



# **Kapiti Fly Fishing Club**

## **August 2021 Newsletter**

**This month's cover photo:** This photo was taken from the Major Jones swing bridge of the Tongariro River.

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### Club activities

Date	Event	Coordinator
Monday 23 August	KFFC Club night Fishing the Manawatu River – guest speakers Dan Brizzle and Hamish McDonald	Malcolm
Monday 13 September	Fly Tying workshop venue WBC	Gordon
Dates TBC	Turangi area	Michael
Friday 1 October	Opening day	
Monday 11 October	Fly Tying workshop venue WBC	Malcolm
Sunday 17 October	McWilliams Shield – Waikanae River	Malcolm
Monday 25 October	Club night – Fishing out local rivers	Malcolm

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*You are invited to the next KFFC Club Night on Monday 23 August our Guest speakers are Dan Brizzle and Hamish McDonald will share with members their experience and techniques of fishing the various areas of the Manawatu River*

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## *Presidents report*

Well, I have my bag packed and all my fly-fishing gear sorted and ready to go on the Tukituki trip and low and behold we headed into a Covid Lockdown and here was thinking that this kind of event was from the past, dam.

Well, I hope all our members and their families are safe and well, we have to accept that this is the new normal in our day-to-day lives and let's hope we can return back to Level 1 sooner rather than later.

At the last Wellington Fish and Game Council meeting we were advised that the Minister had agreed to proceed as normal with the Fish and Game Council Elections which are held every three years. This will then provide the Government the opportunity to implement the various legislation changes that need to be made prior to any changes to the way Fish and Game is structured and managed. One very strong message that has been formal been stated to Government is that any proposed structure changes must provide the Licence Holders with the majority of say/input on what happens within Fish and Game and its Regional Councils.

All this wet weather has been good for our local rivers, but I am aware that the Central North Island desperately needs more rain and snow, the level of Lake Taupo is very low which is influencing the spawning runs of the Rainbow trout. I hope to be heading in that direction early next month so that I can try out some of the Intruder flies that I have been tying in my spare time.

Over the past few weeks various members of our club have headed to the Manawatu River for a day's fishing and have experienced some great trout fishing, if you would like to learn about the Manawatu and where to fish, then you need to come along to this months meeting. Dan Brizzel has fished the Manawatu River for many years and knows the river really well and with his 'Fishing Buddy' Hamish McDonald they are going to share a few of their secrets on where and how to fish the different parts of the river. This will be a very interesting meeting and one not to miss.

Greg is in the process of sending out all the new numbered Membership Cards to all our financial members, if you have forgotten to pay your subscription you still have the opportunity to do so by depositing your \$38.00 into the clubs bank account.

Our Bank Account number is 03-1531-0042482-00 Please use you Initial and Surname as the reference, if you have any problems, please let me or Andrew Li know.

There are two major benefits gained from being a member of the Kapiti Fly Fishing Club, one is the 10% discount the Hinting and Fishing in Otaki and Sporting Life in Turangi offer members. Plus, we are now an Affiliated members of the Waikanae Boating Club where you can enjoy a meal in the restaurant and a drink, all you have to do is ring in and book a table, you will need to provide your membership number. A big thank you to Cathie and Nick Weldon who initiated setting up the excellent relationship with the WBC and the use of their venue for our Committee Meetings and Fly-Tying workshops.

Look forward to seeing you on Monday night, fingers crossed. Take care, warm regards Malcolm

## *Fly Casting Tuition by Gordon Baker*

Club member Gordon Baker is available for one-on-one casting tuition. Gordon is a casting instructor with Flyfishers International (USA). He is available to help beginners get off to a good start and to assist more experienced members improve their distance casting skills. Although not yet an approved two-handed casting instructor Gordon is a keen learner willing to share new skills.

Email Gordon [kiwiflyfisher@gmail.com](mailto:kiwiflyfisher@gmail.com) or phone 0274946487 to arrange a suitable time for a lesson. There is no charge.

## *Mid-Week Fishing trips by Hugh*

For those members who are lucky enough to be able to fish mid-week during the forthcoming season please confirm your desire to be included in the mid-week fishers email list to:

[hugh.driver.nz@gmail.com](mailto:hugh.driver.nz@gmail.com)

The emails are often sent out only giving very short notice to take advantage of the prevailing conditions and members availability, as an example the afternoon of day before the proposed trip.

**If you are interested in participating on any mid-week fishing trips please email Hugh Driver with your contact details and you will be added to the email list.**

## *KFFC Covid-19 Strategy by Malcolm Francis*

At our last Management Committee meeting it was agreed that in the event that New Zealand Covid Response level moves from Level 1, all KFFC club activities will be suspended until the Covid-19 Alert Level returns to 1 or less.

### **This will affect:**

- **club monthly meetings,**
- **any organised club trips,**
- **Monthly fly-tying workshops,**
- **any other club activity that involves a group of members.**

This action is to support and protect the health and wellbeing of club members and their whanau.

## *Fly Pattern of the Month – Grey Ghost by Gordon Baker*

### **Pheasant Tail Nymph (PTN)**



This is one of the great nymph patterns, designed to imitate mayfly nymphs they can, in different sizes suggest other aquatic insects like stoneflies, damselflies, caddis and midges.

This is an easy to tie pattern and should be in every fly-box in a range of sizes and variations.

Hook	TMC 3769 or 3761 size 10-18
Thread	Black Danville 6/0
Rib	Copper wire
Body	Pheasant tail fibres
Thorax	Copper wire (as above example), peacock herl or hares fur dubbing
Wing case	Pheasant tail or pearl flashabou

**Please note** that the next flytying meeting will be at the Waikanae Boating Club at 7.30pm **Monday 13<sup>th</sup> September**. Please bring your club membership card. If you haven't received yours yet you may do so at either the club or fly tying meeting.

Feather Merchants (NZ) sponsor our fly-tying group. Go to their website [www.flyshop.co.nz](http://www.flyshop.co.nz) to see their wide range of top-quality tying materials, tools and flyfishing accessories.



## ***Kapiti Women on the Fly by Leigh Johnson***

Over the past month, four female club members improved their casting and corrected some poor habits at a casting class on Wednesday 28th August at Harautai Park in Otaki.

Many thanks to our resident coach, Gordon Baker, for excellent guidance and the support of Greg de Bern and Nick Weldon.

After the class, Ruth McKenzie, Jenny Tracey, Cathie Weldon, and Leigh Johnson retired to the local cafe for lunch to get to know each other and discuss what we would do at our next event. We agreed to get on the Otaki River to learn more about reading water and line control.

If you have a mother, sister, partner, daughter, or boss who is curious about fly fishing, please bring them to a club meeting or contact me directly at [leigh@leighjohnsonnz.com](mailto:leigh@leighjohnsonnz.com).

## ***Fish Eyesight: Does Colour Matter? by David Ross***

### IS COLOR IMPORTANT?

This is a serious question for fly tiers and fly fishermen to ask. Some anglers maintain that the choice of colour is critical, while others say it is not important.

Scientifically speaking, there is evidence to suggest that both points of view may be correct. There is good evidence that picking the appropriate colour or colours will, under certain conditions, improve your chances of attracting fish, but science can also show that in other situations, the colour of your fly is of limited value or no importance whatsoever.



Fish have been around for more than 450 million years and are remarkable creatures. Over the thousands of centuries, they have made many superb adaptations to survive in the marine environment. Living in the world of water is not easy, but it does present some environmental opportunities as well as serious challenges.

Sound, for example, travels almost five times faster and much better in water than it does in air. The ocean is actually a very noisy place. Fish capitalize on this by having an excellent sense of hearing, using both their inner ears and lateral lines to detect prey or avoid enemies.

Water also contains unique chemical compounds that fish utilize to identify other members of their species, tell when reproduction time has arrived, find food, detect predators, and perform other functions. Fish have evolved a remarkable sense of smell that is thought to be about one million times better than that of humans.

Water, however, presents a serious challenge for fish and fishermen when it comes to vision and colour. Many characteristics of light quickly change as it moves through water. The first thing to realize is that the colour of your fly in the water is almost always different from what it is in the air. I have to be a little technical to explain this, but I think if you bear with me, you'll have a better understanding of how fish perceive colour and how this impacts the flies we tie and use. And while I mostly refer to fish and fishing in salt water, these same principles apply to the freshwater environment.

### **Attenuation of Light**

The light that humans see is just a small part of the total electromagnetic radiation that is received from the sun. We see what is called the visible spectrum. The actual colours within the visible spectrum are determined by the wavelengths of the light: the longer wavelengths are red and orange; the shorter wavelengths are green, blue, and violet. Many fish, however, can see colours that we do not, including ultraviolet.

