



End of the season Connecticut River

The Newsletter of The Connecticut Fly Fisherman's Association

November meeting Ron Merly Sea run Browns

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Dick Wemmell's fly box

From the vest of the president



Chuck Koteen and his Albie

From the vest of the President

"Luck affects everything; let your hook always be cast."

Ovid (ancient Roman poet)



We saw the birds first, mostly laughing gulls. They were swarming, screaming and diving onto a frothy area of the sea about the size of an Olympic swimming pool. This area was not frothy from white caps; this was the blood-tinged froth of mass predation. Schools of tiny baitfish were being driven clear out of the water by terror from beneath. Amid this sound and fury, large football-shaped marauders could occasionally be seen slashing through the chaos. This was a blitz! The Promised Land of saltwater fly fishing. The rest of the late September day was spent chasing blitzes as they erupted over an area of about one-half square mile of ocean.

A couple of weeks earlier, Chuck Koteen and I were having lunch and talking about reports of albies off the Rhode Island coast. We decided to share the cost of a fishing charter in hopes of hooking up with some albies, or perhaps some bonito, both of which are types of tuna. Even more likely, we might catch migrating striped bass and/or bluefish which are usually abundant in our coastal waters at this time of year. But it was the chance of catching albies that we lusted after. Albies are False Albacore, aka Little Tunny, aka Fat Alberts. They only visit our inshore waters for a few weeks every fall, if they visit at all. They are difficult to find, notoriously hard to hook and even harder to land. Swimming at speeds over 40 mph, and pound for pound being among the most bull-headed and powerful fish in the ocean, albies will test every knot in your leader, fly line and backing.

Through CFFA, Chuck and I knew a number of good charter boat captains. At the top of our list were fellow CFFA members Mark Dysinger of Flyosophy Charters and Mike Duclos of Tiderunner Charters, both of whom I'd seen at a recent Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission public hearing held at DEEP Marine Headquarters. We were impressed that Mark and Mike made the effort to speak at this meeting in support of regulations to protect the Striped Bass stock. We also respected another longtime friend of our club, Ray Stachelek of Cast-a-Fly Charters, because he, like Mike Duclos, has joined the "Release a Breeder Club", an initiative by Stripers Forever to improve the health of the bass fishery. Rhode Island is Ray's home waters, so we decided to call him first with our available dates.

The plan was to launch in Galilee and fish the Point Judith area, but the night before our trip Capt. Ray suggested a change. Fishing had turned poor at Point Judith and he had received a stellar report from Montauk, the iconic autumn fishing ground at the north fork of eastern Long Island. So we departed before dawn from the Barn Island boat launch in Stonington and crossed Long Island Sound. We were glad to be wearing waterproof clothing to ward off the frequent rain showers and sea spray. The wind picked up and the seas grew increasingly rougher as we approached Montauk, and when we arrived there we found a strong rip had set up off the point producing eight foot waves. It was hard to stand up in the boat, even when holding on with both hands. It was impossible to fish. We briefly enjoyed the view of the famous Montauk Point Lighthouse sitting high on a bluff as we turned around to head back toward New England. The second high speed crossing was rougher than the first and we took quite a pounding. At least we know with absolute certainty that none of us are prone to seasickness.

We had not yet touched a rod as our re-crossing of the Sound ended under dark and brooding skies. We came in directly toward the Watch Hill Lighthouse and immediately saw the frantically swarming birds. The blitz was being attended to by six small boats. Ray did not charge into the fracas. He determined the direction of the tidal current and positioned our boat to drift on a course that could intersect with the course of the blitz. Sometimes that worked. Other times the blitz would suddenly dis-

appear for awhile, and then reappear in an unexpected place, causing the small fishing fleet to give chase. Like Ray, most of the boat skippers operated in a courteous manner. Unfortunately, a couple of boaters repeatedly cutoff other boats by motoring between them and the blitz. Sometimes a blitz would be put down because a boat motored right through it.

There were lots of feeding fish around and Ray gave us plenty of good shots at them, but we had relatively few hookups. None of the other boats were doing any better. The rolling deck made casting difficult, and Ray said the fish had become more easily spooked by the presence of boats and the sound of motors since the migrations began a few weeks earlier. Chuck managed to catch a feisty albie that was larger than average in size. A nice bonito was boated and a heavy bluefish was fought before it bit through the leader. But this trip will forever be remembered for the epic albie we caught and released. According to Ray, Chuck and everyone else who saw its picture, it is the largest albie they have ever seen taken from New England waters.

