

The Hackle Bender

Boise Valley Fly Fishers

March, 2021



50th Anniversary of BVFF

1971-2021

Welcome to March and spring fishing! Yes, 2020 is finally behind us, but we are still living in a Covid world and we're not back to face-to-face club meetings yet.

However, we have started using Zoom for our monthly meetings. The February presentation by Troy Pearse on the skwala stonefly hatch was excellent, and we had lots of participants on Zoom asking questions. Participating by Zoom is very easy, and you can download the Zoom app for your mobile device, or access [zoom.com](https://zoom.us) on the browser of your computer. You can use your built-in microphone (or phone) to ask questions or do it using the chat feature (typing your question as text).

We have got some great programs coming up and are building the calendar for those presentations. Future outings include trips to Bruneau sand dunes, Silver creek, Stanley and the South fork of the Snake.

But again, things are not back to normal. The club for many years had always held a whitefish derby on the South Fork in February. The club would need to get permits for a group fishing contest, and with Covid there were limits on the number of anglers we could have. So instead, we decided to have a virtual whitefish contest that lasted the entire month. Participants could fish any stream in Idaho and then post pictures of their fish on our Facebook page. There was a prize for the biggest fish. And all participants had a chance at other prizes.

While we explore things to do in lieu of face-to-face meetings, we encourage members to explore some of the lesser known member benefits. For example, did you know about the Cutthroat slam challenge? Catch 5 subspecies of cutthroat and you get a nice certificate of your accomplishment, a pin, plus a gift certificate to a local fly shop. Your editor submitted an application and it was easy. There are also certificates available for catching a grayling in Idaho, or catching a 20" fish on a size 20 or smaller fly, or getting a Popper slam on warm water species. For details go to the members only tab at BVFF.ORG and click on BVFF ANGLER CHALLENGES.

The Board is exploring more ideas to celebrate 50 years of history. We also are discussing our goals for the next 50 years. Let us know what you want to club to do!

Calendar:

March 6. Owyhee river cleanup, 9:30. Event roster now FILLED.

March 11. Club meeting (online with Zoom). Matt Miller, Fishing Through the Apocalypse. 6:30.

March 20. Clear lake outing. See page 6.

April 8. Club meeting. Fishing stillwaters. Online w/ Zoom, 6:30.

April 17. Duck Valley outing (fishery will open!)

**FOR MORE CALENDAR
ITEMS CHECK BVFF.COM**



FFI Affiliate Club

Gear Up!

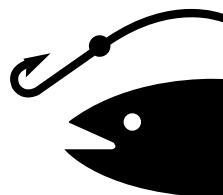
Check Current Fishing Reports to get the latest:

[Idaho Angler Reports](#)

[Boise Anglers Reports](#)

[Silver Creek Outfitters](#)

[Henry's Fork/Henry's Lake/HFF Reports](#)



Check current streamflows before you go:

<https://waterdata.usgs.gov/id/nwis/current/?type=flow>



Check current reservoir levels:

<https://www.usbr.gov/pn/hydromet/select.html>



Fill the Net!

BVFF is encouraging everyone to help keep our rivers and lakes clean. Be a good steward of the beautiful waters we enjoy by keeping them clean. Post a picture of your net filled with streamside trash on our Facebook page with the hashtag #fillthenet and we will send you a nifty fly fishing gift!

So far the following members have posted a filled net:

Troy Pearse, Matt Perkins, Don Caagbay and Ted Eisele.

Thank you!





Did you remember that January was the deadline for membership dues? Our member dues help us to do conservation and habitat projects and so much more. Go here to renew your membership: <http://www.boisevalleyflyfishers.wildapricot.org/Join-BVFF>

MEMBER PHOTOS:



Club members Austin Browning and Bert Williams with some beautiful cutthroats from Pyramid lake.

Submit photos for the next newsletter to the editor:
teisele44@gmail.com



Photo by Ted Eisele. Republished courtesy
Flyfishing & Tying Journal.

Skwala stoneflies are not as well known as Salmonflies or Goldenstones, but they can provide some excellent springtime fishing, if you know where, when and how to fish the hatch. Like other stoneflies, Skwalas emerge by crawling out at the shoreline instead of mid-river like a mayfly, caddis or midge. But unlike Salmonflies and Goldenstones, which are easy to see on the river, Skwalas are often undetected by the fisherman because they hatch under boulders and stay hidden most of the time. And because they emerge in colder

springtime weather they are much more lethargic than their summertime brethren and don't fly much.

Skwala nymphs live in cobbled bottom riffles and are active and growing all winter long which makes a Skwala nymph pattern a good anchor fly winter and spring. A few weeks before they emerge the nymphs do a "mass migration" to the slow edges of the river and wait for the right conditions to emerge. During the migration many Skwala nymphs get caught up in the drift making it an excellent time to fish a nymph imitation. And since BWOS and midges hatch this time of year, adding a zebra midge or a pheasant tail nymph dropper can be doubly effective. Just remember that since water temperatures are cold the best fishing isn't up in the fast water but around structure and where riffles tumble into runs or pools.

