

2017 Angling Calendar

Delphi Lodge, Connemara, Ireland, March 25 - April 2. Susan and I played tourist in Dublin for several days before going to Delphi, in part to celebrate her birthday, in part because it has been many years since we were there. Our pied-a-terre in Dublin was the fantastic Guesthouse 31 (<http://www.number31.ie/en/>), just off St. Stephen's Green. Our stay at Delphi (<http://www.delphi.ie>) was as relaxing and wonderful as we could have wanted -- interesting fishing and walks, some tourism, excellent food, and good company. Susan had a "big fish" (salmon) on for a bit while trailing a Toby on Doo Lough. We were trailing flies and lures in a bit of a wave and wind. Susan turned to me and said, "Bob, my line's stuck on something." Line was peeling off the reel and the rod tip was bucking. In the confusion of getting in the other three lines, some slack got in her line, which gave the fish a chance to escape. I had a salmon on briefly in the Bunderragha, tail of Holly pool, and another in Fin Lough. We caught quite a few brown trout (resident trout) to just under 3 pounds, though most were in the 10 - 14 inch range. We discussed at some length the addition of a museum to chronicle the equipment, clothing, and people of the Delphi Fishery since its inception, around 1820. The beautiful river consists of 1.5 miles of man-made pools, planned to create a challenging gentleman's fishery for rod and line salmon in the 1820s. The construction of the pools reflect what was considered sport at the time, suitable for the equipment and techniques then available. We should have some fun in bringing that project to completion. Only three salmon were landed during our week, a very disappointing number historically. The last three years' runs have suffered from the very small proportion of smolts that survived their passage by the salmon farms in Killary Fjord. The government closed the farms in 2016 because of the disease. The discovery came because the Delphi Fishery, which has the only salmon hatchery in Ireland, alerted the fisheries minister that there were very few returns of smolts planted upstream of the farms; most of the returns were of smolts placed in the fjord on the seaside of the farms. Every hatchery smolt from Delphi has a microchip in its nose, which has provided scientists with massive data sources for over 30 years. The Fishery also has catch records going back into the 1800s, so you can get a good idea of trends. Their arrangement with the government requires mandatory release of all wild salmon and mandatory kill of all hatchery salmon. They net the lakes to remove all hatchery salmon in October before spawning. Their improvements to the salmon and sea trout spawning areas are impressive. The effort placed in trying to expand the wild fish while providing adequate sport to support a fishery have met with frustration in recent years from the disease from the salmon farms and the efficiency of high seas netting. This is a very interesting fishery, one I look forward to visiting every year.

Olympic Peninsula, Washington, April 8 - 15. We had a great time on the OP, into fish during our first hour of fishing from an excellent high-water run.



We took guides for two days, which is always a learning experience. J.D. Love (<https://www.facebook.com/JD-Love-Fly-Fishing-188622627834608/>) has always provided a great day fishing for me, whether in my and his youths in Montana or on the OP. We saw a number of fish and my partner had one come hard for his fly. J.D. and I saw it well, likely a spring chinook in the mid-teens. Richard Underwood (https://www.facebook.com/search/str/assault+on+the+quinault/keywords_top) also provided a very interesting exploration into a fishery I'd like to fish a lot more. The water was mostly quite high, higher than either guide preferred. We were able to find many places to fish. This excursion is always so interesting because of the variety of wildlife we encounter and because we have such interesting walks along elk trails and through blowdowns in the rain forest to our fishing spots. We walk 6 - 8 miles a day through rough and beautiful terrain. Great exercise. Creatures encountered included Roosevelt elk, coyotes, otters, and the footprint of a small cat (lynx?). Many birds were around: pine siskins, pacific wrens, eagles, osprey, terns, gulls, robins, ravens, crows, humming birds, and others. Two pairs of otters grabbed our attention because it was mating season and they were extremely playful and absorbed with one another. One pair came down the

river just a few yards from where we were wading. My partner alerted me as they came by him just upstream. I slipped out my camera to take a photo. As soon as the otters saw the camera, they dove to come up together 80 yards downstream. I got a photo of their heads in the distance. Did they continue their coupling while underwater?



