

Issue 186

TROUT FISHER

New Zealand's dedicated magazine

Spring 2023



Those Hackles
A lifetime on the WEST COAST
Another UGLY Adventure
Confessions of an Addicted Salmon Angler
Kiwi Cane 2024

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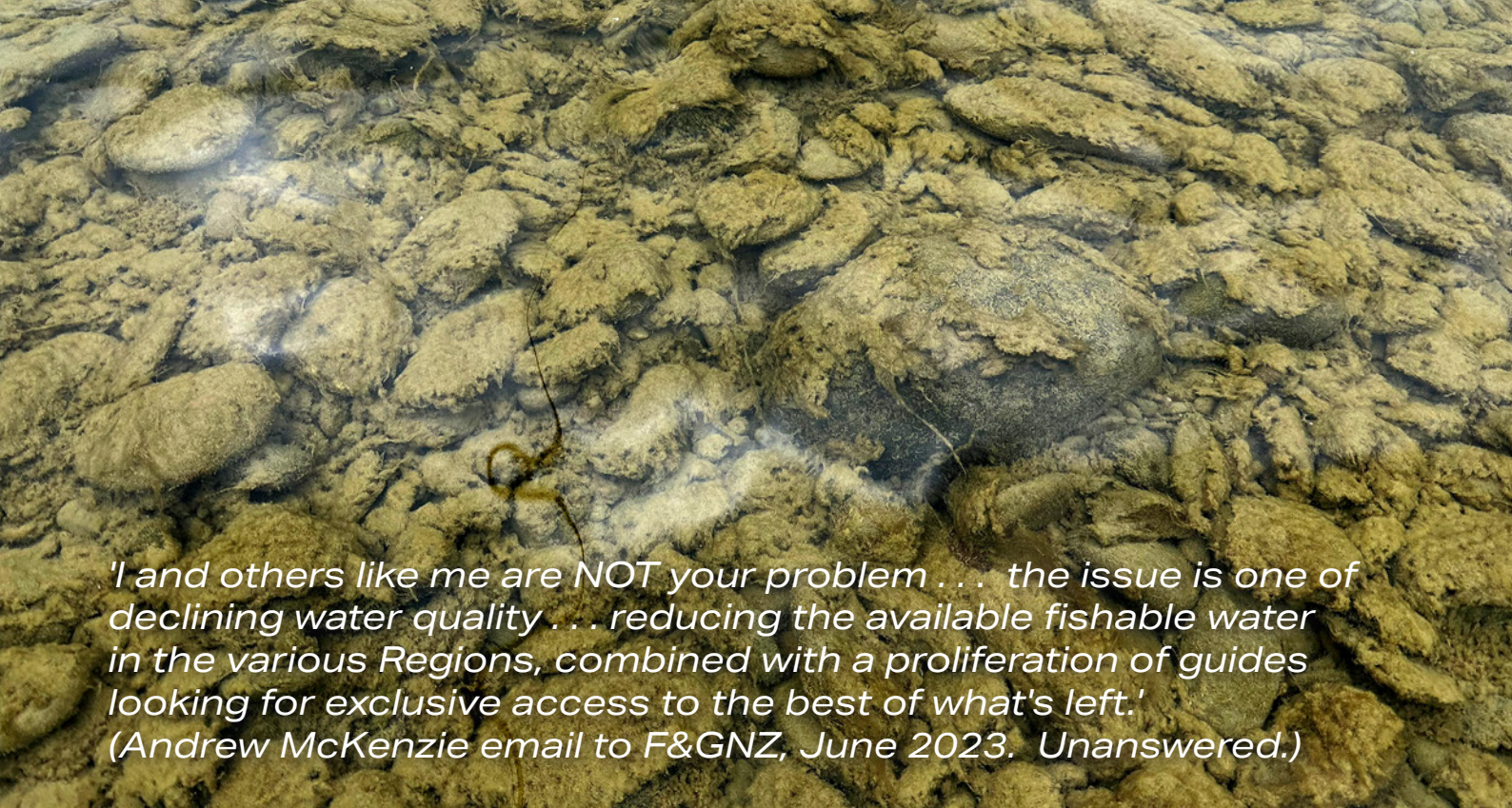
Fishing amongst Whio. (John Gommans)

Here

Hakataramea riverbed, January 2023.
(Barry Cawthorn)

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*'I and others like me are NOT your problem . . . the issue is one of declining water quality . . . reducing the available fishable water in the various Regions, combined with a proliferation of guides looking for exclusive access to the best of what's left.'
(Andrew McKenzie email to F&GNZ, June 2023. Unanswered.)*

Nobody treating freshwater this way has public interest in mind. Everybody knows it only looks like this when private interests collaborate to bypass environmental legislation, for mutual benefit. This riverbed is the result of lobbying, networking, back-scratching, give and take; compromise.

The photo was sent in by an Australian subscriber. Was Barry Cawthorn the only angler to fish the Hakataramea this January? Clearly not. Most anglers visiting the river would have been Kiwis. Kiwis for whom, supposedly, river beds like this are now just part and parcel of a day's fishing – or they would surely do something about them. Fact: Barry spent thousands of dollars getting to that river where those Kiwis would have spent tens or hundreds. This suggests that when faced with degradation of freshwater, the less spent getting there the more anglers too will compromise and the perpetrators clearly knew this.

Why then should Fish & Game want to make it harder for anglers like Barry to fish here, with the Designated Waters Licence Proposal? Ostensibly, it's because we keep complaining about overseas anglers hogging our rivers. Yet, as Andrew McKenzie also commented to me recently: 'While it's overseas unguided anglers copping the brunt of the new DW Licence regime, those changes will not improve the lot of resident anglers either, as guides, both onshore and offshore (resident), are still able to fish anywhere, anytime'. Good point; fishing pressure is best managed by balloted beats – as with the Waitaki Canals. (My email to F&GNZ, whether the proposal has been passed for 2023/24, also remains unanswered; all Andrew and Barry's emails to F&GNZ and Southland, on the broader picture, too.)

Fact: both major political parties have directed Fish & Game operations for the last 33 years, through their Minister of Conservation. (So when one says it will form a Ministry of Fishing & Hunting, what does it want besides our votes?) Fact: over the same period, both parties have not only ignored declining freshwater quality and quantity, but also the ever-increasing impact of an unregulated guiding industry on freshwater angling opportunity. Fact: any F&G councillor can have direct commercial interest in the sport (as did I) and there's guiding industry presence at all levels. Fact: anyone can guide here, anywhere, regardless of residency and subject only to market forces (Frank Murphy's letter therefore seems timely). Fact: F&G itself has been understaffed throughout its 33 years' existence. Its regional staff rely on us licensed anglers, their only source of funding, to assist them in protecting freshwater and thereby, our interest in trout and salmon fishing.

So if you find a river bed like this in 2023/24, please, don't compromise. Photograph and report it to every legally-responsible entity: F&G- and E-Whichever, DOC and EWaitato (Taupo), MPI, MftE – and MoF&H especially, should it eventuate. Let's find out which support public interest in freshwater and which private. That's the question this photo clearly poses.



Confessions of an Addicted Salmon Angler – Part 3

By Larry Burke

Part 2 finished with major changes for freshwater fishing, the Government creating Fish & Game and reducing the former 23 Acclimatisation Societies down to 12 regional and a national council. This set up has controlled the sports fishery for the last 33 years and recently further change has been debated.

The minister stated at the Inaugural meeting of the transitional council, *"You are here to administer sports fish and game nationally. Your decisions must be made in the best interests of anglers and hunters without letting parochial interest colour your judgement."* He went a bit further to say, *"An important aim of the new system is to maximise recreational opportunities for hunters and anglers. For the first time sports fish and game councils have a statutory responsibility to make fishing and game hunting accessible to as many New Zealanders as possible."* (Hon P Woollaston 1990 Minister of Conservation)

At the time none of this meant much to me. My fishing mates had graduated from surf casting to mainly surf fishing for sea run salmon around the Canterbury rivers by now and I finally joined them, towards the end of the run. That was enough, though; I got a salmon: the take, the fight, the adrenaline rush; I was hooked. Now began the acquiring of the gear needed to catch these amazing fish – something, 35 years later, I still find hard to control.

RODS

When salmon fishing river mouths and the surf on South Island salmon rivers apart from the Waimakariri river, you really need two different set-ups; a long light rod for the surf and a shorter 7 foot (2.1m) was normal for the gut (inside the mouth). I could not afford the expensive new graphite rods so settled for, in the surf, a hollow glass 9 foot (275cm) Abu Boxer general purpose rod. This was replaced after shattering with a custom-built imported carbon fibre Tricast Dynamics 12 foot (3.66m) carp blank set up as a spinning rod (gifted to me by my son Jeremy, who was by now working in The Complete Angler).

The gut rod was a carbon fibre composite 7 foot (2.1M) Silstar 60. This lasted about 5 years until the ferrule wore out. After that came a Fenwick HMC GS70MH 7 foot (2.1m), which did me well for 10 years and I was able to pick another little-used one cheaply on Trademe. Around 2013 decided I needed a new main rod, looked around decided that a G Loomis Pro Green fast action PGR 8845-7 foot 4 inches 10 to 17lb line weight, to which I had added 4 inches to the handle to give a perfect balance setup. On the strength of that I also added a 7 foot 8 inch G Loomis same model but in the 6-12lb class.

LINE

These last two rods taught me that spinning rods are now designed for either nylon or braid. The Pro Green is designed for super braid and I do not use braid for a couple of reasons – lightness, tangling and probably, cost. After buying the Loomis the first 8 salmon I hooked I lost- WHAT WAS GOING ON!!! Did some research and found out that shock absorption in braid rods like the Loomis is in the tip section, whereas on rods designed for nylon the shock absorption is in the line. So I checked the line I was using and found it was stretching about 4cm per metre, which meant I needed to shift the rod tip about 3 metres just to take out the stretch in the line before I could fully set the hook. That started me looking for low stretch nylon and I found the best available in New Zealand then was Black Magic Tough;



Jeremy, aged 17 and by now working full time at The Complete Angler, with a great fish from The Point

a bit thicker and stiffer than I liked but the next 8 salmon hooked were landed. Looking for small diameter, strength and limpness, I imported lines and tested more than enough to have a drawer full of them, before finally convincing Jeremy to request them from suppliers. The three I have used with this Loomis are Team Dragon Invisible 0.25mm/7.20kg, Suffix Super 21 0.25mm/6.7kg and Suffix Advance 0.25mm/ 6.1kg being the current one. All these have very little stretch and give a feel like braid.

