



Kapiti Fly Fishing Club

March 2024 Newsletter

At our next Club meeting on Monday 25 March our guest speaker will be Corina Jordan Chief Executive of Fish & Game and Maggi Tait Principle Advisor Communication for Fish & Game, this promises to be an interesting meeting so please make sure you come along and meet Corina and Maggi.

In this month's newsletter: This is photo was taken last week of the Otaki River looking downstream from the old State Highway Bridge, there have been a number of changes to the river during our summer months. photo taken by Malcolm

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Club activities

| Date | Event | Coordinator |
|-----------------------|---|--------------|
| March 23 – 24 March | Club trip to Wairarapa rivers | Graham Evans |
| Monday 25 March | Club meeting – Guest speaker Corina Jordan CE Fish & Game | Graham Evans |
| April 12 to 17 April | Rotorua District - please refer to page 27 for details | Wayne Butson |
| Monday 22 April | Club meeting – Guest speaker TBC | |
| Weekend 12 to 14 May | Turangi area – we have booked the AFAC Lodge | Kras Angelov |
| Monday 27 May | Club meeting and AGM | Graham Evans |
| Weekend 7 to 9 June | Turangi area – we have booked the AFAC Lodge | TBC |
| Monday 24 June | Club Meeting – Gust speaker TBC | |
| Weekend 12 to 14 July | Turangi area – we have booked the AFAC Lodge | TBC |
| Monday 24 July | Club Meeting – Gust speaker TBC | |



Presidents report

Our next meeting will be a real interest to all club members and many others. We have Corina Jordan, CEO of NZ Fish & Game talking to us. Corina will tell us what the state of play is in the on-going difficulties facing the fishing and hunting communities, and how the organisation is changing to ensure that our interests are managed for our benefit.

That hasn't been an easy road, but it is vitally important, and Corina has been leading that work.

She is also an avid and active fisherwoman, so she knows first-hand the issues and what it is we want and need.

So even though the meeting is on this Monday, please try to come along. Corina deserves a good attendance – we are sure you will come away encouraged by what you will hear.

I trust that the fabulous weather has allowed you to get out and do it. Maybe we will get the rain the garden so desperately needs, and that will also refresh the rivers, another needed ingredient in our fishing calendar.

See you at the meeting,

Tight Line

Graham



At our club meeting on Monday 25 March, you will be able to meet Corina Jordan the Chief Executive of Fish & Game New Zealand who will be our guest speaker and keen to meet our members and answer any of your questions.

If you have been following the Fish & Game news you will be aware that Corina is having a very positive impact on our organisation and the sport of hunting and fishing, look forward to seeing you at the meeting starting at 7:30pm

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 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 if you wish to be included in the mid-week fishers email list to:

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.

Slide and Negative Scanner

If any KFFC member would like to digitise slides or negatives (with colour reversal) I have a scanner that you are welcome to borrow, at a cost of a small \$5.00 donation to the club.

Please email me to arrange: hugh.driver.nz@gmail.com



Kapiti Women on the Fly by Leigh Johnson

Practical Skills Sessions are in Demand

Women on The Fly NZ's, 2024 series of Sunday fly fishing skill sessions continued with 11 women attending a session that covered three essential fly-fishing knots, three basic leader set-ups, introduction to fly lines and essential fly patterns. Many thanks to Gordon Baker and Greg du Bern for their tuition. Further practical sessions are planned for the 2nd Sunday of the month.

Events in other regions

Currently, Leigh is supporting Jill Sweeney of the Tauranga Anglers Club with the planning for a women's event to be held on 25/26th May. Also retired guide, Tony Entwistle of the Nelson Trout Fishing Club has organised a gathering of women in Nelson/Marlborough/Buller on 4th April at which Leigh will speak.

Please follow our activities on this [Facebook Page](#). There is also a private [WoTF Facebook group](#) that provides a safe space for women who fly fish, (or would like to fly fish) to share information, arrange fishing activities, and learn from each other about all things fly fishing.

Or contact me directly at leigh@leighjohnsonnz.com or visit www.womenonthefly.nz to receive regular updates.



The Wairarapa by Graham Evans



Ruamahanga River looking down stream at Morrisons Bush

I have made it out on a couple of occasions since returning from the South Island. The best was a trip to the Ruamahanga with an American who hadn't fished the North Island before, even though he had lived and fished in the South Island for four years in the 90s.

My sources tell me that the river is fishing better than it has for many years.

It started disastrously with my confirming access to the river some distance above Morrison Bush, where it gets very little pressure. We arrived to find bulldozers flattening the riverbed just where we wanted to fish – they swore they weren't in the riverbed itself! And no, they weren't, but the river was a mid-chocolate colour. Beyond fishable! He said it must be rain in the high country – yeah right – it hadn't rained for some weeks and the level was low. So, I deduced that they were in the river somewhere upstream, the question was where?

