



## The Official Newsletter of the Hamilton and Area Fly Fishers and Tyers

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March 2002

### EDITOR'S COMMENTS

With just over a month to opening day, some people are already getting antsy. Understandably. Your neighbors may give you strange looks as you stand there practicing your casting on the lawn, but don't worry, in another month, they'll be gardening and you'll be fishing. I don't know about you but that's an easy choice for me. I know, my wife will have another opinion, but I can hope.

For all the new people or those new to the area, Ron Marini has done us all a big favor. Everything but a detailed map of the region where to fish within an hour of Hamilton. Not surprising, we actually do have some great water here. This article is a keeper.

We have another ESOX fable for you. As well, our beginners corner has part three of the "Reading Water" series. I hope you find these useful and interesting.

### PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Thank you to all Spring Fishing show volunteers. Paul and Hank, I still have your hats.

Possible pre-season date at Primrose Trout Farm. Normally \$25.00 for 4 hours but for us \$25.00 for the day. Possible date April 20/21 with Winter Hatches club. Watch the next newsletter for more details.

John French  
President

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### *The Canadian Fly Fishing Forum*

Apr. 6,7. Following last years smashing success, the forum will, once more, be at the Automotive Building at the C.N.E. The list of speakers is too good to be true including names as **Jack Gartside, Collin McKeown, Dave Schenk, Don Bastian, John Valk, and Bill Spicer. Sheldon Seale, Rick Whorwood, Ken Collins, Gary Dubiel, Mark Madore and Kathryn Maroun** etc.

#### *Tricks for Trout*

Ian James is running two one day seminars Tricks for Trout, Saturday April 13 and Sunday April 14 2002. Call 519-858-3602

or [ianjames@sympatico.ca](mailto:ianjames@sympatico.ca) or [www.ianjames.on.ca](http://www.ianjames.on.ca). These are being held in London Ontario. If you haven't seen Ian, he is both very talented and extremely funny. These events would be worth taking in.

#### *Mooneye Night*

June 12. Get your dry fly skills honed up for the season. Join fellow club members for our annual mooneye night at Seneca Park in Caledonia.

### HOME WATERS

By Ron Marini

The other day, I met a former co-worker who had retired a couple of years' ago. He was lamenting the fact that in spite of being retired, he had less time to do the things that really counted, like fishing. His departing comment that he didn't know how he had found the time to work in his former life, really piqued my interest. Even in retired life, we are being stressed by the demands of never enough time.

When it comes to finding the time for fishing, other than winning the lottery and becoming a world-class trout bum, our next best option is fishing close to home. With time as a premium, fishing close to home means maximizing time on the water and minimizing travelling time.

As a Hamilton-based club, the logical starting places are fishing spots within an hour's drive of our community. This lets us get an evening of fishing in after a day of work or a Saturday afternoon after doing our morning chores. On a beautiful spring weekend when the Hendricksons are hatching, if you're fishing close to home, you might be able to fish the hatch and still have time to do your domestic duties to keep your significant other happy.

The potential fishing opportunities being identified in this article come from experience and general knowledge. The locations are relatively public information so club members shouldn't be upset about revealing their secret fishing spots. The only criterion a location had to meet was one-hour maximum travel time from Hamilton.

In the early season, a good bet would be the local Conservation Authority areas for getting the rust out of our casting arms after the enforced winter hiatus. Places such as Fifty Point, Christie Conservation Area and the St. John's Conservation area at Short

Hills Provincial Park outside of St. Catharines have trout ponds with put and take fisheries. Using early season patterns like the Coachman wet fly, Hare's Ear wet fly, Brassies, and Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear bead heads usually yield some nice fish.

At this time of year, the weather is the wild card. Nothing happening at Short Hills on a deliciously warm, spring afternoon and other times, perseverance rewarding the committed fly fisher casting a Coachman into a north-west wind with piercing rain screaming across Lake Ontario at Fifty Point Conservation Area.

As the weather warms, new opportunities are presenting themselves in the form of warm water fisheries. A favourite place is the headland created in

Hamilton Harbour at Bayfront Park at the foot of Bay Street. Recently completed, this area is providing fishing right downtown. Streamers yield effective results, especially in Macassa Bay in the early season with plate-sized Crappy and bulldogging Smallmouth Bass. Also available for an evening of fun, especially for children, are rock bass, perch and pumpkinseed. Early season fishing is key, because heavy organic loads create massive shoreline mats of algae growth which foul the fishing experience as spring turns to summer.

