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Inside this issue:

December Meeting 2

Sunday Night Fly Tying 2

Ten Basic Flies for Michigan Trout 3

Charlie Craven: A Million Flies and Still Tying 4

Five Favorite Flies From Charlie Craven 6

Banned Flyfishing Books 7

Reminders 8

Tippets, Tapers & Tales

December 4, 2023

President's Message

It's hard to believe the holidays are just around the corner. It seems like it wasn't that long ago that we had our September meeting. I hope people have been still getting out to fish when the weather allows.

Our December meeting will be in person at Coral Gables in East Lansing in the front Sun Room. No Zoom presentation this month, but Cole from Nomad Anglers will be there to show us the latest in new products and Christmas gift ideas from the fly shop. Bring your spouse or significant other for a fun evening.

Our Sunday Fly Tying nights are getting started this month. See inside for all the details.

Lastly, I would like to thank those that have answered my appeal for items for the newsletter. Those that have recently sent articles, photos and Memes for use in the newsletter are greatly appreciated. It makes my job of putting it together much easier.

See you at the December meeting.

Mark



1981 McKenzie Cup Winners

The Red Cedar Fly Fishers is a Charter Club of Fly Fishers International.

It's purpose is to promote fly-fishing through Education, Restoration and Conservation

December Meeting

By: Mark Johnson

Our December meeting will be in person on the 12th at Coral Gables in East Lansing and again this month in the front Sun Room. This worked out well for us last month. We will not have a Zoom presentation this month but will have our usual December Holiday gathering. Bring your spouse or significant other and join us for the evening. We will have Cole from Nomad Anglers joining us to show us some of the new products and great gift ideas from the fly shop.

Fish Planting

By: Mark Johnson

Here is a link to an article about the state's fish planting efforts this year.

From Atlantic Salmon to walleye, the state says it has added nearly 300 pounds of fish to the state's fish stocks this year.

<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2023/09/24/state-adds-9-million-fish-to-local-waterways/70927961007/>

Sunday Night Fly Tying

By: Mark Johnson

We will start our Sunday Night Fly Tying in December with our first night being Sunday, December 17th from 6-8pm at the Blue Gill Grill in Haslett. We will meet in the back room generally not open to the public. Come join us for the evening. We will have extra tying tools and materials there for anyone that needs them. The club is also looking into Piazanos Restaurant to do tying at also. We are in the process of seeing if we can do that there and will if okay try it in January. We may perhaps switch between the two places as they are on opposite sides of town and may be more convenient for some people at one or the other location.

THE NIGHT BEFORE A FISHING TRIP



Ten Basic Flies for Michigan Trout

By: Bob Bawdin

20 years ago, May 8, 2003, the Detroit Free Press ran an article by Eric Sharp their outdoor writer. As the trout season was about to open, he wrote about getting ready for the fly-fishing season. The Article was titled "Ten Basic Flies for Michigan Anglers". A summary of his article follows. Would your list of ten basic flies be different?

Ten Basic Flies for Michigan Trout

Adams:

First developed by Michigan fly tier Len Halladay. It can look like a mayfly, caddis fly, stone fly, gnat or mosquito. It is a good choice as a prospecting fly when not much is hatching.

Hendrickson:

A good fly for late April or early May when Ephemerella are hatching. Carrying a good selection of light and gray Hendrickson flies in sizes 14 and 12 is always a good idea. This fly is a good general pattern on smaller streams throughout the summer.

Borchers Drake:

This fly is an excellent match in sizes 8 through 12 for brown drakes. In smaller sizes it imitates mosquitos, midges and smaller bugs such as tricos.

Blue Winged Olive:

In sizes 14 through 22, the Blue Winged Olive will match the small dark, greenish bodied flies that hatch on overcast days.

Muddler Minnow:

This fly was tied to imitate small bottom feeding sculpins but has been modified to imitate other bait fish. It can be an excellent grasshopper imitation if treated to float.

Little Black Caddis:

A hatching black caddis has slate gray wings and dark gray to black bodies. A black caddis fly is tied with dark gray or black body of thread or dubbing with dark wings and hackle in sizes 16 through 20.

