

THE HUTT VALLEY ANGLER

Newsletter of the Hutt Valley Angling Club Inc



Photo of the month "Working it" taken by Ross Goodman

Issue No 403 : August 2015

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Editorial

This last month has seen all sorts of weather being thrown at us, which has made fishing on the weekends very much a hit-and-miss affair. At times like these, you are often forced to just go with the flow and focus on other things such as casting practice, fly-tying or checking out Google maps in anticipation of the new season which is just around the corner.

It looks as though some of the larger fish have finished spawning and have returned to the lower reaches of the Hutt River. The days are also starting to get noticeably longer, so let's hope for a stint of settled weather before the inevitable spring winds. As always, it's great to read about what other members of the club are up to, so keep those articles coming in.

Chris Kuchel

President's Piece

It was good to see so many members at the July club night to hear Strato speak. As he explained, he enjoys coming to our club because there is always a good turn-out and he can feel the interest in the room. HVAC members certainly appreciate his engaging style of presentation which is always informative, interesting and relevant. It was also good to welcome back Keith Tourell and pass on to him the new cup named after him, for safe keeping until next June when it will be awarded to the first worthy winner.



Next month's guest speaker will be Tony Houpt who is a recent new member to our club, but well known throughout New Zealand for his fishing skill. If you want to learn from a top level angler who is willing to pass on his valuable knowledge, make sure you are at the August club night.

Along with a group of keen beginners, I have recently completed a fly-tying course run by John Millar over 4 Sunday mornings. John showed us the basics and after each day we left feeling that the 3 hours had passed too quickly, which is always a sure sign of an enjoyable time, spent well. Our thanks go to John for running the course and to John Rochester for allowing us to be at his place. We

showed our appreciation to John M by giving him a box of chocolates and to John R by managing to drop some flies off the table and leaving them in the carpet somewhere.

Our July casting clinic was held on Sunday 19 July in challenging windy conditions, but as they say, if you can cast into a Wellington southerly, everywhere else is a breeze. That's all for this month. Keep warm and I'll see you at the August club night when Tony will be there to pass on his skills.

Ross Goodman

August Activities

- 10th Club Meeting – King Lion Hall 7.30pm
- 16th Casting Clinic – Belmont Domain 9.30am
- 18th Committee meeting – Community House 7.30pm
- 26th Fly tying – Community House 7.30pm
- 25th Copy deadline for September newsletter

Club News

Club Night — Monday 10th August at 7.30pm in King Lion Hall, King Street, Upper Hutt.

Guest speaker — Riverside Chat with Tony Houpt

Tony is a vastly experienced trout angler and is currently President of SFFNZ (Sport Fly Fishing NZ). He is a member of the Silver Flies NZ fly fishing team and has expert knowledge of most waters that hold trout in the Wellington region. Tony will give a talk on his approach to a new stretch of water – where he would expect to find fish- how he would approach the river – what tactics he would employ etc. He has asked if it is possible, for members to email him their questions in advance so he can incorporate some of this information into his talk at the club meeting.



Members are invited to email their questions to tony.houpt@xtra.co.nz before Wednesday 5 August. Don't miss out on this valuable opportunity.

Casting Clinic — Sunday 16 August weather permitting.

Arrive from 9.30, ready for a prompt 10.00 start.

The co-ordinator is Ian Lawson.

If you want to attend please sign on the clipboard at our monthly meeting or register on the website. Registration allows us to have instructors available for all attendees and who we contact if there is any change in meeting arrangements.

Fly Tying Meeting — Wednesday 26 August at 7.30 p.m.

Upper Hutt Community Meeting House off Logan Street beside Upper Hutt Medical Centre. This month we will be focusing on favourite nymphs where members can bring their favourite nymph to the meeting and we will tie several patterns.

The example shown is from Tim Trengrove, where he has used the bead as a thorax to give a more natural shape and appearance.



Library News

The library is open from 7.00pm on Club nights.

There are a large number of books and DVDs that members have had for more than a month. Would members please check and return any items you borrowed so other members can see them.