In addition to steelhead, we caught bull trout, dolly varden, and cutthroat. I got four cutts on four consecutive casts, all about the same as



Penns Creek, Pennsylvania, April 30 - May 4. One of my more interesting excursions to Penns. The water was very low for the time of year and warm (60) when I arrived to fish on the afternoon of April 30 below Coburn. There were fish around and about a dozen graced me with their attention, none of any size but one. The one, the largest fish I saw during this trip, took a dry fly down twice without eating it. It was against the far bank under the overhanging hemlocks, but not a difficult cast when you're able to move around in low water. Monday brought more of the same fishing downstream in the Ingleby area. A good number of fish liked my flies in the morning, but fewer were interested in the afternoon. I sat on a log with a fellow rodmaker for an hour or so, discussing the state of the art. Heavy weather was coming in, so I left the river around 6:00 p.m. after catching a few smallish trout below Omaha Beach. One of the heaviest rains with extremely high winds greeted me at the top of the hill just outside Aaronsburg. The rain was so heavy that it was impossible to see to pull off the road, so I kept close to the double yellow line, which appeared every so often. The rain let up slightly when I got to Millheim, but the high winds had knocked down trees and power poles all over the area, leaving us without electricity for two days. The river now was running too high to fish and dirty. Tuesday morning I drove around, checking out Roaring Run, which settles quickly, Spring Creek, which settles more quickly than Penns, and Spruce Creek and Little Juniata on the west side of State College. None were in condition for fishing. I returned late to Penns and decided to fish below

Coburn because of the relative ease of access. The water was running at about 2,000 cfs (mean for early May would be about 600 cfs, and I like to fish Penns when it's at 750 - 1,000) with about 15 inches of visibility. Surprisingly, I got three small trout on a fly I'd tied that morning by the light of the window in my room. Wednesday, I went to Spring Creek and fished the water by the fish hatchery, which is always a delight. No big fish, but a good number of small trout came to small wets. I was six risers in the stretch and got them all to take the fly, which was fun in itself. I drove back to Penns Creek in the afternoon to find it running about 1,200 cfs with 24 inches of visibility. In the first 30 minutes six small trout liked my offerings. I was primed for a great afternoon! Then for three and a half hours I did not see a fish. One of the few times I can recall being on the river for such a period without seeing a rising fish. I had planned dinner with some friends, so I left about 6:00 with no regrets about missing anything. Thursday was my last day, and it turned out to be as good a day as you could wish. Not many risers, but a lot of good fish took the wet fly. Most were over 12 inches, with four in the high teens. One was just slightly short of 20 inches. Penns was running at about 1,000 cfs with good visibility, water temperature 53.. Previously, most of the fish were 8 - 12 inches. Only one or two such small fish on Thursday. The flies around while I was there included March Browns, Hendricksons, Sulfurs, stoneflies, caddis, and crane flies. I used a 9 foot 5 weight on Penns and an 8 foot 4 weight on Spring Creek. Both were wonderful! I stayed as usual at www.centremills.com.

I've looked at my notes from past years about my late April early May trip to Penns. The last big fish I caught was in April 2012, when I averaged two a day over 22 inches with the largest fish measuring 25 inches. Since then, the fish in the stretches of Penns I fish have averaged smaller in size. I once saw large fish regularly under the hemlocks in several locations below Coburn and above and below Ingleby. I still see good fish in those stretches, but rarely one over 20 inches. Last year, I got one fish that stretched to 22 inches and two of 19 inches, one a rainbow. One of the pools where I in years before 2012 I routinely saw and caught large fish -- over 20 inches -- has changed somewhat dramatically. When the water was high, large fish would feed under three overhanging trees. The lies were tough to fish, but very rewarding. The uppermost, and largest, of those trees blew down diagonally across the middle part of the pool in 2013. That change has pushed the flow of the river more to the middle, possibly creating a less desirable home for large fish.

Beaverkill and Willowemoc, Catskills, NY, May 16. Fished for the afternoon and early evening at Wagon Tracks and Cairns on the Beaverkill and at Hazel Bridge (above) on the Willowemoc. Saw a few fish rising against the far side at Cairns, but needed the six-weight rod to make the cast, which is close to 100 feet. I could get about 85 with the 5 weight, wet-fly rod, but not far enough. Otherwise, saw no fish. Three small tugs at Wagon Tracks, but no fish showing. It was a beautiful day. A highlight was running into two people I use to see at Cairns many years ago. One had moved to California and the other to Florida and had returned to fish.

Micmac Camp, Grand Cascapedia, Quebec, June 4 - 9. See the entry for Orkla Lax.

Gourmet Salmon Lodge, York River, Quebec, June 10 - 13. [See the entry for Orka Lax.](#)

Restigouche Motel Outfitters, Matapedia River, Quebec, June 14 - 16. [See the entry for Orka Lax.](#)

Norwegian Fly Fishing Club, Gaula River, Storen, Norway, June 25 - 30. [See the entry for Orka Lax.](#)

Orkla Lax, Orkla River, Storaas, Norway, July 1 - 15.

