

What's luck got to do with fishing? By Don Clementson (Nelson Trout Fishing Club President)

On a number of occasions when out on the river, I have been asked “had any luck?” and my standard reply is “there’s no luck involved, it’s all skill”.

Over the years, I have built up in my mind a library of events that will be with me for life. Some of these events vary from just minutes to a whole day.

Two such events happened last year in the middle of the passion hopper period. A week before these events, Tony Entwistle was mentioning that trout can see insects before they hit the water, and I hadn’t ever witnessed this until last year. I was in the upper Motueka and spotted a nice fish right hard against the bank with willows slightly hanging over. He was moving and rising quite rapidly, and it was a matter of luck that I would get the fly right in front of him so he could see it. Fish that are right on the surface only have a very small window, so the fly needs to be almost on his nose. I waited for him to go back to his little pozzy, and then a cast was delivered. Out went the hopper pattern, and before it hit the water, a big head came out to meet it mid-air and inhaled the fly. It all happened so quickly, and I don’t know who got the biggest surprise, me or the fish, but I hooked it and landed a nice 5 lb jack. So I put it down to skill and not luck but others that were with me reckon it was luck, so now they don’t get invited out anymore.

The other similar event happened on a smaller stream at about the same time in the season. I spotted what I thought was a disturbance under a hanging willow on a very small bit of flat water about the size of a table, hard against the bank. The surface was like a mirror, so I couldn’t see the fish. I waited and watched for a bit, then suddenly a very large head came out and took a hopper. It was an almost impossible bit of water to cast into with the willows overhead and dragging currents, so going forward, was it going to be luck or skill that would bag this fish? Well, even to this day, I’m not sure if skill had anything to do with it. The first cast must have landed right on his head, and I reckon he saw it coming through the air. No sooner had it hit the water than a big snout came out and inhaled the hopper, and it was all on for a while. He took me up stream into every under-cut bank he could find. That meant I had to follow, so here I am up out in the middle of the stream up to my chest chasing this fish that I didn’t know how big he was. Finally, I got him downstream out away from the willows, and it turned out to be a beautiful, fat 7 lb jack. So, I reckon it must have been skill with a little bit of luck added in.

So that day turned out to be one of those events with landing 8 big fish all on hoppers, and I reckon I must have picked a lucky day, or was it a skilful choice of the right day?

The more days you get out, the more skills you will develop, so get off the couch and stack up those brownie points before the season starts.

Didymodon your President

