



May 2022 President's Message

Welcome to summer weather in May.

It should be a warm day for the annual Chapter potluck picnic, which is scheduled for Saturday, May 28. We will be meeting at noon at the Fox Bluff shelter and hope you all can join us. Grills will be set up, so bring whatever you would like to grill and a potluck dish to share with others.

To start the afternoon, we will do some casting practice on the grass. So, bring your rod and line. Or you might want to walk to the ponds to search for the Brookies which are hiding in the middle one.

On May 9 about 150 fingerlings were released into the ponds by students from the Dundee Middle School. They were surprised and delighted to see one of the resident Brook Trout who swam over to either see what was happening or was looking for lunch. The kids had a wonderful time and a picnic afterward. These same students were given fly casting instructions at the school on Monday the 2nd and then fished at the ponds of McGraw Wildlife Center on the 12th and the 18th. After the covid shut-down, our So-Fly program is back again. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped and especially to Bob Meschewshi who was instrumental in coordinating the program and Beth Harner, the teacher at the middle school.

Not everything is fun. There is a workday planned for May 25th between 9:00-12:00 at Fox Bluff. Our Chapter will be working with McHenry County Conservation District employees to clear brush which has grown up around the ponds since our last clean-up two years ago. Please bring gloves and be prepared to rake and pile up small invasive brush. These ponds are beautiful and are frequently visited so we want to make them look really nice.

The picnic will be our last meeting till September, but we may have stiles to install over the summer in Wisconsin. An announcement will be sent regarding these workdays.

Hope to see all of you at the picnic. Good fishing!

Jerry

Spring Outings Update

Exchange Outing Part 2, Colorado: The West Denver Chapter has tentatively scheduled the Colorado leg of the exchange for July 14-16 in the area around Frisco, CO. If you are interested, please contact Ralph to be put on the list for information distribution as plans develop further.

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Bob Olach's Fly of the Month

Hare's Ear & Partridge Nymph Variation

Several weeks ago, I tied a dozen of Dave Whitlock's "*Red Fox Squirrel Nymphs*." I really liked the shape / profile of Whitlock's dressing, so I decided to do a few variants of Dave Whitlock's dressing that resemble the profile of the original "*Red Fox Squirrel Nymph*", but use different materials.

As many fly fishers know, John Bethke's "*Pink Squirrel Nymph*" uses a dubbing made up of fox squirrel back fur and a few other materials to add some additional color and sparkle to his "*Pink Squirrel Nymph*."

Quite a few years back, I mixed up a few dubbings that used the Pink Squirrel nymph's "*other materials*", removing the fox squirrel fur --- and then adding light, dark hare's ear, black squirrel or green hare's ear furs to make dubbing mixtures that I used to tie other pink collared bead head nymphs.

After tying the "*Red Fox Squirrel Nymph*", I did a dozen nymphs using these dubbing mixtures and tied a dozen of the nymphs using the light and dark hare's ear or the green hare's ear dubbings to do a few new nymphs to fish when I go to the Driftless waters in late May.

Here's a pic and materials for the Hare's Ear variation:



Hook: - Daiichi #1710, size 12 or 14
Under Body – 5 turns of lead (sub) wire
Thread – Red Danville 6/0
Abdomen – Light Hare’s Ear mixture
Rib – Small Gold Wire
Thorax – Dark Hare’s Ear Mixture
Hackle – Natural gray, brown or dyed golden olive partridge hackle
Tails – a small clump of fur from a Ginger dyed Hare’s Ear Mask



Grumpy's Page by Kurt Haberl

Just when you think you've got trout figured out, they fool you. Just when you think you've got fly fishers figured out, they fool you. I've often wondered why the two species are so much alike. Some similarities are obvious: they both like beautiful places and are rather territorial about the places they favor. Once they start feeding, they'll gorge themselves and pay little attention to anything else. They'll eat just about anything. They love, uh, mating. Their curiosity is insatiable, and sometimes they'll go to great lengths and nearly jump out of their skins to see what's going on. Sometimes they'll seem to be the most social of creatures, joining pods of dozens of their kind, and then snap at each other for no apparent reason. Try to reel one of them

in, and he'll fight like crazy against anything that tethers him. Most surprising of all, well, let me tell you a story to explain the most surprising thing of all about them.