Before moving into the warmer days and other opportunities for warm water fishing, the north shore of Lake Erie with its relatively short streams has enticed cold water fishing opportunities worth exploring. Located between Port Dover and Simcoe, these streams offer migratory runs of salmon and steelhead in some instances, or resident browns lurking to strike at the right presentation. Streams including Young's Creek, Ryerse Creek, and Port Ryerse and Normandale Creek at Lake Erie harbour Rainbows. The Lynne River between Simcoe and Port Dover, Patterson Creek and Kent Creek are other coldwater fishing destinations worth exploring and still within one hour's travel time of Hamilton. In the spring, surf fishing at the creeks' exit into Lake Erie may produce surprising results.

Looking to the northwest, the Flamborough area is criss-crossed by coldwater streams but a significant length of their banks are in private ownership and jealously guarded. However, Mill Creek, near Valens Conservation Area is within public ownership and to the committed angler can have some exciting experiences in spite of the non-existent fly-casting room.

Toward Brantford and easily within an hour of Hamilton, is the always-challenging Whiteman's Creek. Good Brown Trout fishing has been its hallmark for years. However, at the January meeting, club members were being advised that Rainbow Trout are making inroads into this once great Brown Trout fishery. Apps Mill Conservation Area off Restacres Road is always a good place to start with fishing possible both upstream and down. A word of caution with Whiteman's Creek is always in order-deep green water signals the location of holes so careful and observant wading is necessary.

In fishing circles, authors and fly fishers are always talking about "home rivers". For Hamilton Fly Fishers, the Grand River fills that role nicely. Home to a wide variety of warm water species, it also has significant runs of Steelhead in spring and fall.

Mike Pettigrew of Caledonia Bait and Tackle knows the river and the runs. He says that the runs started around 1985 and the

annual runs start in August, lasting to December, depending on water temperature and flow. While the average size ranges from 4 to 7 pounds, Pettigrew recalls catches as large as 22 pounds. Surprisingly, the range of the Rainbows is as far upstream as New Hamburg with runs into Whiteman's Creek. Effective flies for these migratory fish include egg flies, dry flies and streamers. While the area below Caledonia is productive, it is also crowded so other locations are worth trying. Such areas include Seneca Park and downstream from Whiteman's Creek.

With such an excellent fishery so close to home, perhaps this could trigger our club to schedule sessions on tying steelhead patterns and instructions how to fish for these chrome torpedoes.

As a conveniently close fishery with a wide range of species to pursue, the Grand River has no equal. Smallmouth bass fishing is outstanding upstream of the Brantford Charity Casino, through Caledonia to York. Evening fishing for Mooneye is readily available downstream of the Caledonia dam while challenges are lurking in slower waters in the form of the carp. Occasionally, an alert fly fisher will find herself hooking up with a toothy throwback to prehistoric days, the Gar Pike. Fishing streamers deep and slow will fool Walleye while wet flies will take crappy, rock bass and monster pumpkinseed. Lots of action to keep kids and grandkids happy and occupied.

So remember, fish close to home. It may not be as exotic as other locales further a field, but you'll spend more time on the water doing what really matters.

## ESOX FABLES

By John French

Lawyers are one of the few professions almost everyone makes fun of. Along with plumbers, lawyers are the butt (pun intended) of countless jokes. This fable is not intended to poke fun at, or cast dispersions on the entire profession. This fable is being related solely to describe how one lawyer, for want of a few vertical degrees, managed to avoid the leap from humour to angling legend.

Three fishermen in a 14-foot boat is the ideal number for trolling flies. One in a bow fishing wide port, (left side, looking from the square end to the pointy end for all of you land lubbers) one in the middle fishing out the other side and the motor man fishing either short port or directly out the back. The center fisherman has the net to assist the other two as needed or to pass it off to land fish of his own. The motorman watches the water ahead and drives the boat.

The bowman may have arguably the most important job aboard the vessel. The refreshment cooler resides at his feet and it is the bowman's responsibility to pass out liquid and other refreshments on demand. None of the liquids contain alcohol of course. This would be illegal. All you boaters and lawyers pipe down; it adds a note of controversy to the story.

The center man, also the son of the bowman, had been performing his duties with the net with skill and precision. Gaining confidence with each success he announced that rather than pass over the net on his next fish he would perform a solo capture.

As fate would have it the next fish hooked in the boat was by the center man. The motorman reeled his line to eliminate lines becoming tangled then stood up and stepped over the cooler to be able to offer assistance if required.

The fish was missed with the first pass of the net and with unusual vigor frantically made a run away from the boat. Surprised by this unexpected run from the motorman suggested the hook point might have hit a tender spot because of the extra strain on the line.

Once the fish was close to the boat again all three fishermen leaned over the starboard (the right side, looking from the square end towards the pointy end for all you land lubbers who haven't figured it out yet) side to watch the capture.

