Fly Lines

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Charlie Stroulger and the Cowichan Bay Bucktail

BCFFF Annual Awards • Okanagan Lake Bucktailing

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"Ice off at Pimainus Lake"

A watercolour by
John Warren

Contents

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Fly Lines assumes no responsibility for lost or damaged material.

On our Cover:

A School of Bucktails,
tied by Bob Giles and framed by the nets of Len Van Driel (photo by Ed.)

Bob Giles and Len Van Driel, both members of the Cowichan Valley Fly Fishers, are close friends and frequent fly fishing companions.

Bob is the recipient of the 2002 BCFFF Jack Shaw Fly Tying Award and is featured on page 11.

Len, a building contractor, carpenter and master craftsman of elegantly built fishing nets, grew up in Duncan where he still lives within easy reach of the Cowichan River.

Almost ten years ago, I bought my first trout net built by Len Van Driel and I still fish with it today. It has scooped up hundreds of trout from local lakes and rivers, and has lunged at many other fish too large to fit in it. Shortly after I bought the net, I met Len at the old *Cowichan Fly and Tackle* and since then he has been a collector of my art and I of his nets.

For the 2000, 2001, and 2002 BCFFF Annual Auctions, Len built and, along with the Cowichan Valley Fly Fishers, donated three long-handled boat nets, each with an inlaid fly and inscriptions appropriate to the theme of each of the three annual gatherings.

All three nets—one with Bill Nation's Special (Kamloops 2000), one with Roderick Haig-Brown's Golden Girl (Victoria 2001), and one with Tommy Brayshaw's Coquihalla Red (Vancouver 2002)—are in my collection of prized BC fly fishing artifacts.

Word has it that Len is preparing a fourth net with an inlaid Tom Thumb (the insignia fly of the BCFFF) for next year's AGM in Penticton, the 30th Anniversary of the organization. I will most certainly be there. [Ed.]

From the President

HONOURING TOMMY BRAYSHAW, a British Columbian master fly fisher, tyer, artist, wood carver and bamboo rod builder, was the theme for the Annual General Meeting held in Vancouver on April 6. Like most other AGM's this one provided some memorable experiences. My thanks to all those who donated items for the auction, the volunteers who helped make the AGM a success, and to the past board for their support. It was good to see the broad participation from young and old; the fly fishers who attended spanned seven decades.

Art Lingren by the banks of the Bulkley River

There are some who were disappointed that the Cowichan Fly-Fishing Boundary Extension resolution passed. But I think those who opposed the proposal and were at the meeting saw how passionate and well organized those in favour were. Victoria fly fishers have been casting flies onto the Cowichan River for 125 years. Past president of the Victoria-based Haig-Brown Fly Fishing Association Rich Ronyecz was one of the last to speak on this issue and he summed up the feelings of the many when he said, "It is for the future that we should take this step now." In our letter to the government, we put forth the argument presented in the motion and asked they consider the boundary change.

The common bond that unites fly fishers was quite evident at the evening banquet. Fly fishers like Doug Wright and Phil Le Blanc who are in their teens joined members and guests of all ages with the most senior being in their mid-eighties. After the event, I received an email from Dan Holder of Victoria saying how much he enjoyed the day and how pleased he was to be able to meet and talk with some British Columbia fly fishing legends. I was pleased that I was able to say a few words and recognize some of the senior members in the crowd. The two octogenarians, Lee Straight and Ted Wilkinson, received a hearty applause—Lee for a long 60-year career as a writer and outdoor advocate, and fly-fishing patron Ted Wilkinson for the impetus he has given to the Harry Hawthorn Foundation. Bob Taylor, Peter Broomhall, Jerry Wintle and Barry Thornton, whose collective steelheading experience must exceed 200 years, received due recognition. British Columbia is steeped in British fly-fishing roots and I thought it appropriate that I rouse British drill-sergeant, fly-fishing instructor Mike Maxwell from his rest so that he could be distinguished.

At the award ceremony we recognized past service to the BCFFF and awarded to the Cowichan Fly Fishers The Conservation Award for their Shawnigan Creek Wild Coho Project. Phil Le Blanc of Cowichan Bay received the Arthur William Nation Award for his fly fishing and tying endeavours in combination with community conservation work. Victoria's Bob Giles, a well-known Vancouver Island fly tyer, received The Jack Shaw Fly Tying Award. Van Egan of Campbell River received the Angul Award, recognizing his contribution to the arte and craft of fly fishing, and long-time fly fisher Bob Taylor of Vancouver received The Gilly Award for his lengthy and exceptional service to fish and fly fishing. Loucas Raptis, the new editor of *Fly Lines*, has included features on all the award recipients in this issue.

Next year we celebrate our 30th Anniversary in Penticton on May 31st. Our theme will be honouring our past and we will be doing something special for past chairmen and presidents. I hope you will put the date on the calendar and join us for another memorable day.

Art Lingren
President

Editorial Lines

I FEEL I HAVE SOME EXPLAINING TO DO. All of a sudden, *Fly Lines* shows up in a redesigned format, with many colour photographs and illustrations and more than twice the number of pages than in its previous runs. Besides taking a little longer to download the issue, what will the consequences of such unauthorized extravagance be?

One may recall history with a sense of foreboding. In the early and mid 1990s, *Fly Lines*, designed and produced in a commercially printed format, commanded a lot of attention. But the publication was so time-consuming and expensive to produce that it was discontinued. The advent of the Internet allowed for the return of *Fly Lines* in December of 1998. In its new electronic format, each issue could be put together at home by the volunteer efforts of one or two dedicated and computer-savvy individuals. Most members could then have access to it through the BCFFF web site. A one-time wait to download the full document and one could save it, print it, and read it at one's leisure. In fact, one can still access all twelve issues published since 1998. Upon the completion of each issue, economically produced copies were sent to member clubs, direct members, and those without an Internet connection.

Fly Lines will continue in this same path, thoughtfully laid down over the years through the dedicated efforts of Greg Gordon, Don McDermit, and Bruce Turnbull. There is no question that I personally favour the old-fashioned book and the printed word, but I can neither ignore nor resist the power and options of electronic media. So I decided to push the possibilities of what we can do within our means a little further. As a consequence, the mark of the editor appears in this issue more often than it should, but I thought that by demonstrating what can be done with our available resources, I will not have to do as much of it myself in future issues. All the same, although *Fly Lines* welcomes contributions from all BCFFF members, I will not wait in despair for unsolicited material in order to produce an issue. The choice of content will be based on preconceived ideas for articles, and individuals who I think are well placed to do the job will be approached for contributions. For a favourable response, an editor needs a publication whose contents are pleasing and meaningful. I hope this issue of *Fly Lines* can be described in this way.

The "pleasing" part, of course, is in the eye of the beholder, but the "meaningful" part cannot be denied. This issue, partly drawing on the awards of the 2002 BCFFF AGM, profiles three individuals who through their words, books, ideas, and innovations spring up from an era of legends in BC fly fishing history. Alongside them, two fly fishers from two successive younger generations demonstrate their convictions and passion for their sport through their conservation work and their fly tying. With this issue, we also extend a warm welcome to two of the newest BCFFF member clubs, the Harry Hawthorn Foundation and the Comox Valley Fly Fishers. To balance things out a bit with some actual fly fishing, Erik Poole and Sam Saprunoff have come through with two excellent articles about innovative fly tying and the particular challenges of bucktailing for the big rainbows of Okanagan Lake. Peter Broomhall has given us a sample of his usual thought-provoking eloquence, and, not to fall short on aesthetics, our past president John Warren has graced the inside covers of this issue with his beautiful watercolours.

Finally, *Fly Lines* went to press, as it were, only after Dale Francis, the Haig-Brown Fly Fishing Association's Newsletter Editor, and BCFFF webmaster Greg Gordon enthusiastically answered all my questions and helped me out with software and technical advice.

I thank everyone for their help and contributions.

Loucas Raptis
Editor

Profile

Charlie Stroulger and the Cowichan Bay Bucktail

By Loucas Raptis

Charlie looking nostalgically at Cowichan Bay with one of his bucktails just waiting to come off the vise—remembering the old days.

Long, scintillating polar bear hair, brilliantly coloured in reds, yellows, and pinks, greens, purples, and blues; skillfully layered and fastened on a short hook with a second one trailing to the tail; all distinguished flies, with names such as "Coronation," "Grey Ghost," and "Mickey Fin;" coming alive in deep, blue waters and swimming enticingly under the churning surface of a motor's wake; darting teasingly, as though to escape the visible trajectory wave of an enormous coho in hot pursuit; a violent strike and a silver explosion in the air that jars the cane rod and sends the Hardy screaming; and the heart-beat races along with the fleeing fish.

This is the story of the Cowichan Bay bucktail, an old story that no one can tell better than Charlie Stroulger. At 87, having lived within view of Cowichan Bay since the age of six, not only he was there when it all began, but he also played an important role in how it all developed.