REELS

I have used 20 reels over the years; earliest to latest Silstar, Diawa, Dam, Mitchell, ABU, Tica, Shimano. The early cheaper reels were carbon fibre bodied and did not last a season, but the composite body ones did and the alloy ones as well.

Since about 2006 I have only used two brands, firstly a Tica Taurus. This reel has 14 bearings and is very smooth but that caused a problem as when putting some effort into casting, even with the anti-reverse on the rotor would spin round, triggering the bail arm and breaking-off many spinners. In the end I had to lock the rotor and manually trip the bail arm. Nonetheless they are a good reel and I have 5 of them, picking up 3 on Trademe cheap – think the owners may have had the same problem I did. Then I finally succumbed to Jeremy's nagging, brought a Shimano Sustain, and now have three 5000s and a 4000. These reels need very little maintenance and have lasted nearly 10 years. Jeremy gave me the latest model for fathers day a couple of years ago and until the others break down, it is in reserve.

LURES

Those are the set-ups I use and the evolution of them over 34 years. However the most important part is the terminal gear and there is a long evolution here as well. Back in 1989 the spinners used for salmon were very limited in shape and colours; silver, brass, copper and black nickel plated with silver were used about 97% of the time. There were Zed Spinners, Colorado Blades, Salmon Specials, Teardrops and Tickers; the latter used mainly in the surf, usually 56 or 68 g weight. The Zed Spinner is the main survivor, some chrome and others even silver plated. They come in different weights but the go-to is still 20-22g for most situations, although smaller 10-16g are used more frequently these days with lower river flows. I have found in recent times that the various brands are all slightly different in shape and this makes for different actions in certain river flows. But more about that later.





From 1988 to 1990-91 season my only river fishing was a few trips to Hurunui mouth, where we never caught a salmon. Then we found a place called Tentburn, a spring-fed lowland stream situated north of the Rakaia mouth and south of Lake Ellesmere. Here during this time you could find sometimes up to 200 salmon anglers fishing almost every day during peak season. WHY? When the ocean ranching salmon companies switched to cage farming, most brought brood stock from the government-run hatcheries, Glenariffe (Rakaia) and Silverstream (Waimakariri rivers). One, the Lake Coleridge Company, moved to Tentburn and built a large hatchery. As per the agreement mentioned last time, we salmon anglers were allowed first shot at any returning fish, as long as we were fishing 200 metres or more away from either side of the Tentburn stream mouth. I fished there 2 full seasons 1988-89, 89-90, and caught 33 salmon.

Tentburn was hard to find in those days, hidden down a dead end road to Coopers Lagoon. There was a gate on the right at the end down a unrutted mud track over a rickety wooden bridge into an area of swampy flax. There you parked, unloaded your gear, walked along the beach, and got the first look at the sea. Is it flat? Is it clear? How strong is the wind and what direction is it from? A strong wind from any direction could stir up the silt that came from Rakaia river floods; no wind but a lot of rain and the northerly ocean flow brought the silt up the coast. A southerly made it impossible to fish; a northwester, all depended; an easterly was usually best but if it was too strong that also stirred the silt. If I had known then what I know now, I would have fished red or black lures (something to expand on later).

If you were lucky there might be a few dozen anglers there but on weekends or holidays there could be a couple of hundred. The line of anglers always seemed have a hierarchy – ‘The Guns’ – those with the carbon fibre rods and ABU overhead level wind reels – were usually closest the 200 metre post, as that was judged the prime spot. It was always surprising with anglers standing shoulder to shoulder that few were hooked, with all the 56 and 68g Tickers flying around. Rods sometimes suffered, though, as when I hit cousin Martin's rod with my Ticker while casting. Couldn't see a mark on it, yet a couple of casts later the top section exploded – he was not happy! Fortunately, I only had to pay the excess.

Some funny things happened out there. Like the time I hooked a salmon and got tangled with another angler. Cousin Owen went to cut the line tangled with the one with fish on but cut my line and there I was with this good sized salmon bouncing around and no way of getting it in. Another day I had a take that seemed odd, had a good fight, beached the fish and to my surprise found it was hooked through the split ring of another broken-off Ticker hanging from the salmon's mouth. This angler came up to me and said, "That's my fish!" I replied, "No, its not, you didn't land it; but you can have your Ticker back."



Tentburn at dawn; my second Tentburn limit bag



Here I must point out that a salmon take is unlike any other. Often it's just a check in your line or your line stops altogether. I reckon that if you get a hard strike, the salmon is just hitting the spinner. Over the years this becomes second nature; mostly now I have struck and hooked a fish before my brain registers that it is a take. My cousin Owen was the best at this. I have seen him on many occasions say, "Yep", and then strike; sometimes even before he had fully wound up the slack line after casting.

1988-89 season I managed 21 salmon that included 2 limit bags of 4 fish. By the end I had 125 pint jars of bottled salmon. The following season, my tally was 11 at Tentburn and 2 from the Waimakariri River, as we shifted to river fishing.

I've only been out there once since 1996, a day when, now owning a 4wd Toyota Carib, I tried driving down the beach, and got stuck with the tide coming in. Was lucky to get a cell phone call out and was hauled out at 11pm. Never lived that down.



Chasing salmon in rivers opened a more complex way of fishing that I am still learning. Something I am sure of, however, is that you need to try something new every season. I have met anglers who have gone years without catching a salmon, in spite of fishing hard. When you talk to them you find, year after year, they use the same gear in the same way, in the same spot. According to the annual Fish & Game surveys, 70% of salmon anglers will not catch a salmon in any given season and about 15% of anglers will catch 80%. So even if you get a couple of salmon a season you are regarded an "expert". Me? I think luck and being in the right place help, as does learning all you can about the quarry and changing tactics, old and new. I have a saying, "Fish don't change", in how they move through their life cycle, especially when returning to the rivers of their birth. They always look for the easiest way up a river when moving and resting. So reading the water is important. The myths around salmon fishing are mostly just that, I have found. That took a while to learn and thinking back, in some ways we hit a lucky time when starting to fish the Waimakariri.

The Waimakariri river is different from the other East Coast braided salmon rivers, as from the State Highway bridge to the mouth it is like a single channelled semi tidal estuary, which means it is fished differently to other salmon rivers using the same fishing gear. My brother and I started fishing there in the 1989-90 season, heading for the mouth one morning late season. We blanked but saw some caught. On the way home we stopped at McIntosh's, a couple kilometres up from the mouth. Here, the Hole, where the Kaiapoi river joins the Waimakariri, is rarely less than 5 metres deep and what is important for salmon fishing, is that up that river on a small stream called Silverstream, is a government salmon hatchery.

There were a lot of cars in the car park, which is a good sign but could make it hard to find a spot to fish. We however had read our regulations and noted that a white post protecting the Kaiapoi river mouth had been removed from regulations and yet no one was fishing past the post. To us, from our experience at Tentburn, that was probably the best place to be





The Point – always best at dawn, when the pollution was bad and looking across the Kaiapoi towards McIntosh's

and we found a spot near the confluence, Colin fishing one side of a willow tree leaning over the river and me the upstream side. The water dirtier than the main river and standing on the river protection bank about 2 metres above the water you could not see the bottom – back then the Kaiapoi and lower Waimakariri were probably the most polluted rivers in the country. I decide to use a large Veltic spinner and after a couple of casts got a very soft take. I struck immediately, the water erupted, and it was a good size salmon. My first thoughts were, "WHAT DO I DO NOW!" Standing on the flood protection bank, how do I get down there to grab the fish, how deep is the water and what about THE TREE! The salmon solved those problem by self releasing, leaving a very hyped up angler. The next day we came back with my sons Matthew and Jeremy and found out I was trying to play that fish in about 20cm of water! The four of us caught 3 good salmon and 2 large sea trout, got some looks from other anglers when we walked back to the car with them, and had found a spot for the next season. I ended the 1989-90 season with 11 salmon from Tentburn and 2 from the Waimakariri.

In the 1990-1 Season most of our salmon fishing was in the Waimakariri river but we made at least 3 trips to Tentburn and I have two memories from those trips. The first relates to always putting my waders on at the car park, because my neck injury. This day there were other anglers around but most were just waiting, because the conditions looked poor. I had brought a new reel, however, and wanted to see how it went. So I wandered down, lobbed a short cast, started to retrieve, and got the by now familiar soft





Amazing as it may seem, we all get along at The Point

salmon take. I struck and it was on, turned to let the others know and almost lost that fish, never having seen anglers in such a hurry to get their waders on and assemble their gear. I landed that fish and by the time I was ready to start again there was nobody sitting on the beach!

The second is to do with gear failure. The salmon that day were pooled up on the south side of the stream mouth, and as the stream naturally ran north, the salmon could not run the stream until high tide. There were some good sized fish being caught that day and I got one, dispatched it, put it in a sack and buried it in the shingle to keep it damp and cool. Took my time before going back fishing but after a couple of casts my rod broke, snapping about 100 mm above the ferrule and I did not have a backup. That taught me a lesson: never go with only one rod and I haven't since.

McIntosh's became the focus that season. Other anglers had caught on to the change in regulations and were fishing the northern side as well. We began to notice that on the south side of the Kaiapoi, along the Waimakariri edge, there was a lot of salmon activity – fish porpoising and splashing around – and out of our casting range. We knew you could get there because two elderly anglers fished most days when the tide was about half out.

Colin and I found a way up to 200 metres from the mouth. Being low tide we walked around the sandy point and had a long talk to the two old guys. They also whitebaited there and this started an angling friendship that lasted until it became too difficult for them. They left a legacy with us of salmon angling philosophy, that being out there on the water is actually more important and catching a fish is a bonus. After that we quickly found out why salmon were so obviously there. The beach did not slope away into deeper water. At low tide you are standing on the edge of a 4 metre plus straight drop that's fishable from about quarter tide out to around half tide in. The salmon rested here, to acclimatize to fresh water. It became the place that Colin, me, and my boys Matthew and Jeremy and sometimes my cousin Martin fished the rest of the season and have for most of the last 30 or so years. We called it The Point. There has been another word added since, but that is another story.