Wooly Bugger:

It is hard to tell what this fly imitates but it does work. It is fairly easy to tie and can be tied in many sizes and colors. They work well for bass also.

Sulphur:

Sulphurs in sizes 12 through 18 can match a variety of mayflies that hatch on Michigan streams from May to September.

Caddis:

Caddis flies are very important to trout. An elk hair caddis (often tied with deer hair instead of elk) in black, tan, and olive is always good to carry. A good selection will include sizes 12 through 20.

Giant Michigan Mayfly (Hexagenia Limbata):

Hexes (the largest of the mayflies) hatches for a few weeks in late June and early July. The return to lay their eggs in the dark of night. Many Hex patterns are very large but tied in a size 6 would be a good place to start.

Charlie Craven: A Million Flies and Still Tying By: Jim DuFresne

The following article was written by Jim DuFresne, Editor of the Michigan Fly Fishing Club Newsletter and sent to me to publish for you.

Charlie Craven – most of us know him as the fly-tying columnist for Fly Fisherman Magazine – was on a camping trip in Colorado with his family in 1979 when he discovered the joys of fishing. And then promptly lost most of the lures in his father’s tackle box.

On the drive home, his father casually mentioned that if Charlie learned to tie flies, then he could lose his own tackle, and for his birthday that year, gave him a fly-tying kit that “I was immediately enamored with.” Craven was eight years old when he tied his first fly, 12 years old when he began commercial tying. Now he’s 52 years old and still hasn’t stopped tying.

That is a lot of whip finishes.

“I tie almost every day, but not commercially,” said Craven. “What I call commercial tying was back in the day when it was a full-time gig for me. That was a whole different world. Now I’ll do some custom orders for the shop, but nothing at all like what I used to do.”

What Craven does now is “store stuff” along with designing flies for companies like Umpqua, producing videos for his YouTube channel, and overseeing the store’s website . . . not to mention writing books, hosting tying clinics, and traveling the show circuit in the off-season, that has included MFFC’s Midwest Fly Fishing Expo in the past.

Do you ever go fly fishing?

“I don’t get to fish as much as I would like to and certainly don’t get to fish as much as I used to,” said Craven. “But I would also say probably nobody does.”

Craven is on the water roughly 50 days a year, usually part of extended, well-planned trips. Most of his time is devoted to Charlie’s Fly Box, his 5,000-square-foot store located on the south side of Arvada, Colorado. Since moving from a much smaller storefront in historic Olde Town Arvada, sales have almost tripled in the past four years; the reason Craven can be found in his store, often helping customers, four days a week. But not on Wednesday.

On Wednesdays, he’s at home focusing on his first love: tying flies, writing about them, video-taping them, and occasionally even selecting a few for an upcoming float.

Always tying. Especially on Wednesday.

“If all the fish died tomorrow, I’d still tie flies, that’s just something I enjoy doing,” Craven said. “If you fish, you’re going to be a better tyer. And if you tie flies, you’re going to be a better fisherman, hands down.”

“Tying gets you more into fishing. You’ll know more about bugs, understand what the fly’s purpose is, what it’s built to do, and be able to make adjustments easier (on the water).”

Craven is a very knowledgeable angler because he’s tied an awful lot of flies.

A few years ago, Ross Purnell, publisher and editor of Fly Fisherman Magazine, was curious how many flies his columnist had tied in his life and punched some numbers on a calculator. Purnell decided Craven had probably tied “somewhere around a million flies.”

“Yeah, let’s say 3,000 to 5,000 dozen (a year) for 28 years of commercial tying, that’s probably close,” said Craven.

Craven believes two of the most important developments in fly tying since he began tying is the increased use and, more importantly, acceptance of synthetic materials, especially foam, and the explosion of how-to-tie videos on the internet.

Charlie Craven: A Million Flies and Still Tying Continued By: Jim DuFresne

Foam is easier to obtain, more affordable, simple to cut and shape, and often results in a more durable fly. Watching a video and replaying the last step before moving on greatly improves the learning process instead of staring at a recipe with a sentence or two of instructions or tips.