Hutt River Maps

It was great to see Keith back on deck at last month's meeting, where he was able to see and hold the new "Keith Tourell Cup" which will be put into safe keeping until it is presented at next year's AGM. Keith also gave initial details about a proposal to compile maps of the Hutt River to identify drop-offs and likely fishing spots. This will be an-going project and Keith would be grateful for any information-gathering or other help that members can provide. If you are interested in contributing, please contact Keith directly.

Last Months Club Meeting

At July's club night, we welcomed Wellington Fly Fishers Club president Strato Cotsilinis as our guest speaker. As John Millar

explained when introducing him, Strato is a real “working president”. He is the current Chairman of the Wellington Fish and Game Council and has captained the NZ Silver Flies team. He is also the driving force behind promoting trout fishing to the younger generation in the Wellington region with projects such as the Capital Trout Centre and introductory courses at Hutt Intermediate School. And as we also know, he is a great fisherman, all-round top bloke, and a good friend of the Hutt Valley Angling Club.



Strato’s main message was to remind us that the Wellington Fish and Game Council is an autonomous organization comprised of local anglers like you and me, who are keen to listen to local concerns and advocate on our behalf. He encouraged anyone who is interested in contributing to put their name forward for the upcoming elections in September.

And of course, it’s all about catching fish, so the second part of Strato’s talk focused on his recent trip to Aitutaki in the Cook Islands. Bonefish and giant trevalley were the main species being targeted in the shallow waters, so naturally, some serious heavy-duty tackle and lures were called for. Pound-for-pound, bonefish are right up there as a top fighting fish. We look forward to hearing from Strato again in the future and wish him all the best in his many endeavours.

Fish of the month

Congratulations to Mike Nansett for his fine 3lb 8oz brown caught in the Hutt River. You can read about this and Mike’s other success in his article this month.

Raffle Winners in July

Congratulations to Colin Thompson (39) for winning the July Green Trout Guiding entry.

Other prize winners were:
Derek Thompson (48)
Ted Carton (12)

Green Trout Guiding

Sponsor of the Club's Guiding Raffle

Phone Jim Rainey (06) 382-5507

Kawhatau Valley Road, RD7, Mangaweka

office@greentroutguiding.co.nz

www.greentroutguiding.co.nz

Monthly winners of the Green Trout Guiding go into the annual draw for a fantastic trip with Jim Rainey. You've got to be in to win, so make sure you buy your ticket each month at club meetings.

Reminder that Annual Subscriptions are now due

HVAC subscriptions remain the same as last year.

Internet banking is the preferred method of payment direct to the Hutt Valley Angling Club account number 02-0528-0246578-000 but Mike Nansett will happily accept your cheque at this month's club meeting.

Renewal fees paid by 31 August 2015 are:

Family: \$45 Senior: \$35 Super Annuitant: \$25

Add \$10 if you want to receive a printed copy of the newsletter.

The junior subscription remains at \$10 whatever option is selected.

New members and fees paid after 31 August 2015 are:

Family: \$55 Senior: \$45 Super annuitant: \$35
and

Junior: \$10

Hutt Valley Angling Club 1975 to 2015 - 40th Birthday Dinner

At our July meeting this proposal was put to the members present and a show of hands confirmed almost unanimous support for a birthday dinner to be arranged.

In the second step of the process an email will be circulating to our wider membership and past members who may also be interested to join in the celebration. The intention will be to hold the dinner in the Hutt Valley and most likely Upper Hutt. The venue we choose will be determined by the numbers attending and so it is very important to establish as early as we can who will attend and then

we will make a booking to fit our number coming to the dinner. We are inviting members to bring their partners / guests and we will need an accurate indication of who intends to do so.

We are planning to have several special guests since this is an important milestone in the club's history and an audio visual presentation will be made showcasing a potted history of the club from its early days to the present time. There will be several toasts made during the formal part of the evening and then members old and new can mix and mingle, catching up with old mates and sharing stories about their fishing experiences.

Our early estimate is that the meal will cost between \$30 and \$35 per head. The angling club will provide table wines to accompany the meal. Since some visiting former members and others will be travelling from outside of the Wellington region it is probable that the dinner will be arranged for a Saturday night.

Saturday nights are in high demand for social activities and for this reason we have made a provisional booking in a private function lounge at the Upper Hutt Cossie Club for Saturday 31st October.

