



VOLUME 50

January 2015

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JANUARY MEETING

Thursday, JANUARY 15, 2015 @ Farm House

Wet Fly: 6:00PM

Dinner/General Meeting: 7:00PM

Greetings from the President:

By: Bruce Freet, President

May we all have a joyous and healthy 2015 with plenty of fun fly fishing trips. My New Year's resolution for my tenure as club president is to encourage members to go fishing, revive some club traditions that have waned over the years, improve our meetings, and assure that new members get involved with the club. To help us get together and go fly fishing, Carl Hendricks and I have tried to get this ball rolling with the Outings Survey that we handed-out at our November meeting and is available on our website. Please complete it by our January 15th meeting. As for club traditions, I probably have already done more than my share by being nominated (and receiving) the Half-Assed Award at our Christmas Party, which was last awarded in 2006. There were others more deserving, but thanks, Dennis! I will be anxious to pass this prestigious award on to someone else, so please keep me informed of any funny mishaps during the year. Also, in the past our gillie has been more active and we have had a more joking back and forth during the fishing reports, so let's all strive to have more levity. As for our monthly meetings, we are in negotiations now to improve our dinners and re-arrange the room for a ceiling drop-down screen and better flow throughout the room. Last, but not least, have new members serve on committees and make sure that they are supported by their sponsors.

Our executive board is actively working to make your membership enjoyable. Pat O'Hearn will continue as treasurer to keep us on track financially. However, this will be his third and last year, so please contact any of us if you would be interested in becoming our treasurer in 2016. Pat has served as an officer for six of the ten years that he has been a member, and certainly deserves a break. Thanks, Pat! Our Christmas Party raised over \$4,000 net. Jim Paget has a year of interesting programs already scheduled. Ryan Johnson is our new secretary and will record our decisions and keep other club records.

January Presentation:

By: Deene Almvig

The Search for Oncorhynchus Mykiss

Chasing Steelhead

Among the millions of anglers that fish for steelhead, there are a minority but very rabid fishermen who chase Mykiss, more commonly known as steelhead. Steelhead, although a member of the trout family, differ in one major respect; they go to the sea where nutrients are much more plentiful. As a result they are bigger and stronger than trout. After spending one or more winters at sea, they return to their river of origin as mature adults weighing from four to thirty-five or more pounds. This is the fish those who chase steelhead look for. It is a strong fish and often jumps several feet above the surface of the water and it can sometimes run fifty to even a hundred yards into one's backing line. And that is just one of the reasons anglers chase steelhead.

Steelhead are most likely to be found in three to six feet of water. Thus, they are ideal for the fly angler. They like to hang around boulders, current seams, and are often found in pool tailouts. These river characteristics are usually easily covered by the fly angler either with a sink tip or floating line. If the angler is wading in water above his knees, it's even possible a steelhead might take the fly on the dangle. Whenever the fish takes, there's usually no doubt about it. Most takes occur as the fish mouths the fly and turns for deeper water. It is this adrenaline-initiated jolt as the rod bends to the fish and sends electric impulses up the arm and into the brain of a steelhead fly angler that puts him on the river.

Suffice it to say, angling for steelhead with a fly and fly rod is not a sure thing. Steelhead are not known as the fish of a thousand casts for no reason. A number of factors can cause them to ignore perfectly executed presentations. Water temperature, turbidity, barometric pressure, lack of cloud cover are just a few of the factors affecting their willingness to attack a fly.

They are traveling fish and are not always where they were yesterday unless close to or at their spawning location. But when an angler finds them and is able to solve the problem of inducing a solid take, the money, time, and energy spent are more than worth it!

Unfortunately, the populations of steelhead are plummeting in many regions and it is now necessary to travel much farther to enhance the odds of hooking a steelhead. However, the implementation of catch-and-release fishing, increased public awareness and habitat improvement appear to be suggesting the plunge may be turning around in the Skagit River and other regions. Let's hope the work done by fisheries enhancement groups and other conservation organizations, state fisheries departments, the tribes and the federal government can start a period of recovery. Mykiss is well worth it!

Fly of the Month

By: Mike Connolly

Name: *Rambulance Tube Fly*

The Rambulance Tube Fly was created by Bruce Berry. Bruce Berry started tying flies when he was thirteen, and tied commercially through High School and College for Pacific Fly Works, Kaufmann's and The Fly Fisher's Place. He followed in the footsteps of every other die-hard fisherman: at twelve, wrecking lines in the street after school, at thirteen he wanted to catch a fish, which turned into wanting to catch a bigger fish, a fish in the Wind River range, a fish in the salt, a fish on a swung fly, a fish on a skater and so on! Now he spends most of his time on the water either stalking trout or swinging steelhead flies. Between trips he ties flies and talks to friends and family about the fish he catches. He likes Montana Fly Company's style and is happy to be their company representative. His love of Spey casting has also led him to rep for one of the fastest growing, and up and coming Spey and Switch rod companies: Beulah.

