



# LINES & LEADERS

Newsletter of the Connecticut Fly Fisherman's Association  
Volume 18, No. 3  
November 1990

## NOVEMBER MEETING

The **NOVEMBER 14** meeting will feature Kurt Nelson, the hard-working president of the Thames Valley T.U. Chapter. He will present a slide show on fishing New Zealand's South Island. Kurt lived with New Zealand sheep ranchers/guides and fished rivers such as the Clinton, Mataura, Worsley, and many others. Kurt is a well-traveled angler, extensively fishing in diverse regions such as Montana, British Columbia, and the Canadian provinces for Atlantics. He is also well informed on the trout fishing in the southern part of Connecticut, including the Shetucket River.

**PLACE:** Veteran's Memorial Hall,  
Sunset Ridge, E. Hartford

**DATE:** Wed., November 14, 1990

**TIME:** Fly Tying - 7:00pm  
Program - 7:30 pm

## "Flyfishing Only" area opens

by Michael F. Collins, reprinted from *Salmon Fever Fishing Journal - Fall edition.*

After years of debate, the NY Dept of Environmental Conservation has opened a flyfishing only section on the Salmon River.

This area will not infringe on any other fishing areas on the Salmon River as it is located upstream of the "Altmar Bridge" in waters that were formerly closed to all fishing.

The following regulations will apply:

1. Boundaries - From Rt 52 Bridge upstream to marked boundary
2. Dates - Sept 15 through Nov 30
3. Time - From ½hr before sunrise to ½ after sunset
4. Tackle - Limited to trad. fly rod, reel, line
  - a) Artificial flies only with one hook point
  - b) Non-metallic leader of 15 ft or less
  - c) if added weight is used, you must have a swivel at least 24" above the hook and weight goes above the swivel
5. All Species Must Be Released Immediately so as not to hurt fish. (cont. page 3)

## From the Vest of the President



As a fairly long time member of the Board of Directors, I've been around long enough to see quite a few changes on the board. It's sad to see old friends move on to other interests and demands on their time, but it's also heartening to see new members come forward to become more involved in planning and running the club's activities.

This past summer Neil Bantly and Wally Murray stepped down from the board. This fall we have been fortunate to fill both positions. Our latest recruit is Gary Steinmiller, who will take over the duties of Education Chairman. Gary has been one of the instructors for our Fly Tying School for the past few years, and frequently ties at club meetings and during fishing shows at the Civic Center.

We still have openings for Conservation Chairman and Banquet Chairman. Although other board members have been carrying out the duties of these positions, both the board and the club would be better off if these vacancies were filled. If you are interested or have someone to recommend see me at the meeting or give me a call.

A small group of the directors and members have been working on redesigning the selection of patterns used in the basic fly tying class and putting together an intermediate class for this year. Those attending the October meeting had a chance to suggest patterns for the intermediate class and indicate if they would like to enroll. If you have a suggestion and/or would be interested in taking this class talk to Gary Steinmiller at the meeting, give him a call, or drop a note to the post office box.

Finally, don't forget the Farmington Watershed Association's river cleanup on Saturday, November 10. They will meet at 10:00 am at the main pavilion in People's State Forest, move out to different areas for the cleanup, and return in the afternoon for a barbecue. Just a few hours of your time will be an important contribution, and you will get a chance to meet other fishermen and river users who are just as concerned as we are about maintaining river quality and fisheries. I encourage all CFFA members to help out with this event.

Tight lines,

Larry Johnson

# My Stream Bids Me Adieu

Mike O'Neil

Each of us has a favorite piece of water. That place that we go back to again and again because it is always good to us. We've learned the tricks of its currents and riffles, the rocks and the land the water runs through so that we can even fish it in our dreams -- and often do.

Mine is a stream that runs through a steep valley in the Catskills. My father taught me to fly-fish on it, and I have taught my children the art there too. It is the place where, before New York got sticky about folk damming up their streams, I learned to swim and dive -- at least I learned how to turn a bellyflop into something that didn't hurt. It's where I perfected the trick of skipping small flat stones on top of the water, and learned how to walk barefoot on the slippery stream rocks without falling or stubbing toes (the secret is, you do it carefully).

