



Kapiti Fly Fishing Club November 2023 Newsletter



Our Guest speaker this month is:

Strato Cotsilinis will be talking to us, firstly about the Wellington club's recent trip to River Valley Lodge on the Rangitikei, and then the major talk, his trip to Argentina – where the really big ones are!!

Don't forget to bring a gold coin for the raffle as the top prize has increased to a **\$50 voucher for Sporting Life Turangi**.

In this month's newsletter: This month's photo is of one of my great grandson Zephyr holding onto his trout and one of the many children that enjoyed the opportunity of land a trout at the Clubs Family- Take a Kid Fishing on the weekend of 18 and 19 September.

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Club activities

Date	Event	Coordinator
Monday 22 January	Club meeting – B.B.Q. Otaihangā	Graham
Monday 26 February	Club meeting – Guest speaker TBC	

Club Trips

We have nothing formal organised for the rest of this year, as things have conspired against us. Advice from Hawkes Bay is that the Tukituki and Waipawa have, rather surprisingly, reasonable numbers of fish of 1-2lbs, but the Tutaekuri and Ngaruroro are still 'stuffed'. We felt that it was better to give them a longer chance to recover before we start hassling them.



Presidents report

The highlight of the month was our Kids Fish-Out Day at Otaki's Winstone Lakes over the weekend of 18/19 November. We had 124 kids' names on the list for Saturday, and another 30 or so on Sunday. The weather was kind, with a lovely sunny day on Saturday, even if the bright sun did put the fish off the bite for a time in the middle of the day. Sunday was also okay, with the drizzle hardly enough to warrant a parker for more than perhaps an hour.

The pure delight of catching a first fish was wonderful to both see and hear, both for the kids and their parents/carers. Once caught, it was gilled and gutted by that stalwart Peter Butt – he hardly had a break all day! Then they were given a certificate to hang on the wall and brag about, a recipe sheet, a Fish & Game magazine, and the fish all wrapped up ready to take home and cook. Lots of our new club pamphlets also disappeared.

I guess my biggest regret is that we didn't have enough bodies to have an official photographer. In fact, our members were so busy with the kids – issuing licenses, helping them with the rods, casting for the little's – and some bigger kids as well, untangling crossed lines, putting on new flies (well maggot flies) and all the other things that needed to be done, that lunch was a snatched affair and cups of tea sitting on a chair were something to dream of. But thanks Frank for that cup you made for me – bliss!

So, a very big thank you to all those who helped during the 2 days. It was a long and very concentrated couple of days, and I suspect that it was a quiet night for most if you were like me – pretty stuffed! The only negative was that the Potaloo left on the site overnight had its trailer pinched from under the unit. At the time of writing, this hasn't been resolved, but I'm working on it.

As for getting out there, Hugh and I went to look at a small local river I had never fished before last week. We were rather surprised to see it running high as we hadn't had any rain at home, but there had been some in the hills obviously. It was clear enough to fish, so we headed upstream. Why is it that I don't always put my wading stick in, irrespective of conditions? Crossing and even walking up the side was treacherous at times. A strong stick from the bank sure helped.

Some lovely water, but certainly too high to spot anything. We were both good? enough to hook one each – mine being a fluke (nah – deliberate!) as it took the nymph at the end of the swing while I was looking to see where the next cast would go. A nice brown of about 3lb. Unfortunately, we had to come back a bit earlier than we would have liked as I had to be there to see our fish being put into the lakes. The river was dropping quite quickly and maybe later that afternoon it would have been easier and the fish back in position.

The club had its Xmas dinner at the Jolly Roger Pub this week and it was a very pleasant evening with about 22 of us enjoying good food and great company.

I hope you have been able to get out on the water too. There are a lot of good fish around just waiting for you to have a go.

Tight Lines



The Otaki Fish-out Day November 2023

Some pictures from the Fish-Out day – beautiful weather, hard fishing!



Our sincere thanks to our major sponsors and supporters:

- Leigh Sirett of Otaki Hunting & Fishing and his staff who managed the bookings for us
- Pub Charity & NZ Community Trust who sponsored the provision of the fish
- Wellington Fish & Game – and especially Matt Kavermann who helped us get the funding and provided the stuff we needed to run the event
- Graham Winterburn of GWRC who assisted with the pond management and access
- Gary Edwards of Winstone Aggregates who made the road in much more friendly!

Club Trips

We have nothing formal organised for the rest of the year, as things have conspired against us. Advice from Hawkes Bay is that the Tukituki and Waipawa have, rather surprisingly, reasonable numbers of fish of 1-2lbs, but the Tutaekuri and Ngaruroro are still 'stuffed'. We felt that it was better to give them a longer chance to recover before we start hassling them. We confirm that a club trip will not be going up until next year at the earliest.