I looked at the GWRC website and they were bed contouring around the Martinborough bridge. Waiohine section. As we have said before- it pays to check before going fishing!! That wrote off another possible access point. So, we went to the Kokatau bridge, and it was perfectly clear. A short session there gave me a chance to assess my companion's skill, and I could see that he could cast OK but needed a bit of help. We didn't last there long as the easy access meant it had probably been hammered.

A quick rundown to Foreman Jury Rd saw me able to show him what I thought might improve his chances. It was the old story – take his rod, show him where to cast, how to mend so the end of the line stayed on its drift, and then let it swing and...I handed him the rod as it had hooked a fish, which unfortunately he lost. But he was suddenly fishing much better.

Then to another access through a farm, via a pretty rough final walk and clamber through river edge bush to the river. I put him in some good-looking water, checked he was casting OK and voila – he hooked and landed a 2lb rainbow. A very happy guy. And after he had gone through to the head of the pool. I called him back and showed him the drop-off and where to cast, and a 2lb brown took his dry and he landed that too. An even happier guy!

I had hoped to be able to take him up to Taupo a week later, but unfortunately that won't happen as his health isn't up to it. But he is taking a good selection of flies tied by one of our members back to the USA. It will be interesting to hear how they work.

Drag-Free Presentation by Skip Morris



Question: Sometimes my fly drifts are too short, and when my fly starts sliding across the current a trout won't take it. What can I do to get longer fly drifts without drag? – Brian

Answer: Your question, Brian—a classic! Drag has plagued dry-fly enthusiasts since, well, probably ever since there have been dry flies and anglers enthused about fishing them. Before I get into this, though, I'd better provide some background information for new fly fishers.

So, here's the deal, newcomers (and by the way, welcome!). Dry flies often imitate insects that "hatch," that is, wriggle from the skins of their underwater lives to free the wings for their above-water lives. While they're hatching, most of these insects (mainly midges, mayflies, and caddisflies) drift quietly, naturally, freely, on the water. Other insects, that other floating flies suggest, drop to the water and then just drift: ants, flying ants, mayfly spinners . . . So, a floating fly imitating any of these insects must drift quietly and freely too.

On a trout lake, no problem—there's no current to deal with. On a stream, there are troublesome, stress-inducing, infuriating currents. They catch the tippet, leader, line, or perhaps even all three and drag the fly around so that the angler (like Brian L) utters bitter language while watching trout avoid the dragging fly.

Yes, they drag the fly, which is why we fly fishers call anything that draws a fly unnaturally, "drag."

Are some insects lively on the water, so that a dry that imitates them should be twitched or skimmed on or across its surface? Yes. But we're not talking about any of that today—when trout demand a drag-free drift of a dry fly, as they often do, you'd really better provide it.

At this point we should all be together, fly fishers new, old, and between: we now all know what "drag" is, when and why it's a problem, and that it pertains not to trout lakes but to trout streams. So, we're now back to your question, Brian, which asks, essentially, "How do you avoid drag?"

Here is the list.

1. Long Tippets

Leaders are tapered, and the fly lines behind them are tapered too. Snap an arc down something long, slim, supple, and tapered and it'll naturally straighten right to its tip. That's just fine for some fly presentations, but lousy for avoiding fly drag—a stream's matrix of currents draws on the straight line and leader right away, and the fly drags unnaturally. The trout watch the fly's bad behaviour, huff in disgust.

Tippet, though, is un-tapered, constant in diameter. Make it long, three feet, perhaps even four, and it'll want to drop on the water in curves. In curves of slack. Slack is the primary cure for drag. A slightly high forward cast promotes slack in tippet: with some distance to drop, the tippet lags behind the leader, angles, and then makes its waves of slack.

Of course, on small water, a stream or creek, two and a half feet might be long enough for a tippet to provide adequate slack—overlong leaders and tippets can become hazards on small water.

2. Slack Line Cast

There are a few standard casts that force slack into fly line, even into leader and tippet. If I go over them in detail here, this article will become a booklet on casting. It shouldn't. It is, I repeat, an article. But I can name them.

The most common slack-line casts are the S or lazy S, the reach, the pile, and the shepherd's crook (now usually referred to by the romantically sterile appellation "negative curve cast"). There's another cast for making slack called the parachute cast, but it's really for presenting a fly drag-free not upstream or across-stream, like the other casts I've mentioned, but downstream. Downstream presentations of dry flies are uncommon, but under the right conditions, deadly.

And I can describe them. The S cast is made by wagging the rod tip as the line goes out. The reach is made by an upright forward cast followed by lowering the rod to one side or the other, the pile starts as a high forward cast and then the rod tip is hurried down to the water as the line follows, and the shepherd's crook is an underpowered cast made with a low rod so that the loop in the line drops on the water. The parachute cast starts with a high forward cast, the rod remains high, and the line and fly drop and drift off downstream as the caster lowers the rod-tip to feed line.

