



Kapiti Fly Fishing Club

December 2019 Newsletter

This month's photo: I hope you all meet 'Farther Christmas' out there on a river somewhere and enjoy netting a fine trout.

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We would like to wish all our members and their families a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year – KFFC Management Committee

Club activities

Date	Event	Coordinator
Monday 27 January 2020	Club Night – Fun and Laughter at Otaihangā Domain.	Michael
Saturday 8 February	Take the Kids Fishing Day – Otaki	Malcolm
Monday 24 February	Club Night	
February 2020	Mohaka River	
March 2020	Whanganui – Whakapapa River	
April/May 2020	Manganui o te Ao – Tuki Tuki River	

I would like to remind members that Sporting Life are our sponsor and you are encouraged to visit their website or contact them when you are next looking for a fly-fishing item to purchase, Graham will give you a generous discount as a club member.



President report

Well, another year is almost behind us as we move into the Festive Season and what a year it has been. Our fishing trips have been well attended with some good fishing and even better the camaraderie and been amazing and friendships made. I have been fortunate to have been on the last two away trips to both Turangi and Retaruke and whilst my fishing has been average to say the least, I have enjoyed them both. In my mind this is what the club is all about so next year make sure you book in early and come join us.

I also competed in the McWilliams Shield re-run on December 7th and was lucky to have fished with Malcolm who continues to teach me so much. No, we didn't catch any fish, but I now know where some beauts ones are.

Our club auction was a huge success with support from both the Hutt Valley and Wellington clubs whose members certainly supported us and got some bargains. I hope we will be able to interact more with all the regions clubs next year. A big thank you to all of those members who participated and went home with some new treasures.

Our Christmas dinner at the Jolly Pub in Paraparaumu was well attended, the food was good, and the room got noisier as more and more yarns (and a few lies) were told. It was so good to see so many partners present and remember that partners are also welcome to attend club nights.

Our membership continues to grow steadily which is very healthy. We don't have a formal view as to what membership numbers should be however my view is that the more of our fishing regions fisherpersons we have as members the better.

There isn't a formal club night in January however we will again meet for a fun social and casting session on the evening of Monday 27th at the Otaihanga Domain.

On the weekend of the Otaki Kite Festival on Sunday February 8th KFFC and the Horowhenua club are holding the Kids Fish out Day at the Winstones ponds above the Otaki river bridge. This is a huge event and Malcolm, Nick and Wayne from KFFC as well as Horowhenua clubs' representatives, along with Fish & Game have done a massive job in putting this together.

We need a big contingent to help on the day so please keep the weekend free and let Malcolm, Wayne or Nick know if you can assist. This is a big event for the clubs and the Kapiti area and will do a lot to promote sports fishing and getting kids "Out there doing it" and off their phones and social media. Our sport is continuing to be under threat from those who see trout as a threat which need eradicating so if you value the future then please do your best to put something back into our sport. Helping with the Kids Fish out day is a great way to promote fishing and ensuring that the benefits are seen too far outweigh any negatives.

If you want to help with any aspects of the club or have any views, then just give me a call and let me know. The present committee are doing a great job however it is your club and we want to make sure we deliver both the trips and club night events you want.

Finally, have a really nice Christmas and New Year, take care and remember that the fish will be where you find them so if you get a chance wet a line somewhere and you might be surprised. I,

for one, am looking forward to a summer of wet wading and dry flies, maybe with an enticing little nymph hung under them.

See you in the New Year, cheers Michael



Just a few photos taken at our Christmas function at the Jolly Rogger Pub – excellent food enjoyed by all.

You are invited to our next Club night on Monday 27 January 2020 when we have our annual fun evening at the Otaihangā Domain when you will have the chance to share your stories of fly fishing over the Christmas New Year break as well as joining in with some casting practice.

My experience of fishing the McWilliams Shield by Greg Squire

I learnt a great deal from Ken's freely imparted knowledge but even with his great competition experience worldwide he failed remind me, a novice, that leaving one car at the top of the run was necessary, rather than precautionary. (What follows is a typical fisher lie.) I was expecting to nymph up and then wet-line back down, utilising whitebait imitations.

As it turned out Malcolm and Michael confirmed the whitebait option would have been a good call whilst surprisingly persevering with upstream presentations. The end result was no fish for either team.

(And now for the truth, a rarity amongst anglers.)

Having left my car key in Ken's car we found it necessary to walk back from the top of the beat, suffering the opprobrium of onlookers asking why we hadn't caught anything. Not to worry. As no one else landed anything more than the usual detritus from back-casts I can now claim to be the equal of 3 of the most highly regarded fishers in the club.

Moreover, and uniquely, I can play the most famous piscatorial work ever composed; Schubert's trout quintet.

I look forward to seeing this rebuttal included in next month's newsletter, attack being the best form of defence!

Hoping to catch up with some of you sooner rather than later.

When should you change the fly? By Domenick Swentosky



My buddy, Smith, is stubborn. Whether he's traveling across the country or fishing our local rivers, he fishes the same handful of flies, year-round. Smith can literally hold his selection of nymphs, wets, dries and streamers in one hand without them spilling over. With patterns that are fine-tuned from experience, and a selection ruthlessly stripped down to the bare bones, his handful of hooks is the very definition of confidence flies.

Smith's trust in those patterns is so spot on, you might assume that he rarely changes flies. But you'd be wrong. Ask Smith, and he'll tell you he changes flies whenever it's necessary.

Now, what does that actually mean?

I've pared down my own selection of flies, after finding that too much choice is better for making excuses and wasting time rather than actually catching more trout. Keep things simple, and good things will follow.

I might need two hands for my own collection though, if only because I have an endless inclination for testing things. So, half of the space in my fly boxes is dedicated to the next experiment — the next variant. I'm always looking for a new confidence fly. And it takes a few seasons to resign myself to a fly's failure before kicking it out of the box. Remember: everything works sometimes.

So, let's consider this persistent and perpetual question: "When should I change the fly?"

I think it's important to be confident in what you carry in those fly boxes in the first place. My point? Find a reason to believe that the next fly is the necessary solution — that the next fly solves a problem and shows the trout exactly what they are after. And if you don't have such a reason at the ready, just keep fishing the fly you have on. (It too should be a confidence fly.)

Reasons at the ready

My guided guests are often surprised by how much we change flies. So, I always provide a rationale — my line of thinking — behind the switch.

If we're nymphing, the change is often nothing more than a consideration of weight. If we're riding too shallow, then let's tie on a heavier fly. Pretty simple.

Under the water, I might change flies because I want a different bead colour or a different type of flash in a nymph or streamer. Have we shown the trout copper beads and dark brown nymphs? Then let's try something with a black bead and light Hare's Ear dubbing with a hot-orange collar. Did we strip some flashy streamers through likely holding water? Then let's get away from the ice dub and Flashabou. Tie on a streamer with more sombre tones, and run it back through the same lie.

On the water's surface, my approach is similar, but the decisions are often centred around fly size and on-the-water profile. Specifically, I swap out dry flies that ride either *in* or *on* the water's surface. A fly like an X-Caddis lies flat, while a traditional Elk Hair Caddis dances on its hackle tips. Trout take them both just as well. But day to day, one or the other performs better. Up top, I believe colour is the least important dry fly variable, but the general shades of light or dark can be very important.

Whatever the fly type, and whatever part of the water column you're targeting, there should be a *reason* for every fly change. The next fly should solve a problem, or it should test an idea you have about what the trout are really looking for.

Good anglers have a theory about everything. The best anglers keep an open mind and trust the fish when they disagree.



WD40. I love it when they eat the small, natural stuff

When trout say no ...

Don't change a fly until you've effectively fished the one you have on. That's my guiding principle, so back up and read it again.

All you carry are confidence flies, right? And you have a good reason (a theory) for tying any fly to the end of your line. So, you only need to change flies if the trout disagree.

I change up when I know I've gotten excellent drifts over a few trout, but they still haven't taken it. It's a simple philosophy. However, the key is to recognize what an excellent drift really is — and to understand your own river enough to know when you've presented the fly to a few trout who have surely rejected it.

Most often, good anglers change the presentation before changing the fly. Refine the drift. Work from another angle. Get the nymph deeper with a tuck cast, or place the dry a little further upstream of the rise form. Get the most out of the fly you have on first. Show it to the trout in a few different ways and get a perfect drift.

