

TIGHTLINES

A MOST UNLIKELY FLY

Keith Stamm

“I didn’t think you fished with attractor flies,” said Big Frank, standing at the Pass Lake boat launch looking out at the wind-swept lake. The thought hadn’t occurred to me as I tied on a neon chartreuse leech that resembled no natural aquatic critter I had ever seen.



And so I had to explain how I had been shut out, skunked, the previous week casting and trolling a white leech that was supposed to imitate the chubs that spawn in November and spur the lake’s big Browns into a feeding frenzy. Was there something wrong with the white fly, or were the chubs just a fly fishing rumor?

In my bamboozlement I had ventured to the Avid Angler with the cover story that I needed a new clear intermediate sinking fly line, one that wouldn’t coil up like a Slinky. With the new line on my spool I savaged my ego by telling Ryan Smith about my Pass Lake drubbing. “Pass is sure a stingy lake,” I said. “Not an unusual experience,” Ryan agreed, and after a pregnant pause added, “Maybe you should try chartreuse.”

My reaction was, “One hundred dollars for a line, and that’s what I get, a sales pitch to spend more money on some worthless flies.” But then he showed them to me and they looked so sexy. A fly that looked that good to me had to look good to the fish, perhaps. So I bought some chartreuse chenille and went home to work at my tying bench.

Now I was tying that siren fly on my leader as Big Frank looked on with distaste. “Well, good luck,” he offered as I pushed off in my pram, wearing the wool stocking cap from off his daughter Emma’s head. I had remembered the flies but not my cap. With the wind whipping down the lake from the north my goal was to row across the lake to the north end and find shelter from the wind. On reaching the protected water I dropped both anchors and began casting close to shore where the chub-chasing Browns were supposed to hang out.

“Wham!” Something hit that fly like a sledge hammer. The fly and two feet of strong (3x) tippet were gone in an instant. I was so surprised I was shaking, had to sit down and gather my wits. Then I fumbled in the cold and wind and tied on another chartreuse fly, thinking I’d probably missed my one chance at a big Brown. But what could I have done? It happened so fast, and I really didn’t quite believe any self-respecting Brown Trout would attack such an obvious fake of a fly.

Well, it was my only shot at a big Brown that day, but as I fished around the north end of the lake plenty of chunky, 15-18-inch Rainbows took a crack at that chartreuse abomination. I landed three, and lost three or four others because I was trolling upwind. As the boat drifted back toward the fish and the fish ran toward the boat, the inevitable slack line resulted. I also had several missed strikes, so I began to believe I was on to something good. Even more than that, my firm belief in the imitation theory of fly fishing was crumbling a bit while my mind opened a crack to the attractor theory. And I had to conclude that Ryan Smith was not just feeding me a sales pitch.

Naturally, I went home very happy, and very pleased with myself for having won a round against that difficult, stingy lake. I was strongly motivated to tie more chartreuse leeches, some with

chartreuse bodies and white marabou hackles, and others with white bodies and chartreuse marabou hackles, as if the fish might care. When Wednesday’s storm passed through and the wind subsided I would be ready. I might even remember my cap.

The following Sunday found me back at the lake with a reloaded fly box, wearing a cap. It was icy cold but calm. I didn’t need to row to the far end of the lake but I did anyway because that was where I had found fish on Wednesday. My confidence was high but soon deflated. It appeared the chartreuse leech was a one-day wonder. In three-and-a-half hours of casting and trolling all that happened was a few half-hearted bumps. With these tepid nudges the fish seemed to be saying, “Are you kidding me.” One nice Brown even followed the fly to the boat, eyeing it suspiciously before turning and scooting away in panic. (continued page 2)



Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds Okanagan Outing October 2011

Traditional dinner in Conconully, clockwise from back: Host Mike Truax, Bud Camadona, Tom Ryan, Bill MacDonald, Bill Scott, Scott McCracken, Barry Hutton, Jim Hagy.

A MOST UNLIKELY FLY

Keith Stamm (continued)

That was it. I decided to call it a day. Pass Lake beat me again. I pulled anchors and headed to the launch. But wait, there was a nice breeze that would drift me straight toward the boat launch, so I played out line and began drifting down the center of the lake. I was drifting at a nice pace right over a large underwater weed bed near the south end of the lake, drinking coffee and not paying much attention.



