puppy Brooke," said George.



George Safranek's Brooke Trout Lodge on the South Branch of the Au Sable River.



The South Branch of the Au Sable River at George Safranek's cabin up north and a brown trout he caught last September.



George Safranek on his property and a brown trout he enticed with what looks like an elk hair caddis.



Striper Fishing *A Brief Introduction*

By Bruce Strachan

Many MFFC members, including myself, have heard about northeast coast fly fishing but have little first-hand knowledge of the sport. Here is a brief introduction to strip-er fishing that may whet your appetite and motivate you to join MFFC's Striper Trip in September 2021. This is hardly an authoritative reference but if curiosity encourages you, the bibliography will perhaps carry you closer to the NE coast and a unique fly fishing experience.

Stripers "Schoolies"

Striper Bass or "Stripers" are the main target of our 2021 MFFC Striper Trip to Connecticut and Rhode Island. They go by several names, in order from large to small, Monster, Animal, Pig, Cow, Nice, Schoolie, Rat, and Runt. But no matter how you hear of them they are exciting to catch on a fly and easily identified by their body striping. Schoolies ranging from 24" to 36" are prevalent during fall migration on Long Island Sound. Mature stripers can grow to over 50" in length and exceed 60 pounds.

Striped Bass or "Striper"

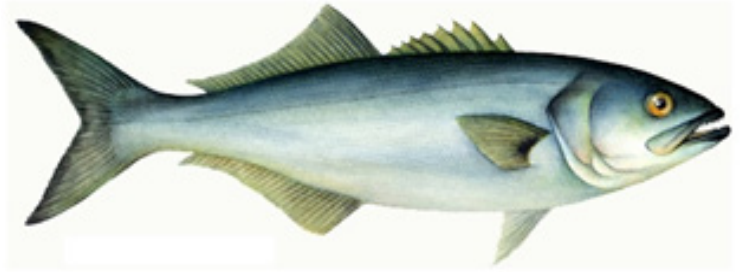
Stripers live an anadromous life on the Atlantic coastline of North America from the St. Lawrence River into the Gulf of Mexico to approximately Louisiana. They migrate into bays, estuaries and rivers to spawn in the spring. Broadcast spawning takes place in fresh water during April, May and early June when water temperatures reach 60 to 68°F. Their diet is mainly baitfish such as Menhaden (commonly known as "Bunker"), anchovies, herring, mackerel, and shad. Some fresh water holdovers occur during winter in northern waters where temperature and baitfish are present.



Striped Bass or "Striper"

Stripers are known to corral and drive baitfish to the water's surface or against shorelines. A "blitz" can then occur. Bait fish roil the surface as stripers gorge themselves. Marine birds are often the first sign of a blitz that can be spotted at a distance. The hapless baitfish are trapped in a frenetic roil between stripers and birds. Anglers get into this action also!

Fly fishing for Stripers requires the angler to "match the hatch" but in this case the "hatch" is bait fish. Striper prey includes mullet (also known as "bunker"), bay anchovies, and squid. Popular patterns include surf candies, silicone pop flies, clausers and the like dressed to imitate the prey of jour. Go-to patterns include both surface and subsurface



Blue Fish "Snappers"

patterns. Subsurface flies are fished with intermediate lines and 300 grain sinking heads for #8 weight rods and progressively heavier sinking heads for rods up to #10 weight. Decent double haul casting skill is essential for surf fishing and a plus for fishing from a boat.

A wealth of fly patterns and tying information can be found in Clouser's Flies by Bob Clouser, and Pop Fleyes by Ed Jaworowski and Bob Popovics. The internet offers more patterns and U-Tube demonstrations to fill the time between now and our Striper Trip.

False Albcore "Albies"

False Albacore run in the fall on the Sound and they are great sport. In the photo note the narrow, widely forked tail and stream line body that characterizes a marine fish capable of very fast speed. "Albies," as they are commonly called, will give any bonefish a run for its reputation so make sure your reel has 200 plus yards of backing. Being smoked by an Albies is no disaster...just a learning experience.