Do they still say no? Then let's change the fly.

Fish hard friends and enjoy the day.

Retaruke Wanderings by Michael Murphy

After weeks of meticulous planning by Steve and Leon the trip was finally on with a great forecast as Mark, Greg and I headed off from Otaki in Kath's poor old heavily laden X-Trail with Pete, Kras, Stuart and Robert not far behind. Yes, us fishos take a lot of stuff with us no matter if it's a weekend trip or longer.

Now, TJ was, as usual off playing around with a fishing guide somewhere in the central north island and Steve and Leon took a shortcut via Turangi.

Now, where the heck is the Retaruke river and our accommodation The Blue Duck Station you may ask?

Well ... you turn left at Raurimu if you want a rough , dirt road track “ road” or at Owhango if you are a softie and head west, on and on it goes lots of dust and windy road till you arrive at Blue Duck Station having passed the Retaruke river some 30k prior.. Oh, heck there is going to be lots of driving on this trip.

Well, there was and a blown tire as well however the Station is a fantastic place. Basic but good enough accommodation but fantastic meals and incredibly interesting. Some 3500 hectares and bordering the Wanganui river it encompasses the Bridge to Nowhere and is a Mecca for young, fit overseas guys and gals who are walking the Te Araroa Trail and often stay on becoming “Eco Warriors “at the Station. we passed a fair number walking the dusty roads, packs on their backs and up to 40k a day in 25 to 30 degrees!

Where else could you sit on your balcony having your brekkie coffee and watch a couple of fallow deer below you on the far bank of the Wanganui river not more than 100 metres away.

The fishing was good with lots of feisty Rainbows around and we split into pairs each day. Poor old Greg got to put up with me, but we landed a few and had lots of laughs whilst the “Guns” on the trip had a ball with some nice fish to the net.

Sunday saw us fish different rivers on the way home and Mark got a couple of nice little Bows at Mangaweka.

For me the trip wasn’t just about the fishing but getting away with a group of good mates, getting to know new ones and exploring new territory and meeting some friendly farmers, who knew we were coming. What I do know is that without Steve and Leon’s efforts to make contact and arrange access with the farmers we would not have been able to access such great spots.

I am sure that lots of effort is being made for another epic away trip to new water in 2020. Come join us.



Photos from the Retaruke River trip

A Brown Trout quirk by John Juracek

This habit, or lack thereof, of feeding brown trout is unique among all species.



For the past several seasons I've been spending most of my fishing time pursuing brown trout. Free-rising brown trout. While so engaged I've been reminded countless times of a feeding quirk particular to this species. It's this: Brown trout react to food according to their own whims and fancy, completely independent of its presence and abundance. Surround them with a good hatch, spinner fall, or stonefly flight, and brown trout might feed readily, might feed haphazardly, or maybe not at all. Give them a sparse hatch and it's possible for every brown in the river to be on the fin, taking anything that drifts nearby. You just never know.

Other trout species don't act like this. Rainbows, cutthroat, brook trout—they all exhibit feeding patterns that pretty much correlate directly with the availability of food. When food's plentiful they can be counted on to eat it and eat it well. When food's sporadic, so too is their feeding. But not the brown trout. They feed according to their own schedule. (A Henry's Fork rainbow can be fickle like this too, but still fails to rank in the same class as a brown.)

What implications does this behaviour have for fishing? For one, it suggests that patience is often going to be a key to success. Don't give up too soon if fish aren't responding early in a hatch. Brown trout can take what feels like forever to come on to a hatch. Even then, they frequently give the impression that rising is something of a bother, practically more trouble than it's worth (uh, easily acquired, abundant food? Who cares?)

This quirk of feeding also means it's important not to pass judgment too quickly about your choice of fly or its presentation. Just because a rising fish fails to take your first cast (or fourth, tenth, even thirtieth) doesn't mean anything is wrong. Your fly may very well be right, your presentations perfect. Doesn't matter. Brown trout rise when they're good and ready.

Success then, at least for me, usually depends on figuring out the feeding rhythm of a given fish. Brown will often rise multiple times in succession and then go down for a period of time. This holds especially true for the largest specimens. Observing how many rises occur in each go-round, the interval between those rises, and the length of time the fish goes down for will help you

plan your casting. Naturally, you want your fly covering the fish at the most opportune time. And, stating the obvious, the execution of other elements of your presentation must be done well too.

I know that this sort of planning and fishing is not for everyone. That's okay. But if you're drawn to brown trout like I am, particularly *free-rising* brown trout, paying attention to their feeding behaviour is more than just an interesting sidelight. It's essential to their capture.

Getting Close by Todd Tanner



When I was a kid back in the late '60s and early '70s, I used to spend my weekends fishing at Murrow Park. The park's small pond, which was situated in the middle of a gorgeous meadow, had a sandy beach at one end where the locals came to swim in the summer. The deepest spot, out near the middle, was all of fifteen feet.

Every April our local hatchery truck would pull up and stock thousands of trout, creating an oversized version of "fish in a barrel." A week or two later, the town's youngsters would arrive for the annual Kid's Fishing Derby. We all hoped to win the Lions Club trophy for biggest fish.

I never won the Derby, although I sure put my time in. I fished that pond as long and hard as the rules allowed, and I always blamed my failure to take home the trophy on the fact that I couldn't reach the cool, deep water out in the middle. The kids who were lucky enough to have open-faced spinning reels and fancy rods could cast further, and they always seemed to do better than those of us relegated to the waters near the bank.

Little did I know that this one particular lesson - something akin to the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence - would mess up my fishing and hunting for years.

Society teaches us that further is always better. A forty-foot putt that drops into the hole is incredible. A two-foot putt - well, anybody can do that. It's the same thing with home runs, three-point field goals, and touchdown passes. We're always rooting for the Ruthian blast that clears the

bleachers, or the 60-yard pass that settles into the receiver's hands at the goal line. Let's face it. Those are feats of skill; displays of power and talent so extraordinary that they separate the stars from the also-rans. And who doesn't want to be a star?

Unfortunately, this "further is better" mentality has spent the last few decades creeping into our hunting and fishing. We admire the guy who can drop an elk with one shot at 400 yards, or who can throw an entire fly line, or who can crank his bow up to 320 f.p.s. and arrow a massive whitetail at 57 paces.

Many of us equate skill with a rod or a gun with prowess in the field. We've convinced ourselves that someone who's a great shot must also be a great hunter, and someone who's a marvellous caster must be an incredible fisherman. Yet we rarely take into account that our sporting pursuits are not simplistic, one dimensional activities, but rather the marriage of all the skill, knowledge, passion, intuition, and experience we can bring to bear.

Having the ability to make that long shot or long cast is a wonderful thing, assuming that it's part of our tool kit; the set of diverse skills that we've developed over the years. But if we use those long range skills on a regular basis - if we take that 300 yard shot, or make that 80 foot cast, because we're lazy or because we haven't cultivated the complementary talents that allow us to get close to our target - then we're missing out on the true outdoor experience.

Extreme distance, whether it's with a cast or a shot, severs any sense of connection between us and our quarry. And that connection is what our time outdoors is all about.

Thankfully, the pendulum of distance is finally swinging back where it belongs. Sportsmen and women are once again calling for balance; for integrating our skills rather than relying on technology to make up for a lack of physical and mental prowess.

The argument against distance come down to two things: skill and respect. Let's say a deer hunter with a scoped rifle decides to take a 200-yard offhand shot. He takes careful aim and then drops a walking mule deer buck in its tracks. Let's assume that the hunter is in reasonably good physical condition and that the terrain provides some cover. Did our hunter make the right call?

Let's look at "respect" first. As hunters, we should do everything in our power to harvest our quarry in the most humane fashion possible. That means we have a responsibility to take shots with an extremely high likelihood of success. For a fellow hunting with a longbow, respect might dictate that his shots are 20 yards or closer; for a compound bow with mechanical sights, 30 yards might be the outside limit. A rifle hunter with a good rest, quality optics, an intimate knowledge of his weapon and an animal standing broadside might decide that 300 yards is reasonable. That same hunter, with no rest and a moving animal, might determine that an 80-yard shot is not. In other words, there are any number of situations that are black & white, and even more that are shades of grey.

