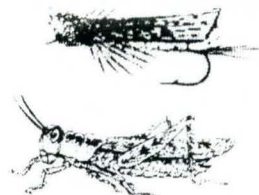


KELLY'S CORNER

Fishing on the Fly. . .

by Jan Kelly



top: hand tied grasshopper fly
bottom: the real thing

Winter reading is one of the luxuries of Cape living. Long winter nights of great dinners and great books. The book that impressed me most this past winter is, *The Compleat Brown Trout* by Cecil E. Heacox, past Deputy Commissioner of the New York State Conservation Department. It is the history of the "Salmo Trutta," the brown trout, told from the point of view of a biologist who is an avid fly fisherman.

The brown trout is considered the most challenging fresh water fish to catch and the most delightful to the eye. The *Salmo Trutta* is an Ice Age fish which began migrations 70 million years ago and is found in every continent but Antarctica. Because of its adaptability and domination, it established itself in inland lakes, streams and ponds, the fjords of Norway and the warming post-glacial seas. Some traveled back to the Arctic with the retreating glacier. Others continued to the chalk streams and lochs of the British Isles, some across western Europe through Russia and Asia to the western edge of the Himalayas. From Europe the brown trout swam across the Mediterranean to North Africa, Morocco and Algeria.

The territory of the brown trout was spread further by colonization and deliberate planting. The Brits, who are avid fly fishermen, have taken brown trout eggs to India, Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand and South Africa. Kenya, the big game country, also became the big fish country. Today, there are brown trout safaris to the Kenyan Highlands and even Madagascar.

German brown trout stock was introduced to the U.S. by Fred Mather and Baron von Behr who gave his name to the German brown trout strain. von Behr sent the eggs to Mather and they were raised in hatcheries in Long Island and Michigan. In 1884 we accepted eggs from the Loch Leven silvery Scottish strain and those two have bred to one coloration. In 1892 we sent the brown trout to Japan.

The record for a brown trout caught by any method (which was held for many years) was a 40 pounder caught in Tasmania. That was finally topped by a 56 pounder caught in Yugoslavia. The record for catching a brown trout by angling is 39 pounds, 8 ounces, and was set at Loch Ave, Scotland. That was in 1866 and the excitement was felt world wide.

In North America, we have brown trout in 42 US states and Puerto Rico as well as Canada. They prevail over Rainbow and Brook trout because they love cold water. They're the bounty of ice fishing and are prized in streams and ponds that are sluiced to the sea. Both wild and hatchery fish are present.

The wild trout are sea trout whose flesh is orangey or golden. Like a salmon, they are beautiful and tasty. The fanatics love these fish. They "read" streams, tie flies, have several rods, many "catch & release," that is, they keep no trout. They use barbless hooks—barbed hooks are for bait, a fly is gentler.

The sea trout is a beautiful fish with gold sheen and red specks. They have more sensitive tropisms to light, chemicals, touch and temperature. If a stream or pond has trout it is an indication of clean water and a healthy environment. Once situated, a trout may keep his "lie" or home for years. Fishermen know this and return year after year to catch "the big one."

In the northern hemisphere, trout court in the Fall, in Australia and "down under" in the Spring and year round on the equator where there are no seasons. Months before mating, the female inspects silt free and well aerated areas. She is ready to build the nest. The male stays close by while the female digs a nest six inches deep and twelve inches wide, sweeping out silt with her fins while situated on her side. The male does not help, but they cuddle a few times. Mating takes about an hour. With bodies arched and quivering, eggs and milt are released, the female covers all with a well-aerated hummock and the eggs are on their own until 5 months later when they hatch. The average life span will be three years and a few will live to four and five years. You can tell the age of a trout

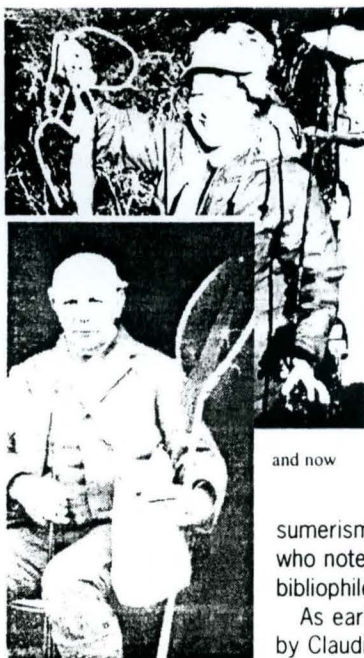
by the annular rings on their scales.

