

Badger Fly Fishers

An Active Member Club of the Federation of Fly Fishers



Newsletter

April 2010



This impressive sculpture titled, "Progression," was created from recycled materials by Chris McConnell, a student at The Cleveland Institute of Art. It is 12 feet long and weighs 650 pounds. Chris can be contacted at cmcconnell@student.cia.edu and he welcomes your comments.

Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance to hold auction

On Tuesday, April 20th at 6:30 p.m. our fellow club will hold its last meeting until September. This is their annual Trash & Treasure Auction and represents their major funding source for the year.

Once again, Mike Simon has assembled an incredible line-up of fishing equipment, flies, guided trips, baked goods, and much more.

See all the details at their web site: www.wisconsin-smallmouth.com and plan on attending.

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Spring trout fishing in England

Globetrotting angler, Martin James, provides a look at some of his home waters

Spring trout fishing. Are those the right words, I sometimes ask myself as I arrive at the waterside with the wind a hooligan coming from the north or north east, frozen snow covers the fields, its icy cold, hands and face are blue and numb with a water temperature of 36 deg F. Not very spring-like and of course March 15th is certainly not the best time to be at the waterside trying to catch a brown trout on a fly or nymph. In fact most fish are not in the best of condition, especially if it's been a very cold winter.

Then we have some clubs stocking with trout often just a couple of days before the season starts. At dawn, the greedy fisherman will be on the water catching these innocents, more so if the club allow the use gentles or worms. I would like to see bait and spinning abolished on all trout waters. Let's make it fly only. Let's be honest, we are supposed to be anglers not fish mongers and we all know that stocked trout are stupid fish.

Bait fishers can soon clear out these innocent trout from a length of river. It's interesting to note that the more progressive clubs are stocking their waters with fingerling size fish in late summer and autumn. These fish then learn to live in a wild environment and will make for some interesting fishing in a few years.

With the season starting so early in the year, one has to expect all types of weather and water conditions. I've

been at the waterside on the first day with the rain sheeting down. A leaden grey sky touching the tree tops and a river bank-high. On one occasion it wasn't possible to reach the river because of snow and icy roads.

Those are days for chatting in a local waterside tavern and not fishing. There have been other times when the river was low and gin clear with a water temperature of 34 degrees F. Of course there have also been occasions when conditions have been good with insects coming off and a few rising fish.

I have been on the river Aire in April and seen 22-24 inch brown trout laying motionless on the bottom. It doesn't matter what you chuck to the fish, it just doesn't move. In fact it's often possible to wade out and pick these fish up.

During one early season fishing trip Alan Bithell and I were doing some river improvement work. Stopping for a break, I looked down to where we had removed some rubbish

River fishing in the north of England for brown trout officially starts on March 15th, In other areas of the UK it's April 1st, though on the chalk streams in the south of England the season commences on May 1st, however one angling club doesn't start the season until May 15th.

The Badger Fly Fishers Newsletter is published monthly. Articles, photos, information, and calendar events for the newsletter are encouraged and should be submitted by the 1st day of the month of issue to: Dan Johnson, 426 Glenway St., Madison WI 53711. If possible, Word files sent to: johnson7@tds.net are most appreciated.

and could see the tail of a good fish. Thinking it was a dead trout I bent down and picked it up. It was a live brown trout of some 3lbs. I reckon that due to the very cold water the fishes metabolism had slowed down a lot. It was either in a coma or asleep and didn't notice the disturbance we were making.

Next time you can't get a take in your favourite area. Don't think the fish have moved they might be in a coma or asleep.



This was proved again when Alan and I were fishing another local river. Alan said, "Cast up this pool Martin there's always a good fish."

I fished it hard but took nothing for my efforts. As we waded up the pool, I looked down and spotted a good trout on the bottom. Handing my rod to Alan I bent down and lifted the fish out of the water then gently put it back. As Alan had said "There's always a fish in this pool." I answered, "That might be right Alan, but if they're asleep you can't catch them."

The first day of the season in 1999 was a good one for Blackpool angler Alan Roe, fly dresser Alan Bithell of Oldham and myself. We arrived at the waterside to find conditions very spring like. We had a light south westerly wind and even the sun appeared from behind some scattered clouds now and again. This had brightened up the day considerably, with a rise in the air temperature of a degree or so.

The river had a nice flow with a water temperature of 48 degrees F. It certainly looked good for our first days Spring trout fishing.

As is usual when we arrive at the waterside, it was on with the kettle! Nothing beats a fresh mug of tea, even more so when it's followed by the drinking a toast to

Isaac and the new season with some good 10 year old Macallan whisky. As we waited for the kettle to boil, we tackled up for the day ahead; Alan

Bithell with a 4 weight outfit, Alan Roe and myself had 5 weight's. We all used double taper floating lines with long leaders. The two Alan's would be using nymphs and dry flies.

I decided to fish most of last season with dry flies. It might mean some fishless days but I was prepared for that. In fact I had an excellent season.

