

Issue 198

TROUT FISHER

Fly focused but totally transferable

Spring 2026

**Biting the Bullet ~ Snowy Lakes ~ Wild to the Table
Heading Back ~ Spent Sulphur**



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Spring 2026

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Cover: Keep them underwater, unless intending to kill. (PWS)

Heading Back 2

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Planning another season with Peter Storey



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This fly is untested but I have been thinking about tying it ever since I found that dun, eight years ago. Many factors have kept me away since then but the intention has remained. So whatever eventuates come early October and whichever venue works out, rather than simply winding another black hackle around a bare hook, this season I am finally going to find out whether a yellow early season mayfly adult imitation gets accepted in rivers where its nymph abounds.

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I became a member of the NZ Salmon anglers Association at their AGM in May 2005 and immediately found out about the volunteer work they did for North Canterbury Fish & Game, hoping to be able to give something back into the salmon fishery.

Confessions of An Addicted Salmon Angler, Parts 16 and 17. by Larry Burke



Snowy Lakes 40

With the NSW fishing season now closed (from 8th of June to 1st of October), there's no need to 'hang up the boots' quite yet . . . While it's a great time of year to be out stalking the Snowy Lakes for cruising brown trout, it's also hard not to let your thoughts run freely and prematurely about those warm spring mornings to come . . .

By Matt Hoole



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T: +6473628914; M and What'sApp: +64274844494; call minder on both phones.





Come October, I'll be . . .

Heading Back

Planning another season with Peter Storey

It's mid-July and someone has brought some quills from a pheasant road kill. On a freezing Winter day, these instantly have me thinking Spring and, able to wade broken river beds again, heading back into uncommon locations in North Island terms, brown trout fisheries. While most rivers systems in the North Island hold both species, these are places I prefer to fish. Why? Because while rainbow trout are not easily spooked, brown trout typically only give you one attempt. Add high quality freshwater onto that reality and what more could a sportsfisher want . . .





11 October . . .



Getting close to trout possibly means more to me than hooking them these days. Recently, I've deliberately begun stalking rainbows from upstream and it's amazing how effectively you can do this too, moving extremely slowly. I get a real buzz wet wading to within metres of a fish that's frequently looking in my direction and seeing its reaction to the fly – whenever, take note, it actually spots it! And if it spots you, just back off, wait, and back it comes. Obliging creatures, (river resident!) rainbow trout. Try wet wading upstream of backcountry brown trout and they're gone for hours, in my experience, along with any others they pass.

Although both species mainly feed somewhere along the main flow, both cruise pools and edgewater, and brown trout especially. Moving slowly along backcountry edgewater you quickly realise swimming mayfly nymphs dominate these areas. Shucks on boulders are obvious indicators but pause and you soon notice the larvae. Wherever you find plenty and stop rather than race on to the next pool head, run or riffle, it's amazing how often trout cruise into view. It strikes me these cruisers are 'taking a break' but whatever, they present far more challenge than in the main flow.

So, yes, those feathers had me thinking of a backcountry take on Frank Sawyer's Pheasant Tail for this issue. Where modern retails are clearly rock-clingers, he was imitating a number of +/- #16 swimming mayfly nymph species which dominate chalk streams during high summer. His tying is basic body shape: 'When swimming nymphs are indeed swimming, they do so with the legs tucked in closely to the body, to, in fact, bring about a streamlined effect. The tail is the propelling unit . . .' Both of our swimmers I've watched close up, *Nesameletus* and *Ameletopsis*, do the same. This action makes them perfect induced strike material and that's how Frank Sawyer fished his Pheasant Tails. Using a floating line and standard leader, he placed them upstream and below sighted trout, with the induced take making them look like hatching nymphs swimming upwards and downstream. NZ swimmers, however, crawl out of the water to hatch. So drowned/aborted dun and spent spinner adults are mostly what trout will see, while in edgewater the immature nymphs swim in any direction and that's clearly set-trap-induced-take territory. Besides, our 15-30mm long species' nymphs look Hare & Copper rather than Pheasant Tail.

So while my fibre-length-challenged #12 'interpretations' certainly work, on either species, those feathers will mostly get used on the lake. They make great Red Setter hackles, highly convincing dragonfly nymphs, and if I cannot create a decent koura imitation from that one bottom right it's time to give trout fishing away!





2 October . . .

Reality is that I 'induce-take' every time I fish the lake and so, whenever I get the chance to fish rivers, focus mostly on the fact that both species rise readily, even in the coolest early season backcountry river temperatures. Black Palmer remains my year round backstop but ever since I found this Ameletopsis dun resting on an overgrown edgewater boulder, I've been thinking about finding out whether a yellow early season mayfly adult imitation will be accepted in rivers where its nymph abounds. That seems highly probable with rainbows, but brown trout should logically also accept it. However, you cannot pass something backcountry brown trout have rejected over them repeatedly or they will spook, where most backcountry rainbows will not and that minimises instinctive reaction in the equation. So now, with my hip fixed and a new lease of life for now at least, this season I'm heading back, intending to find out, Hence, this issue's fly.



3 October ...



4 October ...



It's been pretty quiet here at Tarawera since the season closed, with few smelt close in and therefore, trout. The open season finished well for me, however, with that Ratropinna tied on a salmon iron catching everything, including the largest fish I've caught since the 1990's. At 4.2kg this hatchery hen to the right actually surprised me after quite an easy fight, while the also hatchery-reared 3.5kg jack below towed my Canadian round the reef for 8 minutes, having me convinced he was foul-hooked until landed. Of course, the hen was full of roe and ate pretty well, whereas the even more mature jack went back. I don't like the taste and am close enough to spawning habitat to give fish like this the chance to breed.

Those early 1990 fish were largely the result of line breeding and these, the result of the recent careful stocking regime allowing the smelt population to flourish again. Yes, there's more space between fish but to my mind it's always been hard to catch fish here, whatever the stocking level, and who wants skinny, poorly-conditioned 30,000 per annum release fish when you can spend the same time catching sushi-quality at 10,000? As at the beginning of August just over a thousand fish had been through the trap at Te Wairoa, Mark Sherburn told me, 'with 10 fish at or over 10lb, including one over 11lb, and about 75 fish of 4kg or larger'. I myself handled only one fish over 4kg in the 10 years I helped out at weekends, during the 30k days.

So, with high quality fish throughout the population things are looking good for the coming season and once the smelt come in to breed, I will be aiming to catch something this hen's size from the shoreline again. Until then, it's back into the Canadian and working reefs with two rods on board. One loaded with an SA S2 for the period up to sunrise and the other with an S6 for the way back. Ratropinna on the end of both, of course, until logic demands a koura imitation on the lake bed for the latter. Above all, I am looking forward to heading back out there at dawn again, in Spring, when one of New Zealand's most beautiful lakes comes alive.

Tight Lines in 2026/27 . . .





NEW TACKLE

ORVIS HYDROS REEL

The bestselling Hydros Reel just got even better. Orvis have refined this proven favourite with a new end-to-end sealed drag system for added durability, a tool-free retrieval change for quick left- or right-hand conversion, and higher fit and finish quality. It's the same trusted workhorse anglers love—now even tougher and more user-friendly.

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- Machined aluminum handle
- Tool-free LH/RH retrieve conversion
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- Colours Olive, Coffee, Black and Flats Blue
- RRP From \$699.99





ORVIS RECON ROD

Recon packs high-end performance into a rod that's made to be thrown in the back of the ute, strapped to a pack or stowed in the helicopter for a back-country mission.

With Helios construction techniques to build a lightweight, durable rod that delivers increased hoop strength for lighting power, pinpoint tracking for long casts and easy lifting in close.

No unnecessary flair, just relentless, go-anywhere versatility, crafted in the USA for anglers who measure success by stories, not likes.

The Recon Freshwater rods are matte olive with honey accents and a black anodised with wood insert reel seat.

- Made in the USA and backed with a 25 year warranty
- RRP \$1499

More details of these products: <https://www.kilwell.co.nz/>





AQUAZ DRY ZIP PRO BREATHABLE WADERS

Reviewed by Matt Hoole

If you're in the market for a new pair of waders on a budget, searching for a level of quality but don't want to spend top dollar for them, then Aquaz Dry Zip Pro Breathable Waders from I Love Fly Fishing offer a great and affordable option.

Aquaz has been my first choice of waders for almost a decade now, delivering unprecedented success, while covering all sorts of terrain and conditions fishing in Australia. I needn't look elsewhere for comfort, style, or quality, with those additional features that make wearing them a dream. The Dry Zip Pro Breathable waders definitely tick all the boxes.