So, let's boil it down to a simple formula. If you can make that exact same shot nine times out of ten, then take it. If not ... well, you've got to decide what's more important, your ego or the animal you're trying to harvest. As far as most ethical hunters are concerned, it's not worth taking a chance on a questionable shot. If you've ever tracked a gut-shot deer or lost a crippled elk to a snowstorm, you know exactly what I mean.

Let's get back to our example; the hunter who killed his buck at 200 yards with an offhand shot. Did he make the right call? From my point of view, the answer is a flat-out "No." I've never met a hunter who could put a bullet in a deer's heart/ lung area ninety percent of the time when he was shooting offhand and the deer was both two hundred yards away and on the move. Consequently, it was a poor shot despite the results.

But what about the "skill" angle? After all, doesn't it take a tremendous amount of talent to make that 200-yard shot without a rest?

The answer is a definite "maybe." There are certainly hunters who, through years of practice, can consistently put a bullet into a pie plate at 200 yards offhand. There are even marksmen who can do it with a moving target. So, for those few people - yes, there's an incredible amount of skill involved. But for the rest of us, that shot comes down to luck. And from where I sit, a wing and a prayer aren't nearly enough justification when you're trying to make a clean, ethical kill.

Now to tell the truth, I didn't used to feel that way. In fact, I used to believe that my ability to shoot a buck through the heart while he was leaping over a fence, or to kill a distant elk with an offhand shot, was a sign of my ability as a hunter. Man was I wrong. I took shots I had no business taking, and I justified my faulty judgment by saying that I almost always hit what I was shooting at.

Well, that's all fine and dandy, but when your ethical sidestepping leads to a long and fruitless blood trail - which it eventually did for me - you have two choices. You can try to figure out where you went wrong, or you can start lying to yourself. And that should be an easy choice.

So, respect - respect for the animal, respect for the sport, indeed, respect for yourself - boils down to knowing your limits and your quarry and refraining from questionable shots. That's easy enough.

Skill, though, is not so simple, especially since it takes so many different forms.

There's no doubt that shooting a bow or a rifle well is a valuable skill, as is the ability to make a long, accurate cast with a fly rod or a spinning outfit. Indeed, most folks would agree that if you're going to hunt or fish, you owe it to yourself to develop a certain level of proficiency with your equipment.

Be that as it may, I'm going to make a statement that some people won't like, but that the best hunters and fishermen will almost never dispute. The ability to make a long, accurate cast or shot should be down near the bottom of the list when it comes to a sportsman's priorities. In fact, I'm going to go even further and say that the reason many people rely on a long distance approach is because they don't have the necessary skills to get in close - and that those close-in skills are the true test of a hunter or angler.

I believe that the mark of a great sportsman is his (or her) ability to get in tight to his quarry. The most accomplished fly fishermen don't usually cast more than 40 feet when they're fishing for trout on moving water. And it's not because they lack the skill to make long, difficult casts. It's because the closer they get, the greater the likelihood that they'll put the fly exactly where they want it, adjust for drag, and see the rise. Getting in close gives them more control over the entire process.

It's the same for hunters. The hunter who releases his arrow at 12 yards not only has the satisfaction of being mere yards from his target - close enough to smell that huge bull, to hear the sound of its breathing, to see the bark shavings hanging from its antlers like dark tinsel on a huge, barren Christmas tree. He also he knows that his odds of making a successful shot are excellent. Chances are that the bull won't jump the string, or a gust of wind won't turn his arrow from the mark, or his elk won't take a step or two before the arrow arrives at the target.

Even better, our hunter has played the game at the highest possible level. He's beaten the odds to get within mere feet of a monarch, and that very act, that culminating moment of skill and woodcraft, brings him into the moment in a way that's impossible for a guy who's 400 yards away.

Which is the exact opposite of that 60-yard touchdown pass we like to rave about. You've already done the hard work, you've used your skills to overcome that animal's incredible sensory defences, and all that's left is a shot you could make in your sleep. That, my friends, is the mark of a true sportsman.

Deep History by Kennedy Warne photos by Crispin and Irene Middleton

BENEATH THE WATERS OF LAKE WAIKAREMŌANA IS A LOST WORLD, A 2000-YEAR-OLD TABLEAU OF THE LAKE'S SURPRISING ORIGIN.

WAIKAREMŌANA, THE MANY-ARMED LAKE at the edge of Te Urewera, in the eastern North Island, offers a tantalising glimpse of how things were before humans arrived in Aotearoa. Its waters contain mysteries and memories, some ancient, some recent, many of them now coming to light. Millions of years ago, mountainous Te Urewera, like most of the landmass geologists now call Zealandia, lay under the sea. The forest-clad hills we see today are marine deposits of silt and sand, lifted and tilted by the tectonic forces that have shaped Aotearoa.

During that long tectonic journey, there was no Waikaremōana. No lake at all, just steep ravines with swift-flowing rivers scouring through the rock strata. Then, 2200 years ago—around the time that Hannibal was crossing the Alps, the Romans were building the first sundial and the Chinese were inventing tofu—something dramatic happened.

Two landslides carrying millions of tonnes of fractured sandstone and siltstone swept down from the mountains, converging to produce a wedge some eight kilometres long and four kilometres wide that blocked what is now the Waikaretaheke River. Slowly and steadily the valleys backfilled with water, producing a lake that is 256 metres at its deepest point—the deepest lake in the North Island.

Remarkably, many of the trees that were living at the time Waikaremōana was formed remain preserved by the lake's waters as a forest frozen in time. Their leafless crowns still stretch towards the sky, beckoning not birds but fish to flit through their naked branches.

History

Into encircled lands

This, at any rate, is the geologists' story. There is another story of the lake's origin, far more evocative and disturbing. It is the one told by the lake's indigenous people: Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Ruapani and Ngāti Kahungunu.

In their account, a father, Maahu, asks his daughter, Haumapuhia, to fetch water from a pool. The girl declines. In a silent rage, Maahu picks up a gourd and goes to the spring himself. The aggrieved father sits there brooding for a long time, and eventually Haumapuhia goes to find him. His wrath rekindled by the sight of her, Maahu seizes her and thrusts her head into the pool to drown her.

Turbulent in history and in weather, Waikaremoana is not a place to be treated lightly. On one of the trips made by photographers Irene and Crispin Middleton, there were more days when they couldn't dive than when they could. "The weather was hellish," they said, "with 55-knot winds and the lake as rough as the sea."



In her extremity, she calls upon the spirit beings of the ancestral world, who transform her into a taniwha. With flailing strokes of her arms and legs she gouges deep furrows in the earth as she attempts to escape—first to the west, then north, then east. But mountain ranges block her path in each direction. Finally, she senses the presence of the ocean, and turns south-east, making a final bid for freedom through what is now Onepoto Bay and down the Waikaretaheke River.

Alas, her journey is short-lived. She is turned to stone, her sacred form preserved forever in the rocks of the river. At least, it would have been preserved forever had not a slip come down and buried her, just before the water of the Waikaretaheke was diverted for a government hydroelectric scheme in the 1920s. The taniwha's resting place is now as hidden as the drowned forest. I carry both stories in my mind as I lift my kayak into the water at Mokau Inlet, one of the northern arms of the lake, and paddle westward. I have come not just to explore the physical lake and its sunken treasure, but also to take a dive into the lake's more recent, human history.

I'm grateful that I'm experiencing the lake in high summer. Photographers Irene and Crispin Middleton made some of their sorties here in the depths of winter, when they figured planktonic algae would be least abundant and the underwater visibility greatest. On some mornings, they had to scrape ice from their boat, and the water temperature was a bracing seven degrees. They

pumped dumbbells to warm up their muscles before making a descent. During one dive, a seam in Irene's dry suit split, flooding her with frigid water up to her chest.

But the enchantment of floating silently through the underwater treescape—this “serene catastrophe”, as Crispin put it—far exceeded the discomfort. “It was so quiet and still,” Irene said. “Diving in the sea, there is always the background noise of creatures moving and eating. You don't get that in a lake.”

What you do get are the crowns of ancient trees looming out of the turquoise depths, reaching towards you like hands. An exceptional sight in a singular landscape with a unique personality: Te Urewera.

EVERYTHING CHANGED FOR this landscape with the passing of the Te Urewera Act of 2014, which established Te Urewera as a legal person. Can there be any legislation in the world that opens with words as moving and majestic as these?

“Te Urewera is ancient and enduring,” the act declares, “a fortress of nature, alive with history; its scenery is abundant with mystery, adventure, and remote beauty.”