On one of the early three-day outings last year, Schnoz arrived at the campground after the rest of us had set up tents, a dining fly, and stacked enough wood to keep a campfire going through two weeks of chilly nights. Trout fisherman seem to have an innate fear of running out of firewood. I soon saw the reason why Schnoz was late at the campground, when a young man got out of the passenger side of his car. I guessed he was in his mid-twenties, a mere adolescent compared to the rest of us, clean-cut and wearing a blue dress shirt and khakis. All he needed was a tie to pass for an up-and-coming office manager. He had the build and composure of an athlete with alert eyes that seemed to scan everything around him like radar.

"Joe," Schnoz said to me and jerked his thumb at the young man fresh out of prep school. "I lost a bet. I have to teach him how to flyfish. He saw that movie and thinks it's the romantic, manly, American thing to do."

"Didn't you tell him about gnats, wind knots, mud, wild parsnip and snags?" I said.

"Not yet."

"Nice to meet you, Joe," I said. "If you listen carefully to everything Schnoz tells you and then do the opposite, you should be okay."

Joe smiled. At least that sense of humor might help him survive the day.

"You want me to go along and help?" I asked Schnoz.

"I would appreciate it."

"It'll cost you a dozen donuts back home."

"Agreed." Wow, I thought. Schnoz is really desperate. A dozen donuts is our penultimate bet, one step below betting a favorite fly rod. I just wanted to go along out of curiosity, the same way a car sliding down an icy hill into a ditch is worth watching. Then, if you're lucky, the driver gets out and kicks the car as if the slow-motion disaster was the car's fault. I wanted to see if Schnoz would get out of the car as it sat in the ditch and kick it.

We all ate something resembling brats, chips, and bean salad that Roy the Plumber prepared and an excellent apple cobbler Wet Curtis made in a Dutch oven. Curtis is a wonderful cook. Roy is a great plumber. Then we sat around the campfire, fed it too much wood, drank various concoctions that loosened and then slurred our tongues so we could tell stories which resembled ones we had told often before, although at each

telling, things were a little different. Fish were a little larger, the skill of the fly fisher a little more impressive, and the kind of fly the fish took changed from something standard like an elk hair caddis to something exotic like a bead head, flashback rainbow warrior soft hackle with coq de Patee flank feather tails. You get the idea. Through it all, Joe sat silently, nursing a beer and taking everything in, probably wondering what kind of gypsy sub-cult he had gotten himself into. When the first patter of a light rain began, we wandered off to our tents, and most of us managed to find the zippered doors on the first or second try.

In the morning we ate buttery fried slices of some fine Amish cinnamon loaf, eggs and the unidentifiable sausage left over from Roy the Plumber's attempt of the previous night. Then we suited up for the day's adventure. We had learned over the years how to drive in waders and cleated boots because sometimes waiting to gear up on the stream meant we forgot boots left out to dry, wading staffs left in someone's trunk, or struggles to put waders on while sliding on a bumper tilted at a 45 degree angle with two wheels in a ditch.

Joe wore some zipper-legged fishing pants someone had sold him and a red plaid lumberjack's shirt. He also had acquired an expensive felted, wide-brimmed hat to match the ones he saw in that movie. Schnoz had apparently talked him out of buying a vest, rod or reel until after he tried the sport and could decide whether he wanted to stick with it. Instead, Schnoz rigged up Old Gus, a quite serviceable rod he had used for many years. That made me think the bet Schnoz had lost was probably one made at the local fly shop and involved the distance some guide could cast with the newest astronaut-grade graphite priced in the same class as a space shuttle.

We drove out to Sterrit's Run, one of our favorite streams because of its gravel bottom, decent runs both up and downstream, its situation in a meadow with only a few familiar cows, and a predictable scattering of small but eager fish. Schnoz showed Joe how to tie a basic clinch knot on a pheasant tail nymph, and Joe said, "Please show me that again," which told me we were in some serious trouble because no respectable fly fisher knew or used the word "please."

"Look," Schnoz said, "this is the eye of the hook. Think of it as a rabbit hole and this end of your tippet is the rabbit. The rabbit runs out of the hole, then goes around the tree-"

"What tree?" Joe said.

"This tree. The running line is the tree. The rabbit runs around the tree at least six times, but then instead of going back into the hole in the ground, I mean the eye of the hook, he goes into this knot in the tree, see, this little triangle hole the line makes at the base of the tree above the hole in the ground. See?"

