

Fear of flying



Richard Donkin
FISHING

Picture the following scene: it's late April, still comparatively early in the trout season, and you turn up to the chalk stream with all of your tackle apart from your fly box. A friendly angler shows you his collection and says you can choose any one of his flies. Just the one, mind, as he's a careful angler.

He's not going to help you with your choice either and it's too early in the day to see what might be hatching. Suppose your life depended on catching a trout with that one fly. What might you choose?

I have been thinking on this for a few days now, ever since I had an invitation to fish in a British version of the One Fly event that is held every year in the US. The UK event, in April, is being organised on seven prime beats of the River Test by Simon Cooper, who runs Fishing Breaks, a Hampshire-based agency that handles chalk stream beat bookings.

Cooper has fished in the US event, held over two days in September at Jackson Hole in Wyoming, when 160 anglers compete in 40 teams. The novel rule for this competition is that each angler is allowed only

one fly for the duration of the event, although they may choose the fly with which they will fish.

This presents me with a problem straight away. Some anglers have special skills. Mine is losing flies. I can be fishing in a treeless landscape and still lose flies. Sometimes I wonder if they just fly away. But that's not going to happen this time. I aim to be prepared. Consulting fellow anglers on the Salisbury and District Angling Club forum there was a strong consensus around the elk hair caddis, or perhaps a hawthorn fly.

way that Skues divided opinion in chalk stream fishing must seem faintly absurd to those who have never explored the conventions of the upstream dry fly approach laid down by Frederic Halford in the late 19th century.

But those long-established chalk stream traditions are challenged at our peril. No one wants to do the wrong thing. I've just been told, however, that nymphs will be allowed so a fly that can do both jobs might make a sound choice.

In the US competition, competitors have found ways of bending the rules

overhanging tree. While worrying about the right choice, I'm finding the concept of a single fly attractive, particularly for someone who does not always take the greatest care in his approach. A single fly demands that you keep an eye out for potential obstacles.

You must have watched one of those cowboy films where a posse is sneaking up on some sleeping desperadoes and one of the deputies snaps a twig that pierces the still prairie air like a thunderclap. Well, I'm a natural twig-snapper.

The careful, gentle approach that is a given for all good trout fishers cannot be neglected if we don't want to let the side down. My problem is that it usually takes me a while to relax when I reach the river. Added to that is the anxiety created by a fear of losing my fly, so really I have no chance. At least, when the worst does happen, I'm assured I shall be allowed to continue fishing, even if the potential for scoring further points will have been lost.

"It should be fun," says Cooper, adding that he is making me a team captain alongside some illustrious anglers and writers such as Charles Jardine and John Bailey, and Andrew Flitcroft, editor of Trout and Salmon magazine. The date for applications for the Jackson Hole event has passed but there's another "one fly" competition in the Marlborough region of New Zealand in March. It's tempting to enter all of them.

You only need one fly.

Places are still available for the UK One Fly competition. For details, tel: +44 (0)1264 781 988 or e-mail: simon@fishingbreaks.com

www.richarddonkin.com
More columns at
www.ft.com/donkin



Getting it right: checking before casting

Simon Cooper

They are excellent choices but I'm minded to go for a black Klinkhammer emerging caddis. The Klinkhammer was invented by a Dutch angler, Hans Van Klinken, to catch grayling. It's a versatile fly because it can be fished in the surface film, imitating an emerging fly. It's a sort of "best of both worlds" fly with a cornet-shaped tuft that sits on the surface and a thorax that hangs beneath. It's not supposed to sink but if you don't apply much floatant, well, anything can happen.

Had it been around at the time, I wonder how the Klinkhammer might have influenced the great debate over the legitimacy of upstream nymphing, promoted by GEM Skues in his 1910 book, *Minor Tactics of the Chalk Stream*? The

by tying a bigger fly around a smaller fly and then sort of "taking its jacket off" if appropriate. Naturally this has caused some controversy.

Another consideration is the tippet, the fine end of the leader that attaches to

Some anglers have special skills. Mine is losing flies

the fly. It needs to be slender but also strong. I will probably go for a 5lb or 6lb Riverge fluorocarbon at the end of my line, something that might give me a fighting chance of unsnagging a carelessly presented fly from an

NEW AUTHORS

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK
ALL SUBJECTS INVITED

WRITE OR SEND YOUR MANUSCRIPT TO

ATHENA PRESS

QUEEN'S HOUSE, 2 HOLLY ROAD,
TWICKENHAM TW1 4EG, UK.
Email: athenabook@aol.com