Personally, I prefer a more streamlined wader and this 3rd generation of front zipped wader offers just that, while getting in and out of them a breeze. They're slightly lighter, more robust and durable than their previous model, which makes wearing them in spring and summer more pleasurable when temperatures soar and regulating your body's thermostat becomes a priority on the riverbank. I choose to wear my Aquaz waders during the warmer months for the added protection against snakes, as Aussie snakes aren't known to penetrate waders.

Incorporating two new fleece lined hand warmers, they're a life saver when fishing in autumn and winter, especially during the spawning-runs when keeping blood flow to the digits becomes of utmost importance; and for anglers who require sensitivity to the rod at hand, these cosy pockets offer some relief.

To keep your feet warm the waders boast 4mm neoprene stocking feet, imperative in freezing temperatures, and admittedly, I'm down to just the one pair of socks these days.

The waist belt is strong and stretchy with belt loops for added security and the waterproof front zipper is strong and made of high quality. Well tested, these zippers don't leak!

Two watertight chest pockets are handy to store small essentials for easy access and practicality, great when needing to act fast.

I highly recommend these waders, not only due to their competitive price point but Aquaz's ability to deliver a high end product that continually meets anglers needs.

Aquaz Dry Zip Pro Breathable Waders come in sizes from XS to XXXL with options in T (tall - longer leg) and King (wide - more room in chest and waist). NB: The 'T' size range doesn't come in the front zipped wader.

***For more information on size and availability see:
Johan@iloveflyfishing.kiwi***



LETTERS



Salmon anglers at the Waimakariri river mouth

HATCHERY INFO LINKS; SYMPATHETIC ANGLING RULES

<https://www.fws.gov/fish-hatchery/coleman>

<https://www.dipac.net/facilities>

<https://islandfishermanmagazine.com/how-to-catch-a-tyee-salmon/>



EXTRACT FROM JOHN KENT'S LETTER. ISSUE 197

As a method to support a declining salmon fishery in Canterbury, a number of well-meaning salmon anglers installed hatcheries on some of the main salmon rivers. They were naturally very disappointed when the new CEO of North Canterbury Fish and Game discontinued their use.

I spent 5 years in the USA and fished a lot of water in Montana, Idaho, Washington State and Alaska. I spoke with many anglers over there and addressed the International Fly Fishing Conclaves in Montana and Michigan. In the process I learnt that many of their salmon and steelhead hatcheries had also been discontinued because the smolt produced had somehow altered their DNA, causing them not to thrive at sea. Another reason for the closures was that warming sea temperatures offshore of the mouths of rivers connected to these hatcheries had forced the main salmon food, krill, to migrate to cooler conditions.

LARRY BURKE RESPONDS . . .

Regarding John Kent's letter in the last issue, I think he needs to look at what has occurred in California in the last few years. The salmon fishery was just about wiped out caused by drought, fire, predation, and removal straightening draining wetlands, damming of the Sacramento river. The whole fishery is now open and that is in main part because of hatcheries, particularly the Coleman National Hatchery. This year they have put down 12 million eggs. They have been using innovated ways of releasing fry, alevins and smolt such as using flooded rice paddies to feed smolt and allowing them to leave when ready.

I receive regular updates from them and post on my, NZSAA and other face book pages. There are also an increasing number of studies showing that hatcheries complement natural spawning. They also have new ways of tracking individual fish, which are cost effective.

Alaska has a different problem in trawlers taking and dumping 100,000's of salmon and other species. Salmon over there have adapted to warming oceans and changed their main food from sardines to anchovies, but that has come with a small problem in that some of the nutrients salmon need are not in them . Hatcheries have compensated this by dosing their smolt. Some real interesting stuff coming out of there. Think judging by the condition of our salmon this year they are in the process of changing as well . Interesting with the later spawning runs this year wonder if it coincides with the fact that irrigators start to turn off their water around this time making it easier and colder for the fish heading up to the top of the rivers.

By the way, the Sacramento river catchment is where our salmon originated from.

THE PUBLISHER COMMENTS . . .

Salmonid ova need strict low water temperature ranges, plenty of dissolved oxygen and a clean river bed to hatch successfully. Given our warming climate and continually expanding freshwater degradation, it seems high time the relevant ministry evaluated whether all wild stocks are still adequately protected by current legislation. With habitat destruction alone, NZ salmonids are already extinct in parts of the country.

I have consumed primary products all my life, but to progressively destroy freshwater, at best to 'feed the world', makes no sense when the fundamental factor driving both climate change and natural resource depletion is an ever-expanding human population. It's high time governments, globally, took steps to slow our race towards extinction. Here in NZ, re-establishing the original wild quinnat salmon fishery would clearly be one logical start point . . .



Chargrilled Trout or Salmon with Potato Roti and Chimichurri

Wild to the table with Tony Smith

Springtime, the season that sparks all that is good about the pursuit of angling and cooking for that matter. A good time for the barbecue with a little touch of South America in the chimichurri dressing. All separate preparations can be made in advance.

TROUT OR SALMON FILLETS FOR 4 PORTIONS

Seasoning and a splash of olive oil for cooking

POTATO ROTI

450g peeled mashing potatoes

1teaspoon salt

2 garlic cloves peeled

200g all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon natural yoghurt

½ tablespoon olive oil

Salt and pepper to season

CHIMICHURRI

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar (white wine or cider vinegar work too)

2 tablespoons olive oil

½ small red onion finely diced

2 cloves crushed garlic

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

½ a cup of chopped Parsley (a mix of any green herbs can be used)







CHIMICHURRI

Mix the vinegar, olive oil, diced red onion, garlic oregano and paprika together. This is the base of the dressing sauce. When almost ready to eat add the green herbs and mix well.



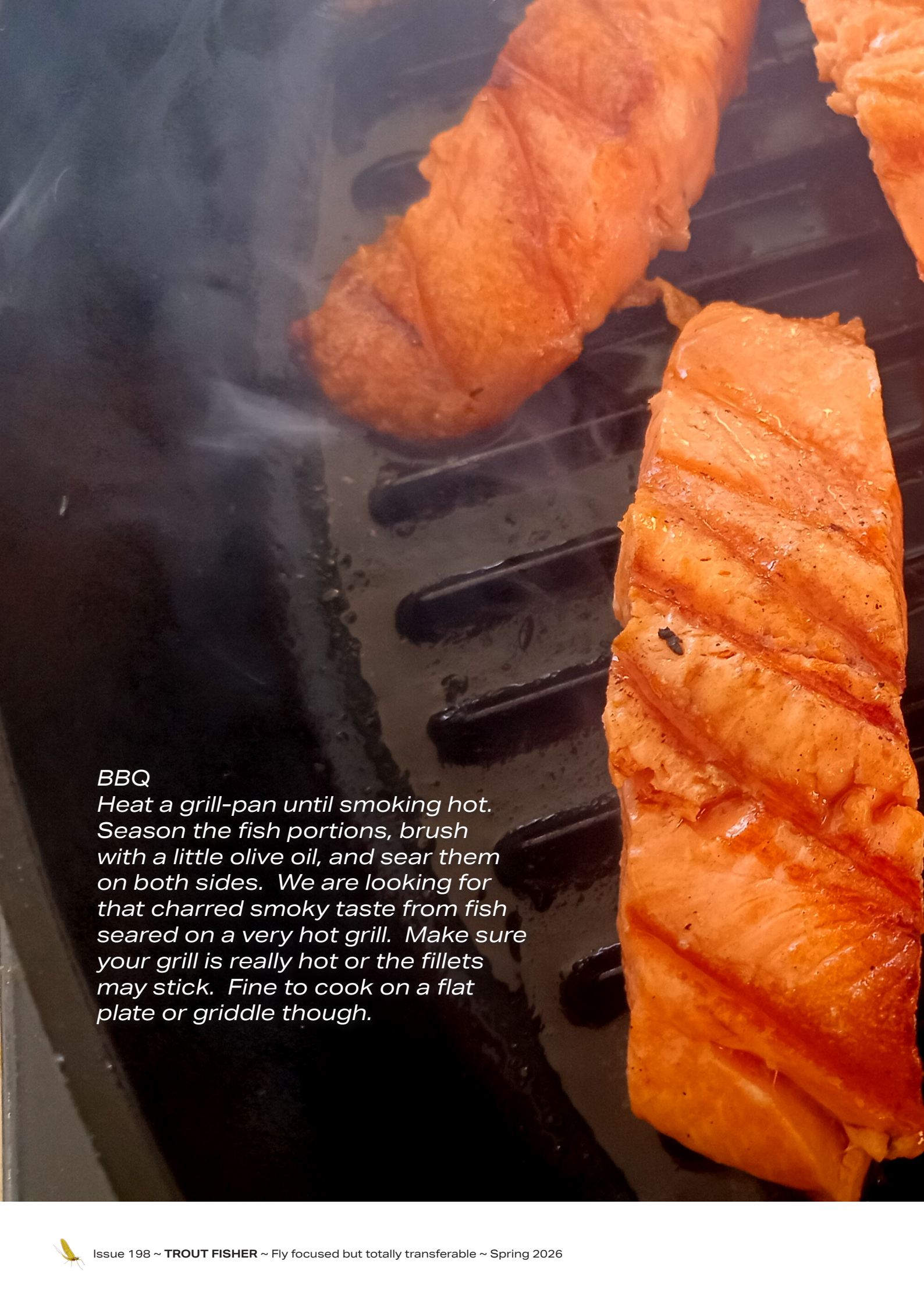
POTATO ROTI

Boil potatoes and garlic until soft. Strain well and mash, leave to cool.

