

Stonefly Maidens
Ladies Fly Fishing
Club Newsletter
June 2002

AN OREGON COUNCIL-FEDERATION OF FLY FISHERS MEMBER CLUB

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MEETING INFO: IMPORTANT!!! NOTE PLACE CHANGE

Next meeting: TUESDAY June 1, 2002

Hi Hat Restaurant, 11530 SW Pacific Hwy, Tigard, OR 97223, 503-246-4055

6 PM, dinner and social hour

7 PM, presentation

This month's speaker will be demonstrating rod building. Blake is a casting instructor and rod builder from the Portland area. He can help answer your questions about why rods cast they way they do.

This month's fish-a-long:

June 15, 2002 – Deschutes River Salmon Fly Hatch

This is the premier hatch on the Deschutes River. People come from all over the US to fish this hatch. Come to the meeting to get all the particulars about the fish-a-long.

We have hats, denim shirts and T-shirts with our Stonefly logo on them for sale at the meeting.

Hats are \$15.00; denim shirts are \$25.00; T-shirts are \$18.00.

Fly Lines

The fishing season is now in full swing. I have been getting out the past few weeks fishing the Deschutes and Crane Prairie. Now I'm getting ready for a fishing trip to Wyoming. So many places, so little time.

Last month's fish-a-long was a great event. Rob Crandall is a great teacher and helped new member Cory and her friend, Terry, Jeff and I with our casting, dry fly and nymph fishing. Jeff caught some really nice fish while we were supposed to be working on our casting. Cory's friend caught his first fish on a fly. That is always a very exciting event. We saw some Pale Morning Dun action in the morning and in the afternoon. If you weren't able to come to this clinic, you missed out on a great time.

This month's fish-a-long is back on the Deschutes River for the famous salmon fly hatch. This is one of those world famous hatches where the big trout come up for the big flies. Not all the details have been worked out yet, but count on having a great day of fishing with dry flies that you can actually see. There is lots of camping available along the river. Someone will probably be staying at the Maupin City Park. Come to the next meeting to help plan the trip. I am going to miss it because I'm headed for Wyoming to fish the North Platte River around Saratoga and maybe even some other lakes and streams in the area.

At the next meeting we will also talk about our summer activities. We had plans for a club campout and summer meeting at Davis Lake this summer, but the reports that I have been hearing are that Davis is still very low. There are many other lakes in the area where we can camp and have access to lakes and rivers. Let us know what you want to do.

If you are looking for a fishing partner and want to get in touch with someone from the club, let Lisa Wassgren or me know. We have contact numbers for the members and can help put you in touch with one another.

I am really looking forward to this month's speaker, Blake. I have always been intrigued by what goes into making a fly rod and have contemplated learning how to make my own. I think Blake will give us a lot of insight into how fly rods work and why they work the way they do.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the meeting. Remember we have changed locations. We are now meeting at the Hi Hat Restaurant in Tigard. They have reasonably priced Chinese and American food. Come early and get something to eat and socialize with other members before the meeting starts. Everyone is always interested in your latest fishing story.

Fish-a-long Schedule

June 15	Deschutes River – Stonefly Hatch (of course)
July 13	High Mountain Lakes Summer Meeting and Camp-Out
August 10	Roslyn Lake
September 14	Umpqua River – Big K Ranch
October 12	Deschutes River – October Caddis Hatch

Goings on: Fly Shops and Events

The Fly Fishing Shop at Welches 503.622.4607 www.flyfishusa.com

Call or visit the web site for more info.

June 22 Rick Hafele Learn About the Hatches Class, 9:00am to 4:00pm. \$50 for the day. Contact the shop to register.

Deschutes Canyon Fly Shop -- Maupin 541.395.2565

Entomology Seminar -- Understanding Western Hatches
Daylong classroom/streamside study of aquatic insects with Rick Hafele, co-author of Western Hatches. By reservation only. \$75 per person. 50 percent non-refundable deposit required.

- July 13, 2002
- August 24, 2002

River City Fly Shop – 11429 SW Scholls Ferry Rd, Beaverton 503.579.5176

Contact the shop for other activities.

Fly tying every Tuesday evening starting at 6:30pm. \$50 for 4 sessions; you can join at any time.

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman and Beyond BOW Workshop Schedule 2002

June 14-16 – 3-day BOW weekend, Camp Magruder, Rockaway Beach

July 13 – A Fly Rod & A Trout, Oak Springs Hatchery, Maupin

July 19-21 – Eagle Cap Horsepack Trip, LaGrande

August 4-5 – Overnight Kayak Adventure, Scappoose Bay, Warren

September 14-15 – Pheasant Hunt, Denman Wildlife Area, Medford

Contact Nancy Smogor, BOW Program Coordinator, 503-827-5264 x 5358, email nancy.e.smogor@sate.or.us, or Liz Kraiter, Registrar, 503-590-4240, email lizkraiter@aol.com for more information and registration.

FISHING THE SALMONFLY HATCH

by Scott Richmond, Westfly.com

Those big guys like to lay up near the shore and wait for salmonflies to drift down to them," said the guy at the fly shop. "You can see some real hawks only a couple of feet from the bank."

None of this made sense to me. I'd only been seriously fly fishing for a year, but I was quite sure that big trout lived only in the middle of the river in deep water. Why would they come in close to shore?

Still, the fly shop guy had been right before, so when I went to the Deschutes in early June I tried an experiment: I pulled a live, two-inch long salmonfly off an alder branch and plopped it onto the water about two feet from shore, in an area where the water was two feet deep. The bug drifted downstream for about 20 feet, then there was a loud sucking sound and it disappeared in a huge swirl.

That was a couple of decades ago. I've been an ardent believer in fishing bankwater ever since.