This is a great winter steelhead fly. It casts easily when paired with a Skagit line and sink tip. The 3-3 ½ inch profile is perfect for most fishing situations. And as an added benefit like all tube flies, the hook can be swapped out easily without replacing the fly.

Recipe:

Hook: None

Tube: Pro Micro Tube with or without drop weight 4 or 6 mm

Thread: 6/0 color of choice

Dubbing: Orange steelhead dubbing of choice

Tail: Pheasant Tippets

Rear Wing: Craft Fur or Finn Raccoon

Rib Wire: Small silver*

Body: Pearl Medium Tinsel/Pearl Saltwater

Flashabou*

Hackle: Schlappen or Saddle Hackle*

***May substitute Tinsel, Rib wire and Hackle with Polar Chenille for faster tie.**

Front Wing: Craft Fur or Finn Raccoon

Collar 1st: Marabou in color of choice

Collar 2nd: Schlappen in color of choice



Important Items!

Help Wanted

We desperately need a greeter, two sales people, and a gillie at each meeting. The greeter meets guests, has them sign our guest book, assures that they have a name tag, explains our meeting events, and introduces them to members that have similar interests. The two sales people sell the buffet dinner plates, make sure that a long line doesn't form, and account for and transfer monies to our server (number of plates sold vs. total funds). Lastly, we need an active gillie to collect fines for not wearing the club name tag, not introducing themselves first when speaking at the meeting, and other fly fishing etiquette infractions. Please

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contact **Bruce Freet** if you would like to perform any of these jobs during the year ... we really do need your help!

Buffet Dinner

This past month Brian Faber and Bruce Freet met with the owner and manager of the Farmhouse restaurant about improving the buffet menu, having a set price that is easy to make change, have two servers during our social hour, remove dirty dishes before our program, a new drop-down screen, different seating arrangement, and several housekeeping issues. They were amenable to everything; however, they had some issues for us to resolve. They would like us to quit ordering off of the menu because it places a larger workload on the server, takes more time to prepare and serve, and doesn't cover costs. The club's original agreement with the restaurant was for the price of our meals to cover the food, tips, taxes, and rent of the meeting room. When we order off of the menu, the rent is not included and it is impossible for them to plan quantities of food for the buffet. We will also try to find a method for giving them better estimates of number of people attending each meeting. This is a work in progress, so stay tuned.

Board Meeting Time Change

The executive board decided to meet from **5:00 to 6:00 pm** instead of starting at 6:00 pm. We will continue to meet on the first Thursday of the month at the Farmhouse.

Pass Lake Fly Fishing History - V:

By: Danny Beatty

From 1940 to 1976 fishing regulations for Pass Lake had gone through many changes. There was also a movement advocating catch and release (C&R) which fit in with the quality water designation. One of the stories I would hear about C&R came out of Yellowstone Park in the 1970s. Rangers had noticed the trash cans around Fishing Bridge contained many dead trout. People would catch fish and as they left the area, would drop the fish in the cans. I asked Yellowstone Park historian Paul Schullery about this story. Paul sent me a more detailed account.

“The question about Yellowstone fisheries management requires a longer answer. The story you describe, of “the Yellowstone Park Ranger” finding dead fish and the park consequently deciding to change the fishing regulations, is a highly simplistic, almost folkloric, version of what happened. You know how these stories change as they move from person to person—after a while they become wishfully idealized versions of what actually happened.” (I'm placing Paul's complete answer at the end of this essay.)

The Federation of Fly Fishers (Federation) was one of the early organizations that promoted C&R. Lee Wulff stated that a good fish is too valuable to be caught only once. The Southwest Council of the Federation made a patch which stated “Limit your Kill Don't Kill Your Limit”. I have a hat pin that states “Release Them Alive”. Along with the idea of C&R was educating fishers on the proper release of the fish. All of these ideas were discussed by Fidalgo Fly Fishermen club members at meetings and with the local Washington State Game Department fish biologists.

One of the Game Department projects that the club members were involved with during this time was collecting and tagging Searun Cutthroat. Biologists were documenting Searun Cutthroat to establish their movements in and out of the rivers and their spawning cycles. Fly fishers were asked to catch the fish because the use of a fly resulted in a released fish having a greater chance of survival. The overall project resulted in the Searun regulations that continue to this time.

