

Issue 191

TROUT FISHER

Fly-focussed ~ totally transferable

Summer 2024



CLARKE'S CADDIS

Reflections on nymphing small streams
A month in Montana ~ Luck or Knowledge
Confessions of an Addicted Salmon Angler
Wild Dogs & Fishermen

TROUT FISHER

Fly-focussed ~ totally transferable

Summer 2024

2 On NYMPHING small streams

As I write this (my first article for a fishing magazine), I think about some of the advancements in fly fishing tactics for trout in the time that I have been involved in this fascinating pastime. It seems every year, more and more fly fishers are dabbling with techniques such as tight line nymphing tactics in its various forms. Tight line nymphing (to me at least!), comprises various forms that have gained popularity over the years, after being introduced earlier in the much larger markets of the US and Europe.

By Steve Griffith



6 STOP?

2024/25 began well for me on the lake. Searching open water for trout rather than the generally much easier task of trying to intercept them at the shoreline, using identical tackle and tactics, by mid-October I had already landed a third of my total catch for last season – my poorest in over 40 years' on this lake.

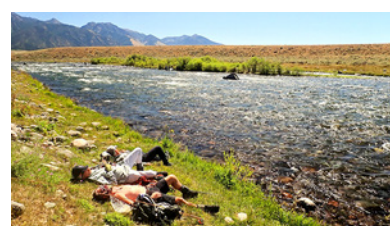
Talking Plenty with Peter Storey



12 A month in Montana

For a dry fly nut, a cold, wet Taihape Winter can make the fishing feel a long way away. A simple solution to this predicament is to get on a plane and fly to Montana for a month and that is exactly what I did in August 2024.

Nick Taransky escapes a Kiwi winter



22 NEW GEAR

From Boot Studs NZ, Manic and Kilwell

26 Clarke's Caddis

This somewhat unconventional deer hair technique is made easier if long hair can be used. Although regular long deer hair can be employed, I prefer to use the stiffer waxy cow elk hair. The extra length and rigidity of this hair makes the handling and technique much easier to perfect.

An adaptation of Chapter 14 of Barry Ord Clarke's latest fly tying book



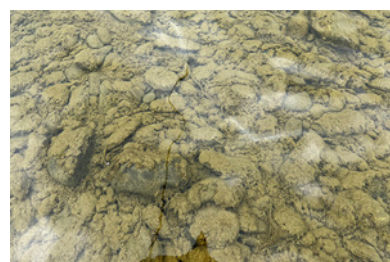
Cover Clarke's Caddis. (Barry Ord-Clarke)

ISSN 2230-6420 No part of this magazine may be reproduced without permission of the publisher. Any articles carrying a copyright symbol also require permission of the author. All enquires to Peter Storey: peter@nztroutfisher.co.nz.

36 Feds Battle RAKAIA WCO Test

The NZ Federation of Freshwater Anglers, a national trout and salmon fishing advocacy is battling to safeguard the future of the Rakaia River and several other prized waters that are protected by a Water Conservation Order status, akin to national park status on wilderness areas.

By Tony Orman



38 Luck or Knowledge

Over my nearly 21 years of life I have grown up with fishing. Both my parents went fishing and took me out with them. While I never really got into the hobby as much as them I still to this day, enjoy the ability to go to an open body of water and play around with different fishing rods, lines and flies.

Todd Storey reflects on an early season trip to the Waimakariri



40 Finding another 'Home Base'

As time rolled round to the 1997-98 fishing season there had been a change to my living arrangements. Hazel, who had been flatting with her oldest son, needed somewhere else to live and the logical thing was for her to move in to my place.

Part 8 of Confessions of an addicted salmon angler, by Larry Burke



46 Wild Dogs & Fishermen . . .

What makes a barren frost plain in a national park interesting for hikers, adventurers and anglers alike? Perhaps, it's what lies within these naked valleys is like a treasure hunt waiting to be explored? A land scattered with historic alpine huts built more than a hundred years ago, each with their own history and narrative. Once used for grazing and a working culture, today easily accessible for a day visit, or an overnigher. A place brimming with Australian wildlife, including brumbies and if you're lucky, a rarely seen wild dog

Matt Hoole and family visit Long Plain NSW



Reflections on NYMPHING small streams

Part 1 – The modular leader

By Steve Griffith



As I write this (my first article for a fishing magazine), I think about some of the advancements in fly fishing tactics for trout in the time that I have been involved in this fascinating pastime. It seems every year, more and more fly fishers are dabbling with techniques such as tight line nymphing tactics in its various forms. Tight line nymphing (to me at least!), comprises various forms that have gained popularity over the years, after being introduced earlier in the much larger markets of the US and Europe.

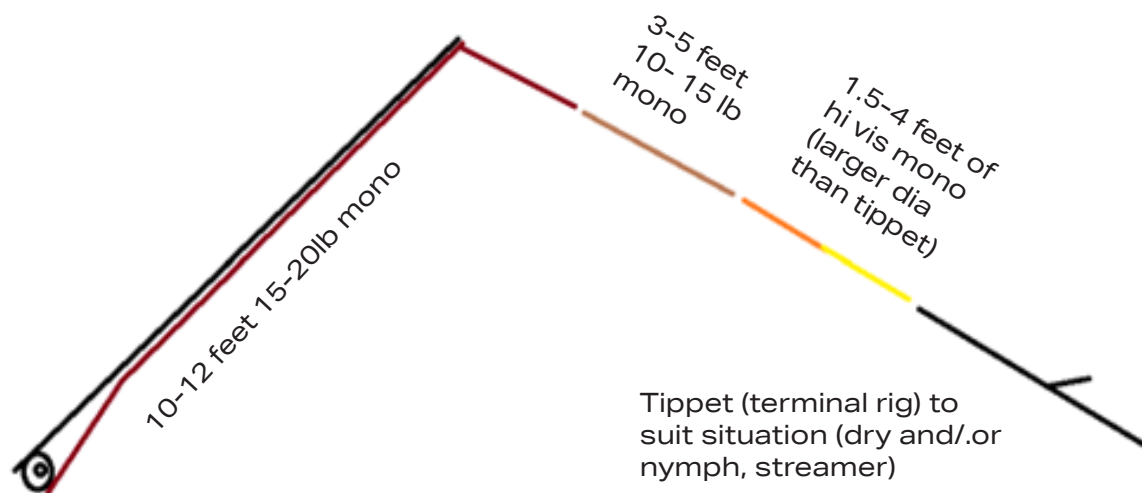
As I have observed through many of the popular magazines and podcasts; both here and overseas, many of these tight line tactics have developed a reputation of pushing the boundaries on what is considered 'sporting'. While there is some truth in specific situations, this isn't always justified in my view. In reality, when an angler is fishing on a small stream (say 14 feet wide) with a long leader connected to a standard fly line, what is the difference between this, and what we now call 'tight line', 'Euro', 'Czech', 'Polish', 'French' or any other derivation of this style of fishing? I would argue that in many cases, not much.

What I will say though is how much tightline techniques have dramatically improved my catch rate; particularly on small streams like the one pictured here.

There is nothing new about mastering the art of achieving a good dead drift on a well-presented cast, fished from a long leader. What has changed the game though has been the slow but steady improvement in the equipment being used, notably the lightweight 2-3 weight rods of between 10 and 11 feet in length that are now commonly used. What was once a rather clunky and desensitised experience casting these lightweight rigs with 5 or 6 weight rods at short range, has evolved into a well-refined technique where relatively small flies can be cast with a high degree of accuracy.

Key to this, particularly when fishing with dry fly, dry/dropper, medium to heavy nymphs, or even streamer, is to fish a leader that allows a decent turnover when fishing payloads that are either heavy and/or wind resistant. A modular leader is key to success in this scenario. This is a tapered leader which is designed to be used for a range of fishing scenarios. They are either hand-tied models, or manufactured tapered leaders with a taper specifically designed to be able to fish a range of flies that you may use through a day's fishing.

Depending on factors such as rod weight, payload of flies, wind speed and casting distance, the leaders vary in length between 10 and 30 feet or more, starting with butt sections that vary between 12 and 30 pounds (with 15-20 lb more common), tapering to diameters typically close to the chosen tippet size. It is useful to introduce a section of high visibility sighter material between the end of the tapered section of leader, and the tippet. On small streams that are often covered with vegetation, and a high degree of varying contrast and sun/shade, some variability in the line colour is useful (see below):





There are many online resources with a wide variety of taper designs/recipes – I suggest experiment and find one that works well for you through trial and error. For a typical 3 weight rod, I like 20 pound butt section as a good all round weight for leaders of 14-20 feet in length. Competition anglers will tend to use lighter diameters to reduce the effects of drag. Stiff leader materials are useful here, with Maxima Chameleon a good all-round choice, as shown left.

The ideal presentation scenario on small streams is to cast directly upstream and drift your rig back towards the rod tip, for a drag free drift. With short presentations of 10-25 feet with only mono leader out the rod tip, drifts of 5-10 seconds are typical. It is then very quick to back-cast and fish the next drift. What I like about this technique on small streams with long rods is that you can fish the entire width of the stream thoroughly, and with a high degree of accuracy, often without needing to enter the river and disturb fish.

The beauty of the modular leader is its versatility. An angler can fish nymphs on the way upstream, and change over to a streamer for the downstream return to the car. Depending on the diameter of tippet being used with the nymphs, it may be possible to use the same tippet weight for the streamer, particularly if the streamer is on the smaller size. Because a small stream is typically shallower than a larger river, a streamer with an appropriately weighted bead will often achieve sufficient depth without the need for a sinking tip or a separate fly line. This appeals to me as it keeps things simple, and means less gear to carry on a warm summer day.

The modular leader system is ideal for beginner to intermediate anglers getting into tight line techniques, where ease of casting and versatility on small streams is key. This comes without the complications of more advanced techniques typically utilising thinner lines, which are more specialised in nature and require a higher degree of skill in line control, handling and casting. This will be covered in a future article, where I will share some of my own experiences in learning how to fish thinner leaders.





Even when trout are feeding stillwater angling involves chance, on top of skill. When you land something or begin losing focus, it's time for THAT decision . . .