There's another, and I'll bet you haven't heard of it regardless of how long you've fly fished: the crash cast. I'm surely not the first to use it but am apparently the first to name it. Therefore, it is my cast, I guess Anyway, it's great for big dry flies whose weight makes them sail out and pull all slack out of the tippet. But I'm using this cast even more often with all sorts of floating flies of all sizes. It's not a cast for flat water; the line really does crash down. Not a problem on choppy currents, though.

To make the crash cast, aim your forward cast low so that the line loop hits the water before it straightens. That kills the momentum of fly and tippet and leader, and they all drop in waves of—wait for it...—slack. Try it.

3. Mending

Just before the currents that have pulled your line into a long curve take away the last of the slack and start dragging your fly, you can mend. A mend is a lift of the line and then a flip of it, so that whichever way it was curving, it's now curving in the opposite direction. Some dry-fly aficionados may mend two or three times during a fly's drift.

Slack-line casts, long tippets, and mending about covers it. I mean, there's practice, of course—you don't get good at these manoeuvres without doing them over and over while giving them the care and attention that bring improvement.

Go out then, Brian. Use everything covered here to make those long, clean fly drifts your trout demand.

May peace and many hookups lie in your path.

My South Island trip – 2nd instalment by Graham Evans

We stayed at Benmore at Ohau C for 2 nights. And the rain that had threatened came to nothing.

A lovely campsite with loos only. Interesting that although a lot of occupied sites had been made to look permanent, they all had to go by Easter. A new policy apparently. I don't know how some of them will be able to move their vans, they looked as if they had been there a long time. It gets pretty cold up there in winter!

Our next stop was Round Hill on Lake Ohau. A very, did I say very, corrugated few Kms to get there.

It's a very nice DOC site with parking available right on the water. Although the edge looked very fishy with the drop-off only 3metres out, I never saw a fish over 3 sessions covering over 1km of water. Apparently its better further towards the head of the lake, but the corrugations made that a complete no-no. On our way in, beside the new Ohau village, we had seen Lake Middleton. It had a large empty campsite beside it, so we stopped to have a coffee, and of course I picked up the rod and went for a walk. I saw 3 browns cruising the edge, very slowly. Managed to hook the last but again dropped it.

So, we stayed the night. Next day I walked right around it over perhaps 2 hours. Didn't see any more as it was dead flat and clear, but fish were broaching further out. And I lost 1 and then landed a smallish rainbow blind casting. A delightful spot.

That was the end of my time with rod in hand other than an hour on Lake Benmore where you hit the lake coming East from Omarama. I saw one brown and quite a few rose just a bit further out than I wanted to wade. The previous night I had watched a couple of smaller browns rising in the Omarama stream beside the campground.

We came down to the coast following the Waitaki. It's a big river! On the way we called in to see Leigh Johnson's place on the Hakataramea. She wasn't there but we had her permission to stay on the property. That afternoon the temperature hit 37C. Boy it was hot! Obviously, I went and had a look at the river. I didn't take the rod, as I felt the river would be far too warm for the fish to recover - if I'd hooked anything. It's a lovely spot, but boy it must be a sight to see in full flood judging from what the locals told me.

Our last night was beside the Rangitata. A front had gone through the previous day, and like the Rakaia on that second morning, it was in full spate, in full snowmelt colours, with 3cm visibility, but no running salmon that I could see.

Disappointing that the low rainfall – and high level of use of the irrigators – meant that many of the 'rivers' were actually dry beds or only a couple of meters wide. The farmers are winning that battle for water use, and something needs to be done.

All in all, a great 12 days away. The South Island offers so much opportunity, and I was able to touch a very small part of it. Not many fish landed, but I really enjoyed it. In that wonderful scenery, with so few people and lovely places, to be able to fish as well is a bonus and it's a trip I won't forget.

Q&A: Barbless Hooks or Barbed? – Does it matter? By Domenick Swentosky



This Q&A series is an effort to answer some of the most common questions I receive. Here's the latest ...

Question

This one comes from Mike,

Hey, I never hear you talk much about hook choice for your patterns. Do you go with barbed or barbless hooks? Do you think it matters for keeping trout from coming off during the fight? And do you believe in the studies that show a higher mortality rate with barbed hooks?

I was just curious to hear your thoughts.

Answer

I do use barbless hooks, almost always.

I also think it's not our choice to believe or disbelieve the data of a scientific study. How can we put our own musings or opinions ahead of multiple studies that show a higher mortality rate from barbed hooks? That side of the question has been proven as fact, as I understand it. So yes, barbless hooks damage or kill fewer trout.

That seems like a pretty good thing to me.

But can I tell you the main reason I use barbless hooks?

