

# A deeper trawl of Alfred Ronalds

Alfred Ronalds' *Fly Fisher's Entomology* with a commentary and illustrations by Paul Troël, £35. Published by Coch y Bonddu Books, [www.anglebooks.com](http://www.anglebooks.com) THIS book started out simply as a transition of Alfred Ronalds' book *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* from English into French. But along the way, the author added a commentary and his own illustrations. The result was published in 2024, and is now republished with the commentary and Ronalds' text in English.

There have been many editions of the original book, so no review of that portion of this book is necessary, other than to note that when it was published in 1836, it was the first book to illustrate both the natural fly and the author's suggested artificial imitation, together with tying information.

Troël has not just lifted the Ronalds text from one of the many editions, but has selected sections from several editions in compiling his work, and he has added many illustrations of his own. Some of the original Ronalds illustrations have even been repeated. There are, for example, four examples of the single plate illustrating caterpillars. This has been done to demonstrate some of the differences between the 1839, 1856, 1901 and 1913 editions, and it gives an idea of the detailed comparisons made in the book.

The author gives full acknowledgement to Beverley Ronalds (descendant of the man himself) for her book *Alfred Ronalds: Angler, Artisan & Australian Pioneer*, published in 2022. I had thought that with another book on the subject published only a couple of years earlier, there might not be room for this one – but

this is not the case. True, there is some overlap between the two, but Beverley Ronalds' book is devoted to Ronalds, the man and his life, whereas this one focuses on Ronalds' original book and the changes that were made through its many editions.

The new artwork (by Troël himself) might be described as stylised and a little abstract, and some readers might feel it is not in keeping with the factual context of Ronalds' book. Of the total 240 pages, 115 are lifted from the various Ronalds' editions, with his original text and illustrations of natural and artificial flies. Troël's comments are included throughout but there are also several additional sections that the author has written. These include an entomology of Ronalds' flies, together with modern illustrations of the natural flies.

Eighteen pages are devoted to the 1913 deluxe edition alone, and there are descriptions, with 25 illustrations, of Ronalds' Companion fly wallets. Unfortunately, these only show the front pages of the wallets, which is a pity because this means there are no descriptions of the different structures, particularly of the earliest wallets issued by Ronalds himself and the tackle maker Eaton & Deller, which were a bit special compared with those that followed.

The book goes into great detail describing and evaluating the differences between the various editions. For both readers and researchers wanting to see that level of analysis, there is much of interest here.

John Knott



# James Youl

*Under the Influence of Salmon* by Steve Harris, £18.63 from Amazon, Kindle £5.99. Published by Melbourne Books, [www.melbournebooks.com.au](http://www.melbournebooks.com.au).

THIS IS a well-written and compelling account of one man's obsession with introducing Atlantic salmon into Tasmania. It is a jolly good read, covering salmon biology, fights against bigots and scientific frauds, a fascinating insight into a period of colonial history of the Antipodes – and a technical triumph of native wit and artisan common sense over the establishment.

When British expats settled in Tasmania, they were struck by how similar it was to parts of the UK. It had lush countryside and wet mountainous regions. Its varied landscape reminded many settlers of home. One thing was missing: familiar wildlife. The mammals, plants, birds and fish were strange, and to their minds, inferior to British equivalents.

Rather than just accept that their new home was different, many set about making it feel more familiar. They named their settlements and rivers after home equivalents, and they determined to introduce wildlife familiar to them. Many species were easily transported, with often disastrous and permanent results. Fish proved more of a challenge.

The hero of this tale is James Youl, the son of a Tasmanian preacher. He was packed off to boarding school in England in 1819, aged

# Paddy's fine w

*The Connemara Sea-Trout Fisheries* by Paddy Gargan, £45. 368 pages. Published by Coch y Bonddu Books, [www.anglebooks.com](http://www.anglebooks.com)

ON A dirty wet dark night last December, I travelled to Lough Inagh Lodge Hotel in the middle wilds of Connemara for the launch of Gargan's book. Connemara is a region of Ireland loosely bounded to the east by Galway City, Lough Corrib and part of Lough Mask, and it stretches west for some 40 miles to the wild Atlantic. Sparsely populated, the region comprises mostly mountains, bogs and rock, but it teems with river and lough systems, including 19 sea-trout fisheries.