Add flour, yoghurt and olive oil to potatoes, knead to a smooth dough. Whatever amount you are making, weigh the mashed potato and make the dough with 50g of flour for every 100g mashed potatoes.

Cut into 60g pieces, roll into balls, cover and put in the refrigerator to rest for an hour at least. When ready, roll into thin rounds and cook in a lightly oiled flat pan or barbecue flat plate. Cover with a tea towel to keep warm. These rotis can be re-heated.





BBQ

Heat a grill-pan until smoking hot. Season the fish portions, brush with a little olive oil, and sear them on both sides. We are looking for that charred smoky taste from fish seared on a very hot grill. Make sure your grill is really hot or the fillets may stick. Fine to cook on a flat plate or griddle though.





Serve with the Roti and Chimichurri along with any additional green salad leaves you have on hand I've got rocket and some wild miner's lettuce here.

Extras: cucumber, as used here, tomato, avocado, etc.





Spent Sulphur

At The Bench with Peter Storey

This fly is untested but I have been thinking about tying it ever since I found this dun, eight years ago. Many factors have kept me away since then but the intention has remained. So whatever eventuates come early October and whichever venue works out, rather than simply winding another black hackle around a bare hook, this season I am finally going to find out whether a yellow early season mayfly adult imitation gets accepted in rivers where its nymph abounds.

Working on the likelihood of both species being most likely to encounter a drowned/aborted dun or spent spinner, flotation is not important here. A little cannot hurt, however, and after many comparisons this deer hair is close enough to both dun and spinner colouring for me. It's a natural material too, dyed or not, so that's another plus in my books and using just one material, yet another. As the season changes and the water fished, go natural red deer hair, adjust all other factors to scale, and the pattern matches most mayflies present in NZ.

I began tying with separate body and wing sections but, repeatedly ending up with something far too fat, eventually realised I was both over complicating AND losing sight of the objective. Ignoring these male-only eyes, whenever an Ameletopsis spent spinner arrives in front of trout as when fishing an imitation dead drift, they will see a mid-brown centre mass with yellow spread around it . . .





3 OCTOBER . . .

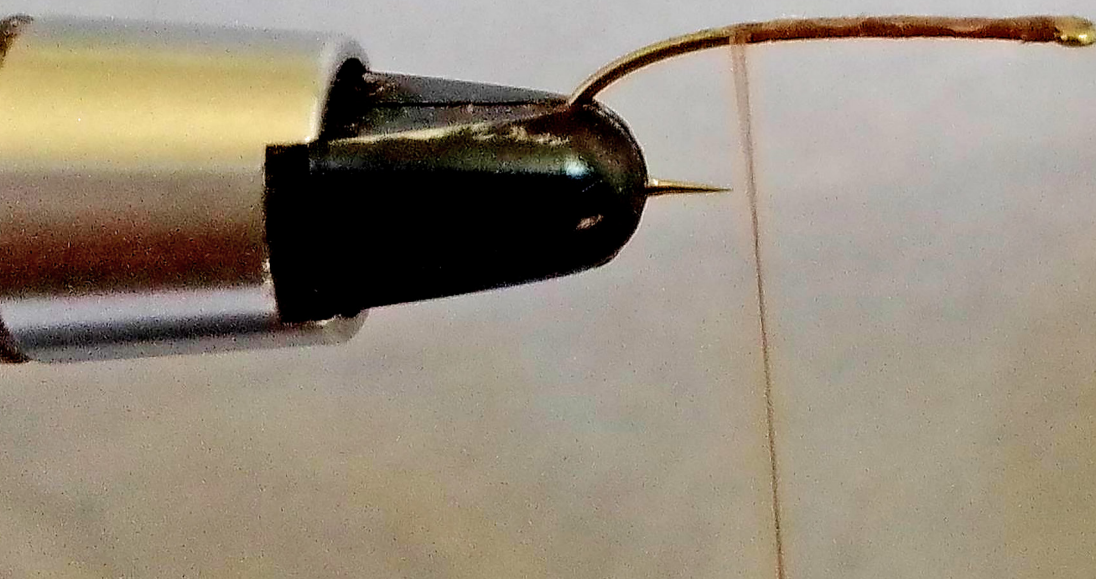
Sulphur Dun, male, 35-40mm from front legs to tail tip, head and body/wing height 20-25mm.



*Cut a small clump of deer hair
and check its length . . .*



*Bind the shank and wax the thread base. The loose end
has been first pushed up through the eye and then trapped
under the base, to prevent the base moving . . .*



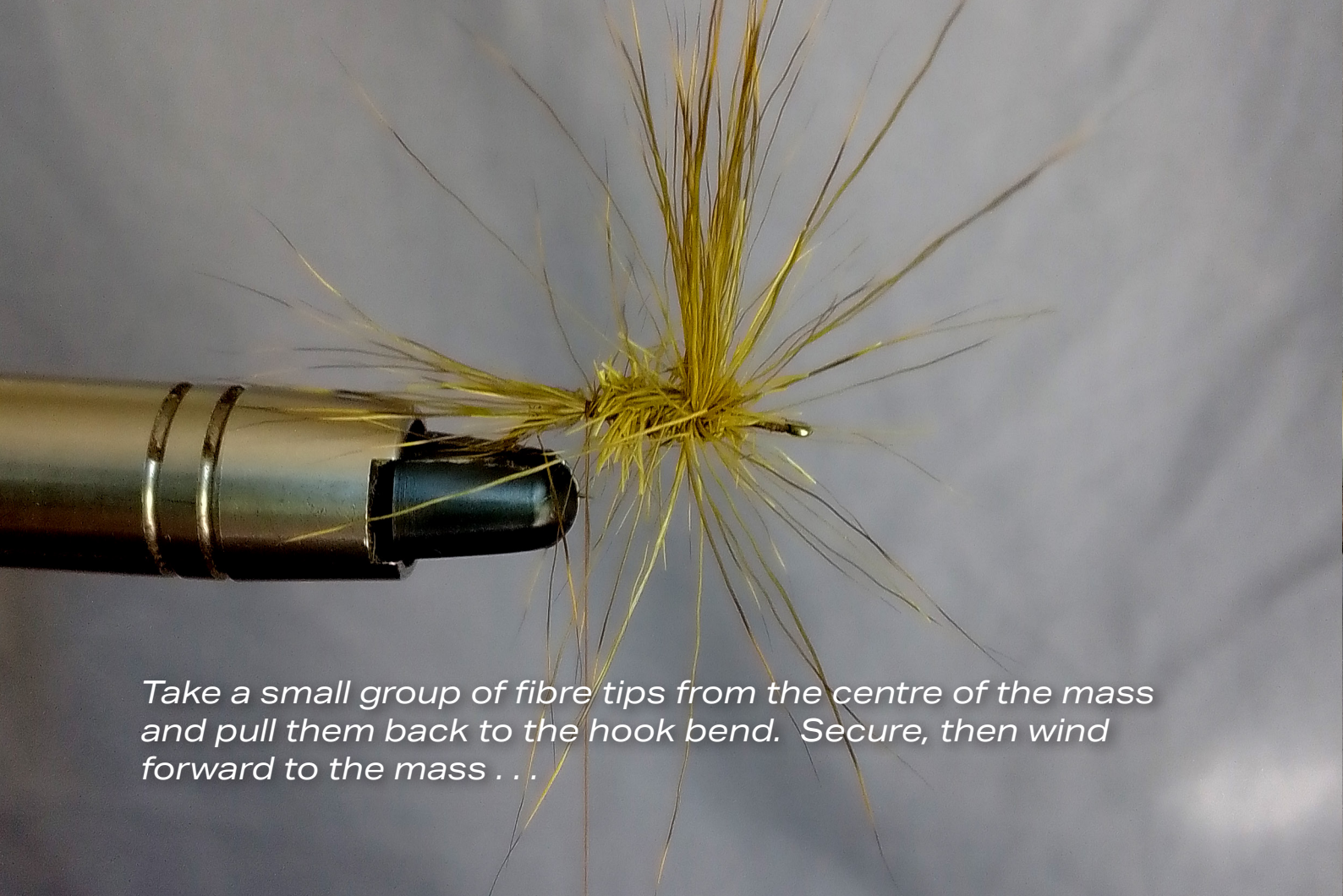


Bind the deer hair clump to the shank about 25% back from the eye. We've already clearly got a basic caddis, stonefly or grasshopper dead drift profile here . . .