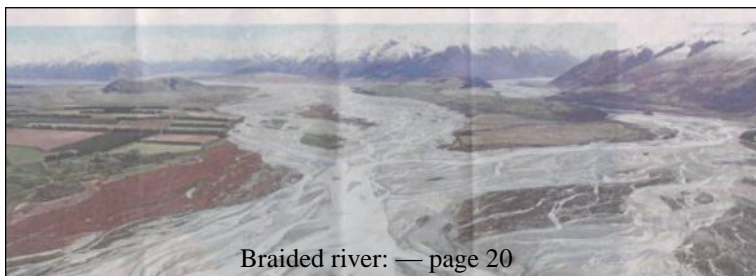
We will be contacting members by email or telephone to confirm numbers who will attend and may have contacted quite a number before this newsletter goes to press.

HVAC Committee

Up-coming club trips

The HVAC Trip Calendar is from August 2015 to April 2016. All trips are weather dependant, with early bookings being essential. Some venues do require a deposit, which should be paid by members directly to the hotel/B&B/lodge to secure a bed.

Members will be given the opportunity to sign up for trips at the monthly meetings. To confirm a place on a club trip, email Damian at c.dbengree@paradise.net.nz not less than three weeks before the trip date. Damian will send accommodation details to participants as necessary.



Braided river: — page 20

| 2015 --2016 | Destination | Degree of difficulty: high 5 - 1 easy | Dates |
|--------------------|---------------------------|--|------------------|
| August | Tongariro river | 3 to 4 | Fri 14 to Sun 16 |
| September | Tukituki river | 2 to 3 | Fri 11 to Sun 13 |
| October | Rivers around Turangi | 3 to 4 | Fri 9 to Sun 11 |
| | Kapiti & HVAC (day trip) | 1 to 2 (Max of 8) | TBC |
| November | HVAC & Hastings Club | 2 to 3 (Max of 8) | Fri 6 to Sun 8 |
| December | Mohaka or Puketirti river | 4 to 5 | Fri 4 to Sun 6 |
| January | Wairarapa Camping | 1 to 2 | Sat 23rd |
| February | Rivers around Taihape | 4 | Fri 19 to Sun 21 |
| March | Rivers around Pahiatua | 2 to 3 | Fri 11 to Sat 13 |
| April | Tongariro river | 3 to 4 | Fri 15 to Sun 17 |
| May | TBC | | |

Please support our sponsors



Lighthouse Theatre Wednesday 9th September — 8pm-10pm

For programme details, film trailers and ticket sales see
www.gin-clear.com/filmfest



Riverworks Specials

**Tongariro Wading Jackets only
\$149.99**

**50% off XRT Wading Boots
only \$149.99**

RX2 Wading Boots only \$99.99

**B3Z Breathable Waders only
\$149.99**

Also

**Ron Thompson Fly Vest only
\$29.99**

The Flyfishing Experts

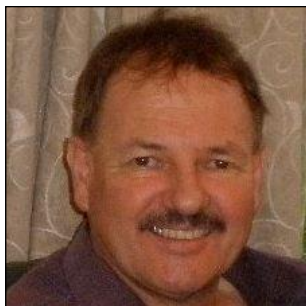
444 Cuba Street, Alicetown Ph 589 9500

<http://www.huntingandfishing.co.nz>

Meet the members

Mark Brown

Greetings my name is Mark Brown. My wife Bernadette and I have recently moved to the Wellington region from Nelson. After apartment living in the city we have now moved to Korokoro. We are discovering Wellington's diversity and wide range of attractions and fine eating establishments as well as trying something different in our spare time – like trout fishing!



I am a complete novice when it comes to trout fishing. As a child I went salmon and white baiting on the Waitaki River. My parents were schoolteachers so we spent our holidays camping and tramping New Zealand but only occasional did we go rock or sea fishing. I have taken a grandchild fishing off the wharf a few times with mixed success. A friend sold me a good rod over 10 years ago. Despite the fact I lived on the doorstep of an amazing fishing area, Top of the South in Nelson, I never learnt. So the rod sat in its tube until now!

