

HENRYS LAKE FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2005

President's Message

Good news on the horizon. Recent heavy rains have suddenly raised the hope of a full or nearly full Henrys Lake. All indications are that there was no fish kill this winter. Damon Keen, our ever helpful F&G manager, reports a healthy and significant spawning run of Yellowstone Cutthroat up Howard and Duck. And, as of June 1 Targhee is rolling, bank to bank. Many spawning fish have come up Targhee to the obstructive culverts. We have a scout troop from West Yellowstone to help translocate the fish to their spawning grounds above the highway. If you would like to help with this project please contact me or Damon Keen at the hatchery. Our Annual Fund Raising Picnic will be held in my front lawn-the same location as the past two years on July 2, 11-2 PM. The Board of Directors will have a significant turn-over this year. If you have an interest in taking an active role, please call me at 208-558-9161. A new feature of our picnic will be the first annual presentation of the Louis Trager Memorial Award recognizing

an individual's outstanding contribution in the past year to conservation and enhancement of the greater Henrys Lake watershed.

I'm looking forward to seeing all of you at the picnic July 2.
Ron Slocum

Henrys Lake Monster Caddis

By Bob Bartsch

Remember the fish stomach content study the F&G did on the gill net captured fish from 2003? Caddis fly larvae and pupae made up 8% and 16% of the total weight of stomach contents in July and August respectively. One of the caddis types in HL is *Phryganea* spp. (maybe *P. grandis*) pronounced 'free-gain-ia' or known by a variety of names; streaking caddis, motor boat caddis or traveling sedge. The caddis hatches in the evening beginning about dusk and continuing after dark. The adults live up to a week and are about 2-2 1/2" long with a tan body and wings. They fly off to the banks where they find a mate and hang around the willows where you might have

encountered them. The females may be seen in the mornings flying out across the lake to lay their eggs in the water. They are amazingly big as they zoom out along the surface dipping down and streaking or motoring leaving quite a wake. They may stop occasionally to lay eggs or deposit them as they go. No doubt this behavior is responsible for the common names.

The eggs hatch after about 2 weeks and a larva begins it's year long life. The larvae spin a sticky substance around themselves and attach pieces of leaves, sticks and bark fragments to themselves. Like a snail's shell they carry this structure around while they feed in the weeds on plant material and other insect nymph or larval forms. As the larvae grow they go through five instars or



Fig. 1. Tiechert Streaking Caddis larval imitation



Fig. 2. Streaking Caddis nymph imitation

moltings, shedding the older, smaller skin. As the end of their larval development nears they are about 2 1/2" long. The larval, worm-like form transforms into a free living pupa, a 'comma' shaped critter with long legs that make them strong swimmers. These pupae are tan-yellow or green with heavy dark brown ribbings or bands. They become very active towards dusk of their hatching day and at the right moment produce gas that collects under their integument that helps propel them to the surface where they burst through their husks and fly away. So many of these caddis hatch some evenings that the husks cover large surface areas of the Lake the next morning. The life cycle comprises one year from one hatch to the next.

There are several interesting strategies for fishing this big caddis on HL. First, the Tiechert Caddis shown in figure 1. This fly imitates the larva, is tied with a 200R hook size 8-12; black thread, abdomen palmiered with a mix of Cree, green and brown hackle, a thorax of tan or bright green dubbing, and a head of peacock herl. Remember, these guys can't swim well, if they lose grip on the weeds, they drift. So, toss it out there and bring it in slowly with a sinking, slime line, sink tip or let it drift using a floating line with a long leader and strike indicator.

The next fly is my rendition of the pupa(fig. 2). The hook is the largest caddis pupa hook I could find. I use green or yellow Arizona flash yarn for dubbing the body with a thick silver ribbing. The thorax is brown flash yarn and the hackle is as much partridge as I can herl around the front.

The real pupae are filled with gas and are very shiny-I want this fly to be bright! I had decent luck with this fly last season in the afternoons in 6-10' off Howard and Targhee Creeks with a floating line and 10' leader or 15' sink tip letting it sink and then stripping quickly. These areas last year seemed to hold a lot of the first and second year cutts and that is what I caught with this technique.

The next fly is one I have not had a chance to try but hope to this year(fig.3). This is an enlarged version of what I use for emerging caddis on the river. Again, find the largest caddis pupa hook you can and use either yellow or green Arizona flash yarn ribbed heavily with silver wire or threads woven together to the right thickness. For the emerging wing case I use a big bunch of doubled-over CDC. If I make a thorax it is again of brown flash yarn and the wing and head is a batch of deer hair cinched down and trimmed in the front as shown. This fly imitates an emerging pupa that is stuck trying to escape from its husk. The front of the fly floats like a cork and the tail end sticks down in the water.

I am anxiously waiting for this July hatch this year. When these caddis hatch the fish cruise and slam into the rising pupae with amazing speed. The idea is to cast this fly out where the fish are actively feeding using a floating line and leave it sit. The CDC keeps the fly high on the surface and can be seen easily in the fading light. Remember, large fish that feed aggressively may hit very hard-a shock tippet of about a foot long may be needed between your line and leader.



