

The Hertfordshire hackle



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FT NEWS

Tie Team

Although there are no tying classes this month, on 12th January we are holding our annual competition. It is a fairly light hearted affair and as suggested by the title it is team based. The teams will be formed by pairing an experienced tyer with a less experienced one. The categories of flies to be tied will be, wet fly, dry fly, nymph and lure/innovative. However it is not necessary to tie all the patterns. Only natural materials can be used, tinsel, wire etc is allowed for ribbing. If you are a new member and do not have a supply of natural material, don't worry your partner will have enough (experienced tyers please note). Prizes will be awarded for each category and there will be an overall team prize. More details on page 3

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Steve Cooper, Diamond "Geyser"!

Our guest speaker on 8th December was Steve Cooper, his chosen topics were fishing in Iceland and the preparation of bird skins for fly tying materials. Steve made a decision earlier in life that he would retire from teaching at the age of 40, to do something different with his life. He achieved his goal and promptly set up what is now Cookshill's Fly Tying Materials. As if this was not enough he now organises the BFFI every year. Surprisingly Steve still finds time to fish all over the world, but the one place that really draws him back time and again is Iceland. Most famous for it's geysers, 24 hour daylight (in midsummer) and of course the Northern Lights, it is also a magnet for fishers of all codes with a choice of arctic char, sea trout, brown trout, salmon and salt water species. Whether you choose the very powerful glacial streams, the gentler mountain streams or the extensive array of still water there is a prolific head of fish to target. To supplement the naturally running salmon the glacial streams are now being stocked with salmon par and according to Steve 15-20 salmon in a day is not unknown. Unusually, from a fly fishing point of view, sunny, flat calm conditions are ideal on the Icelandic lakes and because hatches are very sporadic the fish feed hard when they do occur, black flies and buzzers are the most successful patterns. The char are usually to be found deeper in the water column but they will rise during hatches, they also form a significant part of the brown trout's diet enabling them to reach weights of up to 30lb although a more common size is 4-5lb. Steve explained that if you shop around and spread the cost between a group of you it need not be as expensive as you might think, the biggest outlay is most likely to be hiring a large 4x4 vehicle which is necessary to access some of the spectacular mountain waters.

The second half of the evening was devoted to a demonstration of skinning birds, in this case grey partridge, and the preservation of the skin and feathers. The female grey partridge is usually darker and the male has a brighter plumage. Firstly cut off the feet then make a nick in the skin near the breast bone and slowly peel back the skin with thumb and fingers, the only part of the bird that the skin will not peel off is the head, so when you reach it remove the skin from the throat area and then cut off the bottom beak. When it comes to the wings, peel back the skin as far as the second joint push your knife through the joint, leaving the wing tips attached to the skin. Cut into the wing muscle and rub Borax into the cuts. Now lay the skin, feather up, on a sheet of newspaper to dry. When fully dry scrape as much fat from the skin as possible but leaving a little behind to keep the skin moist and supple, finally rub the skin with acetone and salt. A great evening culminated in Steve donating some of Cookshill's stock to the raffle, thanks Steve for a great night.



IT WORKS!

At the November fly tying evening the Intermediate Group tied the Ivens Green and Brown pattern, a nymph similar to the pheasant tail. This was a pattern I had last tied many years ago but those flies still sat in my fly box unused.

The following day I visited my club water and used the flies tied the previous evening. On the second cast I had my first fish. Plenty of fish were showing and I soon caught my second. A nearby angler asked about the pattern and I gave him one. After changing to a dry fly and catching my third fish and limit I suggested that my fellow angler fish from the same platform I had just finished on. Using the G&B he soon caught two with his third on a mayfly nymph.

Back at our grand Fishing Lodge, well a hut actually, another angler asked after the pattern and when told said "that's an old pattern".

On my next visit at the end of November the pattern was again successful bagging two of my limit. Then at the beginning of December using my ancient version tied in times past the pattern accounted for my limit. It is good to know that the patterns we tie at the branch are not just for show but do work. Plus the fact that the tuition and tips from Ian are spot on and no, he did not pay me (well not yet!) to say that. Must tie some more G&Bs! At Ian's suggestion I will substitute the ostrich herl with differing shades of a fine chenille.