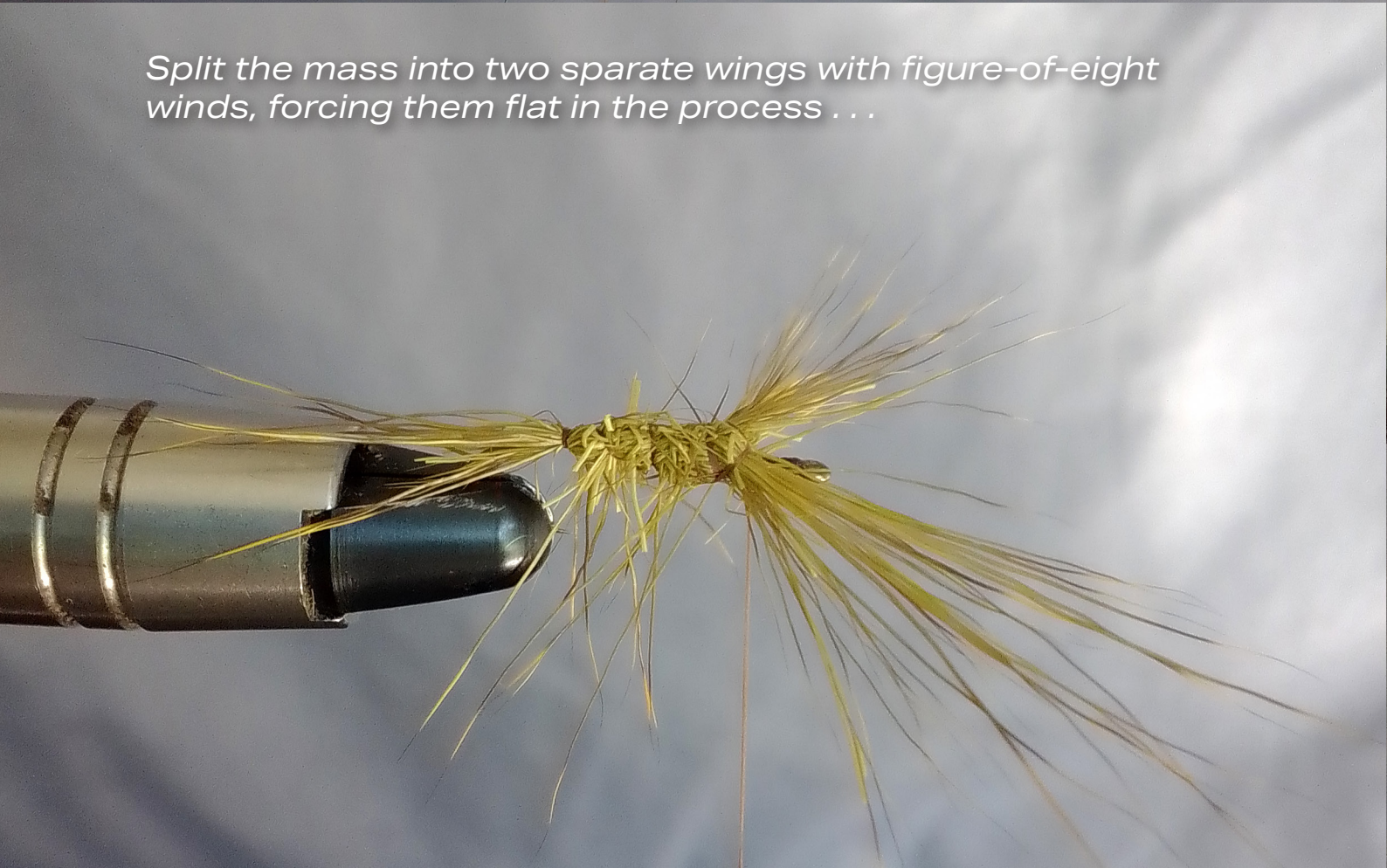


Pass the thread behind the clump, pull the butts back underneath and wrap to the shank bend. Strikes me I've nearly got the dun now too . . .





Take a small group of fibre tips from the centre of the mass and pull them back to the hook bend. Secure, then wind forward to the mass . . .



Split the mass into two sparate wings with figure-of-eight winds, forcing them flat in the process . . .



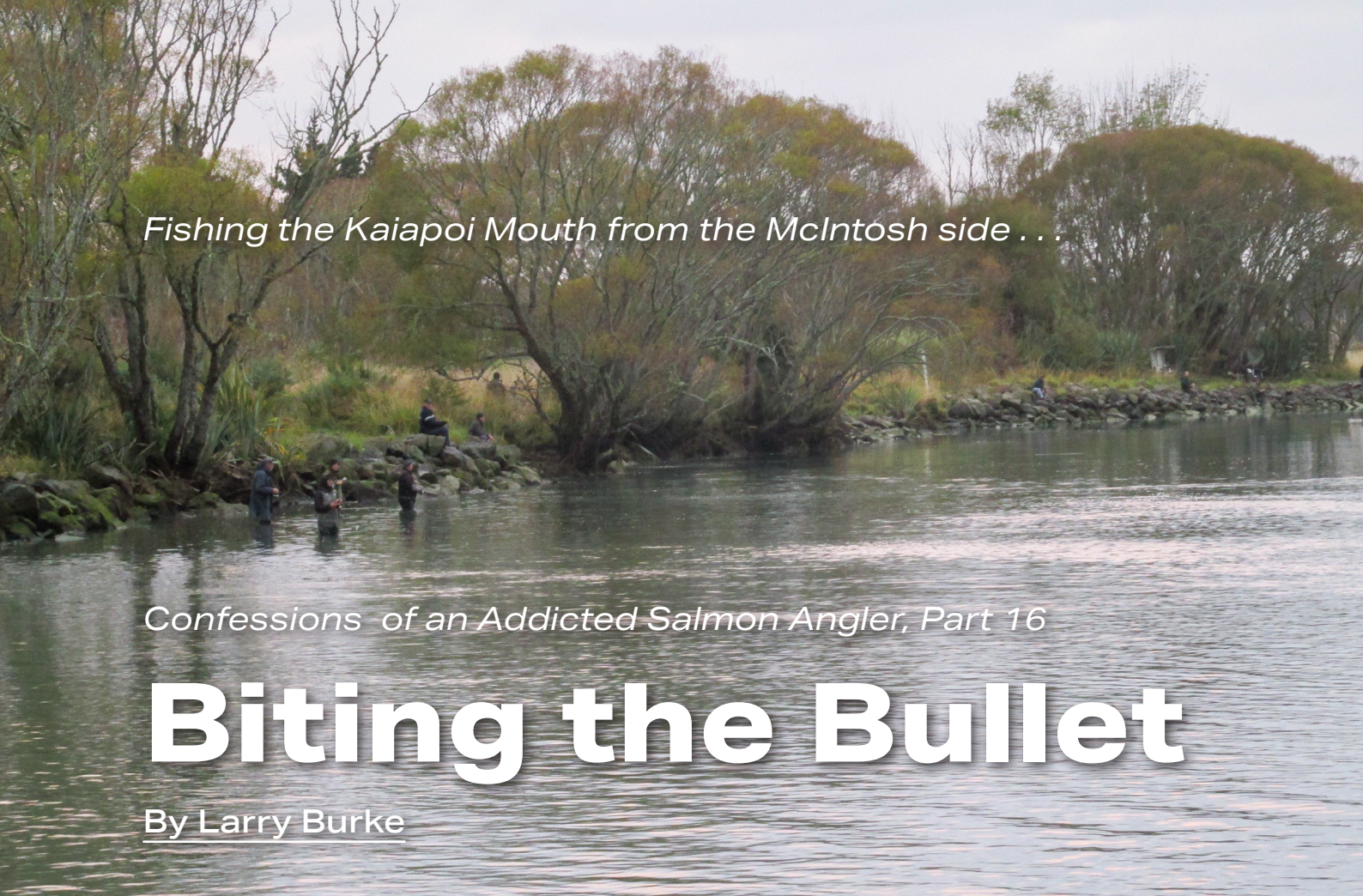


*Pull the wings back, form a head and whip finish . . .
(Aiming to ensure the central focal point is brown with the fly
floating downstream dead drift.)*



Tight Lines in 2026/27!





