

The IRRESISTIBLE:



Ken Lockwood, who pioneered the fly, sponsored it, and gave it its name—the Irresistible

DRY-FLY fishing is no science. It boasts more unknowns than a book of algebra problems, but lacks the equations to solve them. So it's no wonder that individual anglers have ideas as different as their fingerprints, or that, despite the hundreds of patterns already evolved, new flies continue to pop up like mushrooms. Yet when a new fly comes along that packs enough trout appeal to challenge the old favorites, it's real news—news I know you'll want to hear.

But let me warn you right now that if your wife has threatened to divorce you if you come home with another fly, *don't* read any further. Once you've seen *this* fly you'll want to own it, and once you've tried it you won't be without it!

I didn't create or pioneer the fly; the sad truth is I didn't even accept it till it was jammed down my throat by Ken Lockwood's enthusiasm. Ken, rod and gun editor of a New Jersey newspaper, is a keen and experienced angler whose first love is dry flies. At first his column casually mentioned a few nice catches he'd made on a new creation. Just a flash in the pan, I thought, and promptly forgot the matter.

As he reported further successes, I became interested. When he unblushingly labeled the discovery "the Irresistible" I figured he'd gone off the deep end; that's mighty strong talk for any fly. The pay-off came when he pro-

nounced the Irresistible the *best* dry fly he'd ever seen! Now, Ken's not given to making sweeping statements without reason. I knew he must have something mighty good, so I hurried over to see him.

"Where's your perfect fly?" I asked. "Wait a minute," he grinned. "I've been fishing dry flies for more than thirty years. I've tried about every pattern known to man, and let me tell you, young fellow, *no* fly is perfect."

"You're not backing down?" "Not at all," he said earnestly. "I'll tell you what I think of it: Last week I finished checking my storage cabinets—I have about 190 dozen flies in more than 300 patterns—and the Irresistible is head and shoulders above them all!"

"It must be good," I acknowledged. "Is it your own creation?"

"No, but I'm sort of a godfather. You see, a few years back I was mighty sick—had been in the hospital for months, and nothing seemed to help me till one day Art Neu came in with a new fly that looked like a honey; class stood out all over it. As far as Art knew, it had originated with Joe Messenger, of Morgantown, W. Va. That fly was the perfect medicine. It gave me the spark I needed. I forgot myself, started to think about fishing, and got better from that minute on."

"How did it work?" "Like a charm," he said enthusiastically. "Art and I tried it in Jersey, in eastern Pennsylvania, and in the Cats-



Doc, a skeptic—until he took four finicky brown trout on the little killer

When pleasure driving was banned on the East Coast the Grippetts, left, put their car-sharing plan in moth balls, and resorted to day coaches

a Trouble Shooter

By HARRY H. EDEL

kills of New York, under all sorts of conditions. It was deadly, but we still weren't quite sure of it. You know how some flies seem to be killers, and then peter out? Well, I put it to the acid test in upstate New York one August—up in the Adirondacks, on the west branch of the Ausable, to be exact. The river was lower than it had been in years, and for two days, using proven patterns, we scarcely raised a fish. Then I brought out this new fly, and those cagy old brownies went crazy over it. Oh, you had to cast carefully, avoid drag, and use a long, fine leader, but they'd take that dry fly—consistently. We took plenty of nice trout."

"Hook any big ones?"

"More than we landed," he said ruefully. "That's wilderness water, you know—a big brawling stream full of boulders and snags. The bottom's treacherous, and there's no chance to follow your fish. Those big browns ripped loose, snapped leaders, and snagged lines, but I finally landed one of the smaller ones." He reached into his desk. "Here's the photo."

The trout was a whopper.

"You took him on a dry fly?" I marveled. "He looks to be all of five pounds."

"Three and three quarters," Ken corrected. "But some of the others were whales."

"Guess you told the world about the Irresistible after that."

"No, I tested it another season before I went on record. The Irresistible was a pippin, it scored wherever we used it. Why, up on the Beaverkill—"

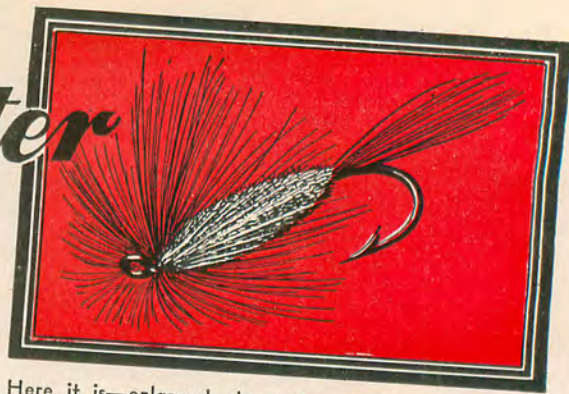
"Don't tell me any more," I pleaded. "Just show me the fly."

