



AUSTIN FLY FISHERS

May 2018
Volume 20, Issue 5



Club Meeting
Thursday, May 17
Northwest Recreation Center
6:00 Fly Tying, Casting, and Social Hour
6:00 Casting Practice
7:00 Diablo Kayaks

Scott Kerrigan caught this steelhead
while fishing with guide David Buckingham
on the Bogachiel River



FLY FISHERS
INTERNATIONAL
Charter Club

President's Message **Shawn Riggs**

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Last month I took my son, Hudson, and our chocolate lab, Roosevelt, camping on some property just outside of Victoria, Texas. We left one Saturday afternoon after his baseball game wrapped up and met up with my brother, my cousin, Eric, his three year old son, Conrad, and a few other friends who had arrived at camp the evening before. We were staying on the family ranch of one of my cousin's oldest childhood friends, Jason, who grew up across the street from him. The ranch is a stunning piece of land covered with beautiful trees and green foliage with access to Linn Lake which is fed by the waters of the Guadalupe River. Wildlife abounds on the property as evidenced by the many deer and wild hogs we saw roaming the bottomlands and we even spotted a pair of majestic bald eagles nesting high above the river. Some of the guys in our party had set out a couple of trotlines late the night before and early the next morning as we went to check the lines it brought back some old memories of similar trips that had occurred just down the road from where we were staying over twenty-five years before.

Starting when my brother, Shane, and I turned twelve years old we often headed out with our dad after dinner to the San Antonio River with a flat bottom boat in the bed of his old Jeep truck. After about a half hour drive we would meet up with a couple of his buddies under the US Highway 77 bridge and slide our vessels into the murky waters. We then proceeded to tie droplines onto the low hanging branches of ancient willow trees which stood watch over the river. During this exercise my brother and I would try our best not to snag our shirts or even worse our young hands with the sharp



hooks. For the uninitiated a dropline is a length of cord hung vertically from an overhanging limb to which a baited hook is tied on with a weight attached below to keep it down in the riverbed. Whereas a trotline is a long cord with a hook attached to a short branch line that is then attached to the main line with a swivel and one trotline has multiple branch lines attached at intervals of a few feet along the main line which sits horizontal in the water.

We would set out anywhere from two to three dozen lines, tie a piece of marked reflective tape on one end of the line above the water and then "bait and wait" as we puttered up and down that stretch of river well into the night with flashlights in hand running the lines. Running the lines involved replacing lost cut bait, untangling the droplines and if you're lucky retrieving any hooked channel catfish, all

President's Message cont.

while trying not to fall overboard and doing your damndest to avoid any curious cottonmouth snakes you encountered while performing your duties. I know it may not sound very fun but for an eager kid it was pure exhilaration. You occasionally even hooked a hungry gar and cautiously freed them while avoiding their elongated jaws filled with rows of long, sharp teeth. Several anglers in our club target gar with a fly and as I'm sure they can attest those beasts put up a hell of a fight and with hard scales covering their extended heavily armored body and their aforementioned elongated snouts they really look quite pre-historic lurking just below the water's surface.

After a few hours and countless trips along the same stretch of waterway checking and rechecking lines the excitement soon faded into exhaustion and usually my dad would realize that his two boys had had enough. We would then retrieve all of the droplines, ensuring we didn't miss a single one, and head back to the trucks, clean the fish and divvy up the fresh fillets amongst the anglers. On the drive home within ten minutes or so of departing the river my brother and I were usually drifting off to sleep in the back seat dreaming about the delicious fish fry we were going to enjoy the next day.

I was so glad to share the ritual of checking lines with Hudson that

weekend and my cousin said the same about having Conrad along for the experience. Even though we only had a couple of lines in the water this time and we did it with the aid of daylight it was still a terrific activity to share with our sons. We brought in a small haul of catfish that morning and even hooked a couple of gar much to the excitement of the boys and the curiosity of Roosevelt, who was still getting his sea legs having never ridden in a boat before that weekend. We had a fantastic time and I can't wait to do it again in the near future creating new memories with my family in the great outdoors.