I have fished a particular part of its clean icy waters so many times that I feel I own it. That's ridiculous of course. No one can own it, regardless of titles and other pieces of paper. Well, maybe the crayfish, beaver, mink, caddis fly and trout own it, but certainly no two-legged critter does.

No one owns it, but the State is particular about when it allows a person to fish it. The season ends sharply on October 1. With the weather still holding up nicely at the end of September, I drove to New York to get one last whack at fishing my stretch.

I reached the stream late in the afternoon and discovered to my horror that conditions were terrible. It was just a trickle and as clear as crystal, so the fish could see you coming for a mile. As far as I could determine there were no insects hatching and no fish were rising.



On the other hand, the sun was still striking the easterly mountains but had left the water, so I had no glare to contend with. With the prospect of poor fishing, at least I had bursts of autumn color displaying themselves on the sunny mountain to cheer me. The top leaves of the hardwoods were just beginning to turn. Their hot patches of red and orange and soft yellow were like plush islands poking up through a stubborn preponderance of green. They were beginning to show off -- giving a tantalizing preview of the brilliance that would soon overwhelm the countryside.

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I tied my version of the Wulff hairwing Royal Coachman dry. It's really a "commoner" and not a member of the royal household, because I don't girdle it with the traditional red silk. The only possible reason I chose the fly I did, was the presence of stonefly signs on the rocks (though the little voice I sometimes listen to told me that the hatch was finished -- finished and gone with days ago). But you've got to start with something. I reasoned that the unencumbered body of peacock herl might somehow match a stonefly's dull color enough to interest the fish.

Small chance, but there you are. At least I'd be able to see the bloody thing.

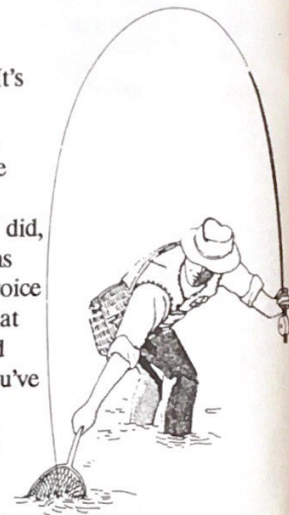
The sixth cast brought one of those pleasant surprises that all of us hope for -- a solid hit. I witnessed it flat-footed, mouth agape. It was so entirely unexpected that my rod hand didn't so much as twitch.

The next cast brought an even happier surprise -- an encore strike. This time I was ready. The fish was a strong, beautifully marked native rainbow of respectable size.

Chile Allam is my friend. He lives in a small old house at the side of the stream a hundred yards down the valley from where I stood. He lives with one companion, a large nervous dog named Highway. Highway was abandoned along the side of the road when he was just a pup. Chile found and nurtured him with love and good food. He in turn adores Chile, but is highly suspicious of all other humans. Chile is 85 and retired from stream fishing as a matter of safety a few years ago. But his soul is still with the water and with the fish, so I took my fresh kill over to his place to show him. It was so pretty that I wanted to share the sight and feel of it with someone who would understand. In his high ceilinged living room, by the light of a small lamp, we marvelled at this beautiful thing together as Highway pranced and barked. The trout had scarcely started to fade and was almost as good as its live self.

When I got back to the stream the sunlight was disappearing. I worked upstream using the same fly and got hit after hit as the light inexorably gave way to dusk. I began to understand that this was becoming one of those rare magical evenings -- lovely and memorable. I was in my most favorite place in the universe. The warm weather had not abandoned me. And against all odds, in spite of crystalline low water, the trout were cooperating

*Continued on page 3*



*My Stream Bids Me Adieu - Continued from page 2*

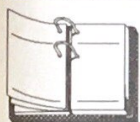
passionately. It was as if they sensed I would not be back until the next spring and were giving me their special attention as a sweet farewell. Adieu-adieu.

I slogged to the edge of the last pool with a bright three-quarter moon burning. The Rixon's big mastiff came charging out at me from behind their cabin howling and slobbering as he gathered steam. Their place is on the other side of the pool. Having heard nothing louder than katydids and my own breathing for the longest time, he scared the bejeezus out of me. This liver colored hound and I have played this game dozens of times and we each know the rules. He barks fiercely and stays on his side of the stream protecting his property. I talk to him as calmly as I can while I stay on my side of the stream and fish. It is a conversation that makes as much sense in its own way, actually makes more sense, than some of those I carry on during my business day in Hartford.

