

Crossroads Anglers

FLYFISHING CLUB SINCE 1994

Meeting Date: Thursday, December 27, 2012 • 5:30 - 9:30 p.m.

From the President

December – Hard to believe a year has gone by and 2013 is shortly upon us. With winter now here, most of us are looking to stock up on new flies for next summer. I hope that everyone who attends our meetings learns a new fly from a fellow tyer. If you have a new fly teach a member how to tie it.

This month we are having a guided trip with Dave Porreca on the Wood River in Rhode Island. I urge all members and their friends to buy tickets. The money raised on this, and similar events, helps the Club.



We are planning on hosting some great speakers in 2013! I hope that everyone comes to the meetings and leaves with a little more knowledge of fly fishing.

The past few weeks have been kind weatherwise however as I write this I am hearing that there may be snow in the forecast. Hopefully, you have been out wetting a line for, possibly, one of the last times this year. Some of you may be planning a trip to a warmer climate. If you do, please send pictures to Steve so he can post them on our web site.

I am still hearing that many members are not using the Club web site. I encourage you to go online. If you are a bit leary, ask Steve, I know he will be glad to show you how to negotiate the site.

I hope that everyone will be able to attend our December meeting. We are planning on having a **free pizza dinner!** Invite a friend...maybe we can persuade them to join!



Lastly, I want to wish everyone a Happy Chanukah, Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year. See you on December 27th. Note that we are meeting on Thursday this month, not Tuesday as that is Christmas Day.

Joel

November Raffle Winners Report...

Terrific Trip with Corey@PNP!

Corey put us on top of the Stripers right against the shore and after some coaching on the retrieve action we had an incredible stretch of top water hits on every cast!

Corey definitely has a sixth sense for where the fish are! It was tough to see them even after he pointed them out.

We chased the False Albies in the afternoon and got into several schools. Corey got one on for Jim (thanks!) and what a fight it was! First time and we are hooked. A great day that went too fast, hope to get back out next year.

—Jim Carrick & Doug Queen



Free Pizza at Our December Meeting!



THE SPARROW

by Phelps T. Laszio



Jack Gartside

The summer was drawing to a close in the big sky country of Montana; soon I would be leaving the legendary trout waters to resume my teaching activities at Northern Essex Community College.

The six-week fishing safari had met all expectations, yet I was reluctant to say good-bye to this beautiful land. There was a bite in the night air that made fingers clumsy; it was only after the second attempt that the strange looking fly was securely fastened to the 4x tippet.

It was some time during that last week in Montana that I met Jack Gartside, a Massachusetts teacher left unemployed when the Commonwealth's austerity program forced reductions in many departments. Jack's layoff is a definite loss to the Massachusetts school system but rewarding to any fly fisherman who is fortunate enough to meet him, for Jack Gartside is the creator of the Sparrow.

In the darkness a Sparrow flew as false cast whispered in the night air. Once...twice and then somewhere on the limpid water of the beaver pond the Sparrow came to roost. Strip, pause...strip, pause...an angry surge in the blackness, the slap on the line against the rod as the slack disappeared, and then the reel began its protest. The fish was momentarily confused and shook its head then surged across the pond. Too soon my rod developed that heavy, sluggish feel informing me that my opponent had gained freedom in the weeded across the channel. Jack's Sparrow had gone with the trout.

My first inkling of Jack's creative genius came shortly after I arrived at his Baker's Hole campsite. There I spied a bedraggled van with a huge elk head secured to the roof. As we prepared our evening meal, his cat, Merlin, stalked chipmunks nearby. The animal was a perfect shade of natural dun, and I should have gained some insight into my companion's shrewdness, for the animal's coat was distinctly patchy. Our meal was interrupted by a lady who stopped her car to inspect the huge rack of antlers that projected from the plastic enclosing Jack trophy. When questioned by our visitor Jack smoothly remarked that the rest of the animal was inside the van and that he was "eating his way up to the head."

Sometime during the evening the conversation turned to large trout, and I mentioned that I had yet to break the twenty-inch mark. "If you want big trout, give them the bird," mumbled Jack. "What?" was my incredulous reply. Jack was already on his feet and moving toward his fishing vest. In a moment he returned carrying a fly box. After some fumbling Jack selected a fly and handed it to me.

