

Black Sheep Handspinners Guild Newsletter

February 2010

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<http://www.blacksheephandspinnersguild.org>

The Black Sheep meet from 11am-3pm on the second Saturday of the month at the All Saints Church, Route 34b in Lansing.

We are meeting at the All Saint's Church in Lansing, across from the Lansing Schools, from 11AM to 3PM, February 13, 2010 .

Dues for 2010 are \$20.00 Either cash or checks are good – Sharon Gombas will collect dues.

President's Message

Jim Johnson

I would like to give thanks to everyone who helped make Roc Day a success! A special word of thanks to Vickie and Aziza for their labors in the kitchen and to Bill for his demonstration. I have heard only positive feedback about the classes and from vendors so thanks to all who helped put on Roc Day 2010. There is an interesting program, described below, for our pre-Valentine's Day meeting so please read about it and do your part to make it fun for all.

Agenda for the February 13 Meeting:

1. Greetings and show and tell table
2. Roc Day reports
3. New member committee report
4. Announcements

Pre-Valentine's Day Program

Fiber and Dessert Tasting

Put a small sample (10" to 12" of roving or about a half ounce) of your favorite fiber in a baggie.

Tag it with:

- 1- The fiber type
- 2- Whether it is carded/roving/batt/top
- 3- Its color: hand dyed/commercially dyed/undyed
- 4- Where you got it if you remember

Please make 5 of these to share. We will "taste" (share/sample) these during our February meeting.

Please feel free to bring a favorite dessert to share as well or instead of fiber.

Fiber, Fabric and Far-Flung Places

Wayne Harbert

It probably won't astound you to learn that *afghans* are named after Afghans, who presumably made the original ones—or that *jersey* is so called after the island of Jersey. Some other fiber and fabric words that started out as the names of places are less straightforward than these. It's a bit less obvious, for example, that *cashmere* is named after Kashmir—the region perennially quarreled about by India and Pakistan—or that *angora* is named after Ankara in Turkey, or that *calico* is so called after Calicut in India, or *damask* after Damascus in Syria, though these connections too seem plausible enough once they are pointed out. Other fiber and fabric terms have drifted still farther from their geographical namesakes. Who would have guessed, for example, that *worsted* wool is so called after the village of Worstead in England? Or that *cambric* is named after the town of Cambrai in France, or *tabby* after al-‘Attābīya, a suburb of Baghdad? Or that *tweed* is...well, tweed is more complicated. The dictionary maintains that it started out as *tweel*, the Scottish form of *twill*, but that it was reshaped partly under the influence of the name of the river Tweed that runs through those parts.

Something to think about the next time you put on your *denim jeans*. *Denim* was originally a type of fabric for which the city of Nîmes in France was well known. *Serge de Nîmes* ‘serge of Nîmes’, they called it, eventually getting rid of the *serge* part, and only keeping *de Nîmes*, from which we get *denim*. That sort of clipping happens a lot, it seems; our word *jean*, the name of a strong twilled cotton cloth, started out as *jene fustian* ‘fustian of Genoa’, but once again it was truncated by people in a hurry. In a similar vein, Sweden was renowned for a particularly soft type of leather gloves, which were referred to in French as *gants de Suède* ‘gloves of Sweden’, and eventually that type of leather came to be called, simply, *suede*. *Serge*, by the way, is from the same source as *silk*. The word from which both of them came is Greek *sērikos*, which means ‘silk’, but its original meaning was ‘belonging to the Sēres’—a people who lived in the Far East (possibly China). I don't know if anyone uses *fustian* anymore. It's an old fashioned cloth made of cotton and flax, and maybe yet another instance of fibrous geography, getting its name from a section of Cairo called El Fustat.

Back in the old days, those denim jeans were made blue by dyeing them with indigo. And where did they get their *indigo* from? Why, India of course.

Editor's Note

Marianne Pelletier

My favorite quote from the one Roc Day workshop I attended: "If you want to know your butts from your tips, then you must lock wash."

Rana Pilosus

By Susan Glinert Stevens

Sent in by Susan Sarabasha, with permission from the blogger, <http://fleeglesblog.blogspot.com>. Susan had to explain the joke about spinning frog hair to me. -Ed.