Famed by anglers and lauded by writers such as Bilton, Grimble, Adams, Street and TC Kingsmill Moore, "the ould judge" himself, Connemara had been an angler's El Dorado for generations. That changed with the advent of marine salmon farms in the

# l's glorious salmon failure



Youl's unassuming base alongside one of his hatchery ponds. His salmon were a failure; the trout, a huge success

nine. He was inspired by his broad education to think about establishing runs of salmon in Tasmanian rivers, an idea that was seldom far from his thoughts for his whole life.

The first challenge was getting live salmon, at any life-history stage, to survive a voyage across the tropics. Youl sought the views of practical fish hatchery men, respecting them over so-called and often self-promoted experts who held ideas but had little practical experience. They ridiculed Youl for adhering to the idea of shipping fertilised ova in damp moss. It was a slow process of trial and error; the voyage took many weeks and he only had

one shot per year when salmon eggs were available. Several years of effort failed, but Youl persisted. Eventually in 1864, live eggs were delivered to Hobart.

Also shipped (against Youl's judgement) were a number of brown trout and a few sea-trout eggs. These were hatched and reared in specially-constructed ponds and released as smolts to the Derwent river.

When a few silver adult salmonids returned, Youl and his supporters argued that, while they looked rather like sea-trout, they must be salmon because the timing of arrival of the few sea-trout eggs from home did not

tally. It was eventually accepted that all returning adults were probably sea-trout, and that all the true salmon had perished. To this day, all attempts to establish sea-run populations of Atlantic salmon south of the Equator have failed too. So while the prime aim of the project, to establish self-sustaining runs of salmon, was unsuccessful, populations of brown and sea trout did result.

The last chapter, bringing things up to date, concentrates on the salmon farms that have sprung up around Tasmania over the past 40 years. But the salmon involved here were not derived from Youl's introductions but brought to the island specifically for the purpose in the 1980s.

Harris mentions that there are a few lake fisheries stocked with reared salmon, but no mention is made of the first-class fishing for brown and sea-trout throughout the state, and of possible land-locked self-sustaining lake populations of Atlantic salmon. These are the true legacy of Youl's magnificent efforts, and they deserve more detailed consideration and discussion than the farming industry, which is quite unconnected with the Victorian initiatives.

But overall I can recommend this book as an excellent, thought-provoking read for anyone with an interest in salmonids, both anglers and naturalists, and indeed in the history of Tasmania. **David Solomon**

## ork on sea-trout is an immediate sellout

1980s, with many fisheries devastated.

Forty years later, there still remain a few that worth fishing. Dr Paddy Gargan, a passionate angler since boyhood, a one-time Connemara fishery manager and a recently retired eminent Inland Fisheries Ireland scientist, has written a book which covers all of the area's sea-trout fisheries. It is a detailed testament of what once was and of what remains today.

There is nobody better qualified or more knowledgeable to write this book. That's why when I arrived at Lough Inagh an hour early, the place was already buzzing. Anglers, fishery owners, scientists had all come in their scores to get a copy of Paddy's book. No one left disappointed. This book is a treasure.

It ranges widely. It is a social history, full of people and characters, yarns and fishing stories. It is also an authoritative reference

book that a stranger to Connemara and angling researchers of the future will reach out to.

Part 1 (275 pages) includes a detailed cohesive account of each of the fisheries, including a brief history of their ownership, an outline of the fisheries themselves, each system, angling literature references and Paddy's particular insights. Part 2 covers the angler's approach to fishing in Connemara, which is mostly loughs with some river fishing. There is solid advice on fishing methods, including wet fly, dry fly, dapping, evening and night fishing. There are suggestions on flies, with large and detailed photographs of many of the patterns now used.

It contains more than 200 quality photographs, several of them scenic views of the loughs spread across two pages. It

includes two previously unpublished photographs of Kingsmill Moore himself.

There are short, easy to understand and educative chapters on the biology of Connemara sea-trout and inevitably, the impact of impact of sea-lice from commercial fish farming; as well as a list of the largest sea-trout caught in Connemara.

The book concludes with several useful indices including large Connemara sea-trout, literary references particular to each fishery, bibliography and scientific sources.

Every salmon and sea-trout angler must have this book in their collection. It is a truly wonderful book, and I believe "the ould judge" himself would agree with me. The first printing sold out in just two weeks, to show how quickly that word has got around about its pedigree.

**Dan O'Donovan**