The bucktail found its way to Cowichan Bay as a small casting fly probably in the late 1920s or early 30s. It had recently evolved from the hair-wing flies of the east coast, which over the previous ten years had gradually been replacing the elaborately tied Atlantic salmon flies. It was a silver-bodied fly, generally around two inches long, with a bushy wing of white and brown buck-tail hair. By the time it reached the Bay, large salmon were being caught for nearly a decade with shiny spoons trolled behind rowing boats. Charlie remembers trolling with his father even as a kid, being removed unceremoniously from the oars whenever the fishing happened to be slow. By the time he was a teenager, he had several tyees under his belt, with a giant of 54 lbs to top it all—he reaches for his wallet and shows me the faded black and white photo.

In this setting then, it was only natural to troll the bucktail too. Once the move was made, it instantly opened up new possibilities. A trolled bucktail did not have to be the small casting fly anymore. Longer hair was used to extend the length of the body, and more hair was used to build up the profile of the fly in the shape of a herring. But the results were anything but spectacular at first. "The coho were thick in the Bay," remembers Charlie, "but at first it was not that easy to catch them with bucktails. The waters of Cowichan Bay are deep and quiet and hardly stir with the tides. We needed flies with a lot of action to get the fish to take them."

"Don't ask me how we did it," says Charlie, "it was all trial and error, but we figured out a couple of things right." For a bucktail to "swim" properly, to have action in the water and really catch fish, the hair has to be fastened on the hook in such a way as to build up gradually a "shoulder" at the front end of the fly, tapering into a point at the back. Tying the hair directly on the top of the hook leads to twisting, and dead-looking bucktails in the water. First, all the short hair from the bunch to be tied has to be removed, and then the hair is divided into two equal parts and tied one on each side of the hook, gradually building up the shoulder. This method balances the fly, keeps it upright in the water, and makes it "swim."

The coho now started coming to the improved bucktails with renewed conviction; but not all the problems were yet solved. "We could see and feel these huge coho hitting our flies," Charlie says, still throwing his hands up in frustration, "but we couldn't hook them." So Charlie took his next idea to his friend Walter Whan, who at the time was tying the flies for him, before Charlie himself picked up the art. Charlie wanted a second hook to extend to the tail of the fly. Walter came back with the next installment of bucktails furnishing an extra bronze hook trailing from the first one with braided cooper wire. From that point on, every coho that touched Charlie's bucktails was hooked. But, of course, not all bucktails were created equal, even when tied by the same expert hands. Some would simply refuse to "swim," while others had such miraculous action that their loss became a memorable tragedy.

The first Cowichan Bay bucktails were probably not the prettiest flies either. They were tied with white and brown buck-tail hair like their smaller predecessors, and were usually garnished with a metal spinner attached right at the head. The translucent and wavy qualities of polar bear hair gradually replaced buck-tail as the material of choice, and through a taxidermist friend, Charlie secured a good supply for himself over the years. He also experimented with dyes and developed techniques that produce brilliant, repeatable, fish-catching colours without

burning or curling the ends of the hair. His secret lies in dipping the hair for the "right" number of times in the "right" temperature of each dye solution. His all-time favourite colour combination is white and purple—the kind of purple, of course, that only Charlie can get.

The trolled bucktail eventually found its way into other waters, in some cases developing concurrently with the Cowichan Bay bucktail, but always looking different, depending on the particular waters it was meant to fish. Charlie understands and accepts the transformation of what would appear to him as the proper way of tying bucktails. But he does take exception to those who claim to have pioneered the sport of fly fishing for salmon in saltwater, when in fact they are only now learning things that Charlie and his contemporaries have known and practiced for over sixty years. Popularizing is one thing, pioneering is quite another.

Charlie knows of no one who can tie a proper Cowichan Bay bucktail—with one notable exception: Bob Giles. "Bob is an innovator," says Charlie, "when I first saw him tying flies, I wanted to hide." Impressed by Bob's respect for tradition, Charlie took him under his wing and showed him everything he knows: how to select polar bear hair, how to apply the dyes, how to build up the "shoulders," and even how to attach the trailing hooks—always facing downward. When you look at a bucktail tied by Charlie and one tied by Bob, and you run your fingers down the long polar bear hair, you get the distinct feeling that the two flies are very closely related.

Charlie Stroulger and Bob Giles displaying Charlie's colourful bucktails, with Cowichan Bay in the background.

Last year, during its Annual General Meeting in Victoria, the BCFFF recognized Charlie's "Outstanding Contribution to the Heritage of the Arte and Science of Fly Fishing in British Columbia" by presenting him with the Angul Award. His own club, the Cowichan Valley Fly Fishers, went even further, by declaring him "Fly Fisherman of the Century" and honouring him with a Lifetime Membership.

The coho of Cowichan Bay are long since gone. But miracles do happen, and one can only wish wholeheartedly that Charlie will live to be a hundred and gets to see the big coho of Cowichan Bay chase his bucktails all over again.

The Angul Award

Given to that individual, who is not necessarily a BCFFF member, for their outstanding contribution to the heritage of the Arte and Science of Fly Fishing in British Columbia.

2002 Recipient: Van Egan

A few doors up the road from "Above Tide," the residence of Roderick and Anne Haig-Brown, is the entrance to the "Garden of Egan," the residence of Van and Maxine Egan. I am here, welcomed in their home by the banks of the Campbell River, holding the 2002 BCFFF Angul Award (a striking photograph of a steelhead by Art Lingren framed with a General Money No 2 and a Coquihalla Red also tied by Art). Van and Maxine could not make it to the awards ceremony, and long-time friend and fishing companion of the Egans Peter Broomhall accepted the Award on Van's behalf. My mission—and great honour—was to bring it to the Island. Van accepts it with the utmost humility and surprise. Maxine is glowing with pride. The conversation instantly turns to books.

I have known Van mostly from his books—three already published and a fourth on the way. The lyrical depth of his writing in *Waterside Reflections* (1996) made me seek his most recent self-published title, *Rivers on my Mind* (1998). That's when I started corresponding with Van. Through his generosity, I also received one of his last remaining copies of the deluxe edition of his first book, *Tyee: The Story of the Tyee Club of British Columbia* (1988). Soon enough, we were carried away by our mutual enthusiasm for old books and angling literature and the outcome was inevitable: Van came up with a wonderful manuscript for a fourth book, and I was overwhelmed when he accepted my offer to illustrate it. Van is producing this book on his own as well, with all the fine qualities of a collectible volume, from which established publishers seem to shy away nowadays.

Van's upcoming book entitled *Rivers of Return - The Angling Adventures of Will Fisher* takes us back into a time that we will never see or experience again. But through Van's skillful pen we witness the fishing, the animals, the woods, the people, the old ways, as though we were there ourselves. Van's writing is an illustrator's dream. What follows is a little literary gem excerpted from a treasure of a story. [Ed.]

Excerpt from ***Rivers of Return*** *-The Angling Adventures of Will Fisher*, an upcoming book by Van Gorman Egan.

With Illustrations by Loucas Raptis.

From the Foreword:

The reader may wonder if the author lives in a different world. Perhaps he does, or has. The stories that follow are based on a period when angling opportunities were a pure joy, before easy access made them available to an expanding auto-traveling public.

The time frame of these stories is the late 1950s to mid 1960s. Three of the four stories are set on northern Vancouver Island, the other on the mainland coast of British Columbia.

During the period drawn on the North Island was relatively remote (as most of the mainland coast still is). It was not until two decades later that the Island Highway was completed, linking the northern Island towns with the rest of Vancouver Island. Prior to that time, connections were made by float plane or boat to most rivers. Beginning in 1964 one could commute by car by driving logging roads that took you first to the west coast and then back to the east coast of the Island. These roads were an adventure in themselves. My first trip by car required eight hours of driving from Campbell River to Beaver Cove.

From Chapter One, "River of Return":

Many years had come and gone since he was last here. It wasn't the dead cedar he had come to see, but he searched the area near it, parting the bushes and kicking about the forest litter. He was nearly ready to quit when he spotted the post, a weathered, rotting chunk of Douglas fir, askew and nicely camouflaged in the thick ground cover. He looked hard and long at the old post and at the ground around it, and then he turned away and walked back to the river.

A wide shingle beach leads down to the river's inside curvature, and the flow of the water is dark and deep along the far side. Fisher wades out and casts and the fly begins to swim. Fisher mends the line and the fly settles deeply. And then the line begins to draw and he raises the rod and feels the fish. The rod arcs and trembles and Fischer begins to play the fish almost as if in a trance. He has hooked a very good cutthroat, and beside him is Benji, a young black Labrador, who now wades carefully forward, concentrating on the straining line that cuts the water, now wildly eyeing the surface commotion as the trout fights for its freedom. Benji looks up at his master, then back to the action. The rod is no gun and whatever is raising a ruckus in the river is no blue grouse. He would know what that is all about. But this?

The trout is tiring and coming in on its side, not feebly but with quick thrusts and turns and sharp shakes of the head. In the crystal water its bright flanks are tinged in yellow below and roseate slashes are visible beneath the jaw. Fisher draws the fish into ankle-deep water, and then Benji, possessed of a primeval force, springs upon the trout, grasps it in its jaws and turns to his master. Fischer is awe struck and seconds pass as he registers what he has seen. For Benji, the retriever, it is a first.