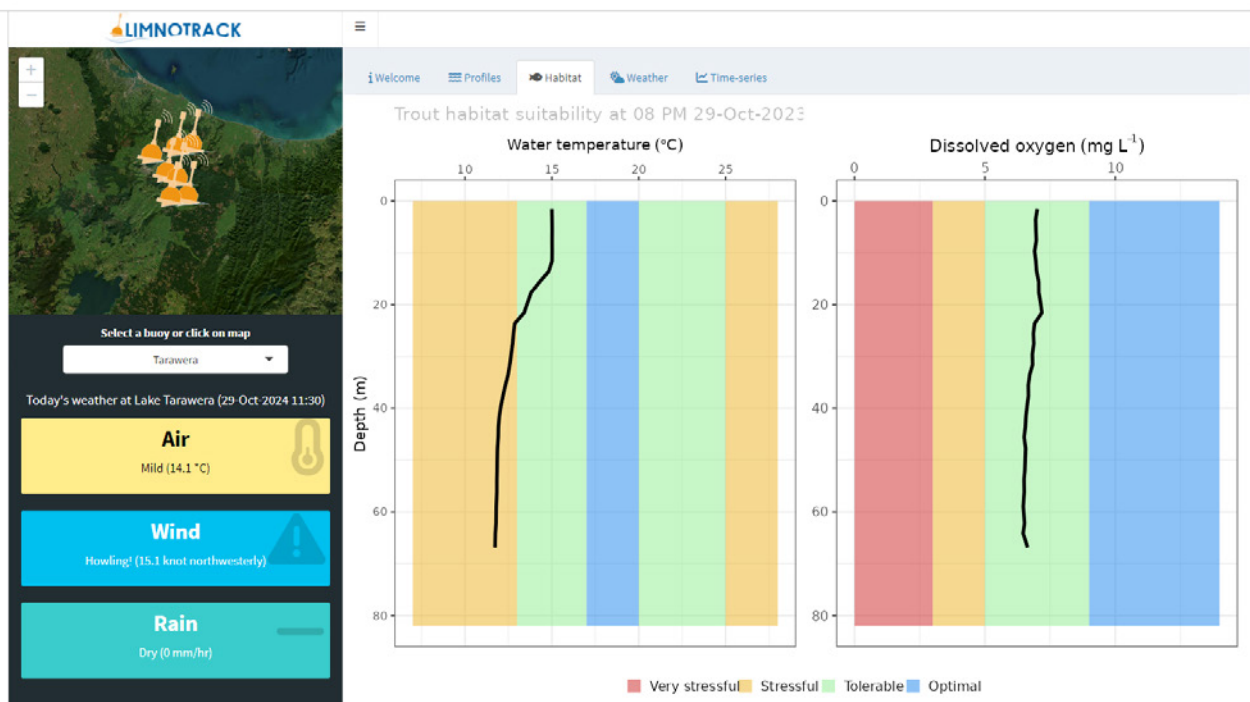
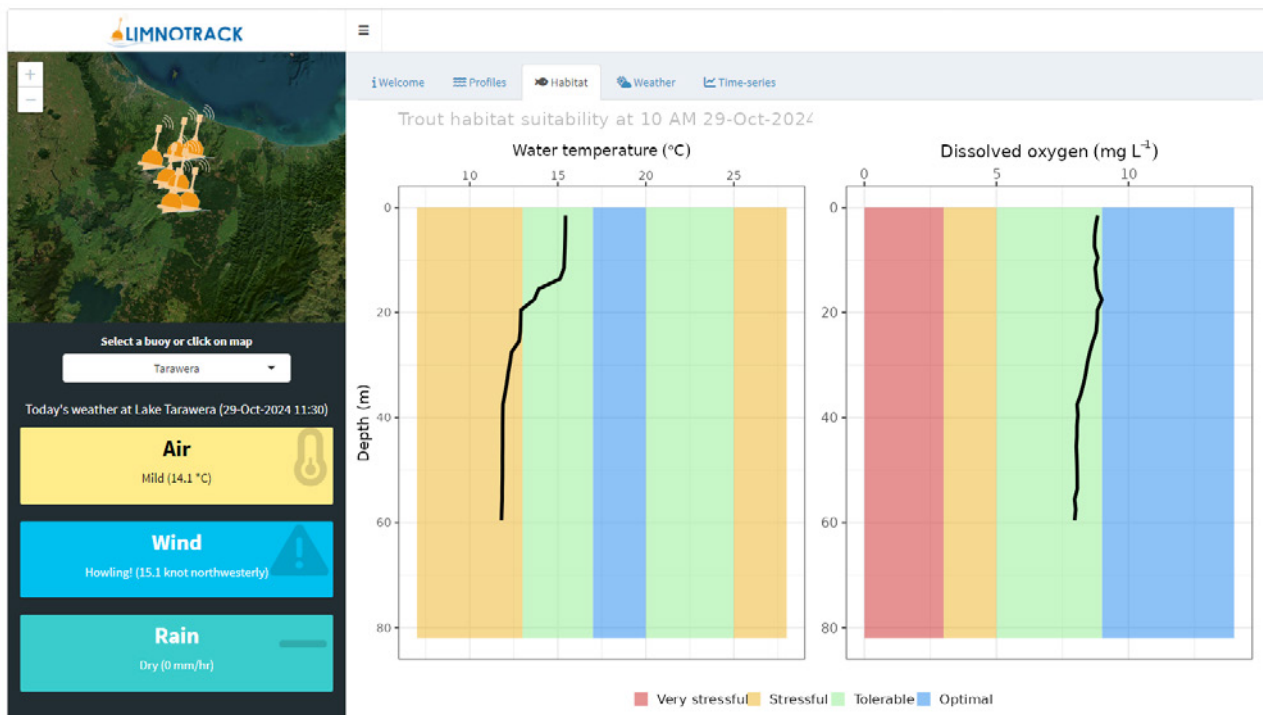
STOP?

Talking Plenty with Peter Storey

2024/25 began well for me on the lake. Searching open water for trout rather than the generally much easier task of trying to intercept them at the shoreline, using identical tackle and tactics, by mid-October I had already landed a third of my total catch for last season – my poorest in over 40 years on this lake. Since then I've had enough 'blank'awns with fish around me to suggest another challenging season lies ahead, as well-fed fish become increasingly aware of angling pressure. There's always an element of chance in stillwater, however, and despite an early 'run' into the shoreline late October smelting is still ahead. That will provide a much clearer picture.

The catch to date, a full spectrum from maiden to kelt, seems generally in better condition than last year. You can see from these Limnotrack charts downloaded from <https://envdata.boprc.govt.nz/Data/Dashboard/151> and still close mid-November, there's little difference in water temperate but a higher dissolved oxygen level than last year, yet neither rates optimal for trout habitat. So my read is that the smelt population is the most significant factor. Firstly, there now a lot more smelt in the lake with the annual hatchery releases back to 10,000 rather than the 30,000 pa held for nearly a decade, while lakes Rotorua and Rotoiti were heavily polluted. Secondly, those smelt are getting larger too, suggesting that perhaps as well as less predation by trout, their food chain may have also improved; and it seems worth mentioning here, that the lake has only been dosed with Diquat around launching sites these past two or three years, rather than over the inshore reefs as well. Whatever, this one, coughed up by a barely 1kg maiden and nearly filling its half-closed mouth, is 105-110mm in length and towards the top end of the population





scale but the clearly general increase had me tying Ratropinna in #4, as well as the usual #6-10. All this season's fish to date have taken the latter sizes, but the #4 also looks bully/koaro/koura enough on the lake bed to see it getting used that way.

Offshore I'm using the usual #6 SA Wet Cel S6 fast sink line, fast sink leader and fluorocarbon tippet. I have tried different speed leaders and come back to a particular older braided fast that seems to provide the most consistent results. With any appreciable wind, this is cast ahead into undisturbed water with a drogue behind the canoe and retrieved or, if more breeze than wind, cast at right angles to the freely-drifting canoe and swung, wet fly style. I have to troll my way back to each new start point and so far, that's proven less effective than either fly fishing approach. If held close to the shore by excessive wind the same lure is on an SA Wet Cel S2 medium sink, intermediate braided leader and fluoro tippet. Here, right after launching and given fish clearly feeding in the near vicinity, I will also tie up onto a buoy and work the open water immediately beyond.

Note the fluoro tippet has been scuffed with pumice to take the shine produced in its manufacturing out of the equation in a 'blind' presentation. By this I mean, that because I cannot see the fish and it's swimming in stillwater, I have no control over what it will see first. Knowing from direct observations over numerous years, that when stillwater fish are feeding casually they inspect anything encountered closely, any shiny leaders get scuffed too. There's little point in trying to convince a fish with far better eyesight than yours a bundle of fur wrapped around a piece of steel is the real thing, when it has already noticed, stopped to inspect and probably bitten, whatever leads from that bundle back to you . . .



While the 169 is very stable and floats full of water, there are definite practical limits fishing from it, solo and tandem. Given any decent offshore or, worst case by far, shifting wind it's an SA 2 session or close-in SA 6, full stop. However I can head out into the lake on an inshore, knowing I can drift back in on the shock cord-secured drogue should it worsen. As with any kind of boat, there is also a point when it becomes too rough to fish effectively; but it seems clear this particular limitation, even when fishing solo, involves little difference to those boats regularly around me. Fishing at dawn there's a torch in my jacket. My back up pack of lures, leaders, tippet, pumice, priest and glasses are on a waist belt, along with the net. Whatever time of day I carry two paddles; the standard backup to get off the water and the customised, far stealthier otter tail for fishing. Launched in moments, quieter than an electric motor on the water, Canadians make highly efficient fishing platforms.





Looking forward, this issue will see a probably short continuation of surface feeding, until rising surface temperatures force the trout to feed deeper. I say 'probably short' because last Summer proved that cool surface feeding never ended, just got progressively harder. A normal Summer should see it all done and dusted by Christmas but who knows what 2024 has in store.

Normally, a clear thermocline forms at the point where the warmer surface water mixes with the denser, cooler bottom water and typically, this area contains the most highly-oxygenated water during Summer too. Thermoclines generally sit around 20-25m here and once the surface action is over I will then start targeting the lake bed in that depth range with the same SA Wet Cel S6 set up, using a dab of glue set at 20m along the line. On the tippet will be either a bead head koura imitation or the much smaller yellow foam head black rabbit fur body floating Gibson's Choice featured in Issue 188. That said, Ratropinna takes fish at this depth too and I will probably start with that until it's plain I need something more obvious, to catch the attention of sluggish Summer fish. (This is how I finish potentially blank dawns now, because if putting everything close to the lure on the lake bed rather than around or above it does not work at any depth, it's likely nothing will. It's proven successful, too.)

Summer fishing typically becomes increasingly challenging when fishing blind on built-up knowledge and I choose to keep doing so. A more effective strategy on this lake is targeting electronically 'spotted' fish within the thermocline area. Simply knowing where smelt shoals are at this – indeed any - time of year is the most critical factor on all these lakes for successful fishing, however. Smelt are, without question, the prime food source for the bulk of their trout populations year-round and trout follow these shoals, which show up like mist/cloud on electronics.

