



Fly Lines

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Rob Brown • Van Egan • Ron Grantham • Art Lingren
Doug Pollard • Erik Poole • Richard Raisler
Donald Spratley and the Doc Spratley • Haig-Brown's Steelhead Bee
Syd Glasso and the Canadian Connection

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From our Readers:

Excellent *Fly Lines*! My, how the internet has changed newsletters. When I edited and produced the *Totem Topics*, from '92 to '98, it was all black and white hardcopy. The most difficult newsletter that I produced was the Spring 1994 edition of *Fly Lines*. However, the work involved hasn't changed. Your latest issue is beautiful. Congratulations on a fine job.

--Ron Grantham (Totem Fly Fishers)

Thank you for including me on the mailing list for *Fly Lines*. An excellent publication. I enjoyed reading every word of it.

--Terry Bragg (Totem and Osprey Fly Fishers)

Wow! Beautiful newsletter! Great work! I love your art work and it was great to see some watercolours from John Warren. I thought ... hmm that can't be BCFFF John? Well what other John could it be? So I phoned John to tell him that his paintings were very inspiring. We loved the *Ice-off at Pimainus Lake* picture. He's only been painting since last September! Boy – what hidden talent lurks beneath the surface in people--just takes the right incentive to unleash it! Keep up the great work!

--Peter Caverhill (Osprey Fly Fishers)

The Cowichan Valley Fly Fishers were very impressed last night with the summer edition of *Fly Lines* and wanted to express their appreciation for your excellent work and the information you provided about the club and its members. Well Done!

--Wayne Pealo (Cowichan Valley Fly Fishers)

Fly Lines is a beautiful publication and an inspiration to read. There is so much talent and commitment in the organization. I have been musing over the thought, "what would have happened if Roderick Haig-Brown had cast a line in the Skagit River when he was exploring the Stillaquamish River and Deer Creek?" We cannot change history, and the life of Haig-Brown and Vancouver Island is a treasure.

--Richard Raisler (Fidalgo Fly Fishers/Washington State Council of the Federation of Fly Fishers)

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On our Cover:

A Swarm of Steelhead Bees,
tied by the following members of the Haig-Brown Fly Fishing Association of Victoria in alphabetical order:

**Dan Holder, Ian Holder, Ken Marsh,
Rich Ronycz, and Barry Stokes**

The Steelhead Bee, Roderick Haig-Brown's signature dry fly pattern, is also the insignia fly of the Haig-Brown Fly Fishing Association of Victoria, which this year is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its inception. Doug Pollard, past president of the club and the author of *Peetz, A Reel for All Time* (1997), has given us an eloquent account of the club's changing character and accomplishments over the years (page 15).

Of course, no one could give a more personal account of the development of the fly itself than Van Gorman Egan. He was already a close friend and fishing companion of Roderick Haig-Brown when the famous author was experimenting with the dressing and fishing of the fly.

In 1998, Van was selected by Canada Post to dress the Steelhead Bee for one of six stamps in a series entitled *Fishing Flies*. He joined a group of six renowned Canadian fly tiers, including two other British Columbians: Art Lingren, who tied Tommy Brayshaw's Coquihalla Orange, and Rob Brown, who tied Roderick Haig-Brown's Coho Blue.

All three British Columbian participants in the stamp project are also contributors in this issue of *Fly Lines*.



From the President

BY THE TIME BCFFF MEMBERS READ THIS, summer will be nearly over. I hope that all members have managed to get out and enjoyed catching one or more of the many BC game fishes.

All members should make an effort to view the June issue of *Fly Lines*, the first under the editorship of Loucas Raptis. Most of you who saw it in colour would have viewed it on the Internet. Unfortunately, printing colour copies is still far too expensive for general distribution and only those featured in an issue or those who make a significant contribution to an issue will receive colour copies. I know that many have complemented Loucas on his effort. Nonetheless I offer one more from Van Egan, who in a July letter to me, writes: "I did receive my colour copy of *Fly Lines* a few days after you were here. Beautifully done. The work of a fine artist, and a collector's piece. Loucas can be very proud, and the members of the BCFFF should be too." From what Loucas has told me this September issue will be as fine or better than the June. Loucas, thanks for a job well done.

On June 25, 2002 Rob Way and I made a presentation to the Recreational Stewardship Panel, as did a number of other fishery-related interest groups. The Minister of Water, Air and Land Protection Joyce Murray appointed the panel and charged them with getting input from interested parties and recommending to the government improved management models and funding sources for British Columbia's fish, wildlife and parks' recreation services, and opportunities for greater public involvement in decision-making. I won't get into the details of our nine-page submission but we concentrated our efforts on the points below. They are the topics we felt were most important to members:

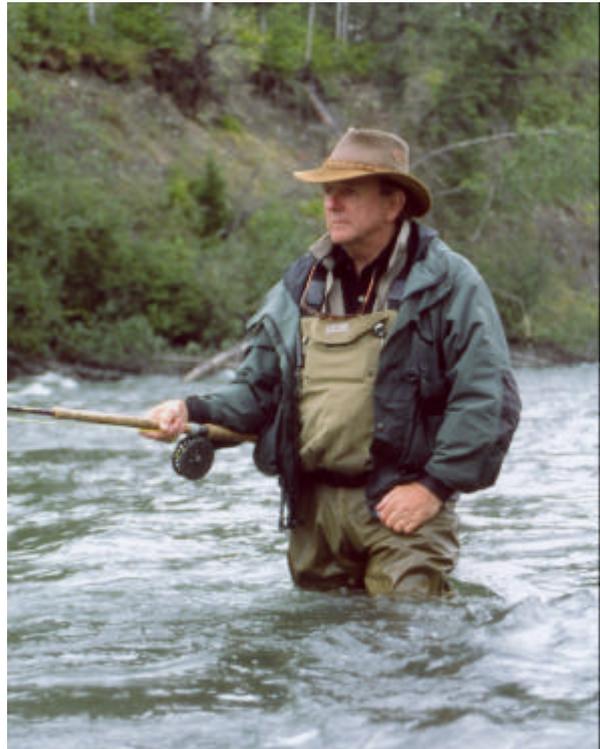
- ? Fishing must be considered a BC heritage activity.
- ? Public access to common property lakes and rivers for angling must be maintained.
- ? Angling is a sustainable activity and is a significant contributor to BC's economy.
- ? User/special fees for certain fisheries are acceptable but need to be reasonably priced.
- ? BC residents must have priority in the access to BC freshwater angling.
- ? Other recreational users who share lakes and rivers with anglers should also contribute to their management.
- ? Special waters need special management.
- ? Consultation with the angling community on management of freshwater recreational fisheries must be maintained and enhanced.

As I write this the long-ago stalled Angling Guide Management Strategy and Classified Waters Review is being resurrected and we will be involved in this review over the coming months.

In the June issue of *Fly Lines* we listed the businesses who support our fund-raising efforts. Please support these businesses when you are thinking about purchasing that new fly line, rod, waders, pontoon or belly boat.



Art Lingren
President



Art Lingren searching for steelhead in the Kispiox.



Editorial Lines

The June 2002 issue of *Fly Lines* has now been widely read throughout British Columbia, the Pacific Northwest, and as far east in the States as New York. And that is only the extend of readership I am aware of from the dozens of complementary emails that I have received, enthusiastically welcoming the new format of our official publication. We have the Internet and the electronic age to thank for such easy, literally international access to *Fly Lines* and the talented British Columbian writers, artists, fly tiers and fly fishers it showcases.

At least within the fly fishing community of British Columbia the quarterly release of *Fly Lines* has now become an eagerly awaited event, and printed colour copies are placed in protective binders and guarded along with other collectible material. It does take some effort and a good

inkjet printer to come up with a decent copy, but it can certainly be done. The Cowichan Valley Fly Fishers have already a team of individuals making sure that members interested in colour copies will be able to get one. The same logistics can be worked out by members of any other club. Unfortunately, in order to make the publication of *Fly Lines* in its present colour format viable, we can only produce it electronically—the cost of colour printing and distribution is well beyond any reasonable budget for an organization such as ours.

The expanded horizons of the new *Fly Lines* are already paying dividends with this issue. It is my pleasure to welcome our first guest contributor from south of the border, Dr. Richard Raisler. Richard, a retired dentist, is a member of the Fidalgo Fly Fishers (club member of the Washington State Council of the Federation of Fly Fishers), but most important, he has been the successor of Dr. Donald A. Spratley's dental practice in Mount Vernon, Washington. He has written an intimate and comprehensive account of one of the most fished and familiar fly patterns not only in British Columbia but throughout the Pacific Northwest: the Doc Spratley.

The Canadian/American fly fishing connection, with deep roots of friendship going back for over one hundred years of fly fishing history, is also brought to the fore by Art Lingren's account and photography of some exquisite Syd Glasso tied spey flies, which found their way to the collection of a very fortunate but truly deserving British Columbian, Bob Taylor.

It seems that every story of long sustained friendship must eventually come with a cautionary note, and Erik Poole, with an open letter, challenges the publisher of one of the most influential American fly fishing publications, pointing out the dangers of unwise outdoor reporting and the consequences of greedy exploitation of fly fishing opportunities. A bit of excessive eagerness to catch fish can lead to a potentially shaken friendship between Canadian and American anglers.

I have already hinted at the contributions of the remaining superb writers such as Van Egan, Rob Brown, and Doug Pollard. Joining them is the well-known split cane rod builder Ron Grantham with a concise description of his unsinkable skated dry fly, the Grantham's Sedge. And since I have such an easy access to the publication, I have included a piece of my own on the sculpins of Vancouver Island, which gave me the opportunity to showcase the fly tying skills and patterns of Barry Stokes, Jim Humphreys, Tom Murray, Jim Fisher, and Rob Brown.

