

Snags and Snarls

The Pisgah Chapter of Trout Unlimited

May 2010



May is Fly Tying Month





President's Letter

Spring has in fact arrived....the trees and flowers are in full bloom and the fish are much more active in the streams.

Over the last several months, the chapter has been very busy with lots of different activities. The delayed-harvest fish stockings have started in earnest and a roadside cleanup day was also completed. In addition, we had an excellent collaboration event with the LOS Chapter and the US Forest Service back in March building a sizeable section of fence along the North Mills River near the campground.

The annual Fly Fishing School on April 24th was a great success. It was terrific to be back at Harmon Field in Tryon where the school first began and watch 23 students complete the program; including a couple who had come all the way from Alabama. I would again like to thank all of the instructors, mentors, and other volunteers for all of their time, hard work, and other contributions to make this school such a rewarding experience for each of the students. I would like to extend a special thank you to Frank Forrester, a FFS "grad" from last year, who took on the sizeable task of being the school's new director.

Please remember that this month's chapter meeting (May 13th) will have a slightly different format. We are having a meeting dedicated to fly tying similar to what we did last year. It should be a lot of fun for novices and experts alike. What a great way to either introduce yourself to this part of fly fishing or an opportunity to learn how to tie something new and different.

As announced in both the March issue of Snags & Snarls and at the March meeting, we have officially launched our new chapter website, www.pisgahchaptertu.org. It is not only very easy to navigate, but equally important is that it contains a lot of useful information along with lots of great photos featuring all of our various activities. Please make sure to log in regularly since we will be using this site as one of the key communication methods for chapter news and events.

In addition to checking the website, please watch for email announcements as well as the newsletter for the dates and details of the other events scheduled for the next couple of months. These include the two Kids' Fishing Days at Stu Cohn's Pond on May 1st and 15th along with additional delayed-harvest fish stockings in May.

Thank you to everyone for your continued interest and support of all of our great programs and activities.

See you on the water.

Kiki Matthews



Fly Fishing Feathers

By Doc Knoll

While I was in college a marketing professor once said, "If something is essentially wrong with a product. . . then advertise the hell out of the product. Soon, they (the consumer) will be praising it (any product) as the best thing since sliced bread." Every week or so I receive an e-mail from someone seeking to find the truth about "premium neck and saddle feathers." I also read, from the written laments of these beginning fly tiers, that they are confused with what they are either hearing or reading on this subject. Well, help has arrived. . . and it is I who is going to tell you.

I don't want this to sound like an advertisement for my feather and fly tying products so I will take a "neutral" position on this matter. Well, given this a second thought I might "pitch" something while I help to "clear the air" of a bunch of "glossy" advertising dribble and chat room drool. Which, for those of you who do occasionally look into these places, probably know the names of those "confused and lonely people" who really need to get a life.



First and most basic, because fly tying feathers come from "chickens", there is a huge difference between "standard" birds and "genetic" birds. The basic difference is that a "standard" bird is larger in stature and naturally produces feathers used primarily in warm and salt water applications. In these situations using these feathers is fine

"Genetic" feathers (I really wish whoever penned this name would have used anything else. . . maybe Memphis or White Water.) however grow smaller (and thinner) in size and are used primarily for smaller flies and/or flies which are generally used for trout, salmon and steel head. If you fish for any of these three fish; try to use genetic feathers. I don't care who's ... just do yourself a favor and use genetic feathers.

Can the two be interchanged? Yes, except a standard bird will not (numerically) produce the sizes needed by anglers fishing for trout. Then again, the (left over) genetic neck feathers which are larger than what is customarily used by trout fishermen can and are used by most commercial tiers for their warm and salt water applications. And, because of the genetic feather's characteristic "make up," these larger feathers will ultimately produce a more desirable fly than one made with the standard bird's feather. So, and for the finger pointers out there. . . yes they both will catch fish.

Secondly, and what I feel is the most important point of this article, is the misconception most people have about "genetic feather quality." Occasionally, because of my reader's questions which have been directed to me, I drop into Internet News and Chat Rooms as a lurker.

There, sometimes hidden behind a false "handle," I become shocked at the dribble a handful of tiers or fly fishermen are doling out to the general public. So let's clear the air for once and for all. (Except, I really know it won't happen.) And, for someone who wants to argue what I'm about to write... Yes, there are some newsroom tiers who do know their stuff. They do answer questions with precise information obtained through experience and not acquired by advertising or with belief in advertising's "useless dribble." In fact, sometimes I see people nearly copy advertising word for word and post it to a news group. Or even worse I have visited several sites and see the same person posting the same dribble again and again. . . I guess he must be on someone's payroll or is just some kind of a weird fly fishing groupie.