Fishing the Kaiapoi Mouth from the McIntosh side . . .

Confessions of an Addicted Salmon Angler, Part 16

Biting the Bullet

By Larry Burke

I became a member of the NZ Salmon anglers Association at their AGM in May 2005 and immediately found out about the volunteer work they did for North Canterbury Fish & Game, hoping to be able to give something back into the salmon fishery. Because of the shift roster I was on and that most of the volunteer work was done at weekends, I would not be able to do much but F&G needed extra volunteers during the week. To help with rearing Salmon smolt for Contact Energy, to be released into the Clutha river, as part of their agreement for the Roxburgh dam blocking salmon migration to spawning waters.

North Canterbury F&G was producing several hundred thousand salmon smolt, bred from searun return adults and shipped to the Clutha in converted milk tankers and trailers, loaded from Issac's redundant salmon raceways where the smolt had been grown to release size. The work needed a team of about 10, early morning. That suited me if on afternoon shift or helping after night shift, as it took 2–3 hours to load a tanker and trailer. The smolt needed to be netted and weighed, as numbers are governed by the amount of water and pumped oxygen in the tanker and two batches fitted in with my shifts. It felt good to be putting something back, as each smolt was worth \$1 to NCF&G and I thought that the money was going back into the salmon fishery. None of it did I was to find out, years later!

There were also a couple of gravity raceways that F&G used for on-growing salmon to about 1kg, for the Take A Kid Fishing days held at The Groynes park each year on a Sunday morning in September, for children up 11 years old, then opened for all junior anglers from 1pm. These can attract up to 5000 children with everything supplied; they just need to turn up. Trout were also in these raceways, some as brood stock. I and other volunteers from NZSAA did a lot the work there.

"Heard you got a fish after we had gone!", was to become a bit of a theme for the rest of the season



Winter 2005 was a strange one. We were hoping for a couple of large floods to clear out The Hole off The Point but there were only a couple of small freshes. Nonetheless, as usual, I kept an eye on the area, especially during the whitebait season and in early November, noticed a couple of baiters with salmon rods who acknowledged they had seen a couple. That stirred my fever, and on 16th November, with 2 days off, I made my way down to The Point to check things out. Unfortunately, the large sandbar was still there but The Hole had widened a bit. Checking out the depth and looking for snags I had a savage hit – AND WASN'T READY – forgot to strike. There was a massive splash, line was taken, and then nothing. Left me standing mouth open – WHAT WAS THAT? A whitebaiter on McIntosh's side informed me it was a good-sized salmon. Took a while to calm down but the fever was well and truly ignited. Next morning, mapping the area again with not much happening until 12.25 pm, I again got a savage strike. This time I was ready and hooked what felt like a good sized fish. It was a real struggle in that limited area of deeper water with 'first fish of the season' jitters, but after what seemed an age I was able to beach a great-looking jack fresh from the sea, weighing 7.27kg, 80cm long with a 51cm girth, caught on a black & white Zed. This was the earliest I had caught a salmon in any season. I looked at this fish almost not believing – what a great start!!

There was a flood not long after and I was hoping it had been big enough to remove some of the sand bar. It only made things worse. The river was still discoloured and the silt now thick and deep enough to make wading difficult.

Next visit, with good tides and clear water, several of the crew assembled at The Point and were disappointed to see that rather than removing some the sand bar the flood had filled in more of The Hole, which restricted the area we could fish to the Kaiapoi river mouth or casting straight downriver. The latter was not possible as the McIntosh's side was populated with anglers also looking for a salmon. So the first hour or two was mainly spent with catch up coffee and tea, as Dave had carted down a portable BBQ with sausages and bread (this soon became a regular tradition and more elaborate). Casting quietly up the Kaiapoi about 50 metres or so from the mouth afterwards, with no obvious activity my line stopped and, thinking I had hit another snag, gave a gentle strike and caused a bit of excitement among the crew. Nothing makes you more nervous than hooking a fish when a lot of your peers are standing around watching. However, I was able to do everything right and landed a 4.5kg, 55.5cm, 39cm girth, a well-conditioned hen. The Black & White doing it again. A real surprise all round, as nothing had been happening up till then.

We tried Stewart's Gully after that, without much success. So late January I decided to "Bite the Bullet" and go over to McIntosh's Rocks again. Got a bit of ribbing for not fishing 'your side' but knew most went home as soon the tide turned. So I stayed on and around 6pm, landed a 4.32Kg, 68.5cm long, 38cm girth hen with the b&w – a hatchery, 2 year at sea fish. Next day's comments, "Heard you got a fish after we had gone!", was to become a bit of a theme for the rest of the season.



It was 2 weeks before I was able to get back out to the river as union stuff kept me occupied. 5 houses, each with 30 residents and more in staff, but no formal in-house leadership, meant problems ended up in the office. I seemed to be the one called whenever they needed help. So on 7th February, early morning, with Jeremy also having a morning off, we headed for McIntosh's once again. Even with low tide around 7am it was a rare chance to fish together. Numbers thinned out soon after then and we were thinking it would not be long before we would be leaving as well, when at 8.55am I got a heavy hit, struck and felt the weight of a strong fish that was not going to give in easily. After strong runs down the river and up, it was a while before I got a glimpse. It was big!! Bigger than anything I had hooked for a while. The next problem was where to land it, as tide was right to the rocks and about calf level deep. Then Jeremy noticed something he did not tell me until after we had landed it, that the treble hook weld had given way and only one barb was holding the fish. He scrambled up the rocks to go and borrow a net, found one, came back, and successfully netted what turned out to be the heaviest salmon I had caught since 1997. A 9kg, 86.5cm long, 52cm girth hen fresh from the sea on one of our black anodised spinners, one of the few I had left. Couldn't believe that the hook held and doubt we would have landed it without a net, so next day I brought a specialised salmon landing net from Jeremy. Still have that hook and that is still the only photo I have framed with me holding a salmon.





The next 2 weeks were mostly spent sorting stuff before my month's holiday in March. Just one visit 24th February, starting late morning and not needing to be back early with Hazel working that night. It was slow going and I ended up trying different coloured Zeds and other spinners, going through my tackle boxes – you get days like this!!! Finally, 7.30 pm, thinking time to go, I put on a brass one – not a colour I use very much. Casting down river and almost like out of the blue, I had a hit. My first thought was a seatrout, as I had caught them on brass before, but I realised by the shaking head feel it wasn't and had a good tussle with what turned out to be a 6.36kg, 76cm long, 45.5cm girth hen salmon. A good way to end a slow day.

It was 12 days into my holiday with some long days, before I caught anything. Back then during my annual holidays, if condition were good I would fish from dawn till around 5pm, sometimes later. With little happening, just a few fish here and there, there was a lot of reminiscing; stories of fish and incidents that anglers always have when things are quiet. That morning, 11:30, having been on the river (at McIntosh's) for 4 hours of routine casting and retrieving, trying different colours, I got a hit and struck into a stropky fish that preferred to fight at the surface. A 5.45kg, 71cm, 43cm hen. again in great condition and right at the top of salmon condition chart I had started developing.

I had been reading about the physiology of Pacific salmon. They grow length before they put on weight usually in the last year of their lives when a gene kicks in that causes them convert food to reserves in preparation for the spawning run when they don't feed on their way up to the spawning grounds.

I got this fish on a white Zed, well, not really white more like a light grey that was a part of last winter wondering what others colour variation could work. Became the colour of use for the next couple of weeks. Every day was still slow.