Standing at the lake edge in moonlight, or on towering Panekire Bluff, hundreds of metres above the water, or within the luxuriant embrace of the mossy rainforest, one feels the full measure of those words, and those that follow: “Te Urewera is a place of spiritual value, with its own mana and mauri. Te Urewera has an identity in and of itself, inspiring people to commit to its care.”

For more than a century, the people most intimately connected to Waikaremōana were unable to exercise their duty of care. Like much of Aotearoa, the story of Waikaremōana is one of dispossession and cultural makeover. From the first whiff of the lake's tourism potential in the late 1800s, the Crown stripped the lake from the people and the people from the lake. It set in train one of the longest legal proceedings in the country's history, over who owned “the lake of rippling waters”, as Waikaremōana is usually translated. (“Lake of thrashing waters” would be more consistent with both the taniwha's struggle and the lake's political history).



One of the few remaining trees still reaching above the surface stands sentinel at the entrance of Whakenepuru Bay, commonly called Stump Bay. At its base, around eight metres deep, lies an expanse of charophyte plants that looks like a grassy meadow. “It's pretty amazing to see this tree out of the water and realise it is 2200 years old,” says Crispin Middleton.

Across the 20th century, the interest of successive governments in Waikaremoana consisted of tourism, trout and turbines. The needs of the lake's traditional owners? Not at all. Māori were a minority interest to be managed, mollified and, if necessary, bought off.

In an especially damning section of its eight-volume Te Urewera report, the Waitangi Tribunal wrote: "What is astonishing, in our view, is that in all the evidence and papers available to the Tribunal, the various Government departments and Ministers never once seemed to consider what would benefit Māori or what was in their best interests. Indeed, they had actively sought to defeat the rights claimed by Māori."

The particular focus of the government's self-interest was the title to the lakebed. In 1918, the Native Land Court found that the lakebed was owned by some 270 Tūhoe, Ruapani and Kahungunu individuals. This decision was not to the government's liking. It was already operating a tourism enterprise on the lake and planning a power scheme. It would be highly inconvenient not to own the lakebed. So, it appealed.

And appealed, and prevaricated, and procrastinated—for 52 years. It was not until 1954 that the Crown accepted Māori ownership, but it then took a further 17 years before Māori were given a lease for the lake and some recompense for its use.

"For all those years," the tribunal wrote, "Māori had been the declared owners of the lake and the Crown had acted, in the words of claimant counsel, as if 'possession was nine-tenths of the law and it could proceed in treating the lake as its own'."

Not surprisingly, half a century of government refusal to honour the owners' mana and pay for the use of their property had severe economic repercussions, following as it did an era of land confiscation. The deprivation was stark.

By 1930, the Waikaremoana people retained just over four per cent of the land they had held 50 years earlier, and those that remained in the district lived in poverty. This is the context, the tribunal pointed out, in which the government's relentless 'development' of the lake needs to be judged.

As well as battling high-level government intransigence over the lake title for half a century, local Māori also had to endure lower-level pettiness in bureaucrats and government employees. One of the issues that brought out a mean streak was trout.

Rainbow and brown trout began to be introduced to the lake in 1896. A year earlier, during discussions with lake Māori about releasing 'English fish' into their waters, Premier Richard Seddon had said that trout would provide an "additional source of food" for them. He also implied that they would conduct the releases and look after the fishery.



The Middleton's' dive boat *Miromiro* floats above Irene at Ngahinaotepurewa Bay, on the lake's western flank. "The trees start from a few metres down and extend way beyond standard diving depths," says Crispin. At its centre, the lake is more than 250 metres deep.

None of that happened. Māori were excluded from taking any role in the fishery and were regarded as poachers if they took a share of the stock. They were told emphatically that trout were not their fish—despite living in *their* lake, eating its food and displacing its native species.

For the Waikareməana people, trout and its licensing regime were the thin end of an expanding wedge. In 1898, the government established an imported-game reserve around Waikareməana, and in 1903, it prohibited hunting. Traditional Māori hunting, trapping and fishing were coming under increasing government scrutiny and pressure, notes the Waitangi Tribunal. Māori were being squeezed by the Crown in terms of their ability to go about daily food-gathering activities, the heart of their subsistence economy.

"Tourism," the tribunal noted, "precipitated a direct contest between the Crown and Māori for control."

By the time of the Native Land Court decision over ownership of the lakebed in 1918, the government's presumption of dominance had hardened. John Salmond, Solicitor-General at the time, declared it was "out of the question" that Māori should have freehold title to lakes or other freshwater bodies. "Such titles would enable the Natives to exclude the whole European population from all rights of fishing, navigation and other use now enjoyed by them," he wrote.

One of those 'other uses' was about to loom large. Between 1929 and 1948, three hydro stations were commissioned along the course of the Waikaretaheke River, the lake's outflow. They were something of an engineering feat, involving driving a tunnel through the wall of rock that had damned the lake two millennia ago, adding siphons to supplement the flow, and sealing the porous rock around the intake to prevent leakage.

Unlike at Lake Manapouri, where hydro engineers proposed massive raising of the lake level, at Waikareməana the plan was to dramatically lower it—up to 15 metres, with possible fluctuations of 10 to 12 metres below that. Fortunately, the engineer-in-chief of the Public Works Department saw trouble ahead and warned in 1931 that such an action would give rise to "grave criticism... by a large section of the public". In the event, the lake was lowered by only five metres, and is maintained within a three-metre fluctuation zone by the scheme's current operator, Genesis Energy.



At Ngahinaotepurewa Bay, a mix of ancient and more recent tree falls lines the lake edge. Here, in keeping with the lake's origin as a collection of steep river valleys, the lakebed drops away very quickly. Just offshore of the boat, the water is 20 metres deep.

In an ironic twist, it was the lowering of the lake that galvanised the government to resolve the lake ownership issue with Tūhoe and the other traditional owners. Fear—or one might say paranoia—was the motivating factor. Lowering the lake had the effect of turning many hectares of lakebed into lakeshore. Who owned that now-exposed lakebed? Māori. With Salmond's words no doubt drumming in their ears, government officials perceived that Māori could deny access to the lake waters for public or private purposes. They could prevent the building of visitor facilities and services beside the lake. Worse, they could build their own structures on their newly acquired shoreline asset, an activity that could affect the lake's scenic appeal. Something had to be done.

The government wanted control, but it didn't own the lake. The owners refused to sell. The deadlock was finally broken when the government agreed to conduct a commercial valuation of both the exposed and submerged parts of the lakebed, and on the basis of that valuation a lease with perpetual right of renewal was enacted in 1971. And that is the situation that pertains today.

WHAT MAKES WAIKAREMŌANA'S clash with colonial power all the more poignant is knowing that the lake once supported a large Māori community. Te Urewera's 60-year tenure as a national park has tended to obliterate that reality from the public mind. Yet the lakeshore bristles with named features: bays, headlands, caves, former settlements, each of them attesting to centuries of human occupation, many with a story embedded in the name.

Maahu, the murderous father, is mentioned in several place names in the western Wairau Arm of the lake, which was his home. There is a stream he used as a mirror, a stream where he cut his hair, a rock where he had a storehouse, a bay with rocks that look like human figures, said to be his family, and a headland with many flax bushes, representing his hair.

Some of these places are wāhi tapu. I take care not to stop by the flax bushes on the headland. According to tradition, if a person touches Maahu's hair they will never leave the inlet, paddling in vain towards open water but never reaching it. But I do stop at some of the kainga sites. They are easy to overlook. At first glance, forest seems to descend seamlessly to the shore. But behind the coastal fringe of trees I find large areas of flat ground which were once gardens and home sites. Homes for hundreds. I imagine their lives: fishing, crop growing, birding in the adjacent forests. I grieve their disappearance. The lake is a place of solitude now. I see no other paddlers during my

visit. Aside from ski boats at the campgrounds, the only runabouts I see are water taxis ferrying trampers to and from the Great Walk, and the occasional angler.

One night, I pitch my tent on an island in Whakenepuru Bay, also known as Stump Bay because it has two stumps that were left uncut when, in the 1960s, when the lake was at its lowest level, all the protruding stumps around the lake were sawn off or blown up to prevent them becoming navigation hazards once it was raised again.

I doze to the deep bass honking of black swans, of which the lake has legions, and in the morning watch them glide through the mist, some with cygnets in tow. When they take off en-masse, the sound of their wingtips beating the water is like a round of applause.