By the 1991- 92 season the impact of the reducing smolt releases started to create a lot of talk and theories among anglers. Niwa Freshwater scientist Martin Unwin would later produce a paper showing that by 1990, 80% of the salmon run was of hatchery origin. We still had a few trips to Tentburn and I got 2 fish out there, but the numbers of both salmon and anglers were down. Most of the season we fished The Point.

One good thing was the Kaiapoi freezing works had closed down, which made it more pleasant walking down to the Point now that Environment Canterbury had put a chain across the stop bank at the Courtney stream culvert. For a while this also cut down the number of



anglers fishing The Point. The other thing about the works closing was in the early morning walking the stop bank was the smell of waste water that the works sprayed on the paddocks during the night instead pumping it into the river. We put up with it because the salmon were there. They blew the works up, incidentally. You would be quietly fishing away when a sudden explosion snapped you out of it – slightly dangerous too, if you standing right on the edge in the water of the 4 metre drop. Nobody fell in but were one or two close shaves.

One incident that season involved Jeremy, who was 15 at the time. We were fishing an afternoon tide and most of us, on the Waimakariri side. Jeremy was fishing the Kaiapoi behind us, hooked a salmon, had it on for little while, but it spat the hook. We all came over and fished around him for a while. Nothing happened, and we went back to the 'Mak side. About 5 minutes later Jeremy was into another fish and it too spat the hook. Back we came, nothing happened again and back we went. Would you believe it, the same thing happened again and that fish also spat the hook. We didn't bother moving this time. It however was not over. Jeremy hooked up a fourth time, this fish stuck, he played it well and landed a good sized fresh run salmon. Think that was a lesson there for us more experienced anglers.

Fishing The Point now also meant there were anglers on the other side of the Kaiapoi, which on the outgoing tide gets down to just over 20 metres wide. Always wondered how the salmon ever managed to get up the Kaiapoi with lines coming from both sides but we worked a system, didn't get many tangles, almost no disputes, and helped each other out if we got snagged. That season the family caught 70 salmon off The Point between 6 of us. I got 6 there and 2 at Tentburn.

The 1992-3 season was a lot quieter, with only a few trips to The Point. I was trying to finish the masters degree with chronic pain in my neck arms and hands. Eventually my supervisors and I agreed that it would be best if I graduated with a BA Hons degree, instead of struggling on with the thesis and that was a relief. Then, after consulting my doctor I attended a 3 week live-in chronic pain course where you are taught how to manage it and given tools and methods to do so. That course was and still is a life-changer.

For the next part will have records to quote. 1993 is also when I started asking questions of scientists and F&G about what was happening to the salmon fishery.



*Matthew, aged 15,
with a brace from
The Point*



THOSE HACKLES

BANK OR BENCH with Peter Storey



Sitting here, late-July, back at the PC with prime Tarawera fillets marinating, I've just glanced up to see three Tuis displaying in the flowering native *Fuchsia* by the deck. Another month and Spring will be even closer and that means it's time to start thinking about river fishing again.

Happy enough to throw tungsten bead heads on a fast sink line here on the lake, rivers mean weightless flies on light gear to me. However we now choose to use it, fly fishing tackle was created to exploit the trout's willingness to feed on hatched and hatching insects, on and in the flow, and that's why a weightless fly unquestionably still brings the best out of it. For the last 20 years, river-wise, more often than not this scruffy hand-tied *Deleatidium* spinner imitation overset above has been on the end. Even though it finally solved a problem posed by well-educated brown trout, every time I wind another black hackle onto a hook, I still wonder why it fools trout anywhere I fish it. I mean, the concept seems ridiculous – in every respect. Then I remember exactly how I arrived there, matching what materials I had against the real thing, washed up along the canal edge. Instead of looking casually and rejecting, as every fish had to date, the first fish took it readily – as have hundreds ever since.

Throughout those years, however, I've been ignoring the larger hackles in the cape; those butts you cannot feed back up through the hook eye, with fibres most suited to lures. I've been thinking hackle stem bodies all along of course, but doing nothing until that realisation Spring was only weeks away finally triggered these hand-tied prototypes. I'm calling it an Emerger because of the sympathetic forward wing but without question, Midge/Sedge suggestions become concrete when you slope the wing back; as do nymphal, if you break it off! Large and dark enough to stand out in early season flows, yet sparse enough to sink quickly on the standard wire hook, these surprisingly insect-looking results were something I immediately wanted to share, to help pass those long hours, waiting for that first October outing. Maybe you will produce something far better with *THOSE* hackles . . .

BLACK EMERGER

#8 Black Nickel 3X
Short Shank Grab Gape
Claw Point Hook
Black Cock Hackle
Stem Body and Rib
Black Cock Hackle
Fibre Wing and Legs
Black Kevlar Thread
Wax

Leaving the fluffy butt end of the hackle intact, strip the fibres back up to the upper tip, leaving about 2cm that will become the wing.

(You can cut off the fluffy end if tying in a vise, of course. I just found it handier here, pun intended!)

Wax the thread and pass it up through the hook eye. Secure it with a couple of whip finishes.

I start tying this way with a vice too, as it prevents the finished fly slipping down the shank. This becomes critical when hand tying nymphs with wire alone.

Whip-finishing with your fingers is much easier to learn than you might think. The process is central to hand tying, where you quickly learn to whip finish each time you stop!



Bind the hook to the centre of the bend, waxing the thread as you go and pushing the binds back towards the eye.

Secure the stalk to the hook shank. Basically, I like the wing to match the overall length of the tie with a decent amount of fibre bound, for strength.

The thread is locked to the bobbin by the plug. This not only increases general security but also provides a source of weight to help with whip-finishing/stage-locking.

Wax the stalk and thread. Twist the stalk around thread.

Wind the result to the wing, producing a ribbed effect with the stalk. Make two turns of the butt end fibres and secure.

As you can see, I've not been over-fussy in removing the fibres along the stalk. Not only do I see this effect as integral to the act of emerging, I also personally feel a rough look is more convincing than a smoothly-finished one in all forms of fly tying. If you feel otherwise, however, go for it.



Pull the wing and fibres back. Whip finish in front, forming a head.

Adjust the result to suit. I clipped this tying heavily, aiming for a more realistic profile.



Readers Write

Hi my name is Ashton Green and I am from Rotorua. I first started trout fishing at the age of 9 after hearing millions of stories from my granddad, who showed me the ins and outs of fresh water fishing. Back then, in gumboots, I was using a spinning rod as it was easier to cast. When I had mastered that and caught a few trout, I upgraded to a fly rod, and waders. My Airflo, 8 wt, 9 ft rod was a good beginner fly rod. Not too expensive. When I first tried a fly rod however, I was getting snags and losing hooks, but I kept practicing. Now that I am 13 years old, I have mastered the overhead cast, the roll cast and recently I have learnt the Tongariro roll cast.

Next came an upgrade of my rod to a Scott S.A.S, which we purchased for \$100. Included was a Greys GRX reel and 3 spools with lines from my granddads old friend, Chris Main. Chris bought the rod for a trip to the Tongariro and hadn't used it since.

Last winter granddad and I packed the car for a fishing trip to Rerewhakaitu, up early and on the road by dawn. We had a successful day catching 7 rainbow trout and brought them home for the smoker.

Recently I have begun tying my own flies and my favourite one is the 'Hairy Chested Nut Scratcher'. I really like this fly and consider it to be the winner of them all. This is a particularly special fly designed by my granddad's friend Jamie Davies (founder of the Tongariro Roll Cast) and has now been passed on to myself.



My personal best catch to date is a 6.5lb rainbow trout caught in the lower Ngongotaha stream, where I would go regularly on weekends. The gear that I currently use for fishing in Lake Tarawera and the Ngongotaha stream, is my Scott S.A.S fly rod 8 wt with a Lamson V6 reel 6 wt and a Scientific Anglers spey line, also 6 wt.

Ashton, Moose, and a solid hatch on the Scott set-up from the shore (Elwyn Green)



ery-reared rainbow, caught
eline of Lake Tarawera.



'... the most momentous angling discovery of recent years ...'

F. E. THORNTON, THE NEW ZEALAND HERALD, 31 MARCH 1934

The dry fly revolution

Chapter 13 of Fishing the Tongariro, A History of Our Greatest Trout River, by Grant Henderson

FROM THE VERY EARLIEST DAYS of the Taupō fishery, a wide range of angling methods was permitted on the Tongariro river. Spoon, minnow and artificial fly were all allowed — in a nutshell, the rule was anything except live bait.

Although New Zealand fly patterns were developed over time, the first anglers to tread the banks of the Tongariro used salmon fly patterns transplanted from their UK home. The river flowed deep and broad and its fish were salmon-size, so it must have seemed logical to fish with such standard flies from 'Home' as Silver Doctor, Bulldog, Jock Scott, Thunder and Lightning, and Butcher.

It was also necessary to fish deep in a pool to get results. The correspondent 'March Brown', writing in The New Zealand Herald in 1923, advised the use of lead to get the fly well down, adding that he had never heard of a trout being caught with a fly fished at the surface.

Even though the large wet fly fished deep was the prevailing angling orthodoxy, there were occasional exceptions which showed that Tongariro rainbows would come to a surface fly. On a calm, bright day in May 1927 an English angler, N. F. Bostock, took eight rainbows from the Log Pool by fishing a small, lightly dressed fly just under the water surface. Bostock was applying the technique that his friend A. H. E. Wood had used for catching salmon on Scotland's River Dee.

ALAN PYE

The Tongariro river was the first Taupō waterway to see dry flies used to tempt the rainbows and browns. In 1924 Alan Pye, an unpredictable Irishman, demonstrated the technique on a small King Country stream to fellow anglers Trevor Withers and Frank Yerex. Pye's Waikato river fishing lodge business was some years in the future, but even then he was a superb fly fisherman. After a weekend of tuition from the master, Withers and Yerex went back to the Tongariro and took trout there with surface flies. But despite their success, dry fly fishing failed to take hold, and the downstream lure remained the only method on the river; probably because in the mid-1920s the second golden era of the Taupō trout fishery had arrived and the fish were at their heaviest since the great days before World War I.

