



# The *Tippet*

April, 2010

**Clearwater Fly Casters**  
**www.clearwaterflycasters.com**  
**A Federation of Fly Fishers Club**



## April Speaker: Mac Huff, “Fishing Wallowa County – Oregon’s Northeast Corner”

**Mac Huff** has lived in and fished northeast Oregon for the last 35 years. He received a degree in Wildlife Biology in 1976 and worked as a biological technician for Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife that summer and continues to contract biological work for the U.S. Forest Service. Moving on to retail, he operated a sporting goods store in Enterprise, OR, for 13 years before selling the business to devote his energy to Eagle Cap Fishing Guides, a business he started in 1994 with partner Frank Conley. Mac has fly fished since childhood, guided for the last 18 years and been an FFF certified fly casting instructor for 16. Mac also instructs at Oregon Outdoor Women programs and was lead instructor for a 2001 and 2002 women’s steelhead fly fishing seminar in northeast Oregon that is sponsored by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. He has fishing stories published in American Angler, Washington/Oregon Game and Fish and Family Fun magazines. His wife Nancy is the pharmacist at Wallowa Memorial Hospital and they have two sons, ages 26 and 24.

**Where and What:** River fishing is the emphasis in northeast Oregon, and the three rivers that he spends most of his time fishing are the Wallowa, Imnaha and Grande Ronde Rivers, with the Grande Ronde receiving about 80 percent of his attention. The vast majority of his guided trips are float fishing trips, using either a Clackacraft drift boat or a 13 foot raft. Each craft easily accommodates two anglers, plus Mac. The drift boat can transport up to three anglers, which he does occasionally during steelhead season.

The fishing seasons begin in late May, usually Memorial weekend, when trout season opens, and continue through April 15, when steelhead season closes. Early season trout fishing is usually good, but trout fishing improves later in the season when water levels drop and continues to be good through Oct. 31 when trout season closes. Steelhead season opens Sept. 1, and a few steelhead are available then, but fishing improves each week through November. Winter fishing depends on the weather, but by late February ice is reliably melted and fishing is fair to fabulous through April 15, depending on water level.

The rivers are caddis rivers. These are abundant and hatch from April through late fall. Mayflies occur during the same time period, but are slightly less abundant. Stoneflies are important as nymphs year around, and adults are very important in early summer, when salmonflies and golden stoneflies hatch, and occur throughout the rest of the summer. Midges are the primary hatch during winter months.

Fish species include rainbow trout, steelhead, bull trout, brook trout, smallmouth bass, whitefish, sucker, and northern pikeminnow. Chinook salmon also use these waters and are often seen in late summer and fall. Dry fly fishing can be very good during specific hatches, but most of the fishing is with wet flies, or if a dry pattern is chosen, it usually isn’t dressed and fished subsurface. Basic patterns tend to do the job here: Adams, deer-hair caddis, hare’s ear, prince nymph, zug bug, stonefly nymphs, muddlers and - of course - woolly buggers. The fishing is easy, but the fish aren’t - you will earn the fish you catch.

## Calendar

**Apr 14: CFC Meeting, Mac Huff, “Fishing Wallowa County—Oregon’s Northeast Corner”**

**Apr 22: Fly Tying, Moscow Fly Shop, The Scud Fly**

**Apr 30-May 1: WA Fly Fishing Fair, Ellensburg**

**May 8: Amber Lake Fishout**

**May 12: CFC Meeting, Bryan Irwin and Gary Loomis, Coastal Conservation Association Representatives**

**July 8-11: Fly Flat, St. Joe River Fishout**

**Aug 23-28: FFF Annual Conclave, West Yellowstone, Montana**

## Information

**The Tippet is available as a PDF file on our web site. Please submit information to the Newsletter Editor.**

**Meetings 2nd Wed:**

**Wet Fly Hour: 5:30 PM  
Dinner: 6:30 PM  
(buffet, \$16 per person)  
Program: 7:30 PM**

## Backcast to March Meeting

**Fishing Reports:** David Yonge said he caught one fish on the Ronde, which for him was a “fantastic day” of steelheading. David and Don Johnstone floated with Mac Huff, and Mac caught one too. He said they were “hitting” a green soft-hackle fly, tied about #10 size on a bigger hook, so they could be accused of “snagging them”. Dan Payne said it was good on the Ronde, and he caught fish on black buggers on the bottom and on a bunny leach.

Dave Uberuaga reported spending a couple of Sundays up on the Joe recently – one good day and one nothing. Mike Decker said he had fished four or five runs up there, catching fish on nymphs. He reported that there is no snow this year. Howard Davis had been to Upper Twin Lake, north of Coffee Pot Lake, and he caught some very nice rainbows on Woolly Buggers.

