



President's Message

I hope everyone is finding some time to fish. I've enjoyed the club outings I've been on so far this year. The Red Lake outing was one of the best club outings I've attended in some time. I hope many of you are planning on attending the Big Twin outing and/or our Classic in July.

A few things from the Board I would like to share:

- To ensure everything runs as smoothly as possible, it is important that you **sign up for activities through Zeffy**. This is particularly important for general membership meetings as we have to provide a dinner count.
- I'm pleased to share that thanks to Mark Munn and the Committee, we are moving closer to holding our club's first ***Introduction to Fly Fishing Class*** this fall. More to come on this later.
- After more years than I can count as our **Education Committee Chair**, **Klaus Loshe** is stepping down from the role. If you are interested in immediately taking over this position, please let me know. Please don't force me to start making phone calls.
- While we definitely want to encourage new membership and guests are welcome on our outings/activities, it is important that we protect ourselves as a club. To this end, all guests on outings are required to sign our ***Waiver and Hold Harmless Agreement***. This document can be found on our website under the Candidate Membership Application.



One Final Note....Jeff Taylor has stepped up to manage our activities at Squalicum Lake...give him a word of thanks if you see him.

Thanks everyone. Let's go fishing!

-Mike

4CFF Calendar of Events

June 11, 2025 5:30pm. Join us for Beer Night!

Structures Brewing 601 Holly St, Bellingham

June 12-15 Big Twin Lake Outing

Located just outside Winthrop, WA, Big Twin is a stocked lake with excellent camping. Reservations are recommended, call and tell them you are with us and we can camp together.

June 26 Club Meeting BGCC

Be sure to register for this meeting so we can notify BGCC. Master fly tying expert Tim Flagler of Tight Lines Fly Fishing will be presenting underwater video of bugs and the flies that imitate them.

July 10-13 Methow Classic

River Bend RV Park, Twisp. Reservations suggested soon if you are attending. There will be several opportunities to fish in the area in addition to a float down the Methow on Friday. This outing takes the place of our July meeting and features a pot luck with the main dish: Frank's Paella.

July 22 Bear Paw Lake Hike In

More information about this local lake hike will be forthcoming. You will need a float tube to have the best chance of catching the many cutthroat trout. It is described as a moderately challenging 1.8 mile hike.

Conservation Update

-Ralph Lloyd, Conservation Chair

In keeping with past commitments, we have used some auction proceeds to support the organizations promoting conservation:

Wild Fish Conservancy	\$1000
Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association	\$1000
Skagit River Enhancement Association	\$1000
Coastal Conservation Association	\$1000
Whatcom Land Trust	\$1000
Coastal Cutthroat Coalition	\$1000
Western Rivers Conservancy	\$1000



Summer Casting Clinics Coming Soon

Starting July 16, Marion and Frank are offering a series of casting lessons to focus on fishing moving water. Topics include: how to make various casts and mends, how to take advantage of windy conditions, gaining greater distance, and better accuracy. Sessions are scheduled for Wednesdays and Saturdays. Topics covered Wednesday will be featured again on the following Saturday.

Then on Sundays, through the remainder of August, you are welcome to come and work on specific casting goals of your choice that we call a Walk-in Clinic.

Zeffy sign-ups will arrive in your email some time in the near future.

Wednesday-River Clinic

6:00-8:00 pm

July 16
July 23
July 30
August 6

Saturday-River Clinic

9:00-11:00 am

July 19
July 26
August 2
August 9

Sundays-Walk-in Clinic

9:00-11:00 am

August 17
August 24
August 31
September 7

Dry Falls Outing Report May 15-18

Dry Falls is a beautiful place and has a fascinating history regarding the geologic features there. The fishing there can be good, however, this was not the time for it. The fishing was slow for everyone and very few fish were caught, in spite of there being fish present that were rising and occasionally jumping. The weather was fairly good with only one rainy night that ended by 10:00 PM. Five of us from 4CFF were there for this outing. We had a good time and had a potluck on Friday. There was a fly box for raffle provided by Ed Ruckey. Duanne Sutton's wife Kim was the raffle winner.