After the magnificent scenery and year-round fishing opportunities, one of the other reasons for living here is that I like to eat trout and can do so without any qualms, since the lake is stocked. Raised on a diet of unlimited smelt, a prime maiden Lake Tarawera trout ranks among the best, Omega-laden fat oozing out as you clean it. Most of my annual catch goes back into the lake, of course, as with a stocking rate of 10,000 rainbows per annum, that fish will likely be around 2kg and will last us a week. The lake still carries an 8 fish per rod daily bag limit, however, and while I will agree that's hard to achieve, averaging more than one per session is not. We have learnt the hard way that the Lake Tarawera smelt population crashes if stocking is raised above 12,500. Maybe it's time to review the limit on this lake.

The three river visits made so far were magic. On the first the river was nearly as high as the same time last year, roughly twice normal flow and again, dirty on the far bank where a tributary rising in and passing through forestry enters. Fortunately the main river rises in bush, was still clear enough to fish and the near bank, deeply undercut. Time to test out my hand-tied version of Clarke's Caddis . . .

I chose to feature that chapter because this is a summer issue, it features a dry fly/emergent, and caddis will be hatching everywhere by the time this reaches you. As I told Barry, this pattern clearly has high potential over here. In this form, and with a longer body for the net-building (*Aoteapsyche colonica*) 'woolly' caddis that abound on both islands, especially in hydro-controlled water.

"You can make the extended body as long or as short as the caddis pattern you are imitating requires," he replied. "Generally, the longer the hair the easier it is to handle and achieve the desired body effect. The elk that I prefer to use for this pattern is cow elk rump and approximately 5 cm long. You can also use natural deer hair, it's just a little more challenging."

Next I asked him whether he locks the thread and lets the glue set at Stage 7, before moving on to 8. (Locking is an absolute 'must' at every stage when hand tying and so is wax. Glue never enters the picture, tying 'to order' on the river bank.)

"No locking off the thread. I wax my thread with tying wax. When applied to the thread, this will hold it in place and stop it slipping."

Finally I asked Barry how he fishes the finished fly – an across and downstream approach made sense to me, but given the dubbed head . . .

"This is what I call a 'ploppe' You can fish it dry, skating in the surface as a skittering adult or as an emerger. It can be fished to great effect as an emerger on a floating line with a slow sink Poly leader and long tippet. This allows you to make a long slow retrieve that will pull the fly under, making it swim just below the surface. As the retrieve ends, it will 'plop' up through the surface film, emulating the emerging caddis pupa. I trim the underside of the pattern so when fished as an adult it sits lower in the surface film giving a more dynamic footprint."





I had no elk hair but remembering, searched around and found a Chamois skin I was given years ago, felt how waxy it still was and thought, why not! Within minutes I had tied a version in the vice and realising how much easier Stage 7 was than it may sound, tied another by hand from just the hair, for simplicity when tying on the bank.

That first outing, given the state of the river I put a near-black version made from spine hair on the tippet with the slow sink leader behind . . . and in about an hour spent at three proven locations saw no reaction to its spot-on behaviour. Two days later, the river half way back to normal and a lot clearer, there were two rainbows feeding just out from the same undercut bank. First swing, with this lighter coloured flank hair 'plopping' up onto the surface again, exactly as the darker one had, the larger of the two sped forward past the other and took it. Early November, on an overcast day with the river close to normal and clear, multiple fish reacted the same way. Once this issue is uploaded, next stop Ngongotaha!

Thank you, Barry, Clarke's Caddis has found a place in my arsenal going forward. This realistic-looking-and-acting pattern is far easier to tie than it may seem, by vice or hand, and I thoroughly recommend fly-tying readers to try it.

In closing, please notice that I used 'chance' rather than 'luck' in making that opening statement. I am a flyfisher but I too need to keep reminding myself to angle rather than fish for trout. Angling, to me, means the careful use of logical tactics to achieve a specific aim until it's clear the chance of achievement is minimal for that session; fishing is more like putting what you get told worked last week on and hoping. 40 years spent chasing Lake Tarawera rainbows has taught me that to successfully hunt trout in stillwater demands concentration and that's hard to maintain. So when faced with indifference (maybe even success?) at your chosen stillwater venue this Summer, make that decision. STOP, and come back refreshed . . .





A month in Montana

By Nick Taransky

For a dry fly nut, a cold, wet Taihape Winter can make the fishing feel a long way away. A simple solution to this predicament is to get on a plane and fly to Montana for a month and that is exactly what I did in August 2024. Peter Hayes and a few other Tasmanian friends have started to make an annual trip to the Madison Valley in recent years. For Peter, it's an opportunity to take advantage of the "off" guiding season, do some fishing himself, and escape the bleak Tasmanian Winter for Northern Hemisphere sunshine.

I didn't need to be asked twice when invited for the latest visit. So it was great excitement that I flew out of Auckland, to meet up with Peter, fellow rodmaker David Hemmings, and Tackle store owner Mike Stevens at San Francisco airport. From there, we all boarded the same flight to Bozeman, Montana. After a short visit to the Simms factory and some local tackle stores, we drove an hour to the a 4 bedroom house that Peter had rented, in the small town of Ennis, on the Madison River. There we met up with Randall Trethewie, who had already arrived a fortnight earlier, staying around the corner in a salubrious abode, right on the banks of the river. We'd later be joined by another Aussie, Ross McPherson, for a few days too.

ENNIS

Even with six Aussies in the one town, we hardly made an impact on the local angling numbers (though we did do our best to make a dent in the local Gin stocks). With a population of around one thousand, Ennis has four excellent fly fishing shops, each employing a team of guides. Every second vehicle coming through town seemed to be towing a drift boat. It was obvious that the whole culture of the town revolved around fly fishing, and locals appreciated that fishing and visitors were a major factor in employment and the success of the local economy. Even when checking out at the local supermarket, you are asked if you want to "Round up for the River". This meant rounding up the payment to the nearest dollar, to go to the Madison River Foundation <https://www.madisonriverfoundation.org> which does a lot of environmental and other work in support of the Madison and its tributaries.



Ennis . . .

Fly shops with plenty to choose from . . . even the coffee has a fly fishing flavour . . .

Ennis has a really nice feel to it. Although a large part of its existence is to service visitors, it still has a local town "vibe", and isn't overly "touristy" or fake. Our daily routine would be to have a coffee and breakfast muffin, usually at the Sure Shot Cafe, and hatch a plan for the day. After fishing, there were plenty of places to eat out, including the "Gravel Bar", just 50 metres from our house. We also ate in a lot, with Mike and David doing the cooking. (I let the other guys cook, for everyone's sake!)

The August weather in the Madison valley was a dream, coming out of a NZ Winter. Most days were sunny, warm and settled, almost like clockwork. We did have a few afternoon showers here and there, but nothing that affected the fishing adversely.

FISHING CULTURE

For all of us, the welcoming fishing culture was a big part of why we loved our visit. It's strange, in our home countries, anglers do mix in a limited way, but maybe because of lower fish populations, and less available water, people tend to focus on staying away from others, and concentrating on the fish. When there are so many anglers around, like in the Madison Valley, you make your peace with the fact and don't feel any animosity; in fact, the opposite seems to be the case. It's really nice to strike up a conversation in the bridge car park with other anglers, and compare experiences and plans. That's not to say that you want to share a small tributary with a crowd of people, but the main river is able to cope with the masses (and we had little trouble finding small streams to fish on our own). Dropping in to fly stores was also a big part of the "scene". While we all participated in a bit of "retail therapy", the staff in all of the stores were very generous in providing information on places to try regardless.





The locals are proud of their valley, and seemingly very willing to share it. One thing that we all noticed was that, despite the number of anglers and general visitors, the near total lack of any rubbish left along all of the rivers and lakes that we fished.

Visiting the Simms and Winston factories, or spending time casting with people like Bruce Richards, Simon Gawesworth, and the Big Sky guys on the Bob Jacklin Casting pool in West Yellowstone was as rewarding as the fishing itself. Similarly, going to the Rodeo and Buffalo Bill Museum in Cody, Wyoming, and all of the other aspects of the culture of the USA and American West in particular, made the trip the memorable experience that it was.

SCENERY AND WILDLIFE

The scenery of course is awe inspiring. The trip along the Beartooth Highway for me was perhaps the highlight of the whole trip. Yellowstone National Park is a must visit, despite the crowds along the main roadway. Something as common as an Elk can lead to a major traffic jam, which can be a little frustrating if you are trying to get to a river at the far side of the park.

In and outside the park we saw a huge amount of wildlife. Bison (including fishing near them in the Lamar Valley), a wolf hunting grasshoppers, coyote, foxes, bald eagles, marmots, ground squirrels, chipmonks, elk and other deer were a contest reminder that we were in the U S of A.

We didn't see any bears on this trip (I've seen both blacks and grizzlies before), and I wasn't too fussed about that. We all carried bear spray, and made plenty of noise to make sure we didn't have any surprise encounters. Walking back to the car after a day's fishing at dusk, through a scenic valley, with Peter's bluetooth speakers blaring loud music was a surreal experience. What it took from the "ambience" it easily made up for as bear repellent.

Curiously, after struggling to spot any moose in Yellowstone Park, David woke one morning and told us to look out the front window of our house in Ennis. There was a cow moose with two calves right by our front door!





Mike Stevens playing a Madison brown in Big Sky Country

THE FISHERY

The Madison River forms the backbone of the local fishing. Formed by the junction of the Firehole and Gibbon rivers inside Yellowstone National Park, it flows NNW out of the park, through Hebgen and Quake Lakes through Ennis, and then Ennis Lake, before continuing North to meet the Missouri near Bozeman. From Yellowstone to Ennis Lake is over 110km, including a stretch known as the "50 mile riffle". The river contains a mix of browns and rainbows, with a population of around 2-3,000 fish per km - that's over 2 fish per metre! It's little wonder that the valley can support so many anglers...

While there is quite a bit of public bank access to the Madison, much of it is bordered by private land. Some landowners closely monitor their "patch of paradise", and are very willing to come down and passionately share their interpretation of Montana property law. While we didn't have any of these encounters on our trip, this was largely because we avoided most of these places. There was still plenty of access, and wading in the river was an option (and possible) in most places, regardless of ownership of the bank. This is in contrast to say much of Colorado, where landowners are considered to own the river bed. It goes without saying that this makes wading, or even anchoring a drift boat a potential "issue"...





Drift Boats are a popular method to access long stretches of the Madison



Peter Hayes nets one on a long line leader and dry fly

Anyway, on the Madison, both wading and drift boat options are popular. Many drift boat guides deploy pingpong ball sized "bobbers" with a pair of heavily weighted nymphs, for occasional-angler clients. These indicators are so big that you can see them from the highway, while driving past at 80 miles an hour. I was tempted to yell "strike" out the window, except that it's redundant - the bobbers are so buoyant that I think most fish hook themselves on the take... It's a testimony to the resilience of the fishery that you could look up a stretch of river from the highway and see no less than five drift boats following each other down the river, with two anglers in each boat plopping a bobber from one side to the other. If there is a limit to the number of anglers all those fish can take, it must be getting close.

