



A brief history of the Mid-Island Castaways Fly Fishing Club

(Prepared for inclusion in the BCFFF report on Vancouver Island fly fishing clubs for presentation at their AGM in Nanaimo in April 2004)

The Beginnings of the "Castaways"

The original suggestion to start a fly fishing club in the Parksville/Qualicum area first surfaced early in 1996. It started with a casual conversation between several angling enthusiasts who just happened to be browsing through the goodies at "The Village Angler", John Pehowich's fly fishing store in Qualicum Beach. The formative meetings which eventually resulted in the establishment and incorporation of the "Castaways" took place during the spring of '96 in "Murphy's Coffee Shop" immediately across from John's store in the Carriage Place mall.

The organizational meetings for the club under the interim name "Parksville Qualicum Fly Fishers" resulted in the nomination of a steering committee which included Ian Beveridge (Secretary), Tim Tullis, James Craig, John Pehowich and Dave Harris. These five enthusiasts later became the charter members who co-signed the club's application for incorporation as a society.

June '96 saw the club's first general meeting held in donated space in the loft above the office of the Rathrevor Resort in Parksville, and the July meeting, which was attended by 27 of the 40 individuals who had by then expressed interest in the club's formation, was held at the same location. The speaker at that meeting was Craig Wightman, the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks senior biologist for Region I, who addressed those present on the troubled state of the Province's salmon and steelhead fisheries. On a more positive note Craig also described some large scale examples of habitat restoration work then being undertaken jointly by the forest industry and government in the San Juan watershed. The meeting proceedings were recorded and distributed by Ian Beveridge in the club's first news letter, a service which Ian continued to provide for the first three years of the club's early existence.

In recognition of the Castaways' rapidly swelling numbers, the August meeting was moved to the Parksville Quality Inn. On that occasion, the business agenda included the introduction of the basic constitutional decisions required to satisfy the legal formalities set out by the Registrar of Companies (and Societies) in Victoria. These items were debated at some length and formalized at the club's September meeting. The August guest speaker was John Snook, the President of the Comox Fly Fishers Club, who, apart from contributing some most useful insights into beach fishing, was able to provide some practical observations about the process of establishing a fly fishing club, thanks to his having played a similar role in the neighbouring city to the North.

The September meeting, chaired by Ian Beveridge, voted to formally adopt the name "Mid-Island Castaways Fly Fishing Club" and also agreed on the other basic criteria for inclusion in the constitution including: objectives, membership categories, dues structure and budget. The General Money #2 fly was selected as the club logo in recognition of that master angler's local residency, combined with the fly's striking appearance.

The club's objectives were defined as follows:

- To practise and promote the sport of fishing with artificial flies.
- To practise and promote the research, conservation and enhancement of all sport fishing in British Columbia.
- To support and encourage the preservation of lakes, streams and beaches in British Columbia and the access thereto for the practice of fishing with artificial flies.
- To encourage fellowship, ethics and sportsmanship amongst anglers.

The constitutional decisions were followed by election of the first Castaways Board of Directors: Ian Beveridge, James Craig, Tom Dowling, Dave Harris, Tom Minton, John Pehowich and Tim Tullis. At a subsequent Board meeting, Tim, who had been President of the Evergreen Fly Fishers in Washington State, and additionally was one of the founders of the Lonely Loons Club in Kelowna, agreed take the reins as President. Ian Beveridge who had substantial experience with the management of several non-profit organizations, accepted the position of Secretary/Treasurer.

Progress

Although the "Castaways" is the youngest of the five fly fishing clubs on Vancouver Island, for the past several years it has had the largest membership, and indeed has been the biggest in the Province for much of the same period. There have certainly been many reasons for the club's rapid development in an area not necessarily recognized for its great trout fishing, although the Island's remarkable beach angling opportunities more than make up for this particular shortcoming. Perhaps the most significant of these growth factors has been balanced programming. From the earliest days there has been a strong club imperative to satisfy all categories of member interest, whether those are strictly fly fishing related, fisheries environmental or enhancement activities, government intervention, camaraderie oriented social functions, fund raising for good works, or education for anglers of all preferences and gear types.