We might arrange for a short duration trip, possibly mid-week, so get in touch with Hugh Driver if you are possibly interested in joining one.



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

2023 Women on The Fly Workshop

The second annual WoTF workshop was held at TALTAC on 10/12th November, with 40 attendees plus a team of 14 planners and presenters.

Saturday consisted of a rotating series of workshops in groups of eight. Bronwyn Wilson led fly tying classes, while Rachel McNae gave a practical riverside lesson covering entomology and landing trout. Our own coach, Gordon Baker, provided casting tuition alongside professional guide Kristina Placko, and Cherry Twaddle of the Taupo Anglers Club. Other topics covered included setting up gear, and three different approaches to fly fishing (also held on the water).

A Kapiti Fly Fishing Club (KFFC) subcommittee is responsible for the planning and management of the weekend workshop with members Greg de Bern, Gordon Baker and I operating under the supervision of KFFC's management committee. For this event the planning team also included Rachel McNae, (captain NZ Fly Ferns), Marion Hall and Betty Mani. A full report on the event will be made available shortly.

KFFC & WoTF

WoTF started as a low key, grassroots initiative to get more women to join KFFC, which has been very successful for KFFC and also for Fly Fishing clubs in other centres.

WoTF is now a rapidly growing community/network of several hundred women across New Zealand linked through friendship, social media, and an email list.

WoTF's unanticipated organic growth has only been possible because of the club's support and the enthusiasm and leadership of coach, Gordon Baker, along with Greg du Bern, Ruth Mckenzie, and Malcolm Francis.

This growth is due to:

- The many woman who participate online and attend events, often travelling long distances to enjoy the company of other women to learn and connect.
- The support of the KFFC management committee who ensure that appropriate governance exists to support this organically growing initiative.
- Fish & Game Wellington, and New Zealand, who encourage the leadership shown by KFFC to grow female participation.
- A wide range of industry stakeholders.
- My role as a networker/communicator and Kaitiaki of WoTF.

Importantly, from the outset, WoTF has attracted wide support, both regionally and nationally, and has not required direct funding from KFFC. Two KFFC donations totalling \$450 were much appreciated support for the workshops in 2022 and 2023. WoTF funds are currently held within the KFFC working bank account but are reported on separately in the financials.

Lastly, WoTF is grateful to the KFFC committee and members for continuing to host the initiative until discussions are advanced on how WoTF might become a standalone entity.

Where to find WoTF?

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 register your interest.



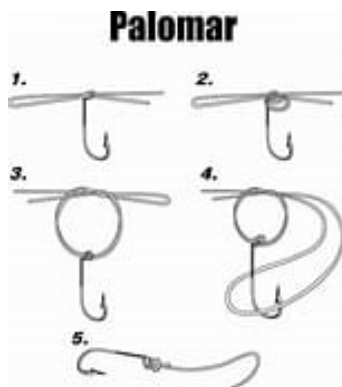
The Euro-Nymph Manifesto by Richards Barbless flies

A number of the 'tips' below are very relevant for any form of nymph fishing.

1. **Use Thin Tippet & Thin Flies** – Having your flies at the correct depth is generally key to any success. Using lighter tippet (6x & 7x) and thinner flies allows you to get smaller and lighter flies down quicker.
2. **Experiment with Knots** – Try a Palomar knot to tie on your nymph, it gives better tippet protection and is less likely to break thinner diameter tippets.
3. **“Foam is Your Home”** – Where there is foam, there is food (both on the surface and below). This is where the fish will be, it acts as a conveyor belt, taking food directly to the fish.
4. **Look for Seams** – Target any seam in the water. Fish want to expend as little energy as possible, so they wait in the slower water right on the seams.
5. **Colder Weather** = Slower and Deeper – In the colder weather conditions target the slower, deeper water and glides.
6. **Warmer Weather** = Shallower and Faster – When the weather conditions are warmer target the faster, shallower water. Listen for water that is making a noise.
7. **Be more Ian Botham** – Target any boundary you can see. Examples are where the water meets any object (rocks, banks, bridges etc).
8. **Watch for Cover** – Fish love cover. Keep in mind that cover can take numerous forms - faster water, depth, overhanging plants, and trees.
9. **Don't Arc, Track Straight** – A good indicator is to follow the current and any foam lines with your indicator. Try to not pivot around your body as your tracking will be in an arc and not straight.
10. **Indicator Visibility** – Hold whichever indicator you choose just above the surface of the water. Whilst tracking the flies back to you, keep the indicator at the same level above the water – this will require you to raise your rod when tracking back.
11. **Point, Dropper, Line** – When casting/lobbing your flies, remember to land your point fly first, then your dropper fly and then you fly line/leader. This way your flies will be fishing effectively as soon as they enter the water.
12. **Good Tracking** – The angle that the line and indicator enters the water should get steeper as you track your flies back towards you.
13. **Light Tension** – Keep light tension in the rig at all times. This is key for sensitivity and feel.
14. **The Tug is not the Drug** – Successful Euro Nymphing is all about bite indication. Lift at the sight of any unusual movement in the leader, don't wait for the tug.