Although vaguely reminiscent of a Carey's Special, I had never seen the pattern before, yet to anyone who had ever held a flyrod it was apparent that the fly would be effective. Dressed in soft browns and grays its elongated body could suggest a sculpin, grasshopper, stonefly nymph, or even the emerging stage of the large caddis that had been appearing at dark. Most important the fly was a "breather" tied with materials that would flutter and respond to the slightest movement of rod or current. ♣

Jack's dressing for the Sparrow is as follows:

Thread: Black monocord

Hook: # 4, # 6, or #8 Mustad [9671] unweighted or weighted at the thorax with fuse wire.

Tail: Short tuft of medium gray pheasant down.

Body: (light) fox, (medium) muskrat, (dark) mink. Dub fur loosely leaving guard hairs. Body should extend 2/3 the length of the hook.

Hackle: Rump feather from a cock pheasant, preferably those with a slight greenish tinge. Hackle tips should extend slightly beyond the bend of the hook. Wrap gently to avoid breaking the feather.

Collar: A medium grey pheasant down feather or filoplume. These are found beneath the contour feathers and are long shanked. The collar should be tied in front of the hackle.

Although the hook sizes given are for fresh water, there is no doubt in my mind that the pattern would be effective in salt water as well. It would be a close imitation of the epitome stage of the spewing sandworm, a food item avidly sought by stripers when they are in abundance.

Jack fishes the Sparrow in the manner of a nymph pitching the weighted version upstream and dead drifting through the cast until the fly swings in the current at the end of the presentation. I have had my best success using the slow strip retrieve described earlier.

At night the unweighted version of the Sparrow fished in the manner will incite a murderous attack from any large trout that spies it. I can truly attest to this, for two casts after my tussle with that fish, the second Sparrow was seized by a large brown that measured just under twenty-two inches. Unfortunately, this second fly was also lost that night on another

heavy fish. The following evening, after having fashioned a "flock" of Sparrows under the watchful eye of Jack Gartside, the two of us returned to the beaver dam to do battle with its denizens. There we bought nine trout to the net measuring each before its release. The smallest was a fourteen inch youngster, and two of the others exceeded twenty inches.

Since my return I have tried the Sparrow on Maine's Penobscot River where it took salmon as well as any fly I have used. I have found it effective on New Hampshire Androscoggin River as well.

As I write these words a letter from Jack Gartside lies opened on the table. In it he mentions that he has renamed his creation, "The Filo" after the pheasant filoplumes that give the fly its irresistible breathing action. To me it will always be the Sparrow and there will always be a number of them perched in my flybook. ■



Guided Trip this Month on the
Wood River in Rhode Island with...

Dave Porreca

Founder and Owner of River & Riptide Anglers

*From out of our past comes an article
to good to print only once and forget.*

The Proper "Blue Quill Gordon"

by Austin S. Hogan

In the early years of this pattern making, Theodore Gordon, had the greatest affect for quill bodies. His experiments led to the use of a slice of brilliant yellow from the wing of the flicker, the stripped herl of the ostrich and peacock or another material suitable to his color sense. Of his many original concepts, the Blue Quill is one of the most difficult to tie if there is an appreciation of the many factors that go into its design, primarily the right shade of the body color.

The andalusian hackle in the natural seems more a matter of history that actuality, though a dyed neck, wood duck and gold wire are easily obtained. The Quill Gordon is a light and delicate fly, a masterpiece of design because inherently it is environmentally true. The proof comes from its long years of acceptance, and this in spite of modifications and changes to suit the expediency of the fly tying moment. When there is a reasonable approximation to the original color of the quill and hackle the result is extremely effective.

This is particularly trues among fly tiers who learn their skills on the stream and become conditioned to the use of certain color patterns and combinations.

