

Northwest Atlantic Salmon Fly Guild

Newsletter

Summer 2025



Stevenson by Aaron Culley

This year, many active guild members contributed their flies to the guild archive. This publication along with our members' excellent fly tying is instrumental in preserving the craftsmanship required to tie classic Atlantic salmon flies.

More information about this year's additions to the guild archive is included later in this issue.

Club Officers:

President:	Glenn Wilson
Treasurers:	Steve Brocco and Megan Brocco
Librarian:	Dareld Thompson
Fly Archive:	Hunter Bachand

Note from the President:

Thank you everyone for another great year. We finished with a bang by having Joel Hill as our guest tyer to demonstrate his Spey Fly tying methods. I hope you are enjoying your summer and this beautiful Pacific Northwest weather! I want to thank the group for another fantastic year and all the participation we had at our meetings. We covered so much material and techniques over the course of our time together, lots of great questions and enthusiasm shown as well, as demonstrated by the membership, thank you.



As we look toward the fall and our meetings, which by the way, will be held in Issaquah at the King County Library System administration building, I want to thank Mark Spaur for his diligent efforts applying pressure and his relentless work securing the building for upcoming meetings. We will have to stay on top of the deadlines for asking for dates so we can continue to use that space.

With that in mind, I know it's hard to sit down and attempt a classic Atlantic salmon fly when it's hot and sunny outside! I've tied 4 since we met, so I'm guilty as well! But maybe take some time and think about where you are as a classic Atlantic salmon fly tyer. What goals do you have at the present time? Maybe thumb through a few books to get motivation and then write down those patterns. Perhaps it's the construction of the body or under-winging that catches your eye? A complex wing design, a built wing, or do you like the look of a mixed wing? Is it time for you to invest in some serious work at making your flies lean, low and racy? Or something different, style is not going to happen by accident, it takes dedication, hours of hard work, and tearing a fly apart and repeating a particular process over because you feel it's not right, not what you envisioned. It's hard to do, but just think about those Guild members who can look at your work, offer constructive criticism, and help you get where you are going. That's who we are... we are so very lucky to have what we do, and it's right at your fingertips! I'm not saying we are the best at what we do, but talent we have, in aces. Use it!

I have some ideas for upcoming meetings, but as always, I'm not a mind reader, your input drives what we do. If you could take a moment to let me know what you would like to learn, even if we have covered it before, remember, practice will get results!

Going over certain parts of fly construction is a good thing in my mind, and we will continue to do so. Maybe a fly catches your attention, and you are not sure if it will be too difficult for you, let me know, we will work through it. So, get me a list, please. We will also continue to use our members as we did last year, I think seeing different people tie gives you another perspective or approach to tackling a method, technique or style of fly. I will continue to include the white board tips for the selected monthly fly at every meeting. I have no problem keeping that part of the program before we tie. Coffee, beverages and lunch will also continue, it's nice having people stay and complete a fly, or just talk. I look forward to these meetings, the planning, the organizing, I realize just what we have, and I am proud to be affiliated with the Guild! Our membership has expanded to 70 members which is awesome, so, as a member, get what you joined for, ask those questions. Do not hesitate, there are no stupid questions!

Hunter has worked hard to create a newsletter for the group, just another member going out of his way for the good of our organization, thank you Hunter. If you have something that could be used and shared, please let Hunter know, he can't do it alone. Mark will continue to bring his skills to the group and our online members, as he is continuously searching for better ways to showcase our meetings. Byron our resident hook maker will have his hooks available for us, please use his service, they are the BEST! Please give a fly to Hunter for our archive, it shows where you are today. Dareld has added new resources to our extensive library of classic books and thumb-drives provided by Jim, it's such a great resource. Steve and Megan Brocco will continue as treasurers, and Steve will reserve and arrange the meeting location dates and securing the building for us. As we move closer to the fall, we will collect the \$40 annual dues. You can pay Steve or use PayPal by contacting Megan at brocco.megan@gmail.com

Congratulations to Bill Lovelace, Donovan Maddox, and Ben Gehrke for their respective awards. The dedication of these members is amazing and when I get the chance to recognize them it is one of greatest parts of my job!

- Glenn Wilson

Treasurer's Report (as of March 1, 2025):

Bank Savings Account: \$4,168.97
PayPal Receipts Account: \$ 589.80
Cash On Hand: \$ 250.00
Total Balance: \$5,008.77

Note: When paying dues via PayPal, be sure to check the box labeled "friends and family" rather than "for goods and services." Otherwise, PayPal charges \$1.20 per transaction.

Upcoming Expenses:

<i>Spey Flies – Their History and Construction, John Shewey, 2022</i>	\$50
<i>Atlantic Salmon Flies of Major Traherne, Satoshi Yamamoto, 2024</i>	\$50

Upcoming Events:

Next Meeting: 9:00 am Saturday, October 18th, Issaquah King County Library System administration headquarters
Fly for October – **TBD**

Oregon FFI Northwest Fly Tyer and Fly Fishing Expo 2026

March 13-14, Linn County Expo Center, Albany, Oregon

Western Idaho Fly Fishing Expo 2026

TBD (usually late January), Expo Idaho, Garden City, Idaho

East Idaho Fly Fishing and Fly Tying Expo 2026

March 20-21, Mountain America Center, Idaho Falls, Idaho

Membership:

Lifetime/Honorary Members: Steve Brocco, Steve Gobin, Steve Morton, and John Olschewsky

Active Members:

Garry Anderson	Eric Foch	Jose Menjiver
Tom Anderson	Frank Fortino	Ray Miles
Hunter Bachand	Judy Gattinella	Bob Miller (welcome back)
Linda Bachand	Ben Gehrke	Bob Newman
Chuck Ballard	Peter Giffin	Kevin Perkins
Dutch Baughman (new)	Jack Gillis	Nicholas Riggs
Ted Berkeley	Rockwell Hammond	Dave Roberts (new)
Byron Bjerke	Carolyn Hellmuth	Levi Rorem
Hope Blackburn (new)	Danferd Henke	Pete Rorem
Brad Boyden	Tim Howland	Jesse Scott
Brett Breuel	James Kinghorn	George Scoville
George Breuel	Joe Kristof	Byron Suomi (new)
Megan Brocco	Gary Litman	Jesse Scott
Tom Corbiere (new)	William Lovelace	Mark Spaur
Aaron Culley	Matt Ludden	Chic Sundahl
Sean Dahlquist	Kristen Macy	Dareld Thompson
Brittany Davenport	Donovan Maddox	Jeff Thomsen
Lisa DeBruyckere (new)	Bethany Maloney	Barry Webster (new)
Terry Dix	Mike Marlatt	Brandi Hunt Wiliford
Joy Fenton	Brian Mayer (welcome back)	Dennis Worley (new)
James Ferguson	Jim McKinnon	Garren Wood
		Todd Yorke

2024-2025 Year-in-Review

October: Lady Caroline, Thunder and Lightning, and Fiery Brown



Tied by Hunter Bachand

November: Floodtide



Tied by Hunter Bachand

December: Stevenson and Durham Ranger



Stevenson
Tied by Mark Spaur



Durham Ranger
Tied by Donovan Maddox

January: Smith



Tied by Glenn Wilson

NWASFG
January 2025

February: Manchester Swell



Tied by Glenn Wilson

March: Silver Doctor



Tied by Glenn Wilson

April: Black Dog
(**Brett Breuel** was our featured tyer today)



May: Guest Tyer – **Joel Hill** (Spey Flies)

News

2025-2026 meetings to resume at the King County Library System administrative headquarters in Issaquah

Special thank you to Mark Spaur who has carried the torch for the guild for the past two years in a successful quest for permission to meet at the KCLS administration building in Issaquah starting this fall.