Vulnerable Adults

Salmonflies--the adult form of the giant stonefly (*Pteronarcys californica*)--don't hatch in open water like mayflies. Instead, the nymphs crawl to shore under low light conditions, then climb onto rocks, tree branches, grass stems, and other above-water objects and emerge in the open air. Emergence is a lengthy process, taking an hour or more before they are ready for flight, and usually occurring in the dark so hungry birds won't pick off the vulnerable insects.

Adults live for a couple of weeks after hatching, and they can be thick in the overhanging alders and grass stems near the water's edge. They are most active in the afternoon,

when it's warm, and they are often blown onto the water by the wind. Mating takes place in the vegetation after a week or so. Gravid females then return to the river, generally from late afternoon until dusk. Sometimes they lay their eggs by dipping their abdomens in the water, but sometimes they sprawl on the surface or get stuck in the water. Either way, they are vulnerable to trout.

Choosing a Fly Pattern

Salmonflies have probably inspired more fly-tying innovations than any other insect.

Modern patterns include:

Stimulator

MacSalmon

Clark's Stonefly

Madam X

Improved Sofa Pillow

Unfortunately, most anglers miss the point: presentation is as much a part of this hatch as any other factor, and the fly pattern must be chosen with presentation in mind.

For example, foam-bodied patterns and flies with lots of hackle will float well in rough water. They are a good choice when you're casting to riffles. However, these flies are difficult to cast accurately. If you're fishing pocket water or up under the tree branches, you'll do better with an imitation that you can place with more precision, such as a Clark's Stonefly or a MacSalmon. Not only can you put the fly where the fish want it, but you'll leave fewer flies adorning the tree branches.

Consider the wind, too. Afternoon winds are common on many salmonfly rivers, and the bullethead patterns such as the MacSalmon will not be blown around as much as a heavily hackled, hairwinged Sofa Pillow.

Another presentation factor is the disturbance caused by the fly hitting the water. The big, heavy flies make a real splash when they land. In rough water that's not such an issue, but when you're fishing a bankwater slick, that big splash can put the fish down. When a real salmonfly alights on the water, it settles softly and makes a bit of a fuss with its wings. It doesn't go "ker-sploosh."

Presentation

The two primary points of vulnerability--when adults are blown out of shoreline vegetation and when females lay eggs--are what fly anglers should imitate with their presentations. Trout are quick to adapt to the hatch season, and you soon find them near the shore, downstream and downwind from vegetation. There they wait for hapless salmonflies to fall onto the water and float down to them. The fly fisher's strategy seems obvious: toss a big salmonfly pattern onto the water and let it drift to the trout.

What will also become obvious, however, is that the big-name salmonfly rivers such as the Deschutes, Rogue "Holy Water", Big Hole, and others, attract a lot of anglers during the salmonfly season. Trout aren't incautious animals, and they are soon aware of the anglers and wary of them.

For this reason, approach the water with care. Be stealthy, even crawling on your hands and knees and hiding behind trees. Then, if possible, present your fly with a downstream presentation so the trout see the fly before they see the leader and line.

Since the adults are most active in the afternoon and evening, a good strategy is to cast nymphs in the morning, then switch to dries for the afternoon. And don't go home early. Sometimes the egg-laying flights are awesome. I've stood on the banks of the Rogue "Holy Water" while thousands and thousands of females swarmed in the air. As the sun sank lower, so did the cloud of salmonflies. By twilight they were dropping to the water, and many were taken by trout. But few trout were taken by anglers. Why? Because the "Holy Water" is a crowded stretch of river during salmonfly season. Most anglers just kept casting and casting, and ended up putting down all the fish that were near them. If they'd just put up the rod for ten minutes, those nearby fish would have started rising again and would have been receptive to a well-placed artificial.

Pocket Water and Riffles

One result of fishing pressure is that big trout will move into water that makes them feel safer. Often this means riffles and rough water. The broken surface gives them a sense of security as well as providing boulders to rest behind. A big foam-bodied or heavily-hackled pattern works well in this type of water.

Another good spot to look for trout is in pockets behind or alongside boulders. Trout rest near the bottom, but their eyes are trained into the slots and shoots that will bring food to them. Put your fly into the slot and let it drift naturally to the fish. When fishing pocket water, you'll do better with a pattern that casts accurately and lands quietly, such as a Clark's Stonefly.

Skating Dries

Sometimes a good strategy is to use a bushy dry fly, such as a Stimulator, and treat the hackles with plenty of fly dressing so they'll stay dry. Then cast down-and-across stream and let the fly "skate" across the surface. This skating presentation can drive trout wild and result in slamming strikes. Or it may just put the fish down. It's not a 100-percent reliable strategy, but it's worth a try now and then.

Leader Choice

Generally, a short, heavy tippet--3X or even 2X--will help you cast big, bulky flies more accurately. You also want a strong leader because a few errant flies are going to land in the trees and grass along the riverbank. A heavy leader gives you a better chance of pulling the fly out of the brush.

Do They Care?

Just because the bankside alders are crawling with salmonflies, don't assume the trout give a rip. It can take them awhile to re-orient themselves from gorging on bottom-bouncing stonefly nymphs to looking for adults on the surface. Also, there are other excellent hatches at the same time of year, and trout may switch from salmonflies to PMDs or caddis if those bugs are emerging.

On the other hand trout are often receptive to salmonfly imitations for a week or more after the giant bugs have gone to the big riffle in the sky.

Golden Stoneflies

Everything that's just been said about salmonflies applies to golden stoneflies as well. On rivers that have both hatches, the goldens usually come out a couple of weeks after the salmonflies. When both insects are on the water, trout seem to prefer the goldens.

The same tactics and fly patterns work, but golden stones are slightly smaller than salmonflies and are a different color (as the name implies, they're a pale yellow-gold color).