The upcoming December 2002 issue will be a "Special Winter-Run Steelhead Edition." Until then, I hope this issue is enjoyed as much as the previous one.



Loucas Raptis
Editor



Loucas Raptis with a September coho off the beach, ready for release.
(Photo by Dan Holder)



Profile

Donald Spratley and the Doc Spratley

By Richard Raisler

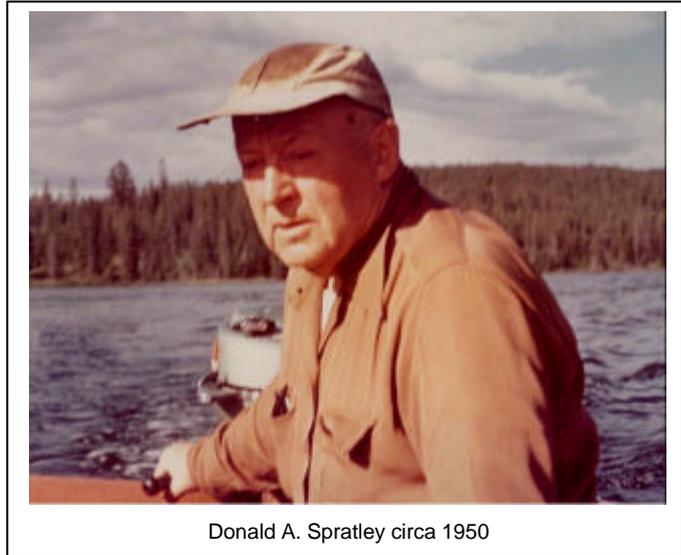
LATER IN LIFE, Donald A. Spratley lamented to his two daughters: "I have spent my life perfecting my dental skills but I will be known for a fishing fly." The Doc Spratley, one of the most popular, productive, and written about flies in the Pacific Northwest, was named after him. There was a good reason for the tone of regret in his voice—his dental skill and knowledge was to a dentist what Atlantic Salmon fly tying is to a fly tier.

The first written history of the Doc Spratley's origin is found in *Flies of the Northwest*, by the Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club: "This pattern, named after the late Dr. Donald A. Spratley of Mount Vernon, Washington, is one of the most effective wet fly patterns in British Columbia, particularly in waters with good caddisfly hatches. Mrs. Dorothy Prankard Schracht of Mount Vernon said her husband, the late Dick Prankard, originated the pattern about 1949. She said he called the fly 'Doc Spratley' because the doctor came into the store at the time he was tying it and asked Dick what the name was. Dick replied, 'I think I'll call it the Doc Spratley.' Prankard's wife tied the fly commercially for several years. Dr Spratley used the pattern in British Columbia. It is still a highly popular pattern wherever large caddisflies hatch."

Fred Schacht, the stepson of Mrs. Dorothy Prankard Schacht, has a different and more interesting version of how the fly was named. Dorothy told him that Dick and Don were good friends and Dick was tying the fly in his shop. Don Spratley came in to visit, but did so quietly and walked up behind Dick. Don startled Dick and the tying thread broke. Dick said good-naturedly, "Damn you Doc Spratley, just for that I am going to name this fly after you".

The original recipe calls for a tail of grizzly, body of black wool, rib of silver tinsel, hackle (throat) of grizzly, wing of pheasant tail, head of peacock herl, and tied on Mustad 9671, sizes 8 to 10.

The next recorded history is found in Roy Patrick's *Pacific Northwest Fly Patterns*, 1953 edition. Interestingly the "Dr. Spratley" pattern is listed in the



Donald A. Spratley circa 1950

Steelhead section of the book, not the British Columbia or General Fly section. It is not until later editions that we find it included in both the British Columbia and Steelhead sections. The recipe calls for tail of barred hackle fibers (8-10), body of black wool, rib of medium embossed silver tinsel, hackle (throat) barred, tied wet, wing of Chinese Ring-neck Cock Pheasant tail fibers, long reddish brown, wing bunched over body, tied on hook size #1/0 to #6. The statement included with the recipe reads: "This particular fly has been a producer of Steelhead, both Winter and Summer. Consistently good on the Stillaquamish, taken to other streams and proven as effective." The 1970 edition states the "Dr. Spratley" is said to be "A pattern very famous for steelhead fishing, both Summer and Winter, excellent for lake fishing, best in the afternoon till dusk."

Right from its 1949 beginning the popularity of the "Doc Spratley" grew rapidly. Don Spratley and groups of Mount Vernon fly fishing couples frequently traveled to the British Columbia lakes Hi Hium and Janice. They most likely used this successful pattern and shared it with others. Somehow Roy Patrick became familiar with the pattern and no doubt shared it with his fishing acquaintances, Enos Bradner, Tom Brayshaw, and Alan Pratt. This may explain why it is initially listed as a steelhead fly. Its popularity can also be explained by its ability to catch fish. This attractor pattern tied in a typical wet fly style does not represent a specific organism but when tied on number 8 to 10 size hooks will attract trout in lakes with large caddis fly hatches. Tied smaller it is fished as a chironomid. Tied larger, size 6, it substitutes for a damsel, dragonfly, or leech. Dave Winters popularized the fly on the Thompson River as an effective steelhead pattern. Steelhead

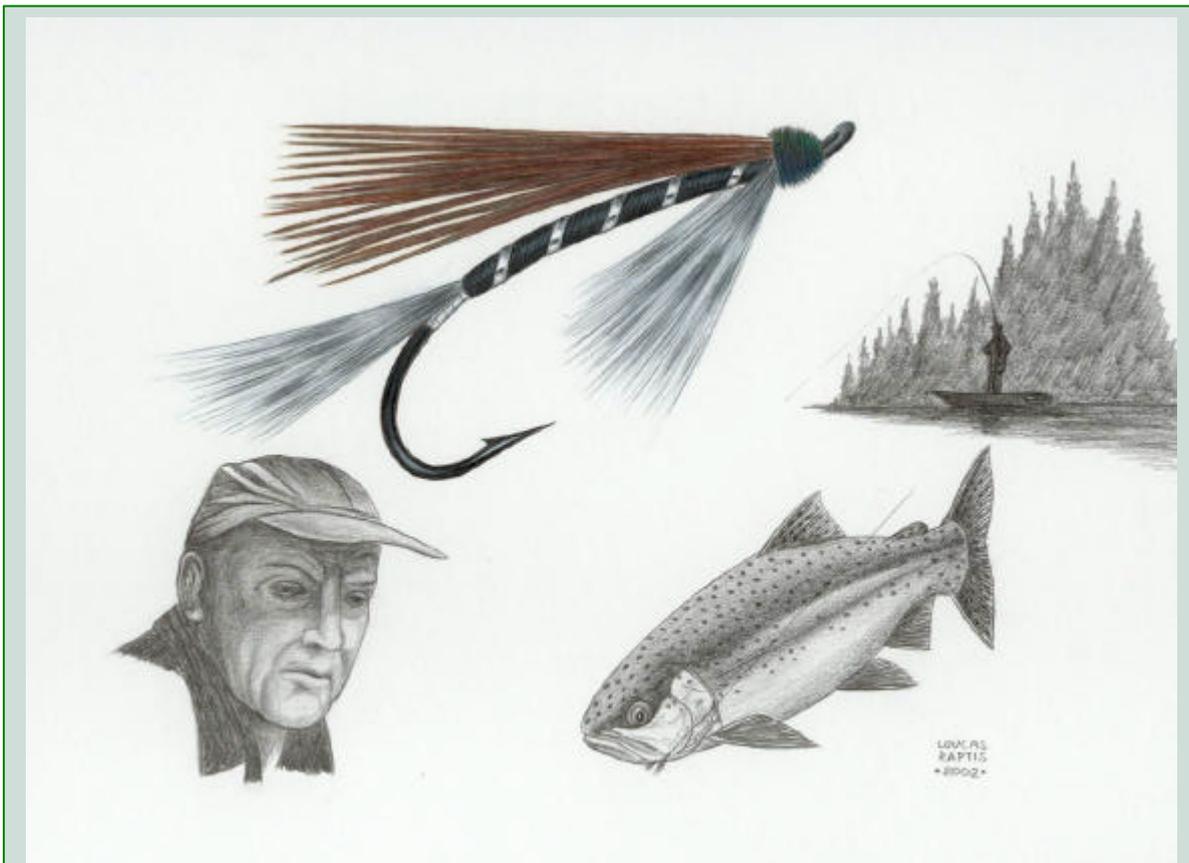
fishers tie the pattern on hook size 4 to 5/0. Although not fished much outside of the Northwest the “Doc Spratley” riffle-hitched and presented to Atlantic Salmon on a floating line will generate takes.

If a fly’s popularity is measured by other fly tiers’ desire to imitate it, the “Doc” excels in this category too. It is tied with a variety of body colors: black, red, green, olive, brown, and orange. Red and orange are successful colors for sea-run cutthroat. One change in the original pattern that is popular with British Columbia fly tiers and was recorded in Roy Patrick’s book is substituting guinea hen fibers for the tail and throat. Trey Combs does not mention the “Doc Spratley” in his two books, but in *Steelhead Fly Fishing and Flies* there is a fly plate of steelhead flies dressed by Harry Lemire and one of the flies is the “Doc Spratley”.