Ken did. It was a jaunty combination of blue-gray hackle, brown deer-hair tail, and upright wings of the same material. The body was unique—unlike anything I'd ever seen. It was of clipped deer hair, made after the fashion of a bass-bug mouse lure, yet only half the size of a bullet from a .22 short. When you touched that soft, crunchy body, it even felt like an insect.

"No wonder it takes trout," I said.

"It's a remarkable killer," Ken repeated. "Why don't you try it out sometime soon and tell me what happens?"

I ordered a dozen that day, but said nothing to the other members of the Grip-petts Association. You'll remember that gas rationing had prompted six of us to band together in a share-the-ride organization, and that "Grippetts" stands for Gas



Here it is—enlarged about three times

Rationed Individuals Providing Passage Enroute To Trout Streams.

By the time the flies arrived the pleasure-driving ban had cramped our style but, nothing daunted, we entrained for Hackettstown, within easy walking distance of the Musconetcong River. As the train puffed leisurely through the New Jersey hills, stopping at every crossroads, the boys got fidgety at seeing a perfect May morning go to waste before their very eyes. I figured it would be a good time to regale them with the Irresistible. I was wrong. They took the news with a col-
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Fred, right, dry-fly purist, who stuck to his floaters despite waves and high water



Where Doc was fishing, the trout began rising just at dusk. He tried his No. 16 Blue Spider; and then the Irresistible

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The Irresistible — A Trouble Shooter!

(Continued from page 29)

lective grunt. Their indifference only spurred me on to make some pretty broad statements. "If the Irresistible isn't a killer, I'll eat it!" I concluded.

I promptly regretted my rashness. It's an unwritten law among us Grippetts that if anyone gets too vocal, he's immediately put to the test. To a man the boys perked up, exchanged grins. Then Jack followed up with, "If it's that good, you won't mind giving an exhibition."

It looked bad, but I put on a bold front. "If I could only work the Stephensburg stretch," I said, "I'd show you."

It seemed like a safe gamble, for that water is some miles from the station; but the first truck we hailed gave us a lift to the very spot.

"All right, champ," invited Fred, "let's see what the Irresistible will do."

I was worried as I cautiously entered the water. Between you and me, I'm something less than mediocre as a caster; it was now high noon of a bright day; and despite Ken's high indorsements, I'd never tried the fly before.

My first cast was reassuring. The Irresistible danced down the current as if daring the trout to ignore it. On the fourth cast a nice fish rose, but I was too anxious and took the fly away from him. The boys on the bridge gave me the old blowtorch.

"The fly may be Irresistible," Doc hooted, "but the caster sure ain't!"

Unable to coax another rise out of that trout, I worked upstream, and had a fish sock the fly as soon as it hit. It seemed too good to be true—and it was. The fish proved to be a big chub.

"Oh, brother," howled Jack, "the right name for that fly is the Irresponsible—it doesn't care what it takes!"

But that chub really saved my hash. By the time I'd carefully cleaned and dried the fly, I had cooled off. My casts were better and, ten minutes later, when the next fish rose, I nailed him solidly.

The blowtorch chorus fizzled out as I netted the trout, a sizable brownie. Again I deliberately cleaned off the fly before resuming fishing. Some twenty casts later I hooked a second one which I creeled with something of a flourish. If I wasn't quite ready to eat that bedraggled fly, I surely could have kissed it. My gallery had become silent. Again I freshened up the fly, dried it carefully and then, turning, essayed a long downstream cast to the first fish I'd raised. Downstream casts are always difficult for me, and this one was only passable, but line and leader fell loosely enough to permit a fair float.

As the fly passed the trout's station I gave it a slight twitch. There was a flash, and the Irresistible was gone. This was a fighting rainbow. He gave one startled leap, then charged downstream to the sanctuary of a log jam under the bridge, where he tore out the fly.

"Want any further demonstration?" I asked.

"Not me," Fred said, "but I still can't believe it. Here it's midday, there's no hatch, no rising fish, and yet you—casting like a plumber—get results. There's only one answer: That fly *must* be good!"

"But my casting wasn't bad," I insisted.

"You," he snorted, "were awful. As far

as you're concerned that fly's the Invaluable!"

"I suppose you experts won't need any, then," I taunted.

That started a riot. The Grippetts descended in a body, stripped me of all but two Irresistibles, then raced away to their favorite stretches.

That evening when we tallied results there was a wide difference of opinion. Jack and Paul found the fly only so-so, but Walt reported that a discriminating brownie, after repeatedly refusing his favorite Hendrickson, had gulped down an Irresistible.

"I don't know whether it made him mad or hungry," he said, "but he sure smashed it."