So it was not until the early 1930s, when fly fishers were confronted by low river levels, that the dry fly came into its own. In those conditions the Tongariro trout became shy, and anglers' large wet flies proved to be almost useless in the very clear water. It was around this time that Alan Pye discovered the massive caddisfly hatches on the Waikato river and moved to set up his fishing lodge on its banks. Pye studied the natural insects closely and devised patterns which proved very attractive to the trout. Before long this Wizard of the Waikato, and his by then established Huka Lodge, were attracting anglers from all over the world.

JOE FROST

The man who can be credited with firmly establishing the dry fly method on the Tongariro river is Joseph Colston Frost, an Englishman born in Herefordshire's Wye Valley, in 1893. Frost's father was a keen angler, and as a lad Joe Frost learned to fish in Ireland for trout, salmon and coarse fish. By the time he reached his teens he was a skilled angler and fly tier.



Joe Frost with two satisfied clients and their catch from the Tongariro river, 1936.

WA-03145-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/30653029



He was already in the British army when World War I broke out, having enlisted in 1910 with the Royal Warwickshire regiment, but was discharged in 1916 on sickness grounds. While recovering in an army hospital, a New Zealand sergeant told him about Taupō's fabulous fishing waters. Frost was fascinated by the tales of the Antipodean monsters, but several years passed before he made the trip, in late 1923.

On arrival in New Zealand, he undertook a sort of angling survey lasting some two months. During that journey around the North Island he first encountered the Tongariro river, opening his account with a superb 14lb rainbow from the upper reaches. That catch (which was to prove his largest) was the start of a very long association with the world's finest rainbow trout fishery. He is considered to be the first angler to fish nymphs and dry flies on the Tongariro. While Frost was an early convert to the Tongariro river fishing, he was too late to enjoy the first boom period enjoyed by Major Rhys Wykeham Jones, William Soltan Pillans and A. G. Campbell when trout as large as 20lb were caught.

Joe Frost's first New Zealand business venture was as a butcher in Wellington. The shop failed in the late 1920s, apparently because its owner was spending too much time on fishing and not enough on the needs of customers, although the onset of the Depression can hardly have helped. He must have then decided to make his hobby his work and relocated to Taupō. After setting himself up at Tokaanu with a house and a job at the local trout hatchery, Frost turned his energies to the Tongariro trout and their diet. A skilled fly tier, by the early 1930s he was making and selling nymph patterns which closely imitated the aquatic insects on which the trout fed. There were two main flies he found to be successful; one with an olive green body, the other brown. These he fished near the surface on a leader greased to within 4 inches of the fly.

Frost spent three seasons working at the government trout hatchery. Hatchery work occurred in the winter (closed season) period, so when that work slowed up Frost was able to earn income as a gillie attached to Taylor's Lodge, hard by the Island Pool.

FROST'S GUIDING BUSINESS

Frost began guiding trout fishers on the Tongariro by accident. Two English anglers staying at a local fishing lodge had fished for days with no luck when they met Frost on the upper river one evening. Observing his fine casting and impressive catches, they beseeched him for advice on how to catch a trout. Frost agreed to show them the Tongariro technique, and under his tutelage over the next few days both men caught fish, to their great delight. Frost was equally delighted with the £10 they paid him for his services.

As a guide Frost could earn in one hour what he had previously earned in one day as a gillie, so after a short time his capital built up. Thanks to a large order for flies from the tackle dealers Tisdall, Frost gave up hatchery work and trebled his earnings. Soon he bought a Tūrangi cottage, and in 1929 he set up his own business as a tackle retailer, fishing guide and fly tier.

Overseas anglers, especially those from the chalk streams of England, found the rough-and-tumble dry fly fishing on the Tongariro a new experience. There was no waiting by a placid pool for a trout to rise; instead, Frost placed his customers in rapids and told them to fish the pocket water using a short drift. The snout of a weighty brown or rainbow would then appear, the angler (if alert) would tighten, and the fight would be on.

Frost's other strategy was to fish slower stretches where the overgrown banks made it difficult to use the traditional downstream wet fly method. Dan's Creek, a side channel of the Tongariro near the delta, was a favoured spot. Stalking quietly upstream, Frost would spot fish lying near the shelter of overhanging branches. Again, a short but accurate cast was all that was required.

DRY FLY FISHING TAKES HOLD

News of Frost's catches began to appear in the metropolitan daily newspapers, which featured regular Taupō fishing reports. In February 1934, The New Zealand Herald noted that dry fishing activity was becoming more common, with Frost taking two trout weighing 7½lb each from the Judge's Pool one evening. The year before, Frost had written to F. E. Thornton, the editor of the New Zealand Fishing & Shooting Gazette, advising that in May 1933 he had taken some good bags on the upper Tongariro pools using a dry fly on a light rod. Thornton was an experienced exponent of the dry fly art, having fished at Alan Pye's Huka Lodge, and had already tried fishing a dry fly on the Tongariro, but the small, feathered offerings seemed out of place on the river's roiling rapids and swirling eddies; he simply could not countenance

that type of fly fishing on such boisterous water.

Frost's reports convinced Thornton he should try again. In late summer 1934 he booked in at Taylor's Lodge and took to the water:

... I strolled down to the famous Judge's Pool behind the Lodge with a 9 foot Makuri rod, a line that matched it to perfection, a 2x cast, and one of the singularly beautiful dry flies built by Allcock's ...

Immediately, large trout rose to his fly, although he missed the first seven before a fat 5½lb hen fish stayed connected. Others followed with the evening rise, so by the end of the day Thornton was completely convinced the dry fly was lethal in the right conditions. He then began to experiment with different-strength gut casts, fishing a Red Sedge fly designed to imitate a natural insect he had observed coming off the water.

The new religion began to spread. The day after Thornton's success he schooled a visitor from England, Hulda Whyte, in the new art. Hulda Whyte had caught salmon on the Thurso using large rods, but had never fished the dry fly. After Thornton and a friend gave her a demonstration, she caught trout from the start and left her salmon rods untouched for the rest of her stay.

Fighting big rainbow trout in heavy water was new and exciting for Thornton:

This was an amazing experience for me. From these deep swirling pockets, a huge rainbow would rush the dry fly (I was down to using a No. 12 Red Peveril) from a depth of five or six feet, and give a wonderful exhibition of leaping. With these small hooks and the big belly in the line, when they turned upstream in heavy water if a fish leaped again, as they often did, the hook would tear out ...

The whole trip became the stuff of dreams. Every day trout fell to his casting. Once Thornton learned to read the water and found the best lies in each pool, it was merely a matter of placing the fly accurately and taking the fish.

Thornton's tackle was a heavy dry fly rig; necessarily so because he was fighting big fish in a fast-flowing river. It performed admirably. With his 9-foot rod (made by the New Zealand firm W. H. Tisdall Ltd, weighing a little over 5oz) and Hardy's Uniqua reel, he took more than 100 trout in three weeks. Sixty of those fish weighed 5lb or more. At least 100 yards of line was essential, as the first wild run of a hooked fish would strip 50 yards of line.

The flies he used included the Brown Drake, Hardy's salmon dry flies, and Brown Sedges tied by Joe Frost, who by then was working as a gillie at Taylor's Lodge.

Captain Arthur Richardson, who had helped develop dry fly fishing on the Waikato river, was equally enthusiastic: 'The Tongariro is not a chalk stream, its [sic] only some of the finest dry fly fishing in the world.'

Richardson landed trout up to 8½lb from the Tongariro's middle pools, but frequently the fish won the battle. On two consecutive afternoons he hooked some 30 fish, but failed to land any. The No. 10 hook simply would not hold in the trout's jaw unless the strike was made from a position directly behind the fish. When he spent 10 days fishing at Tūrangi in March, Richardson brought only his dry fly rods with him — testimony to the effectiveness of the technique.

JOE FROST'S DRY FLIES

Frost persisted with his efforts, learning as he went. A year later, his catches for one week in March 1935 included a fine brown trout of 10lb from Dan's Creek on the dry fly, and 11 fish caught in the upper river pools over two mornings using a large Brown Sedge (caddis) fly. By this time Frost was advertising his services as a teacher of the dry fly technique. The reference on his sign to 'tuition in dry fly fishing' is significant: he would not have bothered to give instruction in an angling method that did not give results and for which there was no demand.

The dry fly technique was partly dictated by the time of year. Frost noticed that in November the Tongariro rainbows gorged on green beetles which inhabited the mānuka bushes fringing the riverside. Using a beetle pattern, he took many fine specimens. But he also found that the fish would readily come to a very large dry fly — what he described as a feather duster — tied on a No. 10 hook and fished blind. In the evenings, the rainbow trout seemed to be more discriminating and a near-exact copy of the natural beetle was required.

Another dry fly pattern Frost devised was the Prismatic; so-called because it had two hackles, one brown and one Cambridge blue. When sunlight shone through them, these



colours in combination gave a prismatic effect similar to the translucence displayed by an aquatic insect's wings.

Because most Taupō waters are now open for fishing all year round, it is easy to overlook the limited fishing season which prevailed in those times. The season for the Taupō district opened on 1 November and finished the following 31 May. That meant the bulk of the season covered spring, summer and autumn, with the fish entering the river from about March onwards. In retrospect, a large part of the season was in the warmer part of the year when dry fly fishing would have been viable.

A national pictorial, *The Weekly News*, often carried Taupō fishing reports, and Frost used these to inform readers of the Tongariro dry fly fishing. He never wrote articles under his own name (it seems the pseudonym he used was 'Red Sedge'), but he is listed in the regular reports of anglers' catches.

With his deep knowledge of Taupō trout, Joe Frost was able to defend the fishery when it was occasionally criticised by foreign anglers who felt that they had not got the results the tourist advertisements promised. One disappointed visitor was Sir Walter Windham, a pioneer aviator who came to Tūrangi in early 1934. Although the Tongariro river was low and clear, Windham refused to take the advice of local anglers and fish the dry fly (the New Zealand patterns he thought were unbalanced) and persisted with large lures fished downstream. Joe Frost went with Sir Walter several times and noted that it was the New Zealand flies that caught fish.

