

Reflections In Green And Gold

Garrett Evans

It was at about the same time last season, that there were about the same sort of conditions: the same shimmering rich dappled light of early morning and evening, of dazzling green and gold all along the stream, and in the hills, and reflected in the water.

Downstream below the big row of poplars, there are big fish in the deeps and up under the heavy cover.

But to be back upstream in my old haunts, is good too - the water there is faster-moving for the most part and the pools and riffles more open and interesting. The picnic ground of the Outram Gorge attracts and holds large numbers of trout. As picnic spots did at Dartmeet back in Devon, and on the Manifold and Dove and by the rustic cheese factories of Derbyshire. After wasp larva, a trout is probably most fond of cheese.

Parking my aged SUV on the sandbar of the Gorge, it was easy to wade across to the opposite unwooded bank. Sometimes when the water's up its impossible.

This time, half way across, I noticed a fish rising under the trees ahead - there were small dimpled rises which often mean a big fish. A size 16 manuka fly gently landed and was immediately taken. Tightening, there was that slow flapping back and forth of a large trout's head. And then the fish came out into the shallower water where it was clearly visible against the sand bottom. I was surprised how long it was. It was clearly not the sort of fish you could quickly horse in, particularly not on a little Hardy's #3, 6' 3" rod, a little gem that has served well for a great many years.

The trout swam round bending the 'Midge' rod - there were a number of rushes into deeper water. Eventually the fish was drawn into the shallows and on to the sand and gravel. It's always a tense time when they're run aground, walked up like a dog on a lead. They sometimes come off then. I flipped him up the gravelly bank and the priest descended on his head.

It was a cock fish with sharp teeth, it could have weighed another pound but was in good condition. It was beautifully marked and just 4 lbs.

Since it wasn't far, I took it back to the truck, then re-crossed the Taieri and proceeded upstream where I had two smaller fish that would fit into my Abu 'Roken' (Smoker).

So, going downstream, the colours were softer. I was returning to an empty house though there were two dogs and two cats to talk to. My wife was up north visiting our daughters. There would be no light in the window.

There was an almost pleasant sort of melancholy loneliness, as the light thickened and the night came on.

Editor's note: Garrett has contributed to *Piscator* for close on 30 years. He now lives in New Zealand. A compendium of his essays, *Huckleberry Days*, Echoing Green Press, 2010, is available from Craig Thom at Netbooks, <http://www.netbooks.co.za/>.

"Time and again I've witnessed trout, especially large trout, snubbing profuse mayfly hatches in favour of foraging on spent spinners, although the spinners may be present in lesser numbers than the emerging insects. Nor does the relative sizes of the flies seem to alter this behaviour significantly, since more often than not, I've found that trout tend to opt for small spinners over larger duns. And why not? To a trout, after all, a spinner represents a sure thing.

"The spent dressing that knocks 'em out on the flats in the hour before dark can be equally effective in prospecting pockets at midday. Trout are prone to bolt spent spinner patterns on fast water because these low-floating flies represent titbits that simply cannot get away. The fish are programmed with the surety of a computer to obtain maximum food for minimum effort, and toward that end, regardless of the hour, there is no better target for them than the obviously helpless spent spinner."

Spent spinners your carrion angels, Art Lee, Lore of Trout Fishing, Human Kinetics, 1999.