Fred conceded that the new fly had taken fish for fish with his idol, a Tup's Indispensable. Everyone admitted it floated well and was easy to see, even in the dusk.

Before we fished again, a series of heavy rains had made the stream high and roiled. The Musconetcong was a surging mill race, but I tried dry flies for an hour before giving up in favor of bucktails and spinners. Fred, sticking stubbornly to the floaters, showed the way with a pair of sixteen-inch browns—both of which fell for the Irresistible.

"It not only takes the fish," Fred said, "but with plenty of fly oil, that baby rides rough water better than a Bivisible."

Later Doc came in and reported a triumph from the near-by and heavily fished Rockaway.

"There was a batch of finicky fish below the dam," he related, "but they were supereducated rascals. Half a dozen fishermen tried for them, but they snubbed every offering. At dusk they began rising to some midges. Three of us stayed on and tried to interest them, but they were choosy. I got a couple of splashes on a No. 16 Blue Spider. Finally I tried an Irresistible. It looked like a battleship compared to the naturals, but I took four browns—and lost three others—before they stopped rising."

"What about the other fellas?" Paul asked.

"They were both amateur fly tyers," Doc laughed. "As soon as I showed them the fly, they headed for home. I'll bet 100 to 1 they're tying Irresistibles right now!"

As the season wore on, we tried the Irresistible in the south branch of the Raritan, the Paulinskill, and the Flatbrook, under widely differing conditions, and for the most part it performed handsomely.

I shall always remember one evening at Rustic Knolls on the upper Musconetcong. The trout had been finicky as all get-out. Then, with a scattered evening rise in progress, several small fish sampled my Quill Gordon—but I couldn't interest a decent-size one. I carefully culled over my crowded fly box and was delighted to find a solitary Irresistible, jammed in among the Bivisible and Spentwings. In a warm flood my confidence surged back. Abandoning delicacy for safety, I snipped off a couple of tippets and went to work.

In the short hour left to me, I creeled five fat brownies and lost several others. Actually, it was hard to understand

why those fish rose at all, for when I cleaned them, all were jammed to the gills with nymphs. Maybe that challenging, chip-on-the-shoulder manner of the Irresistible got their dander up. I don't know. Certainly they weren't hungry.

These are a few of our early experiences with the Irresistible, but don't get the idea that the fly never failed. As Lockwood so aptly put it, no dry fly is perfect. On occasion we had some poor days with it, but they were pleasantly few and far between. If flies are judged by their averages, as ball players are, then the Irresistible is a champ in any league.

To my mind the amazing thing about the fly, however, is its ability to score when other patterns fail. It's a real fisherman's trouble shooter, and that's a sweeping indorsement for any fly. Ken goes even farther. "In this section of the country," he says, "I'd be willing to use nothing else all season. Not as a stunt, understand, but because I'm satisfied it's the best dry fly made!"

Of course, we've had no chance to try the Irresistible outside of Jersey, New York, and eastern Pennsylvania; I can't say how it will perform elsewhere. It may be that Northern squaretails or some Western species will ignore it, but I doubt it. Any dry fly that will pester a perverse old brown trout into striking when nothing else will budge him should interest other surface feeders.

Please don't ask me what makes the Irresistible click. Frankly, I don't know. At times I suspect that tender, tempting body arouses the same urge in a trout that I get when I see a sizzling steak. But that hardly explains why a gorged fish will smack it. As to these, I feel there's something about the cocky, swaggering float of the fly that makes a trout good and mad; and that may explain why a surprising number of responses are almost basslike in their ferocity.

Whatever the reason, the fact remains that the Irresistible has proved itself a mighty good dry fly—a most useful addition to any man's fly box.

Yes, Ken Lockwood knew what he was doing when he named it. For my part, I'll just say, "If you, too, don't find the Irresistible a killer, I'll almost be willing to eat it!"

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BBLUEGILL sunfish and largemouth black bass are the fish most suited to stocking farm ponds, experiments of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service show. The bluegill not only makes very good eating but spawns throughout the summer. The numerous young fish thus hatched make a well-stocked larder for the bass. Furthermore, bluegills should reach eating size within 7 to 12 months after stocking. The largemouth bass keep the bluegill population in balance better than smallmouths, which are less predatory, would.

In fertilized ponds a proper stocking ratio is from 800 to 1,000 fingerling bluegills to 100 black bass for each acre of water. Stocking of both species may be done at the same time, or the bluegills can be planted in the fall and the bass early the following spring.

Fishery Leaflet 27, "Farm Fish Ponds and Their Management," will be found helpful to persons interested in constructing and planting fish ponds, and can be obtained free by applying to the Fish and Wildlife Service, Merchandise Mart, Chicago 54, Ill.



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