15. **Lead the Flies** – Water flows slower at depth, remember this when leading your flies. Don't always try to keep up with the flow on the surface.
16. **Always Lift Slowly** – When re-casting always lift your flies out slowly, this is one of the key trigger for a fish to take.
17. **Lift, Don't Strike** – If you think there is a take, just lift the flies gently, if there's no take just drop them down again – this will often induce a take in itself (see the W Drift below).
18. **Remember the U** – 99% of takes when Euro Nymphing are when the flies are either on the way down to the bottom, or on their way up from the bottom. Think of writing a letter U, the vertical lines are the points at which a fish will usually take the fly.
19. **More U's than L's** – Thinking of the above analogy, use lots of short drifts rather than one long one.
20. **Try a W Drift** – The induced take is where the flies are artificially manipulated/lifted during the drift (think of it as writing a W; the start of the W is where the fly enters the water, the middle where it's manipulated and where you finish the W is the fly exiting the water).
21. **Short Drifts** – A short drift is better than a long drift. Competition anglers only drift their flies for around 3 seconds each cast. This is the classic mistake new anglers make, try counting to 5 and then re-casting.
22. **Ventromedial Hypothalamus** – The Feed or Flee Conundrum – When fishing we should always try to provoke a feeding response from the fish before provoking a fleeing response

How to Tie a Palomar Knot Step by Step



1. Pass a bight of rope through the eye of the hook
2. Pass it behind the standing part
3. Wrap it around the loop
4. Pass it around the hook
5. Bring it up
6. Pull the standing part to tighten
7. The knot is made

[\(2\) How To Tie A Palomar Knot: Palomar Knot 101 - YouTube](#)

The Flyshop Interclub Flytying Competition Results by Gordon Baker

Wellington Flyfishers Club hosted the event at their club meeting on November 6th. A good number of their members attended as did a number from the Hutt Valley. Our team consisted of Gordon Baker, Greg du Bern, Aussie Perry, and Noah Burton.

President Graham Evans travelled to support the team. The compulsory flies were Royal Wulff 14, Gold Bead Prince nymph 12, Craig's Night-time 8 for the seniors and Green Caddis nymph 12 for the novice tiers. Each of the seniors had to also tie a fly pattern of their choice.

Although the team finished second it did very well. Leading on points after the compulsory section with Noah winning the Novice fly and Gordon winning the dry. Greg and Aussie both came second with the nymph and lure. Hutt Valley Anglers outscored our team on the "Choice" fly and won by a small margin. WFC came third overall. A very nice supper and prizes were offered by the host club.

Kapiti Fly Fishing Club will host the next competition on November 25th, 2024



Nymphing: The Top-Down Approach by Domenick Swentosky

One of the biggest misconception in nymphing is that our flies must bump along the bottom. Get it down where the trout are, they say. Bounce the nymph along the riverbed because that's the only way to catch trout. We're told to feel the nymph tick, tick, tick across the rocks, and then set the hook when a trout eats. With apologies to all who have uttered these sentiments and given them ink, it's just not true.

Effective nymphing is largely about *not* touching the bottom. Real nymphs aren't down there banging their heads against rocks and bouncing up and down. No, they're not. With neutral buoyancy and generally poor propulsion systems, dislodged nymphs are gliding through the strike zone. And mimicking that drift is our most effective goal.

[READ: Troutbitten | Forget the Bottom — Glide Nymphs Through the Strike Zone](#)

Bad Things

Three things happen when we touch bottom, and none of them are good'\'.

1. The nymph touches rocks covered with algae or moss, picking up one or the other or both. But trout don't eat nymphs with a side salad. So, we clean the fly or fish without noticing the added vegetables on the hook for a while, making multiple fruitless casts while trout reject our fly.
2. The nymph pauses and stutters as it touches rocks, looking altogether unnatural while dramatically speeding up and slowing down. And again, wise trout reject our fly.
3. The nymph finds a snag. If it hangs on a rock, you might get it back by tugging in the opposite direction, but you'll spook any fish sitting nearby. If the hook is embedded into wood, you won't retrieve it without walking over and spoiling the spot or breaking off the fly. Don't forget that the latter also spooks fish.

There is No Sixth Sense

There's one more thing that happens when we touch bottom. If we do it often enough, we start guessing about whether the next tick is a trout-take or the riverbed.

Bump, bump. Nope.

Bump, tick, tick. SET!