When light enters water, its intensity quickly decreases and its colour changes. These changes are called attenuation. Attenuation is the result of two processes: scattering and absorption. The scattering of light is caused by particles or other small objects suspended in the water — the more the particles, the more the scattering. The scattering of light in water is somewhat similar to the effect of smoke or fog in the atmosphere. Coastal waters generally have more suspended material due to river input, material stirred up from the bottom, and increased plankton. Because of this greater amount of suspended material, light usually penetrates to a lesser depth. In relatively clear offshore water, light penetrates to a greater depth.

Light absorption is caused by several things, such as the light being converted into heat or used in chemical reactions such as photosynthesis. The most important aspect for fishing is the influence of the water itself on the absorption of light. The amount of absorption is different for different wavelengths of light; in other words, various colours are absorbed differently. The longer wavelengths, such as red and orange, are absorbed very quickly and penetrate into the water to a much shallower depth than the shorter blue and violet wavelengths.

Absorption also restricts how far light penetrates into the water. At about three meters (about 10 feet), roughly 60 percent of the total light (sunlight or moonlight) and almost all the red light will be absorbed. At 10 meters (about 33 feet), about 85 percent of the total light and all the red, orange, and yellow light have been absorbed. This has a direct bearing on how a fish perceives a fly. At a depth of 10 feet, a red fly appears grey, and it eventually appears black as the depth increases. With the increasing depth, the now dimming light becomes bluish and eventually black when all the other colours are absorbed.

The absorption or filtering out of colour also works in a horizontal direction. So again, a red fly that is only a few feet from a fish appears grey. Similarly, other colours also change with distance. For

a colour to be seen, it must be hit by light of the same colour and then reflected in the direction of the fish. If the water has already attenuated or filtered out) a colour, that colour will appear grey or black. (Fluorescent colours, which I will come to shortly, behave a little differently.)

It should now be clear how the depth of the water or distance from a fish affects the visibility of your fly. In extremely shallow and very clear water, colours may look similar to their appearance in the air; as your fly gets just three feet deep or three feet away from a fish — or less if the water has limited clarity — the colours will start to change, often with surprising results.

### **What do fish see?**

Scientists really do not know exactly what fish see, or in other words, what images reach their brains. Most research on the vision of fish is done either by physical or chemical examination of different parts of their eyes or by determining how laboratory fish respond to various images or stimuli. Making broad generalizations about a fish's vision is complicated by the fact that different species may have different vision capabilities and that laboratory results may not represent what happens in the real world of an ocean, lake, or river.

Physical studies of the eyes and retinas of fish show that the majority can obtain a clearly focused image, detect motion, and have good contrast-detection ability. A limited number of experiments have shown that a minimum level of light is necessary before a fish can recognize colours. Another finding, but one that needs more study, is that some fish favour a specific colour. This point may contradict or affirm your own fishing experiences but remember that the attractiveness of your fly is a combination of many things, including its motion, shape, and colour, as well as the scents in and depth of the water.

Most fish have an adequate sense of vision, but this is usually not so impressive as their sense of smell and ability to detect vibrations through their lateral lines. Fish usually use their sense of hearing or smell to initially perceive their prey, and then use their vision only in the final attack. Most fish can see in low-light conditions or dirty water, and a few can see objects over moderately long distances. Fish such as tuna have especially good vision, others less so. Fish are usually near-sighted, although it is believed that sharks are farsighted.

The majority of fish have developed eyes that will detect the type of colours typical of their environment. For example, inshore fish have good colour vision, whereas offshore pelagic fish have limited colour vision and detect only a few if any colours other than black and white. This is not surprising from an evolutionary point of view, because nearshore waters are lit with many colours; offshore waters, on the other hand, are mainly blue or green and contain few other colours.

The actual ability of a specific colour to attract or even repel fish has fascinated both anglers and scientists. While there are no uniform answers, scientists have conducted experiments on this interesting question. For example, studies of sticklebacks during their spawning season have shown that males, which then have bright red colouring on their bellies, become very aggressive to decoys that also have bright red bellies. Similarly, decoys with extended bellies, which look like females carrying eggs, attract the males. But it isn't that simple: it wasn't just the case of a perfect decoy imitation, but rather the colour or shape of the decoy. In addition, it was noted that a passing red car, seen from the fish tank, also excited male sticklebacks.



## Colour suggestions

This is perhaps the most important point to remember: Most gamefish detect their prey by seeing the contrast of the forage against various coloured backgrounds. The level or type of contrast depends upon many factors: time of day, type of bottom, transparency of the water, whether it is cloudy or sunny, and perhaps even the time of year. I wish I could be more specific, but such scientific information is not available. The best I can do is provide some general suggestions and information; determining the right colour or colour combinations will take a lot of fishing and experimenting under various conditions. Keep these ideas in mind the next time you tie or select flies.

- Try to consider what the colours in your fly will look like at the depth you are fishing and chose appropriately. For example, since red is the first and blue is the last colour absorbed, it makes more sense to use a blue fly when fishing deep.
- If you are trying to match a particular bait, the colour of your fly should match the colour of the bait for the depth you are fishing. In other words, try to match the underwater colour rather than the colour of the bait in air.
- Many fish feed by looking up toward the surface of the water. In doing so, however, they have difficulty distinguishing specific colours, and the contrast of the prey against the surface becomes more important. When a feeding fish is looking up, a dark silhouette, even against a dark night sky, provides the maximum contrast and is attractive to predators. Selecting a fly based on contrast, rather than on specific colours, is often the key to enticing a fish to strike.
- Black is the least transparent colour and gives the best silhouette at night. Black is probably the most visible colour under most conditions.
- If your fly has two or more colours, the darker colour should be over the lighter colours. Almost all baitfish have this colour arrangement, and dark over light usually produces good contrast.
- Different coloured flies may be equally effective or ineffective simply because they are similar in colour at the depth the fish see them.
- If you are fishing your fly in deep water, the motion and any noise or disturbance it makes might be much more important than its colour.
- Increase the contrast of the fly if the water is dirty; decrease the contrast if it is clear.
- A good profile is important when vision conditions are low (night-time or dirty water). Black and red flies offer good profiles.

- Some colours, such as chartreuse, always seem to work better than other colours. Yellow-and-white and chartreuse-and-white are also favourite pairings. Red and white, which provide good contrast under many conditions, is a popular combination for many anglers.

### **Understanding Polarized light**

Recent research shows that many fish sense polarized light. Humans do not have the ability to separate polarized from regular light. Regular light vibrates in all directions perpendicular to its direction of travel; polarized light, however, vibrates only in one plane. When light is reflected off many non-metallic surfaces, including the ocean surface, it is polarized to some degree. This explains how polarizing sunglasses work: they block out the horizontally reflected polarized component of light from the ocean surface which causes most of the glare but permit the vertically reflected component to pass through.

It is not fully understood why some fish have the ability to sense polarized light, but there are interesting possibilities. Being able to detect polarized light might help fish in their migrations and ability to swim closely with others of the same species.

The ability to sense polarized light must certainly be related to the fact that when light is reflected off surfaces, like the scales on a baitfish, it is polarized. Fish that can detect polarized light have an advantage in finding food. Polarizing vision can also enhance the contrast between almost transparent prey and the background, making the prey easier to see. Another conjecture is that having polarizing vision can let fish see objects that are farther away — perhaps three times the distance — as fish without this ability. If this speculation is correct, it may answer the question why some fish can feed under very low-light conditions. And there is more polarized light at dawn and dusk, which might explain why some fish, such as striped bass, seem to feed more aggressively at these times of the day.

If the ability to sense polarized light helps fish to find food, then it follows that flies that reflect polarized light should be more attractive to such fish. Some natural fly-tying materials, such as polar bear fur, are especially good reflectors of polarized light. Bucktail, on the other hand, is a relatively poor reflector of polarized light. There are artificial materials that simulate fish scales and various tinsels that claim to be excellent reflectors of polarized light. Flies with irregular surfaces may reflect more polarized light than smooth flies. I suspect that in the coming years, as we learn more, there will be an increased use of polarizing materials in flies and lures.

### **Fluorescent Colours Increase visibility**

Fluorescent colours, especially chartreuse, are very popular with saltwater fly fishermen. I almost always start fishing with a chartreuse Half & Half, even if it's just to see if there are any fish in the area. Under the right conditions, fluorescent colours, which are not naturally found in nature, can be very visible under water and seen for considerable distances.