Right now there are a handful of genetic hackle producers. We all basically have the same common stock of birds (at least the last time I looked at mine. . . which was about fifteen minutes ago.) We all try to maintain a feeding regiment that is conducive with our "home" environments and we all naturally strive (in our own way) to produce a more desirable bird. So what is the difference between my feathers and that other guys? Nothing really to speak about much less have a conceptions fit over!

We all produce #1's and we all produce culls (rejects). We harvest in one year's time and we harvest at two years intervals or whatever. Some of us produce a small crop and some produce more than they actually need. Some enjoy dying their capes and others enjoy producing variants. Some want to stay small and others would want to "have it all." Some advertise as procedure and others are never or rarely in print. The difference is in the reader's perception of what he is exposed to. A noted political author once said, "if you repeat a lie enough it will become the truth."

Yes, advertising is much like politics. Usually glossy advertising works by persuading people to believe in a subjected opinion. Anyone given enough advertising will fall victim and eventually even I will begin to believe the sun rises in the west. But, by comparing a company's package of ten selected saddle feathers to another company's complete neck is bogus. And, (for you beginning tiers and fly fishers) a "good" saddle feather cannot be compared to a "good" neck feather. It's like comparing apples and oranges. Besides, there is a very good chance that a given company's "selected" feather package, just like ones which even I provide, came from birds that (as a whole) had inferior or damaged capes and/or saddles. (So you elitist ego maniacs can now realize you probably have poo-poo feathers in your kit!)

I like to believe a feather is a feather. If it can be used to catch fish then it must be a good feather. Continually, I've monitored chat room arguments which have started about who (company) has the best necks and saddles. Is it company X, Y, or Z? Sorry guys. . . I know who gets my "best" feathers and it certainly isn't anyone who would sit in front of a computer and argue when not adequately informed and like I stated before; we all produce really good stuff and we also have some not so good necks and saddles.

If you stop into my shop in late September and try to pass judgment on what is hanging on the shop's wall (probably all #2 & #3's) I might not (visually and at that moment) compare to any other genetic producer's #1

neck. But, to pass judgment by coming to the party late and saying, "it was dull and all the girls were all ugly," only tells me that the observer isn't too smart. Sorry guys, (that is the writers of this useless dribble) for your information the people who contact me and now question your wisdom are pretty much beginner fly fishers or beginning fly tiers. So let's face one sure fact; some of you "informative people" are likely going to ruin.

So let's face one sure fact; some of you "informative people" are likely going to ruin a potential angler and sportsman even before they get started. I guess some people can teach and others really should sit on the bench. . . or maybe in the bleachers and become spectators.

FYI when feather "grading" first took shape a neck or a saddle was "graded" by the NUMBER OF USABLE FEATHERS in the neck or the saddle.. Naturally, even before I got into this business, some people began to "miss count" and give a better rating to any given neck and therefore command a higher price. Now I've been recently informed by some of my customers that the established feather grading system is about to go the way of the credit card.Platinum, gold and plutonium or something. I wonder if this is good? I don't plan on changing.

Well, all I can say is good luck to all of you in this wading pool of advertising. I bet if my college professor was still alive he would tell me. "Doc, if you wrap a two dollar wrapper around some culls I bet you can get \$20 more for it... And someone will be crowing that it's the best thing since sliced bread." I won't take him up on it.

The last time I checked? (now, about twenty minutes ago) a #16 feather from a #2 or #3 neck was just as good as a #16 feather from a #1 neck. I'll continue to fit the customer's wants to the neck or saddle they really need and choose not play this game of illusion.

In fact, just so all of you might know; most commercial tiers don't want our #1 necks and plead with us to sell them #2.s and #3's . They don't want the ridiculously small feathers some tiers say they tie in quantity. In actuality, on most Montana and western streams a #18 fly is small enough.

I've had some small feather tiers, who also happen to fit the descriptions of the news room boys, in my shop



and when I ask them to show me their flies I've seen some really ugly stuff with hackle proportions out of balance for the fly. So, apparently their well touted #1 neck didn't tie down to a #24. Maybe they should have taken out a gauge. But... this is life.

You know it's also very funny (to me) that people believe that cost is the ultimate factor in quality or product reliability. Nothing here could be further from the truth. Many of these same "News room" experts extol the virtues of custom rods over "generic" brands. And, after listening to this nonsense, I really doubt they have ever caught a "good fish" on some of the brands they report as "exceptional" just to use one word which I often read.