Among the trees and hedgerows were bunches of primroses, daffodils and a few snowdrops, in fact one hawthorn bush still had berries. Robins, blackbirds, blue tits and a flock of fieldfare could be seen hunting for food. That most beautiful of wading birds the Oyster catchers in their black and white plumage, orange beak and pink legs were flying up and down the river giv-



ing us a wonderful flying display. In fact over the years I have missed many fish through watching these birds, but who cares. In a distant field were a small skein of pink footed geese .

A moor hen called from across the river. Two others, on seeing us were running across the field to the safety of the river. Dippers were around in profusion and we must have spotted a dozen different birds in total. Some had bits of nesting material, while others could be seen looking for nymphs.

We even spotted the blue flash and heard the shrill whistle of a kingfisher. It was wonderful to be back on a river trying to catch brown trout on a dry fly. That was a good day with a few pulled strings.

What I don't understand is why so many anglers put their tackle away when the brown trout season ends on the last day of September, only returning to the waterside when the season starts

the following year.

At the many talks and slides shows I give up and down the country I meet some of the anglers who don't fish through

the autumn and winter months. When asked why they didn't fish for grayling, pike or still water trout, the usual answer given was, "I only enjoy trout fishing on rivers". Sadly these anglers haven't tried fishing for the other species of fish so they don't know what they are missing.

My sincere advice is give the other species a try. It can be great fun.

The day before the opening of the trout season on March 15th 1999, I had been on the river Ribble further downstream until 11 o'clock at night, fishing a big bit of cheese paste, catching several good chub including a five pound plus fish.

Now a few hours later I am back on another stretch of the river with a light fly rod and floating line. For me it's a full twelve months fishing with fly, lures and baits chasing fish in both fresh and saltwater and long may it continue. Though I must admit its always nice being back and trying for the brown trout.

One of the great things about early season trout fishing is, it's an after-breakfast and home-before-tea fishing session. I like to arrive at the waterside around 11 o'clock in the morning, After putting the tackle together, I will sit at the waterside looking for rising fish and hatching insects, listening to the birds and watching the wildlife, all part of being a naturalist angler.

It's so wonderful and relaxing just sitting there waiting for something to happen which will cause us to pick up our rod and go fishing. You will be surprised at what you can learn as you sit at the waterside. Often a good fish will roll, swirl or rise in a spot where you never ever expected to see a fish or ever thought of casting a fly.

For many years the "down and across" wet fly fishing with a team of spider patterns was the way to go on the northern rivers. Two fly patterns reigned supreme,

the Snipe and Purple, and Orange and Partridge.

Now, think about the presentation you get when fishing 'down and across'. First it doesn't look natural because insects don't go across the current. Yes, I know its been practised for many years but that doesn't make it right. Think about it and you will soon realise it cannot be the best way of showing a fly to a trout

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Drop a stick in the river and watch it drifts down with the current, It doesn't drift across the current. So why not fish a fly to drift the same way but cast it upstream. You will catch more fish and detect more takes once you have learnt to fish upstream then let it drift naturally down stream towards you. It's a much more natural presentation and catches more fish.

Don't take my word for it Go out and try it yourself. While we are at it. Why use two or three flies? One well presented wet fly cast upstream will out fish half a dozen flies fished the wrong way. Presentation is of utmost importance.

Fishing two or three flies has its problems. Bad presentation, tangles and knots in the leader or the droppers. You will sometimes hook a fish, then have the free hook get caught up in some obstruction then it's a lost fish. Using more than one fly also increases the chance of hooking two fish and again, the risk of breaking off as one fish goes off in the opposite direction to the other fish. You then end up losing one

or both fish, often with hooks stuck in the mouth.

Upstream nymphing is a style of fishing that causes the downfall of early season trout in cold water conditions. Trout can often be seen hugging the bottom and that's where your nymph has to be. In the past few years a lot of anglers have started fishing a style known as Czech nymphing.

To hear some anglers talk, you would think fishing heavy nymphs upstream was something new. It's not. In the United States anglers have been fishing big heavyweight nymphs for years. Often in conjunction with some split shot on the line to help get the nymphs down on the bottom. Jerry Swanson of Kaufmann Streamborn has been fishing big nymphs for thirty years. He once told me, "Heavy weight nymphs were being used before I was around."

I have been fortunate to spend a lot of time fishing several rivers in Washington State and Oregon, which has included the Deschutes river in Oregon for its magnificent reidsided rainbows. A particular winning method I discovered by accident.

I was fishing a size 12 Pheasant tail nymph or a Gold-ribbed Hare's Ear as the point fly with a very heavy lead-wrapped caddis or Stone fly on the dropper, tied in some two feet from the point fly. I would start off fishing upstream and let the flies trundle downstream. As they continued downstream I would feed line and strike at any movement of the sight indicator.

I have always maintained that we shouldn't be blinkered but keep an open mind and not use just one style of fly fishing.