Joe looked at me. He did not see. Because of my long-time friendship with Schnoz and the promise of a dozen donuts, I took the fly and line from Schnoz, undid his rabbit running around the tree and its holes, made a loop with the fly dangling at the bottom and then showed Joe my knot-tying tool.

"Joe, you put this tool into the loop, twist it around six times, and then hook the very tip with this spring-loaded gizmo and pull it through the loop. That gives you a clinch knot you can spit on and pull tight."

"Why do you spit on it?"

I thought about telling him about abrasion and finicky tippet material, but instead I said, "For good luck. It's a superstition the guys in the movie had about good luck."

Joe nodded. "Got it," he said. I smiled at him. Schnoz sighed. He screwed on a strike indicator and showed Joe how to make a basic cast, making sure to confuse him by explaining line weight, loading the rod, tight loops, various clock positions, drag-free drifts, back casts, and line control. He made a decent forward cast, pulled line in, and handed the rod to Joe.

"Your turn," Schnoz said.

In his first attempt, Joe snagged the expensive hat he wore on his back cast, yanked it into the water behind him, and then cast it like a wounded duck that landed at our feet. It immediately sank to the bottom. I retrieved the hat with my landing net.

"No problem," I said. "Everybody does it the first time. It's called 'christening the hat.' I heard it was originally in the movie but they cut it out."

Joe wrung most of the water out of his hat, then put it back on. As water dripped down his face and neck, Schnoz and I looked at each other and then put on our sun glasses. Joe watched us and pulled some fancy wrap-around sports glasses out of his lumberjack shirt. The glasses probably cost more than Old Gus but they would protect Joe's eyes well enough.

"Let me show you something," I said, taking the rod from Joe. "It doesn't matter how you get enough bend in the rod to make it work." I let out about twenty feet of line and waited for it to straighten downstream. "Let the stream load the rod." I flicked the rod a little to the side and the strike indicator and fly flopped upstream well enough to be called a cast. Then I gathered line until the indicator went past us and I could let out line until it dragged straight behind us. I handed the rod to Joe, who made a reasonable cast that left his hat and glasses on his head. We were all proud of ourselves, and I thought I deserved the dozen donuts Schnoz promised. Joe managed to gather most of the line and then let it out behind us until it was straight.

Then it happened. As the fly slipped downstream and then rose at the end of its drift, a fish struck and hooked itself.

"Fish!" Schnoz called.

"What?" Joe said.

"Fish. You have a fish!"

Joe turned downstream and saw the swirl and splash of a very determined fish.

"What do I do now?" Joe said in panic.

"Reel him in," Schnoz said. "Slowly. If he makes a run, let him pull line off the reel. The drag will slow him."

Joe reeled so slowly I thought lunch time would arrive before the fish, but eventually he got the fish close enough for me to net. It was a creek chub, maybe six inches long.

"My first trout!" Joe said excitedly.

Schnoz looked at me. "A little bit pale for a brown trout," Schnoz lied, "but that's okay. You're supposed to take your first fish off the hook, kiss it and let it go."

"Kiss it?" Joe said.

"Well, pretend to," I said. "Kiss it the way you kiss Aunt Tillie. It's in the movie."

Eventually we moved upstream, and I saw that three of us sloshing through their living room sent every trout racing into their bathroom and closing the door. The chub was the only fish we caught that morning. A few hours later we headed back to camp. Joe talked nonstop the whole way, his babble ranging from hook-setting to playing a fish, repeatedly asking the name of the fly that caught his fish, then how hard the fish fought him, and the patience he exercised to bring it to net. I thought about donuts, and Schnoz probably thought about never, ever again making a bet in a fly shop.

Back at camp, Joe proudly took his place at the table, was totally unembarrassed when Wet Curtis asked, "What happened to your hat?" Joe answered, "I christened it," and then launched into a moment-by-moment account of how he had learned to drift a fly downstream, how his first trout took a rising fly, how expertly he played that twelve-inch brown trout in an epic battle that tested his stamina, how maybe the trout was fourteen or sixteen inches long and then looked to Schnoz and me for confirmation.

"Sixteen inches," Schnoz said. "That brown was definitely sixteen inches long."

Ghost Mary had heard this often before and did the eye roll women had perfected.

Schnoz shrugged at me, knowing full well we had turned an ordinary human being into a monster or worse, a fly fisher. Neither of us was sorry.

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