I'm waiting to check in at Trondheim airport after three interesting weeks in Norway. But, first let me back up to the June 4 – 16 excursion en gaspesienne.

Fishing was quiet at the Micmac Camp while we were there. I had two encounters, one at Lower Jam, the other at Maple, but no hookups. My partner had some action on the last day at Ledge and Donkey Hole. The last day was the first one where we saw running fish in A water. Our companions each caught one fish upriver, one in C water and the other in B water as I recall. The Cascapedia was in great shape for fishing. The early run was upriver, with catches at the top of the branches in early June, and the next run of fish waiting in the bay for a triggering event, higher and possibly warmer water. As in the past few years, this run began entering the river in the days after we left. Our companions also caught two on the Lake Branch 89 run when they returned to the Cascapedia after the four of us fished the York..

The York experience was unique with the Patterson family taking care of us at Gourmet Salmon Lodge. They have an abundance of interesting pools. We saw fish in the tail of Home Pool, one of which was more than twice the size of the others. I passed three files by its nose as Norbert Patterson observed and directed from the high bank but with no reaction from the fish. One of the others had a fish on briefly at Home Pool. I had a good pull and near hook-up at Hank's Run. Otherwise, it was a nice, relaxing few days.

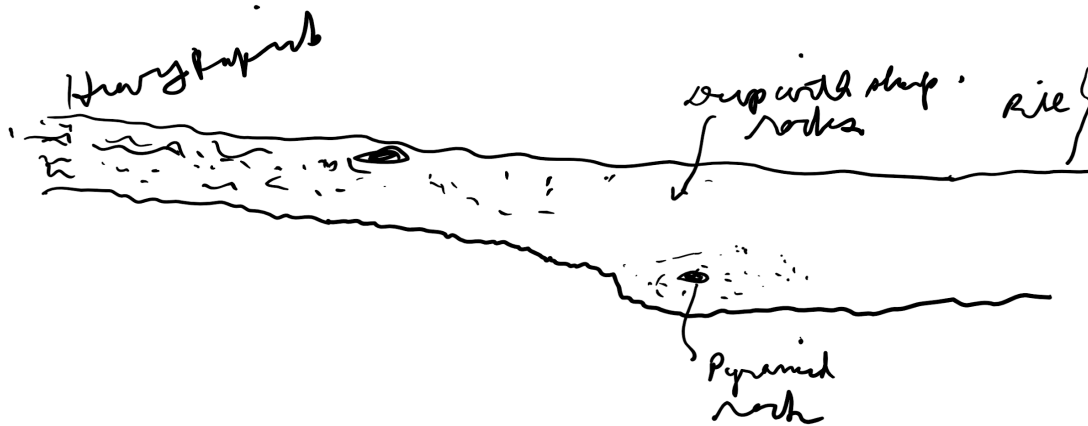
My partners and I spent our last four days on the Matapedia with Pete Dube. My fpartner had two fish at McKiel on the first day. One, the larger at around 20#, showed for his fly on the first drop, third or fourth cast. That one jumped its way free as he was bringing it in. The second took a little further down, a bright, sea-liced 15 # fish. I had a fish that came four times in McCallam's Pool on the Restigouche, never taking the fly, before sinking into the depths. We each had a couple of more pulls, but the fish mainly gave us the fin(ger).

I spent the last week of June on Gaula, fishing the Norwegian Flyfishing Club water. Per Arneborg, who bought the NFC from Manfred Raguse several years ago, has a very

interesting operation. The day is split into four six-hour beats. You can fish with or without guides. They give you a GPS and a booklet with maps of their pools for guidance. Meals are served at fixed times, so you can fish all rotations some if you wish. They also maintain a number of “free-for-all” pools outside the rotation if your assigned pool isn’t fishing well or you’d like to fish more than your pools. I’m starting to understand most of their pools, and it was fun fishing them. I shared my beats with a youngish, very keen GP, originally from London, now practicing in Newcastle. I had six encounters, two fish hooked, and two landed. One was a bright, sea-liced 36” female from a downriver beat below the Kval bridge, below the Gaulafossen. The other was from one of the Bogen Sondre beats above the fossen, a still silver, small-kype 42 ½ male. The big fish in the NFC log then was 106 centimeters, so I chose to put that fish in at 105 centimeters.