I was attracted to your very good website, so along with your very informative open day held a couple of months ago, I have made the decision to learn! Sport has been a massive part of my life. I've played and coached at provincial level hockey, rugby and cricket. For 15 years I was an international Touch Referee – this resulted in 6 World Cups – 82 international games, over 550 first class games and international referee coaching I have been a Primary School Principal for over 30 years in both rural and urban schools. I primarily worked in Nelson at Victory Primary School for 22 years. During this time the school and community were transformed was awarded New Zealand Community of the Year 2010. I have worked as a Leadership /Management Adviser for University of Canterbury, Regional Manager, Ministry of Education, Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast.

I moved to Wellington in 2012 to work in the Ministry of Education as the Chief Advisor to Schools in New Zealand. During this time I was involved with the social reform - Green and White papers – of the Vulnerable Child and Children Action Teams. I have recently taken up the Principalship of Newtown School in Wellington city. Newtown is about to be rebuilt, due to its main classroom blocks

being demolished as a result of earthquake damage and being 7% of the building code!

More recently family and community events and activities have consumed my time I look forward in the future to become engaged in the club activities and events and having an active retirement pursuit!

Peter Bailey

My name is Peter Bailey. I used to own and run an electronic security company Wellington Security, however I have just sold this and am looking for a new challenge. (Is this a long-winded way of saying unemployed?) I am an electrical engineer by trade but seem to have been self-employed mostly in the security industry over the past 15 years. I love the challenge of both business and sports and hobbies. It's seldom about the money or the trophy but getting out and playing the game.



I am a very keen hunter and surf caster but my knees are getting too old to charge around in the hills and I wanted a new challenge, so have taken up trout fishing. I have tried for 8 months on my own with very poor results and so decided I needed help so joined the club. Love the fact that members share their skills and knowledge and it's refreshing after an unsuccessful month whipping the water to listen to stories of fish caught and lost. Always keen to learn something and this is half the battle.

Winter success on the Hutt

by Mike Nansett

Over the last weekend in June, I managed to get in a few hours of fishing on the Hutt. On the Saturday morning I started by nymphing along the edges under the willows with a small unweighted #16 caddis tied off a #14 tungsten bead nymph. The first fish I picked up was a healthy 3½ pounds.

On the way back to the car I put on an olive woolly bugger. I have been interested in streamers and have read that they are very effective, both in USA and NZ especially for steelhead. I use a spey

technique which consists of a cast straight across (not down) followed by a big upstream mend, which helps the fly sink, then let the line drift downstream naturally. As it drifts under the willows, it starts to swing and rises up. Using this technique, I managed to hook and land another nice fish of 3¼ pounds.

But back to reality...After being taken to light fitting shops (yawn) and having a hernia from the prices, I finally got a reprieve and managed to get out for a couple more hours. I decided to swing streamers again. After fishing for 20 minutes I saw a couple of guys coming upstream, nymphing as I worked my way downstream. I had a chat (well tried to, they were not very talkative) and asked whether I could fish below them as they had been through it 10 minutes earlier. They said fine and first cast I hooked up on a 2¾ pound fish. 30 minutes later, I landed another 2¼ pound fish.

What I've learned is to control the drift and not let the fly swing too early as it is not natural. Jigging across can also produce a strike. So all-in-all, a really productive weekend. I went out again to practise a few things and use a few new techniques I picked up from youtube. While I prefer nymphing and dry fly stuff, the streamer patterns are certainly more productive at this time of year. Also, the fish do not fight as hard, so I try to keep them in the water (hence my pictures are a bit rubbish), get them in fast and try not to touch them. Releasing them is easy because most of my nymphs are barbless now. All of the fish I caught were in very good nick, with no slabs at all.

I have been fishing for 18 months now and still get a buzz the night before I go out. We are very lucky to have the Hutt River. It's a great river and most fish are a good size. I think that a lot of people tend to give up on it too easily. This is the time to get out and fine tune things like your casting, presentation and drift,



because if they aren't right, you're stuffed! Coming to realise this has helped me no end. Some of the videos from the club library have helped, especially "Stealth with a Fly" which is an absolute must.

Thanks also must go to the fly-tying classes. I bought no nymphs last season. All my fish were caught in home-ties...a bit of investment up front, but it is worth it, especially when they are \$3.50 each. Keen to see how my Madam X goes this year!