But Benji isn't here now as a tired cutthroat lies in the shallows. And Fisher isn't fully conscious of the noble fish as he twists the hook from its jaw. His mind is in a time capsule, back when the four-year old retrieved his first fish. Even as the cutthroat struggles to regain its balance, he is seeing Benji on point and as the trout darts for deep water, fisher sees a dripping black Labrador bringing the catch to his hand.

A gust of misty wind strikes Fischer's face, bringing him back to the present. When he regains some presence of mind he reels in the line, fastens the fly in the hook keeper and wades ashore. He looks up at the cedar snag and at the thick bush all around. How different from back when he had set the post in the ground. The post, so badly deteriorated, yet still nearly upright and in its place, though missing its cross-piece now. Where can it be?

Fischer was on his hands and knees, parting the bushes and ferns, and sweeping aside the layers of mulching leaves when his hand strikes the end of a metal bar. This was the cross-piece that the decaying post could no longer hold. He lifted it free and cleared off the wet litter off and read again the brazed lettering on the black iron – Benji - the Best Fishing Dog Ever.

–Van Gorman Egan

"Egan has been an angler, hunter and naturalist from his youth, a fishing guide, biology and oceanography teacher, master fly-tyer (he tied the Steelhead Bee, one of six "fly" stamps released in April '98 by Canada Post) and since retiring from the classroom 12 years ago, an active writer." "Egan writes of the rivers he has known intimately, from his early trout-fishing days in Wisconsin to his retirement years in British Columbia. Though detailed and specific, his accounts are nevertheless universal and timeless." -by Peter Broomhall from the cover of *Rivers on my Mind*.

Rivers on my Mind can be ordered from Van Egan, 2340 Campbell River Road, Campbell River, BC V9W 4N7. Hardcover, 2nd printing, $25 Can. $20 US, soft-cover $20 Can. $15 US, please add shipping $5 in Canada, $7 in US.

The Gilly Award

Given in recognition to that BCFFF member who has continuously given exceptional service to BC's Fishery, the Sport of Fly Fishing, and the BC Federation of Fly Fishers.

2002 Recipient: Bob Taylor

A Tribute by Art Lingren

DURING MOST OF THE LAST HALF CENTURY, expert steelhead fly fisher, fly designer and tyer, book collector, rod maker, and all-round fly tackle craftsman, Robert Taylor of Vancouver has journeyed through most of British Columbia and Washington state pursuing the mighty sea-run trouts that frequent most coastal and some interior rivers.

Taylor, like many other steelheaders, didn't always fly fish. Furthermore, he didn't get bitten by the fishing bug until he was in his mid-twenties. His early association with fishing was a direct result of his affluence: he owned an automobile in the very early 1950s. His younger brother liked to fish and Bob volunteered to drive him and his friend to local lakes such as Sasamat and Hicks. The enthusiasm displayed by the younger Taylor when bringing his fish to the boat persuaded the older Taylor to try fishing. A couple of trips to the Indian River for pinks set the hooks deep and Taylor has been wandering rivers and lakes in search of fish ever since.

He took his first steelhead from the Seymour River's Shingle Bolt Pool in 1954. His eagerness for float fishing, however, waned early, because as he said in our interview "it was just too simple." One December day in 1958, Taylor en-route to the Suicide, decided to go over to the Allouette and see Jerry Wintle who had been having good results on that river with the fly. Taylor found Wintle and his dog Prince on the Maple Ridge Park Run and Jerry encouraged Bob to give it a try. Destiny works in strange ways, and Taylor, who had just wanted to see Wintle, took a 13 lb. winter steelhead that day—his first on the fly.

Once Bob was hooked on fishing, he soon became hooked on angling literature. His first two books were given to him by his wife, Karin, for Christmas in the 1960s. Both were bibles of the day for the west coast fisherman. Roderick Haig-Brown's *The Western Angler* covers all aspects of British Columbian sport fishing and Clark Van Fleet's *Steelhead to a Fly* was the only book of that era almost totally devoted to steelhead fly fishing. Since those first two books, Taylor has amassed an impressive library. Rod Haig-Brown was one of the people whom Bob frequently sought advice from on angling literature.

Taylor made frequent trips to Vancouver Island to fish for cutthroat and coho in the late 1950s and 1960s. An admirer of Haig-Brown, Bob eventually went to call on him at Haig-Brown's Campbell River home. The master fisher was not at home but Mrs. Anne Haig-Brown told Bob and Karin that he was on the river up at the Island pools and suggested they go and see him there. Although they didn't bother Rod that day on the river, they did return and meet him, and after that initial meeting they enjoyed a cordial relation for years, until Haig-Brown's death in 1976. Through that association Bob developed a greater love of fly fishing and angling literature that will remain until his dying day.

One of Bob's most prized possessions was an Aldam that he bought during a trip to England in the 1960s. Books like the Aldam, which were specially bound with actual flies tipped into the works, display the love that fly fishing writers and fly fishers who buy such masterpieces possess for their sport. Taylor's Aldam had a good home for more than a quarter century. Of course fly fishers never really permanently own books: they just baby-sit them while in their libraries. Bob recently sold the book and made quite a handsome profit. Collecting good books has its side advantages: besides the knowledge they give, they often appreciate.

Taylor, the book collector, is not a reel collector, although he has amassed an impressive number of Hardy Perfect reels. One of the fly fishers who influenced Bob was Coquihalla fisher, Bill Cunliffe. Taylor met Cunliffe, the consummate fly fisher, on the Coquihalla River in the summer of 1958

and after that meeting Taylor bought his first Hardy Perfect reel. However, Earl Anderson, local tackle guru of the day, convinced Bob that Perfects were of poor quality and Bob traded his only Perfect to Lee Straight. Some time in the late 1960s Hardy decided to discontinue Perfect production and some of Bob's American angling friends, including ardent reel collector Art Smith, whom Taylor describes "as valuing his reel collection more than his wife," convinced Bob that he should have at least one Perfect. After that re-acquaintance with the Perfect, Taylor decided that he would like to have at least one sample of the many Mark I and II models and styles of Perfects made since 1891. In his non-collection Taylor ended up with about three dozen Perfects, including some very rare models such as a Bougle, and early century Mark Is and Mark IIs.

Taylor is a tinkerer when it comes to fly fishing tackle. His line splices, loops, and rod binding and repairs are neat and well prepared as are the flies that he dresses. He is credited with the development of two steelhead patterns--the Woolly Worm and the Golden Spey.

Taylor's Golden Spey (see page 20) is unique in that it is the first Spey pattern which incorporates the flat feather wing of the General Practitioner while still maintaining the other features of classic Spey patterns such as the thin body, double rib, heron hackle, and a barred duck flank throat. Characteristic of Taylor's fly tying craftsmanship are his small, neat heads.

Taylor has long been a supporter of the conservation movement, and before the practice was in vogue, he became a convinced catch-and-release fisher. He is a long-time member of the Totem Flyfishers of British Columbia and has supported the efforts of the Steelhead Society of BC and the BC Federation of Flyfishers. Taylor loves many rivers, but prefers those of large size with big fish such as the Dean and Thompson rivers. He has been instrumental in influencing the regulations on the Dean and has been a key player in the Totem Flyfishers thrust to ban the destructive bait fishing on the Thompson River.

A man of many talents and convictions, Taylor is also a grand fishing partner. ¦

The Arthur William Nation Award

Given to a junior conservationist fly fisher or fly tier who displays leadership in conservation as it pertains to the art and craft of fly fishing.

2002 Recipient: Phil LeBlanc

By Dan Holder

PHIL LEBLANC IS A MEMBER of the Cowichan Valley Fly Fishers. Soon after he joined the club 18 months ago, Phil became interested in fly tying and enrolled in a fly tying course taught by fellow club member Ken Thorne. With his newly acquired skills, he entered his club's fly tying contest and took first prize in the Novice Nymph category. Among his favorite fly patterns are the Woolly Worm and variations of the Woolly Bugger. He ties his Wooly Worm with long and soft palmered hackle (see page 20) and says that the rainbows of the Cowichan River love it.

At only 13 years of age, a grade eight student at George Bonner Middle School, Phil is among the youngest members in his club, yet one of the most involved in club activities. He has participated in the conservation work of the Shawnigan Creek Wild Coho Project, as well as in his club's fish-outs and displays during Family Fishing Weekend, Rivers Day, and at the Freshwater Eco-Centre.

Phil LeBlanc grew up around the Sechelt area and has spent countless hours with his dad flying around the area in a floatplane. His future plans include a remote fly-in fishing trip and a trip to the Maritimes to fish for Atlantic salmon. For the time being though, he

Phil LeBlanc with his Arthur William Nation Award

enjoys fishing the Cowichan River for rainbows and brown trout. He has already drifted and fished the river with guides Kenzie Cuthburt and Joe Saysell. His mom, Cathy, who has recently taken up fly-fishing and is also a member of the Cowichan Valley Fly Fishers, usually accompanies him on his trips.

Phil is a strong proponent of catch and release. A conservationist, skilled fly tier, and passionate and involved fly fisher, Phil LeBlanc would certainly have received the approval and high praise of Bill Nation. ¦

The Jack Shaw Fly Tying Award

Given in recognition to that BCFFF member who has excelled in the art and craft of fly tying.