Albies are often misidentified as tuna which they are not. They are also easily misidentified as their very similar cousins, Bonito. Albies have a prominent but abbreviated dorsal fin as compared to the Bonito's dorsal that extends half way down its back. Both are prized game fish. Catch a Striper, Albie, and a Blue fish for a "Trifecta". Add a Bonito for a "Slam" that New England anglers hope to catch in a day's outing.

False Albacore, "Albie" Bonito or "Skipjack"

Your fly reel is possibly the most important piece of gear in an Albie or Bonito encounter. A robust, smooth drag and stout over all construction is required to deal with runs.

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Booking A Striper Fly Fishing Trip

Interested in the the First Annual Striper Fly Fishing Trip? The outing to Long Island Sound at Mystic, Connecticut will take place Sept. 25-Oct. 2, 2021.

Total trip is less than \$1400 and includes outbound lodging, six days lodging at The Tober Inn of Mystic, two guided fishing boat trips, lodge breakfasts and catered dinners by Mystic Market East. Car travel, lunches, marine licenses (\$15) and tips will be each traveler's personal expense.

For more information or to book a reservation call Bruce Strachan at 248-346-6391.

Master Disappointment *Angler Awards are Not Easy to Catch*

By Jim DuFresne

I called Lynne Thoma two days before Christmas. I wanted to call her Christmas Eve because I was sure she was going to give me the only gift I wanted and it wasn't my two front teeth.

But I didn't think anybody in the DNR Fisheries Division would be around on Dec. 24 and I couldn't wait until after the holidays. The suspense was killing me. This was the third time I called Lynne. I've also emailed her five times.

"Hi Lynne, don't know if you remember me (she didn't) but I called you a month ago and was wondering if you had time to check with a biologist about my green sunfish?"

Someday, when this pandemic is just a bad memory, people will ask how you spent the lockdown and I'll tell them I went fishing for a Master Angler Award. From February through July, I was obsessed with earning the shoulder patch the DNR sends anglers for a fish that exceeds a minimum length.

I had never submitted an entry to the program before; I never even thought about it. But in the sudden uncertainty that was the coronavirus last spring, focusing on the challenge seemed like a way to keep my sanity. Or at least some of it.

Along with the DNR requirements that I carefully noted, I added some of my own. I was using only a fly rod and only flies that I tied. I also didn't want to kill a trophy fish, so I had to enter it in the catch-and-immediately-release category.

The first thing I did was study the list of fish that qualify. The Master Angler program was launched in 1973 with just 19 eligible species. Today, there are more than 50.

And while earning a patch for a glory species like a brown trout (minimum length 34 inches), steelhead (32 inches) or brook trout (15 inches) would be impressive, in my home



Jim DuFresne



What do you mean this isn't a green sunfish! It's green isn't it?

waters that wasn't going to happen.

I'm a belly boater who, for the most part, fishes small swampy lakes. That's not all bad when the governor bans outboard motors and tells you to social distance at least six feet (there goes combat fishing at Tippy Dam). But it pretty much meant I had to focus on pumpkinseeds, bluegills and green sunfish. So that was my goal; catch three Master Angler species in one summer but not the virus.

In February, I tied flies. In March, I drove backroads scouting new lakes in my area that looked promising. By April, when the lockdown was in full swing, I was fishing three or four times a week, whenever the evening was calm and still.

Within two weeks I caught my first qualifier, a pumpkinseed a hair over the minimum length of 9 inches that took my Mylar minnow right at dusk. It was then I realized how unprepared I was. I needed one hand to hold the flopping fish on the side of my float tube, two more to stretch a tape measure across it and a fourth to shoot a picture of it with my smartphone.

What I ended up with was a dark and somewhat blurry photo in which it was impossible to read the 9 and 10 on the tape measure.

I emailed it to Lynne, anyhow. The following morning, I swiped the cloth tape measure from my wife's sewing kit, cut it up and use Velcro to attach it to my belly boat, knowing I was going to catch hell the next time she needed to hem a skirt. But sometimes, you just have to take risks when chasing fishing fame.