The one unique aspect of this typical wet fly pattern is the wing. We can call it a feather wing, but the Chinese Pheasant tail fibers are “bunched” on top of the fly to produce a wing that looks more like a hair wing. If you have ever tied a Doc Spratley and tried to place the pheasant tail fibers on the fly in the typical

feather wing fashion, you have most likely found that the fibers immediately splay into an irregular “hair wing-like” position. This “bugginess” may be one of the reasons why the fly is so effective. There are reports of Don Spratley and his fishing friends chewing on a new fly before fishing with it, but I am sure that story is not true.

Researching the history of Don Spratley and the “Doc Spratley” fly has been a rewarding experience as I am the successor of Don’s dental practice. I have met the patients he so carefully and generously cared for and have witnessed the quality of his dental art. I have fished Hi Hume and Janis Lakes with his fishing partners and always make it a point to fish the “Doc Spratley” late in the evening. I have experienced the physical connection to Kamloops and Montana trout, Skagit River steelhead, and Labrador Atlantic Salmon through the “Spratley” fly. Tim Marker DDS, fly fisher and dentist, currently owns the dental office previously shared by Doctor Spratley and myself. The legacy of Donald Spratley and his famous fly is sure to be carried on by future fly fishers and dentists alike. †



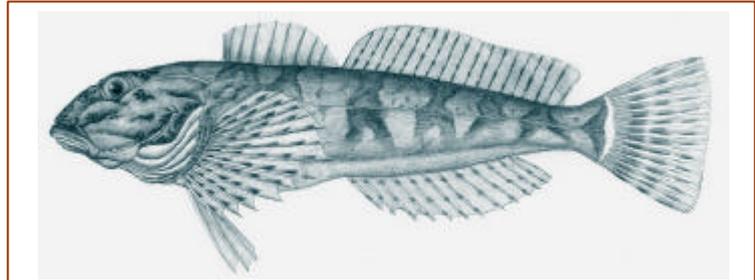
Tied in a variety of body colours and in different size hooks, the Doc Spratley has been used to imitate chironomids, dragonfly and damselfly nymphs, sedges, and even leaches and baitfish. It has caught Kamloops rainbows, coastal cutthroat, steelhead and Atlantic salmon. The drawing above depicts a Doc Spratley tied by Richard Raisler.

Natural History and Fly Fishing

The Sculpins of Vancouver Island

By Loucas Raptis

MALIGNED, MISNAMED, and misunderstood, the lowly sculpins have always been perceived as the unsavory characters of the trout's world. Thieves of eggs and slayers of fry, with spiny, oversized heads and gaping, serrated mouths, they have held little appeal in the eyes of fly fishers and naturalists alike. Yet, wherever the largest trout swim, it is usually the sculpins who lead an anxious existence, blending in like chameleons with their surroundings, hiding motionless behind rocks, and crawling on the bottom with their eyes constantly on the events above them, ready to dart skittishly away from any approaching shadow.



Coastrange Sculpin

It is this clownish nervousness so typical of sculpins that I have found both endearing and suggestive. One fine morning I went fly fishing on the beach and because of the antics of Tidepool sculpins I didn't bother fishing. To me, that says a lot about a creature whose behaviour is interesting enough to distract the fly fisher completely from his prime directive. It was my first outing to the beach in pursuit of sea-run coastal cutthroat and I had no clear idea what I should be doing. So I looked to the sculpins for a clue.

I found them inadvertently at the mouth of a tiny creek emptying into Bazan Bay in Sidney. As soon as my boots rattled the pebbles by the creek and my shadow crept onto the gravel bottom, dozens of Tidepool sculpins scattered frantically in unpredictable directions, triggering a chain reaction of unrest all the way to the beach. The moment they stopped moving they became invisible.

I was already familiar with some of their names—that is, the names of the different species, although given enough patience and time one can recognize even individual sculpins living in small tidal pools. Tidepool sculpins rarely stray away from their home pool and have an uncanny ability to find their way back to it from far away whenever displaced by heavy waves or human action.

The little creek was populated mostly by Tidepool sculpins, their variably coloured bodies marked with several vertical broad bands in hues of blue-grey, black, and olive. None of these little fellows was over two inches long, but when I reached hip-deep water, I started running into some of the larger species. I dipped and dangled my pink fly over the compressed head of a Pacific Staghorn sculpin and he sucked it in at once. I gave him a little tug and he spat the fly out reluctantly, but after a moment's hesitation he pounced on it again. A Buffalo sculpin farther down the beach was irked by one of my wading boots, completely oblivious to the potential danger towering above him—I lifted my foot over his head and he scooted away in a fright.

At about six inches long, less than half their potential full-grown size, neither of these fish would have been of any interest to the sea-run coastal cutthroat. In fact, there are sculpins, such as the Cabezon, the Great sculpin, and the Red Irish Lord, that grow large enough to make an easy meal out of the trout, but it is unlikely that their paths will ever cross. On the other hand, of the nearly forty species of sculpins found in the coastal waters of Vancouver Island, about two dozen species carry out their lives within the domain of the cutthroat and grow to a relatively small size that keeps them perfectly edible at all times.

In fresh water the trout's choice of sculpin is not nearly as eclectic. The Prickly and the Coastrange are the only two freshwater species of sculpins on Vancouver Island. The Prickly sculpin can be found in almost every lake and stream throughout the Island, and although the Coastrange sculpin prefers cold and clear running water, it has also made a comfortable home in many lakes along the coast. Once, during a camping trip to a little coastal lake, a mob of Coastrange sculpins assaulted my toes with a barrage of ticklish nibbles after I tried to cool my feet off in the shallow, ice-cold water. And I have seen examples of the same suicidal boldness from Prickly sculpins too. One day, in Victoria's Elk Lake, a one-and-a-half-inch Prickly sculpin struck a nymph imitation nearly half his size with such ferocity and power that the impact made me set the hook and drive the point clear through the sculpin's body. I felt terrible, of course, but it was easy enough to blame it on the sculpin.

Whether in a marine or freshwater habitat, sculpins are generally small in size, ubiquitous and plentiful; they are bold, inquisitive and prone to danger. In other words they are the perfect forage fish and the cutthroat, the rainbow, the Dolly Varden, the brown trout and the steelhead will find and eat them—and so will the merganser, the kingfisher, the great blue heron, and the mink and river otter too. And sculpins, of course, will even

eat each other. As for the fly fisher, exploring unknown waters without a sculpin imitation is like trying to fish during a traveler sedge hatch without a floating line.

The fly tier does not have to be particular about the number and variety of species. After all, the two freshwater species and the more than three dozen swimming in the sea have always been lumped together indiscriminately under the uncharitable name “bullheads.” This is perhaps the most important descriptive term that the fly tier needs to keep in mind—creatures with large and bulbous heads tapering sharply into speckled, barred or variegated bodies.

One notion that one must forfeit at once when tying a new sculpin imitation is that of absolute originality. Ever since Dan Gapen designed the Muddler Minnow in the late 1930s, the use of spun and clipped deer hair has become the standard in shaping the head of any sculpin imitation. In fact, this is such a significant and unbeatable innovation that it renders the remaining parts of the fly recipe merely incidental. Any reasonable substitute for the body and wing will usually do, and one should not fret and fuss too much about them. Ironically, Dan Gapen wasn't

even trying to imitate a sculpin, but a species of darter found in Ontario's Nipigon River and locally called “muddler”—a fish very similar in appearance and habits to those of a sculpin.

On Vancouver Island the first recorded sculpin imitation was tied by Roderick Haig-Brown. The picture and recipe of Haig-Brown's Bullhead first appeared in the 1939 edition of the *Western Angler* with convincing evidence on the significance of sculpins as a staple item in the diet of very large trout. Surprisingly, however, by the time he published *Fisherman's Spring* in 1951, Haig-Brown seemed to have lost faith in the use of sculpin imitations. “I used to try to imitate the mottled gray back and dirty white belly of the bullhead,” he writes, “I now think that to do so is a waste of time.”

The reason for such a dramatic change of heart would be incomprehensible for many contemporary fly fishers obsessed with heavy sink-tip formulas and flies weighted with shiny metallic beads and painted dumbbells. Haig-Brown did not change his mind about the role of sculpins as important foodstuff for large trout—he could



Roderick Haig-Brown's **Bullhead**(left column of flies) is the first recorded sculpin imitation on Vancouver Island and is among the few sculpin patterns that do not incorporate spun and clipped deer hair for shaping the head. Dan Gapen established this feature with the **Muddler Minnow** (right column, top two flies) in the late 1930s and since then almost every sculpin imitation is tied with a deer-hair- shaped head, such as the **Bow River Bugger/Cowichan Style** (right column, bottom fly). All flies above were tied by master fly tier Barry Stokes of the Haig-Brown Fly Fishing Association and production manager of *Islander Reels*. Barry, a consummate fly fisher, is also the first recipient of the BCFFF Jack Shaw Fly Tying Award—the award was established in 2001 in honour of the famous Kamloops fly fisher. Barry has taught fly tying and casting to hundreds of aspiring fly fishers over two decades and his flies not only look beautiful behind glass, but they catch fish too. [Ed.]

not possibly repudiate what his own eyes had seen. But he did have serious reservations about recommending a fly pattern which, to be fished properly, necessarily compromised the fly fisher's finer motives: bouncing a sculpin imitation off the bottom would certainly catch fish, but it couldn't possibly be an enjoyable way of doing it.