2002 Recipient: Robert Giles

Bob Giles by the Cowichan River

By now, I am no longer surprised when I peek in the fly boxes of members of the Haig-Brown Fly Fishing Association and Cowichan Valley Fly Fishers and spot fly patterns that were either tied, originated, or popularized by Bob Giles. For the last 15 years or so, Bob has left an indelible mark on the fly fishing habits of all those who have known and fished with him.

Although a competent fly tier of fully-dressed Atlantic Salmon flies, Bob's fishing flies are sensible and practical, and often tied with attention to and respect for tradition. Bob was one of the first to introduce me to fly patterns by Al Allard, Jack Shaw, and even old British patterns, such as the Bloody Butcher.

Bob does not fish haphazardly—he is a meticulous observer, attuned to every natural event in the world of his favourite salmonids: the sea-run cutthroat, the brown trout, the steelhead and the coho. His most popular fly pattern, the River Dragon (see page 20), came about this way. He noticed the few October Caddis flies that flutter by the edge of the woods every fall along the Cowichan River and started looking at their larvae. The body colour turned out to be critical, and the remaining elements fell together from apparent influences of interior lake fishing. The fall is the time of year when jack chinook are in the Cowichan River, and they instantly took a fancy to Bob's new fly. The big browns couldn't turn it down either. But the real surprise came with the success of the River Dragon with the winter steelhead of the Cowichan. The pattern has now become Bob's standard steelhead fly.

One kind of fly you won't see Bob tying any time soon is a bead-head. "Where did they ever come from?" he says. "And now, not only they are everywhere, they have turned into cone-heads, and some people even put little propellers in front of them, so they are not really fly fishing anymore, they are basically fishing with a Devon minnow." He is not impressed with the word "progressive" behind all the latest gimmicks. "It is a poor excuse, for those who can't bother to take the time to develop the skill of proper fly presentation, and for whom catching the fish is a lot more important than the enjoyment of actually trying to catch it."

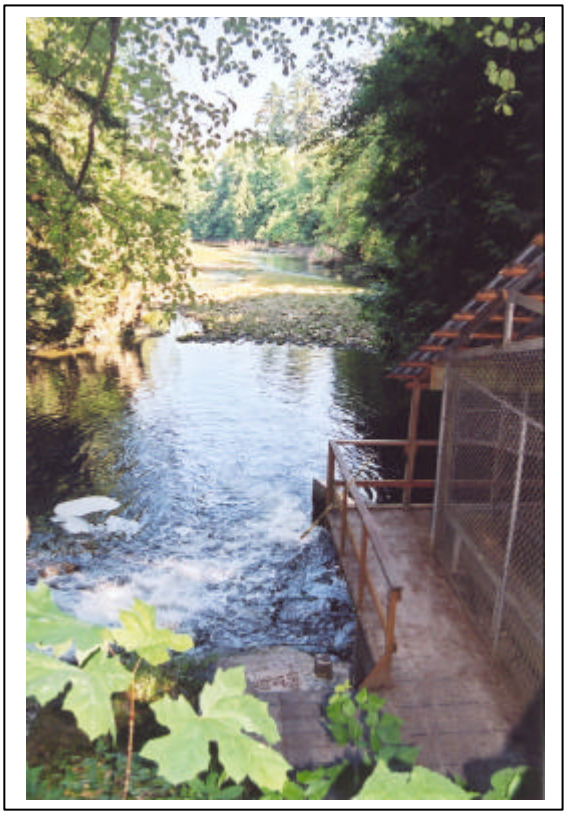
Bob echoes similar uncompromising principles when it comes to conservation too. "If you put your personal interest or your fishing ways ahead of what's best for the fish, I will call you on it," he says to me with an unwavering voice. That does not frighten me—on the contrary I find it very reassuring. And he puts his money where his mouth is. In the ten years that I have known Bob, I have always seen him enthusiastically involved in one conservation activity or another, with his most passionate pursuit being the Shawnigan Creek Wild Coho Project spearheaded by his club, the Cowichan Valley Fly Fishers. Such involvement is only fitting for a man who was a rare voice among anglers in defense of a sport fishing ban when coho stocks were nearing extinction.

I think what Charlie Stroulger said to me about Bob, when we last parted, applies to all British Columbia fly fishers, their fish, and their sport. "I don't worry about you," he said, "you are in safe hands with Bob." [Ed.]

The Conservation Award

Given to that BCFFF member club in recognition of their contribution to the conservation and enhancement of BC's fishery for a specific conservation-related project.

2002 Recipient: Cowichan Valley Fly Fishers



Nature has not been fair to Shawnigan Creek. The creek drains Shawnigan Lake at its North end into Mill Bay on Southern Vancouver Island. A substantial stretch of it, from about four miles above tide water all the way to the lake, is ideal spawning and rearing habitat for coho salmon. Yet no fewer than six impassable waterfalls, starting literally at tide water, have prevented any salmon from reaching the spawning beds.

This is the perfect script for human interference—always with the potential for ruin , but in this case the result was a great success. In 1978, a nameless biologist with no clear plan introduced coho fry into the creek from Goldstream River. Sure enough, a few years later the coho came back to spawn, only to find themselves blockaded right from the get-go. It only made sense to help the fish a bit, and for the next two decades the Mill Bay Conservation Society kept the run going by transferring the mature fish beyond the waterfalls and onto the spawning grounds.

In 1998, project coordinator Tony Brown made a presentation on the Shawnigan Creek Wild Coho Project to the Cowichan Valley Fly Fishers, with the intention of finding an interested volunteer-based group to take over from the now aging members of the Mill Bay Conservation Society. The conservation-minded members of the Cowichan Valley Fly Fishers know a great opportunity when they see one and quickly went to work. Tony Brown, already a fly fisher, joined their club. Together since then, they have been helping over 500 coho every year onto the spawning beds of Shawnigan Creek.

It is not as simple as it sounds. The coho are misdirected, so to speak, through an easier path than that of the first set of rapids, and into a holding trap, which resembles a small, shallow swimming pool. This is housed under a shed that holds two troughs where males and females are kept separately after capture. An equal number of males and females are then loaded into a vertical tram-way that lifts the fish over a hundred feet up the steep slopes of the ravine and into a 200-gallon transfer tank (which, incidentally, was put together with funding from the BCFFF Gilly Fund). The coho are then driven, thirty at a time, about four miles upstream and released within a two and a half mile stretch of the creek.

When, a few years ago, the return of Goldstream River coho approached extinction numbers, brood stock from Shawnigan Creek came to the rescue. The coho of Shawnigan Creek had become a naturally ongoing depository of genes that could be reintroduced into the river of their genetic origin.

Volunteer-based projects like this require commitment, dedication, and environmental consciousness and they produce results which are nothing short of inspirational. [Ed.]

The Appreciation Award

Given to that individual, group or business in recognition of their support of the BCFFF.

2002 Recipients: Bruce Turnbull, Marie Allen and Chris Purcell

For their dedication and the many hours of volunteer work as members of the BCFFF Board of Directors.

Steve Hanson

For his generous contributions to many fly fishing organizations.

Featured BCFFF Member Club

The Harry Hawthorn Foundation

OLDER THAN THE OLDEST fly fishing club in British Columbia, the Harry Hawthorn Foundation is now a member of the BC Federation of Fly Fishers.

With Roderick Haig-Brown as one of its founding members (along with a university president, a librarian, and six professors) the Harry Hawthorn Foundation for the Inculcation and Propagation of the Principles and Ethics of Fly Fishing was formed in 1953 and since then it has been raising money for the purchase of angling books for the University of British Columbia Library.

With the publication of *The Contemplative Man's Recreation* in 1970 by Stanley E. Read, fly fishers were exposed for the first time to the obscure and rather humorous circumstances surrounding the formation of the Foundation, as well as to a bibliographical list of some of the most important volumes in the history of angling literature.

Thirty years later the collection has grown to nearly 2,000 titles. The occasional bibliographical supplements could not keep up with this rate of growth. Inevitably, a new, complete and up-to-date bibliography was needed. Under the direction of the Harry Hawthorn Collection librarian Lee Perry, a new bibliography was compiled and published in March 2002 by the University of British Columbia Library. Art Lingren, BCFFF President and a member of the Foundation, was invited to write a new introduction. In it Art gives an account of the historical details of the Foundation's inception, as well as a historical overview of angling literature from the earliest European treatises to contemporary British Columbian angling books. The segment of Art's Introduction discussing BC-related titles is excerpted below.

The book is available from the UBC Library under the full title: *For the Contemplative Man: a bibliography of works related to angling and sport fishing in the University of British Columbia Library*. Compiled under the direction of Lee Perry with an Introduction by Art Lingren and Illustrations by Loucas Raptis. Vancouver, Canada : The University of British Columbia Library, 2002 . Soft-cover; Spiral Bound; 199 pages. ISBN 0-88865-223-2. It sells for *$20* and can be ordered through the Harry Hawthorn Foundation web site (http://www.library.ubc.ca/hawthorn/bibad.html) or by sending an email to the Collection's Librarian Lee Perry at leeperry@interchange.ubc.ca. All proceeds go to the Harry Hawthorn Foundation. [Ed.]