Waterhen Bloa

By Tim Trengrove

If Hutt Valley Anglers Club members were flies at our monthly meetings, Greenwell's Glory, March Brown and Partridge and Yellow would be easy to spot. Somewhere in the back row would be a fly sitting very quietly, so well blended in you'd be forgiven for not knowing it was there. That's a pity for it is likely to be the Waterhen Bloa. A fly so successful that after around 300 years it still regularly features as a favourite spider.

The Waterhen Bloa needn't blend into the back row. It certainly is old but is still a great fish taker.

In a video on YouTube called Fly Fishing Oliver Edwards Upstream Nymphing, Oliver Edwards enthusiastically fishes a team of three North Country flies. At 1:23 he ties one of these, the Waterhen Bloa. Many today would consider Oliver's tie overdressed but I think he does a beautiful job of it. Most modern dressings use half a hackle and just a 5 o'clock shadow of mole fur, touch dubbed onto well waxed thread. Oliver Edwards has done much to keep North Country spiders alive and kicking and has a deserved reputation as a fine tier and angler. His videos are a treasure, well worth watching. What is a Waterhen Bloa? Waterhen or moorhen are rails, related to our pukeko but different in colouration. Bloa, well that is the smoky blue-grey colour seen in underfur dubbing or hackles, first mentioned in William Lister's fishing diary from 1712. Styles of dressing the Waterhen Bloa have changed through the centuries but the components remain the same.

Robert Smith ties a lovely current take on the pattern in his *The North Country Fly*, page 186:

| | |
|-------|---|
| Hook. | Sizes 14, 16 or 18 |
| Silk. | Yellow |
| Body. | Yellow silk dubbed with water rat or mole fur |
| Legs. | Waterhen under-covert. (Notice that Robert Smith uses "Legs" where we commonly use "Hackle".) |

Robert Smith's dressing also mentions #18 hooks. I find this curious because the long hackles would swamp such a small hook. There are two approaches: 1. Feel the fear and do it anyway and 2. Use the hackle shortening technique. Both are valid. Flies surviving from the late 1700s – early 1800s often have 3-4 wraps of full hackle instead of our miserable 1-2 wraps of halved hackle. This is a veritable hackle bush and using hackles twice the length of those we now tie in. There is no one correct method. They all caught and continue to catch fish. Fashions change in fly design but thankfully their purpose remains the same.

My tie uses Pearsall's yellow No.4 and in this photo appears lighter than it should. Note that the Pearsall's company didn't start until 1795, much later than when the pattern was developed. Using a dark wax and proper fur dubbing will help give a darker tone to the body and more accurately represent dark olive mayflies it is meant to imitate. The waterhen hackle is longer than traditional game hackles like grouse, woodcock or snipe. It is duller too, quite demure.



Waterhen hackles are difficult to obtain and I feel very lucky to have been given some. The hackles are fine, soft and not dense lending themselves to making a spartan fly. Get that body dubbed sparingly enough and the hackle winds itself in. While most soft hackles these days are tied in by the tip after forming the body, I prefer the traditional method of dressing North Country spiders, tying the tip in after the first two wraps of silk are wound onto the hook. That is right back at the beginning and a good test of the tier's thread control. Waxed silk doesn't like staying on the hook and any slack thread tension will see it walking off the job. You might have noticed Oliver Edwards starting his Waterhen Bloa slightly differently. Each method requires a lot of practice and when you're proficient, remember that these flies were originally tied without a vice – right down to #18 and also tied beautifully!

If you are keen to use local materials, this is tied with a pukeko neck hackle and fine fur dubbing.



A large part of the trout's diet in many of our rivers is small, brown to dark brown mayflies perfectly imitated in medium to faster water by the Waterhen Bloa. Naturals emerge with a translucent appearance, the same appearance as the yellow silk seen through the thinly dubbed body. Not surprisingly, the Waterhen Bloa works very well here. It never ceases to amaze me at how clever our fly fishing forefathers were at observing naturals, and their ability to reflect those observations in their fly tying and fishing presentations.

Most North Country patterns were tied to imitate actual insects and fished when those insects were active. While some patterns are recommended for only a few months, the Waterhen Bloa is recommended (in the UK) from March through to October, as is the North Country Greenwell tied with a near upright wing (see my article last month). The body of a Greenwell fly also uses darkly waxed yellow silk but does away with the dubbing and has that striking gold rib instead. I feel that where the Greenwell's Glory leads from the front, the Waterhen Bloa lurks behind and is the silent assassin.