Anyone who spends so much time on the water has stories about hooks buried deep into the flesh of their finger. Maybe the hook was caught in your palm, wrist, or ear instead. Barbs also grab your glove, your jacket, the anchor rope, and they won't let go. Wherever a hook is stuck, a barbless hook makes for easier extraction.

I see barbed hooks as a holdover from bait angling or a catch-and-keep mentality.

But fish **eat** bait, right? And we're taught to let the fish take and even swallow bait, then set the hook. Fly fishing requires the opposite. **Because as soon as a trout feels the artificial fly, it's trying to eject it.** So, we set quickly — almost as fast as possible, because trout rarely swallow our flies.

Set quick. Fight quick. Release quick.

So, the only time a barb makes much sense to me is when you're planning to keep the fish. We choose catch and release, because we enjoy the sport — the activity of fooling a fish. So, the occasional loss of our quarry because it slips the hook doesn't take food off the table and away from our family. It's just a fish that didn't make it to the net.

That's an acceptable consequence, isn't it?

What percentage of fish are we surrendering when we go barbless? If we're good at fighting fish, almost none. A barbed hook is built to keep the fish buttoned up, even when slack is introduced. That's when a barbless hook may slip. But if we're good at keeping tension, the barbless hook never has a chance to back out, and there's no difference in landing rate — absolutely none. It's only when slack is accidentally introduced that the hook has a chance to slip. Again, we do this for sport, right?

So, let's welcome the extra challenge of fighting a fish with enough skill that we never give it slack.

I choose barbless. And to me, that means either manufactured barbless hooks or barbed hooks that are pinched down. Either is fine. If we pinch barbs down with sturdy pliers or with the jaws of a vise, it's the same effect as manufactured barbless.

But what about the rest of the hook? What really damages trout? Some studies aren't specific enough about what they test. And there's a big difference between standard barbs and micro barbs. I have #12 dry fly hooks with bigger barbs than #6 streamer hooks with micro barbs. And what about a #20 Griffith's Gnat with a micro barb? Does that really do any damage to a trout? I'd say no. That said, I still pinch them down.

READ: Troutbitten | Are We Taking the Safety of Trout Too Far?

Before anyone gets self-righteous about going barbless, maybe we should consider hook gap and hook size. I have a friend who has seen mid-sized trout get brained (killed) by a wide-gap streamer hook that pierced the roof of the trout's mouth and passed through its pea-sized brain, killing the trout instantly.

Many articulated streamers feature double-wide-gap hooks, and if that gap isn't filled with some material, like chenille, fur or feathers, there's an awful lot of hook in the mix to cause damage to a trout while hooking and fighting.

I'm not suggesting that articulated streamers are bad. I love them. And most of mine have two hooks. But I try to keep the hook gaps reasonable, knowing that more damage is done by barbless streamers than barbed dry flies any day.

Last point here ...

What matters most is proper fish handling. Education about safely hooking, fighting, and releasing is far more important than the debate on barbless vs barbed flies.

So, fight trout fast, and unhook them carefully.

There is not a single way. A one-handed release that keeps the trout in the water may not be the best thing for it, if the hook is lodged at a tough angle. Two hands on the trout with the use of forceps might just be the best way. The goal is to cause no damage, right? So do whatever it takes.

A tool like a Ketchum release or similar is another way to release a trout unharmed. The point is a box full of barbless hooks is only the beginning of the equation. And the rest takes more effort to get it right.

Fish hard, friends.



Editor's note:

One of the most effective ways to release a trout without touching the fish is with a Hook Release Tool, one of our sponsor The Fly Shop stocks the Stonfo Release Tool.

The truth about false casting by Todd Tanner



The conventional wisdom you've heard about false casting may not be particularly wise

If you spend much time reading about fly fishing, or hanging around with other fly fishers, you're likely to run across a common theme in our sport.

"We false cast too much. Stop it."

That admonition to limit or curtail our false casting is frequently followed with a bit of home-spun angling wisdom. "You won't catch fish with your fly in the air. False casting is a waste of your time. Get your fly in the water."

Sounds like great advice, doesn't it? Stop false casting. Make sure your fly is on, or in, the water. Catch more fish.

Except it's not great advice. For lots of folks it's incredibly counterproductive. So, let's take a closer look at our false casting.

Why do we false cast? There are six main reasons. Here are the first five:

1. Why do we false cast? There are six main reasons. Here are the first five.
2. It also allows us to change the direction of our cast — let's, for example, say we've picked a new target — without putting our line on the water.
3. It helps us measure the distance of our cast in comparison with our target
4. It dries off our dry flies.
5. It can eliminate line spray before our presentation cast. (Which is why we frequently false cast to the left or right of our target.)