To get the best out of our fishing we have to use dry flies, nymphs and wet flies to try and catch our fish. But this past season I was guilty of not taking that advice.

I spent last season fishing dry flies. Mostly just one pattern, the Paythorn olive which didn't let me down. I caught fish on the Ribble, Kennet, Hodder, Aire, Wharfe, Ure, Nidd, Teme, Dane and Teifie. It also worked on several rivers in Swedish Lapland.

I was given the Paythorn Olive by Alan Bithell a couple of years ago, It stayed in my box for a few weeks, then one evening on the Ribble I couldn't raise a fish. As I sat looking through my fly box for inspiration I thought, why not try the Paythorn Olive? It worked. I netted over a dozen nice trout.

Next time out with nothing hatching and no fish rising, I tried the fly again. I caught fish. Last season was one of my best ever river trout fishing seasons. Was it the fly? Were there more fish about? Was it the longer leaders? Was it the fluorocarbon leaders? Was I a better angler? Probably a bit of all these things but I am firmly of the opinion the fly paid a big part in the scheme of things. I am indebted to Alan Bithell for the following fly dressing details for the Paythorn Olive:

Hook: # 22 to 14 Light wire barbless. Silk: Olive or grey 0/8 Uni. thread Tail: Blue dun cock hackle fibers tied a little shorter and sparser than for a standard dry fly. Body: Medium dark olive Polly dubbing or fine natural dubbing (dye rabbit or hare body). Dubbed over the rear 2/3 of the hook shank. Wing: Grey or cream antron yarn (e.g. B.T.'s dry fly winging yarn). Tied as an up-

right post. Hackle: Iron blue Hoffman saddle hackle. Wound quite dense over the front 1/3 of the hook shank and trimmed flat underneath.

Start with the wing when dressing this fly. Figure of eight the wing to the top of the hook shank about 1/4 of the hook shank length back from the eye, then take one complete turn of silk around the hook shank. Now grasp the ends of the yarn and twist it round the shank so that it is now tied in under the shank. Gather up the yarn to either side of the shank and take several turns of silk around the base of the wing to secure it in an upright position.

Also, make several wraps of silk around the shank going from front to back and back to front of the wing root to stop the wing spinning round the shank. Continue with the silk to the start of the bend and tie in the tail. Dub the body forward to just behind the wing. Prepare and tie in the hackle. Take the silk forward to just behind the eye and wind the hackle behind and in front of the wing. Secure the hackle and trim off the excess.

Form the head, whip finish and trim out the hackle fibers from under the hook shank. This is a very simple fly to dress which sits lower than a traditional dry fly but slightly higher than a parachute fly. This, I believe, is the reason for the success that we have both had with the pattern. By varying the colour of hackle body and wing a whole range of dry flies can be dressed.

For further reading I would recommend *Trout Fishing In Rivers* by Malcolm Greenhalgh, Witherby publishers. It's certainly

the best book on the subject for northern fishers [in the UK.]

Martin James is an international salt and freshwater angler, consultant, writer, author, broadcaster and TV contributor.

Martin caught his first fish in 1941 during a German bomber raid on his home county of Kent. As the Hurricanes and Spitfires attempted to shoot down the invaders, this 4 year old angler was content to fish for the small stunted rudd in a Kentish clay pit.

Martin's favourite country is the United States. As he writes in his autobiography Up Against It, "I will never forget the friendship of the American servicemen who stayed in my house during the war years". If he couldn't be English, he would want to be an American.

Martin's work has taken him to many places throughout the world including the Middle East, Europe (he loves Swedish Lapland), North and South America, Mexico, Bahamas, the Amazon river, it's tributaries and jungle lakes of Brazil, Columbia, Peru Ecuador and Venezuela - some of this work being extremely dangerous at times.

He has spent a lot of time in Canada, a place he loves for its wilderness and the wildlife, especially some of the more northerly part of the country up towards the Arctic circle. Martin donates all his writing fees and speaking engagements to various charities and habitat work.

You can read more of his articles at fishing.co.uk. He also has his own website: www.martinjamesfishing.co.uk

In addition Martin has a radio program which can be heard at www.bbc.co.uk/lancashire

Next Meeting:

Monday,
April 26th

Bill Fladers on how he goes about setting fly fishing world records.



Events Calendar

April 12th **DNR and Conservation Congress
Spring Hearings**

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/nrboard/congress/spring%5Fhearings>

April 20th **WSA Monthly Meeting**
Mapletree Restaurant, McFarland 6:30 P.M.
Trash & Treasure Auction

<http://www.wisconsin-smallmouth.com/>

April 26th **BFF Monthly Meeting**
Mapletree Restaurant, McFarland 7:00 P.M.
See above

May 24th **BFF Monthly Meeting**
Mapletree Restaurant, McFarland 7:00 P.M.
Craig Amaker from Fontana Sports

BFF meetings are normally held the fourth Monday of the month. Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance meetings are the third Tuesday.