Red Lake Outing Report May 28 - June 1

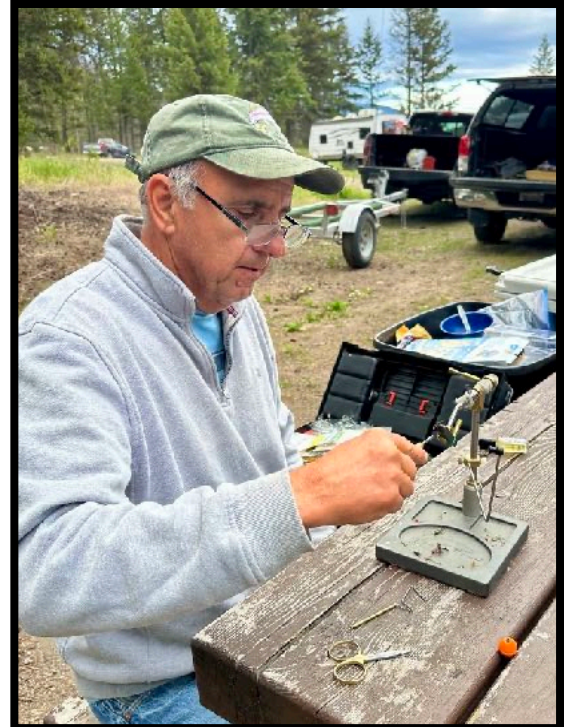
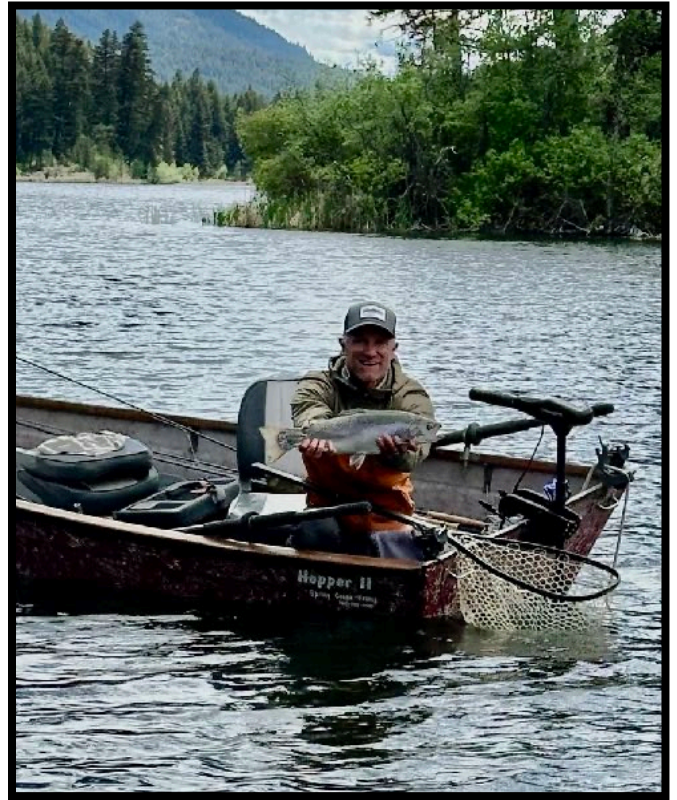
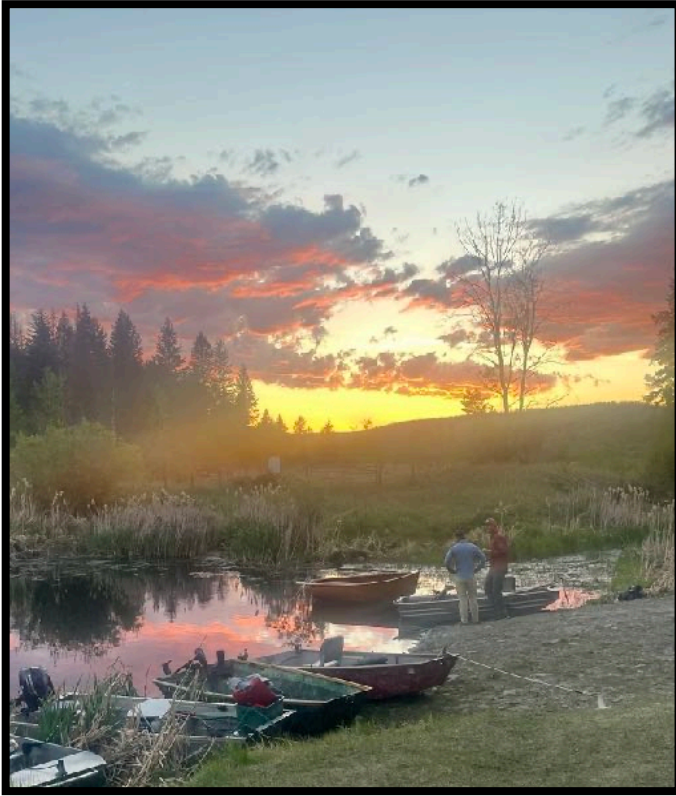
The Red Lake Outing hosted by Ralph Lloyd was very well attended. Mike Reiber, John Sanders, Mark Munn, Jeff Taylor, Steve Wimer, Angus MacArthur, Bob Jorgenson and Ralph braved the 20 miles of dirt road to arrive at a very nice and essentially empty campground. By Friday the 12 sites were all taken and it was soon evident why. Our group had a very successful outing with at least 12 fish taken over 4 pounds and Angus managed to land a 7.2 pound Penask Rainbow. Most everyone caught at least 10 fish a day nearly all over 2 lbs and one fisherman (I will let you guess who) caught 27. John arrived a day early and we knew it was going to be a great outing when he told us he had caught two 5 lb Rainbows within a few minutes of each other on the morning of our arrival. Fish were taken trolling various patterns and still fishing chironomids. Why the "Whiskey Dick" of Tunkwa Lake or "Blue Dunn" is so successful is really confusing "fish think". We each had a walkie talkie and the typical exchange was "got a 20" Frasier stripping a leech in 16 ft on a sinking line" or "foot off the bottom using a chromie #14". The walkie talkies enhanced our success and when the weather came in added to the safety of the outing as people communicated with those who were out in the rain and wind in the afternoon to verify their safety.

The weather was anything but "fine." While the skies were clear the wind gave everyone who fished Chironomids a real test casting a 23 foot leader with indicator in 20 mph wind, not to mention the occasional anchor drag. It was a great day for Seaguar as many new leaders were rigged to remove knots. Wind finally stopped on Saturday but unfortunately was followed by 2 inches of rain. Many attendees were caught fishing with partial rain gear on but continued to fish during the downpour.

Saturday evening John was kind enough to dry wet gear in his trailer drying room (also known as the bathroom) and most of the group enjoyed a tying demonstration by Angus. He tied his very effective "Halfback" in no time. This was followed by Bob attempting to copy his tie. What resulted was a very humorous exchange and we seriously doubt that Angus will look forward to teaching a 75-year-old novice to tie again. Bob however, will not let him off the hook.

Despite the wind, rain, variable temperatures and the floating island that blocked the boat launch, this was a most memorable and successful outing. We have Ralph to thank for it.