Financial Report by Jim Robinson

4/1/2018 - 4/30/2018

Begin Bal. Checking \$12,458.24
Income:

Dues AFF FFI	<u>\$305.07</u>
Total Income	\$305.07

Disbursements:	
Moticos Studios	\$150.00
Brushy Creek Cleanup	\$250.00
FFI Dues	<u>\$60.00</u>
Total Disbursements	\$460.00

Net	(\$154.93)
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Unencumbered:	
Unallocated Funds	\$5,993.59

Encumbered Funds:	
Casting for Recovery	\$00.00
SKIFF	\$6,309.72

Ending Bal-Checking	\$12,303.31
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May Presentation

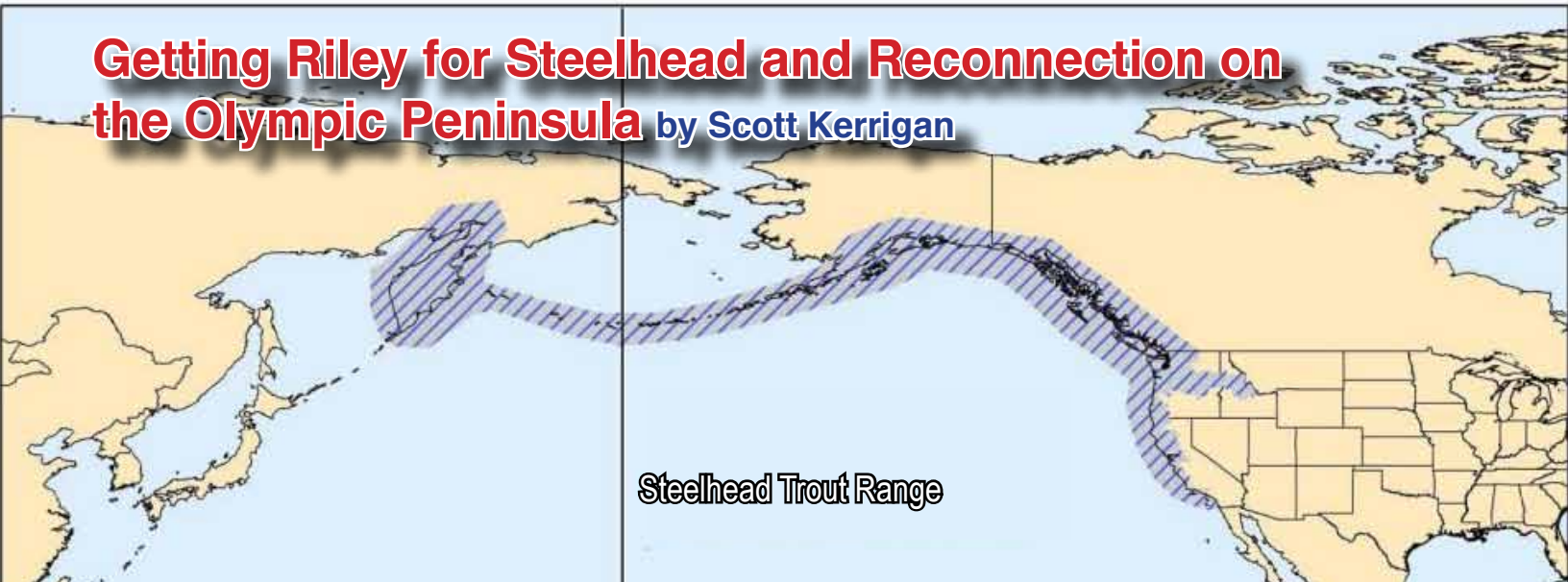


The folks from Diablo Paddlesports will be presenting their kayaks.



Getting Riley for Steelhead and Reconnection on the Olympic Peninsula

by Scott Kerrigan



You've heard aphorisms about "the places fishing takes you." This will be one of those stories. Other quotables related to our sport, like the one attributed to Thoreau, remind us that it is not fish we are after. This will be one of those stories as well – one of what fishing does to you.

After months of planning, I set foot in the Pacific Northwest for the first time. Home of many trees, first peoples and now my childhood friend Todd Penke. This was our first time seeing each other since 2012 and would also be our first time fishing together. We both had taken up fly fishing after college and the sport gave us every reason to reunite (something our 10-year high school reunion failed to do). I flew in from my newer home of Austin, TX and arrived just before dinner.

We spent the first night at Todd's home in Seattle, swapping stories and local beers from our new hometowns. Catching up on the past. Rigging up for the future. I slept well – full of hops and hopes for dreamlike steelies.

The next morning, we packed up Todd's truck, stopped at a Seattle outfitter for a license and drove to catch the ferry to Bainbridge Island. A pleasant 30-minute ride. The sights were magnificent, enough to quell jitters from fishing anticipation, Seattle-brewed (and grown) stimulants, plus a

touch of motion sickness.