Note: Guild member Mark Spaur has been dogging the King County Library System for 2 years. Below is his story of success!

I learned early in life that writing letters and civic engagement pays off. In the early '60s, the Tootsie Roll company had some ads on TV showing a company executive taking home Tootsie Rolls in a briefcase. A roving band of kids descended on the executive and stole the candy for the hungry horde. My mom wrote a letter to the president of the company complaining that the ad promoted theft with children. In short, the ad was pulled from national TV, my mom received a handwritten letter of apology from the president of the company, and a large box of Tootsie Rolls and Tootsie Pops that she failed to share with me and my siblings!

I started my letter campaign to KCLS by figuring out the chain of command and working up the ladder. I started in July of 2023 by visiting a few of the libraries with meeting rooms to see if another was suitable – they were not. The head librarian at each library told me that meeting room policy was set above them. I got the name of Lisa Rosenblum, Executive Director of the King County Library System from them and the library web page. I wrote her and received the following written response:

“In order to align with our community libraries, we offer this space during open hours. As you noted, the Service Center meeting room is available Monday through Friday, during business hours because that is when the building is open and staffed.”

She provided a list of meeting rooms, and I noted that none were available early Saturday mornings when we meet.

I did some more research on the meeting rooms and found the original bond application from 2004 that funded a massive expansion in the King County Library system that featured meeting rooms for community engagement. I then wrote to John Sheller, the Government Relations Manager for the King County Library System.

In January of 2024, I received the following reply from Mr. Sheller:

“I am writing to confirm there are no current plans to staff the lobby, reception and meeting space at our Administrative Service Center in Issaquah on Saturdays or Sundays. We are sorry for the inconvenience, but the layout of the building requires staff presence for access to the meeting and restrooms.”

That was never the case. And, though he mentioned that rooms were available on Saturday, they are not open the hours that we need.

I then discovered that the King County Library is overseen by the Library Trustees. These people are appointed by the County Executive to oversee the budget and operations of the Library. The trustees meet on the last Wednesday of the month. After being stymied by the Executive Director for six months I arranged to speak with the trustees at their January 2024 meeting. I learned at the meeting that Lisa Rosenblum was retiring, and a new Executive Director was being considered. I knew that I would have to bide my time until the new executive got up to speed.

I met with the Library Trustees again in November of 2024 and gave the same speech. This time the new Executive Director had her assistant contact me and told me that the operations committee was considering opening the Issaquah administration building extension room and to keep in touch. In April, we received word that the meeting room will once again be open for reservations on the weekend starting in June.

Though I have a gigantic sweet tooth, I consider getting back into the Issaquah meeting room to be sweeter than a box of Tootsie Pops!

– Mark Spaur

Awards

Oregon Council of Fly Fishers International Fly Tyer of the Year Award

At the Oregon Council annual Fly Tyer Expo in Albany, Oregon, fly tyer chair, Hal Gordon, presented the Stan Walters Fly Tyer of the Year award to guild member

Bill Lovelace

In addition to being active in Oregon natural resources legislation public meetings, Bill has been involved with the Eugene/Albany fly show since its beginning. Bill has been an active member of the guild since 2012 and was an active volunteer for the Atlantic Salmon Fly International Show in 2014 and 2016.

He lives in Portland.



Most Improved Fly Tyer Award

At the April meeting, Glenn Wilson presented the Most Improved Fly Tyer award to

Donovan Maddox

The award is presented annually, and the recipient becomes the caretaker for the Blacker Ghost Fly #2 Plate with flies tied by guild members.



And the Hat goes to.....

At Todd Yorke's home following the Albany Fly show, Glenn Wilson presented the Hat to

Ben Gehrke

for his numerous contributions to the guild.
Perhaps a little Lagartun tinsel will be added to the hat before we see it next?



Guild Members attend the Atlantic Salmon Fly International in Calgary in September 2024

Several guild members gathered with the best Atlantic Salmon Fly tyers from all over the world at the 4th ASFI gathering. There is no better place to socialize and exchange fly tying ideas than this event. All of the fly tyers received a city of Calgary “white western hat” honor in keeping with the city’s tradition of friendship and hospitality. Byron Bjerke delivered a presentation on hand-made blind-eye Atlantic salmon fly hooks. Proceeds from the event benefited a Hope Mission, a local youth camp and homeless meal program.



Calgary – City of Friendship Honorary Award presented to ASFI Participants



Byron Bjerke, Garren Wood and Dareld Thompson at Hope Mission



Calgary ASFI hosts Colin and Kristen Callbeck



Satoshi Yamamoto, Sacha Putz, Chris Reeves, and Rocky Hammond at Hope Mission



Byron Bjerke presented Rocky Hammond with a commemorative plate as the original gangster (OG) of ASFI



Yuji Wabe’s unique artistic acrylic key chain fobs

Washington FFI Atlantic Salmon Fly Tying and Fly Casting Fair (April 29, 2025)

The Northwest Atlantic Salmon Fly Guild co-sponsored this casting and fly tying event to support the Washington Council of Fly Fishers International. Many beginner fly fishers attended and participated in the available casting instruction. The FFI successfully enrolled new members and attendees were invited to learn more about tying classic Atlantic salmon flies by attending an hour-long presentation by **Hunter Bachand**. Many guild members tied during the show including **Glenn Wilson, Aaron Culley, Levi Rorem, and Brett Breuel**.



Levi Rorem with his Black Dog



Brett Breuel

FeathersMC and John McLain

Tales of a Feather Merchant

It has been 16 years since John visited our guild in 2009. He has been tying flies for over 60 years and has been supplying members of our guild with quality materials to make the most of their fly tying efforts. Below we will review what we learned in 2009 and discuss what has changed since then and what's next.



John McLain demonstrating for the guild in 2009 how to make a substitute for hard to find Florican Bustard using screen printing.

Day 1

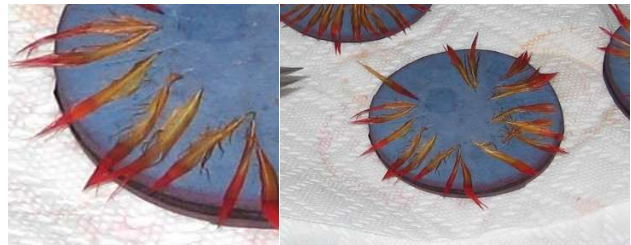
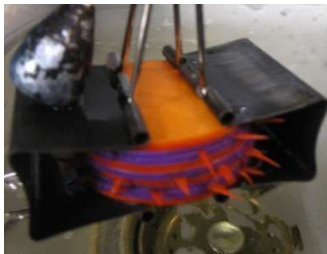
When John was a guest tyer for the guild in April 2009, he demonstrated tying a Durham Ranger on the first day and on the second day, the entire club participated in dyeing many different types of materials including Indian Crow substitutes, Banksian Cockatoo, Amherst Pheasant tails, and Florican Bustard. This was a hands-on event enjoyed by everyone.