"I've been tying in fly shops since I was 12 years old, and back in the day, everything was natural," said Craven. "Now, there are a lot of times when I'll design a fly, and it's not until I'm done that I even realize it's entirely synthetic."

Both make it easier to learn the basics of how to tie flies. And that's the key: start by mastering basic techniques. "We have guys come into the shop and say, 'I fish a parachute Adams, and that's what I want to learn to tie,'" said Craven. "And so, you get guys starting in the middle, and that's really hard, and they either suck at it or they drop it because they never get very good at it."

"If you start at the beginning with simple stuff and learn the techniques, you will have a much better success rate."

You don't have to be a Charlie Craven to tie flies that catch fish. You just have to tie flies and then fish with them.

This is what Craven religiously preaches in his clinics, on his YouTube channel, and in four published books, beginning with his first title in 2008: *Charlie Craven's Basic Fly Tying: Modern Techniques for Flies That Catch Fish*. Just keep tying. And fishing. It will come. Faster than you ever thought.

"You can catch a fish on the biggest piece of shit in your fly box," said Craven. "We give fish way too much credit. Fish are dumb; fish are easy to catch."

"We tie flies for us. When I design a fly, I'm trying to solve a problem to make (fly fishing) easier. It has to be more durable or float better or sink better so you're not having to maintain the fly to keep it dry or add more weight to get it down."

"But a hare's ear tied by anybody will catch a fish if it is reasonably proportioned. If you're tying flies and not using them, then you can't get excited about fly tying or fishing. That's absolutely the case."

Says the man who has tied a million flies.



Five Favorite Flies from Charlie Craven

By: Jim DuFresne

The following article was written by Jim DuFresne, Editor of the Michigan Fly Fishing Club Newsletter and sent to me to publish for you.

Here are four Charlie Craven originals, plus his variation on the parachute Adams. Scan the adjacent QR codes for his how-to video for each fly or this QR code for all his tying videos



Baby Gongga Streamer

Craven: This is my Baby Gongga, my favorite streamer to fish. It's a small articulated fly. A lot of big articulated stuff works but gets a lot of follows and not always gets eaten so I wanted to start playing with something that was a little smaller.



Charlie Boy Hopper

Craven: There are not a lot of hoppers in the world that you can tie in two or three minutes, but this is one of them. Super durable, super easy to see as it sits up high on the water.



Two-bit Hooker

Craven: This is one of my favorite patterns ever and I can honestly say it's one found on the end of my tippet most days. It was designed to be fished, on a dropper under a dry fly, but I also use it in a two-fly rig when I have to get dirty.



Jujubee Midge

Craven: One of my favorite patterns is the Jujubee Midge. I developed this one years ago while guiding in Cheesman Canyon on Colorado's South Platte River. The two-color Super Hair abdomen creates a striking ribbed effect and the Flouro-Fiber wing case produces an attractive halo around the thorax. A simple fly for sure, but with a definite edge.



Parachute Adams

Craven: The Parachute Adams is without a doubt, one of today's most popular patterns. The tying sequence here also shows my method for tying in and wrapping a parachute wing and hackle. It is a bit different from most others and, I think, a vast improvement.



Banned Flyfishing Books

By: Bob Kren

“Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta.” That’s writing! I forget the name of the book, but I’m sure it was banned universally, which is a surefire way to guarantee a best seller. Now, just imagine that this “Lolita” is a trout, finning seductively under a log at the middle of a pool, like Cleopatra waiting for Marc Antony or Julius Caesar or some other horny Roman to blunder along and try to seduce her, never imagining that it is he who is being seduced. Face it, it’s happened to everybody, male and female, alike.

Here’s a couple of books that have raised the hackles of the semi-literate self-righteous, only to go on to immortality, as adapted to Our Favorite Sport.

Fifty Shades of Brown Trout. Our fabulously rich incredibly handsome hero hires a ravenously beautiful female guide to show him the ins and outs of flyfishing. It doesn’t take long for them to get past the quadruple haul and quick release, and get on to knot-tying.

