



President's Message

Breaking Fly Rods

I've always been particularly sensitive about breaking fly rods. So, when I was crashing through the brush on Kelly Creek and heard that unique sharp snapping sound, I unfortunately knew right away that I had broken my rod tip.

The first rod tip I ever broke was on a salmon rod I had borrowed from my grandfather. I took it into H & H Sporting Goods (*the old fly shop in town*) and Jerry Wells fixed it for me on the spot, earning my eternal admiration. He told me my grandfather would never know, and I never told my grandfather. I've broken a few other fly rods since then and even drove away with a rod on my roof once, but that is another story.

My sensitivity stems in part from my early fly fishing days when fly rods were a significant hit on my fishing budget. Learning and making a few fly rods only slightly eased the financial strain as I started appreciating more expensive rods. Making a fly rod also gave me a new appreciation and increased my overall bond with fly rods, making it all that much worse when I break one. The good news is that most rods can be repaired, but the lingering feeling that you have broken something special takes some time to go away.

With three prospective new members awaiting approval, excellent turnout at our outings, a successful fly fishing class, and upcoming plans for fly-tying nights and our holiday celebration, our club is in a great place. We're ending the year on a high note—please join us for the holiday celebration!

-Mike Riber



4CFF Calendar of Events

November 11 - Fly Tying Night - 5:30-8:00 PM. Focus: Stillwater Flies

Holiday Inn Suites, 4260 Mitchell Way, Boundary Bay Conference Room

November 20 - General Meeting - 5:30-8:30 PM. Guest: George Pess of University of Washington School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences.***"Ecosystem Response to the Removal of the Elwha River Dams"***

Holiday Inn Suites, 4260 Mitchell Way, Chuckanut Conference Room

December 2 - Board Meeting - 6:30-8:00 PM

Trinity Lutheran Church, 119 Texas St. All club members welcome.

December 2 - Trout Unlimited - "Letters and Lagers for Steelhead" 6:30 PM.

Participate in a writing campaign asking the state legislature to restore funding to the WDFW Quicksilver Portfolio for Steelhead monitoring and recovery. Details at Nov 20 meeting. Farmstrong Brewing, Mount Vernon

December 20 - Holiday Party - 5:00-8:00 PM

Holiday Inn Suites, 4260 Mitchell Way, Chuckanut Conference Room. Meet friends new and old, celebrate a successful year of fishing, and enjoy a raffle for prizes. Zeffy invitation coming.

January 6 - Board Meeting - 6:30-8:00 PM

Trinity Lutheran Church, 119 Texas St. All club members welcome.

Club Materials Storage

The board has rented a large temporary storage space for all club materials. We plan to sort through all donated items and catalog all club equipment. To help us accomplish this, if you have club equipment or materials, contact Mark Munn or Frank Koterba before November 25 and they will arrange to meet you and collect the items for placement in storage. After organizing we will downsize to a smaller space.

Club Meeting November 20

George Pess (an in-person presentation)

Ecosystem Response to the Removal of the Elwha River Dams, Washington

A Note from Hugh Lewis:

I've attached a short Bio for my old friend George Pess, who John thoughtfully invited to speak at the Club's meeting next Thursday. George has been involved in fisheries science and management since 1989; that's the same year that Ralph Lloyd, Marc Hurlbert, and I, with some other former members of 4CFF, started the Wild Fish Conservancy.

George Pess, Ph.D., was until very recently the Watershed Program Manager and senior stream ecologist at NOAA Fisheries' Northwest Fisheries Science Center.



George has worked in the fisheries science and management field since 1989. His primary research interest during that time has been the examination of natural and land-use effects on salmon habitat and production. George has conducted research on historic and current land use impacts on salmon habitat and production, the influence of wood in forested stream channels, the development of a wood recruitment model to determine the relative influence of forestry activities, what role watershed analysis plays in ecosystem management, and how landscape characteristics and land use affect salmon abundance and distribution.

Over a period of 26 years at NOAA, his work spanned stream and watershed restoration, emphasizing habitat restoration's impact on salmonid populations, most recently on the Elwha River, in conjunction with its successful dam removal project.

George has a BA from Bowdoin College (Economics and Environmental Science, minor in Geology), an MS from Yale University (Forest Hydrology), and a PhD from the University of Washington (Aquatic and Fishery Sciences). He remains an affiliate professor at the University of Washington, and a consultant to the Natural Systems Design consulting firm [Natural Systems Design](#)

George took an early retirement from NOAA in response to the cuts made by the Trump administration to the NOAA budget.

In his retirement, he hopes to be spending more time in Greece, where much of his family is still located.

For more detail concerning his background, including links to several important papers that George coauthored, see: [George Pess - Natural Systems Design](#)

Volunteer Needed to Help Lead Bellingham Project Healing Waters Location

This past summer, the North Sound Program of Project Healing Waters launched its Bellingham location. The Bellingham group meets at 6:00 PM on the second Monday of each month at the Bellingham Vet Center.