My partner joined me the first week of July at Orkla Lax. He got a nice grilse right away and then the action cooled down for the week for both of us. I also caught a grilse and then we went barren except for pulls and lost fish, etc. until Saturday when I got two very nice males of 33 inches and 47+ inches. The second a very big fish in a year of big fish on Orkla.

Earlier in the week I lost an even larger fish that none of us saw for almost 15 minutes when it ran to the hole in the pool and the leader sheared on the rocks. It took a small black-wing collie type fly on a ¾” aluminum tube on a short cast to the run just outside pyramid rock in Espaas. I was prepared for a big fish with the 15’, 10-weight rod and 20# leader (light for some in Norway, heavy for me). It sat in the run just off the bar outside pyramid rock for about 15 minutes. It moved towards me slightly from time to time only to return to its original position seconds later. I decided to get a more downstream pull on the fish, which was across from me and perhaps very slightly below, moving downstream in the little bay that is home to pyramid rock. After I took about 5 steps the fish immediately ran to the deep spot fringed by jagged rocks on the far side of the run. In retrospect, I should have reversed my direction and followed, holding the rod above the fish as much as I could to keep the leader away from the rocks. I doubt if I could landed the fish, though, because it was too heavy and strong for even my strongest rod to lift its head over the edge of the sharp rocks. It would have prolonged the possibility, though, and perhaps if the fish had ever chosen to run directly downstream the leader would have cleared the rocks and the fish could have been brought in...;. A very big “perhaps!” Here’s a sketch of the pool:



I learned something provisional from the behavior of the two large fish -- one lost, the other landed -- at Espaas. When under stress, large fish tend to run to the last spot they felt safe. The lost fish had been in the pool for a while and had experienced the security of the deep hole. The landed fish took the fly just above the rill that enters from river left, not having reached the secure holding lie in Espaas. Instead, it ran to the deep, holding lie just below the Halset hut, the pool below, a length of about 100 meters.

The second week I was paired on my beats with a wonderful Austrian. I previously had heard of him from two friends that fished with him in Russia at least once. Not only was he a delight to be with, he was also the hot angler for the week, so it was fun and eventful with him. I contributed with four fish, but he was the prime attraction. For the two weeks, I ended with 17 shows, 10 fish on the reel, and 7 fish landed. All three of the non-landees were large, naturally!

Orkla was unusual for July. Water temperature was mostly 9.5 to 10.5 C, when normal for that time is closer to 13 – 14. The air temperature got over 15 C only briefly a couple of days; most of the time it was 11 or 12. Lots of rain. The second week's rain put Orkla at the second highest I've ever seen it, but it continued to fish well. It remained clear, except for a slight intensification of the normal olive-yellow taint to the water. The first week 8 anglers put 30 fish in the log. The second week 8 anglers placed 32 fish in the log. Everyone in the rotation had at least one fish each week.

The following week there were 62 fish in the log. Water levels below the tunnel were lower, which brought in Liholen where several nice fish were taken. We fished

Liholen once in the two weeks I was there, but the water was really too high. I saw running fish in the normal spots, but it's unlikely that they stop there in such high water. Interesting trade-off at the four Varmstat beats where some of the pools fish best in high water and others in low water.

The value of the long, heavy-line rod was evident during my weeks there. I only used the light rod (14', 420 grain line) upstream at Rye and Espaas when the water was running about normal or slightly high -- 22 - 25 cubic meters/sec. Otherwise, I used almost exclusively the big rod (15', 650 grain line) with a variety of tips because the water was high during my stay and cold (only over 11 C one afternoon and evening, when I waked flies at Rye).

Flowers River Lodge, Labrador, Canada, August 5 - 11. I should be getting ready for the flight from Goose Bay to the Flowers River Lodge, but here I am in White Plains, logging an unsuccessful attempt to leave the quaint environs of NYC for the quainter environs of Labrador. Weather-related problems in Montreal and Toronto pushed back all Air Canada flights so there were no connections to be had to Goose Bay until sometime next week. Mike has graciously offered me a later week, and I will try to rearrange my ticket for then. We'll see on that one. 2017 has been my year for travel problems and excitement!

I'm now writing in the afternoon of August 29 from Goose Bay after returning from Flowers River Lodge. My travel took me from NYC to Montreal to Halifax to Goose Bay. We stayed overnight at Otter Creek Bunkhouse for proximity to the Otter float plane. Then, ten of us sat in Goose Bay for two days waiting for the fog to lift. We were lucky to get the Otter on the morning of the third day, because the person who had hired it for the first run let us use it while he transported some materials for rebuilding his camp in his Beaver. As a consequence, we had 3 ½ days of fishing rather than 6.