A fluorescent colour is one that will be bright when exposed to light having a shorter wavelength. For example, fluorescent yellow appears as bright yellow when exposed to ultra-violet, blue, or green light. Alternatively, fluorescent yellow does not appear yellow when struck by red light that has a longer wavelength. Because of this unique characteristic of fluorescent colours, they do not have as dramatic a change of colour when they are fished deeper.

The fluorescence of fluorescent colours is mainly due to ultraviolet (UV) light, a colour that is invisible to us. Humans cannot see UV light, but we can see how it brings out the fluorescence in certain colours. Ultraviolet light is especially dominant on cloudy or grey days, and when UV light hits something having fluorescent material, its colour becomes especially visible and vibrant. On bright sunlit days, the fluorescent effect is considerably less, and of course if there is no light, there will be no fluorescence.

Research shows that fluorescent colours are visible and distinct for longer distances than regular colours, and that a fly with fluorescent materials often attracts fish. To be more precise, a fluorescent colour having a slightly longer wavelength than the colour of the water has better long-distance visibility. For example, in greenish waters, the brightest colours would be fluorescent green or chartreuse.

As good as fluorescent colours may be, they will usually not work if the fish are actively feeding on a specific bait, since it is highly improbable that the fluorescent colour will resemble any colour in that bait.

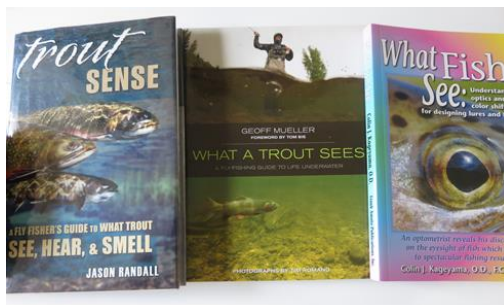
As you can see, light and colour can get pretty complicated. But let's not forget what we are trying to do: have our flies imitate pieces of fish food. Fish are not very clever, and they attack prey — or flies — as an instinctive behaviour motivated (or so we think) by one or more stimuli. These stimuli include movement, shape, sound, contrast, smell, colour, presentation, and certainly other things unknown to us.

Successful flies should probably include some of these stimuli, and then we need to consider other variables such as the time of day, the tide, and the presence of other fish or fishermen. This is a complicated venture, of which colour can sometimes be an important aspect, but only if the fish can see the colour.

**Editor's note:** *I have always enjoyed reading articles and books on trout fishing and fly tying, I have spent time exploring the subject of how trout see and what colours are more effective and why, if you are interested in learning more, I would recommend the following books:*

- *What a Trout Sees* by Geoff Mueller
- *Trout Sense* by Jason Randall
- *What a Fish See* by Colin Kageyama

*All three of these books sit in my collection and have influenced my approach to tying flies and colour choice when out on the river fishing.*



## *Stay dry – Fishing on top during uncertain times by Todd Tanner*



I'll turn 60 later this spring and I've noticed a truth that seems to reveal itself over the course of a lifetime. It's called "change."

As the years have passed by, I've seen rivers reshape their banks, saplings turn into trees, and new houses spring up where I've never seen houses before. At the same time, my friends and family have grown older, my son has shot up like a weed, human technology has advanced, and my daily activities and routines have evolved. It's just the way things are. As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus once pointed out, "the only constant in life is change."

These overt transformations occur all around us, sometimes via incremental little shifts and sometimes, as we've seen recently, with a suddenness that catches us by surprise. Almost always, though, the scale is so vast that it's hard for us to fathom. The sheer volume of change can leave us unmoored, and that's especially true for those of us who value heritage and tradition above convenience and expediency.

We know that a certain amount of change is baked into reality. Nature follows its own immutable rhythms and people will always be tethered to the natural world. In spite of that, I'm not sure that humans were meant to walk through life with the ground shifting so quickly under our feet. You don't have to follow the news of the day to notice that life seems to be spinning faster and faster all around us.

I grew up back in the '60s in a home with a single rotary phone mounted to the kitchen wall. Now my son, who is in high school, has an iPhone that's more powerful than the NASA computers that guided Apollo 11 to the moon. That's pretty crazy stuff.

I'm also blown away that most of us were still using traditional cameras and dropping off our film for development a mere 15 years ago. Now I open up my computer or pick up my phone and see pictures of the fish my friend just landed on the other side of the planet. Technology is advancing at a pace I never could have envisioned when I was younger.

I'll leave it to you to decide whether the convenience of saying, "Siri, call Mackenzie River Pizza in Kalispell," or "Alexa, turn on the television," outweighs the obvious downsides. Personally, I'm not a big fan of kids who can't pry themselves away from their mobile phones, or people who

spend more time playing video games than interacting with friends and family. That said, there are certainly an awful lot of folks who have embraced our social and technological changes with gusto.

The single biggest shift I've noticed with fly fishing might actually surprise some of you. From where I sit, it's not so much a change in gear, or tactics, or techniques — or the struggles we're all currently facing from the pandemic — as it is a change in attitude.

I bumped into an old friend last autumn on the Henry's Fork and he got right to the heart of things. Dry fly fishing, he explained, used to be the pinnacle of our sport, and the men and women who played the dry fly game were celebrated in the fly-fishing media and in fly fishing culture. John Gierach made that same point back in the '80s when he wrote that he and his fishing partner invariably preferred dry fly fishing, and that a twelve-inch trout caught on a dry fly was four inches longer than a twelve-inch trout caught on a nymph or a streamer.

It's obvious that Gierach had his tongue planted firmly in his cheek when he penned *The View from Rat Lake*, but you still can't argue with his observation. Most fly fishers did focus on dry flies, and many went so far as to place dry fly angling on a pedestal. And you can see why. Casting a dry fly is way, way more enjoyable than lobbing nymphs or chucking streamers, and there's something absolutely wonderful about having the totality of the angling experience play out right in front of you. Who doesn't love watching a large trout sip mayflies from the surface, and who doesn't feel a thrill when that same fish tilts up under your imitation?

Yet as Bob Dylan pointed out, the times they are a changing. Many fly fishers no longer focus on dry flies, or even on trout. You're as likely to hear about folks stalking the flats for bonefish or permit, or chasing bass, or pike, or carp, or muskie, as you are to run across a true-blue trout fisherman extolling the virtues of a well-placed Harrop Last Chance Cripple on his or her local trout stream. And when you do bump into trout aficionados, chances are good that they'll be talking about their favourite strike indicators or discussing their favourite glow bug patterns or woolly bugger variations.

Honestly, that's okay. Maybe a lot of those folks will never learn how to cast well enough to present a dry fly, and maybe they'll never really understand the excitement we feel when we stalk an oversized Henry's Fork rainbow or a big Beaverkill brown, but it's okay for fly fishing to mean different things to different people. As long as we're all out there having fun, then there's absolutely no reason we have to look at the sport the same way.

I should also mention that these shifts to the fly-fishing culture afford certain benefits to those of us who view our angling through a more traditional lens. When I started traveling to great rivers like the Missouri and the Madison, the vast majority of my fellow anglers were fishing dry flies. Now the folks who aren't off chasing bass or bonefish are typically lobbing nymphs under a strike indicator, and the rising trout I love to target don't have nearly as much pressure.

It's true. Sometimes change can be a good thing.

## *Tips for nymphing with tiny flies by Domenick Swentosky*



### ***Big fish eat tiny flies***

I'd rather fish larger nymphs, but there's a corner of my fly box dedicated to flies that imitate tiny critters too. And trout seem to ask for them often enough.

Fishing extra-small nymphs is a little different than fishing the standard fare, and for many anglers it's hard to have confidence in them. But a few refinements in tackle, rigging and onstream approach can help make the most of the itty-bittys.

### **What's tiny, anyway?**

In my corner of the earth (Central Pennsylvania), a #18 nymph is small, a #20 is really small, and a #22 is as small as I ever need to go under the water.

I know that nymphs of even smaller sizes are a staple in some tailwaters. So while fishing a true tailwater, and in a few other situations, you may need to go smaller. Nevertheless, no matter how small the nymph must be, some things change when you're nymphing with a #18 and smaller.

Let's talk about that.

### **Why we don't fish them**

Something in the average angler's instinct suggests that trout want something bigger to eat. A #20 nymph seems too insignificant. How will some trout ever find it? How will it stand out in the drift enough to grab a trout's attention?

We also like larger patterns because they're easier to tie on. And because larger patterns can hold some built-in weight, with beadheads and lead wraps, we can often fish them without adding split shot to the leader.

Furthermore, the hook-up rate for smaller flies can be poor. It's simply harder to stick and land trout on tiny hooks.