Nothing.

"Was that a fish?"

"I don't know, but that felt like a fish."

Forget that! Forget all of it. There is no way to reliably determine if a trout ate your nymph or the fly touched a rock. None. Trout don't grab nymphs, they just slide over or tilt up and intercept them, stopping their progress downstream (usually). So, most takes are as subtle as . . . well, they're as subtle as your nymph grazing a rock on the bottom.

No one can reliably determine a trout-eat vs contact with a rock. And any idea that there's a sixth sense for such a thing is just hocus pocus.

In fact, touching bottom too much deadens our senses. Repeated contact with the riverbed forces the angler into a guessing game. And because fishing is fishing, we usually guess the wrong way at the wrong time.

Instead ...

Glide nymphs through the strike zone and try *not* to touch the bottom. Yes, I've written about this at length. And it's one of the key points to good nymphing. I focus on it every time I'm out there

The Top-Down Approach

A good cast sets up a quality dead drift for the nymph. And depending on our nymphing method (tight line vs suspension) there are either limitless or limited adjustments to be made throughout the drift.

But regardless of the nymphing method used, the angler does better to avoid the bottom, especially the first time through a specific lane. Then ride the fly deeper on consecutive drifts, after learning something about the current's depth and speed.

I repeat, bad things happen by touching the riverbed, so avoid it. Try to keep the nymphs off the bottom.

By "top," I don't mean the water's surface. Instead, I'm targeting the top of the strike zone. And the first time through a chosen drift lane, I try to barely ride into that cushion of slower water. In doing so, I often find exactly what I was looking for. On the first few drifts, I usually locate the zone by reading the sighter or suspender. Then I spend the next handful of drifts refining one single lane and getting as deep into the strike zone as I dare. In the best spots, I may purposely touch the bottom on my last couple drifts, just to be sure I get down to the lowest part of the strike zone while presenting my nymph to the trout.

That's the top-down approach, where the first few drifts are higher and the last few are low enough to be sure.



That's a big Flipper

Here's what is like in practice

It's been a good morning. The trout are active enough to provide the rewards for hard work, and they're discriminating enough to teach the right things.

Nobody's home behind this large chunk of limestone, so I'll test the seam to the left. It's a 1-metre-wide channel, about 1 metre deep, and I can effectively drift through about ten feet of it before the shelf of rocks extending to my right ends the productive lane. The seam is deeper and greener than the water next to it, and wild trout have been eating in this type of water all morning long.

I wade three steps forward and a half step to my left, putting myself in perfect range for a cast that is twenty feet above me and ten feet over. I'm on a tight line nymphing rig, so I'll guide the flies down one seam with my rod tip.

Because I can't see the bottom, I really have no understanding of what the riverbed looks like. But I can make a good guess. My sight angle is decent because the sun is behind me. And I can judge the water depth by its colour alone.

On the first cast, I place a single beadhead stonefly into the lane with a shallow tuck cast. I deliberately try *not* to touch anything on this first ride, but I get my fly below what I think is mid-column and look for the strike zone. When the nymph is just beside the rock, the sighter slows down a bit, and I set the hook. I touch no rocks and no tree parts, so I know I found the top of the strike zone — that's what created the hesitation in the sighter. Nice. The hook set becomes my backcast and I'm right back into the same seam.

On the second drift, I tuck cast a little steeper and lift a couple seconds before leading, creating a more vertical angle on the sighter. Both adjustments allow me to get deeper quicker. And by no surprise, my nymph finds the strike zone before approaching the side of the rock. I set on a hesitation again. Yup. That's the strike zone. Backcast, and I'm right back into the same seam.

I spend the next few drifts deliberately guiding my flies through the strike zone. I easily find the necessary depth each time, and I do my best to influence the nymphs only enough to keep them moving along, so they neither sink to the bottom nor drag downstream unnaturally.

By the seventh or eighth drift, I have an excellent understanding of the currents and the riverbed below. I've used the nymphs as a probe to gather a mental image of what lies beneath. Each drift gets better, until one of them is just right. The adjustments I've made — the tuck cast, the leading angle, the speed, the depth — all allow for the perfect presentation, and a trout eats the fly. Set the hook. Fish on. Net. Release.

Thank you, river. Cast again.

And never once did I touch the bottom.

The action remains this way all day long. The trout are picky, but it's a fair game. And when I get a drift close enough to perfect, they eat the fly.

I work upstream, alternating between tight line and suspender presentations. I read the indicator for the strike zone, just the same as I read the sighter. And at every new lane, I start with a top-down approach, avoiding the river bottom as much as possible, and riding a little deeper with each cast until I find the strike zone.