With fifteen veterans and volunteers already registered—and about two-thirds actively participating—the Bellingham program is full of energy and promise. The average age of Bellingham's registered veterans is 44, notably younger than the other three North Sound locations, which average around 60. This younger demographic brings vibrancy but also presents unique challenges.

North Sound Program leadership has been actively seeking a volunteer to help guide the Bellingham location. However, since most participants are still in the midst of their careers, finding someone local with the time and capacity to take on a leadership role has been difficult. Without local leadership, the sustainability of monthly classes in Bellingham is at risk.

If you or someone you know might be interested in supporting our local veteran community and helping introduce a new generation to the joy and beauty of fly fishing, please reach out to Jeff Sturm (below). Keeping the Bellingham program active and thriving depends on local support.



JEFF STURM

North Sound WA Program Leader

Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc.®

(360) 731-0047

Jeff.sturm@projecthealingwaters.org

Beer Night at Terramar Brewery Report

August's Beer Night at Terramar Brewstillery in Edison brought together members of North Sound TU and 4th Corner Fly Fishers for the Fly-casting Olympics. This fostered a camaraderie of the shared joy of fly fishing and fun experiencing casting challenges together with beer in hand.

Upon arrival, participants went to the outdoor bar, ordered beer and pizza, and socialized during happy hour. Conversations covered fishing experiences, current conservation concerns, and personal introductions. After socializing, participants took turns attempting casting challenges that mimicked real fishing situations and required various casting skills. Even some onlookers eventually joined in to give it a try.

Frank, Molly, Steve, and Marion were on hand to offer tips for each challenge: river mends, accuracy, distance, and casting around obstacles. The night was filled with laughter and entertainment, and nobody worried about scores or the competition. Everyone gained new insights into casting techniques, and all participants were winners for having attended.

"I can say that it was a fun event. I'm glad I participated and practiced casts to get to the 'target,' with a beer in my hand!" -Lin Nelson.

Thanks to all who attended! **-Marion Hiller**



It is Tying Season!



Upper Skagit BC Outing Report

August 12-14 *by Jeff Taylor and Steve Wimer*

The Upper Skagit River begins high in the pristine mountains north of Manning Provincial Park, flowing south into Ross Lake at the U.S. border. The surrounding forests and cool mountain air keep the river refreshingly cold, even during the heat of summer—perfect conditions for wild trout.

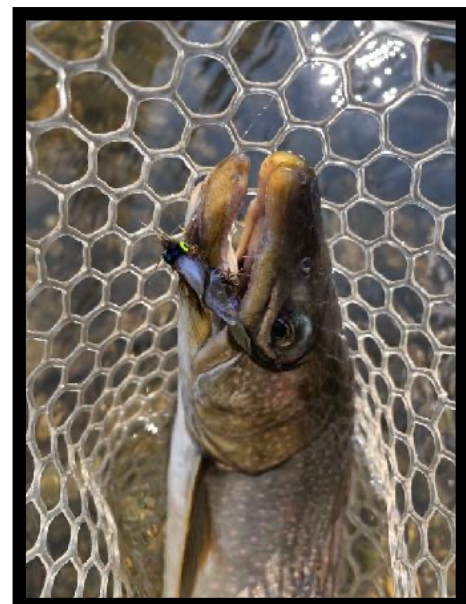
After a four-year closure caused first by the pandemic and later by road washouts, access to this remarkable fishery was finally restored in 2024. Eager to return, a group of 4th Corner Fly Fishers—hosted by Angus MacArthur and joined by Mike Riber, Mark Munn, Jeff Taylor, Harold Cashman, Jim Swanson, and Steve Wimer—made the trip north for several days of camping, fishing, and good company. The group set up camp at the large Ross Lake campground where the river meets the lake—a beautiful spot that, while historically notorious for mosquitoes, was nearly bug-free this year.



Conditions were challenging at times. A low snowpack and extended warm weather had left the river running low and crystal clear, making the fish cautious and selective. Still, everyone managed to connect with fish, and the group enjoyed steady action on both dry flies and nymphs. Blue-Winged Olives and Caddis were the most consistent hatches, with a few big Green Drakes making an appearance. Rainbows came to hand on Parachute Adams, X-Caddis, and Comparaduns, while those fishing euro-nymph setups found success with olive and black Perdigon-style nymphs. Several bull trout were also landed on streamers—and in one memorable moment, Jeff Taylor fooled a bull trout on a dry fly. As Steve Wimer quipped, "That hopper must have looked like a big cheeseburger—too good to pass up."

The weather was sunny and pleasant throughout the trip, and the easy wading made for relaxed, enjoyable fishing. Beyond the angling, evenings around camp were filled with laughter, stories, and the shared appreciation of being back on one of our region's most beautiful rivers.

The Upper Skagit River in British Columbia remains a gem—home to wild rainbows and bull trout, easy to access, and a joy to fish. Given this year's success and camaraderie, the outing is sure to remain a highlight on next year's club schedule.



Annual Club Picnic: A Perfect Day for Friendship and Fishing Tales August 23

Our annual 4th Corner Fly Fishers Club picnic was held this year at the Nelson's beautiful home, where the welcoming yard and fine weather created the perfect setting for camaraderie and conversation. Members gathered to share good food, laughter, and plenty of stories—reminiscing about memorable outings and the fish that didn't get away.

