

BOOK REVIEWS**THE FLYFISHER'S NYANGA**

By Peter St J Turnbull-Kemp

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When I joined the Society in the late seventies I purchased all available back-issues of *Piscator* and was particularly enthralled by an article, "Lilliput Water" by Peter Turnbull-Kemp in issue 91 (Spring 1974). The article was about small-stream fly fishing – the little brooks and burns which do not harbour big fish but provide, nevertheless, great delight. In it the author referred to a "six-foot, two-piece cane rod by Leonard of New York rated for a No. 2 line, and weighing 1 oz. This is balanced perfectly by an Orvis reel exactly twice the line weight.

The rod was originally designed for 8x leaders and No. 28 flies, and its slender responsiveness makes all but the very smallest of trout a captive well worth recollection. With a total weight of less than 4 oz for rod, reel, line backing and fly there is little to blunt the sense of contact with a game opponent of any size".

To me, this most evocatively captured the delicacy which makes small-stream fly fishing so appealing. The reel was no problem, it was the commercially available Orvis CFO 1, now even more delicious in bar stock. By the time I read the article a disastrous fire had put Leonard out of business and with it the rod to which Turnbull-Kemp referred – the "Baby Catskill". Time and technology

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came to my rescue and Orvis rod designer, Howard Steere produced the spiritual successor to this model, the aptly named One Weight and, subsequently and even more appropriately, the One Ounce, a six and a half feet, two weight.

A back-cover resume of the author's career says that his boyhood recollections "are rich with the sounds of moorland streams and highland burns", and much of that joy resonates through this book.

He joined the Scots Guards during the war and, subsequently, he joined the then Southern Rhodesia's Department of National Parks. As Warden of the Rhodes-Nyanga National Park, he established the trout hatchery there and did important research work on developing suitable pellets to feed the hatchery's trout. His greatest interest however was the feral trout in the area's rivers and streams and he was a founder member of the National Trout Anglers' Society which, in Zimbabwe, performs a similar function to the Cape Piscatorial Society here.

One of Turnbull-Kemp's flies, Kemp's Favourite, was featured in a series of articles on indigenous flies written by Alan Yates for *Piscator* in the late fifties (Issue No.46, Spring 1959). Kemp's Favourite is a streamer distinguished by a wing of Water Mongoose hair. Yates mentions a letter received from Mr. Turnbull-Kemp detailing his early experiments with the fly in the Nyanga National Park's Gaeresi River. "The first fly tied accounted for 25 rainbow trout, weighing 51 lbs, before being retired - naked!"

The Flyfisher's Nyanga is a little bit of everything, a historical and geographical discourse on this lovely area in the Zimbabwe highlands, a flyfishing primer for beginners, a detailed description of the best rivers and dams in the area and a comprehensive discussion of the tackle and tactics that have proven successful.

Not surprisingly the diet of trout in the Zimbabwe mountains differs little from our own with mayfly nymphs providing the staple fare and terrestrials also playing a major role in the hotter months. He also mentions that Buffalo Gnats (Blackfly) are a not insignificant component of trout food in Nyanga, although of lesser importance than the mayfly nymphs. "Less commonly available to Nyanga trout in the living drift are the sub-aquatic larvae of caddis flies and the dark, small larvae of Buffalo Gnats. The latter resemble tiny animated indian clubs, and the caddis larvae are usually segmented creatures with prominent jaws".

He stresses however that the Nyanga trout, to survive, have to be opportunistic feeders because "the very purity of the granite-channeled Nyanga water renders it unproductive of food animals. The upland trout typical of Nyanga is essentially a very catholic and opportunistic feeder, and the size of food items it will engulf is merely a matter of mechanical convenience. The trout's utilisation of all forms of animal life as food can provide a catalogue of tremendous variety, and it would indeed be easier to list what manageable items have not been recorded from trout stomachs at Nyanga. Lizards, snakes, rodents and nestling birds can be added to the more regular dietary treats of crabs, frogs and other fish"

Inevitably the ubiquitous midge pupa are the staple diet of stillwater trout at Nyanga and Turnbull-Kemp favours Arthur Cove's Pheasant Tail nymph as a suitable imitation. Interestingly enough he, like British anglers, is finding that it pays to fish midge pupa patterns as static flies. "Imparting distinct movement to a midge pupa pattern - sometimes called a buzzer - will seldom bring increased success, and may well be retrograde". The author does not seem a likely candidate to try the stillwater dry fly tactics which have revolutionised the sport in Britain. "Dry fly fishing on calm stillwater has been described as akin to taking a hedgehog for a walk on a lead, and having to watch it do something unspeakable!" E.H.