### **Why we should fish them**

Honestly, I fish tiny nymphs because I have to. I fish them when trout won't have it any other way. Going smaller, going tiny, has turned bad days to good more times than I care to count. And those times are unpredictable. It's often said that winter is primetime for tiny nymphs, and that can be

true. But I find days and situations in all seasons where catching trout requires me to downsize. Sometimes tiny nymphs are just what our trout are most willing to eat, and there's no way around it.

Here's another thing to consider tiny nymphs are often the most natural flies in our box. The next time you're enjoying a beer and sitting on a streamside log (you should do that often) reach down and pick up a couple hand-size rocks from the riffles. You'll find that sizes #18 and smaller are the most common wiggly things making a home on the bottom of a river. Midges, caddis, mayflies, and stoneflies — even large nymphs were once small, right? They all start from eggs and grow larger. The point is, there's a lot of tiny stuff down there, and trout know it.

### **Hooks and patterns**

The smaller the fly, the more difficult it can be to get a solid hook-up. And while releasing a trout, we might find our #22 hook precariously grasping the slightest bit of trout skin in or around the mouth. I like to use hooks with wide gaps to compensate.

I use scud hooks for many of my small patterns. A #18, 2X- short scud hook gives me the length of a #20 and the hook gap of a #16. That helps the hook-up rate tremendously.



***The WD-40***

These are some of my favourite patterns for going tiny: Zebra Midge, WD40, Rainbow Warrior and Dorsey's Top Secret Midge. All of these I tie on scud hooks.

I also fish a lot of RS2's as nymphs, and I like simple Pheasant Tails down to a #20. Both of these I prefer on straight hooks with extra wide gaps.

### **Tippet size and type**

I generally nymph with 4X or 5X fluorocarbon. But those line diameters are too thick for tiny nymphs. Sure, I can get the tippet through the eye, but that's not the problem. The trouble is how much 4X limits the movement of a tiny fly. The line is too stiff for the nymph — it can seem like it's attached to a steel cable.

So, I usually fish tiny nymphs on 6X fluorocarbon. That's usually good enough, although on the tiniest nymphs I sometimes switch to 6X nylon, just for the extra flexibility. Softer nylon permits more movement from the nymph.

### **Weight**

Importantly, tiny nymphs need something else to pull them down to the bottom. You can't add enough lead or tungsten to a #20 hook to effectively get to the bottom of a river. That leaves two

options: pair the tiny nymph with a larger weighted nymph or use split shot. Either will work, and there are advantages to both. Let's think about that for a minute.

I do best with tiny nymphs fished near the surface or near the bottom. Rarely do I fish them in the middle of the water column.

For the surface, I add a nymph as the dropper for a dry fly, perhaps 12-24 inches behind the dry. Adding a tiny nymph hardly affects the action or the casting of the dry, and it's a great addition. At times, I add a micro split shot 4 inches in front of the nymph, just to help it break the surface and get down into the water column a bit more. Of course, adding any weight to the rig will affect the drift of the dry, but sometimes that's okay.

I most often fish tiny nymphs near the bottom. Occasionally, I rig up two extra-small nymphs with split shot between them, but I prefer fishing a tiny nymph in tandem with a second, larger fly. And my favourite way to set that up is the Burke Rig.

### **The Burke Rig**

I know that lots of anglers, authors and guides promote similar setups, but fishing with Pat Burke is where I first saw the effectiveness of this simple solution for nymphing with tiny flies. It's a great idea with a few nuances.

The Burke Rig is a tiny nymph trailed behind something large or brightly coloured. Simple, right? Attract their attention with something big or unusual, and then show them something tiny, something safe, and something they're used to eating.

I like to pair a stonefly with a Zebra midge, or I might pair a junk fly, like a Squirmy Wormy, with a WD40.

Let's address a few intricacies. The parent fly can be weighted (a tungsten beadhead stonefly is a good choice), or it can be unweighted. If no weight is built into the fly, then split shot should be placed about five inches in front of the parent fly, not behind it — not between the nymphs.

The trailer line is tied off the bend of the parent fly (or as a second line from the eye of the parent). We don't use a tag dropper here, because we want the tiny nymph to track directly behind the parent fly.

The trailer line should be 10-18 inches. I usually opt for something about a foot long. Again, the idea is to keep the tiny nymph close to the parent. Build interest with a large or bright fly, and then seal the deal with something natural. Fish on.

The Burke Rig is about trailing tiny nymphs behind larger ones. You can, of course, trail a #16 Beadhead Pheasant Tail behind a #10 stonefly; it works, but that's not the Burke Rig. Stick with tiny, unweighted nymphs.

Sometimes, delivering tiny nymphs to the trout is the only way they'll eat. And you can fish those nymphs with confidence by making a few adjustments in your rig and presentation.

**Editor's note: I will often use size 16 and 18 nymphs in our local rivers, to help get the small flies down to where the trout are sitting, I will use a very small swivel.**



## ***Fishing with my mate George! A contribution by George Mismirigo***

Looking back over the years on the subject of my good mate George, to the time when we first met, it was one of those times that might never have been, had I not decided to follow a request and make a simple phone call!

**Austin Fraser**, a long-standing friend of George's from the north island, sent me an email early in 2005. That contact told me that his friend George was fishing somewhere in the central South Island for a few months and asked me to meet up with him, if I should have the time and opportunity. In his email, Austin described George as a slightly unusual character and said he was a bit of a loner. I was also asked to report back to Austin and let him know that his friend was doing OK, so I concluded from that request Austin cared about his friend.

That said, then I don't consider George to be anything more unusual than anyone else I have met in my life. He grumbles about the cost of things, he doesn't like the cold, or too much heat or rain, just like everyone else. He may be slightly obsessive and compulsive in his ways and lifestyle, but so are most people for that matter who are over 65 years of age. Our friendship has endured for whatever reasons, and I sincerely hope that our grumbles and laughter will continue to be shared between us both over many more years to come!



**The two of us at our first meeting in March 2005 by the Pylons at Lake Aviemore, near Otematata.**

Fast forward now to late 2019 as I put these words together and realise that what started out as a one-off chance meeting of a stranger, has grown into a close friendship that spans over 15yrs. During that time, we have shared many enjoyable moments together, not just in fishing, but socially too. We have clocked up hundreds of hours together over the years and I think one of the attributing factors to the longevity of our friendship is the common bond we both share of, living with chemical poisoning! For George it was the clock and watch cleaning solvents he was exposed to during his career as a clockmaker and for me it was the solvents used in the printing trade.

Consequently, we are both very much aware of just how valuable our health is and the precautions we have to take to remain stable, is totally understood by each of us!

As an insight into our time and many humorous hours of camaraderie since 2005, a compilation of stories now follow that George has featured in, taken from a number of articles I have written for the NZ Troutfisher magazine.

### ***A Little Northern Exposure!***

Some species of birds and mammals migrate annually north for the winter. This year I headed north too, although only briefly for five days. I had to be in Havelock North over a weekend and when my new fishing friend George Mismirigo found out, he suggested that I should spend a few more dollars and join him in Turangi, to fish the mighty Tongariro River for a couple of days. When an offer like this comes along, any keen fisher person would find it very hard to refuse.

So, after thinking about it for all of two seconds, I jumped at the opportunity and accepted George's kind offer to collect my baggage and myself at Taupo airport and I was warned, not to forget my waders! Another phone call from George three days later, informed me that I would be more comfortable and much better looked after at a small private Bed & Breakfast house that he had found.

The following two weeks before my trip, should have allowed me plenty of time to get everything together, but as nearly always happens, time seems to speed up the week before you leave home. I lost count of how many times I checked the weight of my baggage and went through my fishing vest, just to make certain that I had not left anything out. By the time I arrived at the airport, my flight details were falling apart through my repeatedly folding and unfolding them, after rechecking times, gates, and seats, being just a tad nervous about flying.

Due to ill health, I had not flown for over five years, and it came, as somewhat of a surprise to find that most of what I had tucked away in my belly bag and tool belt could not be taken onto the plane with me. After recovering from the embarrassment of having to strip down from my anorak, polar fleece jacket and two jerseys, so that the security guard, who was the size of King Kong, could be doubly sure that I was not carrying anymore multi tools, hook disgorgers, hand grenades or missile launchers up my sleeves, I was allowed on the plane to Wellington. It took me almost the entire flight to settle down again after my security/frisking experience and to return most of my belongings back to my pockets.

Sadly, even when traveling internally now, not even this small, isolated country of ours can escape the legacy of 9/11.

All the rigors and worries of travel quickly faded away as George greeted me with a broad grin and a friendly handshake just a few moments after landing at Taupo and I was much more comfortable from then on. Having a friend on the spot with local knowledge and experience is in my opinion much better than any guidebook or topo map, no matter how good they are.