Outings are a great way to meet with others in the club, learn new skills and enjoy the outdoors. When a group of fishers work together more fish are caught and the collective knowledge base increases. We encourage you to come out and enjoy fishing with us!

Ed Note: This article is part of my effort to provide articles written by members about their fishing experiences. Reading this article makes fishing the Saint Joe River attainable and a possible future destination for me and my fishing friends. Many thanks to Bob Carney for his work on this.

Hooked on the Saint Joe River Idaho

I've fished a lot of different rivers in Nevada, Montana, and Oregon but the one that is truly my favorite is the Saint Joe River in northern Idaho. Others could say that about the Bitterroot, Big Hole, or Blackfoot in Montana, the Truckee in Nevada or the West Carson or Sacramento River in California. While they all have some great fishing the Saint Joe, or as some call it the "Shadowy Joe" is the one for me. It all started about 12 years ago when a friend in Spokane got some friends together for a fishing trip on Saint Joe. I flew from Reno, met up in Spokane and off we went in late September. I'm guessing a lot people would say it must be your favorite river because you caught a lot of fish, but I only caught 3 fish in 3 days. The most likely explanation for the low catch rate was my skill level, not the river or lack of fish. Since my first trip I've been back a dozen times, usually after Labor Day staying from 3 days and up to my longest of 28 days. I thought maybe I was an exception going so many times, but I have talked to people who have been coming for 30 plus years. It is not just locals, I've met people from Tennessee, Colorado, Montana and other states. It seems to be a destination river. Online says the best time to be there is June-October. I went in June once and there was a near record CFS 16,000, so you really need to check the flows when you are planning a trip.



Okay why is the Saint Joe my favorite river? The reasons are; I don't need a drift boat, pontoon boat, float tube, raft or a guide and the river is manageable in size. I do not need to cast long distances and there are several spots to fish. In addition, you will find almost everyone gives you plenty of room. I have only been crowded twice, probably the same people who cut me off on the freeway. The primary fishing centers around Avery, Idaho. Upriver from Avery is all National Forest with unrestricted access other than some spots that take a little effort to get to. Down river from Avery to Calder is generally where I see people floating the river and occasionally above Avery. (Floating from above Avery is done mostly in July and early August) Down river to Calder does have somewhat limited access because of private property. The river road above Avery runs for 29 miles with plenty of places to stop and only a few steps from the river. At 29 miles there is a cut off

at the Red Ives Ranger Station. There are a couple of spots after the cut off but a short distance after the road is very narrow and rough with no turnouts.

How do I fish the Saint Joe? If you're a dry-fly-or-die fly fisher you're lucky. The Joe is a great dry fly river. The dry flies I use are mostly stimulators, elk caddis and BWO with a 3-wt. rod. When those don't seem to work, I use size 16 to 18 Gnat with a little strike putty up the tippet so I can see where the fly is and watch for the flash of a trout rising. But like most fishing, not everything works all the time, so I've also used nymphs, streamers, and wet flies with a 5-wt. rod. My last technique will get some gasps but I euro nymph with a 10 ft. 2 wt. rod. I know some fly fishers say this is not fly fishing but there is a lot to it. If you watch the Orvis channel on YouTube with George Daniel or Troutbitten you might change your mind, plus the method works. I first heard of Euro nymphing when the club had a raffle, and the grand prize was a euro outfit. I thought, not me, just another way to burn up cash and is it fly fishing? But now I'm a believer, it's



just an additional method to fish. What do you catch on the Saint Joe besides bushes, rocks and logs? The primary fish are West Slope Cutthroat but there are some white fish. The river is fly fishing only, with barbless hooks, and is catch and release. Most fish are 10 to 14 inches. I've caught as few as 2 in a day and to 30 plus. My best count with euro nymphing one seam I caught 20 fish in about 90 minutes'. However, you might run into the guy who says he caught a dozen plus fish all 15 to 20 inches, I would say he is hallucinating.

Here is some other useful information. What's in Avery? There is a small grocery store with essentials, a fuel location with gas and I think diesel but will confirm on my next trip and a full-fledged fly shop completely stocked. The fly shop also has a deli with sandwiches and local hard ice cream open 7 days a week in season. There is a restaurant and bar open most days with cold beer, wood-fired pizza and chicken. Where to stay? There are two nice campgrounds, upriver from Avery, Turner Flats and Tin Can. Both are first come first serve but seem readily available after Labor Day. Plus, there are some other small spots along the river and some people set up in the pull outs. For the less hardy there is the Avery School House bed and breakfast, cabins and RV by The Joe (website says RV's must be full self-contained), Airbnb our favorite is hosted by Shilo, Northidahoretreat, check out VRB0 and Avery Cabins. How do I get there? It is about a 10-hour drive from Bellingham and the best route is I -90 to Rose Lake exit. Head toward Saint Maries and turn left just before you get to town and drive 50 miles up the river road. Helpful tip --Google will tell you there is a way thru Wallace, Idaho but it includes some forest service roads, and my friend almost turned back in his heavy duty 4 wheel truck because the road was so rough.

Tight Lines-email if you have questions. Contact Bob Carney at rhc201@msn.com

Project Healing Waters

May 22, 2025 Program Notes

Our May program featured a presentation by Project Healing Waters (PHW). PHW is a program started in 2005 by a veteran who fly fished and thought other service personnel might benefit from fly fishing outings with peers to help provide vets identity, community, and purpose. Their tag line is "Healing America's Veterans Through The Therapeutic Art Of Fly Fishing." PHW helps active military service personnel and Veterans in need through a dedicated, developed curriculum of fly fishing, fly casting, fly tying, and fly rod building. The statistics regarding veterans are daunting. There are currently 19 million vets in the US. 5 million have some form of identified disability. On average, over 17 veterans commit suicide every



day. In 2024 alone, PHW helped 6,820 participants, comprising all service eras through the generous work of 6,329 active volunteers. They are a leading nonprofit in the area of therapeutic outdoor recreation, using the sport of fly fishing as an intervention.