The afternoon was filled with talk of guided adventures from the rivers of Montana to far-off tropical saltwater destinations, along with enthusiastic plans for the upcoming fall fishing season. It was a reminder of the wide range of experiences our members bring to the club and the shared passion that ties us all together.

The meal was a highlight of the day. Frank and Lin prepared two delicious variations of Paella, complemented by an impressive spread of sides—from Hugh's fresh green bean casserole to a colorful assortment of fresh salads.

More than anything, the picnic offered a welcome chance to reconnect, catch up with friends old and new, and appreciate once again the positive and supportive community that defines our club.

-Bob Jorgenson



Skagit River Pink Salmon Outing

September 10 *by John Sanders*

Since 2025 is an odd numbered year, the Humpback Salmon, also known as Pink Salmon, would be returning to Puget Sound rivers. This year was forecast to have near record returns, with the Skagit River alone expected to have a return of about 500,000 Pinks. 4CFF planned an outing for September 4, but there was so little rain in late August and early September we delayed the outing one week until September 10 to allow more time for the salmon to return. We had eight people attend the event at Howard Miller Steelhead Park at Rockport on a beautiful early fall day. There was an even mix of members who preferred single-handed rods and those who preferred two-handed rods. Since the river was low, wading access was excellent along the entire stretch of the park. And although the fish were not in the river in large numbers yet, almost everybody managed to catch a fish or two!



Introduction to Fly Fishing Course

September 13 by Mark Munn

On September 13th the Fourth Corner Fly Fishers taught **Introduction to Fly Fishing** at the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association (NSEA) headquarters. The purpose of the class was to teach the basic elements of fly fishing for individuals in the community and to introduce people to our club.

This was an all-day event that included fish identification and habitats, fish food and fly mimicry, fly fishing equipment, safety precautions, and basic casting instruction. We had a great teaching group that included Scott Willison of



Confluence Fly Shop, along with John Boblett, Frank Koterba, Marion Hiller, Steve Hiller, and myself. There were 11 students with the class composed of young adults, most of whom had limited background in fly fishing. The students seemed very interested in fly fishing and provided us with positive feedback and suggestions for improving the class in the future. Several of the students commented about possibly joining our club. I would like to thank Scott at Confluence for taking time to help our class and also thank John, Frank, Marion, and Steve for their critical help developing and teaching the class. Based on the positive feedback we will be offering the class again in the spring.



Kelly Creek / North Fork Clearwater / St. Joe River Outing September 15-21 *by Angus MacArthur*

We had 11 fishers show up at the Kelly Creek / North Fork Clearwater / St. Joe River outing, which is great considering it was a ten-hour trip to get there. The excitement level was high, so high that the outing which was supposed to start on Monday, most everyone arrived the Saturday before. The host, Steve Wimer, did a great job of setting this outing up, picking out a great campground central to all the fishing, and sharing his knowledge of the area to improve our fishing.



A caravan of us headed out early Saturday morning to make the trip, including a stop in St. Regis for the world's best huckleberry shake... really good. We arrived early enough to fish a few hours that day and still set up camp. There were three different rivers to fish, the North Fork Clearwater below the junction of Kelly Creek, Kelly Creek, and the North Fork Clearwater above the junction. All are great fisheries.

With 11 anglers there we were never bunched up with the many miles of river to fish. We would pair up and head off to different areas. Hopper droppers were very popular with everyone as were foam ants. A couple of us did Euro nymphing with great success, but it did cost us a few flies. Those rivers ate flies very well until we switched to lighter flies and shorter leader between the fly and sighter material.

Mike and Elizabeth Tucker fished the campground fishing hole in the evenings and said they caught big fish. Well, everyone knows that campground fishing holes get pounded and are not very good. The last evening Bob Jorgenson and I went out and fished it to see, and wow it was good fishing and big fish! Evenings around the campfire were great with lots of fish stories, fly boxes given out, and sharing of flies.

After Kelly creek a few of us went back to St. Regis, another huckleberry shake, and off to the St. Joe. The fishing in the two different fisheries was similar with the big difference being access. The St. Joe had fewer turnouts and the road was a lot higher above the river making it harder access. There were slightly bigger fish there also. The rocks in the St. Joe were pretty slick so we had to be more cautious. With all the rivers, if you could get away from easy access you were rewarded with better fishing. For me it was on my bucket list, and I am looking forward to doing this again.

Kelly Creek / North Fork Clearwater, St. Joe River Outing (continued)



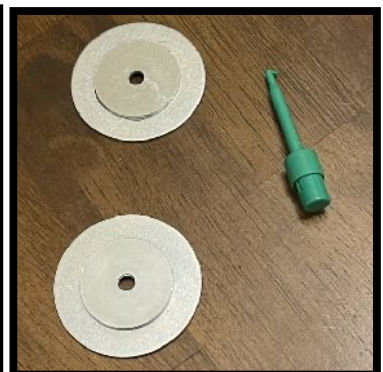
Mike Fighting a 20" Cutt right in back of his camp site.