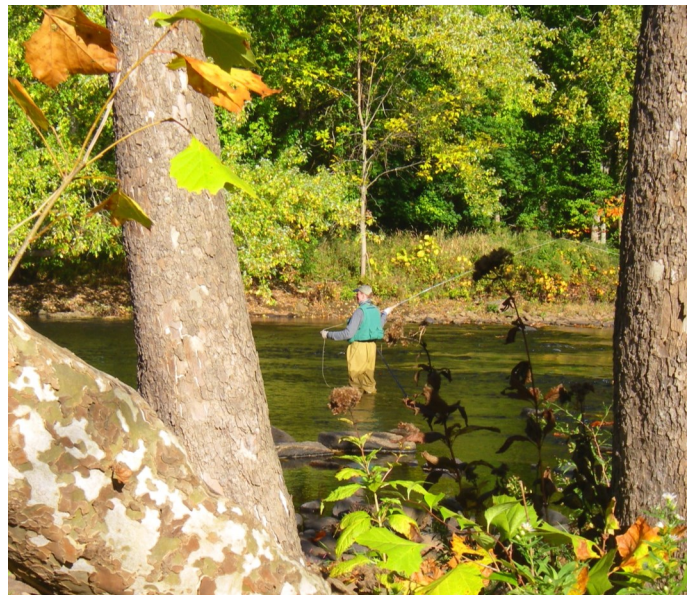
I remember setting the hook then being shocked when the fly line was wrenched from my line hand, making a loud pop as it smacked into the rod before exiting the guides. The reel began to sing my favorite song as the spool spun in a blur of pinwheeling water spray. This was the signature initial run of an albie, except that it seemed to go on for too long, hardly stopping before several hundred feet of backing was out. Imagine seeing the line angle down from the rod tip and not enter the water until it's a football field away. The fish was using to its advantage the strong current at a rip, and I could hardly budge him. I would regain some line only to lose it again, and again. Ray checked my drag tension and declared it was fine. We were beginning to speculate that this fish might be a blue fin tuna. I repeatedly raised the rod then lowered it while cranking line onto the spool and Ray cautioned me not to raise the rod so high that it bent at its weakest point near the tip. He said to look at the straight line formed by the backing outside of the rod tip and try to maintain that straight line for at least the first couple of feet into the rod before it bent. Good advice for someone like myself who does not often fight very powerful fish on a strong leader. Fifteen minutes later, when the albie was nearing the boat, Ray said if the fish swam under the boat I should invert the rod vertically and thrust the tip into the

water to prevent the rod from over-bending. I had to do that a few times while dancing around the bow. Did I mention that the deck was rolling? I remember telling myself not to rush, that most big fish are lost at the boat. We were both tired, and the first one to give into that tiredness would lose. Ray leaned over the rail, got a hand around the caudal peduncle and hauled him onboard.

It was purely dumb luck that the fish happened to eat my particular fly. It's nice that I tied the fly, a 2" long bay anchovy on a #4 hook, but there were plenty of other good flies in the water that day. What I feel best about is that I was prepared for a trophy fish. The day before I had checked and performed maintenance on all my gear, which included constructing the simple leader recommended by Ted Rzepski: a six foot long piece of 20-pound test fluorocarbon with a Kreh loop at both ends. Luck, preparation and good advice all came together to create a lifelong memory.

Chuck and I were both extremely impressed with how hard Capt. Ray worked (and how much fuel he spent) to make the day enjoyable for both of us, despite the poor conditions. It gave me a new appreciation for what it takes to be a fly fishing guide. The speaker at our November 12th meeting is a fishing guide and an author. Hope you can join us for Ron Merly's program on sea run browns. Let your hook always be cast, and may you be fully prepared when luck strikes it.

><<)))*> Bruce



Salmon Season on the Shetucket river

Return to Big Eddy

By Robert Quinn Jr.

(Continued from last month)

Let's get back to the fishing. My Dad, Jack and I all agreed that the water conditions on the West Branch were too rough for us. Instead we fished a small pond about 4 miles away from Big Eddy campground. We saw lots of trout jumping, but were unsuccessful in getting them to take a fly. The most exciting event that day was that we almost dumped my Explorer canoe, but we managed to save it at the last second. We drove into town later that day to attend church and prayed for better luck on Sunday. We also called home to report that we were safe. You have to drive about 18 miles from the campground in order to get cell phone service. We returned to the campground. My Dad was exhausted, so I cooked him a grilled cheese sandwich, which he ate in his tent and then quickly fell asleep. Jack and I dined on rib eye steaks, wild rice and green beans. We then spent the evening fishing the run upstream of Big Eddy where there is a plaque fixed to a boulder in remembrance of a fisherman who drowned in Big Eddy. Both Jack and I wore life preservers and stayed close to shore. Neither one of us had any luck, but the sunset sure was beautiful.