Many wading anglers used Euro/Tight Line Nymphing techniques, with plenty of success. But we hadn't travelled across the globe, chasing the Summer, to fish like that. I think Mike caught one fish on a nymph just to upset the rest of us, but everything else was caught on dry flies. One challenge that the drift boats have, is that in the swift flow and boat drift lines, a lot of soft back





Local guru Ed shares his knowledge on Ennis Lake and overset, male *Baetis mayfly spinner*

eddies and tight edges and undercuts can't be effectively fished from a boat. Even while wading, the complex currents are difficult to drift with a conventional leader setup, without drag occurring. Converts to long leader fishing (especially Japanese LDL style), we had a wonderful time getting really nice drag-free drifts in the tricky currents. With careful wading and presentations we were rewarded by more than enough fish, despite regular boat traffic.

Another opportunity that the Madison offers are the lakes that it flows through (Hebgen, Quake and Ennis). There can be wonderful *Callibaetis* mayfly fishing on these. This is Randall's forte, to the point that he has a boat permanently in Montana to take advantage of this. We had a few nice sessions on the lakes with Randall, and he kindly offered me the fishing chances while he played guide for me, even though I insisted on using a bamboo rod!

One issue that we had to work around during our visit were fishing restrictions on some stretches of the Madison and other rivers due to warm water temperatures. Being high Summer, when temperature thresholds were surpassed, "Hoot Owl" restrictions were put into place. This meant that no fishing was allowed from 2pm to midnight. Some rivers, like the Jefferson, and the Madison in Yellowstone were totally closed for periods. While superficially bad news, there was always open fishing in plenty of headwater streams, and parts of the river below dam releases, where the water stayed cold. An upside to this is that some American anglers deferred their Montana fishing because of the restrictions, so there was less overall pressure than in other years.

The other point to make in regard to the time of year, is that the Montana fishing, especially dry fly, is driven by the hatches. August is in a shoulder period for mayflies, with terrestrials being more of an option. The downside of visiting during iconic hatches like the Green Drake or Salmon or Golden Stonefly is that everyone else wants to be there for it too. For me, I would consider a slightly different time frame to August in the future, just to have a window into a little more mayfly fishing. Having said that, we certainly did find plenty of the sort of selective fishing that I live for, including some small but demanding fish!





As mentioned, aside from the main river, there were plenty of tributaries and other small streams to fish. Sometimes the four of us would split up into pairs to fish, but often all four of us would fish together. As we were all watching the same dry fly, we were equally happy to be doing the actual fishing or "helping" with advice (welcome or otherwise). This approach drew quite a bit of consternation from people we met - "so you fly around the world, and you fish one at a time with the other three watching? Don't you want to fish separately and catch more fish?" The point was, that we were there to hang out together and enjoy each other's company, as well as learn from each other's subtly different methods and approaches. We caught hundreds of fish as it was. How much is enough?

Interestingly, many of the tributaries and smaller streams had little or no pressure from what we could see. Most people wanted to fish the main river, possibly because of the larger average fish size. One real bonus of the small streams was the diversity of species. As well as browns and rainbows, we encountered far more native pure cutthroats in the smaller streams. On top of that, we caught plenty of brookies, some arctic grayling and whitefish.

A typical Madison brown

A brookie and right, David Hemmings on the Wyoming stream it came from





Henry's Fork on two contrasting tough days

Outside of the Madison catchment, we fished a range of other waters in day trip distance from Ennis. A must visit for me was the Harriman State Park (Railroad Ranch) section of the Henry's Fork of the Snake River. It's one of the most iconic hatch-based waters in the world. I'd been there in 2002 and got skunked despite quite a few fish rising. This time, we visited it on two tough days, without much happening, but a few big fish moved here and there to give us a chance. I caught a few small fish (which a local told me don't count), but Mike picked up two big rainbows in a handful of casts, shrugging his shoulders as if it wasn't that hard! I really, really need to go back there. A local I spoke to on the bank, says it's the only place he fishes and he goes there nearly every day. I totally understand where he is coming from. I'm haunted by it.

Before we knew it, the month had come to an end. A month of almost constant fishing and I'm missing it already...

Caddis abound in Soda Butte Creek, Yellowstone National Park



Arctic grayling



Cutthroat



Mike Stevens on a
creek with brookies,
grayling and cutts in
the mix



NEW GEAR

BEST GRIP BOOT STUDS

Reviewed by Peter Storey

I was immediately dubious when Harley emailed me, asking if I would be prepared to review his Italian-made tungsten boot studs, designed to enhance the gripping power of work or hiking boots. Thinking it over, however, I decided to see what difference they might make to the Boonies I have. So I sent Harley their specs and asked him to pick the stud model for me, and am glad that I did.

Since that email and decision, you see, I have had my lower back x-rayed after constant pain over the last winter, expecting to find an old rugby injury had resurfaced and possibly, worsened. Still there, it hadn't; instead I found out that on top of the rheumatoid that led to my starting this magazine 30+ years ago, my

right hip is now at Stage 4 with osteoarthritis. It's fair to claim then, these studs have been thoroughly tested on as many dangerous surfaces as I could find around here, over farmland and during October, on an algae-covered boulder and, frequently totally rock-bedded river set in full bush. The only place I can think of that might have tested them fuller would be an ultra-smooth obsidian chasm on the Rangitaiki in the now closed Kaingaroa Forest.

As you can see, I screwed the 1100-F studs into the gaps between the heel and sole cleats, so that the studs just protrude above the sole. Having dealt with hobnails seriously, as a kid and in the army, I was worried they might hold





Best Grip Stud Models, L-R: 1000, 1100-F, 3000B-F, 3000B-P, 3000A-F, 3000A-P

my feet too securely and set my hip off. The roughly 1mm prominence still definitely catches on wood but has proven both comfortable and adequately secure on every other surface I have encountered.

To pick a couple of common scenarios, I have some lethal-when-wet grass slopes around here that have historically put me on my back numerous times and these have been worse than usual over the entire test period. While not recommended for snow, I can also guarantee they work fine on heavily frosted steep concrete driveways and jetties. Getting down through the bush to the unquestionably worst case river bed during that week of heavy rain mid-October, was surprisingly easy too.

Best Grip Boot Studs cost \$49.50 for a set of 28, or \$69.50 if you buy the installation tool as well; both plus postage. I thoroughly recommend them.

Please also note that studs in this range can be used with vehicle tyres, as an alternative to snow chains. For more info contact:-

Harley Grant; sales@bootstuds.nz; website: <https://bootstuds.nz>

1100-F Stud Technical Information

Application: Footwear, Wader Boots

Dimensions: 7.9 x 9.8 mm ~ Prominence: 1.9 mm (from tread surface) ~ Stud

Penetration: 7.9 mm (into tread surface) ~ Minimum Tread Depth: 9.0 mm ~ Carbide

Tip Width: 2.2 mm ~ Corresponding Tool: #3200 Install Tool



NEW FLYWEIGHT BOOT

The new Flyweight Boot is a balanced blend of light weight, travel-ready performance, grippy Vibram traction, and the kind of no-quit durability that gets it done.

- Durable and lightweight, TPU-based synthetic woven upper material
- Molded, rubber toe wrap and abrasion panels protect against wear and tear
- Lace-up closure with reinforced eyelets
- High cushion dual-density EVA midsole for comfort and stability
- Vibram® idroprip with Traction Lug outsole optimizes stability while walking and wading in water
- The outsole is compatible with Simms Harbite and Alumibite Star Cleats and Hardite cleats/studs
- Drain holes to prevent water pooling



HARE AND COPPER

The old faithful hare and copper has to be NZ's favourite nymph. The team at Manic have relaunched their collection with a huge array of bead colours and of course the faithful unbeaded version. All tied on Kamasan B175 hooks and high quality German tungsten beads.



NEW PRIMAL REVEL CS RODS

The new Primal REVEL CS has been launched in Australia and New Zealand and it's a rod that will turn a lot of heads, human and fish alike. CS stands for carbon scrim, and like the big daddy CCC versions, this technology brings about a whole new casting experience for the user.

The trend in fly fishing these days is to get lighter rods with a crisper feel and the new REVEL CS has exceptionally fast recovery and is extremely lightweight in the hand.

The carbon scrim technology gives the angler more sensitivity to feel every take. The Carbon Scrim makes this an incredibly strong rod - incredibly strong. Couple this with its unground blank you've got a rod that feels super light in your hand but will punch line out even in the windiest conditions.

- High modulus 55MSI blanks
- CS - Carbon Scrim
- Lightweight single foot guides
- LFA - Longitudinal Fibre Alignment
- Codura rod tube with carry strap
- Cloth rod bag
- 4pc travel design
- Supported by Primal Quick Fix warranty service

More info on these products: <https://www.manictackleproject.com/>



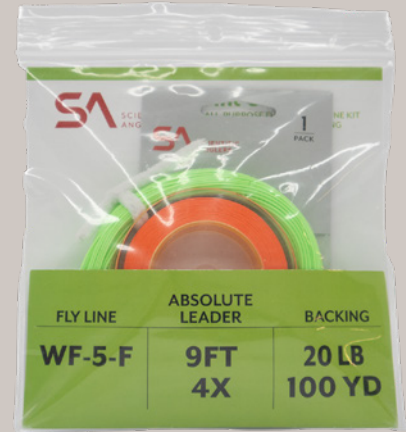
SCIENTIFIC ANGLERS AIR CEL KIT

The original modern floating fly line, now with a front loop.

Dependable flotation and durability. Raised bump in handling section to indicate the ideal place to begin the cast. Mid-length head for general fishing situations. Braided multifilament core

Kit includes Backing, Fly Line and Absolute Trout Leader. Available #5, #6, #7, #8

\$99.99



FLY LINE	ABSOLUTE LEADER	BACKING
WF-5-F	9FT 4X	20LB 100 YD

SCIENTIFIC ANGLERS REVIVE

Apply onto a clean fly line. Adds Slickness.

Can be used with AST and AST+ lines. Biggest gains are on non AST lines

\$21.99

More info: <https://www.kilwell.co.nz>





Clarke's Caddis

Adapted from: Chapter 14

The Feather Bender's Advanced Flytying Techniques

By Barry Ord Clarke

TECHNIQUES MASTERED

Elk hair extended body

- *A technique for making an extended body from a small bunch of cow elk hair.*

Elk hair down-wing

- *Elk hair down-wing made from the same bunch of cow elk hair as the extended body.*

CDC dubbing brush wing and hackle

- *A split tying thread dubbing loop loaded with CDC fibres to form a CDC dubbing rush for the hackle and wing.*



This somewhat unconventional deer hair technique is made easier if long hair can be used. Although regular long deer hair can be employed, I prefer to use the stiffer waxy cow elk hair. The extra length and rigidness of this hair makes the handling and technique much easier to perfect.