Gordon came from Pennsylvania, and in the years when he was worm fishing and fly fishing as a beginner, gray hackled flies were extremely popular (he published a delightful account of presenting a creel full of trout to his girl friend at boarding school). Pat Warden, a local professional, apparently highlighted the special appetite of the Pennsylvania trout for gray when he described the Ashy as an old Alleghany favorite in a contribution to the American Angler. Prior to this, "little gray flies" were described by even older Pennsylvania anglers and so it would seem, in his impressionable youth, Gordon had become familiar with the way of the gray hackle, although it was hardly mentioned by writers from other Northeastern states.



Theodore Gordon

Gordon could hardly have missed the Ashy, either as an omnivorous reader or at the waterside, it was so popular. Warden wrote the first pattern of the Ashy was given to him in 1864 by a skillful fly fisherman of thirty-five years experience. He commented further; "I am acquainted with an excellent fly fisher who is always provided with well stocked brook and he cannot be persuaded to choose a cast of flies without having a Ashy for a stretcher or dropper. I have the first old pattern given me, carefully put away among my collection of standard patterns, which has taken me many years to collect, to carefully study correct dressings. The Ashy is made as follows:

The color of the hackle is blue dun and is extremely difficult to procure of the proper shade. It resembles the color of many of the insects on the water during the fishing season. The color of the body varies – dull orange mohair or lemon are favorite colors. It is also made with peacock herl body wrapped with goldtwist and also greenish yellow and sometimes a red one. It is mostly dressed palmer and is also varied with a light dun wing and hackle tied in at the shoulder. Sometimes it is dressed by tying the hackle by the root at the end of the shank, and rolled over the body finishing off at the tail, and instead of clipping off, the hackle should remain as a tail."

Remember the above was written in 1881, so it seems we can make a reasonable assumption that Gordon had reached far back in time when he selected the hackle for one of his experiments. The wood duck wing was also one of this favorites, but the selection of the stripped quill for the body was truly creative and most typically Gordon.

Dr. George Parker Holden, in his Streamcraft, notes the blue as "A quill body wound with gold wire, the effect being a bluish body with a fine brown ribbing; the wings are of wood duck and the hackle and tail, blue gray." An accompanying illustration ◀

The Proper "Blue Quill Gordon" continued

of the fly tied by H.B. Christian, Gordon's friend, has a high wing and a spare tail.

This important bluish cast is rare among the natural aquatic insects, but I have seen something approaching the color on a mayfly emerging from upstate New York streams [Baetis?]. And by good luck now lost in the needles of a Kenyetto pine. For the fly maker with a critical eye, peacock herl with the true bluish cast is even more of a rarity, and when found lies deep in the eye of the tail feather and after stripping, the color can be seen only along the edge. Tied in, it must be carefully wound so the edging is uppermost. Tucked somewhere in my memory is a note that the English peacock flourished a blue far more brilliant than any other, but Gordon never identified the source of his herls.

The Blue Quill is first mentioned through one of Gordon's magazine articles of 1906. Why he chose quills is explained in an earlier article when he suggested the dry fly fisherman "carry a little bottle of kerosene or a tin pill box of vaseline and just touch the

legs and wing of the fly, if you wish to save yourself the labor of drying it. This dodge, however, will ruin the bodies of many flies. I tie floaters with quill bodies, usually, and have discovered a quill from which I expect great things." Possibly this discovery was the blue hidden in the peacock tail, and the origin of his most enduring pattern; the "great things" were far greater than he would ever realize.

Gordon demonstrated that precise imitation need not always be a goal and that a synthesis of stream experience and traditional ways of tying accompanied by a touch of innovation can produce an efficient and beautiful fly. Sometimes it takes a bit of genius to even copy the pattern of a genius, and perhaps that is the reason one hardly ever sees a proper "Blue Quill Gordon." ■

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~ December 2012 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4 Board Meeting first Tuesday!	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25 Christmas Day	26	27 Regular Meeting at Foxboro Community Center 6:30-9pm	28 	29
30	31	Notes:				

~ January 2013 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Board Meeting first Tuesday! I doubt it	2	3 Board Meeting first Tuesday Meeting moved to here???	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18 Marlborough Show Click for info	19 Marlborough Show Click for info
20 Marlborough Show Click for info	21	22 Regular Meeting at Foxboro Community Center 6:30-9pm	23	24	25	26 
27	28	29	30	31	Notes:	