We decided to drive to a brook about 11 miles away from Big Eddy on Sunday. My Dad caught the fish of the trip, a 19 to 20" landlocked on a black ghost marabou streamer. He hooked a second landlocked at least as big as the first, but it threw the hook when it leapt three feet in the air. Jack and I each had a couple of hits, but missed setting the hook. It was a great day on the water with beautiful scenery, including some small waterfalls. We took all kinds of photos to remember that day. A passing rainstorm gave our van a much needed shower on the way back to camp. Most of the roads in this area are dirt, so be prepared to have a filthy vehicle within a couple of days. When we arrived back at camp later that day, we noticed that the water level on the West branch was significantly lower. The decision had been made to reduce the flow a day early. The flow was almost back to normal by Sunday night.

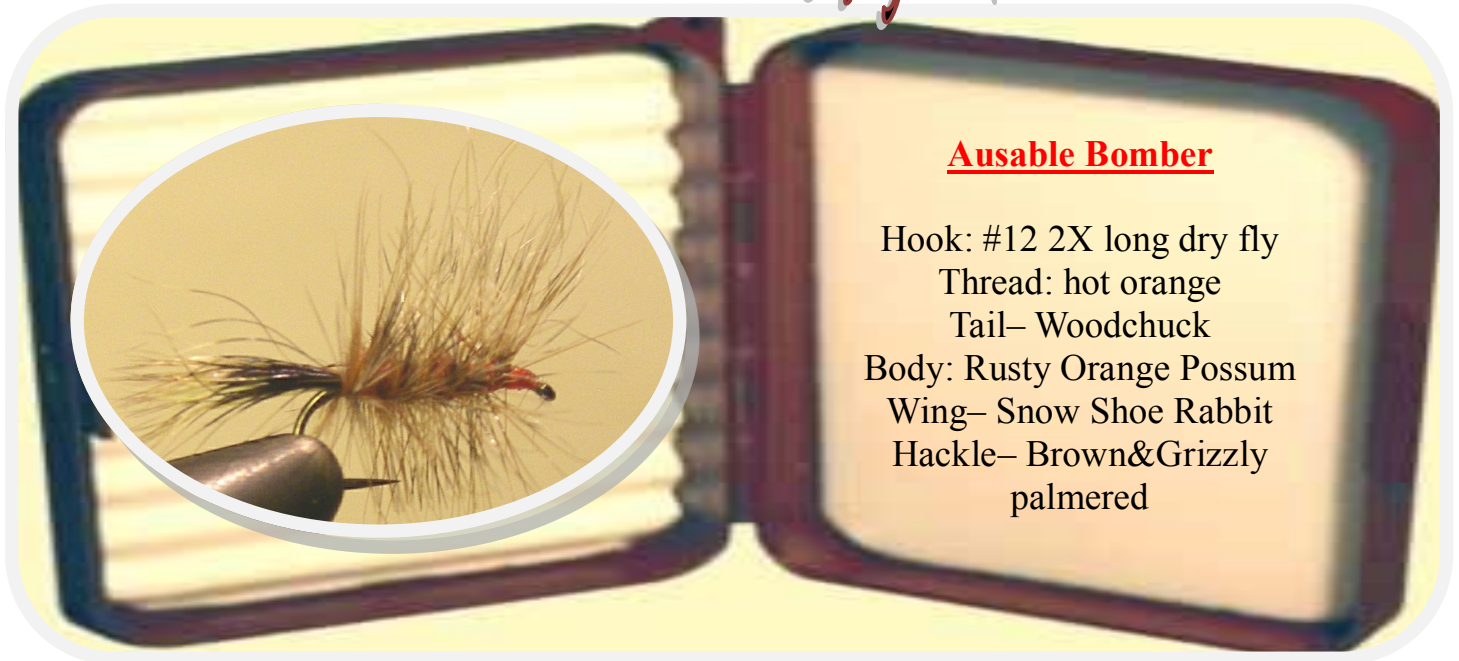
We spent Monday fishing from the canoe on the Nesowadnehunk Deadwater. We each caught at least a half a dozen land locks and brook trout mostly on elk hair caddis and black ghost marabou streamers. Some of the patterns that have been successful for me in the past include orange marabou muddler minnows, Gary Lafontaine's double wing, large irresistible and horn bergs. Mother Nature treated us to some spectacular

views that day, including a bald eagle, a coyote, red fox, and deer with of course, Mount Kathadin in the background. Later that evening, Jack and I fished the run at the head of Big Eddy pool and I managed to land another landlocked around 14" on a black ghost marabou streamer. We snapped a few photos in the fading light and hightailed it back to camp before the mosquitoes ate us alive.