We stopped off and had a look at some of the more readily accessible fishing spots on the way to Turangi. Then it was decided to take me to my lodgings and drop off my gear. The sign

outside the house reads, “Do Drop In” and I am pleased that I did. It is only a stone’s throw from the Turangi motor camp and George was certainly right about being looked after. I gave him 10/10 for booking me in for my stay, Cathy and Ray were my hosts, and I was given the most wonderful breakfast to start out each morning. A packed lunch on my first day was not eaten until mid-afternoon and after that, my drink bottle and a Moro bar was all I carried with me.

I was out walking the neighbourhood before breakfast on my first morning, keen not to miss out on anything. At one of the local tackle shops the evening before; I had been given a DoC map of the river. As one might expect, all the river pools are mentioned, but not one of the street names for the township are, so I was able to blame this minor hitch for my taking a wrong turn and getting lost. Two early morning walkers pointed me in the right direction and just before dawn, I stood in the middle of the Major Jones swing bridge. Looking down river I counted eleven headlights or torches, indicating the presence of at least the same number of hardy souls already in the water.

As daylight grew and visibility improved, I had to look again in sheer disbelief at where some of the more foolish souls, in my opinion were standing. Not just waist deep, but some had water almost up to their armpits. This was definitely not going to be happening to this guy, on this river, no matter how good the fish are supposed to be! It was easy to see that fishing plays a major part and has an influence on the economy of the area. Turangi, although small in population has more fishing tackle shops than my hometown of Dunedin.

Just before the Major Jones swing bridge, I stood and admired a large dry fly the size of a small family car. The handy work of a talented metal artist had been mounted as a central feature in a front garden by the homeowner and all around me as I walked down the street, were trout sculptures made out of stone, wood, iron, and glass. Turangi is a really neat place to spend a few days and you don’t have to fish all the time either!

I was still discussing the foolishness of some fishers with Cathy back at the house, during breakfast when George called for me. He laughed at my remarks and said, “You just have to see these things for yourself, some of them are fish crazy and you will see other things too”!

The Sand Pool was to be our starting point for the day, and I was grateful to be told of the correct etiquette and procedures to observe on the water. We walked briskly from the car park and were just starting to warm up by the time we arrived. Then began my first lesson and culture shock, with regard to the techniques used when fishing this mighty river. I was handed a bright fluorescent yellow indicator to attach to my line. I remarked that it was larger than the fairy that we put at the top of our Christmas tree.

My friend smiled and handed me what he called a bomb, to me it was like tying on half a house brick, but I was told that we have to get down deep and fast too! The second fly handed to me, was a #14 P/t nymph and this I was able to handle without a problem. Then after a brief series of instructions from George, I was set loose on the river to do my stuff. Two false casts and my new WF-F 8 weight Scientific Anglers line flew through the rings of my rod, by all of at least four metres before the house brick attached to my line brought it crashing down on the water.



Well, not even I expected that I should get it right first time, but I did hope that my first cast would look somewhere close to reasonable in front of my instructor. My second cast smacked me firmly between the shoulder blades with a loud, Thwack! As my line dropped all around me, entangling my arms, head, and legs. I emitted a quick gasp of pain as I inhaled and attempted to come to grips with controlling my agony.

This revealed one more of the many qualities of the true gentleman that my friend carries with him on the water. George did not laugh as he removed the bomb from the back of my vest with his multi-tool or do anything other than to say, “My friend, you are lucky that it wasn’t your head!” and then he followed up with “It can take a while to get the hang of this, take your time and practice”.

I hooked and landed a magnificent rainbow of between 4-5 lbs later that morning thanks to good advice and George hooked three fish himself, but they all escaped him. Exhaustion overtook me by mid-afternoon, and I was in need of a rest before going out for a meal later on that night.

The following morning, I did not go for a walk before breakfast, as George had informed me that we would be walking a much greater distance than the previous day. The day turned out to be overcast and it drizzled all day long, with a moderate wind blowing continuously. I unfortunately got the opportunity to witness first-hand some of the strange, arrogant, and greedy behaviour of a few followers of our sport.

Another man fishing next to me who introduced himself as Dave, hooked and landed a good fish and while he was attending to it on the bank. Two other men literally sprinted along the bank a good 100 metres or more and entered the pool just below us. I offered Dave his spot back and he told me to carry on, as he was packing up. Even though I was moving steadily up stream, one good sidestep every two casts, the two men on my right were closing the space between us. I quickly tired of having two other indicators regularly dropped only a rod length in front of me and backed out of the water.

I could have easily poked one chap in the ear with the tip of my rod he was so close. I remarked to Dave and George as I left, that I didn’t need this. George informed the guy that he was short

on manners as I sat down on the bank. I heard the other chap ask George what his problem was, and it became apparent to me that George must have got his message across, as both men left the water a few seconds later and went back down to the start of the pool. Which is where they could have started from in the first place, had they shown us their good manners that is!

Later that day we experienced another angler who after he noticed us approaching the pool, he was fishing, he backed out of the water and ran back down stream to re-enter the pool at the start again, rather than work all the way through to the top. We just shook our heads and smiled at this act of greed and selfishness as we walked down stream, to a pool that was free.

The following day was to be my last opportunity to fish, but early in the morning we discovered that the river had come up over night by an alarming amount and it was running very high, fast, and dirty. That was the end of my few days in Turangi, fishing the Tongariro.

Sincere thanks to George for my Northern Exposure and looking after me so well!

***Editor's note: There are number of more chapters to this story, watch-out for the next episode in next months newsletter.***

## ***Fighting big fish – the last few meters by Domenick Swentosky***



Rarely do trout fights result in epic battles. Instead, they are short, down, and dirty struggles between fish and fishermen. We don't chase trout for their fight. It's their selectivity. But yes, the bigger fish might surprise us with their super strength. Combine that with the trout's knowledge of a local river beat, and a good angler must make quick moves and wise decisions to gain enough of an edge to land the biggest fish of his life. It's more about those decisions — the angle choices, the arm, body, and rod positions — than strength.

Making quick work of a great trout is an artform that leaves the fish with plenty of reserve energy to carry on. It also leaves the angler satisfied by the completion of a catch — success from cast to release.

What I'm about to write and recommend must come with a good side order of sometimes, maybe, and hopefully. Surely, you will land trout at all angles. You'll take a crazy net-stab below the water because you know the trout is about to bolt, and it isn't hooked well. Your buddy will net a fish as it swims a figure eight around his legs, the hook will pop free, and he'll somehow pull off the miracle and bag it anyway. Yes, all of this and more odd things will happen.

But we aim for a consistent baseline. Our mark is something repeatable. And by following these best practices, we land fish routinely, even when they do extraordinary things.

In this fighting fish series I've covered many of the key elements, from setting the hook downstream to fighting fish fast and low, pulling hard, knowing your tools and using side pressure. And if you do all of that right, you stand a very good chance of netting the prize.

Pop quiz: When and where are most trout lost? Top two answers, please.

*Survey says ...*

In the first few seconds and in the last few feet.

I think we all can agree with that.

Getting past the initial surge and excitement from both you and the trout is a challenge solved by keeping trout lower in the water column and doing everything possible to fight a good fish upstream and across from you. And if you've done all that, then the last ten feet should be easy.



My son, Joey, joined me this morning for a few hours on one of our favourite pieces of water. The fish came fast right after dawn, then tapered off as the sun came up. And just as the best fish of the day hit, Joey was a little off balance, wading between sizable rocks and struggling with his footing on a shifting riverbed. The trout zigged and zagged a few times, but Joey kept the rod tight. And when I approached with the net, I saw a nice mid-teens wild brown trout under the surface. Unfortunately, the trout was downstream, and Joey was pulling upstream.

"I can't get him," I told my son. "Switch places with him."

"Oh yeah," Joey agreed, and he remembered what we'd been through a few times before. He swept the rod low and to the side, encouraging the trout to swim back upstream. Joey also stepped

downstream. Then, with the trout ahead of him, Joey waited a moment for the fish to turn. And when it did, he lifted the rod, turned the fish off balance and brought its head to the surface.

“Up, up, up,” I reminded as I reached with the net.

Joey kept the trout’s head up, and the big fish easily slid downstream into my waiting net.



**Good times**

Joey could have done the same thing if I wasn’t there. And he could have done it with a trout of another ten inches in length, given the excellent fish fighting principles, especially in the last ten feet.

Here’s a breakdown of those principles:

### **Get the trout upstream**

I’d prefer having the entire fight take place with the trout upstream and across from me. So, I do everything necessary to force this positioning between me and the fish.