Two weeks later I caught another qualifying pumpkinseed and sent that to Lynne, carefully explaining in the online application that I realize "no more than one entry per species will be ac-



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Chasing a Master Angler Award ... or Three

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cepted” but I was worried my first one would be disqualified due to fuzzy photography. There is also a box for “Any Additional Comments Regarding Your Catch” so I told her about swiping my wife’s tape measure. I thought she could relate to that.

In mid-May, I caught a green sunfish or what I thought was a green sunfish. Bluegills and crappies are easy to identify but I wasn’t sure about this one. Still I had never seen a panfish so green so I decided to send that to Lynne.

In early July, I was up north and landed a 10.5-inch bluegill from Wakeley Lake, that wonderful walk-in, catch-and-release fishery east of Grayling, and a week later back at home I caught another green sunfish. This one was greener than the first and even greener after I used the saturation button in Photoshop while prepping the shot. It was my fifth email to Lynne and I was beginning to get a little worried I hadn’t heard anything.

So I called her.

Actually, I called the Fisheries Division, pressed two for the Master Angler program as instructed and was stunned when she immediately picked up the phone. This was not the DNR I knew.

I told her I was curious about my applications and she apologized for taking so long. In a typical year, you’d get an answer in six weeks. But now it was taking up to six months because Lynne Thoma is the Master Angler program, the sole person responsible for all those patches and has been for the past 10 years.

“I’m so busy this year it’s been crazy,” Lynne said.

It turns out I wasn’t the only one who thought the best and safest way to spend a spring lockdown was to fish. She was swamped with potential trophies, digital folders full of applications and fish photos.

She diligently works through them because they don’t all qualify. Many fish weren’t caught in public waters. Other applications didn’t include a valid Michigan fishing license number. One angler called demanding to know where his patch was for the 22-inch freshwater drum he landed. Lynne told him he was three-inches short of a wallhanger.



A green sunfish (photo by Virginia Tech Ichthyology Department).

“Turns out he was online looking at the Minnesota Master Angler program.”

The ones that broke her heart the most were children proudly holding what was probably a Master Angler entry but there was no required tape measure in the photo. What was dad thinking?

“I felt really bad disqualifying those,” Lynne said.

My patch for the pumpkinseed arrived in August, a second one for the bluegill came a month later, each with a congratulatory letter from Lynne. I then waited two agonizing months after that to see if I was going to score a hattrick before calling Lynne again. She opened up my application, complimented me on the excellent photos I sent in – “you can clearly see the tape measure, that’s important” – but said it wasn’t a green sunfish.

What! “It’s green,” I said. “What else can it be?” and Lynne asked me if I wanted a fisheries biologist to look at it. You bet.

When I called her back two days before Christmas, the verdict was in. It was a pumpkinseed, definitely a green one, but still a pumpkinseed. She had two biologists look at the photos, and there was no debate about it.

“I’m going with the fish biologists.” Lynne said. “I can’t give it to you, Jim, sorry.” Then she wished me a warm and wonderful holiday.

Bah, humbug.

Introduction to Striper Fishing

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You can’t have too much backing. Heavier rods, #9 and #10 weight, are favored.

Albacore feed on herring and sardines in inshore waters near the surface. Both surface and subsurface fly patterns are effective. Major spawning areas during April through November are offshore, in waters 30 to 40 meters deep. Flies such as Clousers, Surf Candies and Sili-cone flies in an assortment of colors and sizes are effective on Albies.

Bonito “Skipjack”

Bonito travels in fairly large schools and are common offshore in the vicinity of New York City where it is known as a “skipjack.” Bonito feed on mackerel, menhaden, alewives, silversides, sand lances, and squid. Though bonito

resemble tuna, they are a large mackerel-like fish. They live throughout the Atlantic Ocean and occasionally inhabit estuaries and shore lines. They spawn mainly in June but the reproductive process is not well understood. A World Record Atlantic Bonito weighed ~ 18 pounds.

Blue Fish “Snappers”

With a vise like jaw grip and mouth full of very sharp teeth the Blue Fish comes by the moniker “Snapper” quite easily. Anglers best keep their hands and fingers away from the Snapper’s mouth.

Blue fish spawn off shore in summer by the broadcast method and feed carnivorously on squid, shrimp, crabs, and fish, such as herring, Atlantic mackerel, menhaden, spot, butterfish, and mullet.