**Announcements:** Steve Bush reported on upcoming FFF activities, including the Washington Fly Fishing Fair at Ellensburg Apr 30 – May 1 (Brian O’Keefe and Skip Morris are featured – see website for details – <http://www.washingtoncouncilfff.org/> ) and the annual FFF Conclave at West Yellowstone Aug 26-8. He left information on the tables about these events. He also passed out information on “Ask About Fly Fishing.com” internet radio programs (<http://www.askaboutflyfishing.com/> ). Paul Agidius mentioned that the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Western Idaho Fly Fishing Expo in Boise is coming up April 2-3 (<http://wiffe.club.officelive.com/default.aspx> ).

Mike Decker reported that the Obama Administration has an initiative related to conservation of US coastline and the Great Lakes. The release does not mention sports fishing, so we need to watch this and make sure such interests are considered.

Note from Newsletter Editor: A number of our members have taken trips to Mawdsley Lake in Northern Saskatchewan, and we have had several speakers talk about the pike fishing up there. Few of the club “regulars” can go this year, and we know they still have a number of spots available. If anyone is interested, please contact Reid Miller or Don Shearer, or check out the website <http://www.mawdsleylakefishinglodge.com/> . This is a non-profit operation.

### March Speaker: Chuck Stranahan, “The Anglers Bitterroot: An Appreciation and An Approach”

Chuck demonstrated some fly tying before and after the meeting. He donated the flies tied for our raffles or auction.

Based on the sparse snow pack, Chuck thinks the Bitterroot Country should experience a warm and showery mid-June with moderated run-off and a rather low fire season. This will mean good float trips with nice water levels and good bug hatches, including Skwalas (Big Olive Stone Flies). The Bitterroot has lots of great hatches, starting in March and going well into the fall.

Chuck has been on the Bitterroot for 23 years. He got the inspiration to go there from Walt Powell of Chico, CA, the pioneer rod builder that laid the foundation for modern rod-building techniques and whose wife Earline taught fly tying. (Editor’s Note: see the web site <http://flyangersonline.com/features/readerscast/rc164.php> for more information on Walt Powell and the history of Powell Rods.) It took Chuck 15 years to get to the Bitterroot, but he will surely be there as long as he is alive. He lives in Corvallis, Montana, and runs a fly shop in Hamilton (<http://www.chuck-stranahan.com/index.htm> ) which is scheduled to open March 15. He describes his shop as “a throwback to a former era, when fly tying shop owners tied their own flies, dispensed honest information to visiting anglers and regulars who made the shop their headquarters, and booked trips with the area’s best guides”.

The slide presentation involved pictures with Chuck’s verbal descriptions of fishing in the various seasons on the Bitterroot. He showed scenery and wildflower pictures in addition to fishing shots. There are high mountains to the west, a tilt-block with glacial till in the Bitterroot Valley. The main river runs south to north, with side streams draining the mountains and flowing in from the west. The fishing starts in late March. Each year the run-off brings more ash from the fires of 2000 into the river, providing nourishment for the phytoplankton, resulting in great hatches and fat fish. The Bitterroot is named after a wildflower that blooms in the spring. The Native Americans ate the roots of this plant, which are bitter at first and then become palatable later each year.

There are good fish in the main stem (average 14 inches, normal range 10-18 inches, possible over 20 inches), with smaller sizes in the headwater streams. Westslope Cutthroat and Rainbow Trout are the main fish, but there are browns in good numbers as well as a few Bull Trout and Brook Trout in some sections. Don’t come without Skwala patterns, Blue-winged Olives, Gray Drakes and caddis patterns – see Chuck’s website for details. The early fishing starts with the Skwala hatches, but they are spotty, depending on water temperatures from melting snow in the side canyons. The narrow canyons melt later than the wider ones.

After the early flies are gone, there are outstanding golden stonefly hatches, from June into August, with the upper river always later than the lower stretches. There are five species that hatch on the Bitterroot. During the summer, get out early until the sun is on the water, and then again for the evening fishing. There is good access with many public fishing areas every few miles on US 93, which runs along the river. For the wade fisherman, try one of the popular parking lots where the floaters put in, fishing upstream in the morning and down in the afternoon, after the water has had a few hours of peace.

After the water is too low to float in the late summer, try the West Fork, where there are 10-15 inch fish. There will be hatches, but use golden stone nymphs to catch fish between hatches. Also, hike up into the wilderness, where the fish will only be 8-10 inches,

but the fishing great. There are 12 streams that dump in from the west. Some thoughts for CFC members are to fish on Lolo Creek, or hike up Mill Creek from the trailhead to the falls.