As the wildly struggling fish was netted a massive shadow swam slowly from under the boat. This leviathan was easily ten times the size of the two-pound lake trout flopping in the net.

The center man pointed, the motorman searched hopefully for a rigged line to offer the beast and the bowman simply backed up.

Backed up?

As instinctive reaction triggered by some primeval impulse as the predator/prey roles were reversed, the bowman, the lawyer, father of the center man and the custodian of the refreshment cooler, stepped backward, tripped over the cooler and came within a scant few degrees of falling over the side of the boat rather than into the cluttered bow. Only the quick hands of the center man, the bowman's son prevented the wetting.

During times of great stress or excitement it is said time seems to pass at a different rate. I can only attribute the brief hesitation I witnessed before the center man grabbed for the bowman to this phenomenon. What son would allow his father to fall overboard and have to retell the story over and over and over if he could possibly avoid it?

Of course regardless of how many times he could retell the story of his father being scared out of a boat by a giant fish, the center man would still have to answer to a higher authority, his mother, as to why he had to let his father fall out of a boat.

## **BEGINNER'S CORNER**

By Bryant J. Cochran, Jr., re printed with permission of the publisher, Killroys.com.

### *READING WATER - PART 3*

Now that you have learned the how and why of trout behavior, lets get on with learning where they like to live in a stream. "Practice seeing fish and you will catch more of them". This was told to me by the wisest fisherman I have ever met and I have found it to be true. I would like to add some more wisdom to it..."If, however you do not know where to look, you will never learn to see them". If you haven't yet printed copies of the first two articles in this series, now would be a good time to do so. It will help you follow some of the terms I will be using from now on.

Let's take a trip to your favorite stream. You pack your gear, load up the vehicle, drive (however far it is) to the car park, get

out and suited up, and head to a favorite hole with that special rod in hand. Question.. what do you do next? Do you start wading? do you start creeping up to the bank to cast and hope you get a take? do you find a high spot and observe the water noting any rock, log, gravel bar, bend, deep flat, moss beds, or other structure that is in or touching the water? do you then stare intently at each little piece of structure to see if you can pick up the slightest hint of movement or shadow that is not part of the structure? If you answer yes to the first two questions then I can assuredly tell you that you will miss the largest fish and even if you catch a few or many, you could have caught more and bigger fish if you had answered yes to the last two. When I go fishing I am amazed at the number of fishermen fishing blind. True, some times you have to live with not knowing where the fish are, but most of the time you can see them if you stop and take the time to locate them. The fish you can see you can cast to and know that you have a good chance of getting them to take your offering. Now you are thinking, sure but where do I look and what am I supposed to see? Let us proceed to dissect a stream and find the answers.

All streams or rivers have some basic sections. Fast water can be broken down into;

rapids, riffles, and pocket water. Slow water can be broken down into; pools, slicks, and eddies. Additionally we can break each of these into their basic parts, for example a pool has a head, a tail, possibly a shelf, and an eye. To look at the water as a whole is to create a confusion of details. What we will do, therefore is to look at the individual parts that make up the whole, hopefully this will bring order to chaos.

Slower current is what fish want to be in most of the time - remember the energy expenditure vrs food from the previous articles? Even in the fastest of current flows slower water can be found. The banks of the stream and the bottom carry an increased drag factor thereby causing the current to flow slower than the main body of water. Bends in a stream also create slow water on the inside of the bend. Boulders and smaller stones in the current flow create two pockets of slower water. Let's start finding the slower water in each of the sections, remember that every bit of this slower water is a potential fish home, by finding all of the homes on a section you know where all the fish live. Then all you have to do is eliminate the sleeping houses and you are left with the homes of the catchable fish. We will start with the fast water.

Rapids are the fastest water on any stream. They are deeper than riffles and have larger structure features simply because the smaller features have been moved away by the current flow, or they are buried by the volume of water flowing over them. The features that will create slower water here are; 1. Boulders, either sticking through the surface or covered by the surface of the water. Boulders protruding from the waters surface create two pockets of slower water. They are both feeding lies. The front pocket is formed by the damming effect on the current, this causes the water to stack up and create a bulge of slower water. You will see this bulge and sometimes there is a breaking wave just in front of the bulge. A feeding fish or two live(s) in this house. The lee pocket is usually farther from the boulder than you think. the feeding lies of this house are just up stream from the point where the disrupted current flow comes back together. The food conveyor belt will show you this point. Boulders under the waters surface create the same two lies but they are harder to see because they are sub-surface. Look for the bulge in the

surface that gives away the boulders position and then use the information you glean from an exposed boulder to find the feeding houses. Also when exploring boulders be sure not to forget the sides of the boulder, fish will sometimes hold here too.