Jump forward to the early twentieth century and another great angler was working with just the same issues. Jim Leisenring's tying solution was to develop separately spun bodies of dubbed silk to imitate emerging insects just below the surface. These were a new type of fly, made for the faster waters he fished. Jim's name was given to one of the methods he used to fish the new flies – the Leisenring lift. The North Country soft hackle tradition had crossed the Atlantic and another great chapter was about to be written.

I have tied up Waterhen Bloa flies on #14 hooks for this season. Chances are they will be fished downstream, prospecting for browns and rainbows. That is a large hackle to get down quickly for fishing upstream and for that purpose I'll be reaching for a better suited #16 Stewart's Spider. If a caddis hatch is on, the Waterhen Bloa will still catch fish but my first choice would be a Partridge and Yellow. But when faced with fussy or shy trout in medium velocity water, the Waterhen Bloa will be my top choice. I'm looking forward to putting those long, soft hackles to good use. This is a subtle fly. Just like that person sitting silently at the back of our next club meeting, look out for the silent assassin!

You can see that trout but can it see you?

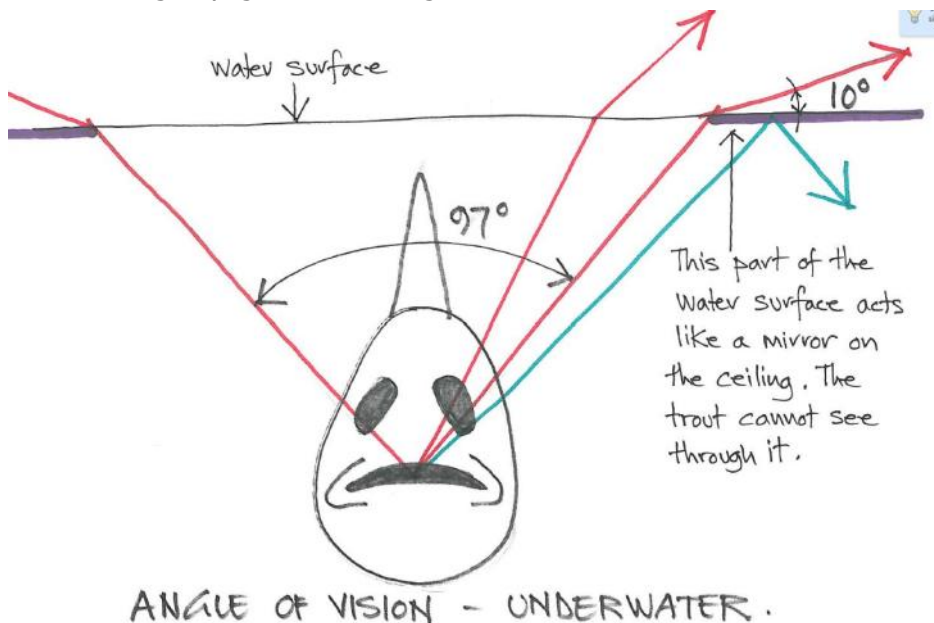
By Chris Kuchel

Or perhaps the question should be: Has that trout already seen you and taken off long before you made your first cast? As we all know, the trout's eyes are located on the side of its head, which gives it very good vision in all directions except backwards. In moving water, trout will generally face upstream, so the ideal way to

approach them is from a downstream position and cast upstream. However, as we walk along the river bank, we often see trout holding in water slightly upstream or straight across. Can the trout see us? This is hard to judge, especially on the Hutt River, where the fish have become accustomed to dogs, stone-throwers and 4WD vehicles.