Stillwater Depth Probe

by John Sanders

If you stillwater fish you know one of the challenges is determining the depth of your Chironomids. Lake bottoms have various characteristics ranging from rocks to weeds to deep silt. This simple device uses hackle pliers to securely grab the hook and is flat enough to not settle too



far into the silt. Importantly, because of the 2" diameter surface area it will clearly display on your depth sounder. The weight can be adjusted by simply adding more washers. Leeworth Hackle Pliers are \$6.99 per dozen on Amazon, and Ace or Hardware Sales have fender washers, shown here glued together in pairs so the small washer hole size matches the hackle plier shaft.

Fly Tying Instructional Sessions Oct. 21

by Mark Munn

The Fourth Corner Fly Fishers is organizing fly tying instructional sessions where individuals from the club demonstrate specific flies that are of interest to members and useful in waters where we fly fish. These sessions are being coordinated by Angus MacArthur and Mark Munn. The first was held at Larrabee Lager Co. on October 21. Steve Wimer demonstrated the tying of the Foam Caddis and Micro Chubby. The class was a big success with 16 attendees. Our second fly tying session will be held on November 11 at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites. Bob Jorgenson and John Sanders will demonstrate how to tie flies used on lakes.



Fly of the Month: Micro Chubby Chernobyl

By Steve Wimer

Recipe

Hook: Ahrex FW531 size 12-14, or TMC 200 size 12.

Thread: UTC 70d in Rusty brown, or color to match body.

Tail: Copper brown Antron, but burnt orange is a great alternative.

Dubbing: Arizona Diamond Dub in olive brown. Lots of great dubbings to choose from. I like blended dubbings with a bit of flash.

Body: 2mm thick sheet foam in root beer color.

Legs: Montana Fly Company – Barred Sexy Floss in brown, size small.

Wing: McFlylon polypropylene yarn.

Tools: Bobbin, whip finish tool, super glue, scissors, foam cutting tool.



Tying Tips

Tying with foam takes a bit of practice, too much thread pressure will cut the foam, not enough thread pressure and the foam will twist on the hook shank. Avoid Uni-Thread when tying with foam, as it is tightly corded and cuts foam much easier than when tying with UTC Ultra Thread. A small drop of super glue at each segment creates a Chubby that will last through many fish and will not twist on the hook shank. When tying in foam, make certain to always hold it in place when applying thread pressure. Applying thread pressure while not holding the foam in place will almost certainly cause the foam to rotate on the hook. A foam cutting tool is nice for cutting perfect chubby foam bodies, but the foam body can be cut and trimmed to shape with scissors. Tie this fly in a variety of colors like black, browns, tan, olive, burnt orange, and purple. Purple Chubbies are deadly!

Fishing Tips

This fly may be the baby brother of the world-renowned Chubby Chernobyl, but it can put a ton of fish in the net. On smaller streams, or over more pressured trout, the Micro Chubby will frequently out fish its bigger brother. Even though smaller in size, this fly is a great choice for a hopper dropper set up. You can easily suspend 2.4 – 3.0mm tungsten beaded nymphs below a Micro Chubby. Generally, fish the Micro Chubbie with a drag free drift as you would any other dry. However, sometimes a small occasional twitch will trigger a strike.



Skagit Steelhead are relying on you to get Olympia on board with common sense funding. We are running our "Letter and Lagers" campaign again, this time heading down south to Mount Vernon. If you saw the notices for our earlier October version of this event you will remember all you need is: bring yourself, your fishiest and most passionate friends, and something you can type with, to Farmstrong Brewing at 6:30 PM on Tuesday December 2nd.

Skagit River Steelhead, and those who love these fish, suffered a big blow in last year's state legislative budget. Funding was eliminated for [WDFW's Quicksilver Portfolio](#), the agency's comprehensive plan for Steelhead monitoring and recovery

throughout the Puget Sound. Despite its proven effectiveness, the state's "last in, first out" approach to budget cuts has left Skagit River Steelhead, and our ability to pursue this incredible species, in a lurch. As we speed towards the new year, Olympia needs to hear your voice clearly! Renewing Quicksilver Portfolio will cost 1.8 million, which is *only* .0023% of the 77.8 billion Biennial Budget (yes - you read that percentage correctly!).

Please check out the WDFW link above for details on the Quicksilver Portfolio and we will see you and your fishy friends at Farmstrong Brewing in Mount Vernon from 6:30 PM to closing.