Angling and fly fishing books in British Columbia— Excerpt from Art Lingren's Introduction to ***For the Contemplative Man: A Bibliography of Works Related to Angling and Sport Fishing in the University of British Columbia Library.***

Closer to home in British Columbia there are a number of books worth noting, some for their historical significance and others that are often more technical and that document certain things about the sport. In volume I of John Keast Lord's two-volume *A Naturalist in British Columbia* (1866), Lord writes about the fishes of British Columbia and includes some fly fishing passages. J.A. Lees and W.J. Clutterbuck spent the summer and early fall months of 1887 touring the upper Columbia watershed rivers and their *B.C. 1887* (1888) is a classic and provides much information about their experiences and the sport they enjoyed on many of the famous Columbia and Kootenay rivers' tributaries. After spending a decade or so in British Columbia, Dr. Thomas Wilson Lambert returned to England where he penned *Fishing in British Columbia* (1907). Lambert traveled fairly extensively in British Columbia along the line of Canadian Pacific Railway and his book is notable for its information about the sport. First editions of Lambert's book are difficult to find, but in 1998 Ric Olmsted republished Lambert's book with a "Foreword" written by myself which documents the importance of Lambert's work. Arthur Bryan Williams' two titles *Rod & Creel in British Columbia* (1919) and the expanded *Fish and Game in British Columbia* (1935) are famous books because they were the prototypes for the many where-to guide books published about the province's fishing spots.

(continued on next page)

Although we share him with the rest of North America and other fly fishers of the world, we in the Pacific Northwest are most fortunate that Roderick Haig-Brown settled in British Columbia early in his life and wrote most of his books while living in Campbell River. His classic work *The Western Angler* (1939) and the revised 1947 trade edition, illustrated by Tom Brayshaw, and *A River Never Sleeps* (1946), are testimonials to his skilled pen. *A River Never Sleeps* is one of the finest pieces of angling literature of the 20th century and a must read for those who enjoy reading well-written essays on the sport. Three of his seasons series: *Fisherman's Spring* (1951), *Fisherman's Summer* (1959) and *Fisherman's Fall* (1964) are all classics about Pacific Northwest fishing. A portrait of a country magistrate's life on rural Vancouver Island, *A Measure of the Year* (1968), is considered by many Haig-Brown enthusiasts to be one of his finest books. Of Haig-Brown's 28 book, 11 are about fish and fishing and all add greatly to the literature of the sport. Any angler who has not read Haig-Brown is in for a treat.

John Fennelly's *Steelhead Paradise* (1963) is certainly notable as it documents early steelhead fly fishing on many of the big name Skeena River tributaries. Edited by Peter Broomhall and Jack Grundle, *British Columbia Game Fish* (1970), with its introduction by Roderick Haig-Brown and with chapters by Jim Kilburn, Pete Broomhall, Lee Straight, et al, is an example of the passion some anglers have for their sport and deserves a place on British Columbia's notable book shelf, as does Jack Shaw's first book *Fly Fish the Trout Lakes* (1976).

This Foundation's long-time Honorary Secretary, now deceased, Stanley E. Read's book, *Tommy Brayshaw: The Ardent Angler-Artist* (1977), documents Brayshaw's skills as a master fly fisher, fly tyer, fish artist, fish wood carver and bamboo rod maker.

Vancouver Island writer Barry Thornton has written a number of books since the late 1970s starting with *Steelhead: The Supreme Trophy Trout* (1978) and ending with *Fly-Fishing-The Thornton Anthology* (2000). Haig-Brown's writing drew Michigan-born Van Gorman Egan to British Columbia. Wandering the banks of the Stamp River he met his future wife. They married and settled in Campbell River where Egan penned three books: *Tyee: The Story of the Tyee Club of British Columbia* (1988), *Waterside Reflections* (1996) and *Rivers on my Mind* (1998).

The Gilly (1985), edited by Alf Davy with chapters covering a wide spectrum of British Columbia fly fishing is certainly notable for its success. Not many fishing books have enjoyed two let alone multiple printings and *The Gilly* has been in print continually since 1985.

About 50 books have been written about British Columbia fly fishing since the 1970s such as Lee Richardson's *Lee Richardson's B.C.* (1978), Brian Chan's small book *Flyfishing Strategies for Stillwaters* (1991), Mark Hume's *A Run of the River* (1992), my own *Fly Patterns of Roderick Haig-Brown* (1993) and *Fly Patterns of British Columbia* (1996), Phil Rowley's *Fly Patterns for Stillwaters* (2000), and *The West Coast Flyfisher* (1998) compiled by Mark Pendlington. All, in one way or another, are testimonials to British Columbia's rich fly fishing heritage. Rob Brown lives, fishes and writes about fly fishing on the Skeena River and tributaries around his hometown of Terrace. Rob Brown is one of British Columbia's best at spinning yarns and his *Steelhead River Journal: Skeena* (1996) is an example of his story telling wizardry.

Over the centuries the sport's practitioners have written many thousands of titles. Some describe the pleasure of angling, others are technical, some document the history of the sport, while others are mainly about dressing flies or fly tying. When great anglers put pen to paper and relate days on the water with rod and line their words can and often do describe their feelings, observations and experiences. Often the words tell more than just a story about catching a fish. They teach us about the ethics of the sport, about conservation, and give us an insight into how the mind of a great fly fisherman works and reveal the secrets to his success. Years ago, as an eager steelhead fly fisher, I read George LaBranche's combined book *The Dry Fly and Fast Water and the Salmon and the Dry Fly* (1951). Soon after reading it I caught my first steelhead using the natural drift dry fly on the Coquihalla River. LaBranche didn't say do this and that and you will catch a fish but to me his words painted a picture and from that picture I devised my approach and it worked. I thought I needed to share LaBranche with others and lent the book to a friend, thinking he might be helped with his fly fishing. When he gave me the book back I asked what he thought of it. He said that he sure enjoyed the story about that guy catching a fish but it had absolutely no effect on his fly fishing. Personally, I have spent many pleasant hours reading fly fishing books and I believe my approach to fly fishing, conservation, and the environment is a result of many influences. None has had more of a profound effect on me than has the literature written by some of the world's great fly fishers.

(continued on next page)

Since its inception in 1953 the Harry Hawthorn Foundation has helped the UBC Library acquire many hundreds of books. Library purchases with Hawthorn funds and generous gifts have swelled the collection. For example, Roderick Haig-Brown donated many of his own works and Tommy Brayshaw willed his personal library to the Foundation's cause. Other members have donated books that they have purchased on their worldly travels and some have made generous cash donations to be used to enhance the Library's collection.

I have spent many hours in libraries and collections to satisfy a desire to learn more about the sport or to research information for my five fly fishing and fly tying books. In a long-forgotten source I remember reading about a young man who met a well-know fly fishing writer and the older man asked the younger what he wanted to do when he grew up. The young fishermen said that he wanted to be a great fly fisher just like him. The older man said that if you truly want to become a good fly fisher then you must read and study the works of the master fly fishers who came before you. The angling books in the UBC's library, made possible by the Harry Hawthorn Collection, are there for anglers of any age to read, to experience the enjoyment of the sport and to study the works of the masters so that they might be able to acquire the knowledge and develop the skills of a Roderick Haig-Brown, a Tommy Brayshaw, a General Noel Money or a Bill Nation, all great British Columbia fly fishing masters.

– Art Lingren

Check Art Lingren's complete *BC Angling and Fishing Literature Check List (1865-2002)* on the BCFFF web site by going to **www.bcfff.bc.ca/Bcbooks.pdf**.

Dave Thurston playing a coho, with Gerry Schaad looking on.

The Comox Valley Fly Fishers

Last fall, as the guest speaker of the Comox Valley Fly Fishers, I was treated to an unforgettable display of hospitality and a glorious morning of coho beach fishing.

The club is actively involved in the habitat restoration and salmon enhancement work of the Oyster River Enhancement Society, and my visit started with a tour of the hatchery facilities and a hike around the trails along the Oyster River. My guides and hosts were Gerry Schaad and Dave Thurston, both of whom I had met during the 2001 BCFFF AGM in Victoria. I witnessed the taking of eggs and milt from pink salmon and I was impressed with the atmosphere of fun, air of efficiency, and depth of knowledge of the volunteers involved. The restoration work along the banks of the river was a showcase of thoughtful stabilization and unobtrusive creation of fry habitat, as though nature had done it all by itself.


Lucky hat, lucky fish. Photo: Dave Thurston

Habitat restoration aside, however, these gentlemen also know how to share their fly fishing fun. The morning after my slide presentation, I joined Dave Thurston, Garry Gauvreau, Gerry Schaad, and Tom McCulloch for some coho beach fishing. Dave got two nice fish right off the bat, but for the rest of the morning the fishing was tough. Coho were mocking us at every cast. Finally, I pulled the most improbable fly from my fly box, a pattern I had tied five years earlier and had never bothered using, and on the very next cast a nice little coho grabbed it as soon as it hit the water. Who knows, it might have been the good luck brought about by the complementary Comox Valley Fly Fishers hat that I was wearing that morning. Since that day, I have been wearing it mindful of Gerry Schaad's advice: "Wear it with pride, buddy."

I am also delighted that Gerry is now the BCFFF contact for his club. The Comox Valley Fly Fishers have joined the BCFFF and we are lucky to have them in our ranks. One day in their midst, and I have made life-long friendships. Find out more about the Comox Valley Fly Fishers and their activities through their website: **www.knightsofthenet.com/covalflyfisher/index.html**. [Ed.]