Haig-Brown's Bullhead, obviously unaffected by the influence of the Muddler Minnow, sports an enlarged head with the use of long hackle tied dry style, and recommended in badger, blue, dark red or claret. If he had dared clip the head to shape, he would have had a fly not unlike Tom Murray's Rolled Muddler, a contemporary sculpin imitation with a head of clipped deer hair. But to take the scissors to the hackle would have been unthinkable egregious. Consequently, the fly tends to spin, particularly when trolled or held against fast current, but it also veers off its path and darts erratically during the retrieve, a highly desirable action for a sculpin imitation. To date, I have caught only one fish with Haig-Brown's Bullhead, a sixteen-inch rainbow trout from the Cowichan River that took the fly as it was drifting close to the bottom. But I must admit that every time I have fished it I have failed to treat the Bullhead with proper patience or fair attention.

Ever since that morning on the beach, I had been too absorbed in my own experiments to give another sculpin pattern the time of day. Haig-Brown's concern, however, had been my concern too: How can one work the fly near the bottom without hanging up on barnacles and rock-weed, or ripping and dragging blades of eel-grass, or scraping slimy balls of diatoms from river boulders, or driving the hook into submerged roots and branches? I did eventually discover that trout would often take a sculpin imitation nowhere near the bottom. In fact, on several occasions, I had fish take my pattern right on the surface, before the sinking line even had a chance of pulling the fly under. But these ought to be seen as isolated incidents, usually taking place only in the river. To deliberately fish a sculpin imitation away from the bottom would make little sense. Any silver-bodied streamer or wet fly would probably do the job better.

Naturally, my thoughts turned to the use of a weed-guard, but I had no taste for the familiar loops of



Arrowhead Sculpin (Originated and tied by Loucas Raptis)

- Hook:** Tiemco 9394, size 6-10 **Thread:** Gray 3/0 pre-waxed
Tail: Mallard flank feather **Rib:** Small oval silver tinsel
Body: Olive dun dubbing tied 2/3 up the hook shank
Wing: Rabbit strip chinchilla colour (or olive), extending just past the tail
Over-wing: A mallard flank feather cut into a V and folded over the wing. Two stands of pearl Flashabou on either side
Throat: A piece of grizzly hackle fluff (or olive) cut into a V and tied by the stem so that the stem functions as a weed guard
Head: Natural colour deer hair (or olive), span and clipped into the shape of an arrowhead

heavy monofilament and similar contraptions. The final solution came to me after looking at a sculpin's pectoral fins—round, broad, and splayed out over the sides, below and behind the head. I was already stripping and using the fluff from hackle feathers for the throats of my other minnow imitations, and with the sculpin I took this dressing one step further. I cut a fluffy segment from the base of a hackle feather, long and stiff enough for the quill to function as a weed-guard and for the fluff, extending on either side, to appear as pectoral fins. My main concern had now been addressed. For the remaining parts I did what other people had already done with one fly pattern or another many times before me: a tail of teal or mallard, a rib of oval silver tinsel wound around a dubbed body, a wing of a freely moving rabbit strip, accented with a few strands of Flashabou, and again teal or mallard folded over the wing to suggest the speckled sides. With a thinly disguised pretension of deviating from the norm, I clipped the deer hair head flat, wide and triangular, in the shape of

an arrowhead, and so I called this pattern the Arrowhead Sculpin.

I tie it in grizzly, dark olive and black. The grizzly Arrowhead Sculpin is standard issue, so to speak—a sculpin for all occasions. The dark olive I fish near and over eel-grass beds along the beach, and in the river I work it through runs and pools with algae-laden bottoms. The black comes handy in streams from February to June—in larger sizes it is of special interest to brown trout and steelhead. This is the time of year when freshwater sculpins spawn, and the males, which are the sole guardians of clusters of yellow or bright orange eggs, turn nearly black in colour. Their paternal bravado makes them particularly noticeable to trout.

I wasn't counting at the time, but it must have been after only my second or third cast that the first sea-run coastal cutthroat came to the Arrowhead Sculpin. I had gone back to the mouth of that same little creek in Sidney for my first official trials. I waded waist-deep along the narrow gravel bar formed by the outflow of the creek and sent the fly out in a line parallel to the shore. The trout hit the fly with determined force and at once started rolling and slapping on the surface. I stripped it into the floating net within a minute. It was a round, well-conditioned fish, easily over thirteen inches, with emerald green highlights on its back, a myriad of overlapping spots over its body,

and two faint red slash marks under its throat. It was an astonishing sight to behold—a silver trout from the sea.

I then took the Arrowhead Sculpin to the river. It was a drizzly late September afternoon along the Cowichan and four different species of salmonids came to my sculpin fly that day. A rainbow rose to it at the head of the Spring Pool before the dressing even had a chance to get wet. A brown trout chased the fly from across the far end of the Cabin Pool and struck it before my very eyes. A cutthroat pulled it down while on a dead drift along the far bank at Wrixon's. And finally, back up at the Spring Pool, a big chinook closed his mouth on the fly as it was hanging at the tail-out. He gave me a few annoyed head shakes, exploded into a boisterous commotion, and broke off with the Arrowhead Sculpin lodged somewhere in his jaws.

These were the early days with this fly. Since then I have fished it many times successfully with an intermediate line on the beach and a full sinking line in the river. I have always made a point of moving the fly close to the bottom without hanging up. To do so, I have to use a lot of thought and care, but I have yet to give up in frustration. And when I make my little sculpin dart and pause and swim behind a rock or hover by a tree root, and out of nowhere comes an angry trout and turns on it without the slightest sign of suspicion, I wish Haig-Brown were there to see it and reconsider his cautious skepticism about the joys of fishing a sculpin imitation. †



SCULPIN IMITATIONS WITH A DISTINCTLY BRITISH COLUMBIAN CONNECTION

Clockwise from top left: **Tsitika Tiger**, originated and tied by Jim Humphreys of the West Coast Fly Fishers in Sooke. **Esker Bar Sculpin**, originated and tied by Rob Brown, the "Skeena Angler" of Terrace. **Rolled Muddler**, originated and tied by Tom Murray of the Comox Valley Fly Fishers. **Skeena Sculpin**, also by Rob Brown. **Adams River Spuddler**, popularized and tied by Jim Fisher of the Kalamalka Fly Fishers in Vernon. All of these fly patterns were developed in BC waters after observations that linked directly trout and sculpins in a predator and prey relationship. Jim Humphreys saw Tsitika River summer-run steelhead regurgitate small sculpins after landing. Rob Brown has seen sculpins on numerous occasions as part of the contents of dissected bull trout and Dolly Varden. Tom Murray's Rolled Muddler has a solid reputation in taking sea-run coastal cutthroat as an imitation of Tidepool sculpins, and Jim Fisher's creation is a refined version of a long standing pattern imitating the familiar Torrent and Slimy sculpins of Adams River.

Fly Box

FOUR SCULPIN IMITATIONS with a distinctly British Columbian connection. (Photos by Ed.)



Esker Bar Sculpin

(Originated and tied by Rob Brown)

HOOK: TMC 9394, size 6 **THREAD:** Brown
BODY: None **WING:** Silver Angel Hair over grey polar bear enclosed in two wide grizzly hackles tied splayed **THROAT:** Hot red arctic fox hair **HEAD:** Spun and clipped gray deer hair



Skeena Sculpin

(Originated and tied by Rob Brown)

HOOK: No 2 to 2/0 Mustad salmon hook
BODY: Gray dubbing **RIB:** Flat gold prismatic tinsel, with silver wire wound counter to the tinsel (both holding down the wing) **WING:** Three hackle feathers from a poor grizzly cape, tied matuka style and all flowing in the same direction **THROAT:** Red Schlappen **HEAD:** Black deer hair extending over the wing behind gray deer hair



Rolled Muddler

(Originated and tied by Tom Murray)
 (Illustration by Loucas Raptis)

HOOK: No 12, Mustad 9671 **THREAD:** Red
TAIL: Wild turkey or light or bronze mallard
BUTT: Red thread **RIB:** Oval silver tinsel
BODY: Flat silver tinsel **WING:** Same as tail
HEAD: Spun and clipped deer hair with a few strands extending down along the body. Red tying thread should show behind and in front of head



Adams River Spuddler

(Popularized and tied by Jim Fisher)
 (Illustration from an old British engraving)

HOOK: Mustad 3665A or 79580, size 4-8
THREAD: White **TAIL:** Fox squirrel tail
RIB: Medium gold wire **BODY:** Flat gold tinsel
UNDERWING: Same as tail, tied to same length
WING: Two matched pairs of wide and webby badger saddle hackle **HEAD:** Spun and clipped deer hair laterally compressed

The Fly Patterns of Roderick Haig-Brown

Haig-Brown's Steelhead Bee

By Van Gorman Egan

HAIG-BROWN'S ONE ORIGINAL DRY FLY, the Steelhead Bee, came somewhat by accident, yet stands alone among the twenty Haig-Brown patterns in its importance to fly fishermen of the coast.

THE NAME STEELHEAD BEE at once suggests the use of the fly and, being a dry fly, its importance. A dry fly for steelhead fishing. But that was not Haig-Brown's intention when he tied it. He first put it to use in 1951 in search of the Main Islands Pool on the Campbell River for the wonderful harvest cutthroats that had disappeared from the Canyon Pool when a hydroelectric development altered its flows beyond recognition. What he caught there were not cutthroats, but bright, fresh summer steelhead whose performances when hooked were awesome, to say the least. By the time he published his discovery in *Fisherman's Summer* (1959), he had not only convinced himself that summer-run steelhead could be taken on dry flies, but that they would rise more readily to a dry fly than to any conventional wet fly. That was a major advance in fly fishing for steelhead.