The North American elk (*Cervus canadensis*), is the second-largest species of deer in the world, also known as wapiti in Europe. Elk, on the other hand, in Europe is the name given to the European moose (*Alces alces*). The two are very different and should not be confused!

Elk provides us with perhaps the broadest range of hairs to meet nearly every tying situation or requirement.

When buying cow elk hair, look for 'Cow Elk Rump' hair that is long and straight, with steeply tapering tips with fine markings. You can see that it looks and feels a little waxy to the touch.

These larger diameter, late season elk hairs are already extremely buoyant to start with. But when folded to form the extended caddis body, they create a little elk hair pellet that traps air. The length or size of the extended body can be modified to the hook size being used, if required.

When stacking the elk hair, use a larger hair stacker to keep the long hairs in check. You may find that the hair you have is slightly curved. If so, hold your hair stacker at a 45 degree angle when rapping it on the table. At once all the hairs fall into line with each other. If you have managed to get some cow elk with unbroken tips and vivid markings, after stacking, the tips will align to beautiful effect.

Finishing the collar of the fly with the CDC dubbing brush can be done sparsely or full, depending on how you wish to fish the pattern, either as a high riding dry or as an emerging pupa.

The hook size and style plays a significant role in this pattern. The size 14 C49X hook that I use on the one shown here, has a deep gape. This not only retains a good 'bite' between the hook point and extended body, but also functions as a keel, keeping the fly fishing in the correct way. This I fish, well dressed with floatant, on a floating line in combination with a slow sink Poly Leader. This leader modifies your floating line into an extremely slow sink tip. This is still light enough to keep your fly dry, if required, but will make it dive and swim just under the surface when you make a retrieve. As your retrieve ends, the fly 'plops' up in the surface again, imitating an emerging caddis pupa.



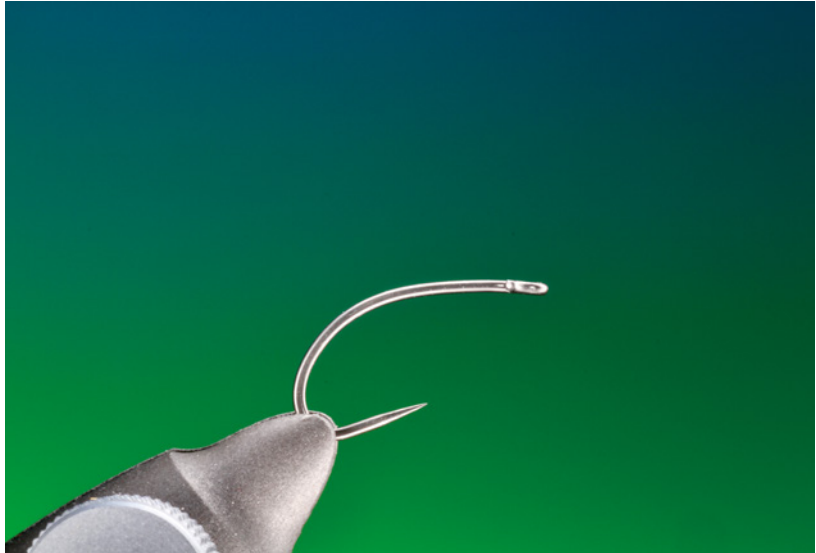
TYING CLARKE'S CADDIS The Dressing

Hook: Mustad Heritage C49XSAP # 14

Tying thread: Sheer 14/0 tan

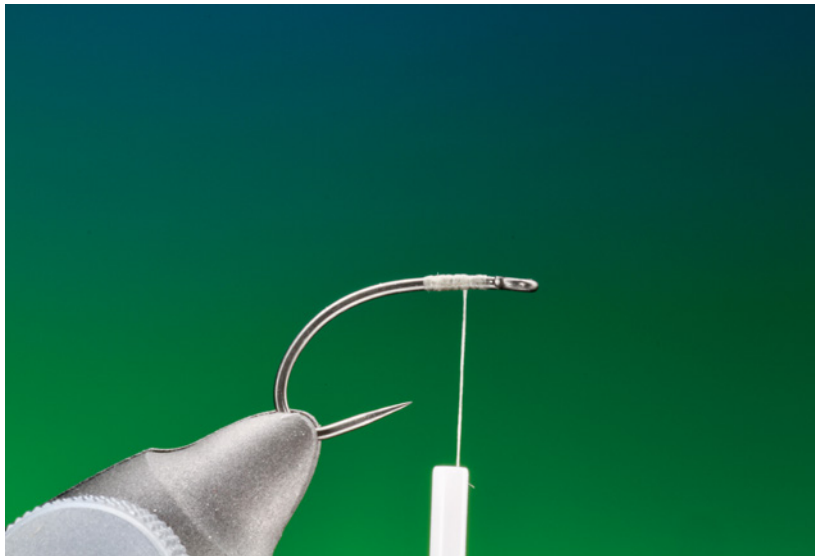
1

Secure your hook in the vice. Make sure that the hook shaft is horizontal. If you have a true rotary vice, centre the hook.



2

Attach your tying thread as shown, a little behind the hook eye and run a foundation a short way along the hook shank.



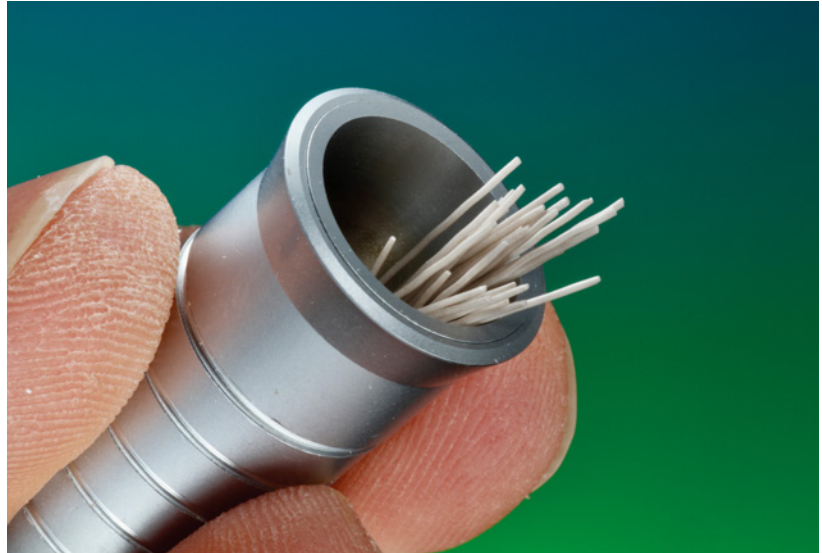
3

You will now need some fine, well-marked cow elk hair. It's not necessary, but it helps if it is long hair. This will make handling it easier. You can also use a standard deer hair.



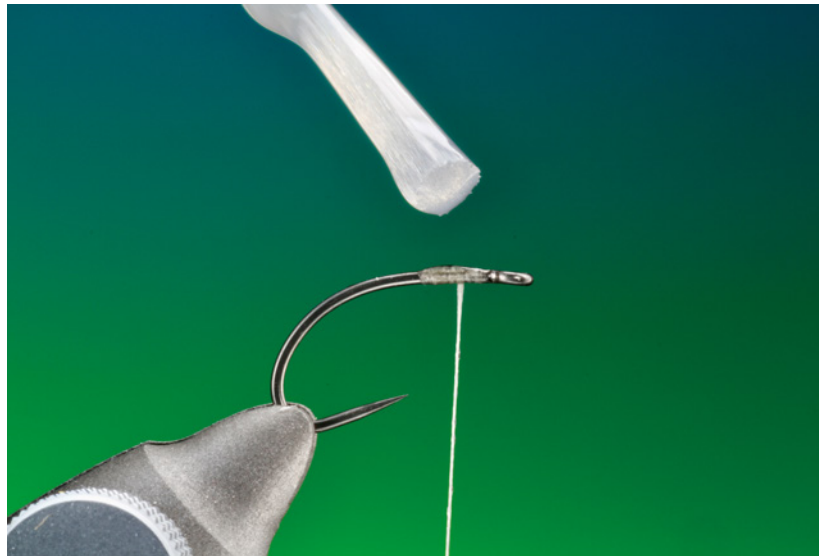
4

Cut a small bunch of the cow elk hair, keeping it as long as possible. Now stack the bunch in a hair stacker to even up the tips.



5

Before you tie in the elk hair, place a small drop of super glue gel on the short tying thread foundation and a little down the tying thread.



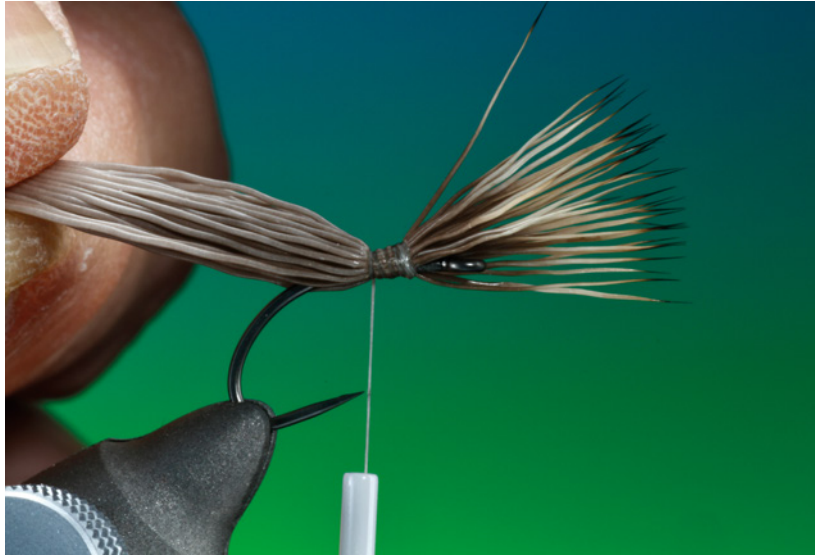
6

Once the elk hair is stacked and the tips even, measure the wing as shown over the hook shank.