Effective

The top-down approach works. Fishing this way allows me to get into a rhythm. I'm rarely interrupted by snagging the bottom, cleaning flies, breaking off or tying knots. I'm fishing. And I'm refining — not guessing or hoping.

Fish hard, friends.

Still Crazy after all these years – The psychotic angler by Richard Wilson



One That Got Away on the Kangia River in Greenland

It takes two short questions to expose just how viscerally brain-bending fishing can be.

The first is ‘*Why do we go fishing?*’ This isn’t subtle and needs just 3 words for an answer. Maybe there’s someone out there who’ll say they don’t go fishing to catch fish, but I’ve never met them. There’s no shortage of secondary reasons such as good company and beautiful locations, but they’re all predicated on the idea that we go fishing to catch fish. The clue is in the name. This answer, as I will demonstrate, is wrong.

So, here’s the second question: What’s your most memorable *One That Got Away*? The Special One. That oh-so-nearly fish of cruelly snuffed gratification? Make a mental note of your answer.

“I shall remember that son of a bitch forever,” — Norman Maclean, A River Runs Through It.

We’ve all lived the moment: A fish takes, the water boils silver, sinews strain and adrenaline surges. Then suddenly, catastrophically, the rod is weightless, and a flaccid line shapes a languid downstream curl. Time pauses until reality bleeds back in, but the void and the fish that filled it are infinite.

Many of our most memorable losses come early in life. For example, the 3lb wild trout in a small stream when I was 14. We parted company in the dying of the day with only the bats as a witness. And still, it stalks me. This is odd because at 12 I had caught a bigger wild trout in more challenging conditions. Yet I remember every detail of the one I lost and a lot less of the one I netted. I am not alone in this, and the difference between the two matters. People who remember a tantalising near-miss more acutely than a success attract psychologists, drawn vulture-like to a nascent psychosis.

“It is good to lose fish. If we didn’t, much of the thrill of angling would be gone.” — Ray Bergman.

All fly fishing, especially salmon and steelhead, is conducted against increasingly steep odds. A cursory glance at the catch returns makes for dismal reading. So, as we head for the river, we save face by telling anyone who'll listen that there's too little or too much water, the wrong wind, nets in the estuary, bloody farmers, bloody pollution, bloody this and bloody that and, of course, bloody climate change. It's gonna be tough.

And as fast as we lay down the reasons for why fishing is futile, we ignore them. Well, I do, and I expect you do, too. OK, the river's not looking great, but after several blank days flogging warm, low water there's a single lacklustre fish showing and I'm due some luck.

"*Look on the bright side,*" I say to myself, "*What are the odds against yet another fishless outing? This is going to be my day.*" And therein lies trouble because this is magical thinking. The men and women in white coats will identify it as the *Gambler's Fallacy*, another red flag for psychosis.

Psychosis: noun (psychoses)

Characterised by a loss of contact with reality and an imperative belief that one's actions are rational.

The *Fallacy* works like this: At the Casino de Monte-Carlo on 18 August 1913 the ball fell on black 26 times in a row. As the streak lengthened gamblers lost millions betting on red because, surely, the next spin could not be yet another black.

According to my abacus, the odds on 26 successive blacks are about 135m:1 — give or take several million. But the odds of the next spin going Red are always 2:1 regardless of what happened the spin before (for pedants, the true odds on a roulette table are 37:18). The point is that a spin of the roulette wheel is not affected by the previous spin, just as a fishless week cannot make tomorrow successful.

'Ah,' you say, '*in a casino I'm at the mercy of the House, but when fishing I can make my own luck*'. This is true, but only up to a point. For example, we could go fishing only on days when all the conditions are perfect. And we could fish well-stocked waters. And choose a lucky fly, buy a cool hat, cast perfectly and in all manner of ways take control.

Which is why we always catch and release a creel-full. Except, of course, we don't. The only near odds-on certainty about fly fishing is that nobody catches anything without a line in the water. Everything else is marginal. As John Gierach almost says: You can change your fly and catch a fish, or you can stick with the old one and catch a fish — or not. I know of only one exception to this rule: A friend who caught his first salmon with a gaff (and helpful gillie) on a fine Scottish river. This is not encouraged nowadays.

The next psychosis red flag is the kicker for anglers, and it's also rooted in gambling. If you have ever played a casino one-armed bandit, you'll know how this feels: You pull the handle or press the button and the wheels spin. Click, click, click — 3 oranges line up across the screen, left to right. The 4th wheel spins a little longer until the last orange drops into the line, pauses, twitches, harrumphs and then shudders one place onward with its last gasp. It's a heart-wrenching moment of loss, because in that skipped beat the ecstasy roar of cascading coins filled your ears.

