

Community

By Gordon van der Spuy

The more I travel, fish and tie the more I realise that flyfisherman are one big family. We're a bit like the broederbond really but in a positive way. The idea of community is a very important one, one that is essential if we want to see our sport thrive. Wherever I go I realise that flyfishing communities are kept together by organisations. I think of the CPS, Natal Flyfishers club, Durban Flytyers, Transvaal Flytyers guild, Jacaranda Flyfishing club, Sneeuberg Aquatic conservancy, Somerset east trout club etc etc etc etc. All these organisations have one thing in common, they are headed by extremely passionate individuals who basically transfer a kind of energy to their members through their respective organisations. Energy, although abstract, is one powerful thing. It can make magic happen. Like 15 pound trout in the middle of the karoo. Only flyfisherman could've thought this up. No other normal person would've thought that viable. Flyfishing like Heroin is highly addictive, its more of a lifestyle than a Hobby really, Kind of like being a school teacher or a miner. They're not careers, they're lifestyles. Flyfishing is no different.

Flyfisherman are a very powerful group of people when they work together.

I'm not a fan of Forums persay, people become very uninhibited when they are talking via their computer as opposed to face to face. I'm guilty myself, its easy to get carried away in front of a computer. Once egos get in the way then things go paired shaped and the actual message of the thread, which might have actually been valuable gets lost . There are plenty of self professing experts nowadays, these okes are more interested in proclaiming their expert status than actually helping develop the sport. The guys doing that are the guys getting their hands dirty, on ground level. They are the guys clearing wattle from rivers, fighting government on the trout issue, organising casting and tying events, having monthly meetings, organising trips and bringing in quality products etc etc etc. they are doers, not just sayers. Typing is easy, putting words into action is another thing altogether. One can choose to live in a bubble and just potter on on your lonesome but we need to realise the following fact. Together we can achieve more. I know that sounds like a slogan from a Corporate team building event but its true. Being part of an organisation is important because its necessary for us to move forward. Groups of people operating with a common goal are far more effective than individuals.

Travelling and working with numerous flyfishing organisations has taught me a few things.

Firstly, successful organisations are always headed by proactive , positive people who are willing to put in the effort and time.

Secondly , the yappers are not the doers, the guys talking too much are the guys doing the least.

Thirdly, the guys making it happen are just normal everyday people, very often not the ' Experts". The point is, they are doers.

Fourthly, and this shocked me, FOSAF only has about 500 hundred members Nationally. I think there are in the region of 6000 flyfisherman in this country. Ok, lets say half of those are weekend hackers, that leaves us with about 3000 hardcore guys. The maths there just doesn't add up. I'm guilty too, it must be said. Im not a member but I reckon I need to make a plan. Smaller organistaions like the

ones I mentioned earlier should all belong to an organisation like Fosaf. A larger body that fights for the interests of all of us. I am not biased, I'm not a member remember!

Fifthly, we have a problem. There is a lack of junior involvement in the majority of the organisations and clubs I work with. There are people like Keegan Kennedy from the Roam free academy and Louis de Jager from Boland Flyfishing doing amazing things with the youth but by and large we need to integrate the work we do with the young ones into the clubs and societies. That's where comp angling is a very useful tool. It appeals to the kids, we shouldn't be slamming it, we should be embracing it. It's a feeder system for the sport. Most of the youngsters go on to become highly involved in the sport. I think of all the young guides and flyfisherman working for outfits like Flycastaway and Tourettes. Many of them come from the comp scene. They are little sponges, sucking up information. Organisations need to work with or establish angling clubs within schools. When I was at Pretoria Boys high many moons ago the angling club was the most popular club in the school. There was a waiting list to get in. We even had our own club room, an abandoned classroom, that had vices permanently set up and served as headquarters during break times. Look, we obviously had a school master, Alex Juno, who was beyond obsessed about fishing so that helped.

Working with youth can probably be frustrating but do remember what you were like at the age of 16. I wouldn't want to go back there again, I prefer myself more now. Point is, the youngsters are the Tomorrow, they need guidance.

Sixthly, well, if that's even a thing. The social guys and the comp anglers need to realise that they are all part of the same thing. We are all addicts, sure we might enjoy different things but fishing is fishing boys. It's the tug that all gets us there. I think we need to all start crossing the divide and embracing.

Comp anglers can be eco tripping lunatics but that said so can the social guys. We are all the same, let's not generalise. Tonsils are tonsils, idiots are a part of life regardless of the sport they might be involved in. Generalising is a dangerous thing to do. Do remember that all families have their problem members, fly fishing is no different.

That's what I like about the CPS, it's probably the most integrated organisation in the country. The committee is well balanced with representatives from all walks of life. Be that Comp anglers, social anglers, dry fly purists, to wet and wild surf bashers! They're all there and they're all working together toward a common goal. No individual is greater than the organisation that he or she represents. Our strength lies in Unity. When individuals become greater than the causes that they represent they lose the whole reason for doing what they actually do.

We are not going to change the world because we fish or love fishing but we can make it a little bit of a better place by being gentle of spirit and kind of heart and promoting this general spirit in everything we do. It's about how we do things. Fishing, well, for me at any rate is more about the people than the actual fish. I get as much joy seeing my pals catch a nice fish than actually doing it myself. Flyfishing is about family, well at least that's what it is for me!