Not all stonefly rivers have a significant Skwala hatch. Some of the biggest Skwala hatches are on the Yuba in California, the Yakima in Washington, the Bitterroot in Montana and the Owyhee in Oregon. Places like the Yuba River in California get their Skwala hatch in January and February. The Deschutes and Yakima in March. Locally Skwalas hatch on the SF Boise and Owyhee in mid-March into April, although remember that fishing is closed on the SF Boise in April. The Bitterroot, Madison, Jefferson and Big Hole in Montana all have pretty good skawala numbers that hatch in April and higher elevation rivers like the SF Snake and the upper Snake often have hatches into May. Hatch timing varies year-to-year depending on the weather and it's important to keep tabs on streamflows to make sure the river isn't blown-out.

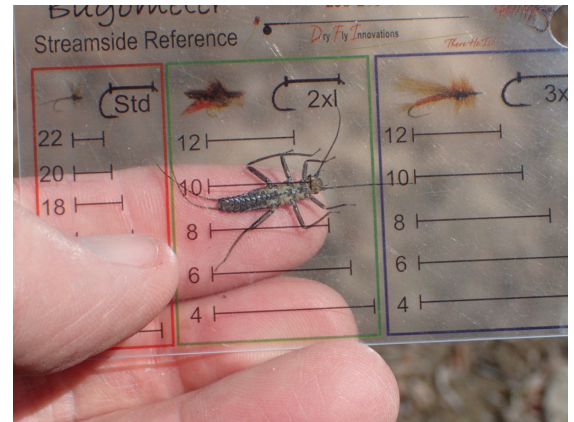
Adult Skwala emergence happens on days when the water temperatures rise into the mid to upper 40s. After hatching, Skwala adults are pretty sedentary, coming out from hiding on warm afternoons. Early in the hatch it

—Troy Pearse

Bug Corner

is primarily the short-wing males patrolling the shorelines for females. Later in the hatch the females lay eggs by crawling in from the edge and swimming slowly. Trout know this and lay in slow water along the edge—sometimes surprisingly shallow--so it is critical to stalk the edges quietly to not spook them. I fish a 12 foot leader with 3 – 4 feet of 4x tippet and try to work upstream slowly only casting the leader over the zone I am fishing. You can do a downstream drift, but it is a poor hooking angle and you will miss and lose some fish. The takes are often excruciatingly slow, so be prepared to let them eat the fly before setting the hook.

When choosing a fly, remember that Skwala adults are very sparse bugs. They don't flutter and skitter like other stoneflies so keep the wing profile to a minimum. Adults are typically a size 8 (2XL) but range from a size #10 to a size #6. Their body is brown and the thorax has some color, which is yellowish/tan locally, but Skwala bug-size and colors vary between drainages so it is always good to catch a sample and check it against your trusty Bugometer. Male Skwalas usually hatch first and tend to be a size smaller and have short wings and the females have a very prominent black egg sac so it is important to have some different sizes and some egg-laying patterns.



There are lots of good Skwala patterns out there. Mid-winter a size #10 2xl purple Pat's rubber-leg works well. As the migration begins in late February I like two-toned patterns like Sanchez's Biot Bug. Adult fly patterns should be skinny, sparse, and float flush to the surface. I fish a bullet-head foam "skinny-chubby" pattern with a low-profile wing. Dry Fly Innovations Olive Slow Stone is also a consistent producer. With both patterns make sure to tie some up with an egg-sac. A dubbed ball of UV Black Ice Dub works great.



One important thing to keep in mind when fishing the Skwala hatch on the Owyhee river is that Skwalas like the same water that Brown Trout spawned in last Fall. The redds have filled in and are difficult to see but there are eggs and alevin still in those nests through March, so make sure to wade carefully and pay attention to the Redd Zone signs. Best to stay on the banks and out of the riffles as much as possible.



Interesting Fly Fishing Links:

[Article on the Owyhee and surrounding area.](#)



restaurants around the U.S. Just below the lake is the Clear Lake Country Club. Together they operate the lake and limited it to fly fishing only. They not only stocked it prodigiously, but also included many Palomino trout and sometimes some very large hatchery broodstock fish. Palominos are a cross between an albino rainbow and a regular rainbow and can be spotted at a distance stalking your fly.

Hard times befell the fishery and many anglers abandoned it. However, there are new owners at the Trout Farm, and a new board of directors with the country club is hoping to restore the fishery to its former glory. They are having a water resources professor at CSI study the water and the ecosystem. They are also studying the impact of the flock of pelicans that has taken up residence there, and discussing options with IDFG.