Fly of the Month

By Todd A. Schotts

January's Fly of the Month

Sawyers Pheasant Tail

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!! Hopefully everyone survived this holiday season. To start out this year's fly of the month column, I am going back in time for a pattern that is a fly box staple. This month's fly pattern is the "Pheasant Tail Nymph," by Frank Sawyer.

Since I did a full river report on Frank Sawyer back in October 2020 with that Fly of the Month (his Killer Bug), I will just give a brief report to refresh everyone's memory.

Sawyer was an English RiverKeeper, writer, and inventor of some of the most famous flies used today. Born in 1906 in the village of Bulford, on the River Avon in Wiltshire, he also created some of the best fly fishing techniques. In addition to all this, he invented a number of animal traps - some of which were named after him. Unfortunately he left

us in 1980, leaving behind a remarkable legacy.

The Pheasant Tail Nymph, also known as the Sawyers Pheasant Tail, is one of the most popular and well known flies in the industry. This fly has many relatives: "Pheasant Tail Flashback," "Bead Head Pheasant Tail," "Leggy Pheasant Tail," "Pheasant Tail Hot Head," and "Pheasant Tail Spider" to just name a few. It was unclear when this fly was created, but multiple writings call it "one of the oldest modern day nymphs." Sawyer's book *Nymphs and the Trout* first published in 1958, describes the methods for tying and fishing this nymph. One thing to remember is that the design is greatly different from other flies in that it was designed using copper wire from a discarded electrical transformer instead of thread. This serves a dual purpose, adding weight to the underbody and securing the feathers. When designing the fly, Sawyer did not include legs because the actual insects he observed tuck their legs inward while swimming. The fly imitates several species of the Baetis Family (Blue Wing Olives). Many writings mentioned that if a photograph of an actual Blue Wing Olive Nymph was compared to this fly, it is noticeable this pattern matches its profile. Sawyer created the "Pheasant Tail Nymph" to be used on the chalk streams of Southern England.

When tying the original "Sawyer Pheasant Tail Nymph," remember to have a pronounced wing case (or as the Sawyer says, "bulging"), a body that tapers somewhat neatly to the tail, and tail fibers that spread apart. Also note the upper thorax is much darker than the rest of the fly. With the darker tone, it gives the nymph more of a natural appearance. When the original pattern gets wet, it has a translucent effect from the copper wire showing through the pheasant fibers, according to Sawyer's writings. He also believed that the best



artificial imitations use the simplest of materials. The materials to achieve this original are very simple.

The original hook sizes were 00, 0, and 1, which equivocate the English sizes 17, 16, and 15. That breaks down to our American sizes of 18, 16, & 14. These have been tied as small as size 20 and as large as size 10. Sawyer used a fine red-colored copper wire "a little thicker than a human hair." The wire was recycled from small transformers and electric motors. The body and wing case use four center fibers of a brown-red pheasant tail feather. The last bit of material is four peacock fibers for the wing case.

Keep in mind, Sawyer used wire as his thread and weight. In his book, Sawyer

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Frank Sawyer, creator of the pheasant tail nymph.

Sawyer's Pheasant Tail Recipe

- HOOKS:** Standard Nymph/Wet Fly Hooks Sizes 14 -18
- THREAD/WIRE:** Ultra Small UTC Copper Wire
- TAIL & BODY:** Pheasant Tail Fibers
- WINGCASE:** Peacock Tail Fibers/Herl

A Tie Along *Pink Squirrels & Rusty Spinners*

Activity Zoom Meeting, Jan. 27

The Featured Tyer for the Activity Night tie along on Jan. 27 is Corey Thelen. Corey will demonstrate how to tie two flies; Pink Squirrel and Rusty's Spinner.

Pink Squirrel

The Pink Squirrel was originally developed by John Bethke for the



Pink Squirrel

Wisconsin Driftless streams.

The original fly has a thorax tied with shrimp pink chenille and is tied very chunky. I find dubbing is a bit easier to work with.

It mimics a pregnant scud and will work anywhere with a scud or freshwater shrimp population.