The water is warm and beckoning, so I snorkel to one of the exposed stumps and follow it down to the lakebed, marvelling at the diversity of aquatic plants: thick carpets of bright-green charophytes; the tall, slender stems of pondweed, each with a handful of coppery leaves at the tip, striving upwards towards the light and the air, where they will flower and set seed; milfoils, with whorls of feathery leaves—so many that the generic name for these plants is *Myriophyllum*, ‘ten thousand leaves.’

Aquatic snails with pale, semi-translucent shells graze over the various species, and a trout fins through the pondweed stems much as a parore swims through kelp in the sea.

Later, at one of the angler cottages in Waikaremōana Motor Camp (each named for a trout lure—this one is ‘Grey Ghost’), Mary de Winton, a freshwater ecologist at NIWA Hamilton, takes me through a list of more than 30 species of amphibious and fully aquatic plants she and her colleagues have found during surveys they have conducted every five years since 2003.

One heartening finding from the surveys is that the diversity of species has remained relatively stable over that period. Indeed, Waikaremōana is considered an exceptionally healthy lake ecosystem. But the lake’s biosecurity can never be taken for granted as shown by several incursions of the invasive aquatic weed lagarosiphon, a native of South Africa.

One heartening finding from the surveys is that the diversity of species has remained relatively stable over that period. Indeed, Waikaremōana is considered an exceptionally healthy lake ecosystem. But the lake’s biosecurity can never be taken for granted as shown by several incursions of the invasive aquatic weed lagarosiphon, a native of South Africa.



Many of the trees in Waikareməana’s sunken forest are perched precariously on their decaying buttresses. Around a quarter of the trees have already fallen and lie prone on the lakebed.

Lagarosiphon was sold widely as an oxygen weed for home aquaria and is thought to have escaped to the wild by people tipping aquarium water into drains and ponds. Now it is spread primarily by contaminated boat, trailer and fishing gear—the means by which it likely entered Waikareməana. When it was discovered in Rosie Bay in 1999, it triggered an emergency response. Teams of divers crisscrossed the area where the weed had established itself, carefully removing each plant by hand.

If so, much as a fragment remains, the plant can regrow, forming dense beds that smother and displace native species. Its stems grow up to five metres tall, and because it occupies shallow waters from two to six metres deep, it can become a serious nuisance for swimmers, anglers and boaters—not to mention clogging hydro intakes.

Between 2014 and 2017, DOC and NIWA conducted annual surveys of the entire 105 kilometres of shoreline, searching for lagarosiphon. Divers used water scooters or were towed behind boats holding a ski rope to cover the ground. The worst-infested area required the use of suction dredges as well as hand harvesting. More than 5000 individual lagarosiphon colonies were removed.

Lagarosiphon is bad enough, but de Winton worries that an even nastier invasive species, hornwort, could potentially be introduced to the lake by a careless angler or boat owner. “I would cry if that happened,” she says.

Hornwort, considered New Zealand’s most noxious underwater weed, has already infested more than 30 North Island lakes. It grows deeper and taller than lagarosiphon—as high as a three-storey building—and can form large drifting rafts, smothering and outcompeting all native species.

Although biosecurity is a key motivation for recent survey work, happier discoveries are also made. During the most recent deep-water survey, in 2013, the NIWA team found bryophyte’s—the phylum of mosses, liverworts and their allies—living on the underside of some of the drowned forest trunks at depths of 18 metres or more.

De Winton finds the parallel with the terrestrial forest fascinating. “What we see underwater is a mirror of the forest around the lake,” she says. “The trunks provide substrates that would otherwise be unavailable. “

There are few boulders or reefs in the lake depths, just silty sediment, which is not conducive to settlement for encrusting organisms such as sponges or bryozoans.

Fish also take advantage of the sunken forest. Bullies clear the sediment from patches of trunk and lay their eggs there, guarding them until they hatch. The myriad holes and crevices in the decaying trunks are also fine habitat for kōura, the freshwater crayfish, which lifts its pincers like a crab when a diver comes close.

THE LAKE IS low. On the shores, broad swathes of amphibious turf—grasses as close-packed and level as a lawn—are high and dry. Sand berms created by lapping waves have carved off sections of the lake margin, turning them into sun-warmed lagoons.

I assume the low level is due to a dry summer, but am told by Tūhoe’s biodiversity team that Genesis, for its own reasons, has drawn down the lake to the lowest permissible level under its resource consent.

Low lake levels cause ecological problems and are upsetting for the biodiversity staff. The exposed lakeshore enables new plant growth to occur, which attracts rabbits, and predators in their turn.

“It makes it harder for birds to fend off pests, puts pressure on nature and puts pressure on us, the people trying to bring some kind of balance to Te Urewera’s living system,” team leader Herehere Titoko says. In Tūhoe eyes, restoring the lake’s ecological balance is part of restoring its mana. The way they see it, they are not managing a resource but maintaining a relationship. They serve Te Urewera as its custodian and its voice.



Those that remain standing in shallow water pose problems for trout anglers, whose lines often snag on the underwater trunks. In shallower depths, a range of aquatic plants flourishes, such as the invasive oxygen weed, smothering a tree branch.

Tūhoe want manuhiri, the lake’s visitors, to be part of that relationship. It starts when they come to what they think is the visitor centre—an impressive new Tūhoe tribal building near the lakeshore at Aniwanīwa—but find instead they are in a whare wānanga, a place to meet and talk to the tangata whenua, to orient themselves to Te Urewera, the living person, and to Papatūānuku, the mother of all.

This can cause some awkwardness and uncertainty, says Tina Wagner, team leader at the centre. “People say, ‘This isn’t like a DOC visitor centre,’ and of course they’re right!” Having to take their shoes off at the door is a good indication of that. So, too, is a log burner, comfortable couches and long tables with board games walkers can play while waiting for their shuttle or water taxi.

Wagner is often the person walkers speak to about their plans for either the Great Walk around the lake or the many shorter walks on offer. She doesn’t worry if visitors feel awkward at the start. “Awkwardness can be good if it helps to reset your thinking,” she says.

Outside the building I see Lance Winitana about to do a pick-up for some trampers. I last saw him in 2013, when he told me that as far as Te Urewera is concerned, “the government has the mana, but Tūhoe has the mauri. But one day the mana will come back and run alongside the mauri as one.”

“Has that day come?” I ask him.

“It’s coming,” he says. “We’ve taken the first step—Te Urewera owns itself. Now we’ve got to learn from it. If we can learn how it has survived all this time, we can help it continue to survive.”

Central to all of this is Te Urewera’s personhood, and the lake’s participation in that. The lake’s name almost foretells this outcome. Waikaremōana’s full name is Waikaremōana whanaunga kore, Waikaremōana beholden to no one. A lake beholden to no one within Te Urewera, owned by no one.

THERE IS ONE last place I want to visit, a place of origins. I paddle to the end of the western arm, where a stream tumbles down several waterfalls and into a sheltered inlet. Trout swim languidly away as my kayak glides over golden sand. A swan is incubating an egg on a twiggy nest as big as a car tyre. A raft of paradise ducks and ducklings dabble and peep nearby.

I beach the kayak and follow the stream into the forest, pausing to admire its cascades, then return to the broad sandy reach where stream meets lake and let the significance of the place fill my consciousness.

This is Te Punaataupara, Taupara’s pool, the place where Maahu bade his daughter fetch water, then sought to drown her. I picture a girl, regretting her disobedience, coming here to find her sullen father, only to rekindle his wrath. The terror of his violence, but yet the beauty that came from it: a lake of rippling water.

A burst of bubbles from the sand catches my eye. Then another, and another, and all around Taupara’s pool bubbles are rising and popping, and the mirror surface becomes a pattern of ripples. It feels like history’s gift, this springing up of something invisible from beneath the streambed. This mythic place, the start of it all.



“A fortress of nature, alive with history,” is how a 2014 parliamentary act describes Te Urewera. The new visitor centre represents a renewal of the human connection to nature. As Tūhoe’s management plan for the area puts it: “Our disconnection from Te Urewera has changed our humanness. We wish for its return.”