January 7, 2010 Dateline Kyzyl-Oi, Kyrgyzstan

Scientists today announced the discovery of the fabled *Rana Pilosus*, the Hairy Frog of knitterly legend! Hitherto mentioned only in passing on a multitude of knitting blogs (as in "The yarn looked like frog hair, so I ran away screaming."), this endearing amphibian is no longer a myth, but a reality. In fact, *Rana Pilosus* cultivation turns out to be a major economic industry in a remote area of Kyrgyzstan.

Dr. Elmer Vrkyng and his graduate student, Bob "Hoppy" Hopper, semi-distinguished amphibian zoologists at the University of Uch-Korgon, made their tremendous discovery while floundering around in marshland north of town. Dr. Vrkyng explained that they had overindulged in fermented mare's milk (not much to do in Uch-Korgon besides drink and flounder) and decided to take a walk and clear their heads. Unfortunately, they wandered into the infamous Gryznyk Swamp and got, um, bogged down.

"Bob fell flat on his face, causing a torrential tidal wave that floomed all over my clean shirt. When the water, mud, and algae subsided, I felt a tickling sensation on my forehead. I reached up and discovered a webbed foot caught in my pith helmet. I tugged frantically on the squishy offending limb and was suddenly face-to-face with a genuine *Rana Pilosus*! His other leg was curled around my earlobe! I immediately whipped out my camera and took a picture of this monumental discovery."



Dr. Vrkyнк and Mr. Hopper subsequently interviewed the nearby townspeople, most of whom were oddly dressed in layers of delicate knitwear. Apparently, the surrounding area, being mostly swamp, was not conducive to raising sheep, yak, or vorpal bunnies. However, the town was overrun with furry frogs, especially during the Annual Festival of Flies, an occasion marked by fly-calling, fly-swatting competitions, fly markets, and highly decorated swatter sales.

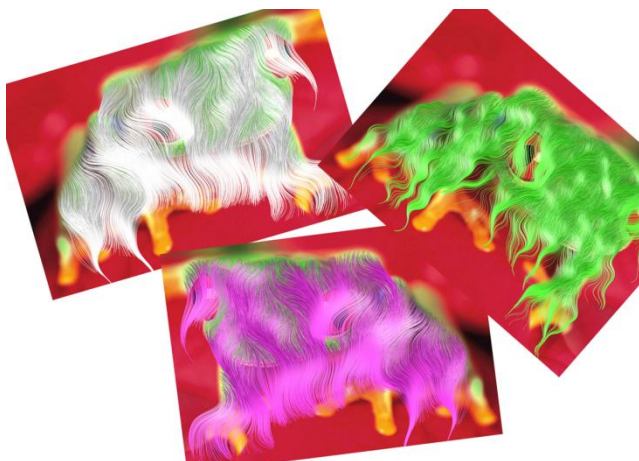
Over the millennia, frog herding became the town's major source of income. The only other business in Kyzyl-Oi is a vowel importer, and apparently the import tax on A's and E's is so outrageous that the company only accepts a few shipments of I's and O's every year and thus doesn't offer much hope of employment. Mr. Krygzy, who owns the company, says Vrknuk's Vowels has spent a ton of grybzyfs in search of a new vowel, but have not had much luck so far.

In light of the poor job market, frog herding has become the sustaining business. According to Madame Grizkyrg, who owns the largest frog spread in the area, the *Rana Pilosus* is an economical crop, as the frogs take good care of their families, are excellent padkeepers, and require only an occasional rinse with conditioning shampoo to keep snarls and split ends under control. And, she adds, the frog industry is unquestionably Green!



Madame Grizkyrg explains. "Our frogs are free-range, happily playing cards and engaging in frog-wrestling tournaments by day, and indulging in karacroake at night. In June, the frog shearers armed with tiny scissors, lure the frogs (with homemade fly snacks) onto supersized pads, where they are carefully shorn of their pelts." She went on to say that the hair is then washed, sorted, and spun by the locals to produce extremely fine yarn, which is then knitted into garments during the severe winter months. As you can see from the picture, a shorn frog is a happy frog!