All five of those reasons are valid and important to our angling. Any fly fisher worthy of the name needs to change the length of his or her cast, as well as the direction, on a regular basis. We all hope to cast the right length of line. Our dry flies definitely need to float. And none of us should want to spook fish by throwing a cascade of water droplets in their direction.

There are two other points I should make. The first regards the ubiquitous "keep your fly in the water" truism I mentioned above.

Everything else being equal, a fly that's always on the water will outperform a fly that's on the water less frequently. But everything else is rarely equal. The fly fisher who casts occasionally but fishes effectively will invariably out-fish the person whose fly is constantly in the water but who lacks basic angling skills.

If we hope to catch more, or bigger, fish, we should focus on improving our angling. The amount of time our fly spends on the water is a secondary concern.

My final point — and I'm not sure how to say this without offending at least a few people — is that for many of us, fly fishing isn't about conforming to some unexamined and counterproductive norm. It's not about bowing to the conventional wisdom. It's about enjoying our time on the water.

Fly fishing should be fun. So should fly casting. So, when someone, regardless of their credentials or their opinion of themselves, tells you that you're doing it wrong — that you're false casting too much — they're trying to impose their narrow, dogmatic views on your angling.

John Juracek, who writes on occasion for Hatch and who, in addition to being one of the finer anglers on the planet, is an instructor at the School of Trout, said it beautifully some years ago.

“Take a few minutes and watch a good fly caster. What you'll see is someone in complete and total control of their medium. You'll feel the grace, the elegance, and the beauty inherent in their smoothly unrolling line. Good casting should be a matter for conscious enjoyment, celebration even, never something to be overlooked or dismissed as merely the mechanism by which we deliver our fly to a target. After all, isn't it the casting itself that separates fly fishing from other forms of angling? If we can't celebrate that, why fly fish in the first place? There are other, more efficient ways to bring fish to hand.”

I mentioned up above that there are six reasons to false cast. John's quote illustrates the last one perfectly. We false cast because it's an important part of our fly fishing — an intrinsic part — and because it adds tremendously to our enjoyment of the sport. If you don't want to false cast, then you don't need to. But please don't allow the false casting police to dictate the way you fish.

At the end of the day, fly fishing should put a big smile on your face. Don't let anyone steal that from you.

An angler's Lament by Bob Romano



I admit it. For me, it's been about the fish, in particular, brook trout, the native char of western Maine's Rangeley Lakes Region. Although that's not how it started.

I remember summer evenings on the bank of the Saddle River, a polluted stream located in suburban New Jersey. I'd be seated beside my father, a hard-working man of few words, who attended night school on the G.I. Bill. During the summer, after a tiresome commute into Manhattan, he'd return home on a Friday evening. We'd eat a quick dinner, then drive to the river accompanied by my uncle George, who lived next door.

George was a genial man who drank too much. He didn't serve during the war because of a hearing loss suffered as a child, a rejection with which he struggled as much as he did with the loss of hearing. I can see them in their fold-out lawn chairs, legs stretched out, cigarettes dangling from the corner of their mouths. A ballgame, either the Yankees or Mets, would be playing on a transistor radio.

Their spinning rods were set on forked sticks. Although they yearned to catch one of the few largemouth bass able to withstand the rot that plagued the river, it was the stream's carp, gentle creatures with Fu Manchu moustaches, some twenty inches long and weighing five or more pounds that sucked down their nibble's of corn, and later, a recipe involving cornmeal enhanced with secret ingredients rolled into tight balls.

Me? I was eight, maybe nine, wearing a white tee-shirt, baggy jeans, the cuffs rolled up around a pair of black high-top sneakers, and on my head, a light-blue baseball cap with the Mets orange logo stitched across the brim. I sat among patches of crabgrass and plantain, always watchful for the mischief of rats living under a bridge a few hundred yards upstream. My fiberglass rod was also set across the fork of a stick, but unlike the open-faced Mitchell reels attached to the men's rods, I was regulated to a closed-faced Zebco model.

It was years later, after reading Richard Brautigan's poetic novel, *Trout Fishing in America*, that I picked up my first fly rod. Like so many of my brothers and sisters of the angle, I began by casting a fiberglass model mass produced by the Cortland Company. Back then, the only fish in those streams savaged by development were put-and-take trout stocked by the state, none of which paid attention to the gaudy flies I'd found in a bin of our town's hardware store. Invariably, I'd switch to the spinning gear stored in the trunk of a Dodge Dart purchased off a used-car lot, the Zebco reel replaced by my father's hand-me-down Mitchell.