Fly Fishing the subsurface, suspension nymphing by Al Simpson

Virtually every fly fisher loves to fish a hatch. It's hard to beat the pleasure of targeting a rising trout, selecting the right fly, presenting it well, and watching the trout rise and suck in your proffered fly. But most of the time, there is no hatch. Therefore, trout mostly fill their gullets with foods found below the surface. In "Fly Fishing the Subsurface, Suspension Nymphing", I'll begin a review of subsurface techniques and how to choose among them to fish a variety of stream features.

The water column

Compared with the water's surface, fishing the subsurface is much more complicated. Of course, it doesn't help that we can't always see what's happening there unless we go diving. But in general terms, we divide the subsurface into 3 layers. The upper 25-50 mm is referred to as the film, and the lower several inches is referred to as the bottom layer. Between these two layers is the largest layer, the mid-layer.

The mid-layer is the most complex. Its depth and force changes seasonally and with any significant precipitation. In addition, similar to the surface, it is affected by stream structure, which creates pockets of slow and fast water. Unlike the other two layers, the mid-layer has no non-aqueous interface to create friction. Thus, the mid-layer moves faster than the surface, and still faster than the bottom layer, which is the slowest layer.

Given such differences in the water column, it should come as no surprise that a variety of techniques have been developed to fish the subsurface. Seasoned anglers arrive streamside prepared to fish several techniques. They evaluate both the water's surface and the subsurface before preparing to cast their first fly. If no hatch is present, the focus is upon the mid and bottom layers, as the film is an important layer primarily during a hatch.

Nymphing

Nymphing is the most commonly used method to fish the subsurface. It is so effective, that fishing clubs in England banned its use on chalk streams in the early 1900's. Even today, some clubs continue to ban nymph-fishing. Over the years, several techniques have been developed to fish nymphs. Let's begin with the simplest, suspension nymphing.

Suspension Nymphing, set-up

Most fly fishers begin nymphing with the suspension technique. Other names for this technique include "dry-dropper", and in the summertime, "hopper-dropper."

With this technique, a nymph is suspended, or dropped, with a length of tippet, from a dry fly, or a bobber-like affair, referred to as a "strike indicator". The nymph is most often weighted. Alternatively, shot is pinched onto the tippet. Either method of weighting must be sufficient to sink the nymph to the slowest moving water near the bottom of the stream. This is where trout most often find nymphs crawling about the stream-bottom, feeding upon detritus.

As a rule of thumb, a length of tippet approximately 1 1/2 times the estimated stream depth is attached from the nymph to the indicator or the bend of the dry fly hook. In slow water, this may

be more than is needed, leaving too much slack. Conversely, in fast water it may not be enough, with elimination of slack almost immediately. Thus, while the “1 1/2 rule” is a good starting point much of the time, a study of the water is helpful before starting.

A proper length of tippet allows the angler to begin a drift with a bit of slack in the tippet. Due to the speed differential between the mid and bottom layers, the slack will be taken out as the drift proceeds. Once the tippet has straightened, the nymph will be dragged unnaturally along the bottom layer, alerting fish to its fraudulence. It's difficult for the angler to detect this, but the indicator may be slowed a bit by the dragging nymph.

If dragging is suspected, it is easy enough to re-introduce slack. Simply perform an upstream mend if the indicator is upstream or stop the downstream drift if the indicator is downstream. Once corrected, continue the drift. On longer drifts, especially if not getting strikes, I automatically adjust the drift several times.

If the nymph is deep enough, it will catch on rocks or other bottom-structure “periodically”. Everyone has their own yardstick, but I think that if the nymph isn't ticking the bottom every 3-4 drifts, it isn't deep enough. In that case, I either lengthen the tippet or add weight until I am feeling the bottom with some regularity.

The approach

Suspension nymphing is best done by casting upstream and drifting the flies downstream. Sometimes a strike is self-evident. Either the fish is seen turning under the indicator, or the indicator is pulled under the surface. More often, however, strikes are more subtle. They may be detected by noting that the indicator briefly pauses or shifts slightly from its course. In each instance, the hook should be set. If no fish is on the line, simply lower the rod, and allow the drift to continue.

Personally, I prefer to use a dry fly rather than a strike indicator. It is easier to cast, makes less disturbance on the water's surface, and casts a smaller shadow. In addition, even in the absence of a hatch, some fish invariably take the dry fly.

In some states however, only two flies can be fished at a time. Hence, the use of a strike indicator allows two nymphs to be fished, while the dry-dropper method allows only one. Nonetheless, I still prefer to fish a dry dropper most of the time.

During a hatch, a variation of this technique is to drop an unweighted nymph from a dry fly. This is a very productive method to fish a hatch, as there are more pupae and nymphs trapped in the film than hatched flies on the surface. I use a short length of tippet, 150-200 mm, to stay “in touch” with the nymph. Longer lengths leave slack, allowing fish to spit the hook before being detected.

Casting

Most authorities recommend casting with a large, open loop to avoid snagging indicators and flies on the trailing line. But I prefer to cast normally, with a tight loop, which gives me better control and accuracy. I do make certain to keep my line-speed fast. In addition, I tip my rod slightly to the side, and bring the forward cast over the back cast. Should the flies sag a bit, due to arm fatigue, there is no line below them to snag and tangle with. So, it's a fielder's choice, most dependent on the caster's style and skill.

To begin a drift with the desired slack in the tippet, one must either mend the line at the onset, or use a “tuck cast”. Mending at the onset of a drift is messy and disturbs the water. Thus, most anglers learn to use the tuck cast, as championed by the late Joe Humphreys. In essence, it requires the caster to overpower the last forward cast and tip the rod back a bit just before the line fully unfolds. The resultant abrupt stop causes the weighted nymphs to swing backwards under the indicator and enter the water vertically. Here’s a short video demonstrating the tuck cast- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yy4FptzL94A>.

The flies

For nymphs, I typically use generic patterns. Nymphs blend with the stream bottom for their own preservation. Thus, shades of brown and olive usually suffice. I like a bit of flash and use dubbing blends with crystal flash or similar materials for the thorax. For legs, I either pick out a bit of the dubbing, or wrap a small hackle between the head and thorax. For weight, I use a tungsten bead-head for my heavy nymphs and brass for my lighter nymphs. I prefer red, pink or black coloured beads.

If fishing two nymphs, I put my heavy fly in the point position. I attach the second, nearly weightless fly, eye to eye with 150-250 mm of tippet. With this method, both nymphs remain in or near the bottom layer of water. If fishing my usual dry-dropper method, I use only one weighted nymph.

For the dry fly, I find that a #14 parachute pattern or a palmered pattern, like an elk hair caddis, readily float one nymph. If I can fish two nymphs, or the water is fast and pulling my dry fly under, I move up to a #10 or #12 size fly, usually a Kaufman stimulator. During the summer and early fall, grasshopper and other terrestrial patterns work very well.

Limitations

One of the limitations of suspension-nymphing is the fact that the nymph(s) drift at a fixed depth under the indicator. But as we move from one section of stream to another, the water depth varies, requiring adjustments to the tippet length. Some indicators are designed to facilitate this. For a full discussion, see <https://news.orvis.com/fly-fishing/pro-tips-choose-right-strike-indicator> . But if fishing a dry-dropper, a bit more time is needed to make the necessary tippet adjustments.

Another limitation arises because most runs vary in depth, usually in the shape of a bowl or hammock. Thus, on any drift, the nymph is sometimes too high in the water column, sometimes too low (constantly getting caught on the stream bottom), or just right. Ideally, it would be just right most of the time. Thus, I usually settle on a tippet length that puts my nymph on the bottom of the mid-portion of the run. It will be a bit high at the head of the run, and a bit low at the tail, but just right for most of the run.

If the water is deep, the necessary length of tippet between indicator and nymphs is quite long. More weight is needed to sink the nymphs, and slack is increasingly difficult to judge and manage. In addition, it is more difficult to avoid tangles when casting. Thus, for me, if the water is more than 750-900 mm feet deep, I prefer to use other techniques, which I’ll address in my next blog, “Tight-line Nymphing.”

Strike detection is also less than ideal with suspension nymphing. Due to the intermittent presence of slack, fish have time to spit the hook before affecting the drift of the indicator. It’s hard to know how many strikes are missed because of this. But when I began experimenting with tight-line

nymphing about twenty years ago, my increased catch-rates convinced me that the number of misses is substantial. Nonetheless, suspension nymphing is a productive way to nymph in many situations.