Pink Squirrel Recipe

Hook: Heavy Curved Scud Hook, Size 10-14

Thread: 6/0 Black

Bead: Gold, matched to hook size

Tail: Pearl Krystal Flash

Wire: Medium Copper

Abdomen Dubbing: Hare's Ear Natural Grey or Tan

Thorax Dubbing: Hot Pink. I use Senyo's Laser Dubbing with a bit of pink ice dubbing mixed in.

Rusty's Spinners

This is an Au Sable pattern developed by Rusty Gates. The deer hair body and hackle make the fly very buoyant and the hen hackle wings give it an excellent spinner profile.

Tied in a larger size it mimics a Brown Drake, Hex, or even an Iso. In smaller sizes they imitate a variety of brown mayflies.

In my opinion, the slim profile and natural materials make this is one of the prettiest dry fly patterns.



Rusty's Spinner

J. Stockard Selects Evening Hatch Feature

You read it here first in The Evening Hatch. But in case you missed Jim DuFresne's piece last summer about backcountry trout fishing at the Pretty Lake Complex in the Upper Peninsula, J. Stockard Fly Fishing, the large online merchant for everything fly tying, selected it as one of its guest blogs. DuFresne's article appeared on January 11 as part of the J. Stockard *Thoughts On The Fly* blog series.

They even gave DuFresne credit for being a member of the Michigan Fly Fishing Club. We're just wondering if they paid him in spools of thread or packages of dubbing.

You can still read **A Pretty Lake for Trout** at: <https://www.jsflyfishing.com/blog/a-pretty-lake-for-trout/>



Portaging at Pretty Lake

Rusty's Spinners Recipe

Hook: Daiichi 1280 or similar, size 10-14

Thread: 6/0 Brown or Black

Tail: Moose Maine, 4-5 Hairs

Body: Natural Deer Hair

Wing: Grizzly Hen Hackle Points

Hackle: Brown and Grizzly

Fly of the Mouth

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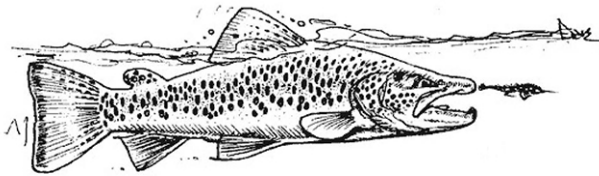
describes the eight simple steps to tie this fly. Two steps to remember are the first and second step, "Cover the hook with copper wire. Start at the bend of the hook, wrap the wire to the hook eye and stop about a hook eye length from the front. The next step (2) is to lock the wire in to prevent it from spinning, using some form of superglue." Now from there, tie in the material. When wrapping material, remember to "Wrap the material around the wire to help to reinforce the material as you finish the fly." Remember to tie off the wire behind the wing case. To finish the fly, I recommend coating the wing case with some head cement to help make the fly more durable. Or to put a touch of modern technology in, using UV Glue.

When fishing this great fly, Sawyer suggests a couple of different, yet sim-

ilar, techniques. For chalk streams and spring creeks, the most advantageous technique is the "Take Up Station," feeding position. Sawyer instructs casting upstream to allow the current to present the "Pheasant Tail Nymph" in a natural drifting manner. Alternatively, cast across the stream, allow the fly to sink, and as the fly approaches the feeding fish, stop the line. This will allow the fly to rise in the water, watch the trout, or the tip of the fly line for any movement. That is where the rod tip lifts gently to set the hook.

If fishing streams and rivers, do the "Induced Take" method. The fly can be presented below the surface, but it is most productive when allowed to sink close to the river bed on a dead drift. Gently raise the rod and line to have the fly imitate the natural behavior of the actual insect. This will stimulate the trout to regard the fly as natural food.

For some history in your fly box, get those bobbins slinging, and tie up some of these amazing historic "Pheasant Tail Nymphs." Until next month, stay safe, tight lines, and snazzy flies.



Sign of the Season - Due primarily to the increase of ice fishing this winter — must be COVID-19 — Oakland County Parks and Recreation have begun leaving ice rescue ladders at lake access points like boat launches.



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