At the October 20, 1977 Fidalgo Fly Fishermen's club meeting, Lee Abramson made a motion that the club submit a resolution to the Game Department for barbless hooks on Pass Lake. The motion was seconded,

passed and carried. The resolution was submitted to the Game Department but at this time I do not have information as to when the C&R regulation was adopted for Pass Lake.

Robin LaRue was club president during 1977. The club's newsletter and minutes for that year show that he had meetings with the Washington State Game Department fish biologist Tom Williams. They also tell about Tom Williams and Jim Aggergaard attending some of the meetings. Club members volunteered for other game fish related projects (see above) which continued the association with the department staff.

Fidalgo Fly Fishermen members did the Pass Lake clean up and creel census in 1977. The average length of the fish on April 17th opening day was 13.3 inches. The largest cutthroat was 15.8 inches and the largest rainbow was 20 inches. Bob Whitney, census chairman, reported "That people from all around the state are for the Quality Water Regulation".

With the regulation change to Quality Water, the regulation for a split season continued.

The club planned an overnight outing at the park for the September 10th second opening with another creel census being taken by club members. Our records do not show the results of that census.

The April 16, 1978 opening day creel census showed some difficult to understand results. Of the 366 fish reported caught, only 21 were kept. The catch rate, 6.1 fish per fisher, was higher than in the past two years but the average fish length was smaller.

In the July 1978 Wahoo (club newsletter) I wrote:

"PASS LAKE - Everywhere we go, people are asking about Pass Lake. 'How was the fishing this year?' They say that they heard this or that but want to know exactly what the Fidalgo club members think is happening. Those (club members) that were in attendance at the May meeting were pleased to hear that Tom Williams, Game Department Biologist, recommended a decrease in the plant at Pass Lake. The creel census taken by the Fidalgo Club as well as conversations with the fishers indicated that most anglers caught lots of fish but most of them were under the twelve inch size limit. Pass Lake as someone put it, was a 'tremendous catch and release fishery this year'. We are pleased that Tom is working to develop Pass Lake into a good quality waters lake."

Finally, at the September 21, 1978 meeting, Tom Williams supplied information that explained why the fish had not grown to the twelve inch and greater size. Secretary Mike Loyd's minutes for that meeting state: "Fall opener @ Pass Lake – Tom Williams says it was over planted (by) 6,000 cutthroat & 10,000 to 12,000 rainbow. He was promptly fined by the Gillie."

By the end of 1978, after four years of the Fidalgo Fly Fishers' involvement with the Pass Lake fishery, much had been accomplished and learned with much more to come in the next years.

Danny Beatty

Below is Paul Schullery's answer to the question about the "Fishing Bridge" situation.

"What really happened is much more involved, as it had to be. Yellowstone National Park fishing regulations have evolved intermittently from the park's earliest days. Here are two vivid examples from the many stages in this process: as early as 1908 park managers resolved not to introduce any new non-native species in the park; and in 1950 the Firehole and Madison became fly-fishing only. The changing of fishing regulations tended to happen piece by piece, and was usually a response to various forces, including general public attitudes, special-interest pressure (i.e., anglers wanting a different experience than in the past), and the ongoing scientific study of aquatic ecosystems that led to improved understanding of how the rivers and lakes actually worked ecologically. I will include some references that describe the history of fisheries management in Yellowstone National Park.

So here's the really short version of the history. During the whole period between 1872 and 1960, regulations slowly changed. Of course, creel limits had been reduced repeatedly, but by 1960 it was known that the sport fishing harvest was still too heavy for the fish populations in many waters to sustain themselves (this was especially the case in Yellowstone Lake, it being the premier park fishery of greatest interest to the most visitors).

In the case of the fishing regulations for Fishing Bridge/Yellowstone Lake/Yellowstone River, by the 1960s the National Park Service was already encouraging what at the time was known as “fishing for fun,” which meant that they tried to convince anglers to voluntarily release most or all of the fish they caught. Some

people did, but of course many people (who came from parts of the country where they'd never heard of such a thing) still killed a lot of fish. It was in this period, during the 1960s, that park staff reported that many people who caught trout in Yellowstone Lake brought them back to the campgrounds but, for a variety of reasons, didn't bother to keep or eat them; they just threw them away. The fish were found, in great numbers, in campground garbage cans. It was a huge waste.”