The excitement of this fruity near miss is so strong that it can be seen on an MRI scan. Brain activity hits peaks akin to sex or drugs in a scanner light show so awash with dopamine that it's visibly more exciting, and addictive, than an actual win. The subconscious brain desperately wants to do that again, and again, and again. The manufacturers know this and are in a continual battle with the regulators to deliver plenty of these near misses. In terms of brain activity, that last orange is up there with great sex, a mirror covered with cocaine - or *that* fish, the *really* big one that got away. We want more – and we want it *NOW*. Which cues this.

"I wouldn't recommend sex, drugs or insanity for everyone, but they've always worked for me." — Hunter S Thompson.

As always, Thompson was onto something. Somewhere between the showboating and the drink, drugs, sex, and dopamine, he rode a compulsive wave that we can all relate to, even if we can't ride it as hard or fluently as he did.

Behavioural problems are persistent and the younger we start the harder they are to shake off. So, the fish we lost as a teenager set our already hormone-addled and overstimulated brains on fire. An explosion of dopamine made us fishing junkies. That's because our inner teenage ape was still learning how to swing through the trees — and although catching the next branch was important, having it slip through our fingers was much more memorable; but only if we survived. The biggest lessons in life are learned in failure.

In my experience, people who dabble in fishing and then quit do not have a *One That Got Away*. They get out before it's too late. Which would be laudable, but they then miss out on all the fun: The exquisite pain of that lost fish.

And as salmon aficionado and serial author Max Hastings so accurately summed up: *"I can remember almost every salmon I have ever lost with much better clarity than the fish I have landed.*

So, let's revert to my opening question: 'What's your most memorable *One That Got Away*?'. I expect it's not really just the one, is it? Even though I lost count years ago, they're all still swimming around in the back of my mind like fish in a deep, clear-water pool, some occasionally rising to the surface before sinking back again, others always in view.

It's not just that we regular fishermen and women are losers, we're serial losers.

Paradoxically, we rationalise fishing as the sport of *catching* fish.

No, it isn't.

The old man, the kid, and the dumpling by Bob White



Morning Light on Timmerman's Island-artwork by Bob White

It seemed only normal that the kid had followed me to Alaska to work summers at the lodge.

It was the kind of hangover I liked and often cultivated. Enough of one to remind me that I'd had a good time, but not enough to shy me away from the first evening drink. I sat in the shop among the ancient and broken-down outboards that needed repair, cradling a mug of coffee, and watched the morning fog lift from the lake and disappear. High clouds were beginning to take form; it would be a fine day.

The first-year kid was early, and walked past the float planes to the end of the dock where he sat down next to the scow and dangled his wadered legs in the lake. He too had a mug of coffee, but it was more an attempt to fit in than a necessity.

The freighter had been loaded the evening before with a week's worth of refuse; that which couldn't be burned or ground into slop and poured into the lake. The contents had been covered the evening before with a ratty blue tarp so that none of the lodge's guests could see the unsightly pile of trash that was headed to the dump. That was our job for the morning, me and the chore-boy, to run the garbage scow the length of the lake, load everything into the panel truck and haul it to the dump where we'd pay a fee to throw it onto one of the enormous mountains of trash generated by the fishing village of Dillingham.

The kid wanted to be a fishing guide, and he'd make a good one. He was the kind I liked to work with. He was well built, with shoulders that'd spent summers haying, he was always early, never walked away from work, did his job with a smile, and he had a sense of humour. He was also the only son of my duck hunting partner and as the kid had gotten older, he'd taken his father's place in the blind. We'd become friends. It seemed only normal that the kid had followed me to Alaska to work summers at the lodge; where the guides were young enough to be my grand-children and I was older than most of the guests' parents.

"Morning Bobby", I said. "What are you studying?"

“Hey there, Bob.” The kid replied. “Just watching the clouds.” It was a curious point of pride that we both shared the same first name. “What do they look like to you?” I asked, figuring to hear some weather-wisdom I’d imparted to the kid.

“Well, you see that one, high over Jack Knife Mountain ... the one with a hole in it?”

“Yeah, what’s it tell you?”

“It tells me that it must be September, ‘cause what it looks like.”

“Well, yeah,” I chuckled. “That’s one way to keep track of time. You want to make the run? I need another cup of coffee.” I’d pencilled it out once; the average Alaskan fishing guide drinks his weight in coffee every six weeks.

Lines were cast off while the first of the guests sleepily made their way up the hill from their cabins to what the guides called, “the big house” for breakfast. Bobby slowly idled away from the dock while I lit my first cigar.

The twin four-cycle Hondas were quiet enough to allow for conversation, but we drifted away into our own thoughts as was our habit.

We’re more alike than he knows, I thought. Though he hides it well, I know he gets nervous when he works with the other, more experienced guides. He’s afraid of forgetting something, making a mistake, or stumbling and being marked as a kid, a fucking new guy. And me? I worry about the same damned things because if a stumble I’ll be thought of as a washed-up old man.