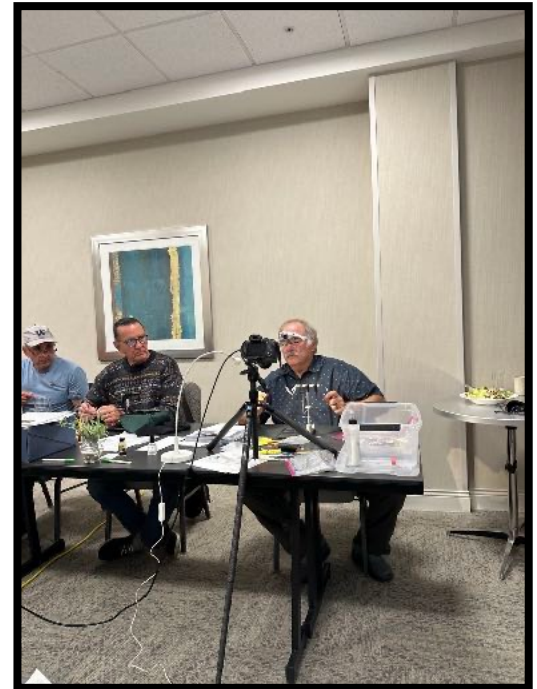
Fly Tying Instructional Sessions November 11

by Bob Jorgenson

Mark Munn and Angus MacArthur wasted no time in coordinating a second instructional session this fall. This session was held at the Holiday Inn at the Bellingham Airport in the Boundary Bay room. The venue was perfect. Table service ordering and receiving of dinner, table drink service, a station with water, coffee, and tea, and a quiet and well-lit environment made the evening perfect. Participants ordered more than enough food and drink to justify the free use of the room offered by the Holiday Inn.

Bob Jorgenson started the evening with two very easy Chironomids that have been quite effective in the waters around Kamloops, B.C. The seating was arranged so that the many experienced tiers were able to assist those with less experience. The focus was on the basic skills of building a taper, attaching Flashabou, and winding wire. Participants were also encouraged to use the rotary feature on their vices.

The next two flies were tied by John Sanders. John used his extensive tying experience and connections to the fly tying community in the Northwest to offer several short cuts and tips, and directed participants to tools that make tying easier and more efficient. John also explained the most efficient way to fish these flies. The first fly tied was a Tequila Booby attractor pattern that is the perfect fly for the stillwater fisherman having a frustrating day. The use of foam eyes, marabou, and Fritz were explained. It was a perfect fly for both the beginner and more experienced. The second fly was the very realistic and challenging Tony Stark (Ironman) Chironomid. Eight materials were used in a variety of ways. Several of us left for home hoping to gather materials and try to reproduce this work of art. This fly was a challenge for those of us who regularly tie Chironomids to up our game! John also helped participants understand the importance of choosing the correct coating for Chironomids so that the fluorescent properties of materials would not be neutralized. The sixteen participants had a great evening, and everyone came away with flies and greater tying skills.



-Bob Jorgenson

Second Fly of the Month: Modified Zucchini Chironomid

By Peter DeRoche

Recipe

Hook: Daiichi 1760 Size 14-16, or Aqua Talon Chironomid Ambush Hook. Daiichi 1760 available from Confluence.

Thread: Black UTC 70d, red UTC 70d.

Body: Medium Holographic Tinsel (spool). Also try Avocado Flashabou 6937 for a different look, both available at Confluence.

Rib: Red wire size small.

Bead: 2.8mm metallic copper (or copper) tungsten for size 14, 2.3mm for size 16, both available at Confluence. I have also used a 2.4mm successfully.

Gills: White Uni-Stretch or white Antron yarn.

Finish: Loctite super glue or clear Sally Hansen Hard as Nails.



Tying instructions

1. Place bead on to hook. Personal preference - I put the bead on with the bigger hole toward the eye of the hook (backwards to most people) because I feel it allows me to build a smoother taper for Chironomids. Using the red thread tie in a 1-inch piece of gill material in front of the bead and pointing forward over the eye of the hook. Use the minimum number of thread wraps to secure the material as the bead has to slide over the whip finish. Secure with a whip finish and snip the thread. Pull bead forward over the thread wraps to the eye of the hook, leaving only the white gills extending past the eye. Trim the gills so they are approximately the size of the bead.
2. Reattach the red tying thread behind the bead and travel down the length of the hook to the bend and then return to the bead. Tie in a couple of inches of size small red wire, securing this rib material back to the bend of the hook. Leave about a bead width of red thread as a red butt beyond the wire stop point (which is about where the barb on the hook would be). Wrap the thread forward creating a smooth gently tapered body as you return the thread just behind the bead. Whip finish and cut the red thread.

3. Change to black thread and tie in a couple of inches of black holographic tinsel along the length of the hook to the point where the wire rib stops. Then return the thread to the bead using flattened thread (by counterclockwise spinning your bobbin) to get a nice flat wrap.
4. Look at your profile and attempt to make a gentle transition to the bead. It helps to use flattened thread. One method of tapering is using thread wraps in widths of one bead, followed by two bead's width, then three bead's width
5. Wind the Holographic tinsel, overlapping slightly on each wrap, and wrapping in the opposite direction from normal, and then secure at the bead. Wrapping the tinsel this direction will make the fly stronger because on the next step you will counter wrap the tinsel with the red wire which is wrapped in the normal direction. Personal preference - I use a single whip finish on the thread at the bead and then utilize the rotary function of the vice to wind the tinsel. Secure the tinsel with a 3-4 turn whip finish.
6. Wrap the wire in the normal direction, counter wrapping the holographic tinsel. You can begin with a couple of wraps of wire before traveling up the body of the fly. You are leaving a small section of exposed red thread and wire on the hook end to form the butt of the Chironomid. Work the wire up to the bead in 6-7 even wraps. Secure the wire with a whip finish and then "helicopter" off the wire tag end. Cut the black thread.
7. Tie on the red thread again behind the bead. Take several wraps behind the bead to make a small "hot spot" that slightly tapers up the bead. Whip finish and cut the thread.
8. Finish the Chironomid by applying super glue or Sally Hansen Hard as Nails. Note: I do not use UV resin to finish as it doesn't hold up, and I find that super glue takes more skill than Sally Hansen because it dries so fast.