The brown trout has managed to catch our imagination. We catch only their bodies—the objective reality, as Plato has taught us. It is the brown trout that catches the pure absolute. The trout extends its presence through our imaginations; through ichthyologists who have accumulated volumes of treatises; through the ecologist who uses the trout as the clean water test; through artists who have sketched and painted the theme on canvas, pottery, furniture and glass; through Franz Schubert who wrote the masterpiece of chamber music, "Die Forelle," which translates as "The Trout;" through Auguste Escoffier who prepared the first "Truite en Bleu" (as trout are served in Europe—I remember my delight at being served a cooked trout "leaping" from the plate, it's body curled and simulating the leap); through businessmen for the consumerism of tackle; through the geologist and geographer who note their glacial migrations; through the historian and bibliophile for thousands of volumes of prose and poetry.

As early as the third century we have an account written by Claudius Aelianus of fly fishing on the River Astraeus in Macedonia. Not until 1496 do we have a study in English. It was written by Juliana Berners of the Nunnery at Sopwell, the

Abbey of St. Albans. Because she wrote of both history and skill, Juliana Berners influenced all future writings on the brown trout with her *Treatyse of Flysshynge Wyth and Angle*. In 1653 Izaak Walton wrote *The Compleat Angler* but he was more historical in his approach. Charles Cotton wrote part two, *Flies & Skills*. The original was sized to fit in the pocket of your fishing jacket and has been through 400 editions. Thousands of books have since been written and printed, expanding on Juliana Berners' original knowledge.

I have fished since the age of seven, in fresh and salt water -



Fly fishing then...

and now

Provincetown ponds, the Pamet, kettle ponds up Cape, Herring Cove, Hatch's Harbor, the bay and the outer beach as well as carrying a telescopic rod around the world - all spinning. My desire to fly fish grew every year. This winter after reading *The Compleat Brown Trout* by Cecil E. Heacox, my desire became urgent. The arrival of an L.L. Bean Outdoor Discovery Schools Catalogue, put years of interest into place. The years of poring over catalogs and reading fanatical reports as well as whimsical accounts of catching trophy fish in a soundless, low-tech method would change to experience. Be warned, as I have always been; fly fishing can be, and usually is, addictive.

L.L. Bean was more than helpful, as always. A pleasant phone call had all the information was here in two days. A complete listing of hotel accommodations was sent, listing a worthwhile discount if you are enrolled in one of the Discovery Schools. All the accommodations are worthy, but it was a good opportunity to stay at the posh Harraseeket Inn. The rooms and surroundings are comfortable and pleasant. A banquet-like breakfast and high tea are included. But...onto the sport.

The fly fishing school has several categories or choices: an introductory fly casting lesson on Wednesday evenings; an introductory workshop of one day; a workshop of three days; a parent-child two day workshop or a women's introductory or two day workshop. They also offer a saltwater fly fishing school, an intermediate school and private guide fly fishing. People then choose which is best for their schedule.

The one day school is new and was created by popular demand. The day runs from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm. Twenty-one eager adult students and six instructors gathered in the living room of the Fogg House for mutual introductions. The Fogg House is a turn of the century farm house on 400 acres with two ponds and two casting ponds, 60 feet by 12 feet, which is owned by L.L. Bean. There were seventeen men and four women in our group. Some had never fished before. Two banker buddies talked each other into joining. A man who had observed fly fishing in Mayo, Ireland and was thus fascinated, was given the gift certificate by his daughter, a nurse. Maureen, a woman in our group, said her father was an avid fisherman, but was unable to fish any longer, so she came to class to be able to teach her children in his stead.