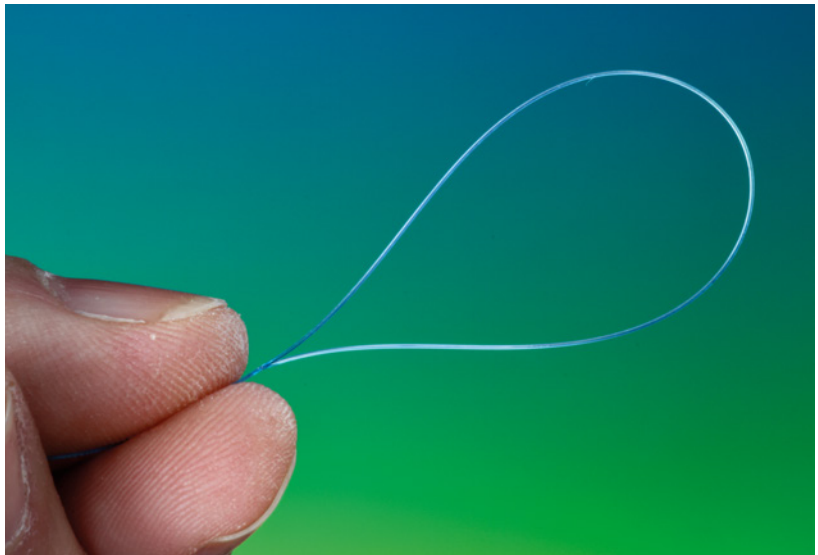
7

Remove the hair from the stacker and carefully secure with a few wraps of tying thread while still holding the rear ends of the hair.



8

You will now need a monofilament loop. You can make these yourself from regular mono or use a dental floss threader as shown here.



9

Place the mono loop over the rear bunch of elk hair. Take care to keep the hair in the bunch tight, even and parallel.



10

While holding tension in the mono loop with your left hand, fold over the elk hair bunch and secure at the wing base with a few tight turns of tying thread. Pay attention to the length of the extended elk hair body.



11

When the extended elk hair body is secure at the wing base, you can remove the mono loop from the body.



12

Carefully wind your tying thread through the spun elk hair and wing, taking care not to misplace any of the wing fibres. This will fasten the body and wing securely. Finish with your tying thread behind the hook eye.



13

With super-fine sharp scissors, trim away the surplus elk hair as tight as possible between the wing and extended body.



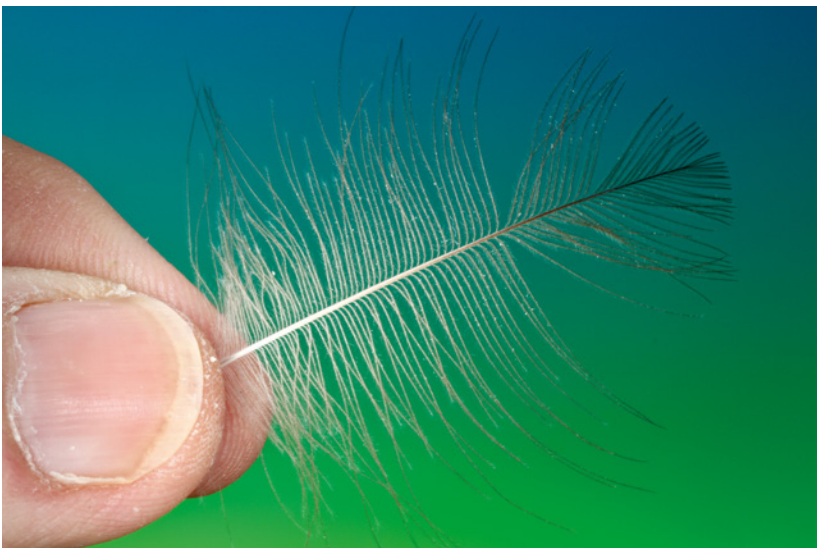
14

Wax your tying thread before you fold back the elk hair wing tips and tie down as shown. The wax will help your tying thread grip the elk hair and stop it from slipping.



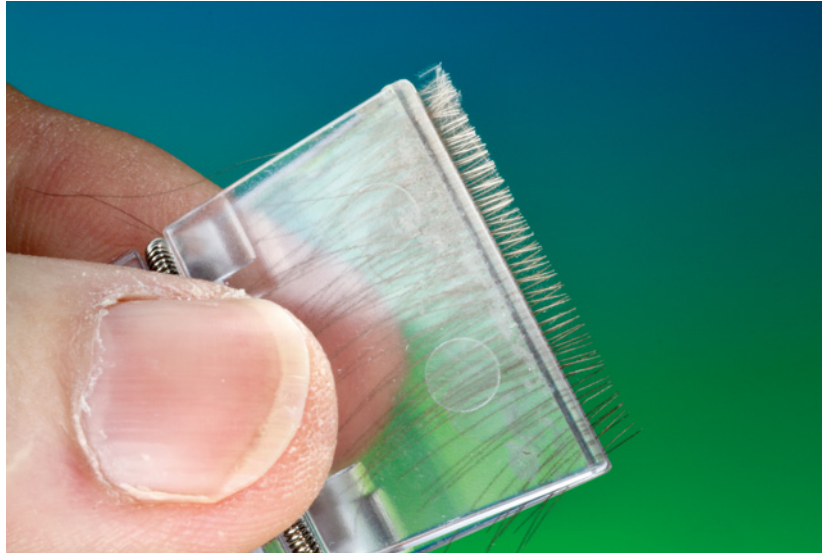
15

You will now need a long fibre natural CDC feather for the dubbing loop.



16

Load a small Petitjean Magic clip with the CDC fibres. Leave only a short amount protruding from the clip jaws.



17

Spin your bobbin anti-clockwise so that your tying thread gets a flat profile and split it to form a dubbing loop. Spin the CDC fibres in the loop to form a CDC dubbing brush. Make a couple of turns of CDC between the body and the wing.



18

Continue wrapping the CDC dubbing brush forward over the head of the fly and finish with your tying thread behind the hook eye.



19

Make a whip-finish or two and remove your tying thread.



20

Carefully trim away the underside of the CDC fibres as shown.



WATCH THE VIDEO

youtube.com/watch?v=1OV3HV80wJ0&t=339s

Tying Clarke's Caddis with Barry Ord Clarke



In New Zealand 'The Feather Bender's Advanced Flytying Techniques' can be pre-ordered from Nationwide Book Distributors (NZ\$ 85.00), with on sale expected February 2025. In Australia the book is already available from Peribo PTY. More details can be found on the Merlin Unwin website: www.merlinunwin.co.uk





Feds Battle RAKAIA WCO Test Case

Special Report

The NZ Federation of Freshwater Anglers, a national trout and salmon fishing advocacy is battling to safeguard the future of the Rakaia River and several other prized waters that are protected by a Water Conservation Order status, akin to national park status on wilderness areas.

At NZFFA's recent annual meeting president Casey Cravens in his annual report said the focus is on the Rakaia River because it will set a precedent of national importance.

"The fate of the Rakaia will determine whether any of the 15 Water Conservation Orders on other watersheds still mean anything. This list includes some of our best rivers in both North – the Mohaka, Rangitikei, Manganuioteao, Motu and Lake Wairarapa – and South Islands – the Buller, Kawarau (which includes the Greenstone), Mataura, Motueka, Oreti, Rangitata, Ahuriri, Grey, Lake Ellesmere, and Waikaropupu Springs, which has some of the clearest water on Earth," he said.

The Rakaia River was awarded a national Water Conservation Order in 1988, but John Key's government weakened the protection in 2012 to allow for massive irrigation schemes across the Canterbury Plains, followed by Manawa, formerly Trust Power, developing a "stored water" concept allowing it to draw off excessive water from the Rakaia.

"An abrupt deterioration in the watershed's ecosystem then occurred, due to factors like reduced flows, siltation, and ineffective fish screens. Salmon runs declined by 90 percent and sea trout have disappeared," explained Casey Cravens. "The result of dairying expansion has been greatly increased nitrate levels in water."

NZFFA, largely due to the efforts of its immediate past president Dr Peter Trolove, has monitored nitrate levels in waters on the Canterbury Plains.

"Nitrates are also toxic to aquatic life, i.e., trout, salmon and native fish. In addition a comprehensive long term Danish study showed nitrates in drinking water is likely to be a major contributor to human health - bowel cancer and blue baby syndrome," he said. "Recent data showed also that drinking water supplies in some parts of New Zealand had nitrate levels more than three times higher than the threshold level for colorectal cancer risk identified in the Danish study."

The Federation (NZFFA), along with NZ Salmon Anglers Assn., Future Rivers, North Canterbury Fish and Game and the Environmental Defence Society (EDS), is participating in an application to the Environment Court that Environment Canterbury (ECan) is accountable for the Rakaia River National Water Conservation Order.

OTHER BUSINESS

NZFFA made a submission to a parliamentary select committee against the current government's Fast Track Approvals Bill.





A Central South Island riverbed showing the combined effects of enrichment, siltation and abstraction during a prolonged period of dry weather. (Barry Cawthorn)

In his report, Casey Cravens highlighted other issues such as monocultures of pines with quality farm pasture now growing pine trees as a way for major polluters to off-set their emissions. There has been a lack of action by successive governments from 2017 to reverse river deterioration. "Successive governments have failed to address the declining state of the public's rivers. There's enough blame to go around to all political parties and recent governments," he said. "Now we have the new government's Fast Track Approvals bill upon us."

He said anglers could not afford to be indifferent to the threats. "With apathy paramount, the world can become ruled by top-down, dictatorial, often arrogant governments. And the public's rivers and trout will suffer as a result."

ELECTIONS

President Casey Cravens (Otago).

Immediate Past President: Dr Peter Trollove.

Secretary/Treasurer: Grant Henderson (North Shore)

Executive: Charlie Baycroft (Christchurch), Jason Foord (Auckland), Peter Bragg (Turangi), Paul Hodgson (South Canterbury), Andi Cockroft (Wellington), Peter Elliott (Auckland), Rex Gibson (Christchurch), Alan Simmons (Turangi).

Life members attached: Ian Rodger (Auckland), Ken Sims (Palmerston north), Sandy Bull (Gisborne), Tony Orman (Marlborough)



Luck . . .

By Todd Storey

Over my nearly 21 years of life I have grown up with fishing. Both my parents went fishing and took me out with them. While I never really got into the hobby as much as them I still to this day, enjoy the ability to go to an open body of water and play around with different fishing rods, lines and flies.

For most of my life this has meant casting out onto Lake Tarawera from a canoe, eager to hook a large fish to make my dad proud and feel the thrill of the line tugging away. There were many of times I would be able to reel in a fish from the lake and go home smiling and happy.

Occasionally, the location would change to the rivers and streams of the Bay of Plenty. The change in scenery would not always bring the same result as the lake, which led me to wonder whether fishing was truly a luck-based sport, or whether knowledge and technique could win you the awesome catch of a large fish.