This fly is good anywhere someone says "a Zucchini works" but the typical Zucchini Chironomid isn't producing. I sometimes use two rods with this fly, each with a different hook size. I have a selection of size 12,14, and 16. I have never caught a fish before noon on anything bigger than a size 14 - probably just me!

How to Fish

I use the finder to locate fish, drop forceps or a weight to the bottom (see "Stillwater Depth Probe" in this newsletter). Looking at my finder, I watch the weight come out of the mud or weeds and then use that as the actual bottom depth. With one rod I start a couple of feet off the bottom using a floating line and depth indicator or fishing "on the dangle" with a sinking line. I fish a second rod at a slightly shallower depth and adjust both until fish are located!

Chopaka Lake Outing October 2-5

By Fay Farkas

Club President, Mike Riber, generously hosted a great multi-day camping and fly-fishing outing to Chopaka Lake, not far from Tonasket, WA. We had great people, good fishing, and invigorating fall weather. The dates of October 2nd to 5th proved ideal as we had days just under 60F and nights in the mid-40's, and the campground was uncrowded, allowing club members to camp in good proximity to each other. The October date also allowed early-season rains to clear the smoke from September forest fires just before our arrival.

A convivial group of 13 club members attended and enjoyed good fishing for rainbow trout, averaging 18-20 inches with some even larger. Members found success with a variety of flies, including leeches of course, though it seemed like "fishing with confidence on a fly you like" was a common and effective strategy. The group gathered in the evenings around a fire and was able to comfortably shelter in George and my mountaineering base-camp style tent when a series of short-lived squalls passed through one evening.

Multi-day trips like this are such a good way to enjoy time with old friends and get to know new ones. Many thanks to Mike and Outings Coordinator Angus MacArthur for making this possible!



A Christmas Island Adventure

By Marion Hiller

For me, fishing adventures are more about the experience than the fish count. It's about the time I share with amazing people and the growth I make as an angler. Every trip creates friendships, new skills, and memories. Memories that sometimes feel quite magical.

Recently, I embarked on an unforgettable journey to Christmas Island in the South Pacific very near the equator. I joined a remarkable group of eleven highly experienced women anglers, aged 35 to 82.



Although I was the least experienced saltwater angler, I embraced the opportunity to learn from these accomplished women.

The beauty of Christmas Island was stunning. Shallow, white sand flats stretched for yards and were surrounded by various shades of aqua waters. Each day we walked these flats hunting for fish, with an assigned fishing partner and a skilled guide. My roommate Cynthia and I kicked off the first day's adventure together.

At the end of the day, the women gathered at the lodge for refreshments and fishing stories. While they reported impressive species and fish counts, I sheepishly reported a single bonefish catch, telling myself every fishing experience contributes to growth as an angler.

As the days progressed, my skills and confidence skyrocketed as I learned to see and hook bonefish! On the final day, I was ready to take on whatever challenge awaited. And what a finale it was! I landed not one, but three bonefish in succession, each one larger than the last: 5 pounds, then 6, and finally 7 pounds. The fights were increasingly intense, with the final fish making several deep runs into backing, proving the rumors of bonefish to be true.

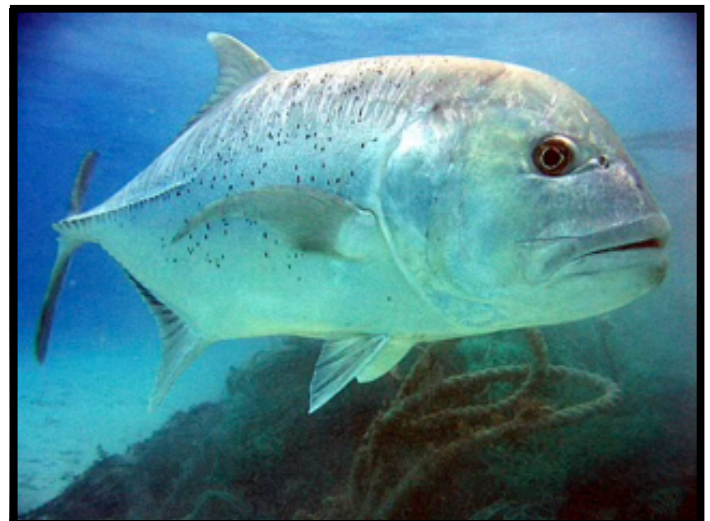
The adventure reached its peak in the last hour of the trip. I spotted five enormous black spots off to the right. My guide silently handed me my 10-weight rod, trading out the 8-weight. I knew something exciting was about to happen as I asked, "Are those black spots big fish?" He nodded with a broad smile on his face.