I will not give names but some (and more than one) well advertised, glossy printed, four color \$400-\$600 "custom" rods are known to collapse into several pieces if even a 5 or 6 pound fish is hooked. Yet, this advertising is persuading anglers that their products are the best. And in light of that; the "average" angler believes he or she is really holding a good instrument in their hands. Sorry, just because you were sold a ABC brand rod by a metropolitan salesman (who normally fishes for "10 inch stockers or some stocked pond for trophy fish") doesn't mean it is worth half of what you paid (except for paying for his bad habits) . Sure, the rod is pretty and the case is handsome and durable but if you go fishing with me on the Yellowstone I might tell you to leave that "fancy rod" in your car. . . because there is the chance that we're gonna catch some big fish. And, I'm not letting you lose that lifetime dream fish to a collapsed rod. . .

So next time you step into that chat room or read over some information in a news group remember this. Some of these guys really haven't a clue.

I remember one little girl (a novice fly fisher) who asked what fly she should use to catch blue gills in her father's pond. The "experts" started naming stuff (flies) that wouldn't be found in hundreds of miles from the pond and then the "pros" started naming makes and models of rods, reels, tippet weights, paraphernalia and other "needed" stuff that would weigh her down so much she wouldn't make it out of the back door.

The girl only wanted to read, "use flies which look like ants and other terrestrials (bugs) or a if need be use a big juicy worm or a small ball of squeezed bread.

Most of the chat room guys are there just to see their name on the computer screen and flaunt the fact that they are fortunate enough to buy a few "big ticket" items (some good and some which really suck.) It's just an ego thing which confuses more people then it helps. And, by informing you of thisthat's why we say, "at Knoll's we're bringing a new reality to fly fishing."

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A few helpful tips for fly fishing in the spring...

- 1.) Be aware of water levels. This time of year yields more rain, thus more water. Spring time in NC means severe thunderstorms. If you hear thunder or see lightning, stop fishing and wait for it the storm to pass. Often, thunderstorms that occur well upstream will send water downstream.*
- 2.) Fish the seams (where moving water meets slack water.) Trout are often found waiting in seams for passing food. They sit in the calm, slack water, adjacent to the faster water, where food concentrations are higher.*
- 3.) If the water is stained or muddy, use heavier tippet (2-5x depending on clarity of water)*
- 4.) 90% of a trout's diet consists of nymphs, so you are more likely to catch a trout on a nymph vs. a dry in most situations.*
- 5.) Try a new fly that the fish have not likely seen yet.*
- 6.) In high, stained water during and after spring rains, use big #4 Zonkers, Woolly Buggers, and Zoo Cougars.*
- 7.) Most rainbow trout spawn in the early Spring, so try using an egg pattern.*

Spring in NC can be spectacular to say the least. Fishing is usually excellent with abundant hatches, warm temperatures, and plenty of hungry fish. Take advantage of the optimum weather conditions spring commonly offers.

By **Tyler Legg**

Tyler's blog~ www.tarheelflyfishing.com

Try These!

Have you ever listened to a radio broadcast on your computer?
It's called a podcast. Click one of these links and listen. If it doesn't work that's OK, you can continue reading the newsletter.

“Fly tying techniques you can't do without.”

http://www.askaboutflyfishing.com/media_player.cfm?sid=85

“Advanced fly tying.”

http://www.askaboutflyfishing.com/media_player.cfm?sid=89

Mentoring

Alan Frank and Emile Labrousse

Taking advantage of the Mentoring Program I called Alan Frank, to set a date for a day of fishing in what are new territories for me, in the mountains of Haywood County, NC.

After a series of very constructive emails and phone calls we got to know one another quite well. Alan is famously known for his physical fitness and his number one passion (after fly fishing!) : hiking mountain trails several days a week. He shared with me some of his experiences fishing local waters in remote ... to very remote areas. A master with a wispy 3-weight short rod while hiking mountain trails he was kind enough to select a more accessible stream on our fishing day (maybe checking the stamina of this French chef!).

We met at the local Lowe's at the assigned early morning hour and shared some home-made raisin bread and coffee before heading to the East Fork of the Pigeon river. We hiked a short 20 minutes in a very passable trail. The pretty river, choke full of huge boulders but with an easy access had the enticing and classic appearance of our lovely mountain streams. The very streams that make Eastern fly fishers... the best fly fishers in the world!

Rainbow trout were planted here over a century ago and have, sadly, displaced our native brookies. Native brook trout can still be found in the higher reaches of the mountains. With the passage of time colorful but small rainbows are now considered natives, and make for a great game for our sport.