By then I had caught four native trout, each the size of the first. Three rainbow and one brown. The size, by the way, was in the 12 to 13 inch range. One last strike and a nice fish is on the line briefly, and then off. The dog is not offended by my blue, high-pitched expletive. He understands that it is directed at myself and not at him.

Then it is too dark. The lure of a good stiff drink and food draw me slowly away -- creel bulging and heart full.

Oh, what were they actually feeding on? An autopsy conducted at the kitchen sink revealed that their stomachs were full of terrestrials of some sort -- thousands of chocolate dark-brown termites or flying ants whose bodies were not royal. There were much commoner.



## CALENDAR

### Fly Tying School

January 4, 1991 - Veterans Memorial 7pm  
January 11, 1991  
January 18, 1991  
January 25, 1991  
February 1, 1991  
February 8, 1991

### CFFA Annual Banquet

February 2, 1991 - Manchester Country Club

### Fly Fishing School

March 1, 1991  
March 8, 1991  
March 15, 1991  
Casting Pond Session - To Be Scheduled  
Streamside Instruction - To Be Scheduled



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### Flyfishing Only - continued from page 1

According to N.Y. D.E.C. Chief fish biologist, Les Wedge, this is an experimental fishery. The continuation of this flyfishing only area will largely depend on how much it is used and how well anglers adhere to the above regulations. Gary Steinmiller submitted this article and hopes that some of you may be able to fish the area before it closes on Nov. 30th.

# The Salmon of Salmon Brook

Carol Laun

This article appeared in the August 1990 issue of Southwoods



The two branches of Salmon Brook meander through the present town of Granby. It was named in the late 1600's by adventurous settlers moving to this northern wilderness from the parent town of Simsbury. They saw the shallow waters of the brook churning with the spawning salmon and called both the brook and the settlement, Salmon Brook. Just as their sister settlement to the east was called Turkey Hills because

of the flocks found there.

Before the coming of the white man, the Massaco and Agawam Indian tribes shared the land of Salmon Brook. In the springtime, the Indians left their sheltered valleys to take advantage of spawning fish. They waited with torch and spear or used a dip net at the falls and rapids. The Crags in North Granby and the West Granby Gorge were probably excellent fishing sites. Some historians believe that the Indians relied more on fish for sustenance than they did the wild game of the forest.

An early 18th century Holcomb, Hayes or Hillyer coming to Salmon Brook in the spring would have seen the large shadowy shapes of Atlantic Salmon weighing up to 40 or 50 pounds. They would rest briefly in the deep pools on their way to the shallow, gravelly spawning beds in the fast water upstream.

And then they disappeared from Salmon Brook.

According to Newton C. Brainard in an article on Connecticut River Salmon published by the Connecticut Historical Society, historic information about the salmon is scarce. "Here and there in old newspapers, before 1800, we come across an occasional reference. Old account books mention them in their debits and credits. A Suffield diary gives the results of an early fishery near the Enfield Rapids, but nowhere do we find authentic information telling how plentiful these fish were before the civilization of the white man exterminated them."

Noah Phelps in his 1845 History of Simsbury, Granby And Canton, described the salmon situation.

"At the commencement of the settlement (of Simsbury), the river and some of its large tributary streams abounded with salmon and shad. One of these streams, Salmon Brook,

took its name from the grand number of salmon found in it. So highly important was the fishing interest considered, that measures were taken early to protect it."

The town, in 1680, had granted Ephraim Howard permission to build a sawmill "at the foot of the (Tariffville) falls on the east side of the mountain." However, it was stipulated that the dam should not obstruct "the free passage of fish." This was possibly one of the earliest pieces of environmental legislation.

As long as the rivers and tributaries were free of barriers, "vast quantities of salmon and shad were annually taken." The salmon were so plentiful, that buyers of shad were required to also buy a certain percentage of salmon - at a higher price. "The supply of both species continued in great abundance until about 1740," thus furnishing food for the settlers and employment to the fishermen.

The General Court of Connecticut passed laws to protect the fishing by prohibiting dams or other obstructions. Then the people of Windsor monopolized the fishing by placing nets across the mouth of the Farmington River, which, of course, also affected Salmon Brook.