Day 2

Indian Crow

We began the day with a multi-step process of dyeing white feathers into substitutes for Indian Crow breast feathers. John uses large dye baths and lays out several layers of feathers sandwiched between balsa wood and foam to achieve the desired results.



Left: Large bull clips with a weight welded to the top are placed over three layers of feathers and placed in the dye bath. The weight is necessary to keep the wood from floating to the top. The foam between each layer helps provide a gradual shift in color between gold and scarlet.

Florican Substitutes



Screen Printing

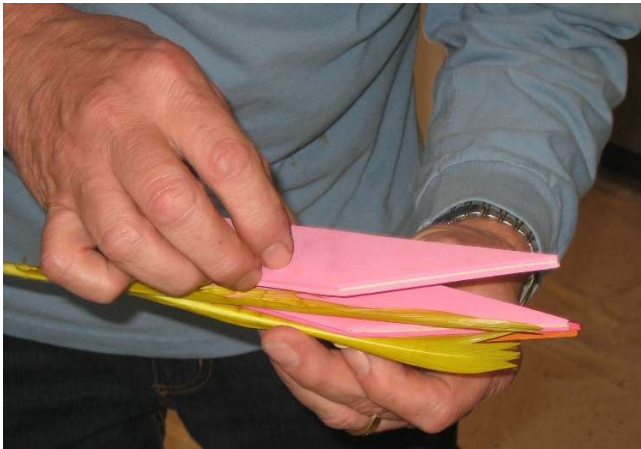
Above: John demonstrates using screen printing and hair beach to change the color of the feathers.

Hot off the Press:

Right: Joe Kristof holds two screen printed Florican bustard substitutes.



Banksian Cockatoo



John demonstrates how to sandwich the yellow portion of the feathers between foam prior to placing them in the orange dye bath.



Ready for dyeing

The wooden rod is placed over the dye bath and the feathers are hung on the rod using the bull clips.



Once the feathers are dyed orange, the guild members added the black bars to the feathers with hair dye.



Ringo Nishioka joins in the creative fun.

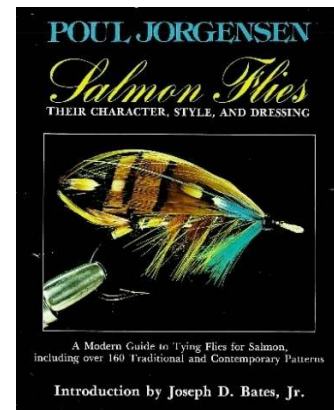
History

***Editorial Note:** All of us have become card carrying members of the guild because we genuinely wanted to learn to tie Victorian Era feather-wing classic Atlantic salmon flies worthy of being framed. John McLain is no different than any of us. However, he has done so much to further the preservation of this craft, that he is the featured subject (rock star) of this newsletter. He is a genuine “friend of the guild.” When my wife, Linda, started tying classic Atlantic salmon flies in 2014, not a week went by when we didn’t receive a package from John and his son Terry Sterling at FeathersMC. I would even say that Linda had John and Terry on speed-dial. The deep blue, green, claret, and amazing golden hackles and turkey tail feathers that arrived in the mail (along with Kori Bustard to tie 6/o hooks or larger) made many of the first 100 flies that Linda tied worthy of being framed and traded with renowned fly tiers all over the world. Through our fly tying passion, we have become lifelong friends.*

Early Years: John was born in Grants Pass, Oregon. His father was a school administrator (which involved moving the family from time to time). As a boy, he attended various schools in southern Oregon and California. In junior high, the family moved to Wisconsin and at age 12 while attending South Milwaukee Junior High School, he signed up for the school sponsored fly tying classes as an after school activity. A friend of his also signed up for the class, but after his friend bought a Thompson S vice, he quit. John bought this boy’s vice for \$2 and began tying flies and fishing local lakes and ponds. (**Note:** *Being the principal’s kid, John sometimes found it difficult to follow all of the rules at school. He actually spent most late afternoons in detention and never attended a single fly tying class!*).

Career #1: John had a long career (26 years) in law enforcement with the Waterford Township Police Department in Waterford, Michigan (not far from Detroit). Prior to his retirement in 2001, he started developing relationships with various sources of feathers. He became good friends with Bill Keough who owns a fly tying and fly fishing supply business. They both lived in Michigan and would travel together to the International Fly Tying Symposium in Somerset, New Jersey. He soon began supplying various hard to find feathers to friends. This was the beginning of FeathersMC (which was supposed to be a retirement hobby but grew to a full time job and labor of love). John credits his police training with helping him to develop the working relationships and friendships needed to be successful in the fly tying supplies business.

Classic Atlantic Salmon Flies: In 1978, John was inspired by Poul Jorgensen's book *Salmon Flies – their Character, Style and Dressing*. However, after tying a few classic Atlantic salmon flies, he found (like all of the members in the guild), that interest and passion didn't help him get the results he desired. He needed more mentoring.



Timing: Next, John attended an Atlantic salmon fly tying class put on by Wayne Luallen in Chicago. Here he met Eugene Sunday who told him about a secret society known as “The Group.” This handful of dedicated classic Atlantic salmon fly tyers were connected mostly by telephone and letters (obviously long before the internet and email). IBM didn't produce the first personal computer until 1982. John desperately wanted to fit in, but Eugene explained that this clandestine group of exotic feather admirers were very careful to avoid any public scrutiny because many of the materials used were rare and potentially came from questionable sources. In other words, the desired feathers were either unaffordable or inaccessible. John was determined to find a way to achieve success in this very focused area of fly tying.

A Foot in the Door (almost): John began experimenting with color processing feathers and fur using hair dye/bleach and a variety of Rit and Veniard dyes. His first success came from dyeing “Blue Taloose” goose shoulders as a substitute for Florican bustard. Additionally, he had developed a method of creating substitutes for Indian Crow by pinching them between rubber washers. John was very generous sharing his ideas and process with anyone interested. Unfortunately, in spite of his efforts he never received an invitation to join “The Group.”

The Salmon Flyer – A Newsletter: In October 1985, “The Group” led by Wayne Luallen had come to the realization that they were not only fascinated with feather wing Atlantic salmon flies, but that they also liked to share. They wanted to share ideas, techniques, and sources, but phone calls and letters and photos sent back and forth weren't enough. They felt that a gathering together face-to-face was a necessity to replace the current cross country mail/phone system. The first meeting was in the fall of 1986 at the home of Duane Thompson in Portland, Oregon with about a dozen people coming mostly from the western U.S., but some from as far away as Michigan

(Eugene Sunday). The group did not want any formal organization structure, however (as before), they wanted to involve more people of like interests wherever they were in the world, as long as they were willing to share what they know with them. They wanted to share, but as a group, they did not want to “teach” [to the common fly tyer].