With the trout upstream of the angler, the currents work in our favour and not against us. Also, with the fish upstream, we pull the hook back into the trout and not directly out of its mouth. Everything’s better with the trout upstream, and this is especially critical in the last ten feet.

One of the biggest errors in fly fishing is trying to net a good trout against the current. When facing downstream, the current adds to the weight of the fish. And we’re exerting maximum pressure with the trout at the top of the water, against the current, with the hook being pulled away from its mouth as it’s led to the net. That’s a recipe for disaster, which is the end result all too often.

Instead, do the opposite. Position yourself and the trout so the current works in your favour. With the fish upstream, lift it to the surface, and have the river push the trout into the hoop. This requires less force and tension but just a little more art

### **Lift on a direction change**

Some of that art is in reading the trout and seizing your opportunities. Even the strongest trout are most vulnerable to the bend in your rod at the moment they change directions.

Get the trout off balance. Trout shift their swimming directions all the time, but they aren’t used to being attached to the end of your rod tip. And like a good martial artist, the expert angler uses the opponent’s momentum against it.

Within the last ten feet, and with the trout upstream, watch for the fish to change directions. (Often you can encourage this direction change yourself). Go with that momentum for a moment, and then lift up, taking the trout off balance and unexpectedly to the surface. It's a good move.

### **Keep the head up**

Trout have to follow their head, right? A fish can only swim in the direction of its nose. So, if its head is out of the water, then it can't swim back underneath.

Once the trout's head is up, keep it up and get the net under it.

Two more things:

First, stories about trout diving back under the water and taking another run are more truthfully told by acknowledging that the angler let the head back down in the first place. This is how the error begins. So, once the head is up, keep it up. That's up to you.

Second, old-school wisdom says to play the fish until it tires. Then it will roll or falter on top of the water, ready for your net job.

But you do not need to do this!

A more modern take on the trout fight is to play the fish with skill — enough skill that the trout is landed in tens of seconds, not minutes, and enough art that the trout is released with a good measure of reserve energy, not spent to exhaustion.

Following the tenets above and throughout this fighting fish series will lead any angler to quick fights and great releases. We don't need to tire a trout to land it.

### **Spread your wings**

The final step of these last ten feet seems to be the hardest, if for no other reason than we don't get to practice it enough. And it takes countless tries before this next step intuitively makes sense.

Trap the line against the rod so the drag is no longer in play, with about a rod's length of line to the fish. Now as the trout slides across the surface toward the net, do this ...

Reach forward with the net hand and reach all the way back with the rod hand. (Look at the cover photo above).

I call it spreading your wings. It's a very similar stance that I teach to young Little League kids ready to throw a baseball. The arms are far apart, and the back hand is cocked up a bit. The rod hand elbow is no longer at your side. Instead, it reaches back. The rod remains flexed. It probably flexes more than it has for the whole fight. But, done this way, the rod doesn't double over either.

By reaching back and spreading your wings, the distance from you to the fish closes. The current helps, and the fish of a lifetime slides into your net. Enjoy that moment.

### **Fish hard, friends.**



## *Home again – no thanks to the Ted Cruzes of the world by Chris Hunt*

I got a Facebook message from an old junior high friend the other day. He'd been out to the Sabine River in the sticky thicket of East Texas, and visited the spot we'd all camped as kids, "Stand by Me" style.

It was a tricky proposition to reach the little haven on the banks of the muddy, gar-and-gator-filled river. The smartest way, of course, was to walk the elevated train route from Highway 259 into the woods and climb down one of the rebar maintenance ladders built into the concrete support pilings. This way, if a train happened to come along, it was fairly easy to get out its way—we'd just toss our sleeping bags over the side and climb down.



The fastest way, though, was to enter the river bottoms just before the tracks crossed the river over an elevated bridge. It took half the time, but there was always a chance that a train hauling freight would come barreling down the tracks—from either direction—and we'd have to hustle across or step onto one of just a couple of little support platforms on the bridge that hung precariously over the river and huddle against the rickety beams as the train whipped past just a few feet away.

Only once did we have to sprint along the tracks to stay in front of a train, and much like that scene in Stephen King's novella-turned feature film, we had to make leaps from the bridge down to the riverbank. I turned my ankle pretty good, and my little brother jettisoned his sleeping bag into the river. Otherwise, everybody was fine

Once down off the train tracks, we'd wander into the woods along the bottoms, armed with machetes, fishing gear, an arsenal of air rifles, tents, sleeping bags and enough food to get through a few days out in the wild. We'd light a fire, swing from the massive wrist-thick vines that hung from the sweet gum trees into the river and generally go native for a few days. My buddy Pete tells me that one of the swings we'd built to launch ourselves into the river is still there.

When my mom showed up at the appointed time to pick us up a couple of days later, we were bug-bitten, filthy, exhausted and ... ready to do it again the next weekend.

I guess it never really occurred to us that, by squatting along the river and venturing into the steamy forest along the water, we were trespassing. Texas, as former presidential candidate and current U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz is fond of saying, has precious little public land—2 percent, to be exact ("And that's 2 percent too much," Cruz famously said during primary season, earning eye rolls from anglers and hunters and, sadly, votes from the dogmatic right here in the rural West).

I'm glad my old friend is still wandering along the bottoms now and then, and it's gratifying to know that some rope-and-wood contraption is still standing over the river, a monument to junior-high hijinks and a silent protest to the Ted Cruzes of the world, who would prefer to see the rest of the country become just like Texas—privately owned, pocked with posted signs and inaccessible to all but the slyest of kids willing to thumb their noses at “the man” and wander along railroad tracks until we reached our own little slice of borrowed paradise. I'm glad to know that you can go home again, and thanks, Pete, for reminding me of those simple times when the biggest worry in the world was making sure somebody brought toilet paper.

Pete's note was on my mind a couple weeks back, when I visited a familiar stretch of river in the mountains of Colorado, not far from the high-country town of Leadville. As burgeoning anglers, my brothers and I fished the upper Arkansas under the tutelage of two amazing grandfathers—both were accomplished anglers, and both loved the top-of-the-world meadow streams at the base of Colorado's highest peaks.

Almost every summer, we'd leave the hot, muggy woods of East Texas and go “home” to Colorado for a while, and it was a near certainty that our grandfathers would pile us into an old motorhome and haul us into the high country for what, in retrospect, turned into a fairly high maintenance endeavour for two aging men. It was a labour of love and almost dutiful—they were determined to share their love of the outdoors, and for fishing, with their grandkids.

We were simply the unknowing beneficiaries of two men who, like many do today, took our public lands for granted and simply used them for the bounty they offered. There was never any assumption that, standing on the steps of the little home on wheels overlooking the river, that anyone would ever consider that this place, and thousands of places like it, could be ripped out of shared national ownership and liquidated to the highest bidder. It was unthinkable.

After topping Fremont Pass the other day and taking in the mountain-moving that goes along with long-term molybdenum mining at Climax, I dropped down in the highest reaches of the Arkansas Valley and pulled off into the same wide spot in the road my grandfathers used decades ago. I can remember the tin cans with the retractable lids that fit right on our belts—it was easy for small fingers to slide the cans open and yank out a reluctant nightcrawler for the size 12 snelled Eagle Claw hooks we used for “tippet” and terminal gear back in the day. I remember the smell of fresh coffee on the old motorhome gas stove. I remember the hearty satisfaction of two old men laughing and playing gin rummy around a couple of beer cans and a white-gas lantern as their grandkids drifted off to sleep.

I strung up a glass 2-weight and wandered across the willow-lined meadow, remembering that this was the place my grandfather Hunt stepped into a beaver hole and tweaked his knee. He told me, years later, that the fishing injury spurred knee-replacement surgery and was the beginning of the end of his mobility. I remember that this is the place where my Grandfather Muller handed out pocketknives to all of us kids, because he wanted clean fish when we got back to camp. When we got back with clean fish, he'd sternly ask for the knives back. Once, I spent more time hunting for the pocketknife I'd foolishly left on the riverbank after cleaning my limit of trout than I did actually fishing. The idea of disappointing my Grandad was unbearable.

On this day the river was swollen with June runoff. It ripped along its course and proved unproductive, but I wasn't dissuaded. Just across the little valley, where generations of beavers had constructed ponds and expertly diverted the Arkansas, I knew I'd find willing fish. I plunged into the frigid river, wading up to mid-thigh, and stepped out on other side. A few steps later, I stood at the edge of a beaver pond that was at least as old as me, and the progeny of the brook trout I caught as a kid fanned happily and largely unmolested in the flat, clear water.