“Wham,” the line snapped tight and a large Brown Trout did two cart wheels and was gone, my only other chance for a big Brownie. But I had found the fish and in the next 45 minutes the unlikely fly redeemed itself. I boated half-a-dozen beautiful Rainbows, lost a couple others, and left with the feeling I had won another round. While basking in my success I’m working on tying an entire box of chartreuse leeches. Do you think maybe all my flies would benefit from a touch of chartreuse?

Postscript: A follow-up call to Brita Fordice at the Avid Angler revealed that she and Ryan Smith got the idea for this fly from their reading of Colin Kageyama’s “What Fish See.” In the murky depths of Pass Lake chartreuse and white are the colors fish see best.

Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds November 2011 Invited Guest Speaker

JOHN KENDALL

Instead of driving way up into Canada maybe we should take a shorter drive down to Merrill Lake in SW Washington. Or maybe down to the Cowlitz to give the abundant sea run population a whirl. At least those were John Kendall’s recommendations at the November presentation.

Merrill is a big, beautiful lake with a campground and an abundance of triploid rainbows and browns, according to Kendall. But if you want to catch them you have to get out early in the morning, which means camping at the lake. And you need to understand the hatches, which are both prolific and complex in their variety, which means that Merrill Lake presents all the challenges and potential rewards of the better lakes on B.C.’s central plateau.

Expect to find everything from giant Hexagenia mayflies to ants and beetles, and everything in between: chironomids in the spring after the water reaches 42 degrees; Calibaetis mid-April thru June; caddis hatches all summer. And when there is no hatch, the hale bop leech is always a great searching pattern, John advises. Just keep in mind that Merrill Lake trout can be extremely leader shy. Fluorocarbon leaders are mandatory, often down to 5x, or even 6x. Merrill Lake is a special water: catch and release, barbless hooks, no gas motors.

Then there’s the Cowlitz, which we fly fishers usually write off as combat fishing for gear guys. Not quite so, says Kendall, who guides fly fishers there regularly for both sea runs and steelhead. The gear guys in their drift boats usually stay on the deep side, says Kendall, leaving the shallower runs open for wade fishing. He loves to fish the calmer, shallower water and the soft currents seams for both cutts and steelhead. His favorite rig is a sinking leader that can be easily changed, and a Carey Special. Twenty-five fish days are not unusual for cutthroat, and the fish run up to the 18-20-inch range. Steelhead opportunities on the Cowlitz exist practically year-round due to several runs of summer- and winter-run steelhead. It’s a classic river for spey fishing, he says. All-in-all, a trip down I-5 is not such a bad idea. (Keith Stamm - OFFE)



MERRILL LAKE - Be There Early in the Morning!!!

From John Kendall Owner Black Heron Fly Fishing & Guide Services

By mid April/Early May things get rolling at Merrill Lake using Chironimids, Carey Specials, BH Buggers, Seal Buggers, Large Damp Elk Hair Caddis in

Olive and Brown. The travelling sedge patterns are quite good on Merrill. The Hex Hatch begins in late June and lasts until mid August. There are also hatches of Beetles, Flying Ants and Crickets during windy afternoons. Good patterns include Flying Ants, Beetles and Black Humpys. Later in the year many of the large Browns will cruise the shore looking for fry and small fish. Good patterns are muddlers and other streamer patterns for minnows.

COWLITZ RIVThe Cowlitz River is the most over looked steelhead fly fishing stream due to its location and number of jet sleds and bait anglers, but nonetheless it has 30 miles of some of the best fly fishing waters in the state of Washington. The Cowlitz has been the #1 steelhead fishing river for about 40 years, the WDFW catch records for 2010 Catch Cowlitz Hatchery Steelhead are impressive: Winters 9464, Summers 8921. **Summer Steelhead:** Available from mid march till early June as Skamania hatchery stock; this is my favorite strain, they are very robust about 10-12 pounds. The regular summers show up in June through December; these summers tend to be a little on the longer more slender side and about 6-9 pounds (Cowlitz River Strain). **Winter Steelhead:** The “A” run winter run steelies begin showing in Late October to November (Native Chambers Creek Strain)and last till January/February. The Hatchery “B” run winters begin showing during Late January February and are a smaller winter run lasting till April. **Chinook:** There are two strains of Chinook in the Cowlitz the Spring Chinook which is the most prized salmon from March through June. And the Fall Chinook which is the largest salmon weighing from 15-55 lbs. from August - October. **Coho:** The Silver salmon appear from September through October and are the most prime eating fish in the Cowlitz system. The native “B” run Coho strain comes in mid November along with the large hatchery run. Many of these fish can be caught into December and Christmas. (continued page 4)