Yellowstone: Marvin Nolte, of Bar None, Wyoming was nominated to organize the second gathering in West Yellowstone prior to the national conclave of the Federation of Fly Fishers in August 1987. At this gathering, a decision to publish a periodic bulletin (*The Salmon Flyer*) was made (**Note:** *Up until now, a yellow legal pad was mailed around to members of “the group” and everyone could add questions. When the round robin chain letter legal pad finally made its way to Al Cohen, he would answer the questions or provide the solution to the fly tying challenges being put forth*). The bulletin would be quarterly with the first issue mailed in early January to the entire mailing list (now approaching 80 names). Recipients would be invited to submit an article for future publication as well as \$5 to defray publishing costs.

Steve Brocco, of Seattle was volunteered to organize the next gathering in Livingston, Montana (prior to the 1988 FFF conclave). The first few issues were edited by Marvin Nolte, and included everything imaginable: feather dyeing of substitutes, materials acquisition, photography, framing, materials preparation, techniques, books, fly shops that sell classic Atlantic salmon fly materials, and other feather sources. It was about this time that Wayne Luallen put forth the idea to get the zoological gardens that had flocks of Kori Bustard to give the group the molted feathers. Anyone in the group who could find a way to get the feathers would then sell them to other members of the group for two dollars. One dollar would be kept by the person who acquired the feather and one dollar would be donated back to the zoo.

The Salmon Flyer was a success! Distribution continued until late 1994. It was a detailed and personable (if not elitest) document that if you received it, you felt like a fly tyer that had finally arrived. For a few years, there was link on the FFF website to *The Salmon Flyer* collection of quarterly bulletins. This has since been removed. Ronn Lucas had Mike Radencich make a website for him and the website is still active at www.ronnlucassr.com. Ronn’s website also includes a link to *The Salmon Flyer* bulletins. The exact web address is:

<https://ronnlucassr.com/ronnlucassr.com/SALFLYER/index.html>

Meanwhile (actually years later) ...Back at FeathersMC

Kori Bustard Feathers made available:

After retirement, John continued tying classic Atlantic salmon flies and worked at two different fly shops in the Detroit area – one of them was a complete financial failure and went out of business within a year. He developed contacts in the fly tying supplies industry and learned an important lesson – a brick and mortar fly tying materials retail business was not sustainable. Fortunately, the perfect solution was much easier – an online store!

FeathersMC grew slowly, and John's reputation grew as a trustworthy competent businessman. In the 1990's, Phil Castleman was supplying Kori Bustard feathers to many classic Atlantic salmon fly tyers by mail order. John began to develop relationships in the Kori Bustard feather business. He later learned that the flock that Phil Castleman claimed that was his, was in fact the flock at the New Orleans Zoo (the actual source of his Kori feathers).

Macaw Feathers: John became acquainted with a woman who had 18 Scarlet Macaw's which she kept in her home. For a period of time, he was able to get some of the matched pairs of feathers from these birds. However, the path from her included going through Paul Rossman and Bud Guidry. He was getting a college education in understanding the workings of feather trading.

How the “FREE” Kori Bustard feather program began:

A well-to-do and somewhat eccentric woman (Nancy Crawford) arranged to have 12 Kori bustard birds imported to the United States. Under the agreement, 8 birds would go to various zoological gardens including the Fort Worth Zoo and she would be the only private owner, keeping 4 birds.

Kevin Snider was running a macaw rehabilitation center in California. He made connections with various people who were managing flocks of Kori Bustard. He began working with Sara Hallager, the coordinator of the Kori Bustard Sustainable Species Program (Kori SSP) at the Smithsonian's National Zoo. He had made arrangements for her to send him all of the Kori Bustard feathers that had been collected so that they could be given to fly tyers (NOT to be sold!) After he received the initial package of feathers, he forwarded some of them to John McLain.

Shortly after John received the feathers, the Smithsonian changed their mind and wanted the feathers back. They contacted John to get the feathers back from him, but he refused to send them back.

After a few days, he came up with the idea of giving them away for free, in exchange for donations to the Kori SSP. A customer who had received some of the initial feathers made a \$2,000 donation. John sent the check with other donations totaling \$2,300. This just happened to be the cost of the new large egg incubator that Sara Hallager intended to purchase. Subsequently (after seeing how much money may become available), the Smithsonian agreed to the plan put forth and thus began a long-standing relationship between FeathersMC and the Kori SSP. The birds benefit from the donations that FeathersMC collects on their behalf. Without this support, the zoological gardens and parks would not be able to purchase and maintain some of the necessary equipment such as egg incubators or conduct certain research projects.

Once the original \$2,300 of donated funds were deposited into the Kori SSP account, the zoo found about the excess funds and used them for something else. This resulted in the Kori SSP account being moved to the Denver Zoo to preserve donated funds solely for the various Kori programs around the country (which is where donations continue to be deposited today). Currently, there are Kori bustard flocks at the Atlanta Zoo, New Orleans Zoo, Denver Zoo, Bronx Zoo, and the Wildlife Conservation Society's (formerly the New York Zoological Society) St. Catherine's Island (small island off the coast of Georgia) center for breeding and maintaining rare and endangered species.

How it Works: FeathersMC receives the feathers from the zoo and wash, sort, and steam them. If a customer places an order with FeathersMC, they usually include some Kori feathers whenever possible (***except they are not permitted to send Kori feathers internationally***). Over time, most customers get the material they need in a reasonable amount of time.



Kori bustard chicks born at the national zoo in 2012.



Male Kori Bustard performing a mating dance to attract a female.

Generally, they try to provide Kori feathers large enough to accommodate each customer's fly tying needs based on the order they place. For example, if a customer orders 3/0 hooks, and they have a nice feather or two that accommodates that, they include them with the order. FeathersMC now sells goose shoulder feathers that can tie flies as large as 5/0. They try to accommodate that size range if possible. They try to move as much Kori along as possible. Any and all that they get is always appreciated even if it isn't large enough to tie an 8/0 fly.

John has given away many thousands of dollars of Kori Bustard feathers. Additionally, and most importantly, through customer donations to the Kori Species Survival Plan, John estimates the various Kori zoo projects have received many thousands of dollars. The zoos proudly display some of the classic Atlantic salmon flies they have received to explain to visitors their participation in the free feather program.

Donations: Two ways to donate to the Kori Species Survival Plan

- 1) Visit the link on the FeathersMc.com website then look for the PayPal icon that says “donate.”
- 2) Write a check payable to: **“The Denver Zoo”**. Enter **“Kori SSP”** in the memo section of your check. Then, mail your check to

**John McLain
38 Robinwood Dr.
Clifton Park, New York 12065**

What’s Next? You and your wife, Linneya, are moving to Clifton Park, New York to be closer to your daughter and her husband and most importantly, your new 14-month old granddaughter.