Okanagan Lake Bucktailing

By Sam W. Saprunoff

Have you ever had your reel scream so loudly that the adrenaline level in your body shoots so high that you have absolutely no doubt that there is a "fish on"? Bucktailing produces this feeling time after time and keeps you coming back for more!

The author with a 13-lb rainbow from Okanagan Lake caught on a trolled bucktail.

THE OKANAGAN LAKE stretches from Vernon to Penticton which is approx. 90 km long. It is fed by one main stream, Mission Creek and takes about nine years to completely change over its water volume. I have been fishing this large body of water for the past twenty-five years and I have seen some significant changes in the rainbow trout populations. Prior to the decline of the kokanee populations the lake was stocked with a small amount of rainbows (10,000) from the Summerland Hatchery every year. This supplement to the natural fish stock seemed to keep the fishing in the lake quite consistent and there was no conflict with the kokanee. However, the failed *Mysis* shrimp experiment to increase the kokanee population has greatly affected the art of bucktailing for trout on the lake. This year after putting in 25 hours, traveling from Deep Creek in Peachland to Bear Creek Park in Kelowna all I had to show was a few 14 inch trout. This seemed to be the pattern, lots of small fish all over the lake and few of the larger 6 to 15 pound fish as in previous years. I received several reliable reports that for the most part the big fish were staying down around 75 –100 feet or they were not in their usual places.

These favourite spots stretch the length of the lake, from Fintry and Okanagan Centre in the north to the old Ferry docks and Paul's Tomb in the Kelowna area, to Trepanier Creek, Deep Creek, Rattlesnake Island, and Squally Point in the Peachland area. It is a tremendous amount of water to try and seek out a successful day of fishing. I did however receive one report of an avid Bucktail fisherman who put in many hours and discover the larger fish from 18 to 27 inches were concentrated at the Okanagan Lake Bridge in Kelowna and off the Westbank yacht club. This would be great information to have, but unfortunately with the hot weather the Okanagan Lake trout are gorged with black ants and the hot air forces them to seek deeper water. This, of course, is great if you have discovered them in May and June, as by the end of June the sedges are out on the upper lakes and the lure of dry fly fishing on Vinson Lake is irresistible!

The equipment necessary to Bucktailing the Okanagan is recommended to be at least a 14-foot boat with a minimum 15-hp motor. I have seen too many storms blow up in a matter of five minutes to recommend that if you stay close to shore, a 12-foot with a 9.9 hp motor will do. I was very fortunate to have been given a wooden, fiber glassed 15-foot boat built for the Columbia River and Arrow lakes, powered by a 20-hp motor. The unique thing about this boat is not only its weight and the set of sculls (handmade by my dad and uncle) but also the fact that I fished as an eight year old in it in 1958 when it was first tested on the Arrow lakes. Many of the Okanagan Lake fishermen use their ski boat and often drag a bucket to slow it down. Of course the advantage of a large motor boat is that you can cover more area, feel safer in the 3-foot wave storms, and troll at a faster speed.

I use a # 6 and #8 weight rod with a sinking line, at least an 8 lb. leader and 150 to 200 feet of backing. However, one of the local fishermen told me that he has switched to "long lining" (100-200 feet behind the boat) with monofilament and a mooching reel. The danger of this method is that you have to keep the motor running at first as the fish will almost always head directly to the boat at a high rate of speed. Also, as the hook is single barbless, the more slack produced by the monofilament line means a greater chance of the fish becoming unbuttoned.

The last large fish that I kept from the lake was in 1996, a 13-lb Rainbow that gave me 20 minutes of

thrills on a fly rod that I will never forget. Of course every year there is the odd 18-lb fish taken usually on an Apex, off a down rigger.

The key to being on the lake when these large fish are up on the surface is the hatch. In this case it is a large black flying ant that usually deposits itself about 100 to 200 yards off shore. It is easy to locate these hatches when you cruise around as the trout leave numerous swirls as they feed just under the surface. However, you need to put in the time or have a friend who lives on the shores to let you know when the ants first start hatching. It is this time that you are almost guaranteed to land a larger rainbow. The hatch usually last two weeks to one month depending on the hot weather. Another indicator is the kokanee fry hatch beginning in early May, depending on water temperature and water volume of the creeks flowing into Okanagan Lake. It is also possible to locate this fry hatch if you can find the areas where kokanee spawn along the shore.

The Bucktails themselves vary from a mini tied on a #6, 3x long hook, to a Peacock Sword-backed fly that is four to six inches long (See Picture). Although my original Bucktail was tied with a deer hair, I have since switched to polar bear hair, different types of Mylar bodies, and varying amounts of Crystal hair or flash. Some have their favourites in terms of hair colour, but as long as you are imitating small kokanee with a silver body and dark back almost any colour works. I still use white, pink, blue and green Bucktail when I want to bulk up the fly or enhance the colour. One year, I experimented by using the long black hair from the ear of my poodle, creating the *Suzy* bucktail—responsible for landing three kokanee, in three different areas of the lake, by three different fishermen with all three fish being 3 pounds in weight. That particular fly was also good for numerous rainbows.

If you do not tie your own, be prepared to pay anywhere from $3.50 to $7.50 a fly. I now sell my bucktails, custom order only, at $7.50 each. (After tying about 300 of them it is not my favourite tie to create). I have heard that some polar bear ties go for $13.00 each at the far end of Kootenay Lake. The other nice thing about the Okanagan bucktails is that they work on the Arrow Lakes, the Kootenay Lakes, and the Shuswap Lakes for rainbows and Dolly Varden and on the West Coast for coho. I strongly believe that the type and style of Bucktail fly is not as relevant as to the speed, water condition and hatch that is happening.

I have cast a bucktail, rowed a bucktail, stripped the fly, and trolled at slow speeds and high speeds (4 to 6 mph) with great success. It is also preferable to fish in a nice two foot chop on a partially cloudy day. My fly line is out to the backing and depending on the type of sink line about six inches to two feet below the surface of the water. In the choppy water the fly can also be skipped through the wakes of the waves.

One year near Rattlesnake Island (across from Peachland) I had my rod in hand, had a strong strike but missed the fish. As I started to strip the line in, I saw the fish (about 6 lbs) turn instantly in a 275-degree turn to try for the fly again. I immediately stripped line out and the fish struck and was on! To see the power and quickness of that fish turning has led me to believe that if a trout is hungry and wants your bucktail fly there is no limit as to how fast they will go to get it!

My favourite time of day on this lake is the morning from 6:00 to 11:00 or the late evening from 8:00 to 10:00. For some reason 9:00 am seems to be a key time whenever I have gone out. This is also the time that boat traffic is the least, and more so on the weekdays than the weekends. Saturday is usually okay but Sunday is a disaster with the new thrill of wake boarders and jet skis tearing up the lake!

Personally, I do not think the Okanagan Lake is the best place to bucktail for the next 3 to 5 years. I would highly recommend the Arrow lakes, north and south of Nakusp. However, once the kokanee populations are increased and stabilized on Okanagan Lake, and the restocking of rainbows takes place, this fishery could become what it used to be: a lake with big, powerful, rainbow trout!

Sam Saprunoff's *Double Peacock Sword Okanagan Lake Bucktail* on top of a 3.5-inch business card for size comparison.

Fly Tying

The Selector Fly

A fly pattern for selectively angling steelhead and coho salmon.

By Erik Poole

THE SELECTOR FLY was born in the midst of fishery crisis management at the dawn of the 21st century in British Columbia. A heavily-subsidized commercial salmon fishing fleet had overexploited mixed-stocks of salmon decimating in particular steelhead and coho. A Neskonlith band court challenge of the salmon management regime lead to radical closures of all fisheries—commercial, First Nation and sport. These closures were designed to save collapsed stocks of coho salmon, particularly Thompson River coho.

Simultaneously, the federal government embarked upon experiments to convert these fisheries to selective fishing methods that would in principle solve the mixed-stock problem by facilitating the release of non-targeted species unharmed. First Nations were encouraged to adopt selective methods such as in-river fish wheels, beach seines, fish traps and weirs. Salmon anglers were required to adopt single, barbless hooks even if the gesture was more symbolic than well grounded in good fisheries science.

Targeting bright, active steelhead

In this context, I designed the *Selector fly* to catch two of British Columbia's most coveted game fish: in-river steelhead and saltwater coho. The fly had to be long, narrow in profile, and move in a tantalizing fashion. The fly had to effectively hook coho and steelhead that often nip at the end of the fly, yet it was important to equip the fly with only one modest sized hook in order to minimize damage to the fish and to reduce the risk of hooking the angler. The fly pattern had to weigh little and exhibit low air-resistance so that it could be comfortably cast all day long on a single-handed rod.

For steelhead, in particular rare and highly-pressured Thompson Steelhead, I wanted a fly that would attract fresh, bright, active steelhead and prove less attractive to dour, stale fish that had possibly been hooked and released several times.