Hank Miller’s various books – *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn*, and *Black Spring Creek* – take us places we’ve only dreamed of going. His flyfishing exotica include ladyfish in Barbados, flyfishing the Seine, seducing every female onlooker, and probably a few males, too. All are highly fictionalized “autobiographies.”

Ulysses Wake imagines that we are surf casting in the very! cold, snot-green sea, where we make sure never to get in up to our pockets, lest we be tightened where nobody wants to be. This is the story that stretches out over one day, has too many various characters, and casts a wide net.

PortNoise Complaint. You’ve done it many times before, back and forth, snapping the wrist at the end of each stroke, back-and-forth, back-and-forth, holding off until you can’t take any more, and letting fly! It really doesn’t matter that you’re nowhere near water, casting on grass, imagining flyfishing, your imagination providing the fish, and the venue. Such non-fishing fishing is casturbation, and you can only hope not eventually to go blind.

Bridges of Madison Country, Our protagonist, whatever that means, goes about finding bridges on the Madison, and catalogs parking, trails, water types, fish types, fisherperson types, and suchlike, all the time taking pictures of unsuspecting flyfishers, mostly females in embarrassing activities, but what do you expect from a novel begging to be made into a Clint Eastwood movie?

1985 describes a world in which Big Sister controls every drop of water, that she uses to brainwash flyfisher wannabes into thinking that they have “free will,” when all they really have is roving bands of feral (or is that “federal?”) game wardens, wielding graphite truncheons to drive ordinary puppet citizens away from the choice waters that The Party controls for the use of the Privileged Few; “Privileged Few” is Newspeak for “ruling class.” Got access? – sorry, that’s only for the PF.

Bravo! New World depicts a future in which only one man, raised by feral game wardens (see above), is free to ask why everybody else goes around high, and not naked. “The Tug is the Drug” sums up the euphoria all others are constantly pursuing even as – Good Ford! – their minds are being ruined by demon rum, and soma. Pay no attention to the knot that figures in at the end of the story!

The Happy Barbless Hooker Fears Flying. Taking your twelve-foot, one-piece, 2-weight rod aboard an airplane can be tough. You can claim it’s a valuable Aztec relic, worth a Montezuma’s Revengeworth of gold, or you can lie. Try distracting TSA by explaining away your high-heel wading shoes, your battery-driven reel, your suspicious accessories,

Huck Fin. Just a simple tale of a backwoods southern boy in a simpleminded relationship with a very undocumented involuntary worker, Jim. Nothing surprising here, except that the amanuensis turns out to be the inventor of the double-haul, and a helluva guy at tying flies. Huck naïvely brags to his friends about how he has learned a new way of tempting “trout,” which the natives call “trt.” Tom is ostracized, trouble ensues.

dr seuss’s “One Fish, Twentysseven Fish, Red Fish, Democrat Fish” is a brief, heavily-illustrated novel about how and when and where we flyfisherpersons fib. The “lies” in question are not those where fishes frequent, but rather the tall tales that garner equal amounts of awe and skepticism.

There’s a ton of books we could have adapted to flyfishing -- *Catcher in the Catskills Elderly Man and the Sea*, and many more. Next time you pick up a Bio Optical Organization Kit, think in terms of flyfishing.

BK

**RED CEDAR FLY
FISHERS**

P.O. Box 129
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Steven and Dr. J had a successful Steelhead outing in November.



Refrigerator Reminders

December

12th: RCFF Monthly Meeting, 6:30 P.M. At Coral Gables in East Lansing.

This month's meeting will take place in the Sun Room in the front of the restaurant.

17th: Sunday Night Fly Tying at Blue Gill Grill in Haslett, 6-8pm in the back room.

January

9th: RCFF Monthly Meeting, 6:30 P.M. At Coral Gables in East Lansing.

This month's meeting will take place in the Sun Room in the front of the restaurant.

Sunday Night Fly Tying Dates will be put in the January Newsletter.