

## Fishing Wee Wets

*This article by Harvey Clark covers the subject nicely.*

Harvey Clark: "The fly that God gave trout fishers." from The New Zealand Herald Saturday October 28, 2006

I spent three hours on the Tongariro River, Hydro Pool one evening this week and landed nine trout. One was an excellent fresh-run rainbow hen, three were recovering spawners in pretty good nick and five were the fish I was targeting - fat juveniles up to 1.2kg that fight like angry little bulls on light tackle. All told, I got more than 20 hits.

Three other anglers visited the pool in that time. They were using traditional nymph and wetline techniques but caught nothing - and they were watching me closely. So what was my secret, what was I using? Nymphs? No. Woolly Buggers? No. Must have been glo-bugs then? No. Well, what else is left - worms? No.

I was using what I consider the most deadly of all flies for evening river fishing, flies that were brought here 140 years ago by the first anglers arriving from England, flies long overlooked since the explosion in nymph fishing relegated most other techniques to the sideline. I was using the long-forgotten fly: the wonderful wee wet.

I'd been fishing the Hydro during the afternoon with traditional heavy rod, nymphs and lead shot. I noticed, when the irregular chilly breeze dropped to leave mild periods, several fish rising sporadically along the cliff by the right-hand bank, and the swallows were flitting about after hatching mayflies. I set up a light No 4 rod and tied on a large dry fly - an elk-hair caddis - mainly to use as a strike marker and tied two wee wets on 5lb fluorocarbon 20cm apart 20cm behind the dry. The hits started within a few casts and they hardly stopped, 95 per cent on the wee wets. Only tiddlers took the caddis off the surface.

As evening came on, the bigger fish were taking and it was a pleasant surprise when the fresh-run hen took a wee wet in shallow riffles where anglers normally wade at the top of the pool. Who said fresh-runners hug the bottom and never feed in the shallows? With the light rod, that fish took me well down the pool in a battle royal.

Many beginners have never heard of a wee wet. It's all nymphs, bombs and glo-bugs as big as bulldozers these days. But those anglers with the years behind them use wee wets with great success.

Some experienced fishers say the wee wet does not represent anything at all. Others say it represents a small, darting fish. Still others say it is an insect emerger struggling to break through the surface film. And me? I reckon it represents a drowned mayfly and I've been fishing for 50 years and reckon I know what I'm talkin' about.

The traditional method of fishing wee wets is across and downstream with a sinking line, mending the line carefully to keep it straight so you can stay in contact with the flies to feel the strikes, which can be savage enough to break the tippet for the

unwary dreamer. I prefer a floating line fished up and downstream, with two wee wets tied under a dry fly as described, or a small strikemarker trailing a team of three wee wets. Most dry flies have their equivalent in a wee wet, the main differences being shorter, softer hackles and a backward slant to larger wings to give it a streamlined appearance.

If you're a father who wants your boy to experience great fishing, then show him how to fish with wee wets on a light rod. On his first strike, he'll be hooked for life. The riffles and pocket water are the best places to fish them rather than the pools. The wee wets I use are Red-tipped Governors, Purple Grouse, Greenwells Glories and Twilight Beauties but my top choice by far is the Red-tipped Governor. I've had wonderful fishing with it from the rivers of Southland to back-country Bay of Plenty, and as far as I'm concerned its "The Fly God Gave to Troutfishers."

I'll leave the last word to angling luminary/writer Ron Giles who, in his excellent book 101 Troutfishing Tips , says: "The art of fishing wee wets has been lost for a generation or two ... but it can prove very effective, especially in the twilight hours. At such times a wee wet can outfish any other trout fly." So bring on the warmer weather and the mayfly hatches, and long live the wee wet.



Red Tipped Governor - wet fly

### **My Preferred System of Fishing Emergers**

1. Useful when trout rising but not breaking surface. i.e. bulging or porpoising.
2. Work well when trout are rising infrequently.
3. Small emergers can be used and takes still detected.
4. Large or easily seen indicator dry fly used.
5. Emerger tied truck and trailer off the dry fly hook.
6. Distance between flies not usually critical. Six to eighteen inches but twelve or more during day.
7. Dry fly can be tied to dropper for quicker fly change.
8. Leader between 9 to 12 ft to dry fly then a further one foot to emerger.
9. Dry fly is always dressed with floatant. Emerger is usually wetted to avoid floating high.
10. Drift flies over rising fish. If indicator dry fly dips or jumps then raise rod because a fish has taken the emerger.
11. One drawback when fishing a short length between the flies is that the second fly can break off when snagged in your landing net. For this reason 12 inches or more is recommended between flies.
12. "Wee wet" flies can be fished in this style, as emergers.
13. Brave souls can tie on 2 emergers to fish at different depths i.e. on surface and sub surface. However beware of frequent tangles.
14. If fishing just before dark then note the position of rising fish. The same fish will be there after dark and you will casting to them more by listening than seeing. There is always a high likelihood of catching these fish even with the wrong fly.

John Millar