Once on Bainbridge, we drove Northwest. First over bridges to the Olympic Peninsula. Then we drove more Northwest. We took the 101 along the Strait of Juan de Fuca to Rialto Beach – one of the more accessible beaches at the northwestern tip of the lower 48.

We saw our first signs here that boded well for fishing. Sea otters effortlessly paddled the mouth of the Quillayute while several bald eagles coasted high above. We presumed they were scanning the waters for steelhead. I just hoped that these elite hunters would leave an angle or two for this novice to have a little fun.

After taking in the views, we decided to scout for camping along the Sol Duc and get a little practice fishing in before dusk. We found a nice campground to stay called Bear Creek. An incredible public primitive site amid tall pines, moss and ferns. Camping was offered free by Washington Department of Natural Resources during this part of the year – the coldest and wettest in a very non-tropical rainforest.

The Sol Duc could be heard quietly flowing down the ravine from our site. We clambered down and found the water to be low and clear. It held up to its name, from the Quillayute *só:lú't'aqú*, meaning "sparkling waters." We worked together, trying to spot fish and not spook them. We were unsuc-

cessful but felt warmed up for the following day.

After having dinner at a diner in Forks, we returned to our site just as the rain began. We got a raging fire going. Warmed ourselves with booze. Set up a tarp to cover us and the hard-covered bed of the truck - to prevent any leaks. We comforted ourselves with stories – of fish and of life's greater catches – wives, children, pets, and much more. My Gore-Tex jacket got a workout it's never been through at home in Texas – though I hardly noticed the rain.

Sleeping in the bed of a truck might sound like roughing it to most of y'all. But Todd had DIY'd quite a nice setup with plywood risers and thick cot mattresses. I slept as well as anyone could the night before a big day of fishing.

We had arranged to meet David Buckingham, our guide out of Chrome Chasers Fly Fishing around 9:30 the next morning at Forks Outfitters. David told us the night before that fishing had been better from the early afternoon into the evening. He also knew that a few boats would be fishing the same water beginning at dawn. This later start would give the fish some time to rest.

We put on the Bogachiel, also known as "the Bogie" to locals, at around 10:30. The river's name is a corruption of several Quillayute words: *bo q'la tcheel el*, which means "gets riley after



a rain" or "muddy waters," depending on the context. It was cool – in the 40s – but there was not a cloud in the sky. We were using 8-weight rods rigged with a fat tube of lead and a yarn egg with a trailing hook. David said that fishing this way under an indicator proved most successful over his years guiding these rivers. He estimates that his clients who want a Spey-swung-fly only experience will need to spend about three days to catch one fish. That's not the kind of time or money Todd or I had to spend. So, we learned to "rainbow cast" out these heavy rigs and mend, mend, stack mend, feed line, mend some more, then mend again.

I struggled mightily at first. Fishing from the back, many of my early mistakes were not seen by David until it was too late. I tangled, I hung up, I wrapped my fly line around everything possible, including David's oars. It would be a long day, covering close to 18 river miles, if I didn't fix myself quick.

Thankfully, Todd started catching fish, which allowed me to fix my mistakes and motivated me to fish harder. First, he caught a wild sea-run cutthroat, then a mountain whitefish or a "whitey" as David called it. Then Todd caught his first steelhead – our target species. It was small. Todd called it "just a

glorified rainbow." Ignoring size, it was still plenty glorious, freshly chromed and full of healthy sprite. It was its first time to return to its place of birth. This young fish would – according to biologists' best guesses – return to the river in two and four years, growing exponentially in size before becoming spawned out and literally disintegrating into the riverine ether.

Todd continued to catch fish, a few more whiteys and cutties. We beached beside a long, deep hole and "walked the dog:" casting out and walking along the shore just behind our indicator, mending all the way – no re-casting. The dog pretty much walked me. Next time I'll do better. It was a good technique to learn, a great way to cover lots of water.

Feeling a little frustrated, I was happy to think about something else for a moment: lunch. We prepped and ate fast to get back to fishing. But I must stop now to note how delicious – and thoroughly backcountry – this meal was. We had smoked summer sausage made with a black bear David killed. We also had pickled razor clams gathered from area beaches. There were giant tuna salad wraps too – a splendid streamside lunch. Then David said Todd and I should switch spots in the boat.

After filling up on eats and a few sudsy cold boys, Todd and I both fell into a post-lunch malaise. David noticed and began to crack the whip a bit more. We were fishing the "prime time," according to David, without any bites, so we had to improve our technique. Once that was corrected, the bites started coming. Then, we had to correct our setting technique. Todd was setting and then immediately fighting too hard. I was barely setting or setting the wrong way and losing connection near instantly. Maybe this story should be titled "Elbow Grease: A Tale of Two Amounts." Maybe not.