Fig. 3. Streaking Caddis crippled emerger

Project Report

By Bob Bartsch, Vice President

This past winter has been a busy time and one of great accomplishment for the Foundation and our number one project; the Targhee/Howard Creek Fish Passage. Last fall the ITD Board of Directors voted to support building a new structure over the two tributaries. The race began to perform all the surveying and site examination work that led to applications for the various environmental, state and federal permits. The site work was completed as the first winter storms rolled into Island Park. ITD had to drill under the proposed construction areas and did so in some horrible weather conditions.

The dozen-odd permits were obtained through the industry and supervision of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, ITD and your Foundation. Meanwhile, the task of project design and drawings was given to Geo-engineers, Inc. of Boise. Those plans were recently approved and the project let out for construction bidding. The plan is to begin work soon after Labor Day to diminish the traffic disruption on Highways 20 and 87. We hope to finish construction of a 30 foot concrete natural-bottom culvert on Targhee and a smaller one on Howard. This has been a whirlwind project thanks to a great deal of help from Senator Mike Crapo and Don Dixon, of his office plus the ITD Board of Directors. The project has involved the

grateful cooperation of diverse agencies, those mentioned above plus Idaho Fish and Game, US Forest Service, Army Corps of Engineers, and Henrys Fork Foundation.

During the last week in May the reason for haste again came to the fore when hundreds of spawning cutthroats ran up Targhee Creek and were halted by the obstructing culverts that are too high for them to jump at Highway 87. This year the Boy Scout Troop from West Yellowstone has jumped in to help the F&G and Foundation volunteers translocate the fish above the culverts so they may reach their spawning grounds further upstream. **We need some extra help in the next few weeks during the spawning run. If you would like to volunteer please call Ron Slocum, 208-558-9161 or Carolyn Keen, 208-588-7202.**

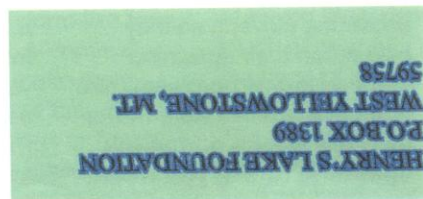
The Foundation Board is considering the current re-evaluation of the Endangered Species Act protection for the Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT). This proposed listing has been looming for some time, but in December of last year a Federal judge in Denver ruled that the USFWS had incorrectly conducted its prior survey and that the YCT may warrant listing since its historic range has diminished over 90% and has become fragmented. The HLF Board is collecting information about the consequences of a possible listing. We plan to consider the different implications and develop a policy statement later this year.

The HLF Board of Directors will be rotating in several new members this summer. We have plenty of room and time to consider those who may want to volunteer. Specifically, as a Foundation we have a great need for those with an interest to work with planning and accomplishing conservation projects in the watershed, compiling and writing articles for our newsletters and planning and leading a membership campaign. Is there a member with an interest in attending meetings of the irrigation community? Water for HL is a huge challenge-**we need interested members!** The yearly picnic and fund-raiser demands a great deal of work. Please help the Foundation maintain an active role in the betterment of the HL environs. Call Ron Slocum or Carolyn Keen if interested.

Idaho Fish and Game Report by Damon Keen

Certainly the last few years have been tough as far as catch rates at Henrys goes. The side benefit has been the large average size fish in the lake. The question now, does the data, catch rates, and other observations lead us to believe a change is in store? I'll give you a brief rundown of what we believe to be the current situation and what the near future might hold for the lake.

The 2005 hatchery run was light. At ladder average fish size was 17.5". The 2005 average size at the ladder was down 1.8" from last year's run. Last season's gill nets indicated good numbers of fish in the lake, but the bulk of the fish were predominately 1 and 2



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year olds. The 2005 gill nets again indicated a strong population of trout, but composed this time of mostly 1's, 2's and 3's (awaiting final evaluation). Additionally, brook trout were a decent component of this year's nets. The opening 2 days catch rates have started strong, with over 80% of the surveyed boat groups catching fish. The Memorial Day weekends catch rates are as good as any we've seen in several years. The bulk of the observed fish are in the 12"-16" range. However, the first 2 days catch of the 2005 season have recorded at least 5 fish over 11 pounds. Numerous 10 pound fish have been observed or reported. So what does it indicate so far?

All indications point to a healthy population of 1, 2, and 3 year old cutthroat. Again, the data indicates a strong number of 2 and 3 year old hybrids are present in Henrys. 1 and 2 year old brookies appear to be present in strong numbers. And lastly, indications are that the trophy sized hybrids are flourishing. All indicators point to a weaker class of 4-5 year old fish. After 4 or 5 years, we seldom see many survivors as a substantial component of the catch. We are looking closely at the fish this year to see if in fact we might be seeing some enhanced longevity of the sterile hybrids.

So what's the prediction? I'll leave that to you folks right now, but based on 15 years of population trend data, there's really no current reason that Henrys shouldn't fish well this year and in the foreseeable future. I'll leave it at this; sitting out in the middle of Henrys at 6 am on the opener with a pair of binoculars trained on trolling boats, I was smiling broadly. Several hours and interviews later, I discovered I wasn't the only one with a smile.