BVFF has been discussing the situation with the managers of the fishery and offering our help to restore the fishery. In return, Clear Lake has offered us a chance to fish the lake for free on March 20. Members can fish for free that day, but you must: 1) be a paid-up member of the club, and 2) must preregister for the event on the club's website. Only registered members will be allowed to fish for free. To fish that day, you must check in at the Country club clubhouse (lower level) in the pro shop. If you have observations about how the fishery can be improved, let your outing host or board members know so we can pass it on to the lake managers.

The lake is a no motor water and there is virtually no fishing from shore, so bring a float tube or pontoon boat. Fly fishing only. It's too early to say the fishery is great again, but there are fish in the lake and it's a nice spring getaway.

You can enjoy a friendly meal or snack during your fishing trip at the restaurant at Clear Lakes Country Club. If you are in the mood for a more unique dining experience, then save your appetite for the drive home. Take the scenic river drive through Hagerman. As you enter Hagerman, on the left you will see the Snake River Grill owned by Chef Kirt Martin the host of the nationally televised cooking show, "Cooking on the Wild Side" shown on many PBS stations. On the menu you will find alligator appetizers, sturgeon, catfish, walleye, moon fish, salmon, and trout, along with much more.

Directions to Clear Lake C.C. go to: <https://goo.gl/maps/XWBzY> For those who don't know the way, we will caravan together. Meet on the west end of the Cabelas parking lot at 8:45 and depart by 9am. For more info contact the Outings Host, Ted Eisele at teisele44@gmail.com

I Remember ...



In the early days of club outings, many of our members made a fishing trip to Montana for opening of trout season. In those days (being much younger), it did not seem like traveling 8 or 10 hrs after work was a problem, Late night arrival in Livingston was just part of the game. For the most part, our spring outings were uneventful, except for an occasional night time speeding ticket or car malfunction. With an early morning breakfast and thoughts of big trout sipping mayflies, we were off to Nelsons Spring Creek. What could possibly go wrong on a beautiful day of fishing? However, for some reason, once on the water, THINGS HAPPEN! Maybe it was the people involved or maybe it was just bad luck! On this particular day, my fishing buddy (John Wallin) hooked a large and vey angry muskrat. Not sure why the leader did not break, but after much commotion, John finally got the critter close enough so I could net the "rat". That was not a good idea! The critter was on its back with those great big teeth showing and making hissing noises. After a short deliberation, we decided to cut the line. Catch and release was the better choice!

The second event occurred when Jerry Cornwall, our club treasurer, decided it was time for lunch and went to his car for a sandwich. WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG? To understand the rest of the story, it should be noted that the property was a working cattle ranch with, horses, chickens, dogs and numerous cats hanging around. To continue: when Jerry reached his car (an old French version of an automobile) he did not notice a mangy gray cat that apparently wanted inside. Upon slamming the car door shut to keep out bugs, all of a sudden there was a horrible crunching noise with the most god awful shriek imaginable. Yes, Jerry had slammed the cats head in the car door. Feeling bad about what happened, Jerry took the dead cat up the house and knocked on the door. Mrs. Nelson came to the front door, upon listening to what happened, she informed Jerry, that was her favorite cat! However; the story ended well as she explained, there were no hard feelings because they had lots more cats.

I believe this was the same trip that Clayne Baker hooked one of Ed Nelsons horses on an errant backcast. Clayne said at least he got two jumps out of the horse before it broke off! "THINGS HAPPEN".

—Thanks to club historian Duane Marler for this memory.

Fly tying tip: Hackle Throat (Wrapped)

by Al & Gretchen Beatty

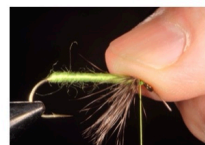
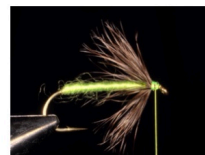
Often streamer flies are tied with a throat rather than a hackle collar. On this fly we'll demonstrate how to first wrap a hackle collar then force the collar into a throat. We particularly like this type of throat because it is so versatile. It can look like a traditional throat that is positioned on the bottom of the fly or it can be slightly flared so it is fanned across the bottom of the hook. It's your choice how it will appear.

1 Tie a body on a hook then attach and wrap a hackle collar.

2 Use the thumb to press down on the collar forcing the fibers on top of the hook to the sides of the shank. By pressing the fibers a bit on one side or the other you can construct a throat that is fanned across the bottom of the hook; just adjust it as needed.

3 Use the thumb and forefinger to pinch the fanned throat further down on the hook so all the fibers are positioned on the bottom of the fly. A soft loop of thread over the throat will force it to stay in place. In the illustration we've used two-turns of bright green thread so you can readily see the loop. The wing in the next step will cover the loop so it never shows.

4 Tie a wing on top of the throat, wrap a thread head, whip-finish and trim as need. Apply head cement to complete the fly.



In case you missed it on the club's Facebook page:



The results of the club's January spawning gravel project





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