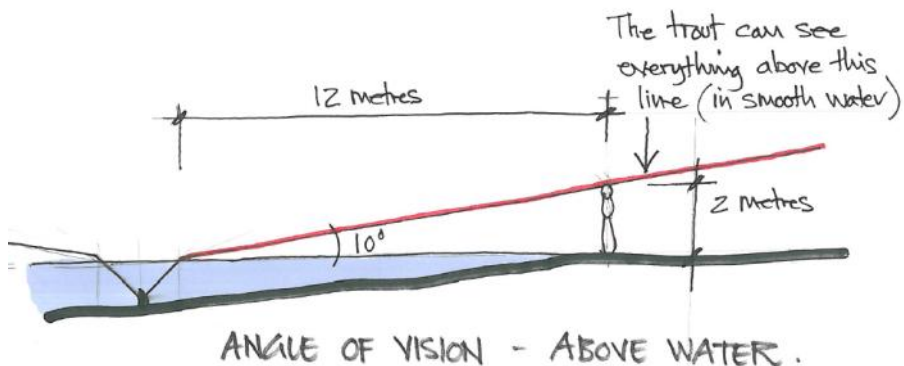
Let's see what the science says.

Trout can see very well for long distances underwater, but when they look upwards, they see the surface of the water as a big mirrored ceiling. However, they have a viewing cone through this mirrored ceiling.... a bit like a circular skylight. This viewing cone has an upwards angle of 97 degrees. When the trout is in shallow water, the viewing skylight will be small and when in deeper water, the viewing skylight will be larger.



So far so good, but due to refraction, the light rays bend as they pass from air to water, giving the trout an increased angle of vision above the water surface. From the edge of the skylight, the trout can see everything except the lowest 10 degrees above the horizon. So what does that mean for the angler?

It means that if you are 2 metres tall, the trout will see you if you get closer than 12 metres to it. If you crouch down to 1 metre



high, the trout will see you if you get closer than 6 metres to it. That's the theory, based on a perfectly flat water surface, but as we all know, a broken riffly surface will provide a lot of distortion and hence cover. But also remember that waving a 3 metre long rod above your head as you false-cast will increase your height dramatically.

Like all theory, this is just another piece of information to add to the puzzle. I think it's safe to say though that being as stealthy as possible will definitely increase your chance of success.

The Best Sauce

(An interesting view of why people go fishing)

From Mid Current Fly News

Growing up, I used to watch just about every fishing show in existence—at the time there were four—and my favorite was hosted by Babe Winkelman, who had a name you could probably only get away with in northern Minnesota. Babe would sign off each episode with a red flannel salute and a well-wishing to his at-home viewers: "Good Fishing." At the time it was obvious to me that good fishing meant easy pickins, fish jumping in your boat, a hand-over-fist acquisitiveness epitomized by the stories my uncles used to tell about spring white bass fishing on the big rivers of Wisconsin: You could catch them all day long on bare hooks, on tabs from beer cans.

I came to realize just how far my definition of good fishing had

drifted since those early days while drinking whiskey with some friends on a Michigan porch. It must have been getting late because someone broached the topic of what everyone would wish for if a genie slithered out of the bottle we were about to empty. "You'd probably wish to catch a fish every cast," one of my friends, a non-angler, said.

I thought about it for a moment—a steelhead on every cast, 100 muskies a day.

"The very thought of it makes me want to barf," I said.

"Why?"

"Hunger is the best sauce. And I really like to eat."

Over the next few days I thought a little more about that question. What is "good fishing" to different people? I knew there was likely to be some variance on the subject due to where people were in their angling lives. But in all my conversations with fishy friends, I began to listen more intently.

One was getting ready to go on one of those once-in-a-lifetime trips he'll probably do 10-15 times. Rather than getting excited, he was checking the weather forecast and oozing pure dread.

"Looks like the first day might be really, really good," he frowned.

It was going to pain him considerably if the first day of the trip was going to be the best. I asked him what the ideal first-day scenario would be.

He smiled. "Not quite skunked, but almost."

I started asking other friends about their definition of good fishing. Was it a hundred-fish a day? For my friend Jason Tucker, better known by his internet moniker Fontinalis Rising, it's more like a one-fish night.

"It was last summer at the end of the hex hatch and there were almost no bugs. We had some big fish intermittently hitting stray spinners, so we rowed down to a gas station, bought beer and rowed back up. We worked one fish for over an hour. It would only rise every ten to fifteen minutes. We sat, drank beer, and moved the boat every time the fish would rise. My friend finally got the fish, a 23-incher, at 3:45 in the morning. We drove home as the sun rose."