Frost's tackle business suffered during the years of World War II and even after, Import restrictions imposed by the government meant that fly rods and reels could not be brought into New Zealand. Frost got around this difficulty by working his passage to England on a ship, where he arranged to act as New Zealand agent for leading tackle makers with whom he had been dealing in pre-war years.

Joe Frost added to his growing reputation among New Zealand and overseas anglers by lending his name to several split-cane fly rods the English tackle makers J. J. S. Walker Bampton, made to suit conditions on the Tongariro river. For dry fly work there was the J. F. Lightweight, 8 feet 6 inches long and weighing 6½oz, and the J. F. Tonga, a little longer at 9 feet 3 inches and 7½oz. For long casts on large rivers the Joe Frost 'Tongasand Special' was an 11-foot, three-piece rod weighing 12oz; presumably for use with a wet fly.

With the guiding and fishing tackle business back on track, Frost decided to move on. In 1949 he sold to Geoff Sanderson, but remained living in Tūrangi until 1958, when he moved to the South Island, settling in Timaru and starting a new phase of his fishing career in brown trout country. (His private life is somewhat obscure, but because he married his third wife in 1958 it is not a stretch to suspect that — following a route sadly not uncommon with keen fishers — fishing came first and his domestic relationships suffered as a result.) After his shift south, the Tongariro river clearly still kept a hold on him, though, as he could often be found writing to government ministers with ideas on how to manage the fishery.

When Joe Frost died in 1983, no monument was erected at Tūrangi to mark his passing, nor does a pool on the Tongariro river bear his name. Fishing tackle collectors may obtain a split-cane fly rod with his name on it and wonder at it. Nonetheless, the significance of his contribution is enormous, for since the 1930s dry fly fishing has continued on the river, principally being used in summer. When fishing to sighted trout it is hugely exciting, but today it tends to take a back seat to wet fly and nymph. However, the large brown trout that inhabit the lower reaches of the Tongariro river offer a marvellous opportunity for the dry fly enthusiast, and indeed there are some anglers who specialise in targeting these challenging fish.

Editor's Footnote

This excellent book was originally suggested by the author to the late John Parsons but was turned down by the publisher John contacted – clearly no freshwater angler – as being regional and therefore, attracting too small a market (over two thirds of readers fish there!). So John suggested Grant take the project over, providing photos, files, ongoing advice, and encouragement '... that kept me going when the task of writing seemed insurmountable.'

The result is an incredibly detailed history of the river as a trout fishery, each chapter containing sequentially-numbered source references which can be found in the Endnotes at the back of the book. There are 18 accompanying this chapter which, to make setting in this medium easier, have been removed.

Fishing the Tongariro

A History of Our Greatest Trout River



GRANT HENDERSON

Fishing The Tongariro: A History of Our Greatest Trout River by Grant Henderson, published by Bateman Books, RRP \$59.99., Release date August 2023; <https://www.batemanbooks.co.nz/>



Southwest American style cooking has become very popular here in NZ, especially once the barbecues are out . . .

Trout with Corn Fritters & Chipotle Lime dressing

WILD TO THE TABLE with Tony Smith

Corn Fritters are extremely popular here in New Zealand so here is a relatively simple trout dish that includes them, the fish grilled and served with a lively smoky chipotle dressing. Avocado, tomatoes and coriander roundup the dish.

All the elements of this dish can be made in advance. The sauce kept chilled, the corn fritters can be re-heated when the trout is baked. The dish is easily adapted to a barbecue dish, the trout cooked on the griddle rather than baked.

FROM THE CREEL

Around 600g trout fillets, pin-boned if possible but basic V cut filleting style fine.

Salt and pepper to season.

CHIPOTLE LIME DRESSING

1 fresh lime, rind grated and juice
1 generous teaspoon liquid honey
4 teaspoons chipotle sauce
(available at supermarkets)
30ml olive oil
1 tablespoon natural yoghurt (can use mayonnaise)

Using a small hand whisk, mix the lime juice and honey, whisk in the chipotle sauce, then olive oil and finally yoghurt.

ROASTED CORN FRITTERS

500g corn kernels
1 teaspoon ground cumin
3 garlic cloves crushed
1 small red onion finely diced
2 tablespoons 30ml olive oil
¾ cup milk
2 eggs
70g plain flour (Bakel's Gluten Free flour works as well)
½ teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
¼ tsp ground white pepper
½ Sunflower or similar oil to fry the fritters

1 Avocado cut into dice
A few cut tomatoes of your choice
Fresh coriander leaves

Preset oven to 200 ° c. Mix the corn, cumin, garlic, onion and olive oil. Place in an oven dish and roast at 200 ° c for about 20 minutes, mixing from time to time until a little coloured. Remove from oven and leave to cool.

Mix in remaining ingredients and fry in shallow oil as required. The mix is fine to keep for a day.

Oven set to 200 ° c. Season the trout generously, place onto oiled baking paper in a shallow roasting dish skin side up. Bake for 12-15 minutes. Lift onto a serving dish, peel off the skin (if crisp it can be served as part of the dish) and serve portions with the prepared fritters and sauce.

Garnish with the avocado, tomatoes and coriander.



WILD TO THE TABLE

Tony Smith was born in Dunedin, educated in Temuka, Alexandra and Gore, and has been a professional chef for more than 40 years. A keen outdoorsman and conservationist, who loves trout fishing and small game hunting, Tony sees himself as a typical Kiwi bloke – a fan of rugby, BBQs, beer and wine, with a penchant for NZ's Pinot Noirs. Copies of his book, *A River Rules My Kitchen*, are still available on TradeMe. Contact: riversmith55@gmail.com



The first week provided typical wilderness fishing . . .

Another UGLY Adve

With Clive Shaw and John Gommans



nture





Back in 2008 Clive and I undertook our most challenging back-country fishing trip, a 12 day adventure into the Tasman Wilderness zone of Kahurangi National Park to explore the Ugly River; tough to get to but great fishing, followed by a long tramp out. That trip was planned after my 50th birthday with the realisation that increasing age may restrict our future ability to attempt these more extreme wilderness adventures. Some 12 years later, it was therefore somewhat surprising to find us contemplating a similar trip!

With heavy packs containing two weeks' food, tramping and fishing gear we again planned a helicopter drop off, onto the ridge at the Western edge of the wilderness no-fly zone. Unfortunately, high winds made that landing site too risky and instead we landed on the wide-open top of Bald Knob, almost 1 kilometre above the river. That descent took us nearly a day and a half through West Coast alpine scrub leading into bush, with detours around treefall and the odd bluff, plus an overnight stay in a steep gully beside a small stream that provided a spectacular nocturnal glow-worm display as some compensation for the cramped campsite. Eventually we reached a riverside campsite on a flat terrace, with trout easily visible as they cruised the large pool below.



Almost 1 kilometre above the river, centre left

On the way down

The start of a magical first week, previous pages fish top right . . .





The first week provided typical wilderness fishing as we explored the Ugly River, initially downstream and then as we gradually moved our base further upriver. Boulder runs and deeper pools were both productive as we stalked brown trout of 3-7 pounds. Royal Wulff dry flies, sometimes with a trailing nymph, were productive in the larger rapids while Stonefly or Pheasant Tail nymphs were our preferred options in the slower moving pools. We often alternated turns; one of us spotting trout while camouflaged amongst the riverside vegetation and the other following instructions. This also allowed assistance with netting for catch and release, especially when amongst rapids. In the more open braided sections without bush cover we sometimes separated and explored pools individually. Occasionally we were able to fish side-by-side from opposite banks while we both gradually moved upriver, making for a very companionable experience. Everywhere we were accompanied by Whio – the native blue ducks that are well adapted to life amongst fast flowing mountain rivers. They were completely unfazed by our presence, often remaining happily at the edges of pools or whistling at us as we fished alongside them, only a few metres away.





The Ugly River, fishing upstream towards the pyramidal Mount Domett over six hours . . . to an enforced pit stop

This was early February in a relatively dry summer by West Coast standards and river levels were significantly lower than our previous trip. This made for easier crossings of what can be a challenging river but meant that, unlike the Whio, the remaining trout in the upper reaches were very wary given the crystal clear, low water conditions, and were easily spooked. Despite this we revelled in the demanding but rewarding conditions with the added bonus of solitude in a magnificent picturesque natural environment.

As we approached the likely upper limit of our fishing options in the Ugly, the evening mountain-radio weather forecast advised of a significant storm approaching. Therefore the next morning we broke camp a day earlier than planned, hiked a short distance up the Ugly and crossed over to ascend Domett Creek. The weather gradually deteriorated with steady drizzle as we hiked through native beech forest in poor light conditions. Around midday, much to our surprise, we encountered a full-grown kiwi, the first I had seen in daylight hours in over 40 years of tramping. We froze as it slowly walked towards and then past us, only 2 metres away, seemingly oblivious to our presence. An amazing experience. Eventually we set up camp on a small flat area well above – or so we thought – a side stream. The predicted heavy rain overnight saw that stream transform into a raging torrent, forcing us to prepare for a hasty decamp and uphill retreat but thankfully the stream peaked without breaching the bank. Nonetheless, we had an enforced pit day resting in our tent while the storm passed and then drying out.







Clockwise: a wet start to the Centre Mountain route; above Aorere Saddle and Lake; descent into Roaring Lion; Clive with a Roaring Lion brown; Peel Range lunch stop on the way out, looking back; on top, looking north to Island Lake on route to Cobb River

We had an enforced pit day resting in our tent while the storm passed and the stream returned almost back to normal overnight, allowing us to resume our journey the next morning, reaching Aorere Saddle in time for an early lunch break. On our previous trip we had descended to Aorere Lake and then down to the Spey & Aorere Rivers, following them to Golden Bay. This time we climbed high up the West ridge of Centre Mountain until well above the bush line and took an obvious sidling route across open tussock on the NW slopes up to the North Ridge. A short and at times tricky descent along this ridge took us to a low point, where a very direct route led us straight down a steep grassy slope for about 300m before it began to flatten out and we were safely in the headwaters of the Roaring Lion River.