In that sparkling series of chapters headed "The Home River," Haig-Brown did not name the fly but described it as a variation of a McKenzie River Brown and Yellow Bug. At the time the book came out, he thought, though was not completely convinced, that the fly was indeed just that. Nearly two decades earlier he had spent several months along the Columbia and McKenzie Rivers researching the great chinook salmon runs for his book *Return to the River*. In Blue River, Oregon, on the banks of the McKenzie, he met the Elys, husband and wife who operated a small fly shop specializing in flies that would float on the swift, broken waters of that notable trout stream. Haig-Brown bought and used their flies on the McKenzie and later on other coastal rivers.

Shortly before *Fisherman's Summer* came out, Haig-Brown gave me one of his Brown and Yellow Bugs, which I somehow had the good sense to keep as a model and which I now greatly value. He was naturally enough enthusiastic about the success he had had with summer steelhead, and about how the fly should be tied and fished. And he talked about its McKenzie River origin and the Ely designs for fast, rough water dry flies.



Steelhead Bee tied by Van Egan—on a drawing by Louis Darling from *Fisherman's Summer*. (Photo by Ed.)

But the doubts were there—was this really a McKenzie River Brown and Yellow Bug? We continued to call the fly that for several years, but the doubts remained. To settle the matter, Haig-Brown sent for a selection of flies from the Ely Fly Shop and what he received as Brown and Yellow Bugs in no way resembled the Haig-Brown fly. In 1964 in *Fisherman's Fall* he straightened it all out, naming the fly the Steelhead Bee.

It certainly is an imitation of a bee with its bright yellow band midway along a dark brown body. And occasionally bees have been found in the stomachs of summer steelhead, though their feeding in fresh water is hardly rapacious and when it occurs is usually concerned with bottom organisms. Yet it brought these Campbell River summer-run steelhead to the surface, and I'm sure it would yet, if the run still existed. We didn't take good care of it. But it works on summer-run steelhead elsewhere, too, including the broad-shouldered Thompson River stock that arrive in the Thompson's blue waters late in September and all through October. The Steelhead Bee is a standard pattern among steelhead fly fishermen.

Early on, Haig-Brown noted two important structural features of the fly and one rather unexpected tactic in its use. For one thing, the yellow band on the body is vital. Tied without it, it failed to interest the fish. My wife Maxi and I have confirmed this on numerous occasions with cutthroat trout, too. It's a perfectly good looking, life-like fly without the yellow band, yet fished along side one with it, there is no comparison in the results.

The other structural feature is a sparse hackle, for the fly must lie belly-on-the-water. This is less important, the amount of hackle, so long as the fly does lie with the body in the surface, and on very swift, turbulent runs a heavy hackled fly may be necessary to

keep it from going under the surface. It seems likely that the body lying in the surface tension of the water provides a disturbance that is itself an attraction to steelhead lying beneath, and which would be related to Haig-Brown's discovery that drag could be used advantageously to move otherwise uninterested fish. Bare in mind that in the 1950's drag was considered an absolute taboo in the fishing of dry flies, and when drag worked to bring a fish to a dry fly, it was customary to dismiss it as an aberrant occurrence or a half-witted fish. Haig-Brown was not tied to conventions that constrained the intelligent use of tactics in deceiving fish. When he found that purposeful

drag, or even skipping the fly along the surface, would move steelhead that were reluctant to take a drag-free floating fly, he used that method, and took great pleasure in the furious strikes (often missed) it provoked.

Today, the use of the riffling-hitch to create provocative fly movements just under or in the surface and the practice of waking dry flies on the surface are all part of a modern fly-fisher's bag of tricks. But one has to think that these useful tactics had their beginning in those experimental days in the Islands Pools of the Campbell River, and that the Brown and Yellow Bug, later the Steelhead Bee, was the fly that started it all. †

Tying the Steelhead Bee

HAIG-BROWN WAS A PRACTICAL FLY TIER, not given to absolute choices in the materials he used. This is clear in his writings where he often mentions various substitutions of materials or omitting something entirely. His original Bees were made with silk floss bodies and bucktail wings and tails, but he made suggestions for the use of dubbed fur bodies and for the use of other hairs. The combination of fur, feather and hair that he came to like as well as or better than the others follows.

Hook: For steelhead, Wilson dry fly hooks in sizes 12 to 4, with 10 to 6 most used. Wilson hooks run two or three sizes larger in gape and shank length than others using these numbers; e.g. a 10 Wilson is a bit larger than an 8 low water hook.

Thread: Medium brown; yellow for dubbing the yellow band.

Tail: Fox squirrel tail, the uniformly coloured under-hair preferred, equal in length to the hook shank.

Body: Alternating equal-width bands of brown, yellow and brown dubbed fur.

Wing: Same as tail, split and tied slightly forward. Slightly is a key word here, unless the fly is being made for the purpose of "waking, in which case the wing should set well forward."

Hackle: Medium to light brown, or dark ginger cock.

To be more specific about the body components, I would suggest the use of a rich brown mink fur mixed with a small amount of Spectrum #41. The latter deepens the color and its long fibers aid in binding the shorter mink fibers into a more teeth-resistant yarn. For the yellow band, I now use Spectrum #39 (sulfur) spun on yellow thread.

The amount of hair in the tail and wings should be enough to give these parts substantial presence. The wing requires about twice as much as the tail. Fox squirrel has good color and stacks well. For coastal fishermen, the Steelhead Bee should not be overlooked as a trout fly.

Dead bees are common sights on lake surfaces and cruising trout take them greedily. When there is no active insect life to interest trout, a Steelhead Bee can be a useful search fly. Perhaps its size and its not unexpected presence contribute to this. Then a subtle action with the rod tip may just confirm it.

--Van Gorman Egan



Photo by Art Lingren

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Featured BCFFF Member Club

The Haig-Brown Fly Fishing Association of Victoria

By Doug Pollard

AS MY FINGERS HIT THE KEY BOARD for this task I am aware that the 25th Anniversary of our club is just around the corner. On Wednesday, September 28, 1977, a dozen or so Victoria fly fishing enthusiasts got together, formed a club, elected a coordinator of club outings, and planned an outing for the coming weekend.

Most clubs, of course, elect a president or chairman, a secretary and a treasurer. But first base for this club was an outing coordinator. Second base, it seems, was an Editor. Fish-outs and writing have been part of the club ever since. The first edition of the *Western Steelhead Bee* rolled off the Xerox within a month of the club's inauguration.

Then there was the matter of a name for the club. The choice was obvious. Fly fishing and writing? In BC? It had to be Haig-Brown. Permission and blessing from the Haig-Brown family would be required. After some anxious correspondence, through which the fledgling club made a commitment to act in the spirit of BC's greatest exponent of fishing and conservation, efforts were rewarded with approval of *Haig-Brown Fly Fishing Association*. It is a name we cherish, and do our best to honour.

Since 1977, the HBFFA has evolved into a strong and active organization. We have a number of ambitious projects under our belt. Perhaps the most important has been the restoration of Sandhill Creek on the Saanich Peninsula. Ron Ptolemy, a founding member and professional fish biologist, regards the creek as having a potential for production second to none in the province, given its size.

Armed with this positive prognosis, a generous grant from the Habitat Conservation Fund, and support from local suppliers and landowners, the club went to work. Members rolled up their sleeves, donned hardhats and waders, and went down to the river (well, creek). They planted hundreds of native shrubs and trees, erected fences to keep out cattle, built a bridge for cattle to cross, built a fish ladder to raise fish through an offending culvert, and put water to work in scouring out gravel beds, plunge pools, and undercut banks. Within a few seasons the payoff was evident in very noticeable improvements in fry and smolt counts. The species? Sea-run cutthroat trout, one of BC's most endangered



salmonids. Coho and chum have also increased. The project is now almost as old as the club. Streamside vegetation is maturing, and fish are still running. Much remains to be done. The biggest challenge is to get fish back into the upper reaches of the creek, currently rendered inaccessible by that offending culvert.

More recently, the club entered the rarefied field of fine books. Again, after extensive discussions, the Haig-Brown family gave the green light for producing a special limited Third Edition of Roderick's second book, *Pool and Rapid*. The result was truly a work of exquisite art and craftsmanship. Loucas Raptis produced a beautiful series of ink drawings to illustrate the original text. Pat George produced striking illustrations for frontispiece, slip-cover and end-papers. Both artists are members of the club. Morriss Printing of Victoria printed the lovely book on a press that was running before Roderick himself was born. Leather-bound books were quickly sold out. Sales of the cloth-bound edition are now generating funds for conservation efforts of the Haig-Brown Kingfisher Creek Society in Campbell River.

In addition to the *Steelhead Bee* and *Pool and Rapid*, the club has also produced a book on lakes of Vancouver Island, and a hiking and fishing trail guide for the Cowichan River. Now in its second, computer-based edition, the guide has been a steady producer of funds for conservation activities. Speaking of funds, a big generator in recent years has been an annual auction. Members donate and bid on fishing tackle and books in a frenzy of hopefully expensive fun to yield somewhere close to \$2000 in a couple of hours, enabling the club to indulge in social activities as well as regular fish outs.

Together with the Cowichan Valley Fly Fishers, the HBFFA hosted the 2001 Annual General Meeting of the BCFFF, at the University of Victoria. This was the first time the AGM had been held on

Vancouver Island. It featured a special program and display on the life and work of Roderick Haig-Brown at the University's Maltwood Museum. If there was ever a coming of age for the club, this highly successful venture was it.