As a kid, it never occurred to me who owned this river and the willow marsh along its banks. It was never even considered—we never asked permission. We parked the motorhome and went fishing. Today, I know this stretch of the Arkansas is managed by the San Isabel National Forest and it belongs as much to me as it does to Ted Cruz, even if he lacks the foresight to appreciate it. Deep-pocketed political donors ensure that he and a host of other ill-informed lawmakers never truly attempt to acquire such wisdom, unfortunately.

I looked back across the meadow, and I could imagine that old motorhome parked where my rig now rested a mile or so away. I could see two old men wearing tattered work shirts and paint-pocked blue jeans (fishing clothes) expertly assembling rods for three anxious kids, halos of unfiltered tobacco smoke circling their heads. I could smell the earthy tinge of nightcrawlers plucked the night before from Grandma's Garden and could feel the anticipation of dropping that first worm into the river and feeling that first tug of the trip.

I cast into the beaver pond and let my fly rest on the water. The ghosts of my grandfather's stood on either side of me.

An eager brookie launched after the fly.

Just like Pete, I went home again.

## ***North Island winter opportunities by Nick Reygaert***

Winter can be a down time for some trout fishers; a chance to fix gear and replenish fly boxes. But if you visit the trout mecca of New Zealand's North Island, all that may have to wait. The cooler months here are packed with great fishing options. Let's have a look at the famous flyfishing opportunities, and also some that are lesser known.

### **Tongariro River & Taupo tributaries**

The most obvious and famous fishery in the North Island is a good place to start: the mighty Tongariro River. The Tongariro is a tributary of Lake Taupo, New Zealand's biggest lake. Lake Taupo is a very fertile body of water and carries a huge head of trout, both browns and rainbows. The Tongariro is the main spawning tributary of the lake and as a result, it experiences large runs of fish during the winter months. The size of these spawning runs, coupled with easy access and reasonably friendly wading, has led to the Tongariro becoming New Zealand's most iconic flyfishing river.



### **Mighty Tongariro river**

Its legendary status was developed in the 1930s, when 20-pound fish were a common catch. Then, to the dismay of anglers, the average size of the trout gradually slipped to little more than a couple of pounds by the 'noughties.' But nature has flipped the trend once again, and over the last few seasons there has been a resurgence in trout quality, and the chrome-bright, fat-as-butter 5 pounders that were the hallmark of the fishery, are once again running the rivers in big numbers.

The Tongariro carries trout running to spawn in almost every month of the year, but there are some definite peaks to the runs, and these are good to know before booking a trip. The peak months for rainbow trout have shifted in the last decade. Late June and July were once regarded as the prime times, but now August and September and even October are considered the best months. The gaps are filled somewhat by a nice run of big brown trout that hits the river in May and continues into June. While the browns don't run in huge numbers, their larger size makes them well worth targeting.



For those who seek some early rainbow runs action, some of the smaller Taupo tributaries see good numbers of rainbows before the Tongariro, with pulses of fish from late May right through June and July. The Hinemaiaia River is well known for early running fish and, although it is quite straight and fast-flowing, the fish stack up, and any small depression or obstruction in the streambed will hold fish. The Waitahanui and Tauranga-Taupo are also well worth a look for early running rainbows and continue to produce right through the winter season.

Getting your flies deep and on a nice, long drag-free drift, is fundamental to success on these fisheries, especially on a big river like the Tongariro. The first principle you need to understand is that these fish are on their way to somewhere else and are therefore unlikely to lift far off the bottom to eat. Therefore, fish with flies that have enough weight to get down to the bottom in the

particular water you are fishing: more weight or less depending on current and depth. The next element to get right is the drift. This often means an early and aggressive stack mend that travels most of the way down your line and ends up close to your flies. This is a difficult technique to execute, but those who get it right will be rewarded.

Roll-casting or Spey casting variations are also useful skills to have in your armoury on these rivers, as you often have thick vegetation obstructing your back-cast. The heavy flies needed here make this much more challenging than flicking a small dry fly around. Overhead casting with heavy flies all day can also take its toll on your body, especially the wrists and shoulders. Efficient roll casting is a good way to reduce body stress as it requires less overall effort. If you are really keen on upping your game, learn the Tongariro Roll Cast. There are plenty of tutorials online.

## **Rotorua**

The Rotorua fishery is less glamorous than its Taupo cousin, but it still has plenty to offer fly fishers. The fishery is mostly based around the 13 lakes of the region containing trout, the main ones being Rotorua, Rotoiti, Tarawera, Rotomā, Kōaro, Rerewhakaaitu and Okataina.

Lake Rotorua is the largest lake in the Rotorua Lakes district but is also one of the shallowest, being only 25 metres at its deepest. The shallow, clear water allows light to penetrate to most of the lakebed and this contributes to luscious weed beds that in turn provide food and shelter for many insects and small fish. The trout, both rainbows and browns, grow very quickly with the abundance of food and reach large sizes. The main tributaries are the Ngongotaha Stream and Waiteti Stream, which each have good spawning runs of rainbows and browns, starting as the temperatures cool in May. Both streams have sections that are open in June and provide spectacular late season action.

The other lakes of the region tend to be mostly stocked as they have limited spawning streams, but they are still great fisheries. Rainbow trout are favoured as the species to stock as they grow quickly and are generally easier to catch. The edges of these lakes fish well all through winter as fish congregate in shallow water in an attempt to spawn. Hot spots include anywhere a small stream enters the lake, or the location where the fry were originally stocked – sometimes this means adult trout are drawn back to boat ramps.



Night fishing is commonly practised and often produces the cream of the action when winter fishing the lake shores. Best results are achieved using streamers or big wet's, slowly retrieved

near the bottom. Big Glo Bugs also work well, either under an indicator or fished on a sinking line with a slow retrieve. Some anglers even use fluorescent flies at night, regularly 'recharged' with a powerful torch or camera flash. The best nights will be after a big storm or even during it.

If you prefer fishing during the day, the Ohau Channel is a great option. It drains Lake Rotorua into Lake Rotoiti and is a major fishery in its own right. Trout move through here to spawn in the Lake Rotorua tributaries. Flies and techniques as above work best. It's worth noting though that this location can get very crowded at times.

### **East Cape**



The East Cape fishery receives very little publicity. Even among Kiwi anglers, its little-known geographical isolation, nightmarishly thick bush, numerous impassable gorges, and a tiny local population, combine to make this, in trout fishing parlance, one of the last true frontiers in New Zealand.

Kiwis use the term 'East Cape' to refer to the portion of land that lies in the easternmost point of the North Island of New Zealand. East Cape is not an official region and therefore there is no official boundary, but it is generally regarded as stretching from Opotiki in the north around the Cape and stretching down the coast to the Mahia Peninsula south of Gisborne. The inland portion stretches east to Te Urewera National Park and then north again through the bush back to Opotiki.

While not a true winter fishery, the rivers of the East Cape are open until the end of June. Autumn is considered one of the best times to fish as water temperatures in summer are often high and result in sluggish fish. As temperatures drop, fish come back on the feed with vigour. The rainbow trout fishing can be spectacular on rivers such as the Waioeka and Ruakituri, even during the short days of June.

### **Hawkes Bay**

Hawkes Bay region offers a huge range of angling opportunities, with some of the best and easiest access in the country. There are some large river systems in the region; the Mohaka, Tutaekuri, Ngaruroro, Waipawa and Tukituki, all of which hold brown and rainbow trout. While not a true winter fishery, these rivers, like the rivers of the East Cape, are open until the end of June. They are predominantly rainbow trout fisheries which sustain high numbers of fish, and with an impressive average size.



For some true winter fishing, the Tukituki River is open year-round below the SH50 highway bridge. Turbidity can be a problem, as the stream frequently discolours after even light rain, but there are loads of fish. Most of the rainbows are in 1-3lb range but 5lb fish are reasonably common. The river is on a very low gradient here and forms big, slow pools that can be difficult to fish. It is best to concentrate on the faster water at the head of the pool – which is often where the fish that are feeding the hardest are gathered anyway.

Lake Tutira is the major lake fishery in the region, and it is open right through the winter. Stocked with fish sourced from Lake Tarawera, the trout grow quickly and provide excellent sport for shore-based anglers in the winter months. The same tactics as used for the Rotorua lakes work here, and these trout can be fished for effectively during the day.

### **Northland saltwater**

Northland may not be a legendary flyfishing destination, but it has plenty to offer the travelling angler. It has a semi-tropical climate and being a relatively thin wedge of land, it is constantly under the influence of rain-bearing westerly winds. So annual rainfall here is high, but don't let that put you off: this is a big bonus for the fish. Freshwater washes nutrients from the land into the sea, which in turn feeds plankton, which are then devoured by baitfish and shellfish – and we know what eats those!