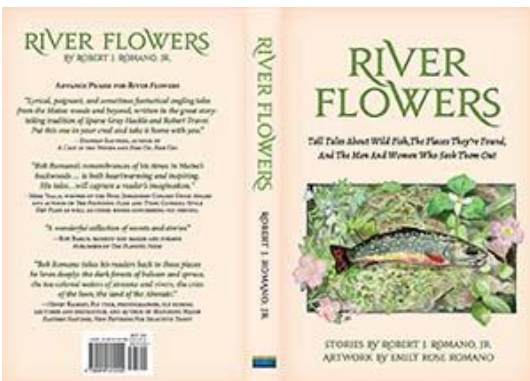
My father had scoffed at my fly-fishing outfit, viewing it as he did my long hair, style of clothing, and recently acquired manner of challenging every norm he cherished. Nevertheless, upon my returning home from four years of college, détente was in the air, and we agreed to spend a few days at the fabled Antrim Lodge located in the Catskill Mountains, a two-hour drive from our home.

It was the second week of May. I recall my father wearing a dark blue baseball cap, with a red-and-white Dardevle spoon hooked to the brim he'd lowered across his brow while swinging a worm across a promising run of the Beaverkill River. A number of yards upstream, I'd been casting one of the store-bought flies with my usually ineptitude until I spotted a fish rise and then another and another. That's when I noticed a number of dun-coloured mayflies floating upon the surface. Searching through my plastic box of flies, I choose the closest in colour and size. When a Catskill brown rose through the pool it was me as much as the fish that was hooked. I would never again cast a spinning rod.

Although Catch-and-Release had taken hold by then, it was not over concern for a fellow resident of this perilous sphere we call home, but a more selfish rationale—returning a diminishing fishery to be caught again. I didn't think much about this at the time, simply happy to be catching trout on artificial flies. That is, until my wife and I decided to spend a week in western Maine. We'd booked time at Bosebuck Mountain Camps, a traditional sporting lodge

built in 1917 and located deep within a vast balsam-and-spruce forest on the western shoreline of Aziscohos Lake where the middle stretch of the Magalloway River joins the outlet of the Little Magalloway River.

It was only later we learned the region was known for its native brook trout, fish that once flourished in sizes and numbers hard to believe today. Word of trout exceeding five pounds spread soon after Lee walked into the Appomattox courthouse, ending the South's War of Succession. Soon thereafter, the Rangeley Lakes became a destination location for sportsmen and women.



Bob Romano's newest book *River Flowers* is available now. Visit forgottentrout.com for ordering information

The brook trout's success was dependent upon various factors, not the least of which was the Artic char known as the blueback trout, a smaller fish, on which the brook trout gorged. By the nineteen-thirties, overfishing, deforestation, and the relentless harvesting of the little blueback trout brought an end to the size and numbers previously enjoyed. Rather than allow the lakes and rivers to heal, steps were taken to "manage" the problem. Smelt were introduced to replace the blueback and landlocked salmon to supplement the waning brook trout population. These efforts only hastened the near extinction of the little blueback, a fish that had survived the ice-age while the native brook trout remained severely impacted by many of the practices begun by the first colonists and continued through that time.

Eventually, enlightened management of the lakes and rivers enforced by a dedicated warden service allowed the region's brook trout to rebound. Combined with environmental legislation curbing the lumber and milling industries, the native fish may be less in number, and smaller in size, but western Maine's native trout abide in the raucous rapids of the bigger rivers and the tannin-stained bend pools of smaller rills. They can still be found in backwoods ponds seen from dirt-and-gravel logging roads, and those secret waters found only by following a trail traced upon a napkin.

Two years after our first visit to the region, Trish and I purchased a cabin across the lake from the lodge, a camp I often write about. It is here where I gained an appreciation of the interrelationship among my neighbours, the four-legged animals ambling along the banks of the vast lakes and free-flowing rivers, the wood duck, merganser, and loon floating on their surface, the many birds singing from the trees; lupines in the fields, lady's slippers and trilliums along the shaded trails, the river spiders on the back side of boulders and under wooden docks, the frogs and slugs, all residing with the brook trout, all under the protection of Maine's ten-million-acre North Woods.

But it wasn't until I read Annie Proulx's, *Barkskins*, a sprawling 713-page tale the San Francisco Chronicle acclaimed as the greatest environmental novel ever written, that I came to understand

the underpinnings of our ancestors' relationship with the bountiful "New World" they "discovered" and the indigenous peoples they found here, and how western economic theory and religious beliefs provided the justification for environmentally devastating practices, such as those employed throughout Maine, New England and across the country.

The book begins in 1693 as two French indentured servants arrive on the shores of "New France" and continues through numerous generations of their families. In telling this elaborate story, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author traces the steady degradation of our forests as well as the attempts to exterminate indigenous societies found on the continent, who in the eyes of western Europeans were an impediment to progress.

The plot is moving, the writing, as would be expected from this distinguished author, superior, as each successive generation finds themselves compelled to carry on the grievous errors of those gone before, sometimes through greed, other times out of ignorance, still others as a result of understandable desperation. Although a novel worth your time, be prepared, for my anger turned to sadness and eventually depression as I set the book on my bedstand for the last time.