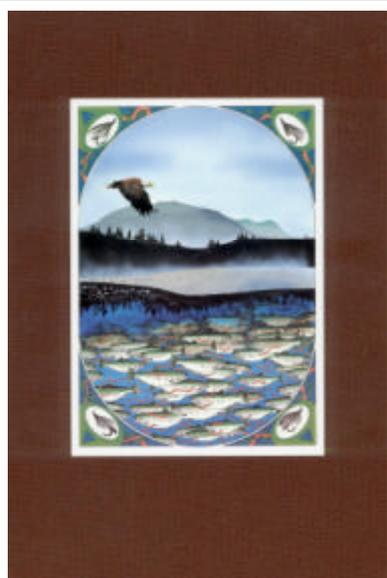
The 25th Anniversary celebrations have been underway for much of 2002. Several fish-outs have been well attended, notably a weekend trip to St. Mary's Lake on Saltspring Island that included a gourmet barbeque.

The success of the *Steelhead Bee*, our official journal, speaks for itself. Beginning with Volume 1 in 1977, the *Bee* was produced in 10 volumes until 1986. It reappeared briefly with Volume 11 in 1989, and restarted in earnest in March 1993, edited by Mike Edgell, with No 1, Volume 12. Since then it has been published annually, with up to four issues a year. A special retrospective edition, with a selection of articles drawn from past numbers, was distributed at the 2002 BCFFF AGM. A separate Newsletter, available in electronic form as well as hard copy, is published

several times a year. There can be little doubt that the Newsletter has helped to strengthen the club with timely announcements and reports on activities. The Newsletter has been ably produced by Dale Francis.

From the outset, the club has been active in promoting the sport of fly fishing through education. Fly tying courses have been a regular feature, and displays and demonstrations have been set up at trade shows and BC Family Fishing Day. Conservation, education, and promotion of sporting ethics are pillars of the club's purpose, enshrined in its constitution.

Looking back over 25 years, the Haig-Brown Fly Fishing Association takes pride and pleasure in living up to its original aspirations. It provides a forum of friendship, information and entertainment for anyone in the Victoria area interested in fly fishing, and makes significant contributions to related education and conservation initiatives. The club meets on the second Wednesday evening of each month at the Chief and Petty Officers Mess, CFB Esquimalt; all are welcome. †



Slip-case Illustration by Pat George

The Haig-Brown Fly Fishing Association's Pool and Rapid Project

POOL AND RAPID was first published in 1932. A second edition appeared in 1936. Roderick Haig-Brown refused to permit any subsequent editions in his lifetime. Now sixty years later, coincidental with the twentieth anniversary of his death and the sixtieth anniversary of "Above Tide," the Haig-Brown house in Campbell River, there was a new edition of the novel authorized by the Haig-Brown family.

The book is Haig-Brown's first expression of the question that preoccupied him so intensely for the rest of his life: how was man to live in the world without destroying it?

The best and lasting thing about *Pool and Rapid*, unaffected by the natural limitations of Roderick Haig-Brown's early thinking and understanding, is the expression on every page of his Roderick Haig-Brown's youthful and intense love for the New World he set out to know and map in his work as no one else had. For that alone it more than deserves to be back in print.

--Anthony Robertson

From the fine brown binding through the silver fish cruising the end papers, to the new drawings and the heavy deckle-edge paper setting off a classic design for the text, the new *Pool and Rapid* is a true collector's treasure.

--Valerie Haig-Brown

Beautifully produced by Morriss Printing, which brought Linotype operators out of retirement to set the type, *Pool and Rapid* is one of those rare books that can be called a work of art in itself. You know looking at this edition, of which only 300 copies were printed, that Haig-Brown would have been deeply moved to see his book reproduced with such reverence.

--Mark Hume (www.arivernever sleeps.com)

All leather-bound copies of the 1997 Limited Edition of Roderick Haig-Brown's *Pool and Rapid* have been sold. A small number of copies of the cloth-bound printing of 220 books are still available by mail (for \$150 CDN) from the Haig-Brown Fly Fishing Association, P.O. Box 6454, Depot #1, Victoria, BC V8P 5M4. Inquiries can be made through the Association's web site: <http://members.shaw.ca/hbffa/>

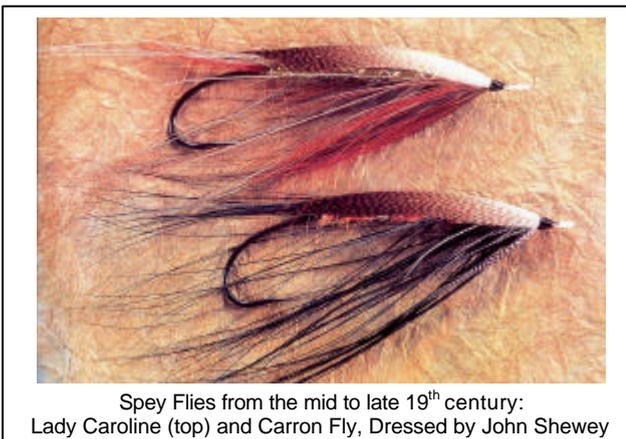
Book Review

Spey Flies & Dee Flies, by John Shewey.
Frank Amato Publications, Inc. P.O. Box
82112, Portland, OR 97282
2002, 160 pages, Hardback \$45 US,
Softcover \$29.95 US.

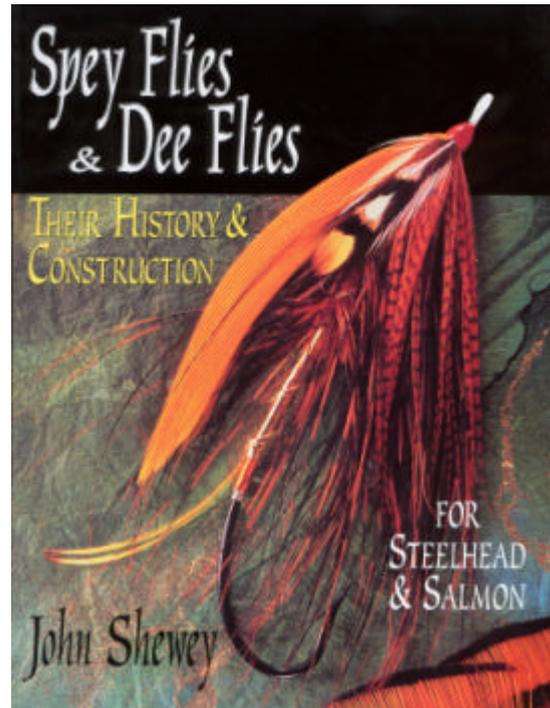
By Art Lingren

FLY FISHING IS A SPORT RICH IN HISTORY. Much of modern-day flies and fly fishing techniques have roots that penetrate deep into the history of the sport. For the salmon and steelhead fly fisher so much of the sport's history is rooted on the great Atlantic salmon rivers of Scotland. Spey and Dee flies originated on those highland rivers.

John Shewey has done a masterful job of documenting the Scottish origins of Spey and Dee flies as well as the history of Spey-style flies that were developed in the Pacific Northwest. Roderick Haig-Brown was instrumental in introducing steelhead to the Lady Caroline pattern back in the 1930s. But it is Washingtonian Syd Glasso, who, in the early 1950s, developed the first original Spey-style flies for Olympic Peninsula steelhead. In *Spey Flies & Dee Flies*, Shewey gives Glasso due credit for his fly-tying innovations and for popularizing Spey-style flies in the Pacific Northwest. Glasso influenced several other steelhead fly fishers such as Dick Wentworth, Walt Johnson, Dave McNeese and fellow Totem Fly Fisher Robert Taylor. It was through the efforts of this group of fly fishers that the Spey-style flies following slowly grew. Shewey's excellent history provides context for the remainder of the book.



In addition to documenting the rich history of the Spey and Dee flies, this book is a pictorial delight. Shewey has done a masterful job photographing the flies, many of which were dressed by himself, but there are sample patterns from other fly tiers as well. About the only complaint I have is the absence of Syd Glasso



original ties. There are a number of samples of Glasso flies dressed by others, but none by the master himself.

Shewey provides easy to follow step by step instructions on dressing Spey and Dee flies, and gives the fly dresser valuable tips on how to overcome some of the fly-tying difficulties. For example, many fly tiers find it problematic to dress the simple wings made from slips of paired bronze mallard. Shewey gives lucid instructions, with accompanying pictures, on preparing the feathers and tying them in. At the same time, he provides the tier with a number of winging options to get the classic Spey fly's desired low-enveloping-wing effect.

Shewey also includes a chapter on fishing Spey and Dee flies. Only a well-experienced angler who has confidence in his/her ability could write in a discussion on "Does the Fly Matter" say that: "I must first insist that the angler doing the fishing exerts substantially more influence over the fly's success than does the fly itself" (p. 134). Nonetheless there are tips on fishing these flies that will help fly fishers obtain Shewey's "Confidence Factor."

Complementing Shewey's words, historic photographs and the overall quality of the photography reflect the effort that Amato Publications has put into the book's design. The layout appeals to the eye and the colour reproduction is exquisite. It is one of Amato Publications best efforts to date.

