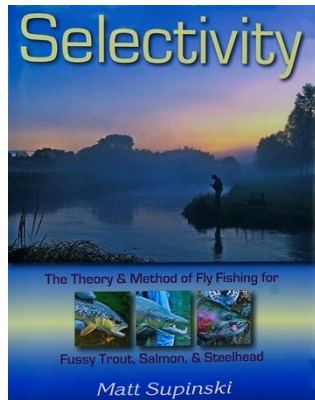


*Selectivity: The Theory and Method of Fly Fishing for Fussy Trout, Salmon, & Steelhead.* Matt Supinski. Foreword by Al Caucci, Headwater Books, an imprint of Stackpole Books, 260 pages, 8.5 x 11", hardbound, ISBN 978-0-8117-1101-2



You can't tell a book by its cover, but you often gain a foothold from the title. That's certainly true here. This book is about selectivity. In fly-fishing's lexicon, selectivity is a monster word. It's the source of many a book and many a magazine article. We talk about selectivity endlessly, and that conversation has been going since the dawn of fly floatant.

At times, this selectivity banter can get a wee bit arcane. Imagine telling a mental health professional you're seeking urine burned belly fur from a vixen fox to tie a Hendrickson? You'd end up strapped to a gurney for a ride to the rubber room. No wonder some anglers are adverse to the term. They'll insist they rule the river with an Adams, a Hare's Ear and a Woolly bugger. Supinski counters the naysayers by pointing out how fussy trout become under heavy angling pressure. If you have ever fished the crowded streams of the East, you can sympathize. On the Farmington River in Connecticut, you'll see trout rise off the bottom, put their nose on a dry fly, drift back several feet eyeballing it, and then slowly descend down with a sneer. They're tough cookies.

So if selectivity exists, does author bring anything new to the table? I believe he does. Supinski asks us to look at selectivity in a more comprehensive way. To that end, he states that fish exhibit 3 types of feeding behaviors. He identifies them as Active/Aggressive, Selective/Reflective, Passive/ Dormant. Together he calls them the 3 Phases of Selectivity. Each of these Phases, he contends, presents us with a unique angling challenge. A challenge we must adapt our presentation and flies to accordingly, if we hope to be consistently successful.

Supinski carefully describes the facets of each Phase, pointing what we can expect when fish are in that mood. Moreover, he wants us to realize that fish are constantly changing their feeding in response to factors such as fishing pressure, changing environmental conditions, the various types of river systems and their fertility. And he adds that one of the biggest impediments to catching tough fish is our own ego. So on the water, the author implores us to remain vigilant, and keep an open mind.

It's a good game plan. Frankly, it got me thinking about angling situations I've run into over the years. I bet it forces you to do the same. Yeah, the wheels will be turning. I even want to add a Phase between Active and Selective; I'd call it Curious/Opportunistic. But the bottom line here is this: the author has us stepping back to get the big picture.

Once Supinski has laid down his groundwork, the train pulls out of the station. Now the author takes us on a journey to fishing destinations around the world. We'll visit English chalkstreams, the Catskills, the Great Lakes, Pennsylvania, Montana, British Columbia, Tierra del Fuego, Alaska, Slovenia, Iceland, the Gaspé, New Zealand, and beyond. As we travel, Supinski uses these locations to illustrate and elaborate on the selectivity of trout, steelhead, and salmon. Equally important, he shows us how to adjust our presentation, and flies, to counter the selectivity we find.

Trout, the author feels, spend most of their time in the Selective/Reflective Phase. As a result, he gives trout a lot of attention. In fact, Supinski spends almost as much time on trout as he does for the other two species combined. That makes sense. Not only are trout highly selective at times, of the 3 species covered, the majority of readers will be concerned with trout. But if steelhead or salmon are your main passion, fear not my friend. Supinski is ready and able to offer valuable insights into both of these quarries as well.

The book begins with a fine introduction by Al Caucci. From there you'll find a wealth of knowledge packed in these pages. All of it backed up by numerous photographs, and color fly plates. Throughout, you'll also dine on tasty tidbits such as recipes for Spring Creek Leaders, Sight-Nymphing, Tips for Trophy Trout, Tips on Night Fishing, Steelhead Guide Secrets, The Dry Fly and the Summer Steelhead, The Doddi Orange. All told, there is plenty to ponder. Whether you're stringing up a fly rod for the first time, or patching your 19th pair of waders, this book has something to offer.

Ed Mitchell