To test this idea, I had to get out of my university flat in Canterbury and plunge myself into the depths of the Waimakariri River. My original plan was to take on the mouth of the Waimakariri, out by Kaiapoi, which flowed to sea. There were two reasons why I wanted to try this area. Firstly, the mix of river-run and sea-run trout meant I would have more chances at hooking something. Secondly, the large amount of success I saw among other people fishing the area. The fishing spot was typically packed with anglers, men and women, trying their hand at catching fish using all sorts of different tackle and methods.

Yet, the more I thought about it, the more I wanted to try an area that reminded me of the rivers dad used to take me. A more secluded place, away from the roaring boats and cars. So, armed with my net, my mum's flying fishing rod and my spinning rod, I chose to set up around the West Melton/McLeans Island region of the Waimakariri River. Having never been to this part of the river, I was immediately met with challenges like the ever-changing and snow-melt coloured braids, which made it difficult to judge how deep or how close to the riverbed my flies would end up. Trying to get my fly to get to the bottom of the braid was also a challenge with the extra flow the snow melt provided. However, as the day passed, the more I learned about the river, and the more I could envision where the deepest water was, and after 3 hours of trial and error, I hooked onto 3 fish in the span of 1 and ½ hours.





or Knowledge

Sadly, while I was able to reel 2 of the 3 fish in close, the opportune moment to swing the net in and photograph the beauties never arose, leaving me feeling slightly annoyed but still determined to keep pushing for the almighty catch of the day.

After walking upstream for what seemed like an eternity, I found a new fishing spot to test out. With more people starting to pop around, I started to have some good chats with people about life and whether wives appreciate the smell of fish on a man. One group, a dad and his kid, were lucky enough to reel in a fish that was too small to be kept, so back to the river that one went. As the day flew by, I decided that my fishing had drawn to a close and packed up my stuff and waddled back to my car, with my shoes, socks and feet full soaked and sticky. Luckily, the flat mates did not mind the mixture of foot odour and river water but jokingly were disappointed I did not bring back anything as a potential flat dinner option.

While luck does certainly play a role in whether a fisherman like me goes home with a prized catch or empty handed, the real winner for anyone who wants to get into fishing is knowledge. Being able to understand and monitor your location, knowing the behaviour of the fish and the water makes the likelihood of fully reeling in the catch that more likely.

I remember many conversations with my dad around the best spots on the lake or the optimal time of day to go out for a cast (personal preference for me being sunset with a Red Setter, can never go wrong with that.) The more that I look back on those conversations, the more I realise this wasn't my dad just trying to give me a lecture about fishing but passing on the knowledge he has gained from his many early mornings and late afternoons out on the lake. Knowledge which has resulted in some successes over the many years he been trying. The more knowledge he has gained about the spots he fishes, the more he can use it to his advantage and the same goes for me. Now that I know what has worked for me in the past (both on the lake and in the streams), I can take this knowledge and apply it to my next fishing trip or even pass down to my kids when they are ready to take on the beautiful sport. Just like my dad has done for me.

While this time was not a success, it doesn't mean that my time was wasted. In fact, it has benefited me and the next time I go out onto a body of water, maybe I'll be the bringing home a large trout and learn how to smoke one from the master himself.





Confessions of an Addicted Salmon Angler, Part 8

Finding another 'HOME BASE'

By Larry Burke

As time rolled round to the 1997-98 fishing season there had been a change to my living arrangements. Hazel, who had been flatting with her oldest son, needed somewhere else to live and the logical thing was for her to move in to my place. This was accomplished with a few minor problems with my kids, that settled quickly when told there was no hope of getting back with their mother and the reasons why.

I was feeling much more settled and peaceful. Work-wise, however, I was starting to see that the youth justice system was most interested in just keeping young offenders out of circulation and, having tried once for a full time placement there with no success, I was starting to look elsewhere. I sought some help around learning interview skills and approached ACC, which I was still on. It seems I reached the right person, as they paid for me to see a Coaching Psychologist. This was probably the best rehab I received. He just asked questions first visit. Next appointment I was rigged up to a computer programme similar to a lie detector and for 20 minutes or so sat with my eyes closed, going through the last interview I had. It felt like the real thing again and afterwards he showed me the readout. Temp went up, so did heart beat, sweating, etc, showing I had a problem with interviews. After a couple more sessions, ending with a mock interview that was videoed, I have had no more problems ever since and this would prove itself later on when facing up to councils, select committees, and others, speaking as president of NZSAA, fighting for rivers, environment, salmon and all freshwater species. That was in future.

I was ready for the new season and it started early, after my way of finding if there were salmon in the river worked. Around about the end of October I wander down to McIntosh's Hole to see how the whitebaiters are getting on. In reality I am looking for salmon rods beside them, the sign that they have seen one and that season they did about mid November. Time to get the gear out and down to The Point to check



it out, which was to be a bit of a disappointment as the winter and spring floods had not been big enough to keep the hole flushed out and it had filled in. The salmon would not be there this season. The Kaiapoi river was still good and it was in there that I got me first salmon of the season on the 16 December, a good fish that put a great fight, as early fish tend to do. Had to beach it as these early trips down are always by myself – the rest of the family seem to wait for my report before they start and/or keep to the Boxing Day opening. Anyway, the fish was a 16lb hen, 33"/84cm long with a 19"/48cm girth. A good start, but we still had to find a new spot to fish, which led us to various places before settling a 'Home Base' for the season.

It was about 6 weeks before the next fish, at the end of January, and looking through my records January is the month I catch least – the average over 35 years is just over 1 in that month and 1997/98 was following that trend. Meantime I had got Hazel kitted with both trout and salmon gear, waist waders, etc. She worked full time so could only fish weekends; me, I was still receiving ACC compensation as casual work was getting less with the government of the day implementing The Employment Contract Act and people were fearful, especially in government departments, and less inclined to take time off. There were also more people around who were taking up casual work. All that was good for my Salmon Addiction, though.

Brother Colin and I had heard they had been catching a few salmon in an old haunt – Tentburn. So on January 22 we loaded our gear into the car and set out on the 45 minute journey. The weather was good with no easterly wind; the tides were good too, with low tide about lunch time, meaning half tide about 0900 – premium time.

The coastal side road ends on the beach. In earlier times there was access through a paddock over a small bridge about 200 metres of where to fish. The gate was locked and a notice said the bridge was unstable to vehicles. So we had to walk about a kilometre through the soft shingle to the Tentburn stream. When fishing the surf for salmon you need both 56 and 68 gram Tickers to cover all wind directions and with a possibly high loss rate, our packs were heavy. Chest waders are heavy too and I always wore them, as the added weight did not help my neck injury. So I needed to sit down to regain breath and check out the conditions once we got there. They looked good, but just a handful from the North Rakaia huts on their four wheel quads were fishing – didn't look promising. A look at the stream intake revealed a couple of fish in there however and that got the fever going – set up rods and into the rhythm of casting and retrieving. Sometimes when the sea is calm you see salmon 'porpoising' out of casting range. You hope they will move in as the tide backs and they get more scent from the small stream. By lunch time, however, Colin and I were the only ones left fishing and close to leaving too.

Sunrise at Tentburn in favourable conditions





Hurunui river mouth (Adrian Bell)

Just a few more casts . . . as you do! Then, while not really concentrating, I struck and had a salmon on before my brain even registered a hit. After a good fight with the fish running up and down the beach behind the first wave, there was splashing on the top of that wave I was able to run it up the beach, for Colin to tail. With a 17"/43cm girth and weighing 11lb/5kg, this is still the best-conditioned 28"/71cm salmon I have ever caught. We fished on for a bit longer but there was nothing. Walking back to the car with an additional 11lb did not seem so bad – for me at least. We talked about the need for a four wheel drive but that was in the future.

The next trip that season was to the Hurunui, on 10 February. This time I had Hazel with me as well as Colin. Owen had his caravan there and so did Martin, but he was not fishing that day. We set off around 0500, planning to arrive around daylight. Sunrise at the Hurunui mouth can be spectacular and I wanted Hazel to see it. Standing at the top of the cliff above the mouth watching the sun like it was appearing out a calm sea, we unloaded our gear. Normally we would wade the lagoon to get to the north side of the mouth with the river flowing north. Not this day however, as Hazel only had waist waders and it was too deep for her. (I have been told what she remembers most about that day was the walk around the lagoon! Fortunately coming back the tide had dropped enough for waist waders!)

The morning was settled and warm, with a calm sea. All we needed was a fish or two. The south side of the mouth saw a couple of fish but we touched nothing. As the morning wore on it got hotter and with very little wind, by lunch time it was approaching 30 degrees. We stopped for lunch and decided on a few casts before





Beaching a salmon at the Hurunui river mouth (Adrian Bell)

going. I was casting over the outflow with my custom Tricast and was thinking just how great those blanks were, when the rod was just about pulled out of my hands as a fish hooked itself. This fight was hard. The fish used the outflow, which made it hard to shift, so I moved down the beach to draw it away from the main current and that worked, with the fish ending up just outside the first wave, still resisting but tiring. Coming in on the wave it was bigger than I thought. Then Colin ran it up the beach. A beautiful fresh silver chinook salmon, still the largest I have caught on my Tricast, 21lb/9.54kg, 36"/91.5cm, with a 20"/51cm girth, this would be my last 20lb salmon for 8 years.

What happened next was strange and something I have never seen since. A few minutes later, just having a rest, we noticed a lot of bird activity further north, right in near the shore. We thought it was a mob of Kahawai. It kept getting closer and came into the river flow. What a surprise! Turned out it was a mob of small salmon, about 2-3lb, and they hit the spinners. We caught a couple, let them go and decided to stop, being next year's fish. On the way back to the car Hazel had the experience of wading through the river – and she hasn't done it since.

Still looking for somewhere close to home to fish, 13 February we had another try down the Stewart's Gully side of the Waimakariri. Local anglers fish there every day, but early morning and not by the tides like we do. So I fished by myself this day and was deciding it could be a good 'Home Base' spot when, to prove me right, a salmon hit the spinner. Lucky for me the tide was low enough to beach this fish; at high tide to half tide that could prove a problem without a net at this spot and we did not use





A Stewart's Gully fish.

them then. Anyway, I landed the fish and was very happy. A fresh run jack salmon 15lb/6.8kg, 30.5"/77cm long, 18.5"/46cm girth.

Over the next 17 days we went to the Hurunui mouth three more times and I managed to get another 3 fish. These salmon had stopped feeding and their girth measurements were decreasing but they were great 6.6kg fish and I was very happy to catch them. The last Hurunui salmon I caught was a small "precocious" jack of 5.5lb/2.5kg, 22.5"/57cm with a 12"/30.5cm girth. These little jacks are Mother Nature's way of ensuring every egg has the chance to be fertilized and they are also great eating.

