



Fly Fishers of the Bitterroot  
Hamilton, Montana

## NEWSLETTER FOR MARCH, 2012

### THE MEETING

There are robins in my yard and grapple on the porch. What's going on? Winter came down with dementia this year. But a few of you are out exercising willing trout. I've even seen a raft or two. Me? I'm still tying so I'm ready when I no longer worry about my guides freezing. But it's getting bad. The snowflakes make me think I'm in a hatch.

We meet Tuesday, March 6, 2012, at BJ's located at 900 N. 1st Street, Hamilton. General fish tails start at 6:00 pm and the program starts at 7:00 pm.

### THE SPEAKER

The program is "A Local's Guide to the Paradise Valley Spring Creeks" by Brant Oswald. The program will cover fishing on Armstrong, Nelson's and DePuy's Spring Creeks, with special emphasis on off-season hatches and fishing, trip planning on short notice, and other approaches available to Montana residents.

Brant was given his first fly rod at age 10, and he spent most of his teens exploring small streams or dragging a Woolly Worm behind a float tube on southern Idaho's desert reservoirs. His college career included two degrees in linguistics from the University of Oregon, but he left academia in 1983 to become director of Orvis' fishing school program in California.

Brant has worked in nearly every segment of the fly fishing industry--as a

commercial fly tier (his first paying job in his early teens), fishing school instructor/director (for both Orvis and the Mel Krieger schools), fishing travel consultant, fly shop manager, casting instructor, and now as a guide and outfitter in Livingston, Montana. As a guide, Brant spends most of his days with clients on the Paradise Valley spring creeks (Armstrong, DePuy's, and Nelson's) and the Yellowstone River.

Brant has written extensively for fly fishing periodicals—as a columnist for both *The Angler's Journal* and *Wild Trout Journal*, and has been a contributor to *Big Sky Journal*, *Fly Fishing Retailer*, *Rod & Reel*, and *Wild on the Fly*, as well as *Tight Loop* and *Flyfisher*, both Japanese fly fishing magazines. He now contributes regularly online, particularly at *Midcurrent.com*. Over the years, Brant has been active with conservation groups, including CalTrout, the Joe Brooks (Livingston, Montana) Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and the Park County Environmental Council, and he served on the Governor's Upper Yellowstone River Task Force. Brant's other interests include photography, cooking, traditional bow hunting, and bird hunting with his Labradors.

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## THOSE WHO SPAKE

Drew Miller, a long time guide working out of the Grizzly Hackle in Missoula, talked about spring steelhead on the Clearwater in Idaho. It was a very well attended meeting and deservedly so. Excellent presentation, Drew. Thank you.

## THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Now that we see spring around the corner, excitement is building for our annual Skwala hatch. One of our members, Steve Akre, has an article published in the *Big Sky Journal*, *Fly Fishing 2012* entitled, "A Sign of Spring, The Bitterroot Skwala Hatch Report". The article is very informative and features photos of four versions of the Skwala tied by members Phil Romans, Jeff Gray, Chuck Stranahan and Bill Bean. Jeff, Chuck and Bill each own fly shops in Hamilton so see them for flies and advice.

We have many trips and activities in the planning stages for this year. Our meetings are open to the public; you and your visitors are welcome. However, if

you come to meetings on a regular basis I want to encourage you to become a dues paying member. The activities, classes, trips, special speakers and community service are funded by our club revenues. Some of the classes and activities are reserved for members who are current with their dues. You may pay at the meetings, send a check to P.O. Box 692, Victor, 59875 or go online to our website and pay via "Pay Pal".

Our March meeting features Brant Oswald an outfitter from Livingston speaking on, "A Local's Guide to the Paradise Valley Spring Creeks". It promises to be a great program see you there.

Jim Cline  
President

## FLY OF THE MONTH

Mercer's Skwala  
by Denny Westover

### Recipe

Hook: TMC 2302 sizes 10 and 12  
Thread: Olive UTC Ultra Thread, 70 denier  
Bead: Tungsten, black. Match to size  
Tail: Turkey Biot Quills, olive  
Rib: Fine gold wire  
Carapace: Thin Skin, mottled olive  
Abdomen: Mercer's z wing caddis  
Buggy Nymph Dubbing\*  
Thorax: Same as abdomen  
Wing case: Thin Skin, mottled olive  
Legs: Silli Legs, olive/black flake or  
orange/black flake  
Antenna: Ringneck Pheasant Tail fibers

\*available from The Fly Shop, [www.theflyshop.com](http://www.theflyshop.com), A more readily available substitute is Hareline Dubbin, Dark Olive Brown, especially when mixed with a little chopped clear Antron to add sparkle.