Christmas Island (continued)

With a bit of nervousness, I cast to the shadows, 45 feet away. I stripped the line once, and BAM! I hooked a *Grand Trevally*. The locals call it "the TANK," and I completely understood why, as my adrenaline peaked. This powerful, top predator surged with aggression, creating an undeniable spectacle as it moved first to the left, then the right, and again to the left, spooking all fish in the area. With each turn, sprays of water three to four feet high and as long, flew from the fly line, and a loud harmonic hum emitted as the line ripped through the water from the power and speed of the GT. Its sheer power was exciting and frightening! I imagined if I lost my footing, I'd be surfing across the water, rod in hand, as the fish pulled me out to sea in cartoon fashion.

At the end of its incredibly long run, the GT finally stopped. The guide walked down the line, pulling on it to create slack, to help me reel in the line, but the reel wouldn't budge under the tight pressure on the line. Then suddenly, the line went slack. I later learned that GTs are escape artists, wrapping lines around a coral outcropping to break them, evading capture. The guide estimated the fish's weight to be well over 50 pounds! Although the fish got away, I earned the opportunity to tell an amazing story about the day's catch.

My fishing story took center stage and was voted the best of the week! I can't think of a more "triumphant" ending to the week, especially compared to its start. This trip was a true testament to my growth through experience and having a heart for learning! You can bet there will be another Christmas Island adventure in the future!



How 4CFF Members Helped Create the Wild Fish Conservancy

Editor's Note: We may not have an official club historian, but it's important to recognize the contributions our club and its members have made to the fishing community over the years. I asked Hugh to share some historical perspective on our club and he has generously provided it in several instances.



In the fall of 1988 on the Upper Skagit River in B.C., Ralph Lloyd, Dan Homel, and Dick VanDemark from the Bellingham-based Fourth Corner Fly Fishers met up with their mutual friend, entomologist [Rick Hafele](#). Hafele had played a prominent role in the organization of Oregon Trout, the Oregon-based conservation organization that was developing petitions to list Snake River salmon populations for protection under the Endangered Species Act. The group camped together on a gravel bar and discussed the possibility of forming an organization in Washington similar to Oregon Trout and its sister organization, California Trout, each of which had attracted substantial followings of people, primarily anglers, interested in protecting wild fish in their states.

That meeting on the Upper Skagit River bar in 1988 did not occur by chance. Earlier in the year, Dick Van Demark, who was then the conservation chair of the 4CFF, had contacted Hafele for advice and assistance in creating in Washington an organization like Oregon Trout. Also, earlier that year, Ralph Lloyd had written to Bill McMillan, who had just published Dry Line Steelhead and Other Subjects through Amato Publications, for advice in forming an organization like Oregon Trout.

By that time, it had become apparent to scientists that only wild fish populations held the sorts of genetic diversity that permit them to survive in changing environments, and that reliance on fish hatcheries as a substitute for proper stewardship of cold-water habitats and sensible limitations on fish harvest, represented failed management strategies by their respective state management agencies. It was further understood that wild fish in all these states were headed for extinction as a result.

While a Trout Unlimited state organization existed in Washington at the time, it shared an interlocking directorate with the Northwest Marine Trade Association, a trade association representing the interests of salmon charter boat operators. T.U. was then publicly blaming Native American salmon harvest, then-recently validated by the so-called Boldt decision from the U.S. Supreme Court, for measurable declines in salmon populations, and was advocating for construction of more salmon and steelhead hatcheries to produce fish for non-Tribal anglers to kill.

Those insufficiencies subsequently caused the Washington State T.U. chapter to lose its national charter from Trout Unlimited, but back in the late 80s it was obvious that a T.U. membership would not lead to the sorts of changes to fisheries management protocols that were so obviously necessary.

Following that initial meeting with Rick Hafele on the Upper Skagit River, Dan Homel, who then owned a Bellingham fly fishing shop, contacted Amato Publishing Company and obtained its angler-oriented subscription list for Washington State. In the spring of 1989, Ralph, Dick, Dan and fellow 4CFF members Hugh Lewis and Marc Hurlbert met at Ralph's office in Bellingham to make arrangements for an initial meeting of interested parties to be held in May. A popular restaurant in Ellensburg was selected as the venue for this first meeting. This choice was designed to include participation by anglers from eastern Washington and not merely focus on west-side salmon and steelhead fishers. Approximately 100 invitations to this proposed meeting were prepared and mailed out, soliciting attendance by people state-wide committed to the preservation of wild fish in Washington.

On May 24, 1989, thirty-plus people in addition to the organizers met in Ellensburg. Among these was Kurt Beardslee who, following the example of Bill McMillan, had been conducting snorkel surveys of the Tolt River to ascertain the health of its native steelhead population. It was determined that another meeting should be held soon, and that advice from representatives of Oregon Trout and Cal Trout should be solicited and presented at that meeting.