2. The Banks of the stream including the bottom. Look for fish right up against the bank walls. They will be down stream from any bump or other protrusion you can see. If the bank has a definite protruding feature; i.e.. big bump out, series of rocks connecting or almost connecting them to the bank, be sure to check for a slack current behind these. If you see one or not, there will be fish holding in a feeding pattern down stream of these obstructions. You must be able to determine if they are big enough to create a back water eddy or not. If there is a back water situation the fish will probably be looking in the normal currents down stream position. This calls for extra caution when approaching.

3. Any trees that have fallen into the rapid and are either still attached by roots or lodged against the bank or some structure. These do not go clear to the bottom, but they do create a slack current so distance from the obstruction. There will be a feeding fish or more holding in the spot where the slack current forms (look for a slick water area or at least a less disturbed water area). Most important of all is to get as high view as possible and don't forget to wear polarized glasses. If you can get to point where shade is on the water you want to see through all the better.

At the end of the rapid or riffle (a riffle is just a shallow rapid) there will be a transition area we call the HEAD of the pool The water rushes down the rapid area and hits a deepening stream bottom that might also widen and slows down. The previously tumbling water becomes smoother and quieter in its movement. the feeding lanes (where the food conveyor travels is quite easy to see now, with all its bubbles and whitish foam. There may well be areas in this transition that match the boulder or log descriptions above. If there are they will hold feeding fish in the same manner. You will also find feeding fish on the stream bed in this area, digging nymphs and catching the drowned insects and other morsels the conveyor belt carries. Just down stream from the head of the pool is an area that may be shallow on one bank this is the SHELF. The shelf may be a gravel bar or a sandy bar or a mud bar, it mostly depends on the type of sediment the stream carries and how narrow the main channel becomes at this point. There will be a very distinct line between the fast flowing

channel current and the shelf's current. This is the place to look for feeding fish in the shelf area. When the stream makes a bend I tend to get excited and usually have to back off and regroup my objective. Where there is a bend in a pool area there is usually a small, really flat, area of water from the inner bank to the straight bank on the inside edge of the channel current. This is the EYE of the pool and if you develop the ability to find these special places on the streams pools you will find that half of the fish you catch come from these places. The eye of the pool has fish in a feeding frenzy whether they are feeding on the surface, sub surface or on the bottom. These guys mean business. I was on my home waters just last week and caught 12 nice trout from one eye of the pool area. These are the places I take clients when they want a lot of action on nice sized trout. That should give you an indication on just how productive the "eyes" are. Learn to find them, you will become the fishmiester in your stream over night. Where the pool empties into the next rapid/riffle is called the TAIL of the pool. The Tail of the pool is not so good during day light hours, but go there in the waning hours and stay till dark and you can catch some of the "biguns". The trout that hide and sulk all day are the sharks of the stream. They are some of the trout that have "world record" name plates. If you have the ability to fish at night then you have the ability to catch some really monster trout. The tail has holding areas like we have been talking about but the water becomes shallower and spills into the next rapids area of the stream.

Now you have the information necessary to start the location of catchable fish homes on the stream. I would like to encourage you to; print this article and re-read it until you think you can go to your stream(s) and practice locating these houses with you eyes. You might even want to draw a map of each portion of your stream(s) showing these house locations. If you do this then you will have as much information about the stream as the gillies. The next installment we will learn how to spot individual fish. Then you will have become a good water reader and the only excuses you will have for not catching fish will be your choice of fly or your presentation. But that is for another series. Practice reading water every time you go fishing and remember the time you spend looking for fish is time well spent. If you see them, you can catch them!

May god smile on you in you endeavors.

### CLUB MEETING SCHEDULE

|             |                     |   |
|-------------|---------------------|---|
| Mar 25 2002 | Swap Night          | Bring your gear. Unload those things you don't use (or won't use again). Make a little money too (or at least spend some). Retailers will be invited to attend and sell products too. (Note: only one meeting in March due to the school break bookings at the library) |
| Apr 8 2002  | Special guest tier. | Extension from the Forum.   |
| Apr 22 2002 | Wayne Martin        | Fly fishing the upper Credit and patterns that work (brookies).   |
| May 13 2002 | Don Moore           | Tying leaders and tippets, strength competition.  |
| May 27 2002 | Tying Night - TBA   | TBA   |

### CLUB CONTACTS

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 Meeting Place: Sherwood Public Library, 467 Upper  
 Ottawa Street, just north of the Fennel Ave intersection.  
 Downstairs in the A/B Meeting Rm.

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