Jeff Sturm is the North Sound Program Lead for Project Healing Waters. Born and raised in western Michigan, he retired from the Navy in Everett in 2015 after 26-1/2 years as a nuclear-trained surface warfare officer. Post retirement, he travelled full-time for 2+ years before settling down on Whidbey Island in late 2018. He is now a full-time stay-at-home Dad for his 15-year-old son while supporting his wife's career as a Physician's Assistant at Whidby Health. Jeff is a lifelong angler, but picked up fly fishing in the early 90s while at North Carolina State University. He didn't get serious about it until 2012, when he discovered Sea-run Cutthroats and Steelhead.

-John Sanders

June 26 Program Information

Tim Flagler

(Owner Tightline Productions)

4CFF is honored to have Tim Flagler as our guest speaker this month at our meeting on June 26th! Tim is an internationally recognized fly fisherman and fly tyer that produces superb fly-tying instructional videos. This presentation is *not* focused on just how to tie flies, but on what trout eat and what flies imitate that food.

Tim is the owner of [Tightline Productions, L.L.C.](#), a video production company located in Califon, NJ. Although he produces video programs over a wide range of topics, his specialty is fly fishing. Tim is a well-known fly-tying instructor. His YouTube videos are some of the best in the business and his YouTube channel, [Tightlinevideo](#), currently has over 122,000 subscribers, over 38 million views, and 762 videos. Almost every week he produces a new fly tying or "how to" video which appear not only on his YouTube channel but on [Midcurrent](#) and the [Orvis News](#) fly fishing blog as well. They're also featured on [Trout Unlimited's](#) national website and in the [Orvis Learning Center](#). In addition, he has a regular column "Beginner's Masterclass with Tim Flagler" in [Fly Tyer](#) magazine, which selected Tim as their "Fly Tyer of the Year" in their Winter 2022 issue. Many of Tim's tying videos take the viewer well beyond just the tying of the fly and show what it looks like underwater, what natural it represents and how it can be fished.

Tim is a fixture at [The Fly Fishing Shows](#) - giving presentations, teaching classes and often as a Featured Tier. He does monthly "Tie-Off's" with Tom Rosenbauer ([Orvis](#)) and, recently, Cheech Pierce ([Fly Fish Food](#)) as well. He enjoys guiding year round for [South Branch Outfitters](#) in Califon, NJ and hosts annual trips to Patagonia in the spring and to the Kootenai River in MT in the summer. He has also started hosting several trips within the year to Spruce Creek, PA.

This presentation focuses on one of Tim's most popular topics. This video-based presentation includes incredible underwater footage of a variety of aquatic insects, bait fish, and crustaceans that trout eat in order to survive. In addition, Tim will share the fly patterns we use to best imitate the variety of bugs discussed. Instructions on how to tie the patterns shared in this presentation can be found on [Tim's YouTube channel](#).

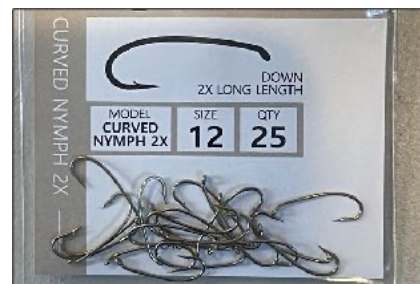
Angus' Halfback Nymph

(Fly formula by John Sanders)



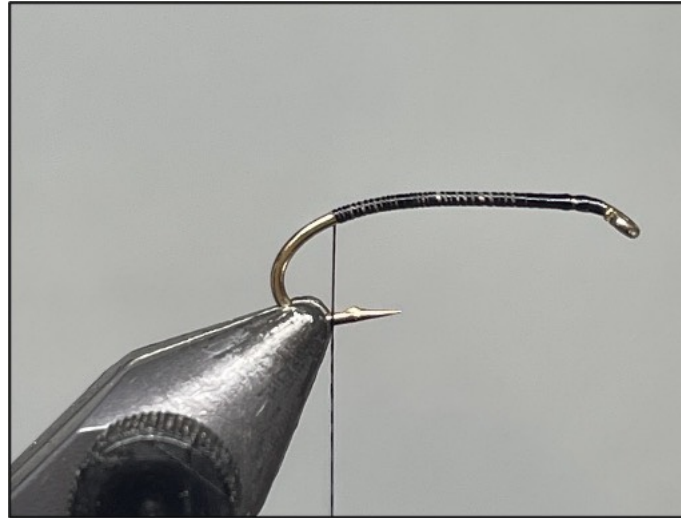
Last week on the club Red Lake outing in BC, Angus MacArthur used a fly he tied and caught the biggest fish of the trip — a 24" long, 15" girth, 7.2 pound Rainbow! This is how to tie Angus' Halfback Nymph.

1. This fly uses only four materials: a size 12 2XL hook like the *Togen's Curved Nymph 2X* or the *Daichii 1760*, black thread, Pheasant Tail (preferably dyed brown), and natural Peacock Herl.