The Court passed more laws forbidding the use of nets or wires (fences across a stream to catch fish) without their permission, but too often they granted permission or else the laws were simply ignored and not enforced.

Fishing declined after 1740 as the population grew and the demand for more mills increased. At first sluiceways for fish were required, then even that restriction was dropped. "Few if any shad have been taken in the town (Simsbury) since 1800; the salmon disappeared much earlier."

Brainard supports this information with his research. "All along the river, farmers from the valley towns came down to the stream during the spring run to catch the salmon and shad and salt them down to add to the family provisions. The speed with which the salmon disappeared is indicated by the statement of Joseph Hayden, the Windsor Locks historian, who reports the last salmon caught there, a 23 pound fish, in 1805."

Granby archives contain the story of Chloe Alderman, wife of Epaphras, who was tending the grist mill on Salmon Brook behind the present Railroad Station

*Continued on page 5*



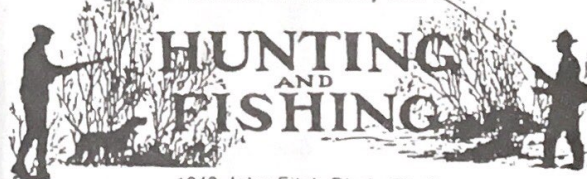
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Salmon of Salmon Brook - Continued from page 4

(Cornflakes Day Care) on Rt. 189. A large salmon tried to jump over the dam and she killed it with a stake. It weighed 18 pounds after being cleaned. this incident occurred around 1790 when Chloe was in her 30's.

Historians are generally in agreement as to the cause of the disappearance of the salmon. It was not overfishing. L.K. Porritt of Canton said, "Hundreds of thousands (of salmon) may have been speared by the Indians or caught in the whiteman's nets, but for every fish that was caught, a dozen others continued on their way upstream to spawn." Nor was pollution the culprit, "the salmon were gone before either the Farmington or the Connecticut began to be heavily polluted by sewerage and factory wastes."

The proliferation of mills on almost every ripple in Salmon Brook and the Farmington River signaled the end of the salmon. The first mill in Simsbury was built in 1679, a grist and saw mill on Hop Brook. The settlers needed lumber cut and grain ground.

When people moved to Salmon Brook, mills were soon constructed. After the separation of Salmon Brook and Turkey Hills from Simsbury in 1786, forming the new town of Granby, a mill was on the agenda of the first Town Meeting.

Elijah Smith was granted "Liberty to Erect & Build a grist Mill at or Near the old Saw Mill place." This popular mill site was located on Salmon Brook near Canal Road and Rt. 20.

In their turn, water wheels became obsolete due to the advent of steam, oil and electric power. All that is left of the mills that once dotted the banks of Salmon Brook are old account books, faded photographs and the stone remnants of mill ponds, sluiceways and buildings - providing mute testimony that a mill once flourished here.

The barriers of the small dams are long gone. The large dams have fish ladders. But the salmon have not returned to Granby. There are no salmon left who can remember that their home was once in Salmon Brook.


*Note: Since 1987, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection has been working on a long-term project to restore Salmon to the Salmon Brook. The young Salmon that have been released in the brook will be "imprinted" with these waters as their home. Within a few years, Salmon may once again flourish in the swift, clear water of Salmon Brook in Granby.*

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The Connecticut Fly Fishermen's Association, Inc. is organized "To Preserve and Promote the Pleasures and Tradition of Fly Fishing and to Conserve Game-Fish Waters." CFFA membership meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month, September through May. Meetings are held at the Veterans' Memorial Clubhouse, Sunset Ridge Drive, East Hartford, CT.

"Lines and Leaders" is the official publication of the Connecticut Fly Fishermen's Association, Inc. and is distributed to its membership and allies of conservation. Business card ads may be placed at a cost of \$5 per ad or \$40 for 9 months. CFFA members may place for-sale or want ads of a non-commercial nature without charge. Newsletter correspondence should be sent to Pam Murray, 160 Rising Trail Dr., Middletown, CT 06457. Change of address notices should be sent to CFFA, P.O. Box 380260, Silver Lane, East Hartford, CT 06138-0268.



**NOVEMBER 14 MEETING - Kurt Nelson - Fishing New Zealand's South Island**

Copy Deadline: Second Wednesday of month previous to publication



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