When we got to the beach, across from the village of Aleknagik, Bobby walked up the hill to fetch the old bakery truck that was used to haul everything, supplies, groceries, luggage, and trash. The muffler was long gone, and I could hear it coming before he could see it. The truck was backed down the landing to the bow of the scow and the process of moving the trash began.

“Why don’t you take the back of the truck and I’ll hand the barrels up to you,” Bobby suggested. But even this arrangement distressed my back to the point where I needed the occasional break.

Sensing this, Bobby stopped the process and walked to the back of the boat, returning with a cup of coffee. It was enough of a rest, the trash was moved, and we rode toward the dump in silence.

“Do you think that cute gal will be working the dump office today?” Bobby asked, breaking the silence.

“Ahhh... the ‘Little Dumpling’”, I said. “She’s rather fetching if I do say so myself.

“Tyler holds the record for the smallest dump-bill she’s given so far this season; he thinks she likes him.”

“You go in and do the talking, kid ... Tyler’s got nothing on you.”

The kid put on his best smile and the Dumpling seemed to perk up as he walked into the gate house. The conversation took much longer than it should have, and I watched the Dumpling admiringly. *If I was twenty years younger, I thought, with a sigh, I might have a chance with her.*

Bobby had a smile on his face as he hopped in the truck. “Twenty-five dollars for the whole load,” he said triumphantly.

“You should get her name and ask her out the next time you’re stuck in town,” I suggested. “You never know.

“I don’t know,” Bobby said, “maybe, if she was twenty years younger.

This is Why sling Mice for Trout by Chad Shmukler



I count 19

In a recent post, oh-so cleverly titled [Mousing Accomplished](#), I related how my pledge to catch a trout on a deer hair mouse pattern while on a brief summer tour of Alaska was saved at nearly the last opportunity by a stroke of good luck. The good news is, my experience was entirely atypical, thanks to a preposterous, never-before-seen Alaskan heat wave. Normally, luring voracious Alaskan rainbows to swung and skated deer hair mouse patterns is relatively easy and fantastically entertaining monkey business.

The picture above of the stomach contents of an unintentionally mortally wounded trout caught on the Kanektok River, shared by the staff of the [Togiak National Wildlife Refuge](#) in southwestern Alaska, should provide all the proof one would ever need to confidently tie on a mouse pattern when hunting Alaskan rainbow trout.

To be fair, the unfortunate souls above are those of the common shrew, and not mice. This is, however, an altogether unimportant distinction. The point is that trout like rodents. A lot.

Despite their affinity for rodents, finding almost 20 in the belly of any one trout is a bit unusual. The folks at Togiak National Wildlife refuge have suggested that bank erosion may have led to an unexpected swim for a family of shrews, much to the trout's delight. But it's also worth noting that shrews don't only end up in the water accidentally, or on a daring dash to cross to the other side. Shrews feed almost consistently due to their incredibly high metabolism and even do so aquatically, diving to the bottom of water bodies to feed on aquatic invertebrates, able to hold their breath for up to a minute.

Thousands of birds die at important wetland, from deadly diseases caused by pollution by Andrea Vance

Agricultural and industrial run-off have caused a botulism outbreak that has killed thousands of birds at Whangamarino Wetland near Te Kauwhata and Meremere.

A strange silence has gripped Whangamarino. It's a deathly silence.

The corpses of thousands of dead birds have piled up around the extensive mosaic of swamps, fens, bogs, and open water between Waikato's Meremere and Te Kauwhata.

But large populations of Whangamarino birds have fallen sick with avian botulism, dying a gruesome death after they have lost the ability to walk and use their wings.



Fish & Game staff are horrified at the number of dead birds, killed in an avian botulism outbreak at the Whangamarino wetlands. The paralysis eventually robs them of the ability to hold up their heads, and they drown in the waters that were once a haven.

Now, appalled by the outbreak, Fish & Game New Zealand has launched a stinging attack on Waikato Regional Council, accusing the local authority of permitting dairy intensification and failing in its statutory obligation to protect freshwater environments.

Fish & Game Chief Executive Corina Jordan said the disease outbreak, which is in its third month, was “appalling” and a wake-up call for “urgent action.”

Devastated Fish & Game staff, as well as community volunteers, have collected almost 2000 birds, including Matuka, in the last month.



Waikato Regional Council says a “blackwater event” caused the disease outbreak. That’s when organic matter – like nutrients – reduce oxygen in the water, after heavy rain and warm temperatures.

Although classed as internationally significant, the wetland has long faced environmental challenges, overloaded with sediment and nutrients from farming and industrial run-off and storm water. Poor water quality, and changes to how the water flows, have contributed to low oxygen levels in the swamp.