So, it was with great relief I opened Katie Holten's book of essays, *The Language of Trees*, a Christmas gift from friends. By the third essay, I was giddy with delight! In these dark times of anti-environmental awareness, anti-intellectualism, antisemitism, anti-immigrant, and anti-democratic principles, this book is a shining reminder of the growing number of those fighting back against these atavistic impulses, working in words, art, and deeds for the very survival of this tiny orb each of us calls home.

One of the essays in Holten's book, *Speaking of Nature*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer led me to the latter's insightful and thoughtful National Best Seller, *Braiding Sweetgrass*. As a writer, I was intrigued to learn of the significance of the English language in fostering the abuse rendered upon the natural world and on a culture based upon co-existence with nature rather than its subjugation. In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, the decorated professor/botanist/poet explains why her Potawatomi grandfather, among so many others, were taken to schools like the Carlisle Indian School, a practice also outlined in *Barkskins*. I'd been aware of the cruelty of these efforts to extinguish the culture of native peoples, which included the prohibition of speaking their language, but never really understood the insidious reasons behind it.

A fundamental tenant of Western philosophy is that humans are superior to all on this earth and as such, the rest of the planet, living and inanimate, were put here for our use. Many are aware of the passage in *Genesis 1:28*

"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

The very Almighty had granted we humans rights over all else. A reason why not only Native Peoples, but those of different colour were spoken of in words casting them as inferior and therefore under western philosophy, to be subjugated, and in the case of the black race, enslaved, and lest we forget, in later years, the attempted extinction of Jews in the gas chambers of Nazi Germany.

And as Annie Proulx describes in *Barkskins*, Katie Holten in *The Language of Trees*, and Robin Wall Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, that by God, is what we did, many times over, again and again, in HIS name, from one shining sea to the other, and then across the globe.

In doing so, western Europeans could not abide a belief that might dictate otherwise, and since indigenous peoples base their beliefs not on the superiority of humans, but on our equality with all others calling the planet home, the language spoken by native peoples was as Robin Wall Kimmerer points out in her aforementioned essay, “an affront to the ears of the colonist in every way.”

In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, she explains, “In English, we never refer to a member of our family...as it. That would be a profound act of disrespect.” Indigenous languages extend this right of respect to the world around them. Birds, bugs, and berries are spoken with the same respectful grammar as humans are.” The impersonal “IT” does not appear. “Because” as Kimmerer points out, “they are our family.”

The botanist explains why anthropomorphism is detested whereas in the language of Native Peoples it is replete. If we are to subjugate the world, we must maintain our superiority in language, the underpinning for our deeds.

She describes one Native American origin story where Sky woman falls toward the earth only to find water. She is saved by geese who cushion her fall. A turtle offers his back as a refuge and a muskrat sacrifices his life to dive toward the bottom of the lake, returning with a fistful of mud to create a place for her to live. In return, Sky woman plants seeds and nuts for the benefit of all.

Kimmerer contrasts this tale with another woman who lived in a garden with a tree. She recounts how that mother of men is made to wander the wilderness while ordered to subdue the earth and its creatures to earn her bread. The botanist ends the contrast between the creation tales with the observation of the scars inflicted upon the earth and its inhabitants when “the children of Eve encounter those of Sky woman.”

In *Barkskins*, Proulx describes how the colonists of North America burned down trees to make space for their potatoes and corn while referring to the indigenous peoples as “savages,” describing them as “lazy” because they preferred to conserve the forest. Land to the westerner was to be owned while for the Native American it was communal, to be used for sure, but never abused.

Language provided the permission structure for the subjugation of the land. Nature became objectified. An unwanted wildflower is a weed. We harvest game rather than kill it. As Kimmerer points out, when the forest is spoken about in terms of timber or board feet it becomes a lifeless object, an eagle no different than a jet, a bear the same as a bulldozer, all encompassed by the impersonal pronoun—IT.

If you met a neighbour in distress, would you not stop to ask the problem? If you could, would you not help? Everywhere we look, the natural world is crying out for our assistance

First it was New England’s cherished chestnut trees and then the elm. More recently it has been the eastern hemlocks, spruce, and now the majestic, and some say magical, ash ravaged by invasive species. With the changes in temperatures, New England’s maple trees may no longer give over their syrup.

What will the deer hunter say when the last mast has fallen? For the canoeist, it might be the loss of a patch of powder-blue iris in a hidden cove. For the hiker, delicate lady's slippers, and secretive May apples beside the trail. Birders may regret the loss of the eagle, gliding on a thermal current, the osprey diving for its meal or a harrier hawk gliding low over the edge of a marsh. Some might long for the sweet song of the bluebird or the cheerful chirps of a chickadee, and there are those who worry about the honeybees and the monarch butterfly. Death to the planet by a thousand cuts.