For another friend, Brian Kozminski, a recent spring day achieved perfection status at last light in the form of a 22-inch native brown on a streamer right next to guys dredging crawler harnesses. "Telling them the name of the Galloup streamer made it even sweeter," he said.

If hunger really is the best sauce, my first brown trout came straight out of a Brillat-Savarin fever dream. I literally fished every day for about three weeks before I hooked up. Now it's true that I was working with an operational ignorance simply not achievable in the modern internet era. My flies were oversized, my casts under-length, and the river I was fishing had a density of about ten fish per mile. For that reason when it happened—on day 22, I think it was—it tasted like nothing I've had before or since. Not even my first musky tasted as sweet.

Some call being out all day not catching anything “paying your dues.” That's one way of looking at it. I prefer to think of it as an essential part of the process of degustation; it's where the hunger builds, the wine reduces, the herbs tumble in. It's where the context for magic—which is as necessary as the magic itself—is established.

So the next time you're on the fence about heading out, ask yourself this: Are the conditions terrible? The bugs sparse? The water low and the sun high? That's all the more reason to get out there and start building toward something really great. It'll be so sweet when it goes down.

Don't overlook braided rivers

Peter Langlands The Press Christchurch

Many anglers write off braided-rivers (picture p7) as being, in many places, barren and windswept environments, but they can offer exciting angling - often for a mixed fishery of browns and rainbows in a wide range of sizes

Never being quite sure what you will catch next is part of the appeal of fishing these rivers, which are surely some of the most dynamic of our trout-fishing environments.

The most characteristic braided rivers have big flows throughout the year and do not dry up like smaller coastal rivers. Also, many are open all year round in the eastern zone.

Large braided rivers that flow into the sea have trout scattered throughout them all year round, and in winter a lot of non-spawning and maiden trout use the more stable edges of the channels to feed when the larger spawning fish have moved into

the headwaters.

Maiden fish up to 2 kilograms can be caught all year round, which are top eating.

Running from north to south, the main braided rivers on the South Island's east coast are the Wairau, Waiau, Hurunui, Waimakariri, Rakaia, Rangitata and Waitaki.

Trophy fish can be found in the upper reaches of braided rivers, especially on the more stable side channels or just downstream of where spring creeks flow in. Large spring creek fish often fall back into the main river channels, perhaps in response to the presence of salmon smolt. That's why Rapala lures that imitate salmon smolt are an effective tool, especially when the wind picks up. Indeed, given the variance in the water encountered, spin and fly-fishing methods are perfectly compatible on braided rivers.

It can pay to look for areas where there is a line of brown or green algae marking out where the river channel has been stable for some time. This is where insect populations are likely to be relatively high and where trout will be found.

Sometimes side channels are maintained for one or two years and act as stable streams in the short term — at least until the next large flood. The longer a braided river has been stable between large floods, the better its fishing opportunities. As a result, the best fishing is in the late autumn and early winter when flows are at their lowest and the trout are more concentrated. Low, clear flows are ideal for fly-fishing, while slightly coloured water is better suited to spin-fishing.

The edges of the main channels where there are some decent-sized boulders, are key areas to prospect. Others include rock groynes, as the large rocks offer some stability and cover.

Irrigation outtake structures can also provide a stable environment, where trout will hold.

Collapsed grassy banks are good areas to look, because chunks of bank lying in the river channel break the current giving trout places to lie; sometimes simply a matagouri bush that's fallen into the river forms a lie. Larger trout in particular will seek out areas where there is some cover.

Larger and flashier flies tend to work best on braided rivers. A gold Beadhead and Flashback nymph combo is one of my favoured search rigs when combined with a large, buoyant indicator. Quickly

covering the water with deeply-set nymphs is one of the best ways to fish these large rivers, as there will be a lot of empty water between trout, although trout are sometimes grouped up in pods. Braided rivers are well suited to spin-fishing. Once a group of trout is found, you can switch over to the fly rod. Trout sometimes chase the spinner but refuse it at the last second. At that point, knowing a trout is present, rest the water for a short while and then fish through it with a fly. This can be very effective.

There's a feeling of expanse and freedom when fishing braided rivers, offering anglers room to explore and experience the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the rivers. When you do find a group of trout, you can enjoy catching them in solitude.

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