Ivens Green and Brown Nymph

Hook B405 # 10 or 12

Brown Thread

Medium Lead Wire

Bronze Peacock Herl

Green and Brown Ostrich Herl

Barry Evans

Thanks Barry

Lower Itchen Fishery

As a member of Verulam Angling Club I was delighted to accept an invitation, from Barry Evans, to join the club's trout section on their away day to the Lower Itchen Fishery for a modest £30. In response to my alarm clock I rose to find the first really severe frost of the winter, not a good omen, but hey we were heading towards the south coast so it would probably be warmer. As we drove down the M3 the car's thermometer showed the external temperature was dropping and when we arrived at the fishery it was obvious they had had a worst frost than at home, walking the bank was like walking on snow the hoarfrost was that thick! on examination we found that the water was crystal clear and add to that the fact that the sun was beating down and the signs were not good. I decided to fish a very heavily weighted pheasant tail on the point and a weighted pink shrimp on the dropper, I had tied these up two days previously specifically for the job. I



fished several different runs without success, moving into a nice looking run at the end of a bend I cast 45 degrees upstream, watching the fly line very carefully, when the water exploded at my feet and a salmon which I estimated at about 10-12lb leapt from the water. That was the first of three salmon I saw leap that day. Unfortunately they were the only fish I had seen by lunchtime, some brown trout had been taken most notably by Bob Ring (another HFDG member), he had four in the day and I believe they were the first fish he had ever caught on the fly from a river. After a convivial lunch, which include some rum



for my coffee supplied by Richard, it was back to the bank for more fruitless casting. Having resigned myself to blanking I reverted to the pink shrimp and on the next cast, as the light was fading, I decided to let the fly swing round right under the bank to my right, and left it there for a few seconds. As I



started to retrieve my line for a re-cast a slight pluck, I tightened, fish on. A modest female grayling of about 6oz, I didn't care I had caught a grayling on a self tied fly on the river Itchen, as it turned out the grayling were in short supply that day. A beautiful fishery well worth the visit, I am not sure I could afford to fish it in the trout or salmon seasons, but hopefully I will be back for some more grayling.



Derek (editor)

Tie Team

For the benefit of newer members, who will not know the history of this event, it was inaugurated several years ago. The then format was that former President of the branch, David Mason, provided a selection of fresh game for the evening and teams of tyers were allowed to use only materials from that game to tie a predetermined selection of fly categories. At the end of the evening the winning tyers took their pick from the selection of edible game on the table. After the sad passing of David, the mantle of game provider passed to Ian Ruff and we continued with that format until last year. Unfortunately because of circumstances Ian has had to give up most of his shooting, so we had to come up with a slightly different format. There will still be teams of two, consisting of a more experienced tyer and a less experienced one. Pairings will be decided by the drawing of lots, only natural materials may be used the only exceptions being the hook, tinsel and wire for ribbing. The flies will be in the categories stated on the front page and will be judged by Ian at the end of the evening. For the patterns to score points, both members of the team must have attempted the same fly. You do not have to tie a fly in every category but the more categories you attempt the more points you can accrue and "what do points make, --- PRIZES"! In each fly category there will be two prizes, best "experienced" and best "beginner" and the best overall team will receive a prize each. So you have a chance of winning a prize whatever your level of competence.

Fishery Reports

No up to date reports are available for any Anglian waters.

As I am sure you know many fisheries are now winding down, to reopen in the coming months, below is what little information I have been able to gather.

Earith Lakes: week ending 21st Dec. Catch ratio 7.5

A great week's fishing with a lot of fish being caught with most anglers catching more than their bag. Cold nights and heavy frosts seem to have turned the fish on and they are feeding freely over most areas of the lake. On some days the weather was not ideal for fishing and strong winds stopped anglers fishing in their preferred spot or if they did, casting was hard, however most caught fish. Most popular area of the lake was the road bank with a number of good catches of over 10 fish coming out earlier in the week. Other areas producing fish were the car park and the causeway where the carp lake island provided some shelter. Fish were caught relatively close in so boat angling did not provide its usual advantage. Most anglers used sinking or intermediate lines with lures stripped relatively fast. Best patterns this week were, black and green, red and black, orange blob, GH Fritz and pink lures. The only day Earith closed was Christmas day.

Norton Fishery and Thornwood Springs both near Epping continue to fish well.

If any of you want me to feature a fishery that is open and you think they deserve a mention just let me know.

Spring Draw

Last year I was lucky enough to win a day's fishing at Amwell Magna, it's a day out I will always remember. Firstly, the fishery is second to none. The countryside is fabulous and having the company of David as guide for the day made it even more memorable. I was lucky enough to meet some of the members of this exclusive fishery and hear of the work they do and are planning for the future. On top of everything else David supplied a banquet (alcohol included) to add even more to the day. This is a day out not to be missed. Don't miss the opportunity to pick up a few tickets as we are a small group and someone or two is going to be lucky enough to enjoy a fantastic day out.

Sean Ballantyne

Thanks Sean, having been to the fishery myself with David I wholeheartedly agree. Thanks to those who have already bought tickets, they are still on sale. Remember you've got to be in it to win it

Congratulations

Congratulations to our own Darrell Howard who has achieved the Bronze, Silver and Gold levels under the FDG's accreditation scheme, having tied the designated flies to the required standard.

The accreditation scheme is open to all, although it does involve a lot of hard work. See FDG website for more information.