OLYMPIC FLY FISHERS OF EDMONDS

CONSERVATION Auction

2011 Beneficiaries Listing

Photo Credit OFFE Member Jim Hagy

Beneficiaries of 2010 Conservation Auction Funded Donations

Mike Truax, Conservation Committee Chair, December 12, 2011

- **Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC)**

For 2011 OFF provided WRC a contribution in the amount of \$1,000 for unrestricted purposes. WRC's primary focus is on the purchase of critical stream and estuary habitat used by important fish species. Its record of accomplishments is most impressive. Streamside acquisitions tributary to the Coast include Hoh River, Drift Creek (Waldport, OR), Lower Klamath River (CA), and its acquisitions tributary to the Columbia include land along the Hood River, Sandy River and John Day River. WRC has recently expanded its acquisition program to the Inland West and now include lands purchased along the Gunnison River (CO), Deer and Mill Creeks (Sierra, CA) and the Bear River (UT). In 2010, WRC named Everett White to be its Project Manager to identify acquisition candidates in Central Washington.

Once acquired WRC normally transfers ownership and protection of stream habitat to public land management agencies, tribes or conservation trusts after having first put in place standards and guidelines for conservation, habitat restoration and public access.

- **Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) of Washington**

CCA of Washington received a contribution in the amount of \$1,000 for 2011. All of the funds contributed by OFF are used to fight for fisheries in Washington State. CCA is a grassroots organization whose primary mission is to advocate for fish and fish habitat. Everything runs through a committee system that is exclusively made up of members based in Washington. Most of this advocacy is aimed at fish harvest issues such as the tremendous damage to fish runs resulting from abandoned gill nets. However, CCA also advocates for predation control and nutrient enhancement in under-producing streams. CCA has been effective in countering the recent proposal to transfer much of the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Commission to the Governor and to curtail hatchery production at state-run fish hatcheries. Currently, CCA is working to overcome harvest restrictions imposed on Columbia River salmon that result from overly pessimistic assumptions about incidental mortality of protected wild Chinook salmon by sportsmen harvesting big surplus of hatchery Chinook salmon.

- **Long Live the Kings**

This year Long Live the Kings celebrates its 25-year anniversary in Washington. It too, received a \$1,000 contribution from OFF. Over this quarter of a century, LLTK has worked toward the twin goals of restoring wild salmon to the waters of the Pacific Northwest, to support sustainable fisheries. Over these many years, LLTK have undertaken many projects and performed cutting edge science at the watershed scale in support of these two goals. Representatives from this organization frequently advise agencies and Tribes on proven scientific approaches and tools to better manage hatcheries, harvest and habitat. Dr. Jacques R. White, Executive Director of LLTK has graciously offered to make a presentation to OFF at a future meeting.

- **Stillwaters Environmental Center**

In past years OFF has contributed funds for local community fish habitat enhancement projects. Some were local such as a grade school program to enhance stream conditions along Perrinville Creek while others were regional such as community based effort aimed at stream improvement along the Stilliguamish River. Edmonds School District was recently contacted to advise that OFF funds may be available to one or more teachers interested in integrating fish conservation into elementary school science. Our offer is currently being communicated to primary school teachers.

One up and running community-based fish habitat conservation effort was identified across the Sound in Kingston. The project involves replacing road culverts installed in Carpenter Creek that restrict fish passage. The project is 11 years in the making and is scheduled to be completed next summer. Were it not for the sustained effort by the Stillwaters Environmental Center this fish habitat enhancement project would continue to be deferred. OFF is providing a \$250 contribution to Stillwaters in recognition of its success in establishing a community-based fish conservation project and in the hope that OFF can learn to apply their model locally in the future.