Ideal water features

Long runs typically feature lengthy stretches of water at a nearly constant depth. They also slow down, allowing longer exposure of the nymphs to feeding fish. The picture below illustrates such a run. It's fall time, and the water is fairly shallow. Thus, this run is readily fished with the suspension technique. Due to the water's clarity and shallow depth, it is better fished dry-dropper than with a bulky indicator.



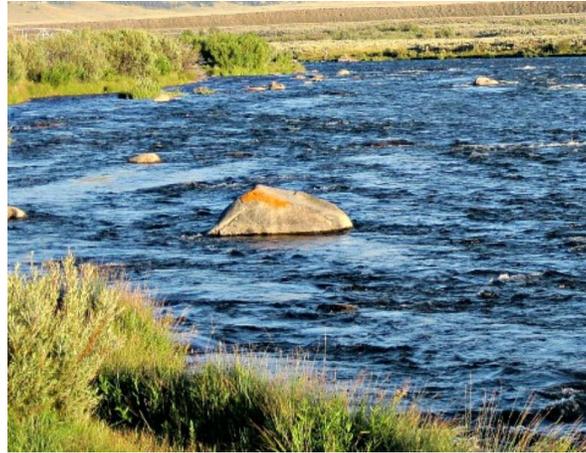
A long run on the Ruby River, Montana

Another stream feature frequently encountered is bankside runs. Slow, outside bends with overhanging vegetation provide cover and shade for the trout. Water depth is typically uniform, and the water is slowed by friction with the bank. Thus, these runs are ideal for suspension nymphing, as seen below.



A bankside run on the Rio Corcovado, Patagonia

Riffles and pocket water typically hold many trout, but they are especially difficult to fish. The proximity of widely different water velocities makes it difficult to keep our flies in the seam, which is where trout hold. Suspension nymphing provides visual confirmation of where our nymphs are drifting. Ideally, they should drift along the quiet side of each seam.



Rocks on the Madison River, creating visible seams

Large rivers such as the Madison present another challenge as well. Due to their breadth and flow, it is sometimes difficult to get close enough to a “fishy” piece of water to effectively use other nymphing techniques which require proximity to the angler. Thus, suspension nymphing, which can be used from greater distances, is a good option.

Stillwaters are also an excellent venue for suspension nymphing. Food is not delivered by a current to waiting fish. Rather, the trout must cruise about in search of their food. They typically do this at a nearly fixed depth. The key is to find that depth and use a length of tippet to match it.

All stillwaters have midges, which flourish in their mud bottoms. Many times, trout can be seen cruising just below the surface, looking for midge pupae. They leave a tell-tale rise form, as seen below



A small mountain lake with bulging trout

To present pupae, I use 150–200 mm of tippet dropped from an adult pattern or a terrestrial. I carefully watch the trout's path and cast my flies at least 3.5-4 meters ahead to avoid spooking them. The dry fly holds the pupa at the selected water level. When the trout is 1.3- 2 meters away, I give my flies a slight twitch to get its attention.

Midges in stillwaters are usually larger than we are accustomed to seeing on streams, so I don't hesitate to use larger patterns, size #18 or even #16.

How to fish with Friends by Domenick Swentosky



"We like companionship, see, but we can't stand to be around people for very long. So, we go get ourselves lost, come back for a while, then get the hell out again."

— Chris McCandless, Into the wild

Fishing with a stick and line is a solitary endeavour by nature. It always comes down to the two hands of an angler: one on the rod and the other in control of the line. Sharing the water with friends is great. But fishing, inherently, is not a team sport. It's more like pole vaulting than a football game because it's really about individual performance. And at its root, fishing is just a contest between one man and a fish.

However, we fish together to *share* our experiences, to learn from one another, to catch up with old friends and make new ones. We choose to fish together because the bonds formed on a river are like none other, and because flowing water and shared moments can heal friendships and mend grievances.

It's hard to find good fishing friends who see eye-to-eye or accept your own philosophies. Tougher still is finding another angler who follows the same protocols and norms about sharing water. No one likes to be front ended by a stranger, but it can be even tougher to accept a friend jumping ahead to fish the water you had your eye on.

All of this is easily avoided, of course, with a little communication and some agreement on the terms of the day. There are a bunch of ways to fish together, so let's sort through them ...

Don't count me, man

First, an important question: To compete or not to compete?

That's up to you and your friend, but I'll mention this: Many would-be friendships go awry when one guy counts but the other doesn't care to keep track. If you like to compete (if you're a numbers guy) just be sure your partner feels the same way before you bring a competitive element into the exchange. Never volunteer to keep track of another man's fish count.

Pairs

Good fishing often happens in pairs. Many of the following strategies are best when fishing with a partner and adding a third person makes things a little crowded. With more than a trio, most of these methods fall apart from the centre.

Lastly, all of the approaches that follow are based in a need to cover water. You can go out there and stand in one pool all morning, chatting with your fishing buddy, but to catch a few fish you need to move — usually.

So, here are a handful of ways to share the water with friends.

Side-by-side

Most of us didn't grow up with a fly rod in hand. We started with some means of conventional gear and later moved to the fly rod. And some of the cultured habits of spin fishing cause problems if transferred over to fly fishing. Let me explain.

It's easy to spin fish right next to your buddy. But fly fishers need room for the backcast, and our casting range is much shorter with a fly rod. We need a good bit more personal space to sling the line around, and that's really the essence of the clash — we simply need more space for success.

So, the side-by-side approach can work well for spin fishers, but it doesn't often crossover well to fly fishing.

Sometimes, on larger rivers with plenty of casting room, two anglers may work a river side-by-side and continue to move upstream. And even on medium-sized creeks, two fly fishers can set up across from one another and fish together, with one guy working the right side and the other working the left. If the water is stained enough, you can even stay within conversational distance of your friend without spooking too many fish. It just requires some cooperation.

Side by side is great, but on many waters it's not practical.

Leapfrog

When the river is too small for a pair of anglers to fish close, then leaving your buddy and hopping up to the next honey hole is probably the most common way of doing things. Working upstream or wading down, leapfrogging is a good way to spend a day of fishing and still keep in touch with your friend, because there's a new opportunity to catch up and share a few words with each pass — with each leap — toward new water.

The leapfrog rules can be troublesome, though. You may find yourself relying on the generosity and selflessness of your partner. Your idea of enough space and your friend's idea may be pretty different, so it helps to agree on some guidelines.

On most rivers, my suggestion is to level up ...

Levels

The waters I fish have enough gradient and structure to provide clearly defined levels on the stream. Levels are natural breaking points in the river. Basically, a level up is the next place upstream where you can wade into the water without spooking the fish your partner is working. Lips, ledges and rock formations often provide these breaks.

If my friend is fishing a tail out, then I may give him the whole pool, and I'll jump up to the run above.

But levels aren't just riffles, runs and pools either. Within a one-hundred-meter stretch of good pocket water, there might be a half dozen or more levels. Anything that breaks up the water, anywhere you can put in and not disturb your partner's fish, is the next level. Sometimes it's fifty feet away. Sometimes it's five hundred.

Either way, I find it a lot easier to agree on a level up system than a on particular distance. Using levels as markers allows the river to make the decision about how far ahead of your friend you should be.

Tag Team

I was eleven years old, and I'll never forget: One Saturday night in 1986, Ricky "the Dragon" Steamboat teamed up with the Junkyard Dog to take back the belt in a no-holds barred WWF tag team title match. The Junk Yard Dog pulled out the brass knuckles, and it was all over.

Tag team fishing takes patience and taking turns on the river isn't for everyone.

At whatever age, if you're out there to fish hard and learn something, it's tough to sit back and watch somebody else fish. But after some long river hours, and on multi-day trips, even the youngest, most ambitious anglers out there may really sink in and enjoy tag-teaming the water.

Watch your buddy fish for a while, enjoy a good conversation or keep it silent. You're there with each other. Watch and learn from your partner. Bust his balls for missing the hook set. Net his fish. Drink a beer until he's ready to tag out, and then take your turn while he relaxes and watches.

See you later

Avoiding any conflict about river space is easy if you split up at the truck. It's also a good way to fish with friends and still clear your head for a while. For many years, this one has been my favourite.

"Hey, I'll go way downstream, around the bend and below that long run against the hillside. I'll put in right at the feeder stream and start working back up. I'll meet you back here for lunch."

Sounds good. Of course, the downside is less time spent communing with your friend, but if you fish together enough, you've probably run out of things to talk about anyway.