The following week the tide turned around to afternoon, which to me meant I did not go to the river until around lunchtime. This became a bit of a joke to some of the 'old timers' who believed early morning was the best time for salmon. Got used to "did you sleep in" and comments. We had learnt that tide seemed more important than time on the lower Waimakariri and the comments stopped when I caught salmon after they had left.

That next fish was, 17th March at 3.15 pm, again on the white. The fish this season seemed stronger and took a bit of patience to bring to the bank. I had seen a few lost but fortunately had been lucky so far. This was a prolonged fight and it was good that I had a bit of space with most of regulars gone. Wore it out enough to beach, still not using the net. This was also a good fish and the largest jack of the season – 7.95 kg, 81cm long with a 45.5 cm girth. Well over the 6.18kg average on my condition chart.

More casting and retrieving, watching others catching salmon. I had not got to the stage yet of really enjoying seeing fish caught when I wasn't – it was not far away.

Five days later, again after most of the regulars had gone, at 4.15 pm 22nd March I was lucky enough to attract the interest of a good hen salmon that did not put up as much struggle as some of the earlier fish. She was very heavy with eggs and I think that might have slowed her a bit, as condition-wise she was again above average on the condition chart. 7kg, 81cm, 47cm, on the grey/white again.

With my holiday coming to a close and domestic stuff needing attention, I didn't go out every day. Morning tide, 28th March, saw me at the usual spot on the rocks side of McIntosh's. Low tide was early, about 10 am, and as usual the numbers fishing had already thinned out. There was just me and a young angler who was learning fishing. The tide had been pushing up for a while and I was explaining to him why I liked to stay on and fish it. The sand bar, only about 30 metres away, channelled the in-coming tide inshore and this pushed the Kaiapoi flow back towards The Point, where pressure created a large swirl that seemed to confuse the salmon. I told him you could spot this when they porpoised and started heading back down the river.

While explaining this I had a take, struck and was into a fish. It was determined to head up the Kaiapoi and there was limited room to follow because of the rising tide, but eventually landed it on what little beach was left at 11.30am, a 6.36kg, 76cm long, 45.5cm girth hen. Decided to fish on a bit longer and to my surprise my spinner was





Grey/White Zeds

taken again, this time by a spirited younger hatchery hen of 2.73kg, 52cm, 34cm. Both were caught on dulled silver Zeds that I sometimes use on bright sunny days. My thinking is that they don't flash as much so the fish accept them better.

That was the last day I fished. It had been an enjoyable season in a different area of the river, meeting and talking to anglers who in earlier seasons just shouted comments from the other side. I ended up with 10 salmon for the season, averaging 6.11kg, 74cm long, girth 44cm. Time to get them smoked as no much room in my large freezer and 10 whole salmon take up a bit of room. Hopefully look forward to doing some more volunteer work for the salmon fishery would find out at the NZSAA annual meeting that was the next thing on the salmon agenda.



PART 17; 2006/7

When a reasonably successful salmon season ends you naturally start thinking about the next one in a favourable light. I have learned that two good seasons together are the exception and three in a row, almost beyond belief. There are so many variables in the environment and we human like to think we can control them, probably our biggest downfall. Certainly, in recent times some decisions have made it harder for the environment to absorb the results. Salmon anglers have been the most optimistic of all anglers until the last few years.

I am getting ahead of myself. Before this 2006-7 season I had hoped to do some more volunteer work with New Zealand Salmon Anglers however my roster did not help. I had extra leave days I could take but needed to give 14 days notice, and as most volunteering work at weekends it was difficult to line up. Nonetheless I told F&G that I could be available to help during weekdays, if only for a few hours, and managed one finclipping day in during the off season. Prolonged union work with the Labour government for equal pay across government departments (which the next National government promptly cancelled), combined with home renovations meant it was late January before I could fully turn my mind to chasing silver. The Point was again fishable by then, the sand bar gone and The Hole, neither as big nor deep but fishable. All we needed was some salmon.



Clear water in the Kaiapoi, road to McIntosh's on the far bank . . .



Early February, with Colin, a weekday, only us fishing The Point no one on the rocks side, said something about how the season had gone thus far. A lot of casting, checking for snags, water depth, just before 2pm what I thought was a snag wasn't. No chance to strike, just a splash and a salmon in a hurry. I was fishing right at The Point and the fish shot across it into the Waimakariri, taking line. Managed to turn it, went down river, turned it again and slowly came back towards me. As we do, I walked it up the river to make it easier to land. That was when I noticed it was hooked in the roof of its mouth, only one barb of the treble was holding and I could see it slipping. Called out to Colin, "Bring the net!" I had last season's net but had never used it; neither had Colin. I was holding the salmon more than a rod length out with as little pressure as I could. As inexperienced as I in netting salmon fast water, he was waiting. I said, "Do it now!", he went to do it and the hook pulled!!! We were both gutted BUT I didn't throw my rod away, nor blame Colin. I was past that stage. I've thrown paddies in the past when losing a fish, now my philosophy is, 'You will always remember the fish you lose; sometimes even more than those you land'.

Finally, 20th February, fishing the same spot at 2 in the afternoon, my line stopped, I struck and was into another. It was a spirited fight and I beached a splendid 5.45kg, 71cm long, 45.5cm girth hen on a black anodised Zed. Using this spinner gives an idea how hard this season was, being very reluctant to use one for many years after they stopped making them. This fish was top of the chart for length. Only 5 out of 32 I have measurements for are at around that weight.

The next 16 days were a mixture of what we jokingly call 'casting practice'. This, as it turns out, is why Hazel, for my 60th birthday gave me a personalized number plate my 4wd Toyota Carib: LVCSTN.

Holiday time and another fresh took out the river until an afternoon tide, 8th March, saw me out there fishing the Kaiapoi, the Waimakariri being still too discoloured to fish The Hole. Whenever this happens there is a stretch of about 100 metres we can fish for about 2-3 hours on the outgoing tide, when the Kaiapoi pushes enough clear water down into the MAK for salmon to find their way through, until the higher main river overpowers it again. As I discovered a few years ago reading a book I have, that dissected a salmon from head to tail (The Complete Salmon Fisher-The life of a Salmon. By Malcolm Greenhalgh), Salmon can see from ultraviolet through to infrared. Why? Thought about it and maybe simply because they run when rivers flood and so have genetically developed the ability to avoid running into rocks, snags or any other stuff that might be in the river.

Anyhow, around about 2pm, with our chances of fishing any longer just about gone, I got hit. It wasn't heavy and for a little while I thought it might be a trout, as sometimes happens when the river is like this. It turned out I had hooked a precocious Jack 1.8kg, 45.5cm, with a 23cm girth, on a grey/white Zed. The first for my holiday.

The following afternoon saw Colin and his friend Kevin Drew, who worked for DOC and spent weeks at a time in the bush chasing possums for science, and I out at The Point again. The main river was clearer and hopefully a few salmon had come in with the tide. (Oddly, very few of the anglers on the McIntosh's side ever came out and fished when the main river was discoloured at that time, until they heard we regularly caught salmon in those conditions, like that day.)

First Colin got a good fresh run fish, then Kevin, casting under a willow tree on the other side hooked into good one that put up a hell of a fight and as it was his first searun salmon on a spinner there was a lot of tension. Gave a chance to try out netting skills and we finally got it for him after a couple of attempts. A little while later, just as the tide was turning in, I was casting across the Kaiapoi where the clear and discoloured water met, almost last hope, and it was my turn. This fish decided the Kaiapoi river was not where he wanted to be and headed out into the Mak. I had, up until then, never played a fish in discoloured water and quickly realised I was basically fishing blind. I could not see my line easily and that always gives some idea of where the fish is. Finally somehow managed to get him headed back up the Kaiapoi, where Colin netted him. 6.73kg, 78cm long, 7.5cm girth, on a dull silver Zed.





Numbers fishing The Point increased with each salmon taken and I was learning that netting a salmon over deep water can be tricky, the sight of a net sending them off in a hurry. Once they are on the surface and preferably on their side works best, and you need more than half the body over the net to be fully confident with the lift because, like trout, many will try to escape again the moment it touches them. My biggest fear is that I will lose a fish for someone when trying to net it and even more so if it is that angler's first salmon. I always ask, to make me more careful if more than anything else.

Six days later, fishing clear on the Waimakariri side of The Point on a sunny day, using one of my deliberately dulled silver Zeds – think they are better on bright days – not flashing in a salmon's eye – strange the things anglers think work best for them – I hooked into a fish around 11.30am. When there are days between fish I am always more, I guess, nervous in playing them. Anyways had good fight and landed a 5.84kg, 73.5cm long, 45.5cm girth hen. This fish is one of two salmon this length weight I have caught. The chart has the average weight at 5.28kg.