Coming up on a bend, we passed another set of bald eagles. This couple was perched in tall trees along the bank. The one we passed closest to was just a juvenile, not yet old enough to sport its trademark white plumage. Despite this, the young raptor seemed to dwarf us. I knew better than to ask whether it was having any luck – for I'd be embarrassed when it reciprocated, asking for my tally.

For this act of humility, I was rewarded. I hooked into my first fish, a healthy whitey. Feeling that fish in my hands as I released it gave me the confidence to connect with something more spectacular.

Steelhead cont.

Then, Todd got his prize. We were approaching a bend when Todd's indicator went way under, he set hard and the fish took off downstream for the bend. We were able to quickly beach. Then, David called to me to pull the boat ashore and set the anchor as he and Todd chased the fish downstream. They were able to control the fish and walk it back upstream. After about 10 minutes of fighting, David scooped up a beautiful hen. It was about 30 inches long, and easily 12 pounds. She was pure chrome; with a lived-in patina of black spots along her dorsal ridge. We got back in the boat and fished quietly for the next few minutes, anticipating more fish. But nothing came. 30 minutes later, we were making some of our last drifts of the day as we tried to reach the take out before sundown. The sun was about 20 minutes away from disappearing behind trees, mountains and finally the watery horizon.

Just as we were about to reel in and ride out, my line exploded under and came tight – then zipped directly under the boat. Those few seconds felt like the time I accidentally put my finger on a live wire in an old deep-freezer while working at a YMCA summer camp. A moment both strange and terrifying, but undeniably full of life and vividness. Poor, tired, cliché metaphor? Yes (deal with it).

This fish then came out from under the boat, ran upstream and did some huge jumps. Each time he came down, it sounded like David smacking the water with his oar as hard as possible. Like chucking a bag of concrete off a bridge into Ladybird Lake. Are we tired of similes yet? This fish was big. David – with thousands of fish under his belt – screamed out “Whoa, that’s a hot fish!” I think that’s all I need to say.

After the acrobatics, this fish decided it wanted to go home to the ocean, charging downstream, taking the 200 feet of line and running line out to the backing. This fish kept screaming into the backing, swimming all the way to the Quillayute River – formed by the confluence of the Sol Duc and Bogachiel rivers. Its mouth is 6 miles downstream at the Rialto Beach we visited the previous afternoon.



Todd with Hen

Steelhead cont.

David said later that, with how far it swam, it was a miracle my fish did not get caught in a gill net. The Quillayute is an ancestral water of the Quillayute people, where descendants are allowed to fish according to their tradition. The gill nets are often set right at that confluence.

As I continued to keep the line tight and reel in when I could, we realized this fish was not going to be landed on the beach we were fighting from. So, we had to chase the fish in the drift boat, beach on a rocky river bank and land it.

Just as the Quillayute River Resort turned on its lights across the stream from us, we landed the fish. A near-40-inch buck that was every bit of 20 pounds. After a 45-minute fight, we wanted to revive this fish fast. A couple shaky, flash-ridden pics – can you blame Todd? – and he was out of the net. It only took 30 seconds of holding the fish upstream before he kicked free. Then after pausing and turning back for a moment, he shot off. I didn't even have the manners to say goodbye (let alone the ability to form sentences), but this revered fish did. Next time, I'll try and behave better among such dignified company.

Well, before that line came tight, I was ready to accept that I had traveled all this way to learn a lot and come up empty-handed. I call it my "Buddhist" approach, maybe to seem enlightened, maybe to hide and bury my frustration. Part of me still doesn't believe that I caught that fish. That my mind has created a better memory to replace what really happened. Even if so, I ain't mad.

When the adrenaline rush subsided some hours later, driving the 3 hours back to Seattle in the dark, I reminded myself that the fish I caught was not the mark of success on this trip. Many more connections were made beyond the piscine. Reconnecting with an old friend. Soaking up the water. The rainforest smells. Trading dance partners with sunny skies, drizzle, and fog. Exploring an ancient and sacred land. Just being there in a pristine moment in time.



David and Scott with Buck

The Fly Tyer's Corner by Mike Morpew

Davy Wotton Super Midge

This is one of the series of "super midges" that Davy Wotton has perfected for the White River in Arkansas. He tells me that a majority of trout his clients catch are on his Super midge and white tailed midge. A very simple tying for this pattern called the Black and Pearl Midge.