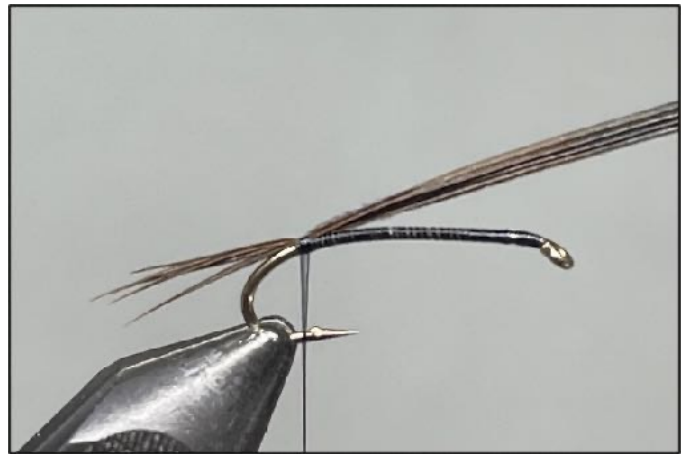


2. Crush the barb on the hook with pliers or using the vice.

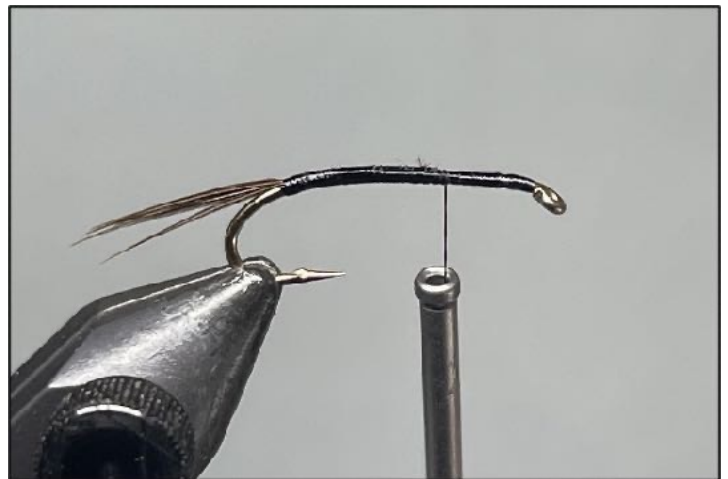
3. Wrap a base layer of thread on the hook, stopping midway between the hook point and the bend



4. Cut 6 Pheasant Tail fibers from the feather (about 3/16 wide) and tie in their tips so they extend the same distance behind the hook as the point is from the bend.



5. Wrap over the Pheasant Tail Fibers until you are about 60% of the distance from the point to the eye of the hook.



6. Select two Peacock Herl feathers and align them at their tips. Cut about 1/2 inch from the tips as they are fragile and tend to break. Tie in the feathers at this cut end, starting where the thread is hanging from Step 5, and wrap back to where you ended the thread wrap in Step 3.



7. Expose about 2 inches of thread from your bobbin. You will now create a rope, or chenille, by wrapping the two Peacock Herls around the thread. About 12 wraps per inch of thread will work well.



8. Wrap the chenille around the hook, or if you have a rotary vice, use the rotary function to turn the hook. Wrap the chenille forward to the 60% point from step 5. Note that the fly will look a bit more realistic if you wrap the chenille tightly at the start and then loosen it as you wrap forward. This will produce a tapered body resembling the natural fly.



9. Cut 10 Pheasant Tail fibers from the feather (about 1/4 inch wide), and tie in their tips so they extend toward the rear of the fly, aligned with the tail feathers from step 4.



10. Take three wraps to lock the Pheasant Tail fibers in place. Then expose about 1.5 inches of thread from the bobbin.



11. Now create another chenille, this time wrapping the Pheasant Tail fibers around the thread. You only need about 4 turns per inch for this bundle of fibers.



12. Wrap the Pheasant Tail fibers forward toward the hook eye, and then backward, creating a football shape. This creates the shape of the fly's thorax.



13. Tie off the Pheasant Tail Fibers behind the eye and wrap the thread back to the Peacock Herl fibers from Step 9.

14. Expose about 2 inches of thread from the bobbin and create another Peacock Herl chenille by wrapping it around the thread as in Step 7

15. Wrap the Peacock chenille forward over the football shaped thorax you created in Steps 12-13. You may want to wrap the chenille backward and then forward again if you prefer a larger thorax profile.

16. Unwind any remaining Peacock from the chenille and tie off the Peacock with 3 turns of thread. You can cut off the remaining Peacock and discard it.

17. Now take the bundle of Pheasant Tail fibers you tied in place in Step 11 and pull them forward over the thorax you just created in Step 16. Take 2 turns of thread to lock this bundle in place.



18. The tips of the Pheasant Tail fibers are now facing forward. Use your fingers or a bodkin (needle) to split the fibers into 2 groups of 5 fibers each. Pull the group on your side of the hook rearward and down at about a 45 degree angle, and while holding it in place, take 2 turns of thread to lock the fibers in position.

19. Repeat this process for the fibers on the far side of the hook. This creates the legs of the nymph.

20. If the fibers stick too far out to the side, or do not face far enough back, you can hold all the fibers against the hook and take a few turns of thread over them to lock them into the position you want.

21. Whip finish with 3 turns of thread, cut the thread, and apply a small drop of head cement or super glue just behind the eye. Here are the side and top views of the finished fly.