The Selector fly was inspired by two large patterns used successfully for steelhead in the Skeena River watershed. One was the *Intruder*—a weighted pattern designed to plum the depths—was far too complicated to my liking. The other was the *String leech*—a four-inch fur strip pattern. It was relatively simple and highly effective, but the long rabbit fur strip soaked up enough water to make it heavy and wearisome to cast.

The Selector fly is tied on a swivel. A small loop of 30 to 50 lb. Dacron or tuff-line © is looped onto the swivel at one end and a 1/0 short-shank, wide-gap hook at the other end. I prefer soft-wire, non-stainless steel hooks because they are easy to sharpen and will corrode quickly if left stuck in a fish.

Materials are tied on the inside end of the swivel and extend at the most 1/8 to 1/4 of an inch beyond the trailing hook bend. Two long, narrow saddle hackles and sparse amounts of crystal flash and tinsel extend to the hook bend. A single, long-fiber marabou plume is wrapped around the swivel and then finished with a single guinea fowl feather or pheasant rump feather to contain the marabou plume. I usually tie the fly with bright red thread and finish with pearl-flake nail polish.

The fly works well in lengths from 3 ½ to 5 ½ inches long. A favourite and highly effective colour combination consists of barred purple saddle hackles with electric blue and silver tinsel, pearl crystal flash, purple marabou and a yellow-dyed guinea fowl feather. Friends and I also tie the fly in black, pink and chartreuse colour combinations. The saddle hackle version described here as well as versions tied with polar bear hair work well on coho either cast or trolled "buck-tail style" with small Indiana spinners placed in front.

Fish the Selector as you would other favourite large wet flies. For late-summer steelhead, I favour a greaseline approach, disciplining the drift and swing so that the fly is presented perpendicular to the fish. This method will work well in what is traditionally regarded as gear-only steelhead water.

Waving material

Experience has shown the Selector to be an easy fly to unhook from saltwater coho caught casting or bucktailing in the prop wash. A gaff slid down the leader provides the right leverage to pop the hook out with no direct handling. Furthermore, the Selector

pattern appears to damage fewer grilse (immature chinook salmon) than traditional bucktail patterns armed with tandem hooks.

The design of the fly means the hook and connecting line ride below the material, leaving the material completely free to wave uninhibited in the water. The modular design allows damaged hooks to be changed with relative ease.

Why a swivel?

The swivel is clearly the most innovative component of the fly. But why use a swivel and why not simply tie the Selector on a clipped hook? There are several reasons.

- Clipping heavy hooks with ordinary pliers or other tools that most fly tiers possess is hard work. The clipped end, unless filed or buried in fly material can poke or cut fish and anglers. Swivels are light, strong and smooth, and come out of the package ready to be used.
- A clipped hook does not have a rear eye for looping the line connected to the dangling hook, thus one has to tie the connecting loop on the hook.
- The swivel reduces the risk of line twisting should the fly become somehow entangled. Twisted fly line will increase the likelihood of tangles during casting.
- The rear swivel eye allows the line connecting to the dangling hook to be easily replaced should it become damaged or should a different length be desired.

Other large game fish

Shorter, simpler versions 2 ½ to 3 inches long consisting only of black and purple marabou plumes work well for in-river chum salmon, particularly during high, roiled water conditions. Sea bass and other rockfish that haunt west coast kelp beds take readily to the Selector pattern as they do other long, narrow patterns.

The Selector should work well with other game fish that often nip at the tail end of the fly such as lake char. It should also work well for great northern pike, largemouth bass, bull trout and other large predator and territorial fish.

I am grateful to Pete Broomhall for suggesting the name *Selector* because the name captures well the fly pattern's spirit and intent. In many situations, traditional fly patterns already allow anglers to fish with a high degree of selectivity. In other situations such as the rich, yet fragile Pacific west coast, patterns like the Selector will allow anglers to increase their selectivity and enjoyment from this great sport of fly fishing.

Selector Fly dressing
(classic purple version)

Length: 4 ½ inches
Hook: 1/0 short-shank, wide-gap hook such as an Eagle Claw L194F or L183F
Fly base: a black, size 8 barrel swivel
Connecting line: a loop of 50 lb. text tuff-line© tied with a uni-knot
Thread: 3/0 red uni-thread
Long material: two narrow, barred purple saddle-hackles; a few strands of electric blue and silver tinsel, pearl krystal flash (sparse)
Hackle: one long-fiber marabou plume capped with a blue- or yellow-dyed guinea feather
Weight: metal dumbbells (optional)

Fly Box

FOUR FLY PATTERNS tied by the 2002 BCFFF Award recipients (Photos by Ed.).

Fry Fly

(Originated and tied by Van Egan)

HOOK: No 6 or 8 low water **THREAD**: Grey
TAIL: Golden pheasant crest feather
BODY: Flat silver tinsel
THROAT: Pink, blue dun, or grizzly hackle fibers
WING: Married strips of green and blue goose veiled with mallard or teal

Taylor's Golden Spey

(Originated and tied by Bob Taylor)

HOOK: No 4 to 5/0 low water salmon
BODY: Rear half hot orange floss, front half hot orange seal's fur **RIB:** Flat silver tinsel followed by oval silver or gold tinsel **HACKLE:** Grey heron
THROAT: Golden pheasant red/orange breast feather or wood duck flank feather **WING:** Two golden pheasant red/orange breast feathers set flat over body

River Dragon

(Originated and tied by Robert Giles)

HOOK: No 4 to 10, long shank nymph hook
THREAD: Olive **TAIL**: Ring-neck pheasant rump feathers, red phase **RIB**: Oval gold tinsel (optional)
BODY: Brown olive dubbing
THORAX: Peacock herl
WINGCASE: Mottled pheasant rump fibers
HACKLE: Ring-neck pheasant rump feathers, red phase **HEAD**: Moose hair

Wooly Worm

(Tied by Phil LeBlanc)

HOOK: Mustad 3399 No 6
THREAD: Black
TAIL: Red chenille
BODY: Black Chenille
HACKLE: Long and soft grizzly hackle, palmered

Commentary

Too Many and Too Few: River Angling and the Numbers Problem

Those who stand for anything stand for nothing, and those who stand for nothing stand for anything

By Peter Broomhall

WHEN YOU NEXT REFLECT on the future of British Columbia's freshwater sport fishing, do some serious thinking about the following five sets of numbers: 1,125,000 and 2,500,000,000; 4,000,000 and 6,000,000,000; 30,000 and 22,000; 19,000 and 14,000; and 72 and 400,000. The numbers are "rounded," but round or square they obliquely reveal much about what's ahead for BC's freshwater anglers, particularly river fishers. And the numbers tell the provincial government and the Fisheries Management Branch a great deal too, if either pays attention.

The first set of numbers (1,125,000 and 2,500,000,000—that's one and one-eighth *million* and two and one-half *billion*, respectively) gives the 1950 population figures for this province and for the world. Like it or not, no part of the globe is immune to what goes on elsewhere, particularly population growth. For good or ill, we're in it together.

A recent *Vancouver Sun* item illustrates the unintentional linking of Japan and two widely separated parts of BC. Japan burns high-sulphur coal mined in eastern BC. The burning releases chemicals into the atmosphere, and the airborne chemicals drift to the Fraser Valley where they fall, in rain. The waterborne chemicals then enter aquifers causing arsenic to leach more rapidly into water systems. Scientists even have the chemical signatures to prove it. Thus we learn that what goes 'round, comes 'round, that private enterprises can profit at the public's expense, and that the forces at work are often subtle and difficult to detect.

Like chemical fallout, anglers can come from anywhere, and they affect, and are affected by, each other, no matter where they are or where they originate. For our individual and collective well-being, we should carefully consider what we do, individually and collectively, and what we expect from, or ask our governments to do. It's easy to understand, even if it's not easy to accept.

The second set of numbers (4 million and 6 billion) gives the populations of this province and world in the year 2000, and shows that BC's population increased three-and-one-half fold and the world's population increased two-and-one-half-fold within the last 50 years. Population growth, ours and others, is responsible for complaints about crowding, calls for protecting quality angling, and appeals for quick fixes. Population growth also underpins fish stock declines and habitat destruction—here and elsewhere.

Population facts, like other facts—and science, for that matter—are neutral. They become important when they are used, or deliberately ignored. Not surprisingly, acceptance or rejection of some population facts is often predictable. For example, champions of both the growth-is-good and the growth-is-bad philosophies tend to seize on facts that support their views, and trivialize or ignore facts that contradict their views.

It's less than reassuring that every level of Canadian government—municipal, provincial and federal—feels that population growth and consumerism are worthy goals, and that technology will always save us from our mistakes. Under the circumstances, the Fisheries Management Branch is pretty much relegated to the role of sycophant. The script calls for Fisheries to rearrange the Titanic's deckchairs, and say nothing about the ship heading for an iceberg. This is the reality against which anglers' hopes for the future must be measured.

Consider these three hopes: (1) that Fisheries accept that fish, fishing, fishers, and fishery managers have long been, and continue to be, intensely affected by population growth and by a wide range of human activities accompanying it, (2) that Fisheries make the protecting of wild fish and fish habitat its first priority, and (3) that Fisheries budget reflect its priority. What are the chances of these things happening?

The script calls for Fisheries to rearrange the Titanic's deckchairs, and say nothing about the ship heading for an iceberg.