Whether you be a novice or experienced steelheader, this book is a must for the library of any steelhead fly fisher interested in learning how to dress and fish some of the fishiest flies devised by man. †

Syd Glasso and the Canadian Connection

By Art Lingren



Syd Glasso circa 1970 (photo by John Bokstrom)

IN HIS NEWLY PUBLISHED BOOK, *Spey Flies & Dee Flies*, John Shewey gives due credit to Syd Glasso for developing and introducing Spey-style flies in the Pacific Northwest. Glasso, a Forks, Washington schoolteacher and principal, was one of those quiet-spoken, modest fly fishers whose fly tying and fishing skills ranked second to none in the steelhead community. Glasso dressed his first Spey-style fly back in the early 1950s and in the following years developed a number more for his backyard rivers. A master fly dresser who spurned recognition, Glasso certainly would not have fit in with the egotistical celebrity fly



fishers that abound today. Few anglers tossed fur and feathers to winter steelhead when Glasso haunted the steelhead rivers around his Olympic Peninsula home. In fact Glasso commented once in the late 1960s that of the half dozen fly fishers he knew who fished winter-run steelhead with fly, two were from north of the border--the Canadian Connection.

Jerry Wintle and Bob Taylor, both long afflicted with fly fishing for steelhead, made frequent trips to Washington state to fish the Stilly and other streams. It was on one of those trips in the late 1960s that Wintle and Taylor, with Lee Straight tagging along, arranged a visit with Glasso over in Forks. Glasso and Taylor had compatible personalities and a friendship developed. During one conversation about tackle and fly reels Glasso mentioned something about a spare spool for a Hardy reel. In those days English imports into the USA were few and expensive. Bob offered to get Syd his spool in Canada where Hardy reels abounded, were far cheaper, and readily available. When Bob sent the spool, he asked Glasso if he could get some Glasso-dressed flies. In his February 3, 1968 letter to Bob, Glasso writes:

"Glad to hear from you. I'll be very happy to send you a few of the flies you requested but it will take a week or so. Can't seem to locate any proper *wide* yellow hackles (saddles) for the Sol Duc Spey type fly. Have just about given up tying that fly for that reason."

The flies came shortly after, numbered and named: (1) Quillayute, (2) Sol Duc Spey, (3) Orange Heron, (4) Courtesan, (5) Sol Duc.

During their friendship, Glasso gave Taylor three more flies: a Brown Heron, Thunder & Lightning and an Unnamed White-winged Silver-bodied Spey-style pattern.

Syd Glasso died in 1983 leaving a lasting legacy to Pacific Northwest fly fishers--his Spey-style steelhead flies. Glasso had an unique fly-tying style and typical of his flies were his small neat heads. These pictures of flies from Bob Taylor's Glasso collection show that unique style and are samples of the master fly tyer's work. We hope you enjoy.

Spey flies originated and tied by Syd Glasso and given to Bob Taylor of the Totem Fly Fishers in the late 1960s.

Photographed by Art Lingren.

Flies tied by Syd Glasso



Orange Heron



Unnamed White Spey



Courtesan



Sol Duc



Sol Duc Spey



Brown Heron

Photos by Art Lingren

Bright Spots in Dark Water

By Rob Brown

VIC BUTEAU GAVE ME A LAKE. It was a parting gift, though I didn't know it at the time. I did know that a surgeon at Mills Memorial had taken a growth out of his guts, but after the surgery Vic's personality remained as calm as a pond on a windless afternoon, so I assumed the intruder was benign. It wasn't. It was malign, ravenous. It was gnawing at him as we spoke over the coffee table at Fish Tales Tackle Shop, and would kill him a few weeks later. In hindsight, I realized that its growing presence explained the uncharacteristically abrupt way Vic injected the mention of a carefully guarded secret spot into an unrelated conversation, and the meticulous care he took to make sure I'd recorded the directions accurately.

Vic described a pair of lakes lying beneath rounded mountains, within earshot of a rushing river, surrounded by pines, shaped like a pair of kidneys, and connected by small creeks.

"The big lake is the one you want," he emphasized as he led me past mile signs, gravel pits, power lines, derelict roads and a washouts, stopping from time to time to correct the crude graphic

rendering of his description I was sketching on the back of a scrap of paper.

I slid the scrap map across the table to Finlay the next morning. Fin put down his coffee cup and held the paper up in order to take advantage of the sunlight streaming in the window of the Lunch Box Deli. He cocked his head to activate his bifocals. He studied the map for a long time.

"On the Old Nass Road?"

I nodded.

"You sure?"

"I wrote it down just like Vic told me."

Finlay was clearly surprised to hear of a lake in the lower Skeena Region he hadn't fished or, at the very least, heard about.

He shook his head slowly from side to side. "I've been all through here. I don't remember seeing any lakes like this."

He handed the map back then reached down into the pocket of his Indian sweater and pulled out a plug of Apple chewing tobacco, ripping a chunk from a corner and sticking it behind his lip. He lifted his cup and took sip of coffee. His gaze was distant and reflective. I knew he was skeptical, but itching to ground truth the map. He lifted his big right hand and scratched the white stubble on his chin.

He pushed himself up. "Let's get after it," he said.

An hour or so later we were rattling over the Nass Road. Finlay's Audi Fox coughed dust and spewed oil droplets behind us. Finlay was a senior who drove like a teenager. The poor Fox shook like it was about to fly apart. Knowing from experience to expect this kind of ride, I wedged our rods between the half-inflated spare tire that lay on the back seat and my deflated rubber raft.

"Isn't this the model that had problems lurching forward after the ignition was turned off?" I asked.

"I have trouble getting it to lurch forward when I turn the ignition on," Finlay snorted as I struggled vainly to wind up the window before the cab filled up with dust.

Two power lines and a gravel pit later, Finlay steered the old fox onto an off road she had no business being on.

"Here. This road here," I said, attempting to get a good look at the map as we rolled through some deep troughs, scraping the Fox' belly against a high spot in the road. "This is the turn off that Vic told me about."

Finlay turned the key. The Fox shuddered. It didn't

lurch. We grabbed our rods from the back and took the road South, as indicated on the map. A few minutes later the road turned into a trail. A short time after that it became a trail remnant. Almost all of the Kalum Valley has been logged, some of it a long time ago, most of it recently. This particular section fell into the latter category. Unplanted and untended, bereft of the horticultural attention of the foresters, it was packed to the point of impenetrability with brush. Chasing what proved to be an illusory clearing, I went a few hundred feet farther than Finlay before turning back.

"I guess it's the next road," I panted sheepishly, lifting my undershirt to mop sweat from my forehead. Fin said nothing; he just stood up and began slogging his way back. The road out always seems longer than the road in, in this case it proved considerably longer.

"I think we're pretty close to where we turned around," remarked Fin after another agonizing ten minutes.

"We're lost," I said, realizing at that instant that only *we* knew where we were, and with no visual references, and no trees big enough to climb, things were problematic.

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I followed. The going was slow and strenuous. We slogged on for what seemed a long time but probably wasn't. The brush turned into a crowded stand of scrubby pines. The ground in the feeble shade of the emaciated second growth smelled like mildewed canvas. Except for the occasional pale mushroom, it was barren. Pine gave way to brush again, but thinner brush. The ground became soft and spongy. Finlay was standing before me, parting the brush as it were a curtain. I peaked out too and there was the lake. It looked cool and inviting, but small.

"Vic said we want a big lake," I observed.

"Then this ain't it," Finlay sighed.

Slogging around the gnarled perimeter of the lake, over beaver snares, sinking up to our thighs in sphagnum raft made the bushwhacking seem like a pleasant memory. The crude dock site at the far side and the strong possibility of a road leading up to it kept us going.

There *was* a road. I felt like bending down and kissing it. We sat to catch our breath. Fin rewarded himself with a fresh chew. I drew the twelve dollar Cuban, the first half of which I was saving for after lunch and the last of which was intended to celebrate the successful end to this day of discovery, from its aluminum tube and lit up. Small fish dimpled the lake.

Finlay glanced at his watch. "Eleven," he announced. "We oughta go."

I stubbed my stogie in the gentle manner a good cigar demands, then spit on my finger and tamped the end before sliding the remaining half back into its container.

The road was good. We walked what must have been a kilometer at least before it forked.

"Lookit that," said Finlay.

I looked and there, a stone's throw away was the Fox.

I consulted the map again as Fin fired up the Fox.

"It has to be the next road."

"OK," Fin said patiently.

The next road took us deep into the jungle; it ended at a pothole that was more pond than lake. We pulled the inflatable from the trunk and were soon bobbing about hooking odd looking six-inch fish that bore no resemblance to any trout either of us had seen before.

"Can't be right."

"Can't be," Fin agreed.

We pulled the boat ashore and dragged it back to the car. Another road struck out to the east. We took it, stopping where it split.

"When you reach a fork in the road, take it," said Finlay, so we did. I walked down the right road. Finlay took the left one.

Soon I heard my name echoing through the pines. I raced toward the sound. The left road was the right one. Finlay stood before a pretty little lake, its surface ruffled by the wind, its waves sparkling. There was a natural meadow

on one side and a large beaver lodge blocking off a creek at the other. There was the rush of a river in the distance, so loud that Finlay could hear it, and there was the rush of the wind pushing through the pines and making the aspen tremble.

A short time later we were trolling through the red brown water, cooling off in the pine scented breeze while big dragons snapped their papery wings overhead. There were no fish rings, which we agreed could be attributed to the wind.

During a calm moment Finlay spotted a leathery leech brazenly slinking by just under the surface of the dark brown water.

"I'd try something that looked like that," he suggested.

I rummaged through my bag and plucked out a ratty marabou of a similar hue, but not nearly as long as the bloodsucker we'd just seen, then dropped it over the side. In minutes a fish was yanking vigorously on the line. As the fish neared the boat we looked down.