What would you like us to know about your move? First of all, I haven’t seen the new home yet. I’ve only seen pictures online. My daughter found the home for us and helped in the buying process. My son, Terry, who lives with us and works fulltime with me at Feathers MC, is also moving with us. My other son, Steven, is staying in Michigan for now, but may join us in New York in the future.

Do you have more or less workspace for FeathersMc.com? The business, which we run out of the basement of our home will expand significantly. The basement in our new home is 4 times larger than our current home.

What has been the key to your success? As mentioned before, my police training has made me a good communicator and relationship builder. Additionally, our coloring processes, including dyeing techniques, have produced the most beautiful and highest quality products on the market. Our ability to give away the Kori Bustard feathers has been great advertising. When we started giving these feathers away, the boxes came from the U.S. Post Office for free, and in the beginning, all we asked is that recipients pay \$1.95 for the postage.

Anything New? Recently, I acquired the dyeing plates from Doug Milsap that Jens Pilgaard used to make a variety of substitutes. In our new location, we will be able to expand production using these new methods and produce new products for our customers. Additionally, we prepared for today’s social and economic tensions

and current trade wars with China and have already acquired the materials we need from our suppliers to meet our needs for the foreseeable future.

Because of our good standing in the fly-tying materials industry, occasionally, we are contacted when an estate that has a large collection of Atlantic salmon fly tying materials. Through my connections with some of the people previously mentioned in this article, I have been involved with the estates of Derl Stovall, Jim Goggins, Al Cohen and many others. Often, when a family contacts me, there are lots of twists and turns. Perhaps the next time we meet, I can tell you all about the semi-truck loads of unbelievable amounts of fly tying material that so many people have collected!

John, I'm sure I speak for everyone in the guild when I say this...

Thank you for all of the support that you have provided to guild members. It has been a great partnership! We are excited for you as you start this next chapter of your life, and we want you to know how much we appreciate you.

Welcome to “The Group!”

– Hunter Bachand

May Guild Meeting

Joel Hill, from Lakewood, Washington, provided excellent instruction on how to tie slender Spey flies. He likes the skinny sparse floss bodies of these flies because they sink quickly. He uses them to fish for Steelhead on his favorite western Washington rivers.



Our guild's new Zoom meeting equipment allows far away members to participate in the monthly meetings. A close-up of the demonstrator's vice is also projected on the large screen in the front of the room allowing everyone in the meeting to see clearly the fly tying methods being demonstrated.

Fly #1 - Courtesan variant: Joel splits the 12 strand Lagartun floss and only uses 4 strands to keep the body slim. He often uses half-bronze coque rooster feathers from **Lamplight Feathers** or from **FeathersMC**. He looks for feathers with thin stems. Prior tying in the hackle, he strips off half of the fibres (those on the leading edge of the feather). The forward half of the body is either orange seal fur or SLF Tri Lobal Orange dubbing. He prefers the latter to keep the body as slim as possible. To help keep the body sparse, he often only uses four turns of tinsel and hackle instead of the usual five.



Fly #2 Sol Duc variant: To keep the head on his Spey flies small, Joel will tie in the wings and then while holding the wings tightly, remove all of the wraps of thread. He then attaches 8/0 Uni thread to re-tie down the wing with very few wraps prior to varnishing the very small head. The back half of the body on this fly is marigold colored floss. The front half is SLF hot orange dubbing, very sparse.

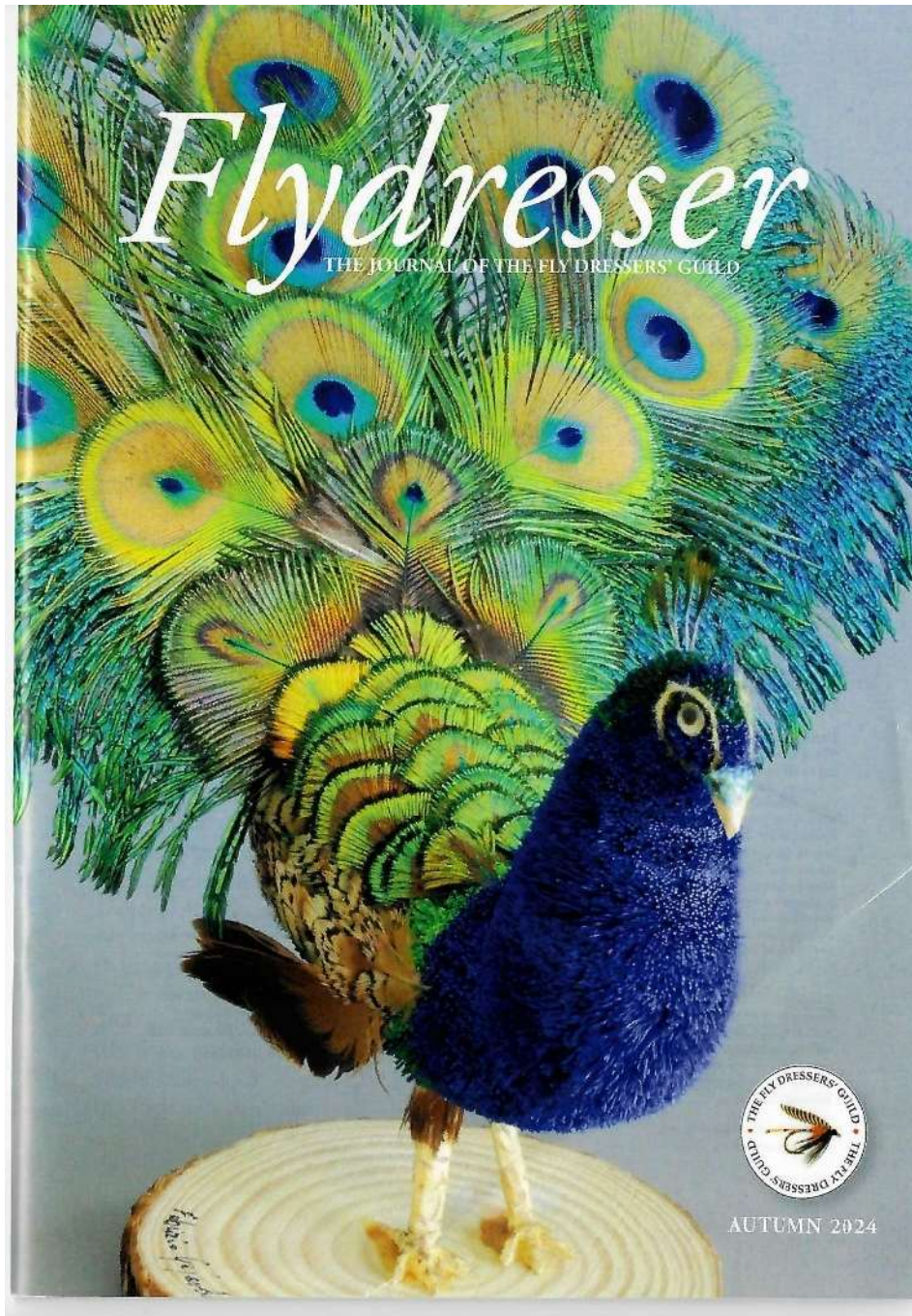


Fly #3 Freestyle Purple Spey: Similar to the Purpy or Purple King, Joel uses purple floss and two ribs of fine gold tinsel. His secret ingredient is the flat ribbing of **UTC Mirage** tinsel. When tied over a dark floss, it looks blueish green which really makes this fly. The more tinsels you add to a spey fly, he recommends using smaller tinsels. Finally, for the teal collar, Joel keeps fibres from both sides of the tip of the feather but removes 90% of the forward pointing fibres from the lower part of the feather. Combining all of these steps gives this “fishey” look to all of his spey flies.