OLYMPIC FLY FISHERS OF EDMONDS

2012 Elected Officers & Committee Chairs

President: Bill MacDonald
Vice President: Wade Nash
Treasurer: Jim Traner
Communications: Tom Sawtell
Secretary: Dave Gross
Gillie: Phil Sacks

Trustee: Bruce Johnson
Conservation: Mike Truax
Outings: William Scott
Education: John Schwartz
Membership: Terry Zietner
Beverage Meister: Jeff Bandy



GENERAL INFORMATION

The General meeting is held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at the South County Senior Center, 220 Railroad Ave. Edmonds, WA. Social hour: 6:00pm Business meetings are 6:00pm on the 4th Wednesday each month at Alf's 4820 196th SW, Lynnwood, WA.

Officers:

Bruce Johnson, V.P., 425-742-2252
Bill MacDonald, Treasurer, 425-774-4769
Thomas Sawtell, Communications & TIGHTLINES, 425-744-0401
Keith Stamm, Secretary, 206-368-5596
Phil Sacks, Gillie, 425-741-7311
Mike Bunney, Trustee, 425-672-3345

Chairs:

Mike Truax, Conservation, 425-672-6963
William Scott, Outings
Auction & Banquet: Jim Traner
Terry Zeitner, Membership
Open seat, Education
Beverage Meister, Jeff Bandy

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www.olympicflyfish.com

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RECREATION on the WATER

Beginning Fly Tying

*Eight Great Classes for All Ages 14+
Tuesday Nights February 7 - March 27, 2012*

Taught by: Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds

Venue: **RECZONE** Edmonds Parks, Recreation & Cultural Service

Start tying your own flies to use for fly fishing on local streams, rivers, and lakes. Learn the tools, materials, techniques, arts and crafts of fly tying from members of the Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds, and take home all the flies you tie in class.

Location: Edmonds Plaza Room (above the Edmonds Library)
Address: 650 Mains Street, Edmonds, Washington
Class Fee: \$61.00 * Plus Supply Fee: \$30 Course No: 14935
Date: Tuesdays - Feb. 7 through March 27 Time: 7:00 - 9:00 pm
* Edmonds residents Class Fee is \$53.00

Information Available: www.reczone.org Tele: 425-771-0230

City of Edmonds Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services, Frances Anderson Center, 700 Main St., Edmonds

To learn more about fly tying, fly fishing, and fish habitat conservation please visit our website at: www.olympicflyfish.com

Contact: Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds Education Committee
Chairman, John Schwartz - E-Mail: johannkermit@gmail.com

JOHN KENDALL (continued)

Cutthroat: Trout: Starting in June, due to regulations the Cutts begin to be caught in smaller sizes as a resident fish in the upper river below the Barrier Dam to Blue Creek boat launch. Many of these fish are in the 10-13 inch size. Around August 1st we usually see some Sea Run Cutthroat trout begin to build below Blue Creek Boat launch in calmer water lining the shore and back eddies. The Sea Run populations usually stay strong until mid November and possibly early December when the winter rains force them back down stream after spawning.

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OLYMPIC FLY FISHERS OF EDMONDS EVENT SCHEDULE

2011 ANNUAL CONSERVATION BANQUET & AUCTION

Proceeds benefit non-profit organizations dedicated to fisheries conservation and enhancement in the PNW

Date: December 14th, 2011 Time: 6PM to 9PM Place: South County Senior Center 220 Railroad Ave., Edmonds, WA Tickets: Available from members Price: \$50 per person

2012 FLY FISHING OUTINGS: Schedule in Progress Contact Chairman Bill Scott

GENERAL MEETING: Wednesday January 11, 2012

Invited Guest Speaker James W. Cox, Western Rivers Conservancy

Jim has more than 25 years experience working professionally in the nonprofit sector, he is a past steering committee co-chair of the Nonprofit Association of Oregon, and is an active member of the Northwest Planned Giving Roundtable. Jim holds a Bachelor of Theatre Degree from Willamette University.

Jim is an avid outdoors man and fly fisherman. Western Rivers Conservancy protects outstanding river ecosystems in the western United States; by in part, acquiring land to conserve critical habitat, provide public access for compatible use and enjoyment, and cooperating with other agencies and organizations to secure the health of whole ecosystems. The "organizations" include *Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds* since we invest through Western Rivers toward these goals. Come to the January meeting and hear what Western Rivers is currently involved in and what their future plans are.