On June 3, 1989, a second meeting was held in Ellensburg, and a larger group of interested people, including Bill McMillan and Alec Jackson, was in attendance. Representatives from Oregon Trout and Cal Trout appeared and spoke, describing how their groups were legally structured and how, in general, they pursued their shared missions of effecting change to the misguided workings of their respective state management agencies. It was determined that a Washington Trout organization should be formed, with a similar mission, membership and organizational structure, and that all those in attendance would become dues-paying members.

Hugh Lewis, an attorney from Bellingham, volunteered to incorporate the organization and create Bylaws governing its internal operations. Another meeting was scheduled for November of 1989, again in Ellensburg. Later in June of 1989, Hugh incorporated Washington Trout as a Washington nonprofit corporation. At the November meeting, a Board of Directors was elected, and officers were selected from their midst. Hugh later applied for the organization to obtain federal tax-exempt status, and the IRS granted this request in November of 1990. In the interim, the organization held meetings around the state and gained an ever-increasing membership.

Ralph Lloyd and Mark Hurlbert served as the original Directors of the organization. Hugh Lewis was the original corporate Secretary and general counsel. Over the coming six months, Ralph Lloyd was appointed its first President, and the Board was enlarged with broader regional

representation that included Kurt and Candace Beardslee from Duvall, John Sowinski and Bill McMillan from Washougal, Trey Combs from Port Townsend, Pat Trotter from Seattle, and Mike Harves of Yakima, as well as the Bellingham group of Ralph, Mark, and Hugh.

Kurt Beardslee eventually volunteered to serve as the organization's Executive Director on a volunteer basis. As the organization's financial circumstances improved, Kurt started receiving compensation for his services, and additional staff members, with backgrounds in science and habitat restoration, were hired. During this period, the membership expanded to include people outside the angling community, often with scientific and technical backgrounds, or general interests in environmental issues and resource conservation.

It gradually became apparent that the name of the organization was generating a false impression as to its mission, leading to a misperception that it was a fishing club or somehow affiliated with Trout Unlimited. In 2007, the organization's name was officially changed to Wild Fish Conservancy, to be more consistent with its broader mission and activities.

For an understanding of what Wild Fish Conservancy has become, and what it has been doing since then, see: [Wild Fish Conservancy Northwest – Dedicated to the recovery and conservation of wild- fish ecosystems](#) .

Fourth Corner Fly Fishers Holiday Celebration

When: Saturday, December 20 5:00 PM

Where: Holiday Inn Suites, 4260 Mitchell Way, Bellingham (Airport)

Cost: \$50 per person (the club will absorb the facility charges to lower costs on this very nice meal). A Zeffy invitation will follow with menu and raffle information. We hope to see all of you there!

A Fisherman's Legacy

By Hugh Lewis

We are deeply saddened by the passing of Wayne McLemore, one of the founding members of our club and a devoted fly fisherman since 1972. Wayne served as the editor of the Club Newsletter for at least 20 years, back when it was *mimeographed*, folded, hand-addressed, and paid from a roll of stamps that he'd periodically replace at the post office. Wayne was well known for his skill and passion for Spey fishing, and for the quiet



enthusiasm he brought to every meeting and outing. He was fishing with two-handed rods before the advent of dedicated Spey lines, Skagit heads, and the like. He experimented and made his own lines, and shared his knowledge of two-handed rods and reels, and how to fish them, with anyone and everyone. His generosity extended beyond his lifetime — upon his passing, he gifted the club all his fly fishing gear, a lasting reminder of his dedication to the sport and the community he helped build.

Wayne's presence on the water and his contributions to our club will not be forgotten.

4CFF Board of Directors



President: Mike Riber

michaelriber@comcast.net

360-927-4105

Board Members:

John Sanders (Programs)	waflyfisherman@gmail.com	425-941-5406
Angus MacArthur (Outings)	angusmacarthur995@gmail.com	360-483-8954
John Boblett (Secretary)	jboblett@comcast.net	360-410-1772
Kevin Formway (Membership)	kformway1956@gmail.com	360-220-0259
Frank Koterba (Treasurer)	fwkii17@gmail.com	360-927-0544
Bob Jorgenson- (Newsletter)	jorgensonrobert@me.com	360-961-9877
Jeff Taylor	jeffdtaylor@comcast.com	206-271-3009
Hugh Lewis	hugh@toadhillconsulting.com	360-739-2023

Committee Chairs

Mark Munn (Education)	mdmun@comcast.net	206-450-6779
Marion Hiller (Website)	marionhiller069@gmail.com	360-739-0186
Dean Bates (Raffle)	deanbates76@yahoo.com	360-296-8057
Ralph Lloyd (Conservation)	ralph.g.lloyd@gmail.com	360-201-9940
Lin Nelson (Past President)	lin.nelson@comcast.net	360-961-0408

Public Facebook page: [4th Corner Fly Fishing Club](#)

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Assistant Editor: [John Sanders](#)