Lake Waikare, one of the world’s most polluted lakes, was diverted into the wetland as part of a flood control scheme. Locals call it Fanta Lake, because of its vivid, orange colour.

As the pools become stagnant, this creates the perfect breeding conditions for bacteria which produces a botulism toxin deadly to birds but harmless to humans.



Cyanobacteria – or blue-green algae – which can produce dangerous toxins, thrives at Lake Waikare. The polluted water drains into Whangamarino.

The toxin is consumed by fish and aquatic invertebrates, which are then eaten by waterfowl. When *Stuff* visited the site on Friday, some of the waters were orange and there was an overwhelming, rotting stench.



The Matuka, or Australasian bittern; more threatened than most Kiwi species

Jordan said even freshwater eels, which are hardy and able to tolerate low-oxygen environments for short periods, had perished.

“We are concerned at the rhetoric we hear from authorities labelling these incidents as natural,” Jordan, who is a freshwater ecologist, said.

“Parts of this wetland have been without oxygen for the best part of three months, leading to massive aquatic deaths of even the hardiest freshwater species such as eels. This isn’t normal in healthy freshwater wetland systems.”



Jordan said the council must now take a “hard look” at how the catchment is managed and limit discharges into the waterways.

She also wants to see a long-term plan for managing Whangamarino.

Ngāti Naho said it wants “answers not excuses.”

“We are tired of the hui with consultants that lack follow-through or hollow speeches from iwi leaders or mayors that go nowhere,” Ngāti Naho Trust chief executive Haydn Solomon said.

“Our waterways are getting hammered. Our wetlands, lakes, rivers and springs are at breaking point, yet nothing substantive and meaningful is done.”

Water is the source of life on Earth, so why are we poisoning it?

He is cynical about consultation exercises. “Sometimes you are lucky if the local or iwi officials show up to the meeting at all on the waterways.”

“But when it comes to the big flash infrastructure projects like the Auckland to Hamilton [transport] corridor, high-density housing, solar farms, expansion of the rubbish dump, or taking more water and sand from our river for Auckland they are all there to clip the ticket.”

The council’s science manager Mike Scarsbrook said the council is seeking to control intensification of land use and control the sources of nutrients and sediments into the Waikato and Waipa rivers through a regional plan change.

But it has come up against legal action, with more than 20 appeals.

“Unfortunately, this has been a prolonged process that currently sits under appeal to the Environment Court,” he said.



News: Poisoning of the Whangamarino Wetland near Te Kauwhata and Meremere. Agricultural and industrial run-off have caused a botulism outbreak that has killed thousands of birds. It is also spreading to Horowhenua and other areas. This area is hugely important not least because there is a colony of the v rare Australasian Bittern (A SUPER COOL BIRD THAT CAN STAND STILL FOR FIVE HOURS AT A TIME) and black mudfish which are ugly but super-rare.

Sarah Lealand, the council’s lower Waikato zone manager, pointed to work with landowners in the Waikare and Whangamarino catchments to stabilise hill country and stream banks and said flood protection infrastructure was continuously being improved.

“The flood scheme provides an important function in protecting rural and residential properties and key national infrastructure, such as roading, from flooding,” she said.

Covering 7290 hectares (about 18,000 acres), Whangamarino is the second largest wetland complex in the North Island.

A draw for duck hunters, it is a roosting and feeding ground for dabbling duck, mallard, grey and shoveler. It is also the only remaining location for the extremely rare, tiny swamp helmet orchid and a stronghold of the black mudfish.



The Black Mudfish are at risk, mostly due to widespread loss of habitat, invading pest fish and reduced water quality.

Wetlands reduce the impacts of flooding, absorbing heavy rain and releasing water gradually.

They are also a natural buffer for floods and tsunamis, and a recognised tool in climate change mitigation. They are our densest natural carbon store.

But New Zealand has less than 10% of its original wetlands left. Between 1996 and 2018, 5761 hectares (14,235 acres) were lost, mainly drained for farming. Last month, Stuff revealed the Government had rowed back wetland protections, introduced in 2020, after pressure from industry groups.

The Department of Conservation says it believes at least 1400 birds have been affected but has had no reports of dead or sick Matuka, or Mudfish, but confirmed eels have died.

Tinaka Mearns, Hauraki, Waikato, and Taranaki director of operations, said the outbreak is concentrated on the Whangamarino and Maramarua rivers. “Historically there has been a matrix of management models and organisations that need to work together to manage wetlands like Whangamarino and other waterways across the country,” she said.



“New Zealand as a whole is getting to grips with this legacy and DOC is working constructively with other agencies, tangata whenua, land-owners, and other stakeholders to address these issues. We are optimistic and motivated to work with others to improve our wetlands.”

The New Sporting Life Turangi

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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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