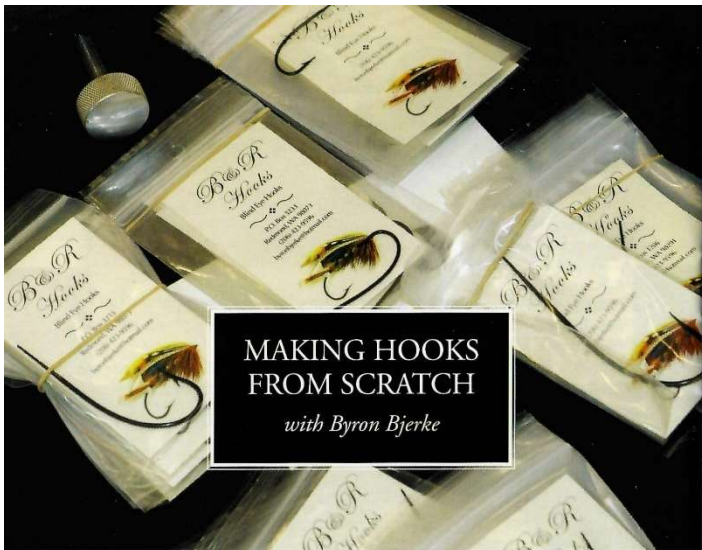


Magazine Articles

Guild members featured in recent periodicals



Following the Atlantic Salmon Fly International Show in Calgary, Chris Reeves, the editor of *Flydresser*, the publication of the large European fly tying guild, spoke to our NWASFG guild member **Byron Bjerke** about including an article on the art of hand-made blind-eye Atlantic Salmon Fly hooks in their Autumn 2024 issue.



MAKING HOOKS FROM SCRATCH
with Byron Bjerke

Chris Reeves reports from the Atlantic Salmon Fly International

I was privileged to be invited to the fourth Atlantic Salmon Fly International, held in Calgary in September this year. This event is dedicated to the art of tying salmon flies using traditional methods and materials. Followers of Kelson, Blacker and other famous tyers compare notes and techniques, offer advice and criticism and mix together almost as a family. While the rare feathers used in these flies are becoming increasingly difficult and expensive to source, original hooks are nigh on impossible to find. Enter the hookmakers. Amongst the best and most well known in the United States is Byron Bjerke. Byron makes hooks from scratch to replicate the old patterns by makers such as Sealey, Bartleet and many others.

Byron has no secrets and will happily explain his process and indeed invites the visitors to make their own hooks. The process starts with buying the wire used for the hook. Byron uses piano wire or spring temper carbon 1080 spring steel wire. The thickness varies from 0.049 inches for a 2/0 or 3/0 hook to 0.072 inches for a 9/0 hook and is purchased in 1 or 2 foot lengths. Coiled wire is to be avoided as it is almost impossible to straighten.



Wires cut to size.

The wire is then sent to an outside company for annealing. The process makes the wire pliable, allowing it to be worked into shape. Byron then cuts the wire into appropriate lengths and stores them in bundles.



Barb roughly cut into wire length.



Some of Byron's jigs.



Bending the hook to shape on the jig.



Tapering the hook shank and refining the point, barb and gutters.

The next step of the process is to cut a rough barb into the wire. The end of the wire is then sanded to a fine point, the barb is refined and the gutters are cut, ready for the bending process.

Each make and size of hook has a different forming jig. Byron makes all of his own jigs out of wood and shaped metal formers and can replicate just about any hook. The barbed wire is placed in the template and bent by hand to fit the shape.

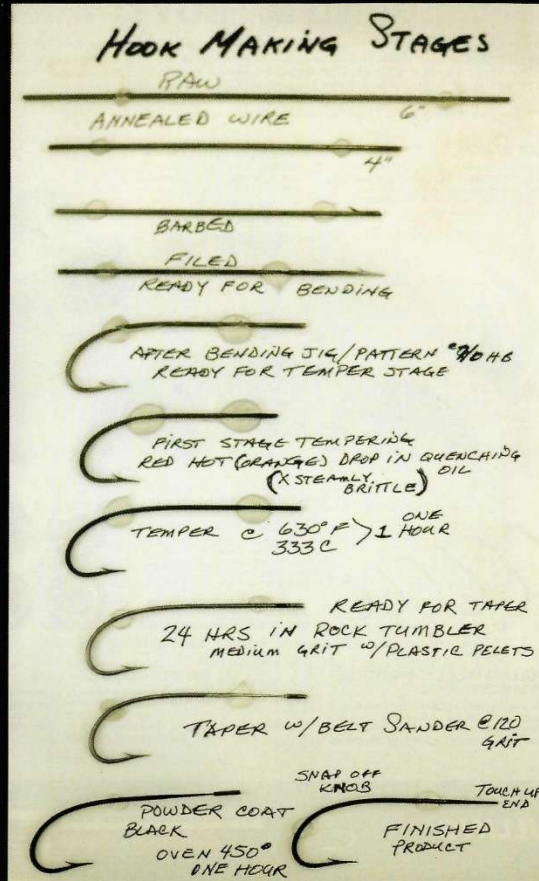
The hook is then ready for the first stage of tempering which is done by heating the wire until orange hot, then dropping it into quenching oil. After the initial quenching, the hook is tempered in an oven for one hour at 330 degrees. Byron uses a dental kiln for this.

Once tempered, the hook is placed into a rock tumbler with medium grit and plastic pellets and tumbled for 24 hours to clean the wire and give it a good finish.

After tumbling, any further refinements required are made to the point, barb and gutters. The shank is then tapered to a point using a belt sander to form the blind eye, leaving the end untouched to provide a holding point.

The hook then gets its black powder coating and heated in an oven at 450 degrees for an hour. Each hook maker has their own recipe for the blacking (japaning) and some keep it very close to their chests. The basic mix is an asphaltic base dissolved in turpentine or naphthalene and other varnish components such as linseed oil are often added. Once blackened, the end knob is snapped off, the end touched up and then the hook is finished.

Byron's handmade hooks sell from \$10 dollars each upwards, which given the amount of work involved seems very cheap to me. You can reach Byron on byronbjerke@hotmail.com or +1 206 423 9596.



The Pole Dancer

A FLY FOR STEELHEAD & PREDATORY TROUT



Tied by Jim Ferguson with text by Chris Reeves

A pattern surfaced at this year's Atlantic Salmon Fly International in Calgary, with the step-by-step photos taken as renowned US fly-tyer Jim Ferguson tied the fly at the show.