By this time I was getting more than a little worried about not being home when my youngest daughter, Luana, left for and came back from school. The neighbours also had children at the school but with The Point still unfishable, I really needed somewhere close by which was governed by tide, not time.

So on 2 and 7 March I tried Stewart's Gully again. It is only 25 kilometres from home, an easy walk-to spot, you don't need to be there at first light and although you may be facing the sun, the easterly sea breeze is minimal. Despite one or two locals saying, "you are wasting your time if you are here at first light", I ended up with a salmon each day, 2 hens. The one on the second was a 14.5lb/6.6kg, 30.5"/77cm long, 19"/48cm girth fresh runner; the one on the 7th, 13lb/5.9kg, 31"/78.5cm, 17"/43cm girth. This fish had been waiting a little while to head up the river, their colour changing from bright silver to a slightly darker light grey – better camouflage in the grey of the braided river.





Helen Duncan and Brownie, fishing at The Point and looking across to Stewart's Gully.

Those were the last salmon I would get that season but I was happy to confirm another local venue where we would not be infringing on locals (although some of this changed later as we became better-known around that side of the river). The next season was only 6 months away and it was going to start with a whole lot of sadness for me and the family, but we had found another 'Home Base' to feed our salmon addiction.

A 14lb Stewart's Gully fish that Hamish netted for me.





Wild Dogs & Fishermen . . .

By Matt Hoole

What makes a barren frost plain in a national park interesting for hikers, adventurers and anglers alike? Perhaps, it's what lies within these naked valleys is like a treasure hunt waiting to be explored? A land scattered with historic alpine huts built more than a hundred years ago, each with their own history and narrative. Once used for grazing and a working culture, today easily accessible for a day visit, or an overnigher. A place brimming with Australian wildlife, including brumbies and if you're lucky, a rarely seen wild dog!

The Murrumbidgee River begins its journey here, from the base of Peppercorn Hill in the Fiery Range of the Snowy Mountains and winds its way through this vast treeless frost plain. Its headwaters hold a great population of both rainbow and brown trout in a remote and isolated location.

This is the Long Plain in the northern end of the Kosciuszko National Park (KNP). If you're ever touring Australia and travelling south through NSW, be sure to stop and visit this awe-inspiring destination.

WHAT IS THE LONG PLAIN?

The Long Plain is an open plain extending some 30km between the abandoned gold mining town of Kiandra and the Brindabella National Park, at an elevation of approximately 1300 metres in the high country.

The nature of cold depressions of air funnelling through an open valley suppresses the natural growth of its trees. During winter, the plain can be covered over in a blanket of snow for several months.

Its landscapes are burned in with rich earthy Australian colours and the valley floor, completely surrounded by heath and tussock grass.

An entrancing place for people wanting to explore its many historic huts, fire trails and waterways, while being spoiled to panoramic views of your surroundings.







HAINS HUT - KNP

In December 2022, we geared up for an early morning adventure leaving home at 6am. After a quick stop in at Kuma Pies, our favourite cafe in Cooma for a well-earned beef pie and cappuccino, we pushed on towards the township of Adaminaby, before making the steep climb up the mountains.

It was just after 10am when I pulled the Ute to a halt off the Snowy Mountains Highway, when my wife yelled "wild pig", seeing something jumping around amongst the tussock grass. As I tried to contain my emotions, the animal looking more within the dog family to me, we gasped when identifying it as a wild dog! We watched it for a while completely awestruck, its distinct strong jaw and larger head separating it from the common domesticated dog, despite the same behaviour.

Continuing on, we then took a right turn off Snowy Mountains Highway onto Bullocks Hill Trail and eased our way down into the Murrumbidgee River catchment. These are the headwaters of the Murrumbidgee, wild, natural and unpreserved!

After having a quick break to stretch out our legs and loosen up, I hurled the first mountain bike over my shoulder and in bare feet, carefully navigated the slippery stones and bottom of Tantangara Creek. Once both bikes were across the creek, I then piggybacked two toddlers one by one to the other side safely, while they took great humour in tickling my ears, exclaiming a spider was responsible. After a minor debate with the boys who was going to ride with who, we saddled them up in their rear seats, before myself and Maike began the onslaught to the top of the ridge, on Hains Hut Trail. Man, it wasn't easy with day packs loaded on our backs and continuously having to disembark the bikes to push them up steep gradients, trying best to maintain our balance with the boys still sitting in their seats. However, once atop the ridge we were rewarded to awesome 360 degree views, before being greeted to a herd of noisy brumbies who were bashing around in the wild heath.







After soaking in the sights, we began the downward spiral, picking up speed quickly as we fanged it down the bumpy trail, the bikes rattling and shaking hard all the way down to Hains Hut, an absolute gem set in a little clearing on the southern border of the Long Plain, with the magnificent Murrumbidgee River whispering down below it. It's a corrugated tin hut with basic amenities including a fire place. We weren't prepared to light that up in the sweltering heat, as we sat outside the hut swatting superhuman-sized March flies that were managing to penetrate our clothes.

After fuelling up on fresh rolls with ham, tomato and cheese, I rigged up the 6 weight ready to test its resistance against the Murrumbidgee fish. I have to confess, when walking down to the river with no waders or snake gaiters on at this time of year, had me skipping and jumping at the slightest of noises in the undergrowth. This was snake country and once down on the river, I wasn't prepared to leave the water, as I began working a smooth flowing riffle with my Hare and Copper nymph.

The fish came quickly, the first a beautifully marked brown trout that had no hesitation in snapping up my offering. Not a large fish by any stretch, but early runs on the board nevertheless. This section of the Murrumbidgee consists of smooth gliding straights that tip into deep clear pools, before it spills into Tantangara Dam a few kilometres down river. While I continued fishing my way downstream, Maiké and the boys played in the shallow water staying cool and away from the abundance of insect life, that was heaving! I managed to catch another four fish in the water below, all rainbows and stunningly marked, before Maiké flagged me that we should really be hitting the bikes again for the return 6km ride back out.

For whatever reason, the trail ride back up to the top was not as gruelling as we'd anticipated, as we dug our heels in early and were soon atop the ridge. From there, we cruised the ridge line before making the final steep descent to Tantangara Creek and the car.







HAINSWORTH HUT - KNP

Last January, we left Yarrangobilly Campground in the Snowy Mountains, to do an overnighner in the Long Plain. After travelling down Long Plain Road, we turned onto Port Phillip Fire Trail and followed it down until we came out at Ghost Gully Campground. From there, we set off on foot up Mosquito Creek Trail for a 4km hike to Hainsworth hut.

Although loaded up with 40 litre packs, it was pretty smooth sailing following an open fire trail while again, finding brumbies out in large numbers. Late afternoon, we took a right turn of Mosquito Creek Trail down a narrow track to Hainsworth Hut, to find three Red Grass Parrots guarding the entrance way, like patrol birds. Hainsworth is also a corrugated tin hut with a rusty red tin roof, benched in a grassy clearing beside Dip Creek. The huts themselves, are still maintained to a high standard by Kosciuszko Huts Association, a volunteer association that does a remarkable job preserving, maintaining and re-building the huts.

After feasting on finger food, we set about putting up our two man nylon tents. Basic to say the least, but lightweight making them an easy option to carry in and assemble for short excursions out in the wild. (These huts of the KNP are for day use or emergency shelter only, therefore we pitched tents out in the open not far away.)

After settling in very early, we awoke later that night to vibrations from hoof prints. Thinking brumbies were running towards us, we quickly embarked the tents to find them some 200m out in the distance. Breathing a massive sigh of relief, our attention then turned and our mouths hung open at that night's sunset. It had magically turned the cloudy, grey skies orange.



The following morning, feeling rather tired and restless after a rough night's sleep in the tents, we chose to hike back early to Ghost Gully Campground, then take Port Phillip Fire Trail back to where it crosses the upper Murrumbidgee River. It was time to do some fishing!

The Murrumbidgee is still a sizeable river in this upper section, crystal clear and dam right alive! Huge dragonflies peppered the water's surface, not to mention the mammoth grasshoppers that were jumping up out of thick tussock grass, thumping into my waders. Despite being only late morning, the baking hot temperatures and jungle act unfolding around me, led me reaching into my tackle box for a hopper imitation without contemplation.

For the next few hours, fish rose to whack my hopper from all directions, as I desperately tried to time the takes, in a circus frenzy of feeding fish! I wondered if there were at times when the trout were trying to stun or kill the hopper imitation before perhaps eating it, as contact abandoned me on a number of occasions. When fishing the high country rivers and streams, fish are also known to spit the larger terrestrials at a moment's hesitation. Right now, it almost seemed impossible to hook up!

Then success! Fishing a tumbling pool with a deep nearside channel, a wild brown came up from the depths to inhale my hopper. I let him turn over and drop, before I set the hook and the battle begun as he thrashed about on the surface with his mouth open, alien like. Maïke, who had followed me up river, saw the action and with due anticipation began filming the fight. As I struggled to reach out with the net to

land him, she vowed to do the honours herself and we were soon staring down at a Murrumbidgee prize! I caught one more smaller brown in the same pool, before we reasoned a cool dip in the river would be the perfect way of finishing off a great summer camping trip.

The Long Plain is a fascinating place in the Kosciuszko National Park. If you relish venturing into a raw and wild location, roughing it out while being immersed in nature's calling, this is the place for you! The Murrumbidgee river and its tributaries offer a variety of first class summer fishing, casting to fish that may rarely experience any pressure and undoubtedly, the huts add to the Long Plains charm. They pull you into visiting them, like history is beckoning for you to take a walk into its past.

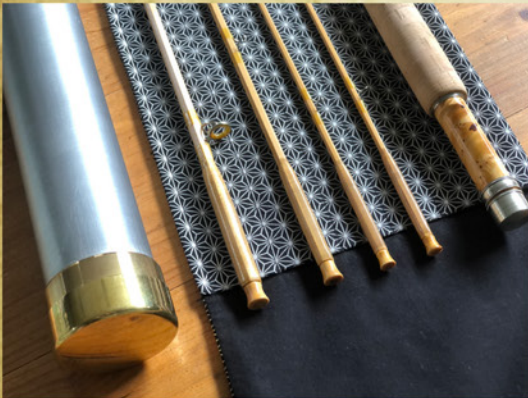


NA Taransky



Made To Fish

Handcrafted split cane fly rods since 2004
based in Taihape, New Zealand



Bespoke (custom) and Maker's Selection (ready to order) rods.
Available in Tonkin cane and Madake bamboo.

Made with the highest quality materials and components.



Handcrafted landing nets and other fine accessories.

Rodmaking classes - make your own bamboo rod.



www.taranskybamboo.com