Boat float

There's nothing finer than a float. With two friends (or three, or four) floating downstream together, anything can happen. You're forced into cooperation with one another. And for any real success out there, the angler fishing must work with the guy on the oars.

Floating a river together defies the individual-sport rule. Instead, two guys work together to find, track, hook and land the fish. And nothing brings people together more than teamwork.

A boat opens up a host of possibilities that are wholly unavailable while wading. Floating is a commitment and cooperation between friends, and that's a good thing.

However, you do it ...

Whatever way you choose to share the river with friends, it's always worth calling up a fishing buddy. Because feeling good and lonely only lasts so long.



Editor note: The above photo from the club's recent trip to the Retaruke River demonstrates the value of fishing with friends as the team discuss where to head for a fish. I enjoy being on the water with a friend and have benefited with having that extra pair of eyes looking for a likely shape that could be a trout and many a time what 'looked like a log' has headed to it's hiding place at great speed.

“Should I move or stay put?” by Skip Morris



Photo by Carol Ann Morris

Question:

When you're fishing a pool, pocket, or riffle, how many unproductive casts should you make before you decide to move on to the next spot? And if you catch a fish in one place, should you assume that it has spooked the other fish in the area and move on? – Mort S.

If deciding whether to abandon a chunk of water or stay and keep working it isn't the most perplexing decision a new fly fisher must constantly face, it's got to be among the top one or two percent. Decades ago, I was new to fly fishing and struggled with this too; so, Mort, I sympathise.

Here's a good general rule: fish a piece of water until it stops putting out fish, and then try the next piece. What's a "piece of water?" Could be the head of a pool or a section of a riffle in a stream, a fallen log along a shoreline or all the water in front of you that's within casting range when your boat is anchored in a lake—simply put: some smallish fish-attracting structure or a manageable part of big structure. I know—that's way too broad to really answer your question, Mort. But we can narrow things down from there as we also explore some caveats.

The History Factor

If you're certain that the run before you holds a bunch of trout—something you know from having fished this stretch of river dozens of times at this very time of year and under these conditions—you'll probably start experimenting if six to a dozen presentations of your Royal Wulff move no fish. Next you might watch for insects on or in the surface of the water and match what you find with your flies.

But if you see no rises and no real insects to match, you'll probably next try a smaller or larger or just very different dry fly. Then, if that fails, a nymph. Then a different nymph. Then, if nymphs fail, perhaps a soft-hackled fly ...

You know there are trout, so you might as well figure them out here as somewhere else on the river. One thing's plain at this point: these are pernickety trout. Maybe they're not pernickety often, maybe only rarely, but regardless, they're pernickety right now. Better deal with that.

There will come a point though, after a bunch of fly and tactic changes, when you might decide to move along. The trout should be there, and according to your experience they should be susceptible to certain of your tricks, but if none of its working, why not trade fly and technique variations for variations in holding water? There's a deep bank just upstream. Maybe if you make a few casts there ...

Whole different scenario: What if you know that this water holds only a small number of scattered fish? Then the answer's easy: Present the fly a few times at each likely spot, and then cover the next spot, then the next. After running the fly through, say, half a dozen spots without action, you'd be wise to consider: Would a change of fly or tactic, or both, do the trick? If you've been fishing a dry fly on a trout stream, try a nymph. If you're fishing a hair bug on a bass pond, try letting a streamer fly sink a bit before working it slowly back.

Virtual History

Knowing about the water you're fishing can really help you decide how long to stay on one spot even if you've never fished a particular stream or lake. Not knowing it first-hand—I mean fly-on/in-the-water wet-boat/wet-boots first-hand—doesn't mean you can't know about it. You can ask at the local fly shop (as you purchase a few leaders both as a thanks for the info and to insure the shop's still around the next time you need it), you can do some research in fishing guidebooks, you can check on-line, you can ask members of your local fly-fishing club what they know.

When the information from your various sources matches up, that's the best. If you read or hear such points as “the largemouth bass in X Lake can be hard to find. Try around the inlet stream” and “the shoal in Lake Y is to the right of the boat launch and that's where the trout typically gang up” and “don't bother with the Z River after mid-August—it gets too warm and the fish go downstream and out” repeated various ways, you've probably got some solid information. (Though just because you hear something from only one of several sources, don't rule it out.)

Obviously, how long you stay on a spot fishing the Z River over Labour Day weekend is irrelevant: there are no fish to catch. X Lake is another matter: assuming your intelligence is accurate, you'll need to do a lot of moving to figure out where bass are currently gathered. See? Your research will help you determine how long to fish one spot before trying another: specifically, with X Lake, quite a while around the inlet stream mouth, not long elsewhere on the lake.

Going in cold

Let's say you have no history, actual or virtual, no information whatsoever on a lake or stream. Sometimes that's just the way things go. First, spend at least a full minute (it'll seem like a quarter hour) just watching. Watching everything, from near your nose to a hundred feet away. Notice everything you can. Do you see the rise of a trout, or not? Do you see insects riding the water or is the top of the river bare? Are bluegills making their smacking sips in and around the weed beds, or not?

Second, read the water; that is, find a spot that likely holds fish: a riffle or a dock or a boulder field or whatever your target fish likes. Of course, if trout or panfishes or smallmouth bass are rising, or largemouth bass are splashing at dragonfly adults, then you don't need to find fish: there they are.

Third, approach with stealth—you have no idea yet how spooky these fish are or are not.

None of this really addresses the matter of how long to stay on a spot, but it will. Now, in fact. Let's say trout are rising; well, just go to work on them. And keep working on them until there are no more rises within comfortable reach. Then make a few test casts and, if nothing happens, move on.

But suppose the fish clearly are there yet you can't get them to take anything? Perhaps they are feeding on top, or you can see them gliding or holding down in the clear water (or you just know they're there because you know this water well). That's really up to you. You can give them some time and experimentation and then go on and try some new fish. That might work. I usually just keep working a fish, changing flies and tactics, until I hook him, or I run out of time. Or, sometimes, if I grow tired of his attitude, which takes quite a while—I love the challenge of fish stubborn, cagey, or both.

Another common Scenario: zero trout are rising, and no bugs are appearing on the river. Try something logical, general—see if they'll come up to a Parachute Adams. If they won't, try another spot, if that spot or the next one or two produce nothing, it's time to try various flies and methods on the assumption the fish are there but aren't liking what you're offering. Assumptions are what you have to make when you've got no clues. Same for smallmouths, bluegills, whatever: find a promising stretch of water, fish a likely fly, after a while try more water but with various flies and methods. Just makes sense, doesn't it, Mort

So how long is "after a while?" I usually wait until I've presented a fly six to a dozen times before I figure nothing's going to happen. At least with a floating fly (dry fly, hair bug, etc.). I might make more presentations with a nymph in a trout stream or a streamer in a smallmouth lake—that is, with a sunken fly—because getting the depth and retrieve right may take some fussing. Still, two dozen presentations in this case should be plenty.

So how long is "after a while?" I usually wait until I've presented a fly six to a dozen times.

That's really about it, Mort: knowing when to leave a patch of water for the next patch is always a game of chance. Done best, it's a blend of experience, logic, foreknowledge, instinct. No matter how it's done, it always includes some degree of luck. At the high end of the luck scale is accidentally picking that just-right fly or depth on the first try, or finding fish where they really shouldn't be because on a whim you tossed your fly there as you passed by, and so on. But even though luck can be a lifesaver, you're wiser to rely mainly on what you learn and hone over lots of time spent on the water.

So get to know a stream or lake, Mort, keep returning to it, and eventually you'll have developed a strong sense of how long to stay in one place and how many flies and techniques to try before you leave it for the next place. Then you can apply all that understanding and experience to waters you don't know.

Editor – I would like to wish all our members and their family a wonderful Christmas and prosperous New Year, I look forward to seeing you out there on the water somewhere enjoying the opportunity to fish. Warm regards Malcolm

Purpose:

To promote the art and sport of Fly Fishing.

To respect the ownership of land adjoining waterways.

To promote the protection of fish and wildlife habitat.

To promote friendship and goodwill between members.

To promote and encourage the exchange of information between members.

Club meetings

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

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

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

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

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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.

*Newsletter copy to be received by
Second Monday of each month, your
contribution is welcome just send it to:
malcolm1@xtra.co.nz*