Materials

Hook curved shank grub hook your choice (here I used Lightning Strike SE1 sizes 14 through 18)

Thread white UTC 70

Bead head a 2mm tungsten silver

Body pearl tinsel

Rib black flexi floss

Thorax peacock SLF Prism

Picture 1: Place the hook and bead in the vice



Pictures 4: Tie in a piece of flexi floss under the hook



Picture 2: Tie in thread behind the bead



Picture 5: Tie in a length of pearl tinsel



Pictures 3: Take the thread to just around the bend of the hook



Picture 6: Take thread back to the bead and wind a tinsel body



Fly Tyer cont.

Picture 7: Stretch the floss well and rib the body



Picture 7

Picture 9: Whip finish behind the bead. Other midge patterns in the "Super category" are: black and silver, red and gold.



Picture 9

Picture 8: Dub a small amount of the dubbing onto the thread and dub a small thorax



Picture 8

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The following individuals who made presentations to our club in 2017/2018. Please follow the links to get more information on the services they provide. You won't be disappointed.

Marcus Rodriquez – <http://livingwatersflyfishing.com/> Central Texas Guide

Capt. Billy Trimble – <http://trimbleflyfishing.com/> Fly Fishing Rockport/Texas Coastal Bend

Chris Johnson – <http://livingwatersflyfishing.com/> Living Waters Fly Shop and Central Texas Guide

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Capt. Rus Schwausch – <http://www.epicanglingadventure.com/> Fly Fishing Southwest Alaska

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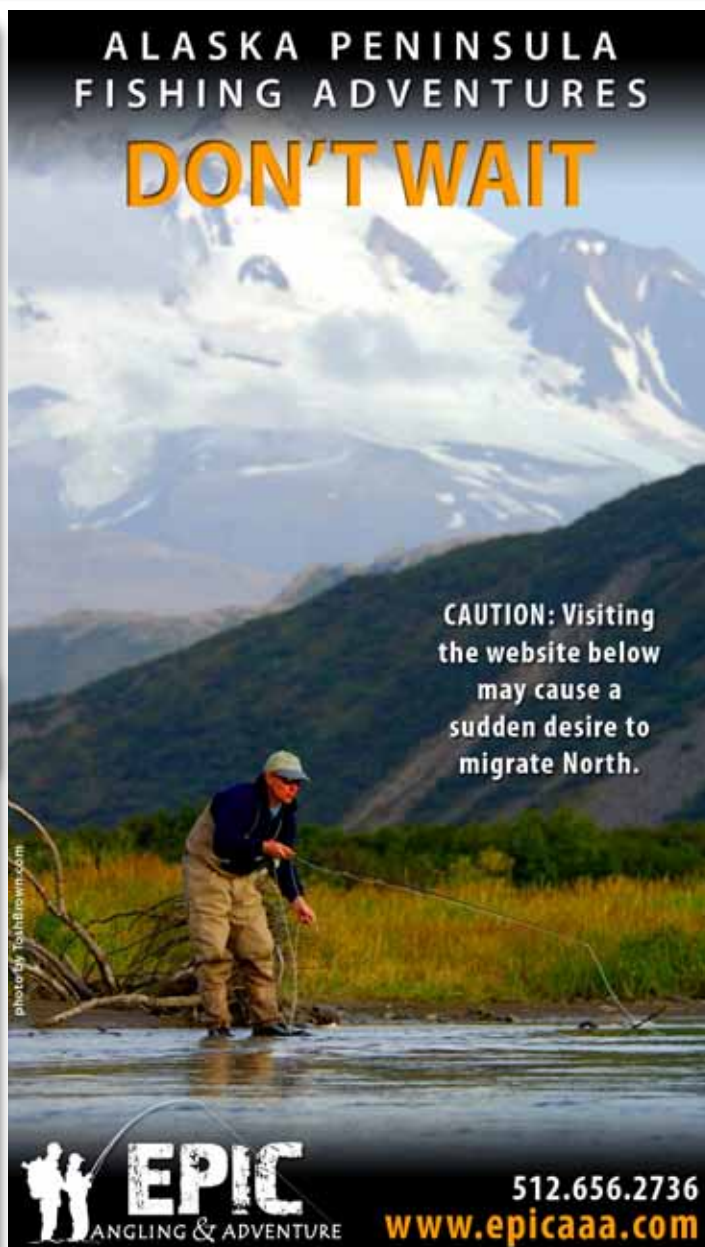
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