Another day's walk took us sufficiently downstream to where the river began holding trout. We then enjoyed a few days of glorious back-country fishing in the smaller bush-clad headwaters of the Roaring Lion; predominantly 3-5 pound brown trout spotted feeding at the tail end of rocky pools or occasionally amongst boulders in fast flowing water. Our last day took us almost down to the Breakfast Creek junction, which had been the high point of one of our previous journeys into the Lion and marked the end of the fishing in this trip.

Our route out began with a short walk up the creek draining Island Lake, to avoid large bluffs on the true left, then four hours of steady uphill climbing to reach a long gentle ridge leading onto the Peel Range. We followed the ridge for two hours and after numerous rests, photography stops and a restorative lunch break we reached our high point of 1574m above sea level, over 1000m above our morning camp site. As well as providing superb views we also got good mobile phone reception and confirmed a ride out for the next morning. The late afternoon descent took us down to Round Lake where we joined the Cobb Lake track, eventually stopping at an old 4 bunk Hut in the upper Cobb Valley. Here we washed away 12 days of sweat and grime in the nearby stream, and dried ourselves and our gear in the setting sun. Next morning was an early start and brisk walk to catch our ride at Tribolite Hut.

As the shuttle descended past the Cobb Reservoir and Dam towards Nelson and civilisation; another wilderness trip came to an end – just in time as only four weeks later, COVID induced travel restrictions arrived. We didn't realise this Ugly adventure would be our last trip for three years!



Kiwi Cane – 2024

By Nick Taransky

I've mentioned the idea of running a cane rod gathering here in New Zealand in previous articles. With travel now well and truly opened back up, I'm excited to say that the plan is to run the inaugural "Kiwi Cane" (www.kiwicane.com) gathering from Friday the 19th of April to Sunday the 21st of April 2024.

Talking with David "Bamboo" Hemmings, the originator and organiser of "Cressy Cane" (www.cressycane.org) in Australia, we've decided to run Cressy Cane and Kiwi Cane on alternate years. This will give David a well earned rest between Australian gatherings, after ten years of annual events, and also give people the opportunity to fit both events into their calendar. Kiwi Cane will be run on even years, and Cressy Cane, on odd.

FORMAT AND TOPICS

Kiwi Cane will largely follow a similar format to the proven and popular Cressy Cane. It will be a three day event, with a mix of topics covering all aspects of understanding, making and using bamboo rods. We will try and have a strong focus on casting and fishing, with a view to making the most of the qualities of bamboo as a rodmaking material. Peter Hayes has always been central to this hands-on emphasis, and he will be in attendance for our first Kiwi event. An on-stream casting/fishing workshop will be offered in addition to the three day event. I will also try and run some rodmaking classes close to the time of the gathering for those wanting to make their own rod and hit the ground running.

I'm starting to put together a topics list on the Kiwi Cane website, but feel free to contact me through the website if you have a topic that you would like covered. The Cressy Cane website will give you an idea of the sort of subjects and themes that we have covered in previous years.

As Cressy Cane evolved, with a solid core of regular attendees, we often have projects or themes for each gathering. This gives people a focus and something to work towards for the upcoming event. This is something that we might do in the future at Kiwi Cane, but for the inaugural event, there will be plenty of fresh ground to cover before we go down that path.

LOCATION AND VENUE

We haven't finalised the venue for Kiwi Cane yet, but the location will be near my base in the south central North Island. As soon as we have the venue organised more information will be posted on the website. We'll make sure that the location is close to a range of local fishing options for both Kiwi and visiting Australian anglers. At this stage I'm not sure if we will try and establish a permanent base for Kiwi Cane, or possibly host it in different regions (say the South Island) from gathering to gathering. This is something that we can discuss at the first event next year.



In terms of attendance numbers, we don't have a fixed number in mind, but Cressy Cane has always had a very relaxed feel by keeping the numbers from growing too large. It means that everyone can be included in group discussions. I've been to larger gatherings in the USA and Canada, while still fantastic, the larger numbers made it more difficult to maintain the same type of interactive dynamic.

We will try and have a strong focus on casting and fishing, with Peter Hayes in attendance.

WHAT MAY BE COVERED:

- Bamboo rodmaking overview and basics
- Advanced rodmaking techniques
- Making reelseats and other components
- Landing net and other accessory making
- Bring your own rod(s) and cast rods of other attendees
- How to get the most of bamboo rods as casting and fishing tools
- Japanese style long tippet fishing with bamboo
- Famous rodmakers and their rods
- Understanding and developing rod tapers
- Care and maintenance of bamboo rods
- Collecting cane rods – what to watch out for
- Old rods – repair, renovate or leave well enough alone!

www.kiwicane.com www.cressycane.org





On-stream rod care demonstration. Turning the rod over from time to time can help to balance the stress on the rod on a strong fish.

WHY SHOULD I COME?

Of course, if you are already a lover of bamboo, it will be an ideal opportunity to meet up with kindred spirits. And if you are interested in learning more about bamboo, but don't have a bamboo rod or any experience with them, that's just as good a reason to attend. There's no better way to give bamboo a try than having a cast of a wide range of rods and learn.

This does bring me to the question of "why bamboo" in the first place. Of course, the beauty of the natural material has appeal, and there is the connection to tradition and angling history. If you get into making rods yourself, it can add another level to your angling enjoyment, like tying your own flies. And of course, over time, you can tweak existing tapers or develop your own. You can make rods to suit your own fishing requirements or casting style. Some people may get totally consumed by bamboo, and fish with nothing else, while others may just end up with one or two bamboo rods for certain fishing situations, among a wider collection of rods made from other materials. As I always answer to people who question how many rods a fly angler needs... "Just one more than I have now"...

As a bamboo rodmaker heading into my 20th year of full time making, I feel like I've moved from an "evangelist" to more of an "ambassador". Gone are the days of animated "debates" with people who say that bamboo rods are rubbish. My own choice of bamboo as a rodmaking material comes from my passion for stalking trout in smaller streams on dry flies. In this situation, the weight as well as the flex of bamboo can help to load a short rod and present the fly quickly and accurately from the rod tip out to longer distances. It's this close range, intimate fishing where I think bamboo has real technical application. My recent addiction to long leader Japanese fishing also requires a very full flexing, slower recovery rod, ideally suited to bamboo. For those who get bitten by the bamboo bug, cane rods can be made for all other sorts of fishing applications too, from nymphing, salt water to Spey casting.

Another general point I'd make about cane in both Australia and New Zealand, is that the old rods that dominated in the past are very much at the longer and heavier end of the scale. These (mostly) English style rods are a very different animal to the lighter, shorter American tapers that dominate today. If you feel that bamboo rods are all heavy clunkers, maybe a visit to "Kiwi Cane" might change your mind.

For more info visit www.kiwicane.com www.cressycane.org



There will be plenty of rods to try out at Kiwi Cane.



Japanese rodmaking has become a major influence and this one's a masterpiece (<http://kawatsura.com/en/index.html>).



A lifetime on the WEST COAST

By Ken Dalzell

I chanced to browse through a recent issue of Trout Fisher, which I used to write for, when it first began. Most of the articles related to fishing at the time, places of interest and methods used. When I was writing I never worried about who was interested in our West Coast waters, as there were so many I doubted they could ever be fished out. That still holds today but there are always commercial activities which are much more damaging to the fishery than the natural decline of certain species.

Many friends have suggested my angling should be recorded and I finally thought, why not, being in my seventies and still remembering the great times had fishing here on the West Coast.

I do not recall my first year licence but my late father was an avid angler. Weekend trips were usually up the Taramakau River, at Waihinihi, where there was easy parking. He would get out the thermette, light a fire, then start a downstream beat. I recall telling my mother I was going to follow him, to see what he may have caught. The traditional thing was to arrange a number of rocks over each newly-caught trout and lifting the right rock on this occasion produced an eye staring back at me. I hastily put the rock back and went on to the next pile. He caught three that day before we headed home for tea. I was not given a rod until three years later. Dad's advice was to use a Silver Devon, fish the deep water slowly, and wait for a strike. I still remember a large, blackish shape behind the spinner, veering off back into deep water, never to be seen again.

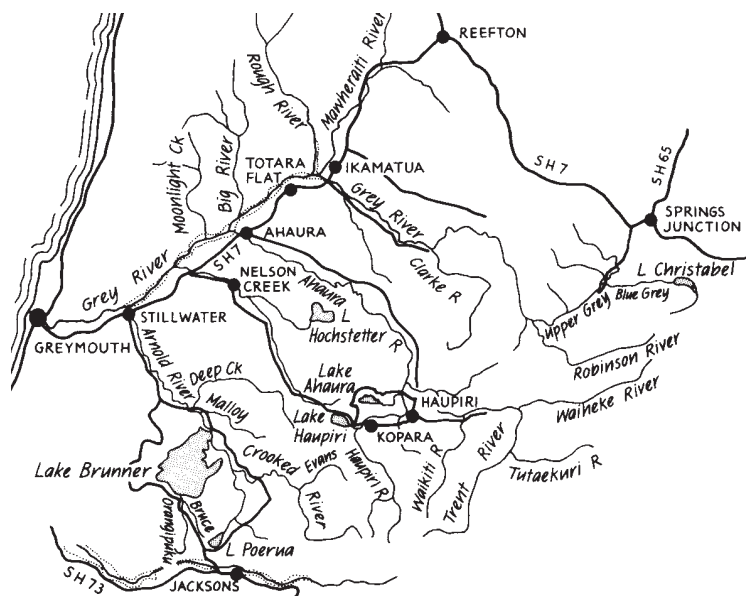
This prompted me to question how and when I might finally catch a trout and was told, that patience was a virtue and it would happen one day. I was intrigued by the Devon Minnow and recall opening up his many metal boxes holding favourite lures. Most were Devons and he told me Golden Devon was number one in the Grey River. There was also a box of wax matches to dull the metal but leave the bottom shiny, to resemble the cock-a-bully. A few years later Dad had an accident which prevented him walking distance, so the angling gear was sold for three pounds. So feeling a bit stranded, I thought why not see if my cousins were interested in fishing at the Greymouth Wharf. One was the same age as I, so each weekend we got out cotton herring lines, baited them up and had some good days on herring, the odd flounder and one day a larger fish took the dough bait behind a coal carrier. I had poached my first trout, a silver sea-runner, with orange flesh. We also fished for herring at the sewer outlet, at Blaketown, as a number of friends' dads used them for surfcasting bait and we got a few bob, to buy hooks and sinkers. We gathered pipi off the beds at low tide and speared flounder when we got a bit older. In Spring whitebaiting was the number one interest, of course; many trout were seen behind the shoals, too.

