

# community

## The joy of fly-tying

*The art of hand-tied flies are catching on*

by Tia Abell

Staff Reporter

**H**and-tied flies seem to be catching more than fish these days.

Rodney Hsu, the organizer of last Saturday's Fish for the Future event at London's Landing, says the clever lures have hooked more hobbyists in the past decade.

"I think it's picking up. Fly fishing is more popular now as bait fishing does get boring," says Hsu, 30, a Richmond resident who ties his own flies and runs the online magazine, [www.fishingwithrod.com](http://www.fishingwithrod.com).

"(Fly tying) isn't as hard as people think, although it takes years of practice to get really good. But for a simple leach, you're just basically wrapping a lot of feathers around a hook."

Although many different kinds of flies are available in outdoor sports and tackle shops, tying one's own is much more fun and, in some ways, more practical, Hsu explains.

"You get the satisfaction of creating something out in nature like what they (the fish) eat, other than just going to the store. Yes, you can buy any kind of fly but you don't know the quality. If you tie it yourself, it won't fall apart after just one cast."

The materials can be picked up at most tackle shops, which are also good places to find out about classes, says Carlo Ng, 27, who tied flies commercially as a teen.

The New Westminster resident volunteered his expertise at the Fish for the Future event at London's Landing and taught youngsters how to create flies such as the "wooly bugger." Ng says this basic leach pattern is suitable for any budding arsenal as it works on almost any fish, although there are plenty of other easy patterns.

"Once you have a foundation of techniques and materials and know the basics, (tying flies is) not hard at all. Say you wanted to tie a fly to catch trout. An hour of learning and you could

tie enough to catch fish. It's simple, once you learn how to wind the thread around and manage the materials so they're not too bulky. But those things come with experience."

Ng can't pick a favourite fly, he's too entranced with all the possibilities.

"I like it because it's a challenge to imitate something in the environment, say if I find a good food source, I want to present it to the fish in a way that is successful."

Fishermen take different approaches in designing their flies depending on how the fish are feeding, he adds.

"Dry" flies are meant to float while "wet" flies are used at different levels below the water's surface. Some flies are designed to look like actual insects, while others—psychedelic visions in electric pink or other hot colours—are used as "attractor patterns."

"It's a mystery. You can bring 100 flies to a river or lake and it turns out only one fly works," he says.

"You'll find yourself trying new materials, new books, it's addictive. These days, I only keep about 1 per cent of the fish I catch (because of regulations), so it's not so much about the joy of bringing home a fish, it's about being out there and appreciating—not just the fishing but also the area."

### Casting flies in Richmond

Richmond isn't known as a hot spot for fly casting but a few locations can be worth a try, says Rodney Hsu, owner of the online magazine, [www.fishingwithrod.com](http://www.fishingwithrod.com).

"Access is not easy for fly fishing as the roads are right beside the river and you need a long back-casting space—if you're going 10 metres forward, you need 10 metres behind you and if you do that here, you're going to hook a car."

But when the tide is out, areas along River Road can be suitable.

Lucky fishermen may even snag a cutthroat or rainbow trout. Garry Point Park also offers some good fly fishing in October for Coho salmon (the pink salmon will be back in August 2007), he adds.

"Go in the early morning, especially when there's not so many walkers; that's the thing to watch out for."

Fishermen can also try spin casting with a float and a fly to reduce the risk of hooking bystanders.