That reality trumps idealism is all we need know in order to understand why fish and fish habitat will always be sacrificed to business interests and short-term benefits—even if everyone knows it's irresponsible and reckless to do so. People everywhere are more concerned about their own property than about the property they own collectively with others. Ergo, it's easy to steal or plunder public resources. Indeed, individuals, businesses and governments often believe they are entitled to help themselves to public resources, and can become offended when told otherwise. No wonder government is reluctant to intervene, and why it sometimes even gets involved. Being genuinely concerned about our angling future means scrutinizing the agencies we entrust it to.

It's helpful, here, to digress briefly with the number 72 and its factors (1 X 72; 2 X 36; 3X 24; 4 X 18; 6 X 12; 8X 9). The factors tell the "doubling" rate—of investments, human populations, etc. At a 6% annual interest rate (or 6% annual population growth rate), an investment (or human population) doubles in 12 years; at 12%, the investment (or population) doubles in six years. Between 1950 and 2000, BC's population increase averaged 5% yearly. Will BC's population double in the next 14 years—to 8,000,000? How will the province's fish, fish habitat, and fisheries be affected? Will the province-wide number of steelheaders decline by 50% or more? What *does* the Fisheries Management Branch think and how far ahead does it look?

It's certainly in the angling fraternity's interest to ask such questions. Here's a sampling of equally important questions. Why doesn't Fisheries: warn government and the public about the downside of population growth; report losses of fish and fish habitat; urge government to adopt "full-cost-accounting" practices, including the negative consequences of population growth, in cost-benefit reports; speak out about the state of the province's ecological health? And, the ultimate questions: "Who does Fisheries serve?" and "Is Fisheries now irrelevant?"

The not-yet-discussed third and fourth sets of numbers shed light on these and other issues. The third set—30,000 and 19,000—shows that steelhead license sales fell from 30,000 to 19,000 in the decade ending in 1999. The fourth set—22,000 and 14,000 —shows that the number of active steelheaders fell from 22,000 to 14,000 in the same decade. Several important things must be noted here: first, the 35% decline is huge; second, it is a province-wide figure; and, third, it might influence the behavior of the Fisheries Management Branch. This is small picture stuff, with big-picture implications.

Here's where the 400,000—the number of freshwater anglers in BC—comes in. Four hundred thousand might sound impressive, but it's only 10% of BC's population. In numerical terms, that's politically insignificant, both provincially and federally. The province's river anglers constitute a tiny portion of that 10%, and are therefore much less than insignificant—perhaps a hiccup at a tea party. What about the sub-set of river anglers called steelheaders? Fifteen thousand would be a generous estimate of their number, and that's only 3.75% of BC's freshwater anglers, and .375% of the province's total population. Because steelhead fishermen are now disappearing faster than steelhead, it's easier than ever for politicians and bureaucrats to ignore them.

So how is it a group with barely enough members to fill a decent-sized camper can catch the ear of the Fisheries Management Branch? Should BC's angling fraternity be paying attention? The issue dates back to a Fisheries decision to "classify" some of the province's blue-ribbon streams as a step toward more intensive management. Don't even ask what a "step" implies. The idea was reasonable, but the method was rotten.

Guides who happened to have some experience on what came to be called Class One and Two Rivers became the big winners, largely in deference to the "grand-fathering" principle. Among the things they received were highly-prized, commercially-valuable guiding licenses and guiding-day allocations, government-approved opportunities to capitalize on renowned angling in renowned rivers, and considerable subsidies in the form of Fisheries' time, effort, and professional assistance. That was the foot in the door for serious privatizing of angling on BC's publicly owned rivers. Open-access guiding was curbed, and high-end, closed-shop guiding began.

For the angling guide industry, the transition occurred at a fortunate time: the prevailing ethos viewed money-making as a praiseworthy art form, relatively few BC steelheaders knew or cared about the rivers or the handouts, and the number who approved—whether or not they understood the issues—outnumbered those who did not approve—whether or not they understood the issues. Understanding is seldom a high priority. On most issues, most of us, at most times, are probably too poorly informed to make intelligent decisions, never mind intelligent commentary. Was it Churchill who said although democracy wasn't much of a system, it was better than every other one?

Fast forward to the present and a rumor that a new operator on the Bulkley River now charges $1000 daily for guided steelheading, and has a waiting list. How will that news affect fishing and guiding on the Bulkley and other BC rivers? How would you react if you were BC's finance minister?

So here's the predicament anglers and fisheries managers face: The province's population is growing; steelhead license revenue is falling; costs of government services are rising; British Columbians are becoming poorer; government must change its fiscal habits; wild winter-run steelhead have all but disappeared from the Lower Mainland and East Coast of Vancouver Island; Pacific Coast salmon and steelhead have disappeared from 40% of their range in the past 100 years, and government agencies on both sides of the border have done little about it; steelheading in south-western BC is concentrated on rivers stocked with prohibitively costly hatchery steelhead; more and more of BC's declining number of steelheaders now fish on a handful of rivers, mostly in the Skeena watershed; the angling guide industry wants more guiding time and influence on classified rivers; Fisheries is entertaining management strategies likely to saddle it with greater costs and more responsibilities, reduce its management flexibility, contradict government's aim to cut red tape and interference, displease the steelhead fishing fraternity (in whole or in part), not resolve the "crowding" and "quality angling" debates or the "illegal guiding" problem, and generally do more harm than good.

And, finally, a few words about "open access" and "restricted access," and the future of this province's freshwater angling. Most anglers likely believe "open access" angling is better than "restricted access" angling until they can't find an opening at their favorite fishing location. More or less the same applies to "open access" and "restricted access" guiding. The problem, of course, is that God doesn't issue cease-and-desist orders. So who does, and on what grounds? There will be even bigger crowds in our angling future—if there are still fish that is.

When our favorite fishing haunts become too crowded for our tastes, we can always give up on fishing, and find another pursuit. As a general rule, we should probably consider quitting before trying to restrict others. Some anglers might quit when they encounter two or three other anglers. Others won't quit after seeing dozens. What's wrong with letting people decide for themselves? It's generally better to let individuals decide than to decide for them. Restricting the *kind* of fishing is light years removed from restricting access *to* fishing. Let us hope we learn to share and to cooperate more than we do now. We have seen the enemy, and it is us. Let us pray.

Commentary *is an open forum for expressing ideas without editorial interference with the sole purpose of generating public discourse. Consequently, the opinions expressed in it do not necessarily reflect the opinions of BCFFF.*

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Van Egan
Weigh West Resort

A special thanks goes to Barry Thornton for donating his slide presentation fees to BCFFF.

And here are the winners of the BCFFF raffle:
1st Prize: Trip to Weigh West Resort was won by Barry Pepper of Qualicum Beach, BC.
2nd Prize: Orvis rod and reel was won by Brian Saunders of Victoria, BC.
Many thanks to all those who bought tickets and supported the raffle.

"Beaver Pond Transit"

A watercolour by John Warren

Discovering Roderick Haig-Brown

The Writer

By Annette Yourk

I FOUND A COPY of *Panther* at a garage sale some years ago and that is where I began. As a woman of another generation, and not a sportsperson - certainly not an angler - I was not the obvious Haig-Brown fan. But Roderick Haig-Brown wrote about more than fishing. His 25 published books include short and long fiction, memoir, essays and nonfiction. A good portion of his nonfiction is on the subject of angling. While his writing is most popular in Britain, Canada and the U.S., some of his books have been translated into Swedish, German and Japanese.

If you have not yet discovered his books, *The Measure of the Year* makes a good start. This is the chronicle of a year; its patterns, observances and musings. Although Haig-Brown refers to "Elkhorn," it is Campbell River he writes of. *Wood and River Tales*, another great introduction to his work, is a collection of short fiction. We become acquainted with a younger, wilder British Columbia when we step into these lively tales.

Haig-Brown took pride in being a writer at a time when critics decried "there is no Canadian literature." A man who loved the wilderness, Haig-Brown also felt privileged to be writing in this "wilderness" of literary tradition. It provided "a freedom beyond all conceivable freedoms." He felt Canadian writers were "in and of the country's flood, her spring, her increase."

Throughout his work, Haig-Brown's love of the natural world is evident. Nature took him outside himself; demanded a receptive mind and showed him life's infinite complexity of interrelationships. Living free and at large in the natural world, with sensibilities grounded in responsibility to place and community was the ethic Roderick Haig-Brown lived by. It seems to have provided a guiding force in his writing as well.

Photo by Van Egan
Courtesy of the Museum at Campbell River

Haig-Brown Exhibit

Sportsman, author and conservationist Roderick Haig-Brown is commemorated with a special exhibit, ***Return to the River: the Legacy of Roderick Haig-Brown*** at the Museum at Campbell River until September 27, 2002. See the collection of tackle and rods belonging to the man who wrote *The Western Angler*, *A River Never Sleeps* and over 20 other books about fishing and the natural world. The exhibit also includes scenes from the author's home, family mementos, Rod's handwritten manuscript pages, and original illustrations from his most famous books. The Museum at Campbell River is open Monday through Saturday 10 am to 5 pm and Sundays 12 pm – 5 pm. For further information phone (250) 287-3103 or visit **www.crmuseum.ca** .