A reasonable tidal range is another factor which adds to the dynamic nature of the aquatic environment. Each tide flushes nutrient-rich water out of the bays and into the oceanic currents that sweep down the coast. In short, this coast is a fisher's paradise and holds an incredible biomass.

Although winter is not prime time for this fishery, there is still enough action to make a trip well worth it. Your prime targets are the big three; kahawai (Australian salmon), snapper and kingfish. Land-based fly fishing can be very productive here. The whole East Coast of Northland is quite protected and offers good fishing from rock platforms. Dirty water can be a bit of a problem during the winter months and is generally not great for fishing. Look for a platform that has deep, clear water in front of it. Points at the mouths of bays or along open bits of coastline will tick this box.



**Kahawai are a winter staple**

Burley is a must when fishing the rocks, the more the better. Generally, as soon as you begin to burley, fish will appear. Often kahawai are the first to arrive and can provide endless fun on an 8-weight set up. As the action heats up, be ready for a kingfish to materialise – in winter, these are often big fish travelling solo or in pairs. You will only get a small window of opportunity to hook these fish as they are pretty educated. A big popper fly, and a 12-weight outfit are your best chance.

When the burley trail becomes established, also keep an eye out for big snapper. A flash of crimson down deep is a dead giveaway. These snapper will take a Clouser cast out and left to hang on a floating line with no retrieve. It feels like a strange method, but it's the best technique to fool these wary fish.



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The spectacular phenomenon of krill-feeding trevally is also on the cards in winter. When the schools are feeding at the peak of the tide, it is quite a sight to behold. Thousands of big trevally mixed in with blue maomao and kahawai breach the surface as they plough into the krill schools from below. Sometimes, the work-up can be hundreds of metres across. It can be spectacular to witness, but quite frustrating fishing, as the predators are locked onto the tiny krill and will often completely ignore anything else. Krill feeding often occurs around offshore islands and at the mouth of big bays. The islands out the front of the Bay of Islands are a well-known hot spot for this activity.

Northland has a very pleasant climate even during the winter months, with plenty of beautiful, deserted beaches. A bonus is that not many kiwis travel to this area in the cooler months, so you'll find plenty of accommodation options and quiet roads. A great family holiday perhaps, with some saltwater fly mixed in.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of the winter flyfishing options in the North Island, but there are only so many pages I have time to write! The travel bubble between New Zealand and Australia seems to be working quite well despite the odd hiccup, so this winter is a good time to cross the ditch and get your NZ fix.

*This article is from the Australian FlyStream website*

## ***When a dry-dropper rig should be your go-to nymphing tactic by George Daniel***



### **The key to nymphing isn't always fishing deep**

Nymphing is one of the most productive fly-fishing methods given that trout spend the majority of their time feeding below the surface. Often the question is “what nymphing tactic do I use?” There is no clear-cut answer to this question, simply because there are times when one nymphing tactic is better than others.

In recent years, European nymphing methods have gained an almost cult-like following. This bobber-free (no strike indicator) system involves keeping line and leader off the water while using weighted flies. This reduces surface tension and allows the nymph rig to quickly gain bottom, where fish spend most of their time feeding. This is why European methods are so effective and

why they are so often my go-to tactic when nymphing. However, there are times when it pays to fish higher in the water column. During these times, higher typically means just below the water's surface with a two fly, dry-dropper combination.

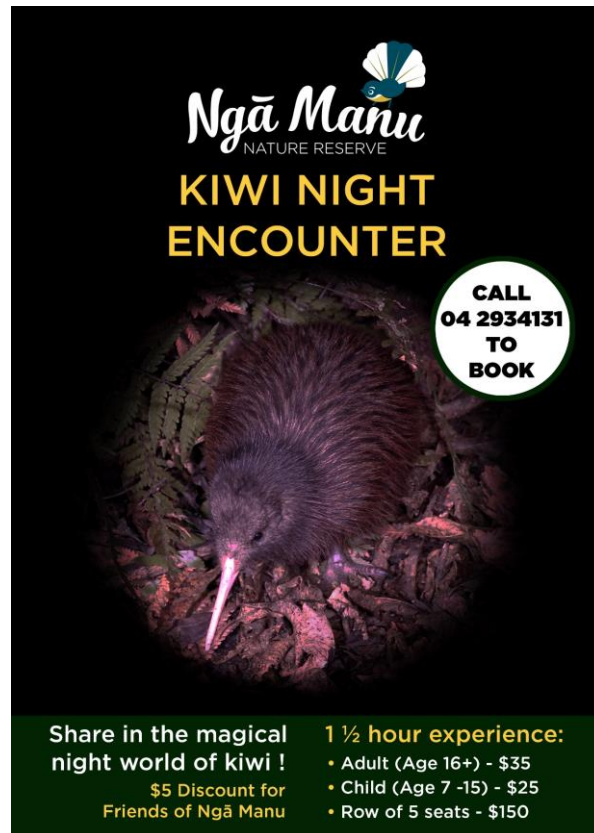
Trout are masters of efficiency—they position themselves where the food is. During peak aquatic hatch and terrestrial season, trout will focus more of their effort on feeding towards or on the water's surface since that is where the majority of the food is. Aquatic insects including caddis, stonefly, midges, and mayflies transform from bottom dwelling critters and emerge to the surface to become winged adults. Trout follow this migration, feeding at the level with the highest concentration of insects.

Dry-dropper fishing involves using a dry fly to act as a strike indicator. In other words, a higher floating/higher visibility dry fly acts like a bobber while a nymph drifts immediately below in the water column. This approach allows the angler to fish immediately at depths slightly farther below the surface. This shallow water approach to nymphing is ideal for periods when fish are looking up towards the surface to feed, especially on those days when it seems like the fish have locked into a feeding zone. The last thing you want to do is fish below actively feeding fish.

As to what dry fly pattern to use, try to match the current food source. If it's summertime and terrestrials are in play, then try using a hi-vis chubby Chernobyl or a hi-vis foam ant pattern. For most caddis hatches, I use a beefed-up poly-wing caddis. If there are mayflies hatching, I use a beefed-up version of Barr's Vis A Dun that matches the colour and size of the current hatch. But the only time I use a dry as an indicator fly is when I feel there's a chance of a trout feeding on the surface. If for whatever reason the trout are feeding high in the water column, but not on the surface, then I suggest using a traditional indicator, which often floats higher and requires less maintenance.

Since the purpose of using a dry-dropper rig is to fish towards the top of the water column, I normally attach the nymph to the bend of the dry fly hook using a short tippet section ranging in length from 10-24" (determined by what I perceive as the trout's feeding level). A simple five turn clinch knot is all you need to attach the tippet to the dry fly hook. As for the nymph, keep it light, as you don't need (or want) to fish heavy flies. Use a lightweight beadhead fly (a 3/32 bead size or smaller) or an unweighted emerger pattern—just enough weight to break the surface tension and drop several inches below the surface.

The key to nymphing isn't always fishing deep—it's fishing your flies at the level where trout are feeding. During the times when trout are feeding higher in the water column and are looking up, using the dry-dropper approach is an excellent choice.



If you have never seen a Kiwi in its natural environment (near natural) then I would recommend the Kiwi Night Encounter at Nga Manu, you will need to book as it is limited to 10 people each night.

### ***Newsletter content with built-in links to other documents by Editor***

Readers of our newsletter may not realise that when you see a name or wording underlined in an article, as an example [a Harvey leader](#) this is a link to another article where you can find more information. All you need to do is hold down your CTRL key and click on the words and the link will open.

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*Newsletter copy to be received by  
Second Monday of each month; your  
contribution is welcome just send it to:  
[malcolm1@xtra.co.nz](mailto:malcolm1@xtra.co.nz)*

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**Purpose:**

**To promote the art and sport of Fly Fishing.**

**To respect the ownership of land adjoining waterways.**

**To promote the protection of fish and wildlife habitat.**

**To promote friendship and goodwill between members.**

**To promote and encourage the exchange of information between members.**

**Club meetings**

You are invited to attend our club meetings that are held on the **Fourth Monday** of each month.

The venue is the **Turf Pavilion Sport Grounds**, Scaife Street, Paraparaumu,

Our **meetings start at 7:30pm** with fellowship followed by speakers of activities.

Club Committee meetings are held on the first Monday of each month and the meetings are held at various member's homes and start at 7:30pm.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

*Please remember that the club has two Five Weight 8'6" fly rods that members are welcome to use, just contact Malcolm Francis*

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