At streamside , after duly taking the water temperature (a surprisingly cold but invigorating 45degrees), we set our rigs. Alan wanted to try his new discovery, the sheep fly. On these unknown waters, with no bug activity visible, I tied on my personal favorite search pattern: a gold ribbed hare's ear Trude (size 14). A 9-foot 4-weight rod (big, but light enough for these waters), with a 6-segment leader and a 30-inch 6Xtippet, completed my gear.

Alan, walking or wading ahead of me spend the day pointing out pools, riffles where he had caught fish . We caught our fair share of gullible, easy small rainbows. The day in the mountains, in this spring weather was glorious and memorable. Alan was a perfect, gracious, host who made these forays into new turf a delight. We all should try the mentoring program: it will open new horizons and create new friendships. Tell your regular fishing buddy: "Today I am meeting a new friend."

Emile

Our 32nd Annual Fly Fishing School



The annual PCTU Fly Fishing School was held on Saturday, April 24th at Harmon Field in Tryon. It was great to be back at the site of the very first fly fishing school held by our chapter.

Despite the questionable weather, twenty-three (23) students from near and far in the Southeast participated in this daylong event. Whether it was learning the basic equipment needs; how to cast; the key elements to a fly line; practicing the best way to tie critical knots; and the preliminary features of stream tactics and entomology, these students came away with a lot of the fly fishing basics. This was the result of a lot of hard work and efforts from twenty-four (24) of our chapter members who provided significant contributions as instructors / mentors / volunteers.

At the end of the class along with the separate fishing experience, we hopefully enabled each of the participants to fall in love with our favorite pastime as well as consider becoming members of Trout Unlimited.

The Bivisible, Brown



HOOK: Mustad 94840 or equivalent (Standard Dry Fly Hook) 10-16
THREAD: Brown
TAIL: Brown Hackle Barbs
BODY: Several brown hackles tied in the rear and palmered forward tightly;
In front are two or three turns of white hackle.

Comment: This is an easy fly to tie. It is a high floating fly that is particularly good in fast high water. It was probably developed in the east many years ago. It can be found on plate 14 of Bergman's TROUT (1938 edition). It can be tied in many colors. Just change the hackle and the thread, but remember to keep the white hackle up front.

Jack Frisch (The Classic Fly Tier)

OUR VISION

Pursue a future where healthy populations of native and wild coldwater fish thrive in the Western North Carolina region for following generations to enjoy.

OUR MISSION

Conserve, protect and restore coldwater fisheries and their watersheds in the Western North Carolina region.

Directory

President	Kiki Matthews	828-696-1599	kikimatthews@bellsouth.net
Vice President	Open		
Secretary	Chris Ellis	864-458-6240	chris.ellis@us.michelin.com
Treasurer	Dick Millonzi	828-595-3905	kmillonzi@morrisbb.net
Past President	Linda Campbell	828-817-2681	linda.campbell188@gmail.com
Director (2010)	David Pierce	828-891-8991	piercefordp@yahoo.com
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Director (2011)	Jim Hoskinson	828-891-8440	ifish2xs@bellsouth.net
Director (2011)	Scott Shafer	828-698-2927	sdsshafer1@bellsouth.net
Director At Large	Frank Forrester	828-458-3137	fforrester@hotmail.com
Snags & Snarls	Jim Hoskinson	828-891-8440	ifish2xs@bellsouth.net



Editor's Note

Please note that the various changes in the appearance of this month's issue of Snags & Snarls is a result of a collaboration of various members assisting in the production of the newsletter rather than the usual culmination of Jim Hoskinson's efforts.

Upcoming Events*

May 1	Kids' Fishing Day – Stu's Pond
May 3	N. Mills River Stocking
May 4	Little River Stocking
May 6	Green River Stocking
May 13	Monthly Meeting – Fly Tying Workshop
May 15	Kids' Fishing Day – Stu's Pond
June 10	Monthly Meeting – Red Fish

*Visit our website www.pisgahchaptertu.org for more information.

Fishing Mentors

Bob Daubert	693-6262
Steve Fromholtz	674-2450*
Dave Maxwell	894-0308
Steve Herring	749-9352
Dale Klug	243-6783
Alan Frank	926-4737**

*weekends only

** Haywood County

General Meeting Location and Directions

Our new meeting location is at the Pardee Health Education Center inside the Blue Ridge Mall. Anyone travelling I-26 use Exit is 49A. The Blue Ridge Mall is located at 1800 Four Season's Blvd,(US 64) Hendersonville, NC 28759