In September, the river is low and clear. This is the time to fish the upper river. Use streamers like Chuck's Skulpin anytime. The Clark Fork is a good place to fish late, including right in Missoula. Chuck also mentioned Skalko Creek for fall fishing. The fall is Chuck's favorite time to fish, as the crowds are gone, the October Caddis Flies are out, and the fish are all fat. He fishes the fall until it is just too cold to go out any more.

## 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Clearwater Fly Casters

This spring marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our fly fishing club. Records of the organization process are pretty sketchy. Forty years ago this month (April, 1970) the following note was mimeographed and distributed by Sherm Lowell:

A fishing club has been started in the area. The first meeting of the Clearwater Fly Casters will be Monday evening, May 11<sup>th</sup>, at the Pullman Country Club (Country Club Road off Lewiston Highway just south of Evergreen Community).

A social hour with drinks at 6:30 P. M. will be followed by dinner at 7:15 P. M. Total cost (everything included) is \$5.00.

Enos Bradner, famous outdoor writer, sportsman, and originator of many flypatterns for steelhead, sea-run cutthroats, and coho, will join Ralph Wahl, the well-known photographer and pictorialist of fishing scenes, in describing the high adventure and feeling of accomplishment that can be gained in an association of fishermen. Both men were founders of the Washington Fly Fishing Club of Seattle and the Federation of Fly Fishermen, the parent organization of fishing clubs all over the country.

Be sure to come and bring your fishing friends. Reservation cards will be sent to you in the mail. Help us to contact other fishermen in the Pullman-Moscow area.

## Note from Newsletter Editor

In the on-line newsletter, you will find two items that are not included in the printed version, due to space limitations:

1. Summary of a talk by Dennis Dauble: "History of Fish and Fishing in the Columbia Basin", presented as a part of the series Conner Museum Chat, March 4, at WSU.
2. Actions for fly anglers to help stop the spread of destructive invasive species in our streams and lakes.

## Fly of the Month: Olive Sparkle Scud

(Taken from: <http://www.dslyfishing.com/fly-tying/olive-sparkle-scud.html>)

HOOK: Heavy Scud Hook 8-16 (TMC 2457)

WEIGHT: Lead

THREAD: Olive

ANTENNAE: Partridge

TAIL: Partridge

BODY: Olive dubbing (mix of olive and chartreuse antron with some sparkle)

BACK: Scud back

RIB: Copper or silver wire



Tying Instructions: Tie in the antennae and tail. Add 8-12 wraps of lead. Make sure to center the lead on the hook shank. Create a dam on either side of the lead to make sure the dubbing creates a nice body. Remember, scuds should be a little meatier from the center back. Tie in scud back behind the lead, and then tie in the rib. Begin dubbing deep in the hook bend leaving the tail exposed. Be generous with your dubbing. It doesn't have to be too tight. Stop about a hook eye length behind the eye. Pull scud back over the dubbing and tie it down with 2 - 3 turns of thread. Wrap the rib forward evenly with 5-6 wraps and tie down. Whip finish and add head cement. The final step is to use a dubbing needle and/or brush to pick out the body, creating very buggy legs. Try different color dubbing, scud back and ribbing. The antennae and tail are optional but good to add.

## Special Item

**Talk by Dennis Dauble: “History of Fish and Fishing in the Columbia Basin”, presented March 4 at WSU.**

Dennis is a retired PNNL employee and adjunct professor at WSU Tri-Cities. His formal training was in fisheries and biology. At PNNL, he studied the life history and ecology of fish of the Hanford Reach, habitat requirements of Fall Chinook, and fish passage issues at Columbia Basin dams. He expanded his interests to all fish of the Columbia Basin in response to a need for fish facts related to the Lewis and Clark Expedition and its bicentennial. This led to publication of his book *Fishes of the Columbia Basin* in 2009 by Keokee Books.

Dennis reviewed fishing by Native Americans in this region, which has a history dating back 10,000 years or more. Their methods included construction of weirs and traps, as well as the use of dip nets and spears. They targeted not only salmon, but lampreys and sturgeon and other smaller fish as well. By the time settlers of European origin came in significant numbers to this area, the numbers of Native Americans had declined, and their impact on fish runs was probably not significant.

Lewis and Clark were the first to attempt study of the fish of the Columbia Basin, and their journals record significant information about only 11 species west of the Continental Divide, which included only 5 species of salmon and trout. They did recognize that Chinook Salmon was the most important species encountered, but they also became familiar with Coho Salmon (White Salmon Trout), Steelhead (Salmon Trout), Sturgeon (White Sturgeon), and Suckers (Mullets). They did not realize that salmon die after they spawn, rather, they thought the dying salmon were diseased. David Thompson was the first to realize that they die after spawning as part of the natural progression. The first true scientists to study fish here were members of the Northern Boundary and Railroad Surveys from 1841-61, appointed by The Smithsonian to this task.