Tragedy struck at age fourteen, when my father passed away after another accident and I certainly needed friendship to keep on top of things. Other people offered to take me fishing too and I learnt a variety of new methods: bully fishing, worm fishing, surf fishing and mostly, spin fishing.

This was about when I got my first licence, joined the local angling club and learnt a lot more. I particularly recall being given a 'Hospital Special', devised by the late Stephen Barclay, who worked at Grey Hospital. This lure resembled a milk worm, consisting of a lead core inside a length of transfusion tube and a treble hook at the 'tail'. Naturally this was lost over time but at a recent garage sale I managed to find three.

Another mate had a variety of Devon Minnows that incorporated flounder or sole skin sewn onto the brass tube. Wings were attached to spin in the water. Other friends bought pieces of brass rod at the foundry, cut slices that were painted all colours, and used them very successfully.





It was a privilege to be invited by club members, onto trips high up into the Grey catchment for big fish. There were worm fishers, bully casters and spin fishers in the party and I used the latter highly successfully; mainly black and gold, or green and gold during the cicada season. It taught me to note the patterns of seasonal food changes. The club also made frequent boat trips to Lakes Brunner and Poerua and most came of the lakes with limit bags. By this time I had started fly fishing, after a stay at Selwyn Huts, where a friend gave me my first fly rod. Instead of trolling a lure as usual, I decided to experiment, tied on a Black and Red Butcher and casually let it out. Within minutes a fish struck and was boated. "That's good luck," they said. "You can't catch fish like

that." "Well I just have," I replied, and promptly caught another. Harling was born. I certainly prompted some guys to change their methods on future trips to the lake.

Finally, fly tying classes happened once a month, with a variety of road kills used to imitate the necessary facsimiles. I asked one of the mentors which flies would work best in the Arnold. "You only need two," he said. "Red Tip Governor and Kakahi Queen." Why were there so many patterns in my dad's fly box, I thought, when only two were needed. Time taught



A map of the Lake Brunner area in New Zealand. The map shows Lake Brunner, which is shaded in grey. To the north of the lake are the towns of Arnold and Moana. To the east is Lady Lake. To the south is Lake Poerua. The map also shows several rivers and creeks: Deep Creek, Molloy Creek, Crooked River, Bruce Stream, Taramakau River, Orangipuku River, and Carew Bay. The towns of Mitchells and Jacksons are also marked. The map includes a scale bar at the top left indicating 0, 10, and 20 km. A road is shown running from the top left towards the bottom right, with a junction marked '73'.

[illegible]

- 1 Harris Creek
- 2 Murray Creek
- 3 Ianthe Creek
- 4 Lake Poerua
- 5 Styx River

Further down, the Grey Bar has always been productive to anglers who fish the wet fly; so too in neighbouring Cobden. The turn of the tide and before dusk are the best time to look for a cruiser among the whitebait shoals with a Grey Ghost always the winner here.

Tight Lines.

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LETTERS

"IS NEW ZEALAND TROUT FISHING DECLINING?"

Sir, regarding Tony Orman's interesting article in the Winter issue, I would like to respond.

No experienced angler would disagree with the title, as a starting point to a much needed conversation. However, having said that, I will disagree with not only his but some of the other opinions he sourced or quoted, as to the major cause of this, first slow, then rapidly-accelerating decline in numbers of trout, in all our trout waters.

I am not questioning all of Tony's nor his contributors' analysis. Perhaps some of those factors may have been a contributing factor, to a percentage of the decline in specific waters? They are certainly not the most dominant factor in the rest of the approximately 17,000 miles of trout-occupied habitat in NZ, however. I am also not saying that in some waters, farm run-off is not a problem, but it is not and never will be the major contributor to our declining fisheries. The same cannot be said of some spraying operations, practised by both farms and local councils. That certainly stuffs up insect life and evening rises. Not so with all water enrichments, unless they are excessive. In fact, some reasonable enrichment of trout rivers is a good thing. Even the famous chalk streams of England have their water enriched.

I will quote an example from a once great dry-fly river I perhaps know better than any, the Motu River. There is no part of the Motu River, nor its major tributaries, I have not shot over and fished. I ran a base for up to eight helicopters for 12 years in the days of the first of the live deer capture. When that finished – most of the pilots were killed – I have never worked for anyone in my life except through contracts. Only hunted. The only other thing I could do was trout fish. After working briefly, for Huka Lodge, Waikato River Lodge, etc, at Taupo, getting the sack from them all, I ran out of lodges. So I started my own international tourist lodge specialising in dry fly fishing, at Motu.

While the lodge helicoptered clients regularly from Motu to many streams and rivers, from the upper Ruakituri to the Waitahaia, we never fished the lower Motu, where the main bush starts, below the Motu Falls. Why? Simply because the trout down there were much smaller than those located in the river bordered by the land farmed above the Motu Falls. Those farms' aerial top dressing ensured the water was enriched, producing much more trout food. Just as those famous chalk trout streams of England are enriched.

The lodge was very successful, at times employing up to five guides. I eventually sold it, however, not as a fishing lodge but as a private residence.

Why?

Because of the lack of trout. This once world-famous dry fly river no longer supported trout in commercial quantity.

Now we get to the point of all this, in respect of Tony Orman's article.

It was not the farmers polluting the river that caused, over the years, the decline in trout numbers in the Motu river. It was me – through "catch and release." Myself and lodge clients, collectively, averaged 400 trout caught and released per season from the waters we fished.

A large percentage of those trout we caught and released, I now firmly believe, did not reproduce.

After the first 10 years of "catch and release", the lack of juvenile trout became very noticeable. In my opinion, this is what is happening currently throughout New Zealand. In my opinion, supported by others, including some far more knowledgeable guides, "catch and release" ensures 90% of trout survive. That may be better than the only other option but it interferes with their breeding cycle. Trout are not breeding the same.

'Catch and release', in its current form, was mostly introduced to New Zealand anglers by angling tourists, mostly from the USA. It was quickly taken up locally, first by guides protecting their favourite rivers – myself included – then by most anglers. Then in some cases, it was regulated by Fish and Game. The worst aspect of this change in attitude (from a fishery management perspective – Ed), is there is now no limit on the number of trout, per day, you can catch – just how many you can kill.

For 20 years, I was president of the New Zealand Professional Fishing Guides Association (NZPFGA), in the days when the membership was built up to approximately 200 members



Hector and myself

throughout New Zealand. For four years I was the sole contact for inquiries related to fishing in New Zealand through the NZ Holiday Planner, for Tourism NZ. It had a print run of thousands, in five languages. I also handled all freshwater-related complaints for Tourism NZ. For a short time, I was Chair of FISH NZ, the sports fishing marketing group for Air NZ, Qantas, Tourism NZ, etc. A lot of the complaints from international anglers revolved around value for money, after flying into headwater fisheries that were not what they were like when those anglers came 10 years previously.

It was common for guides with wealthy clients to helicopter from one headwater to another, catching large numbers of very large trout. Apart from the now greater difficulty of catching these fish, after a few years the decline in numbers was very noticeable. The guides had ensured catch and release was practised.

Why the serious decline in numbers?

These headwaters had never seen a dairy cow, nor any other sort of farm animal. In their lower reaches, where the trout are also in serious decline, throughout the whole of the watershed, yes there are farms on many of them but pollution and over enrichment of the water does not run upstream. Of course I believe some farming practices are totally unacceptable but long term, farmers are not the angler's main concern.

There are no, or very few rivers in New Zealand, that are a patch on their former glory before "catch and release" became a widely accepted practice. And sad to say, you will never see those glory days again.

If Fish and Game had more knowledgeable councillors they would bring in a limit on the use of catch and release. They could start with the sensitive head water fisheries.

Finally a little anecdote. I do believe catch and release affects some trouts' brains. We had a trout in the Motu River we named Hector. Over a couple of seasons Hector was caught and released seven times a season, mainly by clients. Times have changed since but when at dinner the night before fishing, we typically asked the new client if they could fish and often, they proudly produced an Orvis casting school certificate. I only said one word to the guide allocated to that client, "Hector."

Hector made me a lot of money and he was rewarded with a bucket of worms at the end of each season.

Frank Murphy. Ex Motu. Now Gisborne.



Fishing the Avon River in the 1950s

By John Kent

In the Winter 2023 edition of Trout Fisher there is an article by Todd Storey, whom I now know is your son, *Student Life and the Avon River*. It brought back so many memories I had to write and send this to you. I also attended Canterbury University in 1954-55, located in what is now the Arts Centre in the city. One of the great capping events during my time was the Avon Bike Race with students attempting to ride or run with a bike down a stretch of the river flowing through the city. Some of the holes were over waist deep back then but now many have shallowed to calf deep. Environmentalists would have a heart attack if the race was re-introduced.

I was brought up on the Avon River and started catching trout as a 12 year old, in 1948. Many years ago an elderly angler told me that all good anglers have at some time in their fishing life poached a trout. My graduation from poaching reached the dizzy heights of writing guide books and becoming an honorary ranger.

My fishing life began when swimming in the freezing artesian creek with my two sisters and noticing fish racing for cover. Soon I was making a bamboo rod from Bamboo Island, repeated each year as most ended up in my father's garden as a tomato stake. Rod rings were fashioned from copper wire and bound on with black sticky insulation tape. I had an old wooden Nottingham reel that swelled and jammed if left out in the rain. The reel was loaded with thin cutty hunk line, satisfactory for drifting a worm into a hole but impossible to cast.