Annually, the club holds ten general meetings which are normally preceded by fly tying demonstrations, and include approximately one half hour of business, followed by a speaker on a current topic of interest. Also included on the agenda are: Sessions to introduce and welcome guests, local fishing reports, and a coffee break which doubles as an opportunity for all to mix and mingle and ask their "how to and where to" questions from the better informed members.

Another popular club activity is the holding of "fishouts" on local lakes, rivers and beaches. These are mainly held during the months of March through October, with locations dependent on the season's target species. Most years the club organizes a trip to the Pacific side of the Island for the excellent coho fishing at one of the West Coast's fishing hot spots in Clayoquot Sound near Tofino.



Left: Tim Tullis, the Castaways first President with a Tofino coho

Two or three times a year the club imports special guest speakers from further afield. These have included many well known authors or highly regarded anglers such as Brian Chan, Barry Thornton, Art Lingren, Andy Murray, Bob Jones, Ralph Shaw, Jim McLennan, Bill Luscombe and Dr Dick Beamish.

Once a month during the winter there is also a fly tying session, with demonstrations and instruction for beginners and experts. In the past these have mainly been organized by Harv Debuc, one of the club's many expert tiers.

Achievements

Some of the club's more notable successes to date have included:

The building and development of the **Craig Creek coho hatchery** in partnership with Andrew Pearson and the Pacific Shores Nature Resort. This facility which opened in 1999, annually rears several thousand coho fry from eggs provided by DFO's Big Qualicum hatchery, with the resulting smolts being released into the creek in the late spring. Bill Rattray and his crew have been successfully managing this project since it opened.



The Castaways annual **fund raising auction** and dinner has during the past eight years netted a total of some \$30,000, starting in 1996 with \$2,500, and raising over \$8,000 in 2003. For the past several years Ken Kirkwood and his committee have managed this event with ever improving results.



Over the years, the majority of the auction proceeds have been donated to the **Nile Creek Enhancement Society**. Supervised by the indomitable Rod Allan, they annually raise hundreds of thousands of pink salmon which play such a significant role in our early fall beach fishery. The club also donated the majority of the labour and materials for the construction of the Nile Creek hatchery building, and assisted in the development of their extensive network of rearing channels.

Other beneficiaries of this environmental fund have included: The Fanny Bay Enhancement Society, the

French Creek hatchery, Nanoose Creek Streamkeepers, and our Craig Creek hatchery.

Every year, Castaways volunteers led enthusiastically by Bob Weir assist with the Nile Creek hatchery operations as well as at several others including the Big Qualicum, Puntledge, Englishman and French Creek. Sieg Hansel has been one of the French Creek stalwarts for many years. There he has been depended upon during brood stock capture, for supplying the transportation which delivers those fish to the hatchery, while also being involved in many of that facility's egg taking and other operations.

Another annual event is the club **family barbecue** which for several years was held at Bob Burgess' home at the Nile Creek beach. Bob's other claims to a place in the Castaways' history was that he was the club's first fully paid up member, and additionally was the first President of the Nile Creek Enhancement Society. Sadly, Bob succumbed to cancer in 2003.



Perhaps one of the most visible of the club's ventures was the construction of a **handicapped fishers and public viewing ramp** on the river bank within the grounds of the DFO's Big Qualicum Hatchery in 1998. This receives substantial use every fall when the chinook, coho, chum, steelhead and searun cutthroat trout are returning to spawn. From time to time the visitors have included those who were hoping to construct similar facilities on their own neighbourhood rivers or lakes.



In 1998 a work group of club members installed a series of signs on nine neighbourhood creeks to assist in their identification as salmon spawning streams requiring protection.

In 2000, the Mid-Island Castaways Fly Fishing Club was presented with the BC Federation of Fly Fishers' annual Conservation Award in recognition of the great work they had accomplished during the preceding years.

The Future.