You can fish this fly with a floating, intermediate, or sinking line. The fly is essentially neutral, so use the line appropriate to fish the fly at the depth you want. Angus caught his huge Rainbow in only 2 feet of water, imitating a Callibaetis mayfly nymph during a hatch. As you become familiar tying this fly you may want to experiment with different colors of Pheasant Tail, slimmer or fatter body profiles, longer or shorter tails or legs, a larger or smaller thorax segment, and so on. Here are two slightly different versions of this same fly:



Outings Report

External Vice President (Outings) Angus MacArthur

We are part way through our spring outings this year, having done Pass, Omak, Chopaka and Red lake outings with Big Twin (June 13th to 15th) and the Classic (July 10th to 13th) coming up. We have had a lot of success with these outings with lots of big fish getting caught. Omak lake had their usual big Lahontan cutthroats, Chopaka lots of big rainbows (some had 40 fish days) and Red lake, BC, the biggest fish caught was 7.2 lbs and lots in the 18 to 21 inch range including brook trout. The Classic is shaping up to be a fun time. We will be hiking into Beaver lake on Thursday and Saturday and if you need any information on what to bring or how to get there just contact me. We will be floating the Methow on Friday and if you don't want to do these there are others available to do like the Twisp river, Chewuch river, Frost lake, Davis lake and a few others. If you need any information on these fisheries or need someone to fish with I can let you know if there are others going in your direction to fish with. The club has purchased a set of ten walkie talkies for use during the outings. We have used them on a few of the outings and not only can you keep up to date on who is catching what but it is good for safety also. If you have a problem there are others in radio distance who can help out. The highway 24 hike in outing has been canceled and hopefully we can do this next year. July 22 we have a hike in outing to Bearpaw lake which is local and if you are interested in this or any other outings and need more information



Tunkwa Lake Exchange

The man in the blue jacket and blue jeans
has driven south from Dawson Creek
to catch a fish for his mother.
He's been fishing with a spinning rod,
dunking worms, had no bites.

Above the bank at Tunkwa Lake,
he gives me an orange pumpkin-headed fly.
I cast it, let it sink where I'd observed a rise.

A rainbow inhales the imitation,
jumps, tugs and jerks.
I play the trout, reel hard,
turn its head to shore.
He hands me his net.
I scoop the flopping fish.
I offer it to him.

He drops his eyes, turns away,
pushes his canoe from shore into the bay.

I watch him cast repeatedly
towards the oozing sun.
I focus on his rod,
hope to see it bend.

---From John Egbert's Bearings

Ed Note: Member John Egbert has offered to help us move toward a newsletter that includes member contributions that celebrate fishing and the camaraderie between those of us who find enjoyment fly fishing. His article below will help members reflect on their experiences and share them with the group.

Newsletter Submissions

Writing Prompts and Examples by John Egbert

In each newsletter, we will include a writing prompt. If you choose, send me your response in the form of a brief story. I will publish the collection in the next newsletter and present the next prompt. Here is the first one:

“Your favorite fly.” Name it. Why is it your favorite? Share a little story about this fly. Consider a particular fish you recall, or a day, “over the years”, your go to fly, a searching pattern, or what causes you to use it? Where have you used it and how? If you tie, you might mention the size(s), materials. Recommended word count: 100.

“ I left my lake fly box at home, but to keep life interesting, had stuffed my river box in my daypack. When I got to Roche Lake, I had intended to fish Chironomids, and I was forced to swallow hard. Turns out I had small non-beadhead Pheasant Tails and Hares Ears available, so I tied one on each rod and cast them towards Lady Luck who I hoped would bless one of these flies. I figured out the proper depth when a nice rainbow inhaled a 16 Pheasant Tail below my indicator at 12 feet. The Hares Ear did nothing at the same depth. I let it dangle a little longer before, I switched out the latter with the former and enjoyed a big morning”.

Simple Tie: Hook: 14-18 of your choice. Pheasant tail feather for a tail, small copper wire, more PT to wrap forward 2/3 of the way towards the hook eye, a little extra for a back, wrap the wire, add peacock herl thorax, pull PT over the herl and tie down. No legs.

This reflection from Angus MacArthur:

Red Lake Monster

The third day of fishing Red lake had me fishing a new area, down the west side of the lake out in 20 to 25 feet of water. Looking into shore I saw a few nice fish feeding in the shallows and tried to go in and cast to them but instead just scared them. Down the shore I came to another spot where a nice fish was feeding in a channel between some reeds and tried again, nothing. I kept fishing out deeper and only caught a few trout. I kept coming back to the channel and tried again but nothing. During this time the rain increased and with me forgetting my rain jacket I got wet from the chest up as I had on waders. I knew I was getting close to the end so with seeing no negatives like my second rod having the fly 18 feet under an indicator in 10 feet of water or trying to fish in 2 feet of water with a type 3 sinking line, I saw only positives like a big hungry fish in 2 feet of water. Mike Riber was on the other side of the reeds and I told him about the fish in there and to try it. I saw the fish break the surface and cast 35 feet to get near him and on the second strip it was fish on! He jumped out of the water and I knew the fight was on, he headed to the reeds but got him turned around and headed for the deep with kicking my pontoon boat like crazy to keep up. After a lot of kicking, circles and runs I finally netted, measured and released the fish. I realized I forgot to take a picture. It was 24 inches long, a girth of 15 and a weight of 7.2 lbs. What a blast!

Ed Note: Member Hugh Lewis is a master bamboo fly rod builder and if you were at the auction you had a chance to view his work. He has agreed to write a series of articles about the history of rod building for our newsletter. It is a great "rainy day cup of coffee read." Many Thanks Hugh!

Bamboo in Bellingham

A Lengthy Tradition of Making Bamboo Fly Rods in Bellingham

Bamboo, imported from China, was THE material from which nearly all fishing rods of virtually every type were made during a period of approximately 75 years. That 75-year period began in the mid-1870s when Hiram Leonard developed modern-style, six-sided bamboo fly rods in Bangor Maine, to the early 1950s, when a trade embargo was imposed on Chinese goods by the U.S. Government. Subsequently, fiberglass, followed by graphite, largely replaced bamboo in the marketplace. See: [H.L. Leonard - Wikipedia](#) .