Presentation - Seth Norman:

By: Danny Beatty, Paul Piper – Special Collections Librarian



Of interest to Fidalgo Members and Friends - Wilson Library is located on the Western Washington University Campus in Bellingham - Danny

It is my honor and privilege to announce the fourth speaker of our Heritage Resources Speaker Series, and one of particular interest to us, Seth Norman. Seth is an accomplished angler and writer, who has written for such esteemed publications as *Gray's Sporting Journal* and *Fly Rod and Reel*. He will be speaking about the art and craft of writing about angling, and fly fishing specifically.

Seth will present at 4:00 on Tuesday, February 3, 2015 in the Special Collections Research Room, 6th floor of Wilson Library. We are all looking forward to this exciting event, and especially looking forward to you all joining us. Mark your calendars, and we hope to see you there.

Up Coming Events:

- Spey Casting with Scott Willison of the Confluence Fly Shop and Erik Johnson the representative for Sage and Redington on Saturday, February 7th from 10am to 1pm at Young's Bar across the Skagit River from Mount Vernon. You can try new equipment and get instruction on how to improve your casting, whether two-handed or one. There will be several casting instructors. Some students from the fly fishing class will join this event after their class on accessories by Russ Asbury and Don McKeehen.
- Salmon Habitat Tour and Spey Casting with Dick Raisler in February (date TBD) Dick will take us on a tour of recently restored smolt rearing habitat near Howard Miller Steelhead Park in Rockport followed by some spey casting.
- Lynnwood Fly Fishing Show, Saturday and Sunday, February 14th and 15th.
- February Program by Phil Rowley
- 2015 International Fly Fishing Fair Bend OR @ The Riverhouse Hotel & Convention Center, Aug. 11-15th

Note: Please check the Outings and Event page on the web site, things get added from time to time.

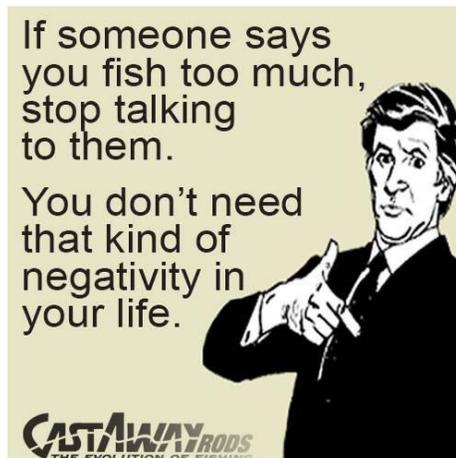
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Return Your Outing Survey:

By: Bruce Freet

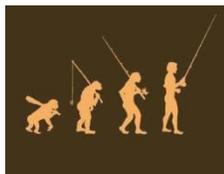
Please return your completed Outings Survey form on or before our meeting on January 15th to Carl Hendricks. There are 23 suggested outings to select from over 11 months in 2015. If you don't like these choices, you can offer your suggestion(s) on the form, and see who might like to join you. Begin planning a fly fishing trip or trips with club members now. The more popular places and dates will require reservations soon. Carl will collate our survey information and produce lists of members interested in particular trips. Then, they can meet as a group; determine a coordinator, and set specific dates, places, etc. Go fly fishing to beautiful places with people you enjoy and catch fish!

The Outings Survey form can be printed from the Bulletin Board section of our website: www.fidalgoflyfishers.com .



Fly Fishing Course:

By: Bruce Freet



Our fly fishing course at Skagit Valley College began on January 7th and will continue through March 18th, 2015. The course filled with 16 students again and a waiting list of others wishing to take it. In fact, there were so many on the waiting list that the Registrar asked if we could teach two courses this quarter. We have 20 club members providing over 35 hours of instruction on selecting rods, reels, and lines; casting; tying knots and using leaders and tippet; fly tying; flies imitating trout foods; fishing lakes and streams; accessory equipment; etc. There is a wide range of ages this year from a 12 year old boy and his father to a 70+ year old. We have two ladies as well. Their skill levels appear to be more wide ranging than ever before from true novices to ten students seeking to expand or refine their skills and already have their fly rod outfits with either waders or small boats.

Web Site – Bulletin Board:

As many of you know we have a Bulletin Board on the web site. Please take a look at it from time to time. Some articles that are too large to post in the Wahoo will be added to the bulletin board. These articles could be on events around the State or Country and publication that are sent to the club.

Photo of the Month:

Photo By: Russ Asbury

Fisherman: Dan Ballard, Dan Farmer, Carl Hendricks



Four Fidalgo Fly Fishers getting ready to float the Skagit River for the day.

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