Perhaps a history article is an inappropriate place for concerns about the future, but it is essential to look ahead when so many of our fish species are at risk because of difficult environmental and/or climatic circumstances... whether or not some of these problems appear to be beyond our control.

Fortunately, many of our members do their utmost to preserve, protect and enhance the resources that nature has so generously provided, and our club is most fortunate to include among its members many knowledgeable individuals who are in position to keep the members up to date on various projects and concerns of significance.

These individuals include James Craig, who is a member of the team which performs the annual fish counts, with particular emphasis on Vancouver Island steelhead, by swimming the local rivers on behalf of the BC Nature Trust. Skip Rimmer is a senior fisheries biologist with the Province who always has current information on BC lake stocking programs, and many other activities of interest to the angling community. Bill Pollard is a consulting fisheries biologist who currently spends much of his time with the Weyerhaeuser company, and is the co-author of a book on the identification of juvenile salmonid species. Ian Beveridge has been active on many Federal and Provincial fisheries committees and has served as the President of the BCFFF where he was deeply involved with both senior governments in intervention activities. Ian has received life memberships in both the BCFFF and the Castaways. Howard Paish has long been a consultant to Federal Fisheries, and as well has served as Executive Director of the BC Wildlife Federation and on the executive of the Steelhead Society of BC. Frank Dalziel is a fisheries technology instructor at the Nanaimo campus of the Malaspina College and has served several terms on the Board of Trout Unlimited, Canada. There are also many members with vast national and international angling experience including such notables as Joe Nemeth and Tim Tullis.

In the present fiscal circumstances of major government debts and budgetary deficits, it is simply unrealistic to rely upon the bureaucracies to provide all of the essential protection or rehabilitation required by our irreplaceable fisheries resources.

Hopefully our small club, which is so well endowed with expertise, will continue to be one of the many which plays a significant role in preserving these resources for the generations yet to come.

For the record, the following list of prior year officers, directors and committee chairs, recognizes those who have so generously contributed their time and effort on behalf of the Mid-Island Castaways Fly Fishing Club and its objectives.

	1996/97	Position	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/03	2002/03	2003/04
1996	1996	President	T Tullis	T Tullis	I Beveridge	J Craig	J Pehowich	W Pollard	W Pollard
Charter	Steering	Vice-Pres	T Dowling	J Craig	T Minton	D Fairburn	S Northrop		
Members	Committee	Secretary	I Beveridge	I Beveridge	D Fortner	D Fortner	J Taylor	K Fyfe	K Fyfe
	I Beveridge	Treasurer	I Beveridge	B Guild	J Taylor	J Taylor	J Davies	J Davies	J Davies
		Past Pres			T Tullis	I Beveridge	Craig	J Pehowich	J Pehowich
I Beveridge	I Beveridge	Director	J Craig	H Dubuc	H Dubuc	H Dubuc	D Fortner	J Hodson	J Hodson
J Craig	J Craig	Director	B Guild	T Minton	D Fairburn	L Kilby	L Kilby	W Kreibom	W Kreibom
D Harris	J Dowling	Director	T Minton	J Pehowich	W Pollard	W Pollard	E Pallot	C Ogilvie	C Ogilvie
J Pehowich	D Harris	Director	J Pehowich	W Rattray	W Rattray	R Weir	W Rattray	E Pallot	E Pallot
T Tullis	T Minton	Director	L Stefanyk					P Pendlebury	P Pendlebury
	T Tullis	Director							
	I Beveridge	News Editor	I Beveridge	I Beveridge	W Pollard	W Pollard	D Fortner	W Kreibom	W Kreibom
		Fly tying	L Stefanyk	H Dubuc	H Dubuc	H Dubuc	H Dubuc	H Dubuc	E Brokman
		Fishouts	B Guild	B Guild	R Fairburn	R Weir	J Pehowich	P Pendlebury	P Pendlebury
		Auction	T Tullis	J Pehowich	J Pehowich	R Kirkwood	R Kirkwood	R Kirkwood	R Kirkwood



**NEWS LETTERS FROM
1996 - 2006**