During that 75-year period, most bamboo fishing rods were manufactured in factories in which specially-designed milling machines or special saws created tapered strips of bamboo that were glued together to make rod shafts. The designs for such equipment and other aspects of construction were closely guarded trade secrets. The better manufacturers developed techniques and special equipment for heat-tempering bamboo with ammonia, for binding strips together during heat-treatment and final gluing, for making high-quality ferrules of nickel silver, and for conducting a host of other processes and making special parts and equipment that would permit construction of rods of all sorts and in all ranges of quality, in large numbers. All of this required significant capital outlays, along with considerable space in which to perform the various processes involved in commercial rod-making.

Even during that early 75-year period of bamboo's commercial dominance, hobbyists found ways to make their own bamboo rods at home, using hand-crafted wooden planing forms, adjustable metal block planes, and simple calipers or micrometers. Advice on how to go about it, including making planing forms and other equipment, came initially in the form of a book published in 1920 entitled *The Idyl of the Split-bamboo*, by Dr. George Parker Holden: [The idyl of the split-bamboo by Holden, George Parker | Open Library](#). Later, a *Professional Spit-bamboo Rod Building Manual and Manufacturer's Guide* was published by George L. Herter in 1949: [Professional Split-bamboo Rod Building Manual and Manufacturer's Guide - George Leonard Herter - Google Books](#) . Shortly thereafter, Claude Kreider published *The Bamboo Rod: And How to Build It* in 1951: [The Bamboo Rod: And How to Build It by Kreider, Claude M.: Fine Cloth \(1951\) First Edition. | BASEMENT BOOKS](#) . Much later, starting in the 1970s several books describing more modern methodologies for home-building bamboo rods became available, along with on-line articles and videos. Links to some of these will appear later in this article.

The tradition of rod-making by patient hobbyists continues to this day in various places around the world, including Bellingham, Washington. Interestingly, Bellingham has been a place where hobbyists have made their own bamboo fly rods and equipment by hand over a very lengthy period of time. This article will discuss ten such individuals, seven of whom are or were members of the Fourth Corner Fly Fishers. These rodmakers include Judge Edward Gooch, Don McKinnon, Fred Miller, Lyle Hand, Hugh Brown, Joe Kelly, Eric Eames, Hugh Lewis, Jimmy Watts, and Sid Strong. This article will discuss these individuals below, organized in a rough chronological sequence.

Edward Gooch

Edward W. Gooch [1884 - 1970], a local judge, was the earliest known maker of bamboo fly rods in Bellingham. Exactly how he created his rods is unknown today, but he likely used an adjustable Stanley block plane and a grooved block of hard wood to hand-plane bamboo strips down to size. It is possible that, while making his living as a judge, he could have acquired the necessary carpenters' tools, knowledge and gumption necessary to make adjustable planing forms, it nevertheless seems somewhat unlikely. In any event, with non-adjustable forms, planing bamboo strips to size was quite a laborious process; that process is described in detail later in this article.

Gooch was not a 4CFF member, but 4CFF founding member Charlie Gold apparently knew him and purchased one of his rods in the 1950s or 1960s. I was able to examine it at the home of Charlie's son Bill Gold, who was also a founding 4CFF member. The rod was fairly well made, was designed for steelhead fishing, and came in a custom wooden case lined with blue velvet. It was quite attractive.

A photo of a Gooch rod made in 1948 appears below. Its owner is unknown, but the rod's butt section was broken at some point near the stripping guide. It was very poorly repaired, without attempting to repair the break in the cane, and using an inappropriate aluminum ferrule set.

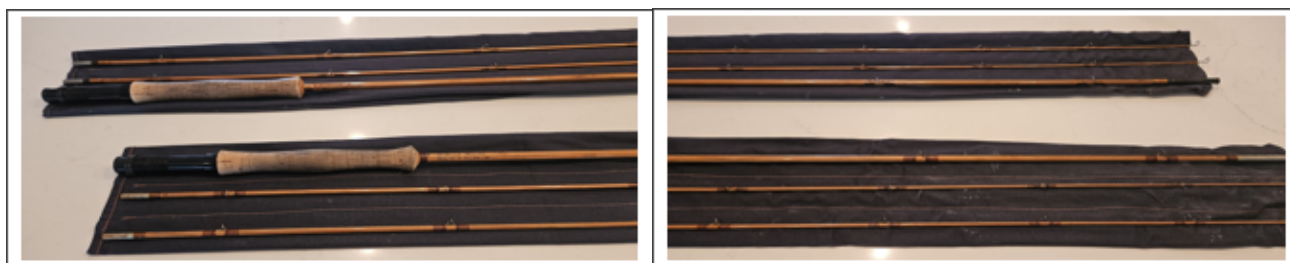


Don McKinnon

Donald R. McKinnon [1914 – 1984] was born and raised in Bellingham, Washington. Not much on his background appears on the internet today, but he was apparently not related to local Trout Unlimited activist Bill McKinnon, now deceased, and he was not a 4CFF member. Nevertheless, at some point in the 1970s or 1980s, Don learned how to make bamboo fly rods. From the appearance of an uncompleted butt section in my possession, he probably learned his techniques from a class taught in Seattle by Dawn Holbrook.

Dawn Holbrook was a legendary bamboo rod maker and fly tier in Seattle. After mastering the craft during a period of more than 20 years starting in the late 1940s, Holbrook started teaching evening classes in Seattle on bamboo fly rod construction. Those classes, taught in the 1970s and 1980s, kept the craft alive in western Washington while bamboo rod-making languished elsewhere in the country. Although Holbrook designed and made a few good trout rods, most of his rods were 9 feet or longer, designed to cast 8, 9 or 10 weight lines for salmon and steelhead fishing.