Mercer's Skwala has become my go-to nymph pattern from mid-March to mid-April on the Bitterroot and other rivers with a good population of Skwala stoneflies. It is a semi realistic pattern that sinks quickly and fools even the larger trout. It is fairly easy to tie and is quite durable. The pattern was originated by Mike Mercer, a very creative tyer from Redding, CA and The Fly

Shop. [www.theflyshop.com](http://www.theflyshop.com). I fish this fly as a single fly or in tandem with a smaller baetis nymph or midge nymph. Trout, especially the larger ones, tend to favor slower water and the insides of bends and riffles during the Skwala hatch. Many of my largest fish have come from tiny inside seams with barely enough water to cover their dorsal fins. This fly is also effective fished as a dropper below a beefy foam Skwala pattern buoyant enough to float the tungsten beadhead. Fish this nymph when water temperatures are 39 to 42 degrees then switch to a dry Skwala when the water temperature reaches 43 degrees. Good Fishing!!!

## ODDS AND ENDS

### **Fly of the Month:**

All Club members are invited to submit flies to be considered for Fly of the Month. Send your recipes and pictures to Bob Pearcy at [rwpearcy@gmail.com](mailto:rwpearcy@gmail.com).

### **Fly tying:**

Every Wednesday evening, 5:30 pm, at the Brew Pub.

### **Trout Unlimited Program:**

The Hamilton Chapter of TU will host Dave Kumlien from Troutfitters in Bozeman on March 15. His program is titled "Secrets of the Madison." The program starts at 7 pm at the Elks Club but a lot of us meet at 5 pm or so for a dinner with the speaker at Spice of Life.

## FOR FUN

### **Summary of Life. . . .**

### **GREAT TRUTHS THAT LITTLE CHILDREN HAVE LEARNED:**

- 1) No matter how hard you try, you can't baptize cats.
- 2) When your Mom is mad at your Dad, don't let her brush your hair.
- 3) If your sister hits you, don't hit her back. They always catch the second person.
- 4) Never ask your 3-year old brother to hold a tomato.
- 5) You can't trust dogs to watch your food.
- 6) Don't sneeze when someone is cutting your hair.
- 7) Never hold a Dust-Buster and a cat at the same time.
- 8) You can't hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk.
- 9) Don't wear polka-dot underwear under white shorts.
- 10) The best place to be when you're sad is Grandma's lap.

## **GREAT TRUTHS THAT ADULTS HAVE LEARNED:**

- 1) Raising teenagers is like nailing jelly to a tree.
- 2) Wrinkles don't hurt.
- 3) Families are like fudge - mostly sweet, with a few nuts.
- 4) Today's mighty oak is just yesterday's nut that held its ground.
- 5) Laughing is good exercise. It's like jogging on the inside.
- 6) Middle age is when you choose your cereal for the fiber, not the toy.

## **GREAT TRUTHS ABOUT GROWING OLD:**

- 1) Growing old is mandatory; growing up is optional.
- 2) Forget the health food. I need all the preservatives I can get.
- 3) When you fall down, you wonder what else you can do while you're down there.
- 4) You're getting old when you get the same sensation from a rocking chair that you once got from a roller coaster.
- 5) It's frustrating when you know all the answers but nobody bothers to ask you the questions.
- 6) Time may be a great healer, but it's a lousy beautician.
- 7) Wisdom comes with age, but sometimes age comes alone.

## **THE FOUR STAGES OF LIFE:**

- 1) You believe in Santa Claus.
- 2) You don't believe in Santa Claus.
- 3) You are Santa Claus.
- 4) You look like Santa Claus.

## **SUCCESS:**

At age 4 success is . . . Not piddling in your pants.  
At age 12 success is . . . Having friends.  
At age 17 success is . . . Having a driver's license.  
At age 35 success is . . . Having money.  
At age 50 success is . . . Having money.  
At age 70 success is . . . Having a drivers license.  
At age 75 success is . . . Having friends.

At age 80 success is . . . Not piddling in your pants.

#### **THE AUTHOR**

Nobody ever calls. Nobody ever emails. What'sa matter youse? You got no stories to tell? You got no old rods to sell? You can reach me at 406-381- 5611 or **richmorrisey@q.com**. I encourage newsletter ideas.