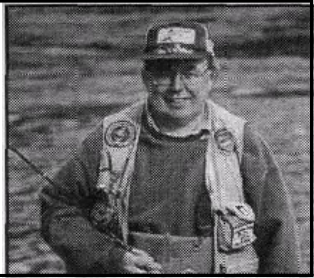


## Outdoors in Eastern Canada

By Don MacLean  
Pictou, Nova Scotia



# The Deadly MacIntosh Dry Fly

I recently had the opportunity to read a new publication on the history of an important Atlantic salmon fly in Eastern Canada, the Macintosh. The publication is called *The Legend of Nova Scotia's Deadly Macintosh Dry Fly* and is the creation of well known Nova Scotia fly tier Bill Carpan, writing under his pen name, Stillwater Slim. The publication of a new book on fishing in Eastern Canada is always a welcome event, especially when it is well written and entertaining as this one. The cover of Bill's work is illustrated by a stunning painting of Dan by well known artist Joseph Crilley. It shows Dan in a familiar pose, poling a St. Mary's River boat. I have the good fortune to know Bill, having interviewed him for my book on Atlantic Canadian fly tiers and their flies.

In the booklet Bill does a great job of detailing the development of the Macintosh fly as related by several authors such as Dr. Edwards Park and Jack Anderson. The booklet includes some treasured photographs of Dan and his family as well as early scenes of salmon fishing on the St. Mary's River. Bill includes the dressing for the ten major variations of the Macintosh which make up the Family of Macintosh flies. The pattern is still evolving however as Bill includes a photograph of his latest variation, the Coyote Macintosh, tied with locally harvested coyote hair instead of squirrel tail for the wing.

The St. Mary's River in Guysborough County has long been known as both the home of big salmon and the birthplace of the Macintosh salmon fly. Dan Macintosh

(1906-1969) was a legend on the St. Mary's River and his legend lives on in the fly which bears his name. Dan was born in Stillwater, along the banks of the St. Mary's River and, except for time spent working during the winters on the dockyards in Halifax, lived there all his life. Along with his five brothers, Dan was a master angler and guide. While he guided hunters and anglers he also worked in the woods. His ability to catch salmon was legendary, as was his casting prowess, he was reported to cast with such force that he often broke rods. His son, Danny Jr., lives close to the family home in Stillwater and continues the fly fishing, and fly tying tradition begun by his father.

I spoke to Danny when researching my book and he told me his father began tying flies as a young boy using local materials such as bucktail and squirrel tail. Dan sold flies commercially and when his six sons were old enough they also began tying flies.

"We all tied flies," said Danny. "It was mostly us boys who tied during the summer, our father was too busy guiding on the river." Dan guided many famous visitors to the St. Mary's including Babe Ruth and Lee Wuiff. In his classic book, *The Atlan-*

*tic Salmon Wuiff* credited Dan Macintosh with teaching him how to land a salmon by grasping it at the base of the tail. Lee Wuiff popularized this technique and today tailing a salmon has replaced nets and gaffs for landing salmon.

Bill also includes information on how the Macintosh fly may be fished as both a wet fly and a dry. If he was fishing it as a wet fly Dan used only a few turns of hackle. The floating version was more heavily hackled, but not too much. Dan intended the fly to fish in the film on the surface of the water. The fly was dressed with a homemade floatant of parawax and naphtha. "He didn't want it to ride high in the water," Danny told me. "He believed that if it was riding high on the water then the salmon would push it out of the way when he rose. The bulge of water would push it away and the fish would miss it."

Bill has done anglers a great service by compiling information from various sources on Dan Macintosh, and presenting it in such an interesting, and readable format. The booklet retails for \$17.95 and is available by contacting Bill at his fly fishing website: [www.rivermagic.ca](http://www.rivermagic.ca). A portion of every sale goes to the Eastern SportFish Association for their work on sportfish development in Eastern Nova Scotia.

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### THE LEGEND OF NOVA SCOTIA'S DEADLY MACINTOSH DRY FLY



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