"One gram of frog hair, spun in our little factory, will produce over 5000 meters of yarn. And the frogs come in a wide range of colors and patterns, including polka dot and herringbone, so we don't have to worry about dyeing it," says Madame Grizkyrg.



She went on to say that the frogs make excellent pets, as they are clean and very intelligent. There are two frog trainers in town who coach the amphibians in **Kyrgyz**, the native language, as well as instruct them in the rules of Frog Paddy Bingo, a subject that will not be further discussed in this article. A new niche business has recently emerged, thanks a sizable grant from the TSA. Azrygyr is one of several being trained as drug- and explosive-sniffing frogs.



The TSA will soon be deploying these little guys in both the personal security and baggage-screening areas. Being small, they can easily hop around inside carry-on and checked baggage. When contraband is detected, their hair stands straight up and vibrates silently, quietly alerting the agents. The frogs' foot-long tongues have been genetically modified to carry an electrical current and, on command from the TSA Frog Handlers, will zap offenders, who are then dropped through a trap door directly into a paddy wagon.

Dr. Vrkyng and Mr. Hopper will be staying in the town for three months studying this new genus before publishing their findings in *Nature*. After they have completed their research, they intend to start an eco-friendly frog-hair yarn exporting business. "Our enterprise should bring a business boom to Kyzyl-Oi," says Dr. Vrkyng.

All of us lace knitters look forward to seeing the product! Right? Don't we?

Upcoming Events

Marianne thanks Knitter's Review for most of these listings. Oh, and for including Roc Day in their listings. Please forward events you know of to Marianne at fudger28@yahoo.com for inclusion on this list.

Knit Michigan

Is this a take-off on the whole Michigan-is-a-big-mitten thing? February 6, Academy of the Sacred Heart, Bloomfield Hills, MI. <http://www.knitmichigan.com/>

East Side/West Side-Uptown/Downtown: SusanSez NYC Knitting Crawl Walkabout

February 12, New York City (can you do this all in one day?). <http://www.susansez.com/>

Pittsburgh Knit & Crochet Festival!

Come be our Valentine! We can't wait to have you join us Feb. 13-14, 2010, at the Four Points Sheraton North in Mars, PA. Registration can be found online at www.pghknitandcrochet.com.

The Carolina Fiber Frolic Spinning Retreat

February 25-28, 2010 at a southern plantation near historic Charleston, South Carolina. Geared toward spinners, but open to all fiber fanatics. Visit the web page: www.CarolinaFiberFrolic.wordpress.com and click on the Carolina Fiber Frolic link on the right hand side of the front page, or check out the Carolina Fiber Frolic group on Ravelry.

Spa Knit 'N Spin

February 27-28, Hilton Garden Inn & Harraseeket Inn , Freeport, ME. Because in Freeport, ME, what else is there to do in February? <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NewEnglandTextileArts/>

Alaska Fiber Festival

March 5-14, all over Anchorage, AK. <http://www.alaskafiberfestival.org/>

Knitting, Yoga & Meditation

Ohm, you only get to do it for one day. March 12, Burlington, VT, which will be almost as cold as Anchorage. <http://www.coolmoonyoga.com/Workshops.html>

Camp Pluckyfluff England

Count me first in line to watch the YouTube videos from this one. March 13-14, Long Ashton Community Centre, Bristol, England, UK. <http://www.pluckyfluff.com/camp.html>

Orenburg Russian Knitted Lace Workshop with Galina Khmeleva

March 22-23, Italian Alps & Venice -- not Russia.

<http://www.alpineadventureagency.com/dream-vacations/fiber-workshops/galina-orenburg-lace.html#Top>

North Country Spinners

September 24-26, 2010 Yup, next year

Johnsonburg Presbyterian Center, Johnsonburg, NJ, Warren County.

Located in the northwestern corner of NJ. To locate please click **here**

<http://www.northcountryspinners.org/retreat.htm>

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Christine Johnson
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To place an ad

A check for \$5.00 made to BSHG for an ad to run three times (a year is \$15) should be sent to the current treasurer, Sharon Gombas, 177 Salmon Creek Rd. Lansing, NY 14882. Send the ad to the newsletter editor, Marianne Pelletier, at: fudger28@yahoo.com. If you have a question for her or others, you can email us through the links at the top of the newsletter.

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