4CFF members Bruce Aigner his sister, Marion Hiller, and her husband Steve Hiller are fortunate to have acquired several Holbrook salmon/steelhead rods from Bruce and Marion's father, noted Seattle fly tier Boyd Aigner, who purchased several rods from Holbrook for personal use and for members of his family, at various points from the late 1950s through the mid-1970s. Photos of two of those rods appear below:



Dawn Holbrook's own rods were reasonably well-constructed, hand-planed on an adjustable metal planing form made for him at some cost by a machinist in Seattle. Understandably, his students were taught to make rods in one of the less expensive if not primitive ways described in George Parker Holden's book from 1920. The planing form used in Holbrook's class consisted of a grooved hard maple block, which Holbrook's students could purchase through the Herter's catalog. See: [Herter's catalog is long gone, but not forgotten](#). Eight (8) grooves of diminishing depth, each with an included angle of 60 degrees, were milled into these wooden blocks. The grooves were not tapered, so the process of making a rod in them was quite laborious.

After splitting a 12 foot bamboo pole into many small strips, and hand-planing a rough bevel onto those strips, the maker would lay the exterior enamel side of a bamboo strip against one side of a groove in the block, and plane the exposed side of the strip down for several strokes, before flipping the enamel side over to the other side of the groove and planing down the opposite side of the strip an equal number of strokes; that process maintained a 60-degree angle down the length of the strip.

Students measured the strips frequently with a micrometer, constantly counting the number of passes made with the plane, then moving the strip to the next smaller groove and repeating the process when necessary to achieve the desired taper dimensions. It was not a process for someone with a short attention span! A photo of McKinnon's maple block planing form [3.5" x 32" x 1.75"], grooved on both sides, appears below:



McKinnon followed Holbrook's example and focused on building heavier rods. A photo of the lower part of an uncompleted butt section for a McKinnon 9 ½ ft 8 weight steelhead rod appears below:



McKinnon penciled target final dimensions onto the strip every 3 inches along its course, as taught in Dawn Holbrook classes. Using the grooved maple planing form in the manner described above, the maker would gradually plane a strip down to the penciled dimensions. This butt strip, after final planing, would have been 0.236" at its butt end, and 0.125" at the ferrule, and it was not designed to be hollowed. The completed rod, consisting of two sections, each comprising six such strips glued together and joined to the other section by metal ferrules, would have been quite heavy, with a diameter twice that of the dimensions of these strips.

We don't know how many rods McKinnon completed during his lifetime, but from the uncompleted section that I examined, they would have been at least structurally well built. I was fortunate to acquire the grooved maple block and uncompleted butt section depicted above, along with a good supply of his hand-flamed bamboo and some other items of interest to rodmakers, at a local antique store following his death.

Next month, a follow-up article will appear that will discuss bamboo rod-making by 4CFF members Fred Miller, Lyle Hand, Hugh Brown, Joe Kelly and Eric Eames.

I am looking for photographs of bamboo rods made by Fred Miller, Lyle Hand, and Joe Kelly. If any reader of this article has rods made by these individuals, or good photos thereof, please contact me. Hugh Lewis: hugh@toadhillconsulting.com or 360-739-2023. Thanks in advance.

Marketplace

This is your chance to get into Euro Nymphing for a very reasonable cost.

Bob Carney has a 3wt. euro rod 10 ft. with extra tip. Used twice.

New cost with extra tip \$389 sell for \$175. He also has a full cage reel with euro line called big general from big y fly company new \$179 plus euro line \$50. sell \$100.

Contact Bob Carney at rhc201@msn.com



Looking Ahead

Big Twin Outing - Thursday-Sunday, June 12-15

Big Twin Lake Resort just outside Winthrop, WA. Make reservations early and mention that you are with 4th Corner Fly Fishers if you want to camp near others from the club. 509-996-2650 or reservations@bigtwinlakeresort.com

Club Meeting - Thursday June 26 5:30pm -9pm - Tim Flagler of Tightlinevideo joining via zoom from New Jersey

Bellingham Golf and Country Club
3729 Meridian St.

July 1- Board Meeting 6:30 (Trinity Lutheran Church 119 Texas St)

Meeting starts at 6:30 all members welcome.

Methow Classic Outing - Thursday - Sunday, July 10-13 (No Meeting this Month)

Many fishing options for this Classic event from floating the Methow to hiking or driving in to local lakes and small streams. Make reservations at River RV Park and campground. Mention that you are with our group under comments if you want to camp with the group. riverbendrv.com 509-997-3500. We will have a potluck dinner and may be able to convince Frank to make his wonderful Paella dinner. Guests must have completed liability waiver and everyone must have registered on Zeffy.

Bearpaw Lake Hike-In July 22

Details on the hike and trip will follow. Float tube advised for this trip.

Upper Skagit Outing - Thursday - Sunday August 12-14

Drive up for day fishing or plan to camp at the Ross Lake Provincial Park. Reservations available or first come sites also available.

Club Picnic Saturday, August 23 starting at Noon

Lin Nelson has graciously offered his home/back yard for our annual picnic. Details regarding food and set up will be forthcoming. Please put this one on your calendar. We provide a main course for this potluck so please remember to register on Zeffy when you get the invitation so we can plan for the main course.

Kelly Creek / NF Clearwater, Idaho Outing - Monday - Sunday September 15-21

Some may choose to stay over and fish the St. Joe after. Details to follow from Steve Wimer Host

Chopaka Lake Outing - Thursday - Sunday October 2-5

Details to follow from Mike Riber Host

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President
Mike Riber

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