The effects of settlement by Non-native Americans have been multi-fold over all the years they have been in this region. These are the effects that Dennis discussed:

**The fur trade** – removed the beavers which changed the nature of the headwater streams where fish spawned.

**Mining** – dug out and otherwise changed stream beds, adding sediment loads, blocking off spawning streams, building roads, etc.

**Ranching and farming** – dammed streams for irrigation, removing spawning habitat, degrading riparian areas, adding sediment loads, building roads, etc.

**Timber harvest** – damaged headwater spawning through sediment loading from deforestation, degrading riparian areas, road building, etc.

**Transportation** – first railroad construction and then road building caused damage to both headwater and other streams, from run-off carrying toxic chemicals and sediment into the water, from accidental spills into streams, from degradation of stream beds through channelization, etc.

**Fish harvest** – development of commercial large-scale fish harvest methods and canneries quickly depleted breeding fish stocks, overwhelming the take by remaining Native Americans, and resulting in the eventual collapse of the commercial industry.

**Introduced species** – competition with and foraging on native species

**Shad** – in 1871 from the Sacramento River

**Largemouth bass** – in 1886

**Sunfish and catfish** – in 1890s

**Smallmouth bass** – in 1923

**Walleye** – in 1950s – now working up the Palouse River

**Northern pike** – in 1970s – now in the Spokane River

**Construction of dams** – 1910-75 – resulted in changed stream flows, moderation of temperatures, increased predation, confusion of migration patterns, destruction of smolts passing through turbines, conditions favoring introduced species over native species, and (in some cases) immediate elimination of runs

All of the above factors have an accumulated effect on fish species in the Columbia Basin. Thus, we now have a resource management conundrum. Its all about the water, and the fish are just “in there” clouding up the situation.

Global warming, if it results in a warmer and drier Columbia Basin, will favor introduced species and be hard on our native fish, as they are cold-water species.

---

## **Special Item**

### **Simple Actions to Stop the Spread of Destructive Invasive Species:** (from <http://cleananglingpledge.org/>)

- **INSPECT** - carefully examine all of your equipment at the end of your trip to see if there are any visible signs of unwanted material attached. This includes any types of plants or mud. If you see any sign of a problem, clean you gear.
- **CLEAN** - first remove any visible material by hand then use water to wash your equipment clean. It's ok to clean with water from where you are leaving because you will be leaving behind any problem that you may have picked up. However, never clean your equipment at your put in spot since you can easily be cleaning off hitchhikers that have been with you since your last trip. If you cannot clean before you leave a site make sure to clean at home where there is no chance that an invader can reach the water.
- **DRY** - a thorough drying of your equipment will kill any live invaders you may have picked up. If you are counting on drying to eliminate any hitchhikers you must make sure that every bit of hidden moisture is gone before you can feel that you are safe.

Clearwater Fly Casters  
PO Box 394  
Pullman, WA 99163

*Clearwater Fly Casters*

*April, 2010*

## Clearwater Fly Casters Officers 2010

President	Paul Agidius	<a href="mailto:pagidius@moscow.com">pagidius@moscow.com</a>
Vice President	Cliff Swanson	<a href="mailto:clswan12@gmail.com">clswan12@gmail.com</a>
Past President	Fred Muehlbauer	<a href="mailto:muehlbauer406@roadrunner.com">muehlbauer406@roadrunner.com</a>
Treasurer	Bruce Frazier	<a href="mailto:bedwin43@gmail.com">bedwin43@gmail.com</a>
Secretary	Lavon Frazier	<a href="mailto:lavon_frazier@roadrunner.com">lavon_frazier@roadrunner.com</a>
FFF Representative	Steve Bush	<a href="mailto:moscowtitle@moscow.com">moscowtitle@moscow.com</a> (208)882-4564
Conservation Chair	Doug Baldwin	<a href="mailto:baldwin5750@roadrunner.com">baldwin5750@roadrunner.com</a> (509)334-1630
Program Chair	Doug Young	<a href="mailto:dlyoung@wsu.edu">dlyoung@wsu.edu</a> (509)334-1617
Newsletter Editor	Reid Miller	<a href="mailto:millerrc@moscow.com">millerrc@moscow.com</a> (208)882-2877
Webmaster	Tim Cavileer	<a href="mailto:tcavi@uidaho.edu">tcavi@uidaho.edu</a> (208)883-4572

CFC membership dues are \$20/yr for individuals, \$30/yr for families, \$10/yr for students, \$50/yr sustaining, \$300/lifetime. Meetings are on the 2nd Wednesday, September through May, at the Best Western University Inn, 1516 Pullman Rd, Moscow, Idaho. Wet Fly Hour 5:30 PM, Dinner at 6:30 PM and Program at 7:30 PM.