Another flood came along, then more 'casting practice' of 16 days' more holiday, hoping for one more salmon, it finally happened, 27th March, 9.30 am. Another sunny autumn morning and again using a dull silver (funny how when you find something that seems to be working well you keep using it until it doesn't). Arrived 8.30 am, so not that long after sunrise. No wind, a perfect morning, only a few others on The Point and no one from the crew, as they were all back to work. One angler we called the Russian, which he was but, did not know his name, came up beside me, fishing into The Hole. We exchanged a few words about the conditions, weather and if I had seen anything. Then he cast out and had hardly started winding when he was into a salmon. I netted it for him, remarking that a first cast fish was rare. A few



minutes later it was my turn, a sharp take, a strong run, then having to turn it away from getting to a boat's anchor rope that was sitting a bit close. Finally got better control and had to beach it, as nobody there was willing to try and net it. A nice jack salmon 5.35kg, 71cm long, 45.5cm girth.

That turned out to be my last salmon for the season. 2 more days 'casting practice' and that was it. 2006-7 had been a season we thought would have a lot of promise based on the previous one. Later on, when doing more research of our salmon history, I found that the data showed it was not unusual – numbers up one season, down the next. A pattern that, over the following seasons, would stand out even more. My season tally was 5 salmon with an average weight of 5.04kg, 55cm length and 41cm girth. So mostly well-conditioned nonetheless. Only 6 months to the next season. Hopefully some salmon volunteer work before then.

Angler in boat, off the Kaiapoi Mouth

Last of the season . . .





Snowy Lakes

By Matt Hoole

With the NSW fishing season now closed (from 8th of June to 1st of October), there's no need to 'hang up the boots' quite yet. Although winter has finally arrived in the mountains, icing car windows and numbing the fingers and toes with temperatures often below freezing, the lakes and dams of NSW remain open. While it's a great time of year to be out stalking the Snowy Lakes for cruising brown trout, it's also hard not to let your thoughts run freely and prematurely about those warm spring mornings to come - humongous dragonflies swarming overhead like an army of drones and lake fish torpedoing out of the water trying to engulf them!





Sunset at Frying Pan, Lake Eucumbene





Sunset: Lake Jindabyne

THE TWO TITANS

Lakes Eucumbene and Jindabyne are huge impoundments of water in the Snowy Mountains - man-made reservoirs constructed in the mid 1900's for the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme. Both lakes stretch kilometres around towns – empty shorelines with several major tributaries entering them, the Thredbo, Snowy and Eucumbene rivers, as well as numerous other feeder creeks. While these larger rivers help to raise lake levels, water is often used to generate electricity by Snowy Hydro and then released back into the Snowy, Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers, therefore lake-levels commonly fluctuate. In recent years, drought has been responsible for causing lake levels to recede by staggering amounts; Lake Jindabyne exposing ruins from its past, like foundations from 'Old Jindabyne' dating back to 1967, in normal times, a usually submerged artifact.

Both lakes receive plenty of activity, especially during the warmer months, from water sports like wakeboarding and water skiing, swimming, boating and of course, fishing. Lake Jindabyne also boasts a pathway around the lake for enthused runners, walkers and mountain bikers, great for individuals and families alike. This significantly adds to the recreational experience on and around the lake.

Both lakes are home to brown trout, rainbow trout, brook trout and Atlantic Salmon, which are routinely stocked by Gaden Trout Hatchery near Jindabyne.

COME SPRING!

When spring arrives in the mountains, things begin to change very rapidly. It's widely believed that the larger 'browns' will drop back down to the comforts of the bottom post spawning, as they perhaps rest up and put on condition, while the 'rainbows' are becoming very active and beginning to 'look up.' As terrestrial life explodes with warmer outside temperatures and vegetation growth, rainbow trout are often seen jumping high out of the lakes trying to snatch dragonflies mid air. It's a sight to





Watching for dragonfly-chasing rainbows and searching around timber for browns: Lake Eucumbene

behold and finding a calm bay without any outside pressures, often yields results. I've explored many bays on Lake Eucumbene during this time of year, Yens Bay, Rushy's, Frying Pan, Seven Gates and Old Adaminaby to name a few, but it's not necessarily plain sailing or easy fishing.

I remember fishing Frying Pan one warm afternoon with all hell breaking loose on the surface, but somehow I just couldn't hook up. After becoming extremely frustrated, I left all the hefty 'rainbows' in sight to stalk a fish I could see foraging in the shallows nearby. I crept down on hands and knees to cast to an approximate 4 pound 'brown,' watching him weave his way in and out of the masses of midges lying submerged in the film, snapping them up like Pacman, before ignorantly turning his nose up at my size #16 black gnat which sat prettily on the surface. I was incredulous, baffled, almost about to reach for my net!

The problem I confessed to my wife on the car ride home, in a rather self-deprecating manner, was that, "He didn't want my Black Gnat (Matthew, you silly twat!), because he wasn't actually eating off the surface." And if he had been, I was probably still a size too big. A few more seconds to sum up the situation and realise this, could of been the difference in getting the eat, with a size #18 midge pattern presented softly in the film.

The next time out, I'd learned a valuable lesson and wasn't about to make the same mistake, of assuming... I therefore sat patiently on the bank waiting, watching, while a mad hatch was going on. Large mayflies were bouncing off the water's surface, but ironically, the trout weren't interested in the main meal on offer, they were more consumed with an appetizer of flying ants, which, when hitting the water, became drenched enough to become easy targets. As I reached into my tackle box for a miniature size #20 ant pattern, my mind raced with thoughts and doubts of how a fish can possibly see a fly so small. See it they did, inhaling it on the first cast. Alas!



THE OTHER LAKES/DAMS

Although Lakes Eucumbene and Jindabyne are the two 'giants' in the Snowy Mountains that notably receive the most attention, there are of course other lakes and dams with a history of great fishing. Guthega Dam, Tantangara Dam, Khancoban Dam, Murray Two Pondage, Talbingo Dam, Blowering Dam, Joonama Dam, Tooma Dam, Rainbow Lake, Three Mile Dam, Dry Dam and more... During spring, these lakes can also produce stellar fishing and quite often, unexpected surprises. Two smaller dams below are great examples of 'hidden gems' in the mountains.

Rainbow Lake – from Jindabyne, continue travelling up Kosciuszko road on the way up to Charlotte Pass, before a signpost on the left indicates car parking and the beginning of the hike (2.5km return).

After the initial climb to the top, the hike is predominantly downhill where you're treated to picturesque views of the lake that's surrounded by snow gums, before beginning the descent.

When the weather's warm, dragonflies pepper the water's surface, as well as an abundance of other terrestrial life. I've been lucky enough to time this small lake when boils appear in every possible direction, not to mention the sound of fish splashing all around the edges. Like most of the alpine lakes, the water is extremely clear and its fish can be particularly spooky, and are known to take nymphs suspended under a dry fly more often than the dry itself. They're not large by any means, but are plentiful and beautifully marked, with both rainbow and brown trout present.

Grasshoppers can be seen falling onto the lake or getting windblown off nearby trees, so a hopper pattern is a must in your tackle box. A wooden footbridge extends out into the lake and can be used to cast from, but a word of warning, it's old and

decrepit and definitely poses a risk, so I wouldn't recommend it, unless you're prepared for a possible icy swim back to shore!

If you're an angler who likes to be on 'the go' covering more ground, it's only a short circumference to walk around the lake. Diggers Creek enters the lake at the top end and exits at the bottom, a tiny creek and although known for offering up a few fish, it's tight water is surrounded by vegetation, making fishing it challenging.