Worms were legal provided you persuaded your mother that you needed a fishing licence. However bread and luncheon sausage was often more deadly, but illegal. The most popular spot for kids to fish was the hole where two streams met at Flemings Flour Mill. It is now Christchurch Girls High School. In a good season, I could land over 50 trout with some weighing over 3lbs. I cycled to and fished all the tributaries, with many sections being unfished. This included the Waimairi Stream in Daresbury, which was occasionally the Governor General's residence, and the Avon in Deans Bush and Mona Vale.

None of my family or friends were trout fishers so I was fortunate at 14, when I was introduced by a neighbour's kid to Robert Bragg, a professional fly tier and tackle maker. Sitting on the opposite side of Robert's desk watching him tie flies was a paradise for me and gradually taught me the error of my ways. Robert had emigrated from Scotland and had even attended a fly tying finishing school in Germany as part of his education. He held the Ogden Smith agency and at various times worked for Tisdalls fishing shop.

Robert lived on the banks of the Wairarapa Stream, an Avon tributary. His room was full of trout fly plates, many photos, hackles, fur and feathers. However, he kept muttering to me about 'Ephemeroptera' – the botanical name for mayflies. I had no clue what he was talking about but apparently, an unusual variety inhabited the Wairarapa Stream at the bottom of his garden. He had tried a number of imitations but bread thrown by kids feeding ducks was more highly sought after. In desperation, he designed and tied a legal trout fly from kapok to resemble bread and could hook as many trout as he liked.

At 14, I obtained a basic fly tying vice slid over a headless nail hammered into a wooden plank. My mother returned from a trip to England with some feathers and a book by Eric Taverner showing patterns of English flies and how to tie them. I tied every pattern in the book and at age 87 am still tying for friends and family. However, not many English patterns.

My passion for trout fishing caused problems for me as a student at Chistchurch Boys High School. One of our 'prefab' classrooms bordered the Avon flowing through the school. In the lunch hour, five of us regularly fed some good looking brown trout on bread. After we had sat School Certificate, we were bored having to attend music in the school hall as a fill in, so we brought a nylon line and a hook baited with bread. We were caught by a school prefect after landing two fish and sent to the headmaster 'Butch' Caddick. Being an English teacher he



asked whether I had read *The Compleat Angler* by Isaac Walton. When I replied, "No sir," he said, "Well, you have no excuses and gave us all 5 strokes of the cane.

Now the Avon holds a few fish well fed on bread in the Botanical Garden section and a few in the city. For the last 15 years, I have not seen any kids fishing the river, nor its tributaries. It's water level is around 30cm lower than when I was a kid.

About 14 years ago I attended the International Conclave of Fly fishers in Montana. As I had given a program on New Zealand I was invited at no charge to join the fly tying class. There were around 30 fly tiers in a room with two lecturers. The first pattern was a small emerger pattern that I tied quite quickly. The tutors examined and prodded my fly and found it satisfactory but then asked why I had tied it backwards. They had never seen nor known of anyone who tied flies that fashion. However, they passed my tying. Afterwards, I thought about this, remembered sitting opposite Robert Bragg, soaking up information and watching from the other side of his desk, and finally realised I tie mirror images. The trout seem happy enough!

Then to the casting class taken by Mel Krieger and Patti Madsen. Because of my height I could generally compete with anglers fishing in a picket fence and also put the fly where I want it – most times! Again there were around 30 anglers casting in the field. I thought I was doing OK but Mel kept looking at me and eventually told me I was over-powering the cast and getting tailing loops. I'd never heard of a tailing loop! Guess that is the problem with being self taught! It certainly hasn't diminished my enthusiasm for such a wonderful sport.

I got my own back on Mel when a he stayed with us in Christchurch a year later. I took him to a spring creek not far from the city and found he couldn't spot fish. But with my instructions he could definitely land his fly in the perfect spot.



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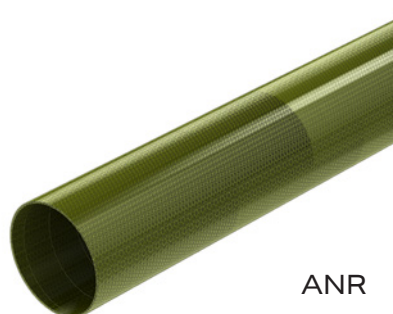
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On the Soap Box

A pre-season rant from Mel Hollis

I had not intended to put an offering together for this issue, nor had I any intention of speaking about political/government happenings either! All that changed with the arrival of two emails in late June.

The first was an article written by David Williams, who is Newsroom's environmental editor and South Island investigative writer. This article looks at a damning government report released on the 26th of May 2023, and it highlights the failures to safeguard our waterways. Currently, around two thirds of our rivers and lakes have declined alarmingly and some are very close to tipping point.

So much for our department of conservation and the ministry of environment keeping an eye on things and having it all under control. More like watching NZ burn and crash, with a chorus of Spike Milligan in the background asking, "What are we going to do now?" Sadly though, this is nothing to jest about, despite decades of reassurances from officials in multiple government departments, telling us that they are all following, "Best practices in land and water management".

Earlier this year, Otago Regional Council CEO stated that the more data they could gather, the better, affirming that this would help them in their decision-making. Many of us have fronted up to council meetings for decades, stating in our submissions that our rivers and lakes are going down the drain, and yet nothing meaningful comes from the powers that be! They are sadly caught up in a Catch 22 situation. They know that current practices are failing to protect our environment, yet successive governments have set a goal of doubling our exports of dairy products, beef and lamb by 2025. So much for our 100% pure PR campaign!

The second email was from Fish & Game, asking us all to voice our concerns over a Bill before parliament currently. The Bill wanted to remove the habitat protection for trout and salmon, which has long been safeguarded by the RMA.

This Bill would have fundamentally stripped Fish & Game's ability to carry out their statutory duty to provide for the interests of anglers and hunters, and to ensure freshwater habitats, including wetlands, are healthy and support trout, salmon and game bird populations.

There has been overwhelming concern about the Bill, but the instigators were determined to forge ahead regardless. Thankfully, the latest news is that a select committee has seen the light, recommending changes to 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.

I sincerely hope that there are enough people in parliament to agree with the select committee changes! Once again this would be laughable, if it were not for the seriousness of the far-reaching implications. The writers of this bill will end up eventually being stabbed in the foot and have the rug pulled out from under them by the Government's growth at any cost goal, irrespective of whichever party gets to steer the bus after the October elections.

As things are, if pollution of our rivers and lakes continues as it has for the five decades that I have been fishing in New Zealand, Trout and Salmon will not be able to survive in the polluted waters as a result of the current export goal of 2025! Ironically, this doesn't leave much hope for the survival of the native species either, which this bill is wanting to protect.

I have no idea currently who I will be giving my vote to in this coming general election, but it will not be either of the two main parties. After 52 years of living here, I have neither confidence nor trust in them!

Make the most of your new season wherever you are, fish as much as you can and if you smile often, I guarantee folks will think you are taking something.

Tight lines and stay safe!



Mike Tihila

By Garrett Evans

A big friend 'from way back when, he was, I think, a Seminole like his Father – though his mother was very Irish – all three of them were very handsome and marvellous people. I regret having lost contact with them over the years, over the decades.

His mother would drop us off by a bridge or river junction, saying she would collect us around dark. She was a wonderful woman and this was in the Maryland of the late 1950's-early 1960's.

We used shot guns usually, and spinning outfits when fishing the Potomac or the canal that ran along it – this latter place was beautiful with restored locks and lock keepers' stone houses. We hunted grey squirrels, rabbits, doves, and bob white quail. And whilst fishing caught sunfish, bass (both large and small mouth), calico bass and others. Trout started a short time later in mountain streams.

I recall walking along or being driven, in a very rural looking place once, and turning to Mike and saying: 'people sure don't live too high up the hog round here...' Mike Tihila found this funnier than hell.

We were fishing a Reservoir once in the area using small poppers on cane flyrods with good spinning reels, mine a Luxor reel from France. It was growing dark and suddenly there was a voice behind us, asking if I were Gary Evans. It was another 'Army Brat' I'd known, probably in France or Germany. I was curious as hell but he moved off into the dark woods with his group of fishing friends. So later Mike, I and some others moved off too – we had a good catch of fish and a fine time casting away. The it was time to move off home, just as it was years and years later, to the home I had in South Africa.

*To pretty wife and little young son,
The barking springers will spring in the hallway
Before dawn the flighting plovers will call
Then the breeze will bestir the curtains to whispers
And shadows call our names.*



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How long have you fished? Yrs

Which methods do you use most?

Dry Fly Nymph Wet Fly Lake Shoreline

Fly Boat Fly Switch Spey

Do you prefer to *stalk* or *fish blind*?

Where do you fish?

Locally Islandwide Nationwide Taupo

Rotorua Lakes Waitaki Southern Lakes

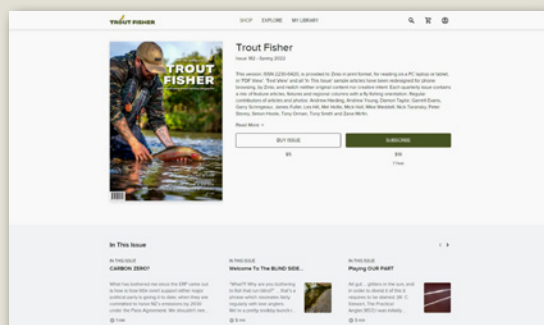
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Reports Predictions Methods Fly Tying

Tackle Locations Ideas

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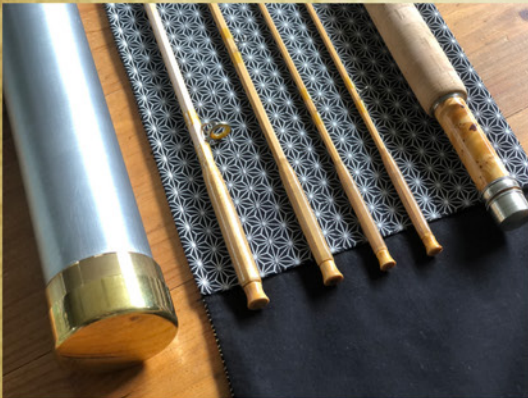


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Made To Fish

Handcrafted split cane fly rods since 2004
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Bespoke (custom) and Maker's Selection (ready to order) rods.
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