Dressing

Hook: Salmon iron size 6 to 10. Jim used a Daiichi 2131 here.

Thread: White, then black UTC Ultra Thread 70 denier or similar.

Tag: Gold Lagartun oval tinsel, fine or similar.

Body - rear quarter: Phosphor Yellow #11 Veniard Glo-Brite Floss (or similar UV fluorescent floss).

Body - next quarter: Scarlet #4 Veniard Glo-Brite Floss (or similar UV fluorescent floss).

Rib: Fine gold Lagartun oval tinsel or similar.

Front half of body: Black Canadian Diamond Dub, a super fine metallic synthetic sparkle dubbing. Ice Dub would be a good UK substitute.

Veil: Strands of yellow, red, blue, pink and purple ostrich herl (or rhea).

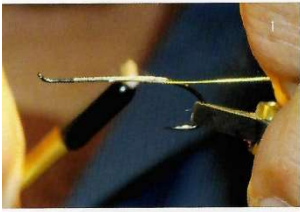
Flash: Two strands fine pearl Krystal Flash and two strands of black/silver Freckle Flash (see Celtic Blob Company's product).

Inner collar: Black hen hackle or ostrich feather with short herls.

Outer collar: Black marabou.

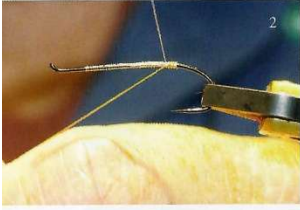
Cheeks: Jungle cock nails or substitutes.

Fly Dresser article featuring **Jim Ferguson** and the steps to tie one of his favorite alluring steelhead flies

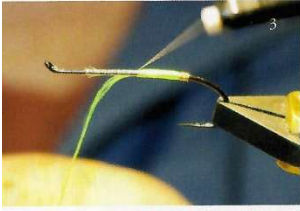


1 Set the hook in the vice and cover with a base layer of thread.

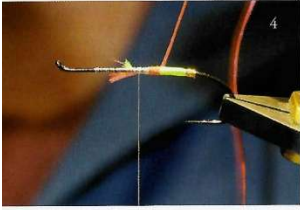
Take a length of the gold oval tinsel, strip it down to the core and tie it in by the core. Jim prefers to use the Lagartun oval tinsel because of its strength.



2 Wrap a tag of four touching turns of the tinsel, secure with one turn of thread and then strip off the outer tinsel from the waste end before tying it down. This avoids an unsightly bump in the body.



3 Tie in a length of Phosphor Yellow Glo-Brite floss and wrap the rear of the body.



4 Tie in and wrap a length of the Scarlet Glo-Brite and wrap to the halfway mark.

5 Tie in the ribbing material as for the

[42]

tag, then change to your black thread. Make a dubbing loop and take a pinch of the dubbing and place it in the loop.



6 Twist the loop into a loose rope, the dubbing needs to be shaggy to support the collar hackle.



7 Wrap the dubbing rope towards the eye of the hook, leaving space for the collar hackles.



8 Bring the rib forwards in open turns through the dubbing. Try not to compress the dubbing fibres too much.



9 Select some fine fibred ostrich herl in a variety of colours.

[43]

Place a few fibres of the first colour on the top of the hook, reverse the hook in the vice and repeat on the bottom of the fly.



10 Repeat step 9 with the other colours.

Once all the colours are in place, add a few strands of each flash material.



11 Tie in a short fibred ostrich herl by the tip.



12 Wrap the ostrich herl as a collar.



13 Tie a long fibred black marabou feather by the tip and wrap one turn

[44]

to veil the ostrich collar hackle.

Note: you could veil the ostrich collar more heavily, with one or two more turns of marabou, as per the second version of the finished fly below.



14 Add a pair of small jungle cock eyes or substitute ensuring they lay tightly against the fly and are not spread out by the collar.



Whip finish and varnish the head.



Fly by Jim Ferguson, a member of the North West Atlantic Salmon Fly Group. He can be contacted on jferguson@comcast.net.

Tips Tags & Tales

Entertaining News, Rumors, Stories, and Folklore

(Francis Francis calls this Notabilia)

Francis Francis includes a variety of descriptions of a feather section in his fly dressings.

Glenn Wilson summarized these in his notebooks as follows:

STRIPS – Approximately 3 fibres

SLICES – Approximately 5 to 6 fibres

SPRIGS – one or two fibres

TIPPET SLICE – “Connected Tippetts” with the rachis attached

How big were Atlantic salmon rods in the 19th century? In *A Book on Angling*, Francis Francis describes four of his single-handed rods (all of which weighed just under a pound without the solid brass winch) as follows:

Gould – A hollow cane rod with an ash butt, 12 feet 8 inches long (sounds a lot like today’s switch rods, except the ash handle will get cold fishing for winter steelhead).

Cheek – a common hickory rod of the usual make, rather stout in the butt. He describes it as very handy and well balanced at 11 feet 7 inches in length. Later in the book, he mentions that even though this is the heaviest of his four rods, it feels much lighter because more of the weight is in the lower section of the rod.

Bowness – An ordinary hickory rod, rather light and whippy, 11 feet 8 inches long (this rod would be great in a drift boat on the Olympic Peninsula to drift egg patterns for steelhead in the winter.)

Aldred – A glued triangular spliced rod, that is, the joints consist of three long pieces of bamboo cane carefully fitted, glued up, and tied every inch and half. He describes this rod as being the most tiring to cast due to its top heaviness. However, Francis marveled at the craftsmanship and beauty and its great power of resistance with a heavy fish. I’m sure he used his most expensive winch with this beauty. The Aldred was 12 feet 4 ½ inches long.

However, by the time Francis wrote his book in 1867, he admitted the following:

“I have, however, after long experience, given up using single-hand rods altogether, for there is nothing which you can do with the single-hand rod which you cannot do with a double-hand one.”

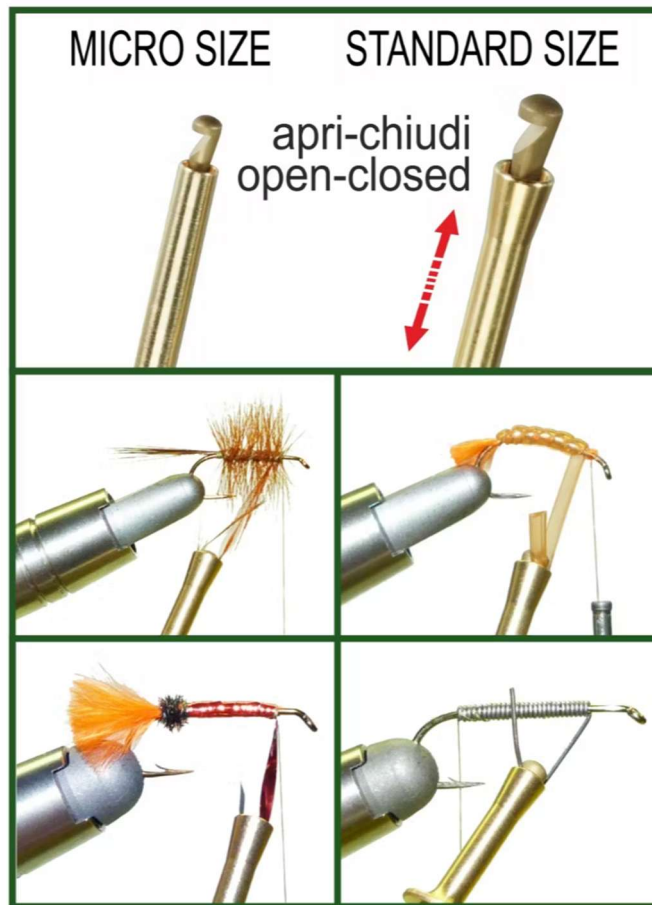
Francis used a double-hand rod which was 14 feet 6 inches [much like the original Sage 9140 and 9150 rods (only heavier)]!