It flashed. Then it flashed again.

"Fish in water like this don't flash," said Finlay.

He was right. Trout in tea lakes are chameleons with skin like spotted tarpaper. This creature was reflective, brilliant. I dipped the net under it and lifted it aboard.

In the midday sun it shone like a herring. We stared at its large silvery scales.

"He's got a forked tail," said Fin.

"He does too."

"He's a salmon."

"Ya think?"

There were more silver fish, enough to satisfy both of us,

most of them about 12 to 14 inches, A few were bigger than that. Most of them took to the air; some sizzled like fish frying in grease.

We wondered how salmon had colonized the place. I suggested that maybe, before the loggers created Grade A beaver habitat, the fish may have found their way in via the steep creek that spills into the river a mile or so below the lake only to find themselves trapped by the industrious rodents.

"Sure," said Finlay, "Coho find their way into all kinds of ponds and tiny creeks."

We fished late on that first fine day atop our beautiful, dark, hard won lake.

When we were done, the rods folded up, and the boat stuffed in back seat once again, the sun was low. The land was blue and gray. Finlay snapped open a pop. I snapped open a beer. We drank to fishing, taking long pulls to slake our thirst.

"So what are we going to call this place, Finlay?"

Fin swallowed. I could see the fading mountaintops glowing in his glasses "I think we should call it Buteau Lake," he said. †

In minutes a fish was yanking vigorously on the line. As the fish neared the boat we looked down. It flashed. Then it flashed again. "Fish in water like this don't flash," said Finlay.

Fly Tying

Grantham's Sedge

By Ron Grantham

THE IDEA OF USING A FRONT-EXTENDED BODY for skating flies was conceived in 1993 while fly fishing for summer-run steelhead on the Thompson River in British Columbia. Riffle-hitched flies and flies with forward-slanted wings work well enough, but I wanted a fly that was attached securely and directly to the leader, and one that would skate high on the water without pulling under.

The pattern shown here is the final result of many trial-and-error shapes and sizes, from a mouse to a sedge, but all dressed with deer hair and a forward extension to make the fly skate better. Used with a floating fly line, this unsinkable fly will stay on the surface as long as it is moving. In principle it acts like a kite where the line is attached to a point back of the leading edge.

The fly will skate in line with the leader, so directional changes can be made by tossing upstream or downstream mends in the fly line. Tie it on with a turtle or clinch knot, but don't riffle-hitch it.

Tying Instructions: Obtain some stiff monofilament, such as .065" nylon used on an electric lawn edger. Cut a piece the length of the hook, and heat and blunt the front end. The back end can be angle-cut with clippers for a smoother body. Proceed as follows:



Step 1: Tie the nylon piece on top of the hook with the blunt end extending 1/8" forward of the eye.



Step 2: Wrap tightly, then cover with flex cement to prevent shifting.



Grantham's Sedge

(Originated and tied by Ron Grantham)

HOOK: Size 4 or 6 Mustad 7957B, 7948A or 94840 down-eye, bronzed, forged, regular length or equivalent

BODY: Brown, green, orange, or black dubbing

WING: Deer hair, length of body



Step 3: Wrap the body material from just forward of the hook bend to the blunt end of the extension.



Step 4: Tie in a large clump of deer hair at the front end of the extension, whip finish and clip head. Coat thread with flex cement.

The Perils of Magazine Reporting

A letter to John Randolph, Editor and Publisher of *Fly Fisherman Magazine*

By Erik Poole

DEAR JOHN: The British Columbia Rivers Special published in the May 1997 issue of *Fly Fisherman Magazine* and on the Virtual Flyshop web-site must have enjoyed wide circulation. It certainly made the Elk River in southeastern B.C. internationally famous. Billed as “**British Columbia: The Last Frontier,**” the *FFM Special* misrepresented the fishery and caused unprecedented angler congestion on the Elk River. I readily understand your desire at the time to find alternatives to whirling-disease infested rivers in Montana for your American readers. Those and similar editorial choices could, however, ultimately jeopardize the access of your American readers to Canadian waters, though I believe that you could easily prevent this from happening.

As you may recall, David Lambroughton contributed the introductory article that surveyed many rivers in B.C. including the Elk. David Engerbretson described the Blackwater River rainbow trout fishery in north-central B.C. and I wrote the draft article describing how the Elk River westslope cutthroat and bull trout fishery had dramatically recovered under enlightened provincial management.

The *FFM Special* immediately attracted hordes of anglers to the river located just north of Montana. In the summer of 1997, float traffic on the modest-sized Elk River jumped to as high as 30 boats daily from previous highs of six boats daily on a holiday weekend. The crowding angered many locals. Some have called for reducing tourist-angling pressure, and others have simply stopped fishing the Elk River. A former outfitter returned for a holiday on the river a year after the magazine article appeared and was astounded by the number of hook-scarred and disfigured westslope cutthroat trout. Fist-fights are occasionally reported. Last summer a number of out-of-province vehicles and boats were vandalized in broad daylight.

All hands point to market leader *Fly Fisherman Magazine* as the primary instigator of angling trips by new visitors and no wonder: the B.C. River Special sketched a compelling portrait of a great fishery. But the layout and juxtaposition of photographs clearly misrepresented the fishery. Insetting five- or six-pound Chilko River rainbow trout into a scenic photo of the

Elk River cradled in the Rocky Mountains must have piqued reader interest; however, few would have realized that the Elk and the upper Chilko rivers are 14 hours drive distant from each other, or that Elk River cutthroat trout average a pound or less.

I suppose that deleting material I wrote about open-pit coal mines, logging, ranching and municipal waste treatment was necessary in order to stay true to the “Last Frontier” wilderness billing accorded the province. That billing continues on the Virtual Flyshop web-site with not the slightest indication—in text or video—of crowding.

Publishing *where-to-go* and *how-to-catch-lots* fishing articles can have benefits. Such articles

introduce fly fishers to rewarding experiences, stimulate the guiding and hospitality industries, and ultimately generate political support for an all too often under-appreciated resource or an innovative angling management regime.

But as the recent history on the Elk River

illustrates, such articles and their Internet counterparts might also generate so much angling pressure that both the fish resource and the angling experience suffer. The resulting congestion can rob traditional users of their experience, causing anglers from one region or nation to pit themselves against those from other regions or nations.

B.C.’s southern trout streams are managed under an open-access tradition. The publicity surrounding the Elk River sparked a gold rush in guiding licenses and the provincial government chose not to limit guiding effort. According to many observers, the river crawls with guides from Montana operating illegally in Canada in addition to numerous licensed guides from B.C. and Alberta.

To better understand the increase in pressure on the Elk River, consider these statistics. The number of reported guided angler days increased 1,700 per cent to 1,458 in 2000 from 81 guided angler days in 1994. These legally guided anglers probably account for less than 10 per cent of total angling effort. Guided anglers now catch more fish. The number of cutthroat trout caught and released by guided anglers has increased

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over 4,000 per cent to 27,408 from 1,458 during the same time period.

Local residents are feeling invaded. If they live in forest-industry towns, they might also feel that they are being stomped on by the punitive 20 to 35 per cent tariffs imposed on our softwood lumber exports by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

As you are likely aware, recovering runs of late-summer steelhead on the Skeena River system have contributed to experience-destroying levels of congestion. Many local anglers are pleading for measures that would radically reduce the access of American and other visiting anglers to Skeena River tributaries, undoubtedly some of the finest steelhead angling in the world.

Many B.C. anglers do not agree with placing extraordinary limitations on alien fly fishers. But B.C. politics is tough. British Columbians only have to look at the dismal quality of angling that American fly fishers have grown accustomed to on highly congested U.S. tailwater fisheries, and wonder if the race to over-developed mediocrity will become the norm here in British Columbia. British Columbians only have to look at Alaskans who don't hesitate to harvest our salmon and lightly dismiss Canadian conservation concerns.

If they are aware of the experience on Ontario's Grand River, they know that a hyperbole-filled, where-to-go article published in *FFM* a few years ago contributed to a similar surge in popularity and congestion.

Some thoughtful and experienced fly anglers believe that angling magazines should avoid stampeding easily accessible waters by not publicizing them or by omitting the detailed information guides which have become popular in recent years. An inspiring,

informative, and accurate where-to-go piece does not need to replace the joy of one's own journey of discovery or the hiring of a local outfitter.

In principle there is nothing wrong with enjoying fishing in crowds of dozens or hundreds of anglers. In-river salmon anglers frequently do. Nevertheless, it is not clear that Americans should use their demographic weight to impose their own value systems on Canadian anglers and in the process unwittingly expropriate experiences that will never be compensated for.

There is always a danger that if *FFM* were to stop publishing embellished where-to-go articles, other magazines might simply fill the void and steal market share. But this would only happen if *FFM* were an ordinary magazine operating on the competitive fringe. Over the years, *FFM* has become a market leader through insightful articles, penetrating analysis, tight editing and stunning visuals—some of the best fly fishing photojournalism in the business. *FFM*'s audited circulation is nearly twice that of the leading competitor. *FFM* surely enjoys sufficient market share and power to effect the necessary editorial policy changes without losing readers or advertisers.

Ideally, British Columbia and other jurisdictions need to better manage and sometimes reduce all angling effort regardless of origin. In the meantime, it is unfortunate to think that a fine publication like *Fly Fisherman Magazine* might ultimately contribute to a situation where American fly fishers are less welcome in BC and other Canadian provinces. It is clearly in your interest to avoid overselling easy-to-reach, open-access Canadian sport fisheries.

Best wishes –Erik Poole †

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