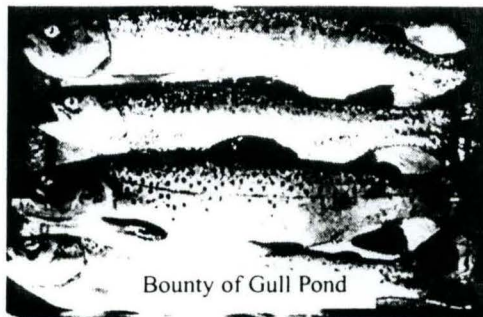
A tile contractor from Chelsea who could not convince us that he was not Sylvester Stallone by face and voice, came with a computer buddy to complete their dream. A golfer wife of a fly fisherman was there because her husband was about to retire and she thought she'd better get the skill down right to avoid comments from her critical husband. Four were retired and would be adding one more skill and activity to their interesting lives. About six had received the course gift certificates from family. They all loved the idea that someone else was helping with their interest.

After introductions we were split in two groups and went out on the lawn, fields actually, to learn and practice the four part cast. The rod rack was on the side of the house and we were encouraged to take a rod whenever we had some free moments or after class. Lunch was the only "free" time. Concentration was severe as the instructors passed among us, guiding our wrists, lines and force. "If we don't make something clear, pick us up on it." "Practice:" they said, "the more you practice, the better you will be."

At about 10:00 am we went back to Fogg House for gear build-

ing and fitting gear. The instructor loved fishing Yellowstone Park and while waiting for all to assemble, told us of a glorious morning when the snowflakes were floating up and the sun was slanting through. Beauty and memory are part of fishing. Outdoor scenes that last only moments of your life are always part of your memory.

We moved then to aquatic insects. Glenn, our youngest instructor, had been to the pond and collected examples of all the nymphs we would cover. These insects spend 12 months as nymphs at the bottom of streams and ponds and as little as one day as a winged insect. They rise, molt overnight in the bushes, lay their eggs and then die - to a trout or not. So when you arrive at a pond you check what is hatching and from your artificial flies, you choose the copy. It is called "matching the hatch," difficult and exacting. If you match the nymph, a black-bottom bug, you have more chance to catch a fish.



But matching the hatch with a dry fly is more exciting. The nymphs were then fed to a seven-inch brown trout and two sunfish in the aquarium. They were snapped right up.

Next was equipment: rods, reels, lines, tippets, hooks. Questions abounded. Everybody's brain was stimulated. No pressure to buy. L.L. Bean was exerted beyond giving each of us a card which entitled us to a 20 percent discount on purchases made at one time only, but good for a month. You didn't feel pressure and impulse buying was put to rest.

Lunch was served and coffee, juice and water were available throughout the day. During this break, many of us had the instructors look over our equipment and give us ideas as to what to expect. I have an antique bamboo fly rod with two tips, one more flexible than the other. It was made in Sweden. I also have a nine foot graphite made by Bill Rourke of North Eastham. Bill gets "stocks" or blank rods from various companies and builds the fittings onto the rods. Mine is chevroned in purple and gold threads and is signed "Made for Jan Kelly by the Cod Father." Pretty good for a man who does not see or hear very well. He uses a magnetic reel to fish because of his sensory deprivation. Bill's rods sell for \$40 and up, salt and fresh, and made to order.

The instructor liked the "spaghetti action" of the rod and suggested double taper line to calm it down to a more manageable state. We'll see. . .

The afternoon's first class was knot tying with Brian Golden. We learned the Duncan Knot and the Surgeons's Knot and much about Tippetts and leaders. And to finalize our day, we donned boots to combat the marine (or blue) clay and soggy meadows. A bald eagle flew overhead and we were warned that a moose once trampled into the pond.

We spent the rest of the afternoon learning and practicing the four-part cast, the Roll cast, the False cast and "shooting line." It was bliss to get it right and to quickly think of the wonderful times you were going to have in your favorite spots and new spots, having four piece rods for travel as well as home fishing. It was an overall good feeling. Every person in the class was pleased and ready to start on this new skill and pleasure of life.

Besides fly fishing, L.L. Bean offers schools in kayaking, canoeing, outdoor skills, outdoor photography, cycling and children's programs. A short and delightful trip north will help you enjoy your surroundings more, whether you stay on the Cape or travel.

And look what Gull Pond fished up!