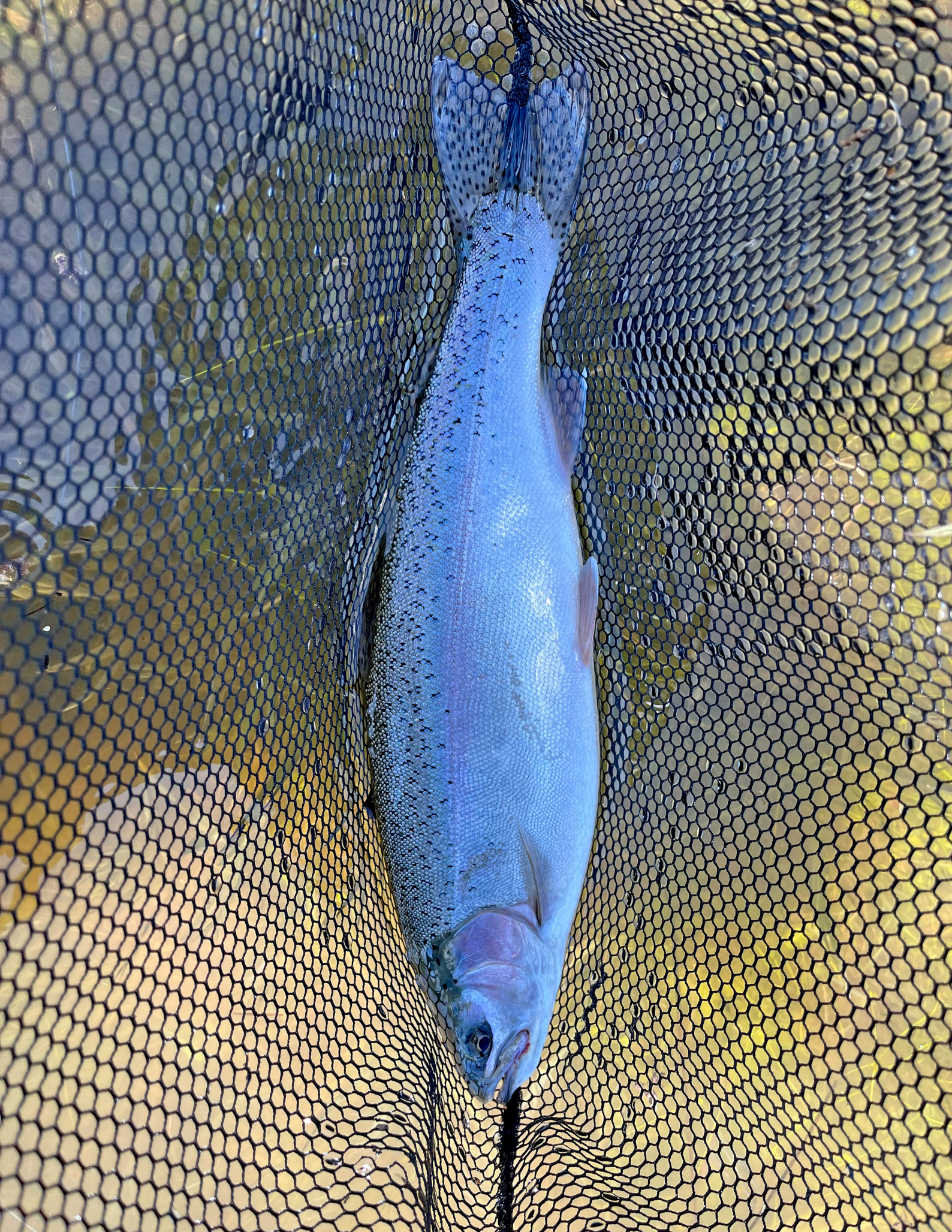
When the conditions are right, Rainbow Lake can be incredible fishing; however, I've witnessed the lake shutting down almost instantly, like the turn of a switch, when cloud cover and colder weather suddenly intervenes. So pick a nice warm day and make an occasion out of it.



*Casting from the old
footbridge at Rainbow Lake (I
don't recommend it!)*

*A clean, well-conditioned
Snowy Lakes fish . . .*





A size #16 caddis imitation brings a small but beautiful reward for Andrew, at Dry Dam . . .

Dry Dam – situated at 1400m in elevation above Cabrumurra, the highest town in the Snowy Mountains, Dry Dam is another small impoundment with a reputation for holding high numbers of smaller fish. Like most lake fishing, the activity often comes in waves of success and this dam is no exception. It's easy enough to navigate its banks and on a warm spring day is an extremely pleasant place to be.

From limited experience fishing this dam, it fishes well to smaller dry flies left to sit on the water's surface playing a game of patience with the fish, which when present, will eventually come up and smack them! There's no need to set the hook with any real authority as they are feisty and do it themselves. Just raise the rod and have fun watching them dancing delightfully on the surface.

Fishing a small nymph as a dropper below the dry can be an effective way of increasing your chances of a strike, as will working deeper drop offs and embankments, extending your dropper if need be. These deeper areas also are worth testing with a streamer in searching patterns, focusing on targeting weed beds, and sunken timber while trying to spot fish cruising.

Fishing a three to four weight rod is ideal to increase sensitivity with more than enough casting ability to cover fishable water; however, some anglers may choose to go even lighter. Fishing tippetts in the size range from 5 - 7X will put you more in contact with the fish, given the water's clarity, with no apparent reason to increase tippet size due to the whopping size of fish in this dam. A two pound trout would no doubt create memories, while a three pounder may be competition for your 'smaller water' trophy cabinet!

TALES AND TACTICS

In terms of stripping streamers, wets and nymphs on the Snowy dams, there's no golden rule on the length or style of retrieve. Anglers will commonly vary the retrieve from long even strips, to short sharp motions, to even finger looping retrieval which considerably slows down the flies. I think it's each to their own and trying to match the imitation you're fishing makes the most sense, while always being flexible and open minded. For example, If you're stripping a streamer past a sighted fish, you may want to rip it past the fish's nose to induce an involuntary strike.

Regardless of the imitation, always remember to 'hang your flies' on the end of the retrieve. It's easy to forget this technique and it's amazing how often a fish sees your flies at the last second, or has been chasing them all along. Raise them, briefly pause them, before re-casting. The amount of times I've picked up to cast hastily and seen a chaser, boil or splash while my flies jetted out of the water is a painful reminder to this!

Another method I've found fruitful when casting to sighted fish, is allowing your streamer to sit on the bottom momentarily before applying quick, short strips, bringing the fly to life. It's an exciting way to fish for brown trout, and I've spoken to other anglers who've found this to be successful, especially when the 'browns' are more docile. Yabbies are known to cause a puff of sediment to come off the bottom, therefore trout would surely recognise this disruption and become conditioned to attacking fleeing prey. This method is also worth trying when you can't spot fish but know they're in the general vicinity you're fishing.

Skating dry flies across the lake's surface is another fun and effective method which can produce exhilarating takes. There's a bit of an art to it, however. When fish are being overly selective or hesitant, skating a dry fly past their noses often 'tempts the bear to bite', similar to the effect of a streamer.

I remember fishing a particularly fussy rise at Yens Bay (Lake Eucumbene), post sunrise. Fish began nosing my dry fly before constantly turning away. With a storm lingering overhead and a short window left to fish, I was running out of options and





JINDABYNE



The Snowy Lakes offer a perfect getaway for day trips, and their 'evening rise' can bring great results . . .



fly choices, therefore I opted for a size #14 Elk Hair Caddis, skating it quickly across the water where a large circle had momentarily dissolved. Like watching a YouTube highlight reel, a large protruding nose erupted out of the water, jaws like a huge vice clamping down on my fly. Being awestruck by the sight and situation at hand, I rather clumsily fumbled the strike, and with that, my only opportunity of that morning squandered – and a mighty one at that! I guess that's lake fishing in its entirety and how often do we kick ourselves when we get it wrong, yet act like it was a piece of cake when everything works out to plan – the cast, the easy, expected eat and fish coming to the net!

Like any, these lakes in the Snowy Mountains nearly always throw up challenges. Spending time on their banks your knowledge definitely grows thicker through experience, constantly learning and unearthing their secrets while understanding the environmental influences in Australia that impact 'lake fishing'. It certainly helps to improve catch rates over time and weaponises your arsenal. But in saying that, just being out there fishing them, immersed in nature, with the sun on your back and the opportunity to catch magnificent trout in the warmth and chaos of Spring, is why we anglers relish fishing the Snowy Lakes.



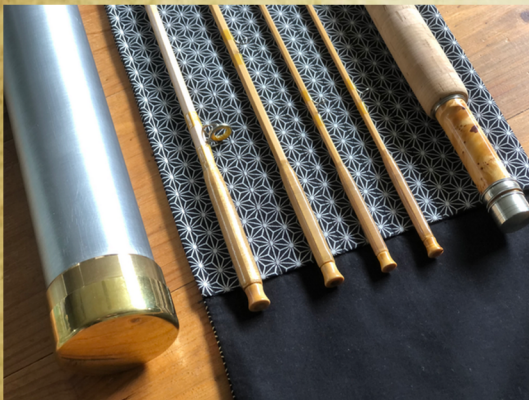


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