Unfortunately we had to leave Tuesday morning as I needed to get back to work. Although it was a short trip, my Dad, Jack and I will never forget this adventure shared with one another. A couple of months after we returned home from this trip, my Dad was diagnosed with cancer. You never know when life is going to throw you a curveball, so remember to take the time to get together with your loved ones.



Dick Wemmell's Fly Box



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YOUR club needs two of you to come forward to fill two open Positions . Perhaps you have a few hours a month, if that to fill these positions? As you already know some of us give many hours each month so everyone can enjoy themselves and learn more about fishing.. And if you think your busy so are we but we enjoy doing this how about giving it a try? Bruce is waiting to hear from 2 members. One for Publicity and a webmaster.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I am in 5 fishing organizations; none have a library like we have thanks to Scott and Johnathan Goldman. You have all gone out and bought books so we all know what they cost. These two great guys buy and donate everything for his wonderful resource that is open to all CFFA members. They lug these books to each meeting (I'll bet if you offer to give them a hand putting it up or helping put them back in there car they would appreciate it very much) I have taken out a number of them myself. Winter is coming a bit less fishing as we all know and these guys have books on places to go, tying as well as how to become better fisher persons (how's that for being PC) without a doubt taking out these books and bringing them back on time makes their day, much effort is put into this.

Roger Plourde has been taking care of programs for as long as I can remember, without a doubt does the best job of any club with our entertainment. And I say this because I see what type 4

About our speaker this month

Ron Merly has been fishing the trout streams of New England and beyond for more than 45 years. He holds the current Connecticut state record for sea-run brown trout, is the author of Flyfisher's Guide to Connecticut and served as the President of the Nutmeg chapter of Trout Unlimited from 2009-2012. Ron has been fly fishing since age 5 and is a talented fishing guide and teacher .

other clubs have for entertainment for the membership. Roger has many connections and uses them for our benefit. I hope we never lose him, as I said I see what other clubs have. Not only does it take time for him to bring us quality speakers and entertainment it cost a few bucks to. Think about that when you buy raffle tickets at our meetings as well attend out banquet. Something that is sad is how few young people are joining the clubs as they can get much information on line. But nothing compares to our library, programs and the fly tiers in the back of the room showing you some of their favorite patterns and how to tie them. We all know young people that fish, invite them to a monthly meeting and show them around at what CFFA has for only a few bucks a year all you have to do is show up and take advantage of it. You can watch Dancing with the stars or a Survivor program with On Demand on another night during the month but our meeting on the second Wend. Of the month is not on TV or the Internet.



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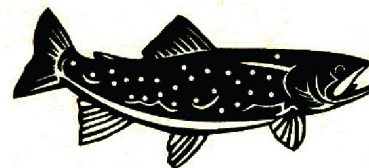


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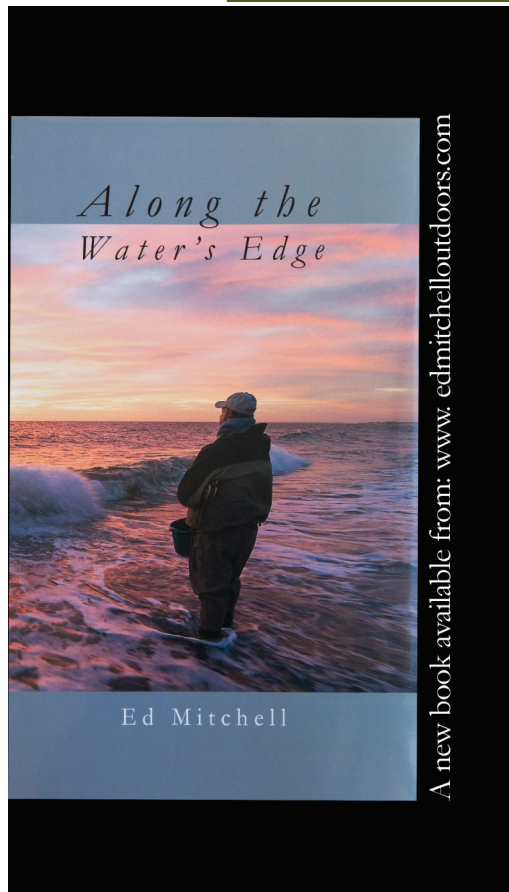
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Lines & Leaders

The Newsletter of The Connecticut Fly Fisherman's Association



SAVE THE DATE

Monthly Board meeting December 3rd 7PM
at Club House

Monthly meeting November 12th
7 PM

UPCOMING EVENTS

Arts of Angler Show Nov. 15-16

Ethan Allen Inn Danbury

Fly Tying Class begins in Jan.

Jersey Fishing Show Jan. 23-25

Garden State Convention Center Somerset NJ



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FEDERATION OF
FLY FISHERS

