

WINDLANES & SLICKS IN A TASSIE TINNIE

After nearly 20 years of tossing flies it was an unexpected pleasure to be blown out of my "comfort zone" and encouraged to try something totally different to the usual method of presenting a fly.

For years I have read, viewed, trialled and generally been educated in the how, why and where of fly fishing on my home waters. Whether this involved lakes or streams, wets or dry's, nymphs or streamers the usual parameters applied including access on "terra firma".

When you put yourself in a new area it requires being able to adapt your tactics to suit the local conditions, using snippets of local knowledge and perhaps a "settling-in" period before results can be gauged. But the basics still remain the same. In Tassie, local knowledge includes things like which waters have good dun hatches on overcast days, what bay or lake / tarn to fish in a fresh westerly wind or which fly is currently the most productive on what



water?

Enter a couple of mates, a decent boat, a new set of tactics and they carry an "ant farm" in their pockets. Great Lake had been midging and my experience on Eucumbene told me this could be a frustrating time. Commonsense would suggest you try to match the hatch, watch the rise form, place the selected fly, wait for a take, curse when it appears to have been rejected and then repeat the process.... Not in these blokes book!

An early morning start, pre-dawn, mid summer with over 40 temps and bushfires at home and a comfortable 12 degrees on the water and a promise of things to come. Cruising away from the boat ramp we are on the lookout for wind lanes or slicks that stretch across the water and hold an abundance of food that has been funnelled into these feeding lanes. The fish take advantage of the feast, sometimes a telltale ring from a rise, sometimes a nose poking through the surface, often a fin or two breaking the film whilst they clean up the

deposits of spent and entrapped insect life. But what fly to imitate this larder of various forms?

In truth I believe there are many options that could have been successful and one of my "purist" mates put this to the test with good results. However when I was told that the preferred fly was an orange and brown piece of foam rubber that resembled nothing on the water and was guaranteed to out fish any other presented fly....lets just say I had some doubts.

My purist mate stuck to his fur and feather, had local experience, the ability to see trout before they arrived in the area, was good enough to make the Aussie Fly Team and could entice trout out of a bucket of water. I was perched at the nose of the boat and pushing my luck.... new methods, flying blind, up against the gun fisherman and just hoping to catch at least one fish before the day ended.

Out came the ant farm and I was told to tie on this rubber slug called a Chernobyl Ant. My hopes took a further dive as I glanced at my mate grinning at me while he tied on a



Russ Davies hooked up to a Great Lake Brownie. His and host's Jim Schofield's attention seems not to be the task in hand—landing that Brownie.

beautiful combination of fur and feather.

It wasn't long before we found a stretch of water that had all the indications of what we were after including fish that continued to rise whilst we snuck up on them with our electric motor. Jim controlled the boat, John and I cast to feeding fish that constantly rose to take the abundant food source. To try and describe the action on that day, I could not do it justice. Needless to say we caught many fish, all browns in beautiful condition. They took the Ant without hesitation, headed for the depths giving the customary headshakes and short runs before being enticed to the surface. Double hook-ups on three occasions, the action lasted for almost 5 hours until the wind came up and dispersed the lanes scattering the food. Jim, John and I alternated between fishing and managing the boat, comfortably allowing for two to fish at a time. As for who caught the most fish...who cares, as I had a fantastic time with two mates that opened my eyes to another form of fly fishing that I hadn't experienced before.

As for the Ant, it out fished the other flies John used by about 2 to 1. Over the next few days I discovered more "ant eaters" that previously I believed would not normally be enticed to the rubber bomb. This included one day when 3 of us fished a little lake, taking over 100 fish of which at least 70% were taken on the fly. Woolly and I also had a day on the Lake with Jim and took some beautiful rainbows in a scum line, all of which were taken on the Ant.

Am I convinced...you bet! But I'm not having a fire sale on my other flies, just a re-think on the value of foam rubber in the fly box. One thing I am sure of ...the next time I head down to Tassie I'll be carrying an Ant farm in my vest...and I won't be the only one.

Russ Davies