For Katie Holten it is the forests. For Robin Wall Kimmerer it is "this good, green earth." For one of our generation's foremost songwriters, the late John Prine, it was a "backwards old town" in Kentucky.

*"Daddy, won't you take me back to Muhlenberg County?
Down by the Green River where Paradise lay
Well, I'm sorry my son, but you're too late in asking.
Mister Peabody's coal train has hauled it away."*

But like I said, for me it's always been about the fish. For I cannot live in a world without brook trout, and brook trout cannot live without aquatic insects, such as the delicate mayfly with its fairy-like wings and caddis flies, intriguing fellows these, who carry their homes of pebbles and sticks on their backs. Both fish and bugs require clean, cool, running streams and rivers, which in turn depend upon stable temperatures and the forest for shade and erosion control.

Like the brook trout, I'm a loner, the reason I gravitate toward those places less travelled. Why I spend hours behind closed doors, struggling to follow a trail of words as they appear from some unknown source, on occasion to fill a page.

I'm not a joiner. I pay dues to my local Trout Unlimited Chapter and a few other organizations, but rarely attend meetings. My inclination is to spend my time seated on a mossy bank of some tannin-stained stream. While there, I might welcome the company of a chocolate toad no larger than a button on my shirt, happy to greet a black bear lumbering past in search of a favourite raspberry patch, the moose looking bemused at finding me loafing about or the sleepy-eyed prickly paw waddling across the path after a night's adventure. I'd be pleased to hear the splash of a beaver's tail, sneak a peek at a mink slinking around a set of nearby boulders or a family of otters slipping down a ramp of mud like children on a play-ground slide, and maybe, just maybe, watching one of western Maine's native brook trout rise through the stillness of a forest pool.

But, if as Katie Holten warns in *The Language of Trees*, we are sleeping-walking into the apocalypse, do we not owe it to those good neighbours—the brook trout, the bear and moose, the porcupine and mink, the beaver and otter, the chocolate toad, the plants and trees, the air we breathe and the water we drink, to wipe the sleep from our eyes?

We may have overslept, but the alarm clock is ringing. Will you rise or simply slam it shut?

Kapiti Fly Fishing Club trip to Rotorua Lakes

Date From: Friday, 12 April 2024 to: Wednesday, 17 April 2024

Photos of location:



Description of location: Rotorua is a world-class destination renowned for its geothermal landscapes, rich Māori culture, and incredible backyard of with ancient forests and sparkling lakes. Best locations include the northwest side around Ngongotaha and the Waiteti Stream mouths and at the Hamurana Stream and Awahou mouths which all fish well in summer but can produce fish throughout the year. The Oahu Channel and Kaituna River also provides options. Lake Rotorua is a high catch rate area for rainbow and brown trout. There are 8 lakes and 8 rivers within easy distance from the accommodation. Boat fishing has a high success rate

Fishing techniques/equipment suitable for location: Flyfishing or spinning. Waders and wet weather gear. Floating and sinking lines. Smelt flies, Woolly Buggers, and boobies with trolling or harling tackle if boating.

Trip organizer: [Wayne Butson 0274962461 and waynebutson@gmail.com](mailto:waynebutson@gmail.com)

Trip party size/spaces available: a total of 8 spots with two already taken

Travel Arrangements: TBA. I will be taking a car and boat. I will be there before the 12th

Meeting time and place for start of trip: TBA and agreed by travellers

Trip grade: Easy Suitable for all no special equipment required.
Suitable for junior anglers (need KFFC parental consent form): No

Accommodation:

Unit 5/25 Robinson Avenue, Holdens Bay, Rotorua. Sleeps 8. Some off street parking. The house has 4 bedrooms, 1 bathroom and 1 kitchen. 3 rooms will be shared with a mix of bunks and singles and 1 room will have queen bed.

Nightly cost and spending money required: should be about \$20.00 a night but depends on final numbers.

What food to bring: lunches and any meals you want to cook. Multiple food opportunities in the area and a supermarket just down the road (5 mins drive).

What bedding to bring: Must supply your own sheets, pillowcases, and towels. Duvets provided.

Google map point and/or website links and access maps: Suggest you go to our club website or Facebook page and my presentation on Rotorua will set the scene

Personal location beacons, smartphones, and medical/First Aid kits:

Medical Centre by supermarket and basic first aid (I am very accomplished at removing flies from body parts of others having lots of practice on Oahu Channel over the years). Bring a PLB if you have one.

If you are interested in attending this trip, can you please contact Wayne Butson on 027 496 2461 as there is limited space available.

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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 or video 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.

*Newsletter copy to be received by
Second Monday of each month; your
contribution is welcome just send it to:*

malcolm1@xtra.co.nz

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 Tuesday of each month and the meetings are held at the Waikanae Boating Club 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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