Tool Time

Joel Hill recommends the *micro* Italian Stonfo brand **Elite Hackle Pliers** for use with fine Spey fly tinsels



A new-concept hackle pliers. Permit a very good tightening of every kind of material like cock hackles, cul de canard, microchenille, tinsel, lead wire etc. etc. The micro size is suitable for small hooks 14-24 , the standard size for bigger hooks 16-4/0. 1 piece per bag, pack size 10 bags.



Library Report

Guild Librarian, **Dareld Thompson**, has prepared an updated inventory of all items in the library as of December 2024. Contact him by email (skagitangler@gmail.com) if there is something you would like him to bring to an upcoming meeting for you. A few items to mention are:

The Salmon Flyer – This is a set of two binders and will be checked out together.

Photo Binder of the Grainger Collection tied by Marvin Nolte – Two binders of photographed flies containing about 350 photos.

Ted Niemeyer Collection – Ninety-seven binders containing prints, articles, *Fly Tyer* magazines and feathers. There are also some old Hardy catalogs. This is an interesting collection and is worth checking out a little at a time. I will bring a few binders at a time to meetings.

***Spey Flies – Their History and Construction*, John Shewey, 2022** – As mentioned in the last newsletter, we are looking into getting a copy of this “new” book on Spey flies for the library.

***Atlantic Salmon Flies of Major Traherne*, Satoshi Yamamoto, 2024** – Satoshi lives in Bozeman, Montana. After meeting him at ASFI in Calgary, we are looking into getting a copy of his new book with a complete modern review of the flies of Major John Popkin Traherne.

New Additions to the Guild Library

***Ernest Crosfield: His Salmon Flies and Fishing*, Colin Innes, 2017**

***Steelhead Fly Fishing and Flies*, Trey Combs, 1986**

***Blacker’s Art of Fly Making*, William Blacker (first published in 1842)**

***Century End – A Fly Tying Journey*, Paul Ptalis, 2000**

***Creative Salmon Fly Art Volume 1*, Paul Rossman, 2011**

***Creative Salmon Fly Art Volume 2*, Paul Rossman, 2011**

Book Reviews

In this new section of our newsletter, we would like members to submit a review of any book that they want to share with the guild.

Fly Archive Report

Recent Additions to the Fly Archive



Lady Caroline
by Judy Gattinella



Eric Foch



20FEB2021
Dareld Thompson



16FEB 2020
Dareld Thompson



Floodtide by Byron Bjerke



Stevenson by Mark Spaur



Dark and Bright Claret by Glenn Wilson



Above: #2 for Rivers Tummel, Garry, and Isla

Below: The Jonah per Kelson
by Glenn Wilson



Durham Ranger by Donovan Maddox

Aaron Culley – Stevenson (see newsletter cover page)

Joel Hill: Courtesan Variant, Sol Duc Variant, and Freestyle Purple Spey (see May Guild Meeting article)

Kevin Perkins: Four Spey flies – Kevin is known for tying flies with three dimensional volume. These flies have a goose underwing and one (or two) pairs of bronze mallard top wings to achieve the overall desired blended color. The colors of Kevin’s flies complement each other similar to school colors such as purple and gold or black and orange. The first fly uses various golden pheasant tippetts as an underwing (over and under the hook shank) for increased volume.



GP Crest Golden Orange Spey
by Kevin Perkins



Purple and Gold Heron Spey
by Kevin Perkins



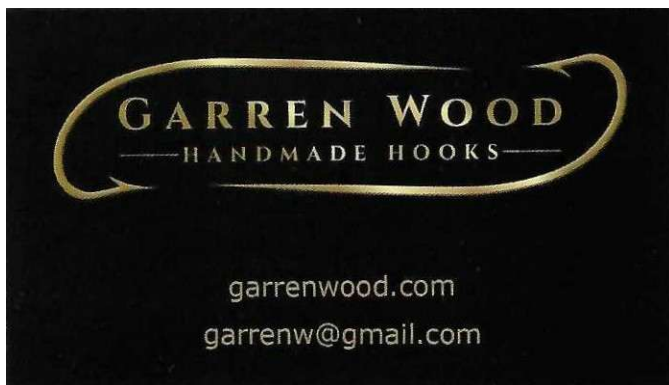
Dirty Orange Spey
by Kevin Perkins



Deep Orange and Black Heron Spey
by Kevin Perkins

Last Cast

Sources of Atlantic Salmon Fly Tying Essentials



Contact Alberto Calzolari

www.54deanstreet.com

+39 377 4782415

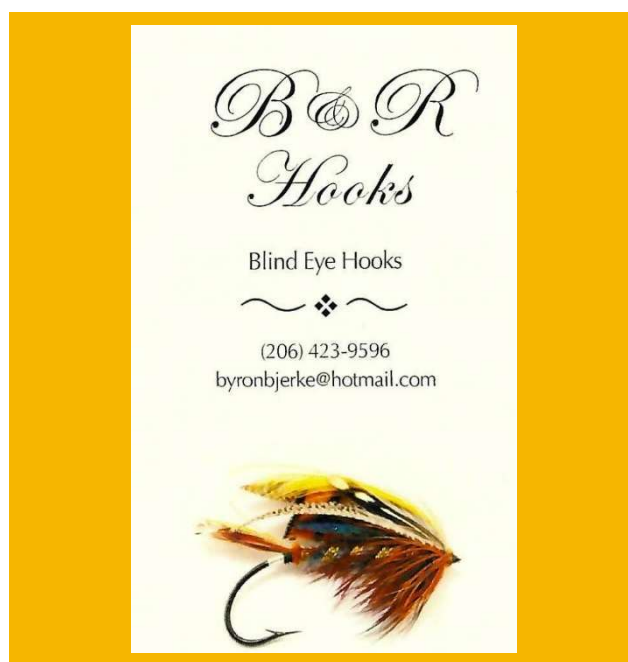
FeathersMC

**Supplier of Classic Atlantic
Salmon Fly Tying Materials**

FeathersMC is moving from
Michigan to New York

John and Terry expect operations to
be disrupted until August

Visit their website
www.FeathersMc.com
for more information



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Books*

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