I was paired with a very congenial companion, who had been fishing the Flowers River since 2002. His attitude about the experience and engagement with the people were inspiring. Hopefully, he will return next year; it would be fun and beneficial to fish with him again. Our guide was first-rate, very knowledgeable about the river and salmon angling, one of Newfoundland's best known fly tyers and salmon anglers. It was an immense privilege for me to be with them for those few days.

The Flowers is a wide, shallow river with a low gradient compared to many salmon rivers. There are some rapids that punctuate the flow and require some hiking and changes of boats to reach the upriver and downriver pools. We fished all but one of the pools in the normal rotation. The one we missed we would have fished if we had arrived on time. Starting from upriver, we fished Landslide, Top Pool, Gonzo's Perch, Long Beach, Jones, (missed Island), Max's, and Red Bear. Most of them were wonderful Spey pools. Top Pool, one of the best holding pools, was a dry fly pool where I fished mostly with a

single-handed rod. I got at least one fish in every pool except Red Bear. There, the guide and I were alternating casts, both of us trying to understand better how the other Spey casts. A grilse took the fly while the guide was casting. It was the only fish caught on a fly I tied for the trip and the only time we chose one from that box.

Wet flies are on the very small side, dressed sparsely on a # 10 light wire hook. They're also dressed short, with the wing covering only about $\frac{1}{2}$ the hook length. The tyers there prefer moose hair for the wing. My best flies were a Blue Charm Green Butt and a Thunder and Lightning. The big fish came on a mid-size bomber with a blue butt. It was one of two dry fly fish I took. The only fly in the box larger than a dime is the bomber on the right side. Incredibly, the color of the butt on the small wets apparently made a difference, as did gold rib rather than silver. Locals also say that moose hair for the wing makes a big, positive difference.



In the 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ days, I had 31 shows, 17 fish on the reel, and 13 landed (3 grilse). Two sea-year salmon this year were 28 - 29 inches, 7 or 8 pounds. Three sea-year salmon were 34" - 35" and were 15 - 16 pounds. There were some salmon around that were slightly larger -- my large fish was 37 inches, probably 18 pounds or so. A 38 inch fish is generally around 20 pounds. I saw a couple of fish that may have been in the mid-twenties. The guides say

they have a few fish in the 30 pound range every year. One remarkable aspect of Flowers River salmon is their propensity to jump. Most of them made lightning-quick darts and short runs punctuated with high jumps. Only one ran any appreciable length of line, which was perhaps 50 yards. That fish also jumped several times. It was around 16 pounds.

The Spey rod I took turned out to be ideal for the river. It was a 12 ½ foot rod with a 350 grain Scandi head. Most of the fishing was river left. There was a strong downstream wind for about ⅓ of the time fishing. The Spey rod was a good choice for covering the water. Mine was the sole Spey rod in camp, and it was a difference-maker in terms of enjoyment and success. When I return, I'll probably take a lighter single-handed rod than the 9 ½ foot 8-weight, which worked fine, but was a little more rod than needed for the dry fly pools.

One of the guides was from Portland Creek and wanted his anglers to fish the hitch all the time. His father and grandfather were involved with the camps where Lee Wulff fished at Portland Creek and River of Ponds. He, like all the people at the camp, were helpful and friendly.

The two photos below provide an idea of the aerial display of the Flowers' fish. Quite the thing!





Poplar Park B & B, Kispiox River, BC, September 10 - 23. Joined a group long-time angling friends again for two weeks in the Skeena system. The first two days the rivers were blown out, so no fishing and lots of visiting. After visiting days, we fished 3 days on the Skeena and the remaining days on the Kispiox. No side excursion to the Bulkeley this year, which only began to fish on the last two days we were there. There were not a lot of steelhead or coho in the system. Even the pinks were somewhat diminished in numbers from past odd-numbered years, which have seen massive runs of pinks. On the positive side, there were lots of interesting creatures -- sandhill cranes, eagles, hawks, ospreys, fox, raccoon, otter -- even though I didn't see a bear until the last two days, when I saw several black bears. A little disappointing was not seeing a grizzly and her cub that had been appearing in the meadows below the B & B. Back to the fishing, I had 7 encounters, 3 of which latched on, and I landed 3, two females and a male. The smallest was from the Skeena. She hit hard going away and ran and jumped with wonderful enthusiasm. She came on a light brown buck bug while using a Fenwick graphite rod and a Hardy reel whose song was impressive. The male came from the Kispiox on a spade fly while using the cane spey rod I leave in BC. It ran well, bull-dogged, and thrashed but never really jumped. The female from the Kispiox was from Bob Clay's pools (see www.riverwatchrods.com) on a black and white buck bug using the cane rod, fittingly enough. It was 35" long and jumped several times, once arcing out and landing nose

first, a feat not often seen. The most interesting story of the trip came on the last day. One of my companions stopped fishing a couple of hours earlier than I. He came to the tail of a good run and announced to our friend on the bank that he was making his “last cast,” which rewarded him with a good-size male. Later, at the same spot I announced to the same friend that I was making my “last cast.” His expression of excitement when my line snapped tight drooped into a sigh of resignation when my fish jumped -- a good-size cutthroat. It would have been too good a story if both of us had landed a steelhead on our last cast of the trip from the same spot!

I left feeling quite lucky this year, as I had some action while many elite anglers had much less action than I for a significantly greater investment of time. Sometimes results are difficult to rationalize. For example, I followed the most experienced steelhead angler in my acquaintance down Clay's pool. He was fishing a hitched wet fly, often an effective tactic. The fish I took must have looked at it, but chose to rise to my buck bug 15 - 20 minutes later when I came through. And, its take was not tentative, but confident and strong. When fish are scarce, latching onto one behind this particular angler is even rarer than the incidence of fish. He's that good. Had this fish slipped into the sweet spot after he had come through? Was there something it preferred about my fly? Had some change in the light or water activated it? No one could ever know. So, anglers simply end up saying, “I was lucky.”

We did not spend all the time while we were blown off the river visiting. Some of it was devoted to learning more about steelhead in its environs through reading and discussions with other anglers and a fisheries/ biologist. Highlights for me was reading a book on steelhead behavior by J.D. McPhail, which is really good. Another highlight concerned a discussion about how scientists label gender for steelhead and Atlantic salmon. Evidently, apart from female and male, they use the words “doe” and “buck” for steelhead and “hen” and “cock” for Atlantic salmon. Now, I wonder where that usage derived?

Below is a photo of the fly box I have now fished from the last two seasons on the Kispiox. The buck bugs have proven especially effective. I'm reminded of Gary Anderson's analysis of fly types and Atlantic salmon taking behavior in his second book, [Atlantic Salmon: Fact and Fantasy](#). Inspired by the six fly-taking motivations observed by Hugh Falkus and discussed in his book, Anderson aligns his experiences with different fly types. The bug is the only fly that Anderson identifies as effective in provoking all fly-taking behaviors. Falkus developed these six striking motivations after years of observation, discussing them in his excellent and provocative book on Atlantic salmon. Feeding instinct, aggression, irritation, inducement, curiosity, and playfulness. Anderson's point concerns improving your odds of hooking a salmon depends on an idea of what might motivate them to strike. Also included are photos of Anderson's text, which, too, is an interesting read for those interested in Atlantic salmon angling.



In my case, I have used bugs successfully in Labrador, Nova Scotia, Quebec, New Brunswick, British Columbia (steelhead), and Norway. The one, yellow-appearing winged fly in the box is one I tie with an orange body, yellow and orange wing, and ringneck pheasant back feather hackle in sixes and eights. The one in the box is a six.

THE SIX STRIKING MOTIVATIONS

feeding habit – “deliberate” follow, acceleration, turning on fly to take it, boil on the surface

aggression – rapid attack; male yawns, or snaps jaws; splash and violent rise; or chasing out of territory and then turning away

irritation – caused by prolonged casting of different flies leading to a take

inducement – long follow to reeled-in fly; attack of accelerating fly

curiosity – rising repeatedly with closed mouth

playfulness – bumping fly with nose, back, tail; slapping with tail, swamping

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challenge in catching salmon so inclined is to present the fly properly, but that will be discussed later. Almost all the literature on salmon fishing is derived in response to this.



APPEAL OF VARIOUS FLY TYPES
TO THE SIX STRIKING MOTIVATIONS

STRIKING MOTIVATION						
FLY TYPE	FEEDING	AGGRESSION	IRRITATION	INDUCEMENT	CURIOSITY	PLAYFULNESS
DRY FLY						
BEATABLE						
WATER						
BOUNDER						
STUNTER						
WET FLY						
CLASSIC						
STUNTER						
STEY						
